

## **OUR ROLE IN CLIMATE CHANGE**

Richard Waller, a senior lecturer in Geography at Keele University, gave a compelling talk on the causes and consequences of climate change to a packed audience at this month's meeting of Penrith and North Lakes U3A. He gave a detailed and fascinating explanation of the dramatic rise in global temperatures resulting from the world's increasing use of fossil fuels as countries industrialise and become ever more dependent on petrol and diesel vehicles. These changes bring about harmful air pollution and lead to dangerous levels of carbon dioxide with rapid global warming. Richard showed slides of disappearing glaciers and of the shrinking polar ice sheets together and referred to recent wild forest fires releasing further carbon dioxide in many areas of the world to illustrate the consequences of these worrying developments. Another concern is the degradation of the permafrost leading to higher levels of methane in the atmosphere, also causing planetary warming. Storm Desmond in 2019 and a temperature of over 40 degrees C recorded in 2022 are probable signs of climate change seen in Britain.



More positively, Richard went on to indicate ways of helping to reduce these problems at both a national and an individual level. First of all, encouragement from the government and from industry could bring significant change. Increasing generation of electricity from wind and by solar power is already leading to major change and is bringing the cost of electricity to below that of gas. Transport is another major area requiring further change as cars and lorries continue to contribute significantly to the problems of



global warming. The increased usage of battery electric cars is encouraging but lower prices and more charging points are needed with stronger incentives to change required. Less jetting off on holidays abroad would be a further help. Agricultural change is also needed, with more traditional farming methods being used to encourage greater biodiversity. We need to buy more locally produced food to save on 'food miles' and eat less industrially processed food. Finally, recycling, reusing, repairing and buying second hand or even just fewer things would be a great help in this endeavour.

Richard's talk was most informative, full of interesting points and with fresh details prompted a wide range of questions which were answered very thoughtfully. Altogether it was a very worthwhile and greatly appreciated event.