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- **Edinburgh's Green Politicians**
- **Stop the Dalkeith Bypass**
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## September/October Issue

### Proposals to Curtail Planning Rights

Proposals to reform Scotland's creaking planning system have sparked uproar amongst environmental groups and an equally worrying welcome from industry lobbyists.

Anger has centred on the Scottish Executive's decision to ignore the results of its own consultation which revealed that 86% of respondents wanted rights of appeal for third parties similar to those enjoyed and often abused by developers. Instead the White Paper proposes pre-application consultation obligations on developers, and public hearings before local authority planning committees make decisions. For supporters of third party rights of appeal (TPRA) such measures are seen as both inadequate and ineffective.

Communities will still see their views being arbitrarily ignored, despite the new opportunities to speak with developers and councillors. Ironically the perfect illustration of this argument, is the Scottish Executive's own rejection of the overwhelming view expressed by the public that only a final right of appeal would make decision makers treat them seriously. If the Executive ignores the views of the public in such a blatant fashion what message does this send to councils?

The White Paper compounding the rejection of TPRA with proposals for an enhanced National Planning Framework for Scotland (NPF), governs the location of the biggest developments. And they contain no scope for public challenge or independent review. Whilst the intention is to facilitate sound planning and the more efficient delivery of major national developments, the concern is that the final decision to include developments in the NPF will be made behind closed doors, without fear of challenge. Given the recent M74 enquiry debacle this would be an alluring prospect for Ministers, who could prevent communities from challenging the need for major

developments at development plan enquiries. This would mean losing the right to dispute the need for a second Edinburgh Airport runway or another Forth road bridge, despite dubious economics and unsustainable growth projections being used to justify both proposals. This centralisation will mean that by the time the public actually gets to discuss detailed planning matters, such as consultation and a possible enquiry into the forthcoming city of Edinburgh local plan, the biggest decisions will already have been decided.

To wake up MSPs to threat posed by these proposals a major petition has been launched jointly by the Association of Community Councils and Scottish Environment LINK, which challenges growing imbalance of power within the planning system. To achieve fairness communities must feel their views carried weight and have been subject to proper scrutiny, if necessary via independent review. Such scrutiny is vital if environmental justice is to be promoted by Scotland's planning system rather than unwanted, unnecessary and unsustainable developments.

To support the petition log onto <http://www.everyonecan.org/>



## Coordinator's Comments

Welcome to September's INFOE, the newsletter of Friends of the Earth (FoE) Edinburgh local group. We have had a great summer, with plenty of time for socialising as well as campaigning.

Back in July, the G8 came to Scotland and the whole week was quite an experience. Many thanks to all of you who came along and walked under the fluttering green FoE banners on the Make Poverty History march or at Gleneagles. It was also interesting to meet FoE members from other parts of the UK who had made it up to Scotland for the week.

To wind down after all that excitement, we held a very successful comedy night on 19th July and raised over £1,100 for our campaigning work this year. Finally, we had our annual barbeque on 11th September and once again were



lucky to hold it in beautiful, end of summer sunshine.

So we're raring to go and start campaigning again now that autumn is here, and, as always, there's plenty to get concerned about.

The congestion charge may have been seen off, but transport issues look set to get Edinburgh all excited again, with some proposals we support, such as the two new tramlines, and others we don't, such as a new Forth Road Bridge, airport expansion and the Dalkeith bypass. We'll be working with other local sustainable transport organisations to lobby on these issues.

In Glasgow the M74 extension is also likely to be drawing our attention, since FoE Scotland is taking the Executive to court over its decision to build the road, and needs at least £30,000 to do so. See their website for details: [http://www.foe-scotland.org.uk/about/m74\\_appeal\\_intro.html](http://www.foe-scotland.org.uk/about/m74_appeal_intro.html)

If you're expecting our AGM soon, we have decided to postpone it until early next year. This is because we changed our financial year to fall into line with FoE Scotland, and need to adjust the accounting period this time so that AGMs can take place in January or February from now on. We will keep members informed of the exact date.

We have a great programme of public meetings set up for this autumn, starting on 21st September, and I hope you will come along. We were very pleased to have James Reynolds, the Environment Correspondent of the Scotsman, who gave us an insight into how our Edinburgh-based national paper covers environmental news. Hopefully you have now picked up some tips on how to get our campaigns into the media!

## Stop the Dalkeith Bypass!

If you've ever driven through Dalkeith, you'll know that it can be a bit of a congestion hotspot. In June the Transport Minister suddenly reactivated a long-forgotten plan to build a bypass which aims to alleviate the traffic in the town centre – the only problem being that the new road will completely cut the beautiful, popular Dalkeith Country Park in two!

