

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

FUTURE EVENTS

- 18 December** Tree Planting at Knaves Hill, Leighton Buzzard (Victoria 01525 385097)
- 5 January** Christmas Social 8pm at 41 Corbet Ride, Leighton Buzzard (Victoria)
- 13 January** Action for Buses at The Square, Dunstable 10.30am (Victoria)
- 27 January** FoE Regional Gathering for Local Groups in the South East, London and the East of England 11am – 4.30pm (Victoria)
- 6 February** Greening of Leighton Buzzard 7.30 at the White House, Leighton Buzzard (Victoria)
- 13 February** Monthly Meeting 7.30 for 8.00 at the Crown PH, North Street, Leighton Buzzard (Chris 01525 382343)
- 5 March** Monthly Meeting at the Globe PH, Dunstable (Peter 01582 663915)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 4 DECEMBER 2006

Present: Stella Goddard (Facilitator), Victoria Harvey, Albert West, Barry Metcalfe, Peter Hatswell, Chris Stevenson, Michael Taylor, Heather Fox, Jane Brown, Ken Barry.

Apologies: Alison Heywood, Jules Stobonovich, Charles Ullermayer, Andy Gaylor

Transport

a. Wing Bypass

Victoria reported that the first part of the funding for the alternatives report had been received. This will look at public transport and congestion charging.

b. Sustainable Travel Site

Victoria reported that arrangements had been made to install bus information screens in the new houses and to make Billington road more pedestrian-friendly. There has been a slight set-back regarding buses but Victoria was liaising with Arriva. The sustainable Transport Site is mentioned in the latest edition of FoE's Change Your World.

c. Buses

Stella has produced bus leaflets for Dunstable, Houghton Regis and Leighton-Linslade with contact details of the relevant ward councillors for addressing complaints and for lobbying for better services. Albert offered to take copies for the libraries in all 3 areas. It was decided to hold a bus action day at The Square in Dunstable on 13 January, meeting at 10.30am for handing out leaflets and maps. Victoria will obtain the maps from Arriva.

d. Translink

Peter reported that a Transport Select Committee Report indicated that the Government had decided that the Cambridge and Luton schemes would be guided busways in order that their performance could be assessed against existing light rail schemes ie hard evidence and valid arguments in favour of light rail had been swept aside and ignored. At the moment the scheme is at a standstill because neither Luton BC or the Government are prepared to pay for the scheme.

e. Cycling

Alison Heywood reported that there is a meeting at 6.30pm on 6 December at Luton BC to promote cycling networks across Dunstable. Further information can be obtained from Alison on 0771 3384471. It was noted that the Town Plan for Leighton Buzzard proposes a 20mph speed limit throughout the town.

Green Infrastructure

a. Working Parties

Ken reported that there had been 2 very successful working parties, one at Linslade Woods and one at Clipstone Brook. In Linslade Woods a new field gate had been installed and brambles had been cleared from the paths. Chris Stevenson had organised a successful working party for Clipstone Brook at which a number of shopping trolleys had been removed. Both events had been well supported and had received good publicity in the local papers. The next working party for Linslade Woods is likely to be during half term week and details are awaited from Esther Milne. Ken and Chris had been approached by Rebecca from the local Volunteer Centre to ask if we needed further volunteers. Ken had been sent a form for registering with the Volunteer Centre, and it was agreed that he would liaise with Esther before taking any further action.

b. Future of Linslade Woods

Heather reported that she had still not received a reply to her letter to the Trustees. She has therefore written a further letter insisting on a reply, and mentioning the successful working parties and emphasising the fact that more people are now taking an interest in the woods.

c. Wildflowers at the Bypass

Victoria and Jean Staples had accompanied the County Ecologist at an inspection of the site. However we will need to raise £300 for the cost of the plants. Victoria will approach Residents Associations, Leighton Linslade Town Council, FoE Local Groups Support Fund and the Chiltern Conservation Trust for help in funding.

d. Tree Planting on Knaves Hill

Victoria has money for the tree planting and the working party will take place at Monday 18 December at 2.00pm, but contact Victoria first.

Actions and Campaigns

a. Food Waste

As neither Susanna nor Jules were able to attend the meeting it was decided to defer this to the next meeting in February.

b. Habitats Directive

Victoria has got a place on the South East Plan and will be talking about biodiversity and the Habitats Directive. The East of England Plan is to be published on 17 December, and is likely to be challenged by Beds Councils Planning Consortium. It was agreed that our emphasis should be on maintaining green infrastructure, protecting green spaces, control of water abstraction and flood prevention. Barry had written to Andrew Selous enquiring whether the Conservatives would challenge housing numbers but the reply had been a bit vague. New member, Diana Mehew had also received a statement from the Shadow Housing Minister via Andrew Selous which states "We oppose John Prescott's arbitrary central targets for house building, we reject the need for regional bodies to fix housing allocations for vast swathes of the country without proper democratic input and we oppose the direction of new housing into a few, centrally-specified, mega developments".

c. Climate Change

Michael had attended Stern's talk at the LSE. He reported that it was an interesting speech in language designed to appeal to business people. It was noted that planning approval for Stansted Airport expansion had been turned down. The Eddington Review was briefly discussed. It was noted that Eddington's insistence that aviation should pay its full environmental, social and economic costs made the Government's 'predict and provide' approach outdated. The report also made it clear that a lot of the airport expansion supported by the Government is not essential to the economy.

Members are urged to write letters to the Beds on Sunday in response to the recent spate of letter from the lunatic fringe and religious fanatics (or misguided individuals) on climate change. It was reported that the Dunstable Herald & Post had recently printed a good article countering recent critics of action on climate change. Peter has applied for planning permission for a wind turbine for his house.

Future Events

a. New Members Meeting in Dunstable

Jules is unable to organise at present as she is studying for an exam in January. It was therefore suggested that the meeting be postponed until after January. Albert will liaise with Jules regarding issues for inclusion in the meeting; suggestions were traffic congestion and climate change, the greening of Dunstable, cycleways and public transport access to the new theatre.

b. Monthly Meetings

The next meetings were arranged as Tuesday 13 February at The Crown, North Street, Leighton Buzzard and Monday 5 March at The Globe, Dunstable.

c. Other Events

Saturday 9 December: Meeting to discuss Regional Policy Developments in the East of England

Friday 5 January: Christmas Social at Victoria's house 8pm – bring food and drink to share.

Saturday 27 January: Regional Gathering for FoE local groups in the South East, London and East of England

6 February: Greening of Leighton Buzzard at 7.30 at the White House.

Other Business

- a. Ken had received an email via the Christian Ecology Group asking for support in presenting a petition at Argos in Leighton Buzzard on Saturday 9 December as part of CAFOD's Unearth Justice Campaign. Ken will forward the email to Chris for sending on to all members.
- b. Barry has written to Youngs Fisheries concerning the shipping of scampi from Scotland to Thailand and back.

CONTACTS

Officers

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