

- **Rubbish Edition: news and reviews on waste campaign**
- **Nature News: Conservation Bill goes through Parliament**

London Cuts Congestion, Is Edinburgh Next?

It's now a year since congestion charging was introduced in London and it's time for this tremendously successful scheme to be extended to Edinburgh.

The London scheme has reduced traffic by 16% at a time when traffic levels have risen in the rest of the country. The scheme has also led to an increase in the use of more environmentally friendly forms of transport, such as walking, cycling and public transport. Traffic accidents are down and inner London boroughs have received very few complaints of new rat-runs outside the zone. The most recent surveys suggest the charge is popular with

business and the general public. A survey of 500 London businesses published by business organisation London First showed that 72% of companies believed that congestion charging was working, compared to 14% who didn't. The most recent public opinion poll shows 57% of Londoners support congestion charging, with 36% opposed. In the absence of any convincing alternative to congestion charging, it is now time for its Lib Dem and Tory opponents to engage constructively to help make Edinburgh's scheme as at least as big a success.

Responses to the Edinburgh proposals have to be in by 27th February - www.ititime.com
 For more about congestion charging see: www.waytogo.org.uk



Colin Hattersley

Coordinators' Comments

Welcome to the first issue of INFOE for 2004. We hope that everyone enjoyed themselves over the holidays and that the new year is off to a good start for you.

We recently held our annual strategy day, and looking back at 2003 it was gratifying to see what a successful year we had. Amongst other achievements, we held a variety of informative public meetings, had a successful hustings event for the Scottish Parliament elections, improved the format of this newsletter, convinced the Council to use recycled paper for their new format 'Outlook' newsletter, and most importantly we saw an increase in the number of active members both on and off the committee. This puts us in good standing to use 2004 to expand our activities and address some items from last year that we didn't manage to do.

At the strategy day we discussed what we'd like to accomplish in the coming year. Given the number of active members and the critical stage of the Edinburgh Council's integrated transport plans, we are going to start a Transport campaign to run alongside the ongoing Waste campaign (contact us if you'd like to get involved). The Waste campaign itself is hoping to use 2004 to start a

'Recycling in Edinburgh's Pubs & Clubs' scheme. We will also be holding a day trip during the summer: FoEE members will be notified closer to the time. And look out for an EU elections hustings event at the end of April.

This is just a sample of the activities we have planned for the coming year and other articles in this newsletter give further details on some important current



Colin Hattersley

issues. We are also looking for volunteers to coordinate recruitment and fundraising activities, so let us know if you are interested in either. Additionally, we are always open to other suggestions. If you would like to help with anything or find out more, please get in contact with us (see the Contact section). Lastly, we have a series of exciting public meetings planned for this year, so keep an eye on our website for details. Hope to see you there!

*Jolin Warren and Katriona Harding
 Joint Co-ordinators, FoE Edinburgh*

STOP PRESS: £83.3 million for Edinburgh Waste Fund!

Today (18th Feb) the Scottish Executive announced that Edinburgh Council had been successful in its bid for money to improve recycling in the city.

Katriona Harding, FoEE Coordinator, said:

"We've been campaigning for major investment in Edinburgh's recycling for some time. This money is a significant

step forward and one which we hope will ensure the city achieves the Government's household recycling target of 25% by 2006. We need to ensure that the momentum which has seen household recycling rates in the city rise from 5% to 11% over the past year is not lost. We urgently need to see kerbside recycling extended to all homes and the types of waste collected expanded to include more than just paper."

Edinburgh Waste Watch

Do you cherish a dream of zero waste? Would you like to see recycling facilities on every street corner in Edinburgh, minimal packaging of supermarket products, containers in your local shops for collecting used batteries, shrinking landfill sites around the country and a general public attitude of 'reduce, reuse, recycle'? Surprisingly, you're not alone. According to Cllr Robert Cairns, Edinburgh council's environmental services executive member, who spoke at the November meeting of FoE Edinburgh, the council now shares the same dream. Making that a reality is, of course, not as straightforward as just having the will to do it. Recycling levels increased from around 8% in 2002 to 12% in 2003, and the council aims to reach or even exceed the 25% target set by the Scottish Executive by 2006. Waste management, however, is complicated and as much concerned with economics as with saving the planet.

