

IN THIS ISSUE: Greenbelt campaign, Local Food, New Campaigns



South-West Euro MEP candidates outlined their party policies on climate-change causing emissions at a packed Question Time in Bristol, prior to European Parliament elections on 4 June.

One of the controversial proposals discussed was the introduction of a European minimum level of tax that countries should gather on aviation and road transport fuels. In the UK we already have high tax on road transport fuels, but this would ensure that all European countries paid their fair share when using up the remaining worldwide resources of oil, and it would help put a true "carbon cost" on the use of fossil fuels that contribute towards climate change. At the moment, many countries do not feel able to introduce "green taxes" as it would put their businesses and economies at a disadvantage compared to others. A European-wide fuel tax would help to create a level playing field across the Union.

Kay Barnard said Lib Dems (who currently hold the balance of power in the European Parliament) would support this but it would be difficult to get agreement; Keir Dhillon said it was a difficult problem but Labour would support a Euro minimum because it would get very messy if individual countries did different

EURO CANDIDATES IN BRISTOL DEBATE ON CARBON TAX

things, and Ashley Fox said Conservatives supported fuel tax in the UK but would not support European legislation on this issue 'on principle'. Ricky Knight (Green) strongly favoured a level playing field and felt the EU was a good place to set minimum environmental standards as it could take a longer term view, and Dr Julia Reid (UKIP) also said, she would support it (to reduce disadvantage for UK truck drivers).

Kay (LD) wants 30% emissions cuts by 2020 and a Carbon Neutral Britain by 2050; Keir (Lab) wants 34% UK reduction by 2030 with penalties agreed in advance for countries who don't meet their targets; and Ashley said Conservative policy was a 20% target or 30% if China and the US agree. Ricky (Green) called for 10% cuts year-on-year, while Julia (UKIP) said Britain was 'On Track'.

Oxfam's Hannah Durrant was delighted with the event. "It is good to see so many people are still engaged with politics in the city. The European Union plays a key role in legislation that affects human rights and global poverty and will be a key negotiator at Copenhagen Global Climate talks in December 2009."

The European Parliament represents 500 million people (US population is 300 million) and is the biggest international elected body worldwide. The event was staged by local groups, Amnesty International, Bristol FoE and Oxfam.

Julian Jones, julian.p.jones@googlemail.com

GREEN BOOKS FOR A GREEN CAPITAL

In Autumn 2008, Bristol FoE set up the 'Green Books for a Green Capital' project. Bristol didn't win the title Green Capital of Europe so it became the 'Green Books for a Green city' instead. The aim of the project is to get funding from outside the Bristol Library Service and use it to buy environmental books and donate them as new collections to local public Libraries particularly small branches in communities (those that only open four days a week).

One of the aims of the project is to promote the use of the smallest Library branches in the city. There are 28 Libraries in Bristol, a number unrivalled anywhere in the UK, all of which we wish to retain in our Transition city as a vital centrepiece of local neighbourhoods.

The first collection of 50 books on the theme of 'Grow Your own' was launched at Lawrence Weston Library on 5 March. This included books on growing and storing your own food, seasonal recipes, farming and food policy with lots of colourful hardbacks. Vicki Bowd, the enthusiastic Library Supervisor and her team ran an impressive array of 'Get Bristol growing' events in conjunction with the launch.

Over 100 visitors to the library, including children from two local primary schools, saw Janet Newland, Bristol City Council Allotments Officer, open the collection. Atwood Allotment Association and Lawrence Weston Community Farm provided excellent photographs of their allotments and produce.

The visiting children were treated to a story time session with a gardening theme and they and other visitors were invited to make their own newspaper pots and plant a pea.

After the event, the Veg Doctor, aka June Wilbur, a member of the Atwood Allotments Association, was in her surgery on 9 March. 22 people asked for her advice.

The following week, Tim Foster talked to 38 visitors about organic gardening. From 16 to 19 March six classes from Bankleaze school attended planting sessions where pupils were shown how to make paper pots in which they planted their choice of vegetable seed. The launch of a Saturday seed swap on 21 March was well attended.

On 24 April, a second 'Grow your own' collection of 45 books was launched at Eastville Library. Local primary school children had a talk from local author Andy Hamilton, who co-wrote 'The Self-Sufficientish Bible' with his twin brother.

