

## **PACT Chairman's Report 2018**

As I write my chairman's report, it's hard to believe that thirteen months have elapsed since the last one. When I took over as chair from Nigel in 2016, I was a bit despondent about PACT's chances of survival, mostly because of the lack of active members. But as PACT enters its eleventh year, I am much more optimistic: despite our ongoing difficulty in recruiting new members, the exceptional work undertaken by a small number of members and associated volunteers across a range of activities, means that PACT continues to punch well above its weight, and this has been brought home to me in reviewing PACT's work over the past year. I'll touch briefly upon some of this in a moment, and as we are going to hear shortly from both Joan and Jaki about some of the work that they have been involved in, I'll try not to steal their thunder.

So here is a reminder of some of PACT's activities since the last AGM but, as always, please forgive me for any errors or omissions!

The subject that has attracted by far the greatest attention is of course those issues of single-use plastics, packaging, litter, and their combined environmental consequences. In particular Nigel and Jaki have been incredibly effective in raising awareness of these matters, both in Penrith and beyond, helped very much by several of you here this evening, including the establishment of a Refill scheme for Penrith. In September, Nigel's Plastics Action Group held the first of several meetings, which was attended by representatives from Sustainable Carlisle who were keen to follow the Penrith example. PACT succeeded in receiving a grant for £1200 towards the Refill project from Cumbria Community Waste Prevention Fund, and Jaki will update us on how this has been used, as part of the campaign.

Thanks also go to those of you who have helped with setting up and manning PACT stalls at various events, including Apple Day (with Penrith Community Gardeners), Penrith Goes Orange (during a "Beast from The East" blizzard!), May Day, and Penrith On A Plate. The May Day event was highlighted by the creation of a whale (made from plastic waste collected on the previous Saturday's big litter pick in Penrith) and which, under the guidance of Joan and Jaki and with the assistance of Eden Mencap, generated a lot of interest, the float deservedly winning a prize.

Still on plastic-related issues, back in September Nigel initiated a meeting that he and I attended, with the head of Cumbria Tourism and their marketing officer, following their branding of the Lake District as an environmental destination on every one of the millions of Aqua Pura plastic water bottles produced in Cumbria each year. A few weeks later, we both attended a three-hour meeting with the head of Princes UK and others from Aqua Pura to hear their side of the issue(s). In both cases, it was very evident that Cumbria Tourism and Aqua Pura have misjudged the groundswell of public opinion over the use of single-use plastic, and whilst for Cumbria Tourism this was clearly an own-goal, for Aqua Pura the matter is more serious, as they are the largest employer in Eden, and PACT recognises the potential difficulties that they may have to face.

In early January, Nigel and I lobbied Rory Stewart on these issues at his constituency surgery, which also gave us the opportunity to tell him, albeit briefly, about the aims and objectives of PACT. This led to a much more helpful meeting with our MP on 20<sup>th</sup> April, with six of us attending. In early February, we met with editor Colin Maughan and Emily Atherton at the C&W Herald office, at their request, as they were keen for the paper to support (and to be seen to be supporting) the work of PACT in seeking to reduce the unnecessary use of plastic in Penrith. As a consequence, the Herald

has been happy to receive and publish any articles associated with these issues including, importantly, the involvement of our local schools.

In March, PACT hosted a showing of “A Plastic Ocean” at the old fire station, attended by 85 people, and at which the Penrith Refill scheme was officially launched. PACT also facilitated the showing of the film in Carlisle.

Further back, in October, PACT and CAfS co-hosted a meeting of the Cumbria Sustainability Network, again held at the Meeting House, attended (as well as by members of PACT) by representatives from Brampton, Carlisle, Keswick, Stavely and Kendal, at which several presentations included a marketing training session, and attitudes to climate change, both led by Jaki. A significant outcome of the meeting was the adoption of actions on issues around plastics, as a combined effort by all of the sustainability groups, modelled upon the outstanding work already undertaken by Nigel, Jaki and others from PACT.

