

infoe

 Friends of
the Earth Bristol

IN THIS ISSUE: New community farm, Plastic recycling

GET SERIOUS ABOUT CO₂ IN BRISTOL

The beautiful city of Bristol is the biggest city in the West Country. Here like most cities we've been enjoying relatively cheap energy until recently.

But today most energy comes from burning fossil fuels, causing climate change which threatens our global supply chains and could paradoxically make our balmy local climate much colder as ocean currents change. Also for the last 5 years oil and gas have been going up in price by 30% a year, as global supplies become scarcer and more people want to share them.

As a country we've now used up the most of our North Sea oil and gas, so in 2005 we became a net importer. And with world availability reducing, that will inevitably drive up prices for fuel and



especially transport fuel. So we need to plan for the future to work out how we and our children can continue to enjoy a good quality of life.

Rapid coordinated action is needed locally, nationally and internationally so we can continue to enjoy our lives without fuel poverty, as individuals and as a country; and without condemning our children to a poorer unstable world with climate change turning the world's breadbaskets into arid deserts and flooding our coastal cities.

Bristol FoE's Get Serious on CO₂ campaign concentrates on the priorities needed locally to secure Bristol's future and reduce climate changing emissions.

Visit www.bristolfoe.org.uk to watch a short video on how to 'Get serious about CO₂'

Julian Jones julian.p.jones@googlemail.com
continued on pg 6 - 7

Rapid coordinated action is needed locally, nationally and internationally so we can continue to enjoy our lives ... without fuel poverty...

STOP BRISTOL AIRPORT EXPANSION CAMPAIGN

Bristol Friends of the Earth opposes the expansion of the Bristol International Airport as it is responsible for being one of the major causes of greenhouse gases in the area.



The public consultation on the planning application for the expansion of Bristol International Airport has now finished. Bristol Friends of the Earth, as part of the 'Stop Bristol Airport Expansion' alliance have managed to raise around 6000 objections; the airport has raised around 400 letters of support for the expansion (many of them a pre-printed letter on which workers at the airport have scribbled their addresses) plus an online petition of 1900 names.

In addition, BoE has submitted detailed objections on transport, economics and climate change and raised public awareness through a series of press stories.

The North Somerset council will now need to digest the planning application and the comments upon it. We believe the first significant committee meeting will be in November. We are hoping that the application will be turned down and is likely lead to a planning inquiry. We still need your support to make this happen, particularly if you can donate your money or time.

For further details on the campaign and how to involved, please visit our website www.stopbia.com.

Jeremy Birch email@stopbia.com

Sustainable Communities Act

In April 2009 Bristol Friends of the Earth identified opportunities for change under the Sustainable Communities Act local consultations. We prepared and submitted a total of 23 requests, some of which generated encouraging comments from Bristol City Council executives and 2 of which are being forwarded to national Government level through the Local Government Association (LGA).

These are calls for legislation to apply Zero VAT to refurbishments, to create parity with Zero VAT for new buildings, as well as legislation which will encourage wider use of car sharing clubs.

Statements made by Bristol City Council executives on this matter included the fact that the council are considering the provision of Land Trusts to create a platform on which to provide affordable homes. Buyers wouldn't own the land which would be retained in the Trust but would pay for the home only.

Other feedback received stated that the council shared FOE's aspiration for pooling surplus rental income from council housing stock to generate provision of new affordable homes. Previously this wasn't possible due to the practice of pooling surplus income nationally, but recent changes make retention of local surplus more feasible in theory.

Planning and building progress

For volume developers this year has proved difficult. However, many campaigners see this economic uncertainty as an opportunity for decision makers to revisit their thinking on what appears to be an unsustainable housing market, and to reinforce the call for better quality homes which will better withstand impacts of climate change, whether this includes introducing water butts or solar panels or an array of other currently available solutions.

A review of renewable energy opportunities commissioned by our council recently to feed into future planning guidance, wasn't as comprehensive as many expected. For example, GSHP (ground source heat pump technology) was not included in the guidelines, even though this was focussed on during the Zero Carbon by 2016 consultations, and is considered a fairly reliable technology. There is clearly a lot more work that needs doing.