Early this year, Bristol FoE applied to the Cycling City project for £2,500 for cycling books. Watch out for the opening of a collection of 100 cycling books at Central Library on Friday 19 June 11am and collections of 50 books each at Bedminster, Hillfields and Marksbury Road Libraries on 1 July. All Libraries will be holding a cycling storytime with a craft activity for the Under 5s during National Bike week (13-21 June).

Pip Sheard, pip_sheard@hotmail.co.uk



Stop Bristol Airport Expansion



Bristol FoE is part of the Stop Bristol Airport Expansion (SBAE) alliance. We have been

fighting the plans for Bristol International Airport (BIA) to expand for 4 years and have delayed the process by at least 2 years. We were told that BIA would submit its plans to expand by the end of May this year, but as we go to press, BIA still seem to be stalling.

BIA now plan to grow from 6.2m passengers in 2008 to 10m passengers in 2016. This would mean an increase in greenhouse gas emissions equal to doubling the road transport in Bristol, at least an extra 2m car journeys per year on rural roads, an extra 27000 flights per year and the consequent increase in noise throughout the day and much of the night.

Over the last year, passenger numbers have dropped and are 20% below last year's levels, or back to where they were in 2005. This demonstrates clearly that the driving factor for previous growth was outbound tourist flights to Europe. Since the exchange rate with the euro has changed by 20%, the outbound passengers have dropped by a similar amount and this has only been partly balanced by an increase in the much smaller number of inbound passengers. SBAE calculate that the imbalance between inbound and outbound tourists at BIA cost the UK economy £700m in 2008, and further expansion would only increase this deficit.

Expansion would not bring any significant business benefits - few more business destinations would be directly accessible than are currently and many businesses have opted to reduce business travel in favour of video conferencing and telepresence systems.

BIA claimed that expansion would create 4000 jobs, but have subsequently admitted that this would be only 800 direct jobs. Given their own previous analysis it is not credible that the indirect jobs should be five times the direct ones. SBAE believe that the future trend will be to reduce jobs to nearer the rate employed by Ryanair, which is 100 jobs per million passengers. As BIA currently has 440 jobs per million passengers it is easy to see that increasing the number of passengers might not actually increase jobs at all. The recent changes to on-line check-in, discouragement of hold luggage, and moves to get passengers through the terminal quicker (and hence to have less time to shop) all reduce the number of jobs in the airport. We believe that the negative environmental and economic impacts are too high a price to pay for a relatively small number of poorly paid jobs which are at grave risk should the price of oil rise again.

When the planning application appears, we will need volunteers to distribute leaflets. If you can help or would like to register, donate money to the campaign or get further information, then please visit www.stopbia.com

Jeremy Birch, jeremy.birch@intuity-design.co.uk

New campaigns

This summer will see the launch of two new campaigns from National FoE.

• **The Food Chain campaign** aims to see a Sustainable Livestock Bill become law. It makes the links between UK factory farming and the destruction of habitats such as the South American rainforests in order to grow soya, to feed our livestock. The campaign wants subsidies shifted away from factory farming to support for farmers to grow their own animal

feed, and the supermarkets offering fairer deals for everyone.

http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/biodiversity/press_for_change/food_chain_19251.html

• **Get Serious about CO₂** is an extension of the Big Ask campaign that saw the Climate Change Act become law in November last year. The idea is to get councils to sign up to 40% CO₂ reduction by 2020.

If you would like to get involved please email us at: info@bristolfoe.org.uk or leave us a Voicemail message on 0117 911 4084

Save the Greenbelt Campaign



In March this year, an alliance of local groups across the West of England was set up to protect our local countryside from development. A demonstration was held outside the Architecture Centre where developers were displaying their proposals for Ashton Park, the first urban extension of 10,500 new homes planned under the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).

Groups from all the villages in the Greenbelt around Bristol and Bath are working together (www.saveourgreenspaces.org) with the Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance www.tfgb.org.uk and Bristol Friends of the Earth www.bristolfoe.org.uk to oppose the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).

This is the regional planning document used by the Government to force the four councils to plan for a target of 117,000 new houses to be constructed in the next 20 years. The bulk outside of Bristol will be built as large new urban extensions in the existing countryside. The full extent of the RSS proposals is at

www.cpreavonside.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/cpre-housing-map.pdf.

The proposals for Ashton Park (the first Urban extension will include new major road construction including the South Bristol Link which is opposed by the city's environmental groups. We believe that in view of climate change, rising oil and food prices, existing Government transport money should be spent on improving public transport including local rail services, a tram rather than a Bus Rapid Transit and the establishment of an Integrated Transport Authority to improve the buses. The groups oppose the RSS on a whole range of environmental, transport and planning grounds including the loss

The Government is to force the four councils to plan for a target of 117,000 new houses to be constructed in the next 20 years.