The landfill tax has greatly contributed towards Edinburgh's increased tonnage of recyclables. It now costs £28/tonne for waste to be landfilled, while paper can be collected for £20/tonne, saving the council £8 for each tonne not sent to landfill. An estimated 30% of all waste is paper and cardboard, and if you buy a daily newspaper, you know how much just one individual household can contribute to this amount! However, this particular economic argument doesn't work for everything: plastic is highly toxic waste and takes up a lot of space, but as it weighs very little, there is little incentive to collect plastics in order to meet government targets based on weight alone. The wider environmental costs involved in using more vehicles to collect the waste - and in the case of paper, transporting the material to Cheshire for processing - surely cannot be sustainable in the long term. Local outlets and markets

for the material are clearly needed.

The main points of the council's integrated waste management strategy were set out in the last issue of INFOE, and much depends on the success of the council's bid for Executive funds. Unfortunately, the Executive prefers to see its money being spent on quantifiable targets, such as increased tonnage, rather than softer, educational and awareness initiatives. However, Cllr Cairns reiterated that reaching hearts and minds in Edinburgh was crucial if the target of zero waste was going to be reached, after 2006.

The question and answer session showed how much thought, belatedly, Edinburgh council has been putting into dealing with the problem of waste, and it is clear that many avenues have been explored. The council is full of ideas how to improve things, and much has been learnt in fact-finding trips to Austria and Germany. But Edinburgh has a number of problems still to overcome, including the noise problem at bottle banks and persuading developers to allow recycling area spaces in new

Cllr Bob Cairns, launching the council's larger household waste items disposal scheme



Colin Hattersley

Edinburgh Waste Watch

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buildings, as this isn't yet a statutory requirement.

Cllr Cairns invited ideas from the public on the following issues:

- locations for more civic amenity sites
- ideas for raising public awareness on the need for recycling
- new schemes for household collection of recycled materials
- ways of encouraging home composting or green waste collection
- food waste - currently not able to be collected due to food safety issues
- ways of tackling the business sector without increasing business costs
- getting around the difficulties of tenement collections

All in all, the meeting gave hope that the council is finally getting the message on waste. There is now a sustainability unit within the council to make sure that they are leading by example, using recycled paper throughout and planning a new eco-friendly council headquarters. With the concepts such as the 'proximity principle', whereby waste is dealt with as close to the source as possible, being bandied about in the meeting, and knowing that the council is considering the introduction of the 'polluter-pays principle' for packaging, plastic bags and maybe even household waste uplifts, this shows that things are changing. However, we still have a role to play: the new version of the Council's newsletter 'Outlook' was set to be printed on paper with no recycled content until FoE Edinburgh alerted them of the change from the old-style 'Outlook', prompting them to find paper that is 50% recycled. Having realised that Edinburgh is lagging

behind most of Europe in recycling, the council is working hard to catch up, and so now is your chance to make sure that any wonderful ideas of your own don't go to waste: contact Robert Cairns at: Robert.Cairns@edinburgh.gov.uk right now and let him know - he's eagerly awaiting your e-letter!

Helen Todd

Environmental Improvements are in the Bag!

All around our neighbourhoods we see litter lying on streets, on riverbanks and in our gardens. A large part of this is due to the humble plastic bag that is given away at supermarkets and in shops. A staggering 1 BILLION are used every year in Scotland. This is 200 for each person in Scotland. This is unsustainable, and it contributes to our throwaway culture. Nearly all bags end up in landfill or on our streets.

I have no doubt that many of you, like me, have a stash of them in a bottom drawer. Apparently people have an average of 40! We simply take too many at checkouts and even when we do take a 'bag-for-life' we often forget this because we know we can get a free bag at the shop. Many shops will give you a bag for only one or two items. Voluntary schemes can only do so much: bag-for-life schemes reduce carrier bag use by about 2%. Penny-back schemes, if you return your plastic bag, contribute just 0.5%. A dramatic shift is now needed and this can only come with a legislative change.