As for planning policy, Bristol Friends of the Earth made a call back in 2006, for 20% micro-generation in all new homes. This is supported by our council, but until the city has finished reviewing its planning policy, this aspiration cannot be made compulsory. Part of the problem is at the Regional level, where the Government has failed to give a new date for the final release of the South West Regional Spatial Strategy (SWRSS). Consequently there has been little progress at local council level in policy development (the Bristol Development Framework Core Strategy process) since local planning policies must not conflict with regional policies. This is frustrating progress.

We're very concerned that the SWRSS (most recent draft) is unlikely to provide an effective strategy to deal with future challenges due to rising food costs, food security, energy

security, reducing carbon emissions and it fails to provide robust support for bespoke localised transport solutions.

We believe that publication of the SWRSS has been delayed because the Government are reviewing their position following a successful legal challenge to the East England Regional Strategy. Further details are awaited at this stage, but we welcome this hiatus in the hope it gives our Government time to rethink their position carefully, as renewed focus on climate change is building up in preparation for the forthcoming Copenhagen Summit in December 2009. It's worth stating that we don't anticipate the SWRSS emerging in the run up to Copenhagen Summit.

Consistent with Bristol Friends of the Earth's stance on protecting Green Belt land, we support the renewal and regeneration of existing buildings where possible, rather than the very energy intensive and wasteful practice of demolition and rebuild.

One barrier to achieving more refurbishment is that the current tax system favours building new from scratch for which VAT can be reclaimed - yet there is no such VAT relief for refurbishments!

Helen Pillinger helen_pillinger@hotmail.com

Consistent with Bristol Friends of the Earth's stance on protecting Green Belt land, we support the renewal and regeneration of existing buildings, where possible.

Don't count on a Maunder Minimum

That eponymous event occurred 1645 to 1745 as a period of a few sunspots, (apparently) caused the Little Ice Age. It is now the suggestion that sunspots are again becoming less active. But overall climate change seems to be accelerating, so campaigns related to this must be FOE's major concern.

Back at the turn of the 17th century our oil supply remained untouched, but now it is extracted like there is no tomorrow. Sceptics must realize that oil, like coal, was produced by photosynthetic processes over a period of hundreds of millions

Sceptics must realize that oil, like coal, was produced by photosynthetic processes over a period of hundreds of millions of years.

PLASTIC RECYCLING

In May, five plastic bottle banks in Bristol became general 'plastic bring banks' for a trial period of six months - not restricted to only taking plastic bottles.

During the pilot scheme, these banks can also take well-washed margarine tubs, yoghurt pots, plastic food trays and plastic drinks cups for example, alongside the already accepted plastic bottles.

The plastic eligible for recycling in this pilot will usually be imprinted or stamped with a number inside a triangle shape on its base:

1 (PET) 2 (HDPE) 5 (PP) or 6 (PS)

The five plastic bring banks are at:

of years. However, these fossil fuels are being burnt globally at a much faster pace; we could consequently exhaust them within merely a few hundred years – a million times faster. Little wonder there is damage to the atmosphere, and much more.

This issue begs the question; how to recapture all that carbon dioxide? The answer is Mother Nature and photosynthesis, and that will be a long slow process, not helped by the clearance of rain forests, forest fires in California resulting from hot dry conditions, land cleared around Athens by vandals while here in Britain governments allow new airport runways and tear up agricultural land for housing.

Don't count on the end of oil either: Long before oil supplies run out we'll be over the tipping point, somersaulting to oblivion. Unless we support all FOE's campaigns there will be no tomorrow.

<http://arstechnica.com/science/news/2009/08/another-little-ice-age-solar-activity-and-climate-change-ars>

- Asda, East Street, Bedminster, BS3 4JY
- Tesco, Callington Road, Brislington, BS4 5AY
- Roo Bar, Clifton Down Train Station Car Park, BS8 2PN
- Tesco, Kellaway Avenue, Golden Hill, BS6 7XW
- Chalks Road Car Park, Chalks Road, St George, BS5 8AA.

For a trial period, it is also possible to recycle most types of plastic from yoghurt pots to patio furniture and drain pipes at the Household Waste Recycling Centre in Days Road, St Philips.

