



Minutes of South Beds FoE Annual General Meeting

19 April 2010 7.30pm

Globe PH Dunstable

Present: Victoria, Alison, Peter, Annie, Chris, Michael, Kirstin, Martin, Sylvia, Albert, Neil & Jane (part time)

Apologies: Ken, Stella, David OH

Activities this year

- 1) Luton Northern Bypass – There is still a risk that it could be built but the huge campaign done last year has been effective. A further study on more practical applications of the alternative study—ie what roads would need bus lanes etc is in the process of being done by Bedfordshire Highways. Victoria has a place on the regional planning panel for the East of England thus over the past year has been able to congratulate Cllr Roy Davis the main proponent of the Luton northern bypass at regional meetings for his work on the alternatives to the road which has kept up the pressure
- 2) Housing development (900 houses) beside the Western Linslade Bypass – Martin feels this should not be in Linslade but to the East of Leighton Buzzard. South Beds FoE has opposed this development as the area is rich in biodiversity which cannot be replaced and the sustainable transport offer is very poor, whereas they conditionally support the eastern development as it could deliver a new country park, really good public transport, renewable energy and a college of further education. The area is actually under Aylesbury Vale Council. They are likely to reject it as it is not in their plans. However they have only classified the area as low-grade farm land. whereas it has of course great natural beauty. and for that reason most councils would turn down planning permission. This extra land is not needed to meet the housing targets for either Aylesbury Vale or Central Bedfordshire and is not in the core strategy (the plans for where housing goes) for either council. Martin and Kirsten with the support of many others have done a huge amount of campaigning very successfully on this issue. South Beds FoE have provided three expert reports, one on the ecology of the area, one on the European wildlife laws as regards bats which shows that Aylesbury Vale District Council cannot grant planning permission legally as there is not sufficient environmental data to make a decision and a recent report on the role of the area in the wider landscape. These are all on the website, www.southbedsfoe.co.uk The area contains species rich meadowland. The UK has lost 97% of its species rich meadowland since 1970. The biggest challenge was that the area was identified in the South East regional plan in October 2008. However due to protests by the councils and a lawyers letter on behalf of South Beds Friends of the Earth explaining that this development would contradict the policy on county wildlife sites the area was removed from the SE Plan. This was a huge victory. There is another application for housing off Stoke Road which is near to Linslade wood and is not in the councils housing plans, has been turned down by Central Beds and we are awaiting a decision by the planning inspectorate. Many other small housing applications in the area are meeting local resistance including the NW Dunstable site at Maidenbower.

Developments with built-in integrated transport provisions are now required by Central Bedfordshire thanks to considerable campaigning by South Beds FoE and other organisations, and the example of Southern Leighton Buzzard development.

We have been asked to join in the LOUD march against housing development on 1st May in Leighton Buzzard. However the organisers are not committed to sustainable development



and oppose all housing in Leighton Buzzard, but are not objecting to housing in the Houghton Regis and Dunstable and Luton area, so we are reluctant to support this event.

- 3) Station Travel Plan – This is part of a national programme of 31 pilot stations aiming to increase travel by sustainable means to stations and to increase train travel. This means that Central Bedfordshire Council, the Leighton Linslade cycle town and London Midland have regular meetings which are chaired by Victoria. The LB station travel won the National Rail Cycle Award for local government at the Houses of Parliament mainly due to the provision of 74 cycle stands which were due to South Beds campaign to make the southern LB development an exemplar for sustainable transport. Being chair of this committee gives us a great deal of opportunities for successful campaigning. This has been useful in starting off Sylvia's campaign "Off the Rails" which has set up a community group to 'adopt' LB station and to plant tubs/troughs to improve appearance of the station. They would be professionally prepared by a garden centre and sponsors (£100 a time) are being sought. Sylvia has also arranged for an area of wildflowers by platform 1. The first planting of this happens on 8th May 11.00 to 1.00pm.
- 4) Parsons Close Litter Bins - All the litter including, aluminium cans and plastic bottles etc in the bins in the town centre at present go straight to landfill. Annie successfully applied for a grant of £1000 from the Wixamtree Trust for a recycling bin for plastic bottles and aluminium cans and has arranged for Central Bedfordshire to empty it once a fortnight. She also organised with the Leighton Buzzard Observer a competition for school children to design a poster to encourage recycling which is in many places around the town.
- 5) Exemplar Site – As a direct result of our bypass protests an ambitious scheme for sustainable transport for the development of 1300 houses on the Billington Road beside Sandhills was worked out by South Beds FoE with the support of Beds County council, and Arriva and £1million from the Department for Communities and Local government This is being delivered by a steering group of Central Bedfordshire, Arnold White estates, Arriva, Leighton Linslade Town Council and South Beds FoE. A new bus service going from the new estate and Sandhills to the town centre and railway station is running every half hour from 5.45am to 9.45pm is being launched officially on Tuesday 20th April. The steering group has paid for the printing of a local directory/ map of shops and businesses in the town centre which are being distributed around the town. There is also an impressive website www.slb.uk.com which is filled with local information.
- 6) Linslade Wood: The greatest victory is that Linslade Wood – which was saved by South Beds FoE and local residents has been bought by Central Bedfordshire Council. The Friends of Linslade Wood is an excellent committee which do action days looking after the woodland and has worked very hard to make sure that the woodland was purchased by Central Bedfordshire.
- 7) Greening Group has planted more shrubs with the Baptist church at Mountbatten Gardens and has also planted more wild roses and other wild flowers by the river bank and this has been commended by the LB in Bloom Campaign. More funding for plants is still required.
- 8) Bus Campaigns – The group has worked very hard to create special timetables and amps of the buses from Heath and reach to LB town centre, and has put the timetables at the town centre and along the route of the no 10. This has gained us great popularity from the operators and Central Bedfordshire. Chris has done a huge amount of work on this.
- 9) Wind Power – NUON Renewables were grateful for the demo that we did for the Podington wind farm which featured in the Age of Stupid which has sadly been turned down on appeal. However the 10 turbine scheme at Biggleswade is looking more promising as is the new scheme at Heath & Reach. Central Beds have employed the same noise 'expert' who was involved at Podington and Brian Spur at CB and the local MP have been alerted to this 'biased' expert.

