

AAFAF'S YEAR

2020 started really well. In February a group of us went to help with tree maintenance on Chris Hodgson's land in the Rydal Basin along with Simon Stainer of Natural England and Pete Leeson from the Woodland Trust.



All the groundwork – community conversations etc. that had taken place in late 2019 culminated in **the Growing and Composting Workshop** that we held in the Kelsick Centre in March – *just* before lockdown. This was a wonderful event, not only because the day itself was enjoyed by so many but because it brought together so many people and their skills: from Pete's composting know-how to Rebecca's planting know-how; from Jennifer's knowledge of herbs to Paul's woodworking skills which produced 20 window boxes to be planted up and given away free to the public; from Luke Evans' expertise on micro salad growing to Steve W's wonderful graphic skills producing high quality on-the-spot publicity in minutes, not to mention the tea makers,

compost deliverers and the enthusiastic people who came along to support. None of this would have happened at all without Jane M and Jane B and their tremendous organising skills and work commitment and the efforts of a hardy team of people who did a leaflet drop covering the whole of Ambleside.



The planting of the **Community Orchard** was another fantastic achievement. This too was completed in the nick of time two days before lockdown, the on-going watering and care being carried out by the safely distanced watering gang - Pete M, Jonathan and Mike - over the next months. The large planter too found its home nearby close to the chat bench. **Six more fruit trees** were planted on **the Kelsick Trust's school playing field** through the efforts of Carole S, Celia and Ambleside school .



After lockdown everything changed. Plans for a demonstration outside Barclays – the highest European funder of fossil fuel extraction – had to be shelved. Meetings of the lobbying group ceased. Events where we might have met and talked to people in the street or brought in inspiring speakers also had to be put aside.

What did happen instead initially was that many of us experienced the kind of world we would love to inhabit – a quiet world devoid of motorised traffic, with empty skies few people and more wildlife in evidence; a world where we could walk and cycle safely on the roads and where contact with our immediate neighbours became important.

Then we started adapting. We all became familiar with Zoom and other online platforms. Our Monthly AAFAF meetings and the meetings of the A-Z and Energy Groups continued on Zoom.

- On 4th March Paul took his place on the Lakes Parish Council in the hope of giving environmental issues stronger representation there
- The efforts of the “incorporation team” – Caroline, Mary, Steve L and Gillian working with our consultant, David Beuzeval – succeeded in gaining **Registered Charity Status for AAFAF on the 6th April** less than eighteen months after we came into existence. Since then, Mary, Caroline & Steve L have done – and are still doing - an extraordinary amount of ‘backroom’ work taking care of all the financial and bureaucratic issues that go along with that to ensure our smooth running.
- CAFs produced a very nice **film about our work**. If you haven’t seen it you can find it on the website: www.aafaf.uk
- Steve L and the **Transport Group held their first meeting** in early May
- 22nd June: the Transport Group invited Tim Farron to meet with them and had very good exchange in which TF was very supportive
- 25th June: Paul facilitated **the first meeting of the Warmer Homes Group**.
- 30th June: Tim Farron held a Virtual Town Hall meeting for constituents on environmental issues which was attended by Gillian and an online surgery shortly after was attended by Mary. Again we found him very supportive and well informed.
- 10th July: the **Transport Group’s Open Letter** made front page headlines in the Westmorland Gazette, opening up *many* conversations not least around the issue of the pedestrianisation of The Slack.

- 30th July: Gillian gave an online workshop - 'Communication or Alienation' - strategies for talking to people about the Climate Crisis. This was the final event in the Spaces to Connect series.
- At the end of July we said a sad goodbye to Rhona Pringle, our excellent consultant from CAfS. Happily she continues to attend A_Z meetings!
- In mid August we welcomed Rhona's replacement, Molly Hogg. Molly has since done a tremendous amount of work in supporting A-Z and the Energy Group in pursuing a workable Community Energy scheme.
- Mary went through the process with HMRC to enable us to claim Gift Aid on donations and she also set up a new Bank Account to match our new status as a Registered Charity.
- In September Mary and Steve W did a First Aid Training - part of the Spaces to Connect project postponed from earlier in the year - so that they can be on hand at the public events that we will, hopefully, one day, be able to run again.
- 2nd October: Cumbria County Council voted to give the go-ahead for the new coal mine in West Cumbria. Gillian spoke to oppose it at the meeting, along with many other opponents.
- Also in the latter part of the year, Mike wrote three funding applications on behalf of the Warmer Homes Group, for the purchase of an infra-red camera for locating heat loss in people's houses. Two of these applications succeeded and we now also have the loan of a second camera. Flyers are all ready for a leaflet drop to all the homes in Ambleside just as soon as the purchase and training are complete and the Group can begin their surveys and reports.
- In August the Growing Group, under Rebecca's knowledgeable eye, started meeting again to plan for post-

Covid Spring growing. Rebecca, Jane M and David did a reconnaissance around Ambleside to pinpoint unused and accessible spots for growing things. A wild flower meadow, free plants for the public to find and tree planting are some of the projects in the pipe line.

- 9th November: A meeting with Sustainable Keswick and Peninsula Environmental Action Team (PEAT) and ourselves organised by CAfS

- Individuals have continued to lobby politicians, planners, corporate CEOs etc. and have responded to a number of government consultations as well as writing letters to the local press.

- Mary has added a number of new categories to [the AAFAF website](#) over the year. If you haven't ever visited the site - or not recently - do have a look. It's a happening place!

All through the year AAFAF has been making connections and forming partnerships with other groups and organisations:

The Transport group has formed a mutually beneficial relationship with [The Lake District National Park Partnership Group on Sustainable Transport](#).

We found a great deal of common ground in a meeting with Julian Whittle of [Cumbria Chamber of Commerce](#). Julian's practical, well-informed and pragmatic stance was music to our ears as was his support for public transport.

Gillian had a meeting with [the Green Lanes Alliance](#) group whose cause we clearly support.

More recently we have had meetings with Nigel Wilkinson and Steve Crook from [The New Ambleside Chamber of](#)

Trade and identified areas where they could disseminate information for us among their members and we might help their members e.g. cut their emissions via a Q&A session in the spring.

Yet another organisation that may support us practically or financially in the future is **The Lake District Foundation**

We are affiliated with **The Parish Centre and Learning Plus.**

We have formed an active connection with **The Langdale Estate** via Dan Visser and Ian Murray.

Paul has represented us at meetings of **The Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership**

We have had two *very* informative and helpful **speakers giving talks online** - the first for A-Z and the Energy Group was Gill Fenna about the possibilities and pitfalls of different types of Community Energy schemes and the second was Dianne Hubbard - 'Zero-Carboning your Home.

Much of the work that has been done this year has been raising our profile, gaining support, exploring possibilities, gathering information and painstakingly preparing the ground for projects that will materialise in the next months or in the next year or two to help us make our community more resilient. Inevitably there have been setbacks. Occasionally roads that seemed promising have turned out to be dead ends. The groups have shown incredible tenacity and clarity of purpose holding to their ultimate goals like terriers! I applaud them all!

I know that we will go on building on the work that has gone on this year and that at some point in the coming year we *will* again be free to undertake the kinds of tasks for the planet that can include many more of us. I look forward to that time. In the meantime, stay safe and well and remain in good heart.