The proposals for Ashton Park will include new major road construction including the South Bristol Link which is opposed by the city's environmental groups.

of local farmland for food production close to the city. How can we have local food if we are to lose so much local land? We want a return to a sane and sensible housing policy with local rather than central Government control, more tailored to local housing needs rather than unrealistic economic growth predictions.

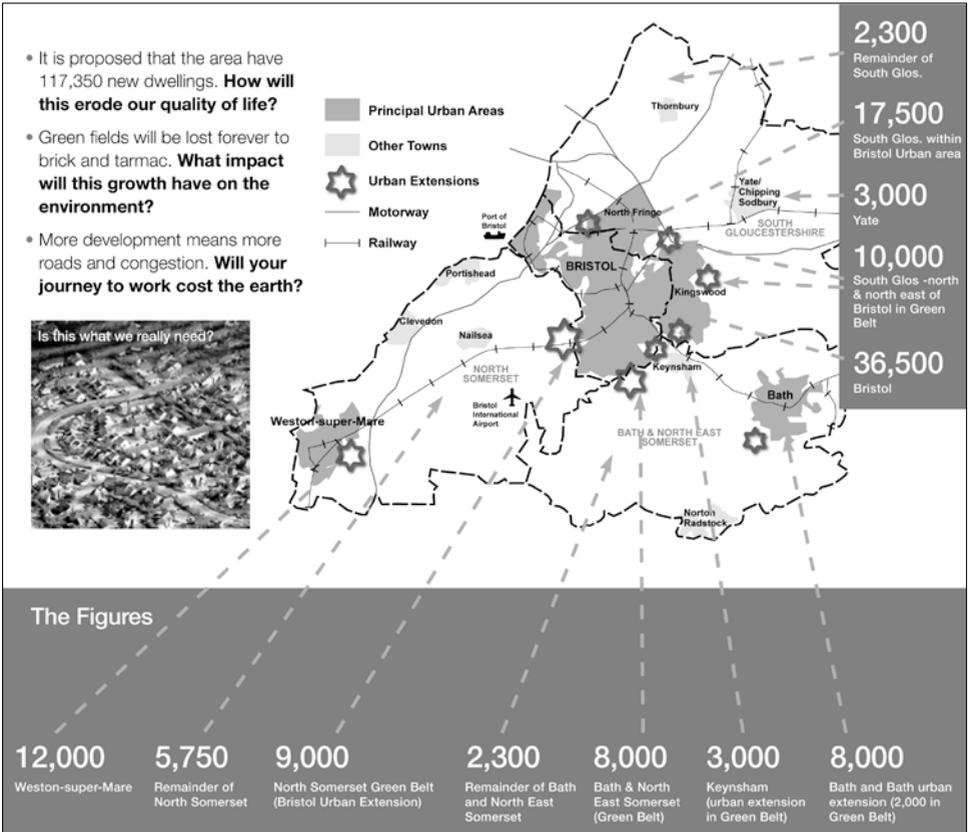
Also using brownfield (existing built-up) land first

to protect local farmland for future agriculture, amenity, recreation, wildlife and our health and to serve the existing city's need for clean air, cooling and drainage during times of flood and heavy rain. If you live in any of the areas affected, we can put you in touch with your local group who are working with local councillors and MPs all of whom are opposed to the RSS.

We have been involved in a mass letter-writing campaign to lobby local MPs and councillors. Throughout June we are running a major postcard-signing campaign, in order to put pressure on Government ministers who plan to introduce the RSS as early as June. If you can help, please contact us as soon as possible.

The Greenbelt Alliance covers the four councils of the West of England Partnership: Bristol, S. Gloucs, BANES & N. Somerset.

Pip Sheard, pip_sheard@hotmail.co.uk



Food Chain



Locally and nationally in FoE there's a new priority on food matters. More sustainable organic production methods are slowly gaining ground. As these avoid chemical pollution and have much lower energy inputs from fertiliser production, they are much more planet-friendly. However progress is slow and much more support is needed for research and spreading the art of efficient organic farming.