Hopefully many of you will have heard about my proposal for a law in the Scottish Parliament to place an environmental levy on plastics bags. This will involve shops having to charge around 10p for plastic bags, rather than giving them away free. This is very similar to a new law in Ireland that cut plastic bag use by 90%. This has



now:

- if you have lots of plastic bags in your house reuse them when you shop.
- if you are only buying one or two items then ask for it not to be put in a plastic bag and just carry them.
- think about buying a 'bag-for-life' or a sturdy shopping bag
- write to your local MSP and encourage them to support my bill in the Scottish Parliament.

With these simple steps you can reduce litter in your neighbourhood and make a real difference to the environment. Many councils have supported my bill and I have been very encouraged by the messages of support I have received from individuals and organisations including FoE.

This new law will be just a small step towards environmental improvements, but I hope it will encourage people to use less plastic bags and to think about how their household can be more sustainable and how they can reduce waste.

Mike Pringle is the Lib Dem MSP for Edinburgh South



Lang Banks

led to a dramatic drop in litter and in landfill and has brought back the traditional paper bag in many shops, which is more easily recycled and can come from sustainable forests. The major change, and the one that my bill is aimed at, is a change in peoples' behaviour. People have now started to bring shopping trolleys, long life plastic bags and rucksacks when shopping. Or they will carry one or two items from a corner shop.

Monies raised from this new law will be used by your local Council for environmental improvements to your neighbourhood and recycling. The Scottish Executive has set a challenging 50% recycling target to 2020 and my new law will help in this. It will also save businesses up to £10m a year in free plastic bags. At present there is a consultation paper concerning my bill.

Anyone can respond and a copy of the report is available at: www.mikepringlemsp.com. The consultation will end in mid-May but the parliamentary process may take up to two years and there are some things you can do

Zero Waste: Making it Happen

In the first morning of the 'Zero Waste' conference held in November at Dynamic Earth, the presentations and discussions centred on the need for a fundamental change in viewpoints on waste and on the strategies which urgently need to be put in place to deliver real reductions in the amount of waste generated.

Several of the speakers talked about the importance of getting more people to understand the need to live sustainably and of raising individuals' awareness of their own environmental impact. Education was seen as a key issue, as was involving people in the planning processes relating to waste management. John Ferguson, one of the founder members of RAGS, explained the importance of zero waste as a 'conceptual driver' to change peoples' thinking, even if it was an ideal that could not be fully realised in practice.

Beyond the level of individual action, Takashi Kiuchi (chairman of The Future 500 - a group that strives to promote sustainable industry and sound environmental practices) spoke about the need to reinvent the economic system so that sustainability is at the centre of decision making. Takashi used the analogy of the Earth as 'Corporation' - by depleting the Earth's resources at an unsustainable rate we are bankrupting the natural 'Corporation', thus leading to the disintegration of the systems that allow life to function as we know it. Takashi's central point was that consumption and accumulation does not equal worth or happiness.

Paulo Cruz, of Remade Scotland, also

drew delegates' attention to the wider picture by focusing on the need for greater co-operation between individuals, communities, local authorities and government. He pointed out that there are very few green procurement policies, few incentives and a fear of change.

As the conference progressed, it was clear that this event was not just about waste - it was about changing the way we perceive the world and the way we act. We need to allow ourselves to become open to change through valuing and respecting natural systems, rather than functioning merely as consumers. A superb morning - I only wish I'd had time to stay for both days!

Emma Margrett

Conservation in Scotland

More than half a million people in Scotland are members of an environmental organisation. The RSPB alone has more members in the UK than all the political parties put together, and this could add up to a very powerful lobbying presence. However, according to Lisa Schneidau, Policy and Campaigns Manager with Scottish Wildlife Trust (with a healthy 25,000 members), the environmental lobby is not yet fully mobilised politically.

