



Newsletter of Friends of the Earth Edinburgh

Green Christmas ? Issue No. 16 November/December 2004
Vote Yes for Less Traffic: Capital's Transport Plans

Get Edinburgh Moving

Edinburgh's transport future is at a critical juncture. In February next year, the city's residents will have an opportunity to vote 'yes' to better transport services and less traffic. A 'no' vote in the Transport Edinburgh referendum will be one for more pollution and a worsened quality of life for all Edinburgh's residents.

The Transport Edinburgh proposals, the Council's plans for the city's transport, offer the best opportunity for radically transforming the quality of transport provision in Edinburgh. The city's traffic problems are not going to go away and concerted action is needed if Edinburgh is going to catch up with best practice across Europe. The Council's plans give the chance to place Edinburgh at the cutting edge of European transport.

Part of the Transport Edinburgh proposals are for a congestion charge, such as the highly successful scheme in operation in London since February 2003. There would be one £2 fee a day, no matter how many times a vehicle crosses a charging cordon – the charge would only apply to in-bound trips.

Public inquiry gives charge the thumbs up

October's public inquiry report into Edinburgh's proposed scheme gave a very

welcome and independent endorsement of the need for congestion charging. The inquiry report supported both the principle of road user charging and the vast majority of the specifics of the proposal. For example, that there should be two cordons, the times of operation and level of charge. The inquiry reporters clearly saw through all the self-interested special pleading from motoring organisations and the more short-sighted of Edinburgh's business groups.

The charge will only be paid by those who drive motor vehicles. The charge will not, by definition, be paid by the 42% of Edinburgh's households who have no access to a car: these households will predominantly be the city's lower income households.

Incoherence of political opponents

It is now time for the political opponents of the charge - and those that have so far kept their heads down - to come on board with delivering the scheme. The political opponents of the proposals have failed to present any credible alternative strategy for tackling Edinburgh's traffic problems and the inquiry reporters clearly acknowledged this. The Edinburgh Liberal Democrats, in

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Coordinator's Comments

Welcome to the November/December 04 edition of INFOE, the bi-monthly newsletter of Friends of the Earth Edinburgh (FoEE). The clocks have gone back and the nights are drawing in, but far from being in hibernation, the group is busy gearing up for an active winter on the campaigning front. Our two public meetings on community recycling projects and Edinburgh's transport plans were very informative and well-attended, with plenty of discussion and food for thought. With the G8 summit being held in Gleneagles in July, our next meeting on 25th November will look at what action NGOs are planning, and we hope to get involved in some way. We'll keep you informed.

We held our AGM on 7th October and voted in a new committee, although mostly the same faces in different roles. I was delighted to be elected Coordinator when Jolin Warren and Katriona Harding decided to stand down from the post. I would like to thank them for all the work they did in taking the group forward over

the past year, and also the rest of the committee for their many contributions to the group. Having worked earlier this year at Friends of the Earth Scotland as a Campaigns Researcher, this experience has given me a useful insight into how the national organisation works and the role local groups can play in complementing and enhancing FoE Scotland's work. I'm very much looking forward to the coming year and sustaining the momentum created by Jolin and Katriona.

Some of you may have attended the FoES event at the Filmhouse on 30th October with the screening of the documentary "The Corporation". The film draws parallels between the institution of the corporation and psychopathic behaviour, and could leave you with a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness in the face of the mighty corporations ruling our world. However, while it may be difficult as an individual to bring down Nestle, Exxon, Nike, Tesco et al, it is at least possible make a difference locally – there's never been a better time to join our Waste or Transport campaign groups! Or just come along to our public meetings, everyone is welcome.

*Helen Todd
Coordinator, FoE Edinburgh*

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particular, have taken a shamefully opportunistic stance and, in so doing, have seriously undermined the environmental credibility of the Lib Dem party nationally.

Say Yes to a better Edinburgh

There is no hope of solving Edinburgh's transport problems unless traffic restraint measures such as congestion charging are implemented. Some politicians argue that if we just pour money into public transport then all traffic problems will go away. This is patent nonsense. Expert academic advice

Photo by Lang Banks



is solidly behind the need for the need for road traffic demand management measures, such as congestion charging, to be implemented if traffic and pollution levels are to be tackled.