On the broader issue of PACT and its role and relevance, in mid-January we held a “ten-year review” at the Quaker Meeting House, attended by 26 people, which included a presentation from our old friend and supporter Paul Allen from the Centre for Alternative Technology, on the COP23 conference held in Bonn in November, and the work of Zero Carbon Britain. A number of proposals for initiatives arose from the various discussion groups, and because it’s easy for such meetings to have outcomes which become quickly forgotten, I have appended the notes of the event to my report, as a reminder of these. I suggest that we should re-visit this at one of our next board meetings.

Although the issues around plastics have dominated my report, I want to acknowledge and thank sincerely those PACT members, including Chris, Malcolm, and Sally, who have been very active in other fields (and not only in Penrith): Freegle Give and Take events; Seedy Saturdays; Repair Cafes; litter-picking (including Keep Penrith Tidy / Love where You Live), Britain in Bloom (Malcolm is to attend the presentation ceremony in Belfast later this month), and the associated work done by Penrith Community Gardeners under the indomitable leadership of Joan Robinson! Joan isn’t one for committees and meetings, but she does a tremendous amount of work in the community, and Penrith owes her a great debt of gratitude.

Other PACT activities have included the following: a meeting with Highways England, instigated by Peter, over the issue of wasteful lighting (including traffic lighting) at the Junction 40 and Kemplay roundabouts (the outcome of which was less than satisfactory, but many thanks to Peter for persevering with this!); lobbying for the retention of the 563 bus route between Penrith and Appleby (thank you Graham); members have also participated (as individuals) in attending anti-fracking protests at Preston New Road, and in the Green Party’s “The Green Question” workshop in April; and currently Frankie and Sally are engaged with the “Divest Parliament” Campaign. I represent PACT on the Penrith Neighbourhood Plan Committee where, together with Roe Baker from CAfS, we are pushing for (and it seems succeeding) in having Sustainability as the golden thread which links all of the policies in the Plan (for which the informal public consultation has now concluded), and we have a meeting in the middle of next month where the Plan will move to the next stage of the adoption process.

Public awareness of the Neighbourhood Plan has, for the moment, been eclipsed by the publication of the Penrith Masterplan. This clearly contains issues that will radically affect our community, and I believe that PACT should have a discrete meeting to discuss the possible environmental

consequences, and respond accordingly before the 2<sup>nd</sup> November, when the public consultation period expires.

Before finishing, I do want to reiterate my thanks to the PACT directors and members who have volunteered their time so generously, and with such effect, over the past year, and again, my apologies if I've failed to mention or thank anyone else, but you know who you are! At this time, we are very sorry to be losing Sally and Frankie from the Board, and we wish them well for the future. We will need to appoint two new directors as soon as possible, to bring us up to full strength. Particular thanks also go to Bill, our treasurer, to Chris for making the time to update the PACT website, to Jaki for writing and publishing the regular PACT Newsletters, and not least to Christine, for being such an efficient secretary, in processing and forwarding the varied emails received, and for keeping us updated with meeting minutes and other reminders. And of course, thanks go to Geoff and Peter, for so kindly hosting board meetings in their homes.

So, from the foregoing, it's very clear that PACT continues to play a useful role in the community in helping to raise awareness of, and in taking action against, those issues that threaten the social, economic and environmental well-being of Penrith (on the micro scale), and the planet (at the macro scale). Indeed, these three elements of sustainability are woven into the fabric of every activity undertaken by PACT, and rightly so.

A sobering reminder, if it was needed, of the essential role of organisations such as PACT, and our much-admired neighbour CAFS, can be seen in the simple statistic of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In 2008, when PACT started, atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> stood at 387ppm. In 2015, emissions broke the 400ppm barrier, and this year will top 410ppm. The gap between where we need to be, and where we are, is still widening, and therefore anything that individuals and environmental groups can do to help mitigate these effects, remains absolutely vital. Let's renew our efforts, in whatever ways we feel able, to help bridge this gap. The global prospects are daunting, but all of us here this evening know that doing nothing is simply not an option.

**John Bodger, Chair, PACT.**

**28<sup>th</sup> September 2018**