Talking at January's public meeting, Lisa gave a brief history of the conservation movement, bringing us up to date with some shocking statistics. If you thought Scotland's natural heritage was a pristine wilderness unchanged for centuries, think again. Since the second world war, Scotland has lost a quarter of its heather moorland, half its hedgerows, half its

lowland raised mires (to produce peat for garden centres), a quarter of its broadleaved and a third of its mixed woodland. Drivers of change include land management patterns, industry and development pressures. Even the areas which you might think are protected, for example Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) which cover 12% of Scotland, are not healthy: a recent report showed that 45% are in 'unfavourable condition' through damage, neglect or bad management.

The government is now debating the first major piece of wildlife legislation in Scotland since 1981, the Nature Conservation Bill. The Bill will protect SSSIs, putting to an end the crazy situation whereby landowners are paid whenever they threaten to undertake development that would damage a SSSI.

In addition, wildlife crime will become an offence, with fines or custodial sentences for those who use pesticides to kill animals, or who steal birds' eggs. But rather than concentrating only on preserving these special sites so that they exist within a

degraded wider countryside, the issue is how to protect and manage all land in a way acceptable to so many conflicting interests. Following on from the 1992 Rio Convention, biodiversity will be enshrined in law for the first time in Scotland, with a duty on all public bodies to take responsibility to further biodiversity, rather than relying on goodwill and voluntary efforts as at present. The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy will be the basis for this work, with some of the £600m in agricultural subsidies set to be diverted into environmental action and rural development.

The Bill may not be 100% perfect but it is the result of a concerted effort on all of our behalfs by nature conservation organisations such as SWT. If you want to make sure it's the best piece of legislation we can hope for, Lisa suggested emailing your MSP to give your support to the Nature Conservation Bill in general, and the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy in particular. Your countryside needs you!

Helen Todd



Make Contact

If you'd like to get involved in the work of Friends of the Earth Edinburgh then please email us - info@foe-edinburgh.org.uk or see www.foe-edinburgh.org.uk. For those without access to the internet you can call Jolin Warren on 0131 466 8329.

We'd also be keen to hear any ideas or comments you have about the events and campaigns organised by the group.

Help Wanted

Friends of the Earth Edinburgh is looking for volunteers to help distribute newsletters and posters. Please email us at: info@foe-edinburgh.org.uk or talk to one of the committee members at the next public meeting.

Dates for Diaries

**Thursday 26th February
7.30pm
FoE Edinburgh Public Meeting -
BabyG.R.O.E.**

BabyG.R.O.E. exists to allow parents to make healthier and more sustainable choices for their families. BabyG.R.O.E. (Green, Re-cycled, Organic and Ethical) was the brainchild of first time mothers, Lynoa Cochrane and Susan Oak. Frustrated at the lack of choice and the volume of mass market products promoted by the NHS, they decided to offer mothers and their families an alternative option. BabyG.R.O.E. is a 32 page information directory packed full of information and adverts for socially / environmentally / ethically appropriate organisations and businesses. Six hundred thousand copies of

BabyG.R.O.E. are distributed free of charge through hospital midwives in almost every hospital in the UK. The directories are also supported by a website of the same name (www.babygroe.co.uk). BabyG.R.O.E. is unprecedented as a new concept in making this kind of information available in a down to earth manner, free of charge, through a mainstream resource and to all parents, regardless of social class.

Friends Meeting House, Victoria Terrace.

**Thursday 25th March
7.30pm
FoE Edinburgh Public Meeting -
Planning Reform in Scotland**

A reform of the Scottish planning system is long overdue, with levels of public participation and confidence in planning at a low ebb. The Scottish Executive has recently launched a consultation to investigate a widescale reform of the system, including contentious topics such as a third party right of appeal. Siobhan Samson, Planning and Development Officer at Friends of the Earth Scotland, has worked with many communities around Scotland who have experienced environmental injustices through the planning system. She will be talking about the main changes outlined in the consultation and will tell us how we can all become involved in the consultation process.

Friends Meeting House, Victoria Terrace.

**Tuesday 20th July
Friends of the Earth Edinburgh
Comedy Fundraiser**

The Stand Comedy Club, York Place
This event always sells out, so book your tickets early. **Email us to reserve tickets.**