- 10) Incinerator – The Covanta waste to energy scheme at Stewartby to deal mostly with Buckinghamshire waste is progressing slowly. This is really opposed by us as it could really reduce recycling levels in the wider area. There is huge opposition to the scheme from local parish councils. This will be one of the first schemes to be tested under the new Independent Planning Commission.
- 11) East of England Planning Committee. Victoria had a place on this as she is part of the Sustainable Transport for the East of England. However the East of England Assembly has been abolished and replaced with a group of local council leaders, and this might be completely abolished if the Tories get in.– Many good environmental schemes have come out of the Regional Assembly which we hope will not be cut by an incoming government.
- 12) Guided Busway – We have made a deal with Central Beds to support this scheme in exchange for improved information for bus users and commitment to improve cycling and work with Dunstable FoE on identifying cycling schemes and encouraging the hospital to have a travel plan. There are also commitments to actively pursue funding for implementing the alternatives to the Luton Northern Bypass and promoting the shops in Dunstable. We can play a part in this by doing a survey of the bus stops, adopting bus stops and applying timetables and posters etc. This could be very important in attracting new members. Clearance of the shrubbery from the track bed and embankments has been completed by contractors and funding has been granted although there is still some uncertainty especially with any change of the Governing party at the general election.
- 13) Climate Change – A dramatic year with protest marches, the Copenhagen Conference and the ongoing arguments on global warming. Several members of the group attended the climate change march. Peter agreed to send Stella our latest letters to the Herald & Post so that they may be displayed on the website.
- 14) Library Display – Alison reported that the display in Dunstable Library was attractive and colourful. As the table was unmanned it is not known how much interest was shown or if we gained any members. It was felt that we needed a promotional leaflet with a summary of our achievements, what we plan to do, how we are funded, list of members skills, contacts etc with a request to join us.
- 15) Future Events –
- | | |
|-------------------|----------|
| LB May Fayre | 3 May |
| Houghton Carnival | 10 July |
| Kite festival | 18 July |
| Canal festival | July/Aug |

It was agreed that it had been a very successful year and that masses had been achieved. Mutual applause was given.

Subscriptions (£5 min) are due and should be sent to Ken.

Voting

Victoria, Peter and Alison were re-elected as joint coordinators, with Alison and Peter looking after Dunstable FoE and Victoria looking after Leighton Buzzard.

Chris Stevenson was re-elected as membership secretary and Ken Barry as treasurer. There is a vacancy for an assistant coordinator who would help with the admin such as making sure that there were meetings organised and that they were out on the website.



Election of Officers - Coordinators	Victoria, Alison & Peter
Treasurer	Ken
Membership sec	Chris
Asst Coordinator	Vacant
Campaign Coordinator	Vacant

National FoE – Has 3 major campaigns, Get Serious on CO2, Food Campaign and Carbon budgets for local authorities. For the CO2 campaign we need more of Stella's childrens windmills which we could offer at the Kite & Canal festivals.

There was a session on the activities that people had most enjoyed and the areas that people felt should be improved. (This will sent round at a later date)

Other Issues – Central Beds was now supporting Travel Plans and Cycling schemes. Steve.Lakin@centralbeds.gov.uk Alison reported that the hospital had appointed a new officer to deal with energy efficiency and staff travel plans. A local Health Club was offering staff cheap membership and a free parking space so that staff could Park & Stride. Real time bus information for patients and staff were also being considered. Paul Dodge (Cent Beds) has a duty to encourage LB & Dunstable residents to use sustainable travel to & from the hospital, Jane was very keen on the new Save Our Town website and Facebook campaign and we could help by putting up posters to encourage use of the Dunstable market and shops. We also need to list the bus stops in the area and source timetables.

Meeting closed at 9.51pm

Peter H