

PACT CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT 2021.

You'll no doubt be glad to hear that this year's report is rather shorter than the several pages that you've had to endure at previous AGMs! The reason for this, perversely, is that for the past few years I've tried to refer to everything that PACT has been involved in during the preceding twelve months, whereas this time there has been such an expansion of PACT's role, due very largely to its involvement with the ZCC programme, that it would be impossible to refer to all that has occurred in the past year, and so this time I am going to limit my comments to a few key items which I'll come to in a minute (and with my usual apologies for anything that I have forgotten to mention).

This increase in PACT's responsibilities has taken place during the most difficult of conditions (I refer of course to the Covid situation), added to by the ever-present issue of having few active members. Of course, this isn't a problem limited to PACT alone; almost every such group revolves around the work of a small number of people who are prepared to put themselves out into the community, and to those we all owe a huge debt of gratitude. Within the volunteers of PACT, I do wish to make special mention of those people without whose continuing efforts, PACT would certainly struggle. They include the following, in no particular order except perhaps the first of these:

Geoff Rockcliffe-King, whose work especially over the past 18 months, in helping to shape PACT's role and responsibilities within the ZCC programme, has been invaluable, not to mention his work in the initial appointment of, and subsequent guidance and communication with Rosie Bradshaw, our recently appointed Community Action Officer; Geoff will say a bit more about all this in a minute; also, Geoff's input to the Town Centre Group over the past year or so.

Jaki Bell who, despite her heavy workload with CAFs, continues to contribute to PACT in all manner of ways, not least in issuing our newsletters several times each year, and for helping to maintain the contacts with Cumbria Sustainability Network;

Christine Sutherland, our tireless secretary, storer of the PACT emporium, and general sergeant at arms who keeps me firmly in place when necessary;

Malcolm Carruthers, for his work with the repair café (assisted by several others), and the Community Gardeners;

Chris Cant, for continuing work with the website, with Freegle, Give and Take events, and miscellaneous other jobs, not least his role in helping guide the PACT application as part of the successful ZCC bid;

Lucy Teather, for her work as chair of Appleby Edibles, as well as a host of other issues around Horticulture, Housing Co-operatives and Permaculture; we are sorry to be losing Lucy as a director this year, but look forward to our ongoing association with her, and her work in Appleby and elsewhere;

Philip Sturgess our treasurer, for keeping us on the right side of the law with our finances....also as a soon-to-be tree-planting expert at Frenchfield, (along with several other members);

Richard Waller, for all of his enthusiasm, expertise and guidance across a wide range of environmental issues; also for heading up the Transition "Bounce Forward" initiative and, not least, for giving us this evening's talk;

Liz Jablonski, for being such a willing help and advocate, especially with the monthly PACT stall in Penrith;

Joan Robinson, for...well, just about everything to do with the Community Gardeners and (in capital letters) FOR GETTING THINGS DONE!

Ron Kenyon, for his help especially with the tree group down at Frenchfield, and together with Christine, for helping currently with arrangements for the "Break the Cycle" group of 70 or so cyclists on 28th and 29th of October, who are stopping overnight in Penrith on their way to the COP 26 event in Glasgow;

To Frances Bell and Peter Simpson, who are stepping back from their roles as directors, we look forward to continue to benefit from their expertise on trees, and all manner of issues around biodiversity;

To those others of you who help PACT in various ways, not least Jo Heeley for helping to prepare the accounts each year. The rest of you.....you know who you are, and I apologise for forgetting to mention you by name (no doubt the sergeant-at-arms will take me to task for this, after the meeting!).

And last but by no means least, Rosie Bradshaw, our Community Action Officer, already seven months into her role with us, and of whom Geoff will now speak, and say a little more about PACT's role with ZCC.

(Geoff's piece).

I said just now that without such people as mentioned, and others whom I haven't, PACT would struggle to exist. And what if it didn't..... would it matter?

I still believe that it would matter, for although PACT is - and is likely to always be - a very small group, it remains the only apolitical voice specifically targeted to the community of Penrith and its immediate environs on a range of environmental issues. It has undergone several changes in its nearly 14 years of existence, depending upon the particular interests of its active members at any one time, but at its core it remains the Penrith voice for those people concerned about the state of the environment. Although environmental issues are now front and centre stage both nationally and internationally, compared with the almost total absence of such matters being aired back when we started, the fact remains that we are still falling further and further behind in our bid to keep the rise in global temperatures to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels, the threshold at which many scientists believe to be the tipping point, and beyond which the global scenario escalates way beyond the control of humankind to rein it in. Global CO2 emissions rebounded from the previous peak of 2018-19, by almost 5% in 2021, an average of 414.47 ppm, and the highest for 3.6 million years.

So, are we prepared to roll over and just accept that this is the way that things have to be: or do we do what we can, however seemingly insignificant, to try and make our tiny corner of the planet a better place for generations as yet unborn?

I know where my own instincts are. But having chaired PACT variously for more than half of its existence, it's well past time for me to step aside, and hand over to someone with fresh ideas and the motivation to keep banging on to anyone who might listen, about the climate crisis, and the ever more urgent need for action, no matter how small our voice. After all, if we won't, who will?

John Bodger (Chair, Penrith Action for Community Transition)

1st October 2021