The Country Park is a hugely important area of greenspace for the residents of Dalkeith and Edinburgh, as well as for its conservation value – it encompasses an SSSI and acres of tranquil woodlands. Friends of the Earth also feels that building a new road will not address the underlying problems of ever-growing traffic levels, and will generate more vehicle movement. A local campaign group has been launched and is holding a public meeting on Tuesday 27th September at 7.00 in Dalkeith District Arts Centre, White Hart Street. See the website for more details: <http://www.save-dalkeith-park.org.uk>



## Green politicians in Edinburgh

Two Edinburgh politicians are showing their green credentials with two members' bills which are passing through Westminster and Holyrood at the moment, and which are supported by Friends of the Earth Scotland. Both politicians have taken part in past FoE Edinburgh election hustings, so obviously we have had some influence in fostering their sense of commitment to environmental matters!

Mark Lazarowicz, Labour MP for Edinburgh North & Leith is proposing a Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Bill, which includes the establishment of national and local targets for the microgeneration of energy, and other measures to stimulate the market for microgeneration by domestic consumers. This Private Member's Bill will receive its second reading in the House of Commons on 11th November, and if successful will move on to consideration by committee. See Mark's website for more details and email Mark or your own MP to signal your backing for this bill as he needs to demonstrate public support at this stage. <http://www.marklazarowicz.org.uk/> - [mark@marklazarowicz.org.uk](mailto:mark@marklazarowicz.org.uk)

Here in Scotland, Mike Pringle, the Lib Dem MSP for Edinburgh South, is proposing his Environmental Levy on Plastic Bags Bill. Scotland currently gets through a billion plastic bags each year and so Mike is hoping that we can follow Ireland's lead by charging 10p per bag, with the money raised being spent by local authorities on environmental projects. This bill aims to change people's behaviour and is currently being considered by the Environment & Rural Development Committee. Why not send an email to Mike showing your support?

<http://www.mikepringlemsp.com/>  
email: [Mike.Pringle.msp@scottish.parliament.uk](mailto:Mike.Pringle.msp@scottish.parliament.uk)

## Edinburgh Community Backgreens Initiative

A local Edinburgh project which aims to facilitate sustainable living has completed its first goal in clearing out the twenty six tenement backgreens at two sites in Gorgie Dalry.

The Edinburgh Community Backgreens Initiative was established in 2004 to promote a tenement greenspace regeneration model which was brought over from Copenhagen by Greig Robertson a local activist.

A study carried out by Greig on behalf of Canmore Housing Association found that approximately one third of tenement backgreens in the Gorgie Dalry area are derelict. This is compounded by the fact that the area is one of the most densely populated communities in Scotland and which has poor provision of public greenspace. The study also asked residents what were the barriers which stopped them from clearing up their backgreens. It was proposed that a pilot project should work with residents in the area to support them to work together to regenerate them.

Between August and October, 43 residents from the two sites worked together to clear out the backgreens.

The next stage will now be to prepare outline plans for the spaces. The founding principles of the project are community, ecology and beauty. These will be applied in the participative design workshops which all residents will be invited to.

It is planned to layout each site with a 'community backgreen' shared by all residents. The community backgreen will have facilities for bike sheds, composting and play areas for children.

The community backgreens will be implemented by a collaboration between the residents and other stakeholders, the assumption being that the residents will do what they can themselves.

Once the sites are completed, it is planned that they will be maintained by a newly established social enterprise, Edinburgh Green Caretakers (EGC), which will cut the grass and prune the trees when required. EGC will also operate the in-vessel compostors which will be located at each site for the recycling of mixed kitchen waste.

For more information contact Greig Robertson [g.robertson@re-solution.co.uk](mailto:g.robertson@re-solution.co.uk)





## 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](mailto:info@foe-edinburgh.org.uk) or see [www.foe-edinburgh.org.uk](http://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.

### Transport Campaign Group Meetings

For information contact Jolin Warren: [JWarren@foe-scotland.org.uk](mailto:JWarren@foe-scotland.org.uk)

### Waste Campaign Group Meetings

For information contact Katriona Harding: [KHarding@foe-scotland.org.uk](mailto:KHarding@foe-scotland.org.uk)

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## Dates for Diaries

### Thursday 27th October

#### Friends of the Earth Edinburgh Public Meeting

Topic: Oil depletion and the energy crisis, with speaker Max Oakes of Depletion Scotland

Friends Meeting House, Victoria Terrace, 7.30pm

### Thursday 24th November

#### Friends of the Earth Edinburgh Public Meeting

Topic: The UK Sustainable Development Commission, by its' commissioner Hugh Raven.

Friends Meeting House, Victoria Terrace, 7.30pm