The pilot period is likely to be extended due to SITA's strike earlier in the year which disrupted the early stages of the trial. But this would be better-guaranteed if we all take our plastics along and support the scheme.



New Community Farm venture

A wide variety of vegetables, beans, potatoes, salad and soft fruit have been grown organically this year on a field of excellent sandy loam overlooking Chew Lake, 10 miles from Bristol. It really is like a large allotment, efficiently organized and with green manure of clover, vetch and rye grass between crops to enrich the soil with nitrogen and organic matter. Plants to attract ladybirds and other pest predators have avoided any significant insect problems this year without using any pesticides.

Phil Houghton, owner of Better Food Company, has started the venture. He has expanded his growing operation onto a seven acre field on a mixed organic farm previously doing cereals and animals and this was the first year of cropping. Local people have already been involved with their families in planting, weeding with a wheel hoe, and harvesting, in return for some produce. Next year there are plans to involve more people and organise bus transport from Bristol.

This project is an inspiration. For Bristol we really need a grower with capacity to get something like this going on the 'blue finger' of land with top quality agricultural soil in the Frome Valley stretching North from Bristol Centre. The current owners are looking for someone to put the land to good use. Any takers?

www.betterfood.co.uk/growing.html

Julian Jones julian.p.jones@googlemail.com



continued from Get Serious about CO₂ front cover

Local transport is one seventh of our city's direct energy use. The rest is equally divided between domestic use and commercial/industrial use.

Residential Buildings

There's a huge job to do, making all our housing stock more energy efficient. There are plenty of people around to do it. So what's missing? The know-how, the will, and the coordination. We and our council have a big role to play. Bringing our housing stock to modern energy standards sensitively, using sustainable materials, is fundamental to the future wellbeing of the city. The council has made a good start with council housing. But there's much more to do and the effort needs coordinating, starting with the most needy cases and spreading to every building in the city that leaks energy we can no longer afford to squander.

For its own projects the council has used low interest loans that are paid back from the energy bill savings. These savings will soon increase as energy prices rise. In the short term many householders need help to fund these measures which will save them money on their fuel bills in the medium term. Such loans should be available to all who need them. Good tailored personal advice on appropriate home insulation measures should be offered to all, and using the internet we should be able to see information and public reviews on all the local firms who can do this work. The longer we leave it the more serious this problem will get.

When it comes to new build, the Council has great planning guidelines and development principles. But we can only lead on national standards if we the people of Bristol insist on

it. Developers can appeal against planning decisions requiring higher than legal minimum standards, but cannot succeed against the concerted will of the people of Bristol. Our MPs and councillors are supportive but we must make our views clear to them and make sure standards are enforced.

Renewable Energy

Reducing energy demand is the first priority. Rapidly increasing renewable energy generation is the next. Our biggest and cheapest under-utilised resource is wind. Onshore wind farms are cheaper and quicker to install than off-shore installations. Despite initial wariness, people soon adopt the large turbines and become proud of them. They blend easily into what is an already manmade landscape, they are virtually inaudible, and each one can generate enough electricity for around 1500 homes.

Again our council is leading with a couple of turbines at Avonmouth to supply a proportion of its own electricity needs. However the scale needs to increase rapidly. On a windy hill at Westmill near Swindon there is a community



Good tailored personal advice on appropriate home insulation measures should be offered to all

owned wind farm of 5 large turbines, surrounded by organic farmland with crops right below. The farmer, the community and the planet all benefit. We need more of this around Bristol.

Transport

Locally, we need to reduce the requirement for cars and reduce the hassle of commuting. We need work near transport hubs instead of remote business parks. We prefer local everyday shops rather than new big supermarkets for which we need cars. They make more profit, while we pay for the transport. Our council planning department will help with this, but needs our support.

Improving life for cyclists, pedestrians and public transport users is crucial. The council has done a good job winning our Cycling City bid. We have some good buses, if a bit expensive. We still need a Integrated Transport Authority covering the wider region to further integrate and improve public transport infrastructure and information. Bristol could have Oyster cards so everyone can access public transport quickly at a flexible fair price when they need it.