February's referendum will set out a route map for delivering a massive investment programme in transport and robust measures to control traffic levels. It is estimated that congestion charging will raise £760 million over 20 years and the Council is only allowed to use this revenue to fund transport improvements. If approved in the referendum, congestion charging will begin in 2006. This will be preceded by a widespread package of upfront investment in park & ride, buses, cycling and walking facilities – with the three tram lines to follow in 2009 and 2011.

Get Edinburgh Moving

A coalition of Edinburgh's civic, environmental and transport groups have now come together under the 'Get Edinburgh Moving' banner to encourage people to support the Transport Edinburgh proposals and vote 'yes' in the referendum. See www.getedinburghmoving.org to find out how you can support the campaign. Edinburgh needs to grasp the thistle and deliver a sustainable transport future for the city: failing to act will only damage the quality of life and international reputation of Scotland's capital.

For more information on the Transport Edinburgh proposals, and to make sure that you can vote in the referendum, see www.transport-edinburgh.org.uk

See www.transformscotland.org.uk for the proceedings of a major TRANSform Scotland conference on road pricing held in Edinburgh on 4th October.

Colin Howden, TRANSform Scotland

Dreaming of a Waste Free Christmas

The Christmas holidays - a time of goodwill and celebration, often accompanied by seasonal increases in eating, drinking and spending. This combination usually results in a lot of fun, but unfortunately it will also produce an estimated extra three million tonnes of waste consisting of food, cards, wrapping paper, Christmas crackers, packaging. And let's not forget the 5.5 million Christmas trees that we buy and then throw away two weeks later.

With a bit of thought, you can limit the impact you have on the environment this holiday season and still have a great time. Many of the following tips are common sense, well known, every day ideas that become even more relevant at Christmas!

Packaging

Avoid goods that involve unnecessary packaging, and buy food and drink packaged in materials that can be recycled (i.e. paper and glass, and in large containers rather than lots of small ones). SNUB - Say No to Unwanted Bags! Always reuse your plastic bags, or better still use a reusable shopping bag.

Presents

Why not reduce some of that Christmas waste by giving your loved ones experiences that they will never forget instead of overpackaged gifts? Alternative present idea include: acupuncture or beauty therapy vouchers, short breaks, archery lessons, dance classes, evening classes, gliding lessons, martial arts lessons, mountaineering training, music lessons and concert/theatre tickets.

Christmas is traditionally the time of year for upgrading mobile phones and purchasing printers and therefore inkjet cartridges. Visit www.recyclingappeal.com

Photo from Natural Collection



and get your freepost recycling envelope, and all proceeds go to charity - with £1.2 million having been raised already! Buy gifts which are durable, especially for children. Things which break easily will just end up in the bin, and cannot be reused by anybody. Try to avoid buying or requesting presents which rely on disposable parts, including batteries. Always look for alternatives, like a coffee maker with a washable filter rather than throwaway paper ones, or rechargeable batteries, with a solar powered charger. Look out for gifts with a high recycled content or made from recycled materials, such as glass tableware or photo frames. The Recycled Products Guide (RPG) www.recycledproducts.org.uk, lists over 1,000 products made from recycled materials.

Wrapping and Decorating.

Choose decorations which can be reused, rather than flimsy ones which will be used once and thrown away. Making decorations from scrap materials is a fun way to keep children occupied! Buy a UK-grown real tree with roots which you can then plant in your garden or keep in a pot for next year. Artificial trees can be used many times but have to be disposed of eventually and as they are usually made of

a number of different materials, including plastics, they are difficult to recycle.

Home-made gift tags can be made from old greetings cards. Any kind of unusual paper can be used to wrap gifts. Save envelopes and reuse them with reuse labels, available from many charity catalogues and shops. Buy recycled wrapping paper and use string, ribbon or wool for wrapping gifts, rather than using sticky tape. The string can then be reused, and the paper too.

Recycling Christmas cards and trees

The Woodland Trust, the UK's leading woodland conservation charity, is relaunching its Christmas Card recycling scheme. Simply take your cards to your local WH Smith high street store or local Tesco store in January and place them in the special bins provided. This year the public has recycled 45 million Christmas cards, or 883 tonnes, which is the equivalent of saving 15,011 trees. Visit www.woodland-trust.org.uk/recycling Alternatively, normal Christmas cards (and other cards) fall into the recycling category of paper, and can be dropped in any paper recycling bin. You could also check to see if your favourite local charity shop is collecting old Christmas cards and stamps.

