

**SOUTH BEDFORDSHIRE FRIENDS OF THE EARTH
NEWSLETTER FOR NOVEMBER 2006**

FUTURE EVENTS

- 9 November** Greening of Leighton Buzzard 7.30 at the White House, Leighton Buzzard (Victoria 01525 385097)
- 11 November** Friends of Linslade Woods working party 10am to 3pm meet at Knaves Hill footpath, Linslade (Heather 01525 379773)
- 12 November** Clipstone Brook working party meet at Parsons Close, Leighton Buzzard 10am to 3pm (Chris 01525 382343)
- 27 November** Anoraks' Meeting 7.30 at 41 Corbet Ride, Leighton Buzzard (Victoria)
- 4 December** Monthly Meeting 7.30 for 8.00 at the Globe PH, Dunstable (Peter 01582 663915)
- 5 January** Christmas Social at 41 Corbet Ride, Leighton Buzzard (Victoria)
- 6 February** Greening of Leighton Buzzard 7.30 at the White House, Leighton Buzzard (Victoria)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 6 NOVEMBER 2006

Present: Stella Goddard (Facilitator), Victoria Harvey, Rob McAllister, Albert West, Barry Metcalfe, Susanna Winder, Peter Hatswell, Andy Gayler, Chris Stevenson, Michael Taylor, Jules Stobonovich, Ken Barry.

Apologies: Alison Heywood, Heather Fox, Robert Stobonovich, Charles Ullermayer.

Rob McAllister, Albert Weston, Barry Metcalfe and Susanna Winder were welcomed as new members. Peter was thanked for taking the minutes at the last meeting and providing the newsletter.

Feedback from New Members Evening

This had been exceptionally well-attended and it was estimated that over 80 people had turned up. This was partly due to the LBO linking the press release to the housing protest. As a result a considerable number of people had come along because they felt strongly about the threat of unsustainable growth. The meeting had therefore been very successful as a protest meeting, and it was good to see that so many people were passionately opposed to the housing plans. However it was not quite so good for recruiting new members, although 3 people had joined at the end of the evening. The speakers from FoE experienced considerable difficulty in getting their information across because so many people wanted to have their say.

Future New Members Evening

This will be held in February in Dunstable. Jules agreed to organise with a possible venue being Priory School.

Way Forward on Housing

Stella and Victoria had produced an Action Sheet which was also available on our website. We need to ensure that as many people as possible contact SBDC with their views. The whole of the Green Belt is now up for review, but it seems likely that most of the new homes will be earmarked for north of Luton and Dunstable. SBDC will be powerless to stop the development, and 26,000 new homes will be dumped somewhere in South Beds. The Conservative opposition to the plans has been feeble, and members were urged to contact Andrew Selous to ascertain his party's views and ask if the Conservatives are prepared to

stand up to Kate Barker, who is the consultant to the treasury who has proposed all of this. It was agreed that our campaign should focus on saving Leighton Buzzard town centre, getting better public transport, saving green spaces, getting energy efficiency into the new homes, providing housing for the homeless, promoting a sense of community and getting better leisure facilities including a new cinema. These same principles also apply to Dunstable which is facing the same challenges. There is to be a meeting of the FOE groups in the East of England Group on 9 December to discuss the whole issue in Cambridge. We are also seeking a judicial review of the housing numbers. The legal challenge is still ongoing.

Green Infrastructure Update

a. Clipstone Brook

Chris reported that a working party is arranged for 12 November from 10am to 3pm, meeting at Parsons Close. About 20 participants are expected and they will be clearing debris from the brook. Tree planting is planned for next year and future action includes installing nest boxes and encouraging otters.

b. Linslade Woods

Ken reported that the first working party had been held on 31 October and a barrier had been installed to prevent motorcyclist from accessing the site. Good publicity had been obtained through press releases. The next working party is planned for 11 November 10am to 3pm – meet at footpath at bottom of Knaves Hill.

b. Greening of Leighton Buzzard

Next meeting will be at 7.30 on 9 November at the White House. The Tree Officer, Andy Jones is advising regarding tree planting. It is essential that any future plans for planting trees and shrubs should include provision for care and watering, and the Council have offered to co-operate. There is a need to re-plant the trees near the railway in Knaves Hill which died due to lack of watering in the summer, and early December was suggested as possible date. Peter has contacted Dunstable Town Council about tree planting, and they have confirmed that they are interested.

Transport Update

a. Sustainable Transport Site

Victoria reported that the planning application had been turned down by SBDC, but now seemed to be back on course again. Victoria was attending a meeting with Arriva and SBDC tomorrow. The proposals are for buses every 10 minutes during the day, buses in the evening and screens in every house giving details of bus times, and “the civilising” (making it more friendly to cyclists and pedestrians) of Billington road which links the new estate to the town centre.

b. M1 Demo

Ken reported that a number of members had joined with members of Luton FoE and Andrew Locksley to fix 2 banners across the M1 at a bridge near Charlton. The banners said “£3.7 bn up in smoke” and “Cars = CO2”. Some Highways Agency Traffic Officers came along and asked us to remove the banners, but we were able to keep the banners in place until reporters and a TV camera had arrived. The demo was not shown on TV but we had a good press release in the Citizen, and an excellent one in the Dunstable Gazette and there was mention on the BBC News online website. The demo was part of a larger action in protest at the M1 widening and other demos were taking place all along the M1 as far as Sheffield.

b. Cycle Forum

Chris reported on their last meeting. The Riverside Path is to be upgraded and linked with the canal towpath. A cycle track behind Morrisons is to be constructed in April. The Forum also contributed to the opposition to the Millers Dairy Site. It was noted that the developer had failed to get planning permission but was now appealing.

c. Translink

Peter reported that the Inspector’s report had been published and it is in support of the scheme. However Luton Borough council would have to fund about £8 million of the cost and so might be very reluctant to do so. Peter had written to Libdem councillors in Luton to draw their attention to the Parry People Mover as an alternative light rail solution.

d. Road Block Bulletin

Members are asked to send an email to Gordon Brown on ministers@hm-treasury.gsi.gov.uk suggesting that he increases the cost of motoring and invests the money into alternatives that get people out of their cars.

e. Campaign Against Climate Change

Michael reported that the demo held in London at the weekend had been a huge success and had been extremely well supported.

Prioritising Campaigning for the Future

It was agreed that, as a way of supporting the local community, we should aim to produce a local food directory to put on our website, and get the support of local traders. Contributions are welcome. We agreed to apply to FoE for a local group support fund grant which will cover some of Stella's time in researching it and designing it and posting it on the web. Obviously this will also include a great deal of voluntary time by Stella and other members of the group. Members felt that further action against Tesco's was needed and Susanna and Chris agreed to plan a day of action and will bring details and suggested dates to the next meeting.

Future Meetings

Anoraks' Meeting at Victoria's house on 7.30 on 27 November

Christmas Social at Victoria's house on 5 January.

The next members' meeting is at the Globe PH, Dunstable at 7.30 for 8.00 on 4 December.

CONTACTS

Officers

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