However there's a growing hidden ugly and unhealthy side to the food industry. Driven by profit and misinformation, the world is consuming a steadily increasing proportion of meat and dairy (eggs cheese etc) in the diet, which relies on 'factory farming' methods. There's mounting evidence that the diet balance shift is related to the increasing incidence of the major chronic diseases in western countries, like heart disease, cancers, obesity and diabetes. People are eating more meat and dairy because they are led to believe it's good.

Food e-newsletter

Bristol's Local Food Update e-newsletter helps community groups and projects in Bristol to share information about what they're doing, to promote courses, events, training & skill-sharing, and advertise jobs & volunteering positions. The aim is to publish every two

months, and the current May-June issue is now available to download. To have future issues of the newsletter delivered to your inbox, send an email to bristollocalfood@googlemail.com with a subscription request. We also welcome any feedback or suggestion for content.

However as well as being unhealthy it is only made possible by intensive livestock production which is also bad on many counts. Not only is intensive livestock production directly dangerous, as evidenced by the recent swine flu epidemic; but it relies on a hidden chain of imported high-protein animal fodder which is largely grown by unscrupulous companies in deforested areas of the tropics in South America. This is now the main driver of deforestation and biodiversity loss and a significant cause of climate change. It also causes poverty and hunger as small farmers are driven off their land in the forest to make way for vast plantations, which after a few years are abandoned to grazing as the soil is exhausted.

In Bristol, BFoE has been gathering support for the national Food Chain campaign as well as looking at ways to revive interest in and passion for healthy food. At our first weekend stall of the year, at Bristol's Vegan Fayre (pictured above) we gathered around 500 postcards to MPs across the country calling for actions. See www.fixthefoodchain.com

The BFoE food group also met the Soil Association and hosted a meeting with several other parties on our approaches to the problems. As a result we attended a first sustainable procurement seminar hosted by Green City Forum.

We'd love your support in creative ways to roll out the national campaign locally or stimulate local food interest. Please get in touch via the website or come along to a monthly general meeting!

Julian Jones, julian.p.jones@googlemail.com

Or to download a copy, go to: www.bristollocalfood.co.uk/

Waste update

It's proving rather difficult to find out exactly what's going on with the West of England (WoE) waste plans.

In February, at Bristol City Council's annual budget meeting, the LibDems put in an amendment concerning Bristol's financial contributions towards the WoE Joint Residual Waste Strategy. Phase 3 of this strategy involved putting in a bid to central government for Private Finance Initiative (PFI) credits towards building a residual waste facility in our region. The 'reference project' used in the funding bid was a 160,000 tonne incinerator.

The LibDem budget amendment read:

"No incinerator: suspend any spending on phase 3 of waste procurement, with the aim of reaching consensus on phase 3 across all four authorities."

The Lib Dems had put forward a very similar amendment at the 2008 budget, which was defeated by Labour and Conservative councillors. So, it was something of a surprise that this time around, the amendment was passed with LibDem, Conservative and Green support. The vote having gone against them and their policies, the Labour Cabinet then resigned, and the LibDems took control of the council.

Gary Hopkins, the new executive member with responsibility for waste issues, posted the following comment on a local green blog:

"As long as I and the Lib Dems make the decisions in this area there will be no movement towards any incinerator. ...I will be speaking to our neighbours, including BANES about a range of more positive alternatives."

This was all very encouraging, but three months later, we are still somewhat in the dark about what these positive alternatives might be. Bristol City Council is not keen to disclose information about the current status of the PFI bid, and meanwhile, at the Treasury, a meeting is scheduled to discuss the latest round of PFI credit applications – and the committee will not disclose its meeting agenda.

As long as I and the Lib Dems make the decisions in this area there will be no movement towards any incinerator.

Gary Hopkins Lib Dem executive member with responsibility for waste issues



The WoE Partnership published a progress update on the Joint Waste Core Strategy Preferred Options Consultation on their website, on 5 June: www.westofengland.org/waste

This consultation looked at land allocation for possible waste sites, and asked us (again) whether we wanted one large waste processing site, one quite large and four relatively small, or eight smallish sites which would be distributed evenly throughout the region.

You still have a chance to give your feedback to the West of England Partnership, as they invite comments on the consultation update before 17 July.

On a brighter note, Bristol City Council have launched a pilot plastic recycling project, which allows recyclers to deposit a much wider range of plastics at five selected bring banks, and at the Days Road Household Waste Recycling Centre. For full details:

www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/press-releases/2009/apr/making-it-easier-to-recycle-in-bristol.en

Jane Stevenson, info@bristolfoe.org.uk

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 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.