Last year LEEP Recycling, in partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council, ran a very successful Christmas Tree Recycling Campaign and nearly 2000 trees were collected for recycling. LEEP do not have the details of this year's scheme ironed out yet, but it is almost certain that some type of recycling scheme will exist. For more information please contact Evelyn Mitchell, LEEP Recycling Tel: 0131 538 7934 EMitchell@leep.org.uk www.leep.org.uk

Finally, try to plan journeys to recycling facilities around essential trips such as shopping. This helps to minimise environmental impact and will save you time.

Katriona Harding, FoE Edinburgh

Good News for the Great Outdoors

The Scottish Parliament has received its fair share of criticisms over the past few years. However, for walkers, mountaineers - and pretty much anyone else who spends time outside for recreational purposes, one of the legislative highlights since the parliament was established has been the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. While the aspect of the legislation covering the community right-to-buy attracted much of the publicity at the time, it is Part 1 (covering access) which is of relevance to most members of the public. The Act and the accompanying Access Code will provide Scotland with an access framework to be proud of, and which is potentially better than that found in any other European country.

Scotland has a long tradition of relatively open access to land for recreation. It is also recognised that being out in the open air is beneficial for our mental and physical well-being, and walking can often replace journeys taken by car with the ensuing environmental benefits. Yet the attitudes of

some land managers and government bodies had threatened to erode the tradition of open access, causing uncertainty for walkers as to their rights when crossing private land. The achievement of the Land Reform Act has been to confirm a presumption in favour of public access to most land and water. The access rights come with responsibilities, not just for the public but also for land managers.

So what has been happening since the Act was passed in January last year? The Scottish Outdoor Access Code has been approved by the Parliament and will be published by Scottish Natural Heritage when the Act is implemented, some time before the end of this year. The Code provides guidance on responsible behaviour in relation to the access rights. The Ramblers' Association Scotland has been heavily involved in consultations on drawing up the Code, and once it is published this will be an excellent opportunity to promote responsible access throughout the country.

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Photo by Colin Howden

Great Outdoors

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All members of the public can have a part to play in encouraging and assisting others to take access responsibly. You may be able to join local access forums, or help develop a community path project, or even be called upon to defend access rights on the ground when faced with "Keep Out" signs. Further information, as well as the Code itself, is available online at www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/access/ApprovedCode050604.pdf The next few years look set to be very interesting times for walkers as the new rights are tested.

Helen Todd is Access Campaign Officer for Ramblers' Association Scotland

Firestarters - FoEE BBQ

This year the annual FoEE barbecue changed location and moved to the historic fishing village of Newhaven, with Andy Ross and Emma Margaret becoming the 2004 hosts. The day began with a frantic shopping spree around Leith, with the main emphasis on keeping to the budget whilst still producing top notch BBQ grub - and with Helen being in control of the purse strings we come in a whopping 1/3 under budget!

Colin and Graham masterfully created fire in a very short space of time and before you knew it the tasty marinated BBQ was sizzling away. There was the age old debate between vegetarians and omnivores, while everybody tucked in to the grub. Everybody stayed outside for as long as they could before the cold drove them inside to seek out some warmth and more drink. The event was as successful as last year's, and hopefully will continue for many years to come.

Katriona Harding, FoE Edinburgh

Talking Rubbish

Waste is currently a hot topic and September's public meeting was packed with people wanting to talk rubbish. Lucy Danger of Emerge Recycling helped set up a community recycling scheme in Manchester where there was a lack of council services, and gave us a presentation with some pretty shocking facts and figures. For example, the UK as a whole recycles or composts 14% of its waste, which is pretty woeful when compared to Scandinavia and many other European countries where the figure is above 40%. In Scotland it's even worse, with just 6% recycled nationally, although in Edinburgh itself we can be fairly proud of our recycling level of 18%.

Each person in the UK creates 1.2 tonnes of domestic waste, adding up to 30m tonnes of household waste annually. However, while campaigns to make us recycle generally focus on municipal household waste, this contributes to just 5% of all waste; the rest is from agriculture, industry, commerce, mining, etc. Yet personal consumption and industrial waste are closely interlinked, as it takes around ten tonnes of waste material to produce one tonne of products. Even the production of a humble toothbrush requires 1.5kg of resources.

Since Scotland landfills 90% of all its waste there is much room for improvement. In a public meeting last autumn, Councillor Robert Cairns showed us how keen the Council is to tackle the waste problem. The Executive recently awarded Edinburgh £83 million for waste and recycling investment, so plenty of schemes are coming into place here. In the audience were members of LEEP and Colinton Community Compost to highlight local



services which are available to residents of Edinburgh. Check these out and get composting!