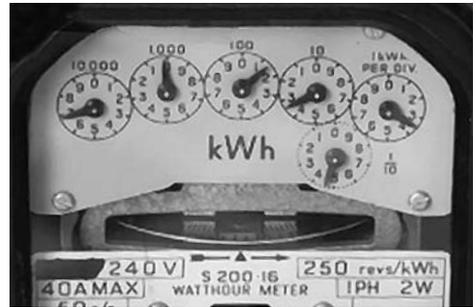
Commercial and Industrial

Industry is a specialist area, but a lot of Bristol's emissions in this sector come from office buildings.

It usually saves the energy equivalent of many years of building occupancy to refurbish buildings rather than rebuild them, so that is usually the preferred option. However for a new building we should not accept excuses for anything less than BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology) 'excellent' standard.

An example of good practice is the new Cabot House, the new building behind the Council House on College Green, which will house the Environment Agency headquarters. It has been recognized as the most environmentally 'excellent' city centre office development in the UK. Being close to public transport helps increase its BREEAM rating. Attention

has been given to on-site recycling of old building materials and sustainable sourcing of new materials. It makes use of sunlight and natural ventilation for temperature control and lighting. It includes rainwater harvesting to reduce water consumption, and uses solar thermal and ground source heat pumps to reduce heat demand. There will also be some on-site renewable electricity generation.



YOUR CALL

Across the country, councils are pioneering innovative green projects – from Kirklees' grand-scale home insulation programme to Southampton's partnership with an Energy Service Company (ESCO); from Clackmannanshire's plans to develop wind turbines on council land to Richmond's cheaper parking rates for greener cars.

This is why Friends of the Earth is calling on everyone to support our "Get Serious about CO₂" campaign by:

- Supporting the council to take strong action to cut Bristol's emissions 40% by 2020
- Calling on the government to give more money and powers for Bristol to improve energy, homes and transport
- Call for a duty to be placed on all councils to cut emissions in this way

Please visit www.bristolfoe.org.uk to tell your councillor you support these asks

About Bristol Friends of the Earth

Bristol Friends of the Earth is an active local group of the international environmental organisation Friends of the Earth. We currently run campaigns on local climate change, Bristol airport expansion, food, waste, local transport and sustainable housing. We hold a monthly group meeting (visit www.bristolfoe.org.uk for details) plus separate campaign meetings.

If you would like to know more about us, to help us by campaigning or raising money, or want to come to a meeting to see what we do then please get in touch. You can help by volunteering and giving your time, or by joining Bristol Friends of the Earth and helping us financially.

How do I join?

Membership of Bristol FoE includes a free subscription to InFoE. To join us, just complete

the form below, and return it to the Membership Secretary. Please pay by standing order if you can – it really helps to cut time spend on admin. Subscription rates are:

- Ordinary £15 Unwaged £5 Joint / Family £25

Contact us

Bristol Friends of the Earth
10–12 Picton Street, Montpelier, Bristol BS6 5QA
email: info@bristolfoe.org.uk
voicemail: 0117 911 4084

To join the Bristol Environment email list, which circulates local news of environmental events and campaigns, please email your name and email address to: bristol_environment@bristolfoe.org.uk

To find out about future events or our next monthly meeting visit www.bristolfoe.org.uk

Yes, I'd like to join my local group

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

I enclose £_____ membership and £_____ donation

TOTAL £_____

cheques payable to Bristol Friends of the Earth. OR:

I'd like to pay by standing order: _____

My bank _____

My bank's address _____

Postcode _____

My account no. _____

Sort code _____

Account name _____

Standing Order Instruction

Please pay the sum of £_____

on _____ / _____ / 20_____

and thereafter the same amount on the same day each month/year*

(*Delete as appropriate. Please make first payment date at least one month from when you fill in this form)

To Co-operative Bank plc, sort code: 08-90-02
Bristol Friends of the Earth, account no: 50296440

Signature _____

Date _____

Please return to: The Membership Secretary,
Bristol Friends of the Earth, 10–12 Picton Street,
Montpelier, Bristol BS6 5QA

Your records will be stored on our computer. If you have any objections to this, please contact us.