LEEP publishes "Too Good To Waste", a guide to reducing, reusing and recycling in Edinburgh and East Lothian. Call 0131 538 5381, or see www.leep.org.uk

Helen Todd
FoE Edinburgh

FoE Edinburgh Vote for New Constitution

FoE Edinburgh held its Annual General Meeting on Thursday 7th October. Looking back over the past 12 months, it was felt that the group had had a successful year with regular public meetings, most of which had good attendance figures and plenty of new faces. The Comedy Night in July was another triumph, both in terms of the fun that was had on the night itself, and the money we managed to raise. Other social events included a memorable Christmas dinner and a barbecue in September. The waste and transport campaigns continue to run and new members are always welcome to join in as there is plenty to be done. It was reported that our finances are in a healthy shape at year end.

A committee for 2004-5 was elected. While there are no new faces within the committee, some roles have been changed. Jolin Warren and Katriona Harding stepped down as Joint Coordinators, and Helen Todd was elected as the new Coordinator, with Katriona as Vice Coordinator. Colin Howden and Brenda Carmichael continue as Secretary and Treasurer respectively. Other committee members are Lang Banks, Stuart Hay, Emma Margrett, Colin Hattersley, Jolin Warren and Velda McCune. There are still places for two more on the committee, so it is possible that new members may be co-opted at a later date.

Secondly, a new constitution for the group was adopted, which replaces the old constitution and more closely reflects the needs of the group. The main items of interest concern membership of FoE Edinburgh. Involvement with the group has now been formalised as follows:

- firstly, anyone is welcome to join our email list and come along to public meetings with no further commitment to the group
- if you wish to become a member of FoE Edinburgh, a membership fee of £5 is payable and allows you to take part in our campaign meetings and make a financial contribution to the running of the group
- finally, if you wish to be a voting member at our AGM, be a member of the committee, or the coordinator of a campaign group, you will need to be both a member of FoE Edinburgh, and a member of FoE Scotland to gain these formal rights.

The constitution will shortly be available on our website.

Helen Todd, FoE Edinburgh

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 Helen Todd on 0131 553 6869.

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

Dates for Diaries

Thursday 25th November, 7.30pm FoEE Public Talk

"G8 what is it and why is it coming to Scotland? Oh yeah and why has Tony Blair put climate change on the agenda?" Join us for an update on G8 and how you can get involved in campaigning on this topic in the run-up to next year's event in Gleneagles.

Clare Coughlan (Jubilee Scotland) and a representative from Friends of the Earth. Friends Meeting House, Victoria Terrace

Saturday 27th November Buy Nothing Day 2004 <http://www.buynothingday.co.uk>

Tuesday 30th November, 6.30pm Waste campaign group meeting For information contact: KHarding@FoE-Edinburgh.org.uk

Tuesday 30th November, 7.15pm Wildlife Witness Event Western Infirmary Lecture Theatre, University of Glasgow For more details contact Wildlife Witness Ticketline 0131 312 7765, wildlifewitness@swt.org.uk

**Wednesday 1st December, 7.15pm
Wildlife Witness Event**
The Logie Lecture Theatre, University of Stirling
For more details contact Wildlife Witness Ticketline 0131 312 7765, wildlifewitness@swt.org.uk

**Wednesday 8th December, 6.30pm
Transport campaign group meeting**
For information contact:
JWarren@FoE-Edinburgh.org.uk

**Tuesday 14th December, 7.30pm
Capital Rail Action Group (CRAG)
public meeting**
Talk about community rail partnerships
Paul Salvesson, ACoRP
City Chambers, High St

**Saturday 22nd January, afternoon
FoEE Strategy Day**
FoEE Members Only
For information contact:
HTodd@FoE-Edinburgh.org.uk

**Thursday 27th January, 7.30pm
FoEE Public Talk**
"Ecological Debt: A moral responsibility to meet the Sustainable Development goals."
Teresa Martinez
FoE Scotland, Global Communities Project
Friends Meeting House, Victoria Terrace

**Thursday 24th February, 7.30pm
FoEE Public Talk**
Topic TBA
Friends Meeting House, Victoria Terrace

**Thursday 24th March, 7.30pm
FoEE Public Talk**
Topic TBA
Friends Meeting House, Victoria Terrace