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November - December Issue

The future of transport in the Lothians

Do you want to have your say on the future of transport in the Lothians? If so, then come along to our November public meeting.

On Thursday 30th November at 7.30pm in the Augustine United Church, George IV Bridge, we will have a presentation from Alex Macaulay, the newly-appointed Director of 'SEStran' to tell us how the new Regional Transport Strategy will be developed.

SEStran (South East Scotland Transport Partnership) is one of seven statutory Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs), set up by the Scottish Executive, with an initial remit to develop a Regional Transport Strategy (RTS). The main purpose of the RTS is to provide a framework which will guide the future management of, and investment in, transport for the SEStran area over the next 10-15 years. SEStran contains eight constituent council areas — City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, East Lothian, Falkirk, Fife, Midlothian, Scottish Borders and West Lothian.

The presentation will introduce the SEStran area and its transport issues, describe where we are with the development of the RTS, outline the three main strands of proposals within the RTS and describe the consultation process that is planned for the winter months.

Friends of the Earth Edinburgh will be interested to hear what action SEStran plans to take to reduce levels of traffic and pollution across South-East Scotland, and what investment in public transport, walking and cycling will need to be brought about. Will SEStran campaign for the redevelopment of Waverley Station and for faster rail services both within Scotland, and across the border? What position will it take on the proposed expansion of Edinburgh Airport? And will SEStran support the further development of Edinburgh's tram network, with new light rail routes reaching out into the Lothians?

It will certainly be interesting to hear what Alex Macaulay has got to say about the new proposals for a Second Forth Road Bridge – the one development that would do most damage to the prospects for a sustainable transport system for Edinburgh and the Lothians. The plans for a second bridge were thrown out in the 1990s as being grossly unsustainable: with the heightened awareness of the need to take action to tackle climate change, building an additional Forth road crossing would be nothing short of criminal negligence on behalf of the region's transport authorities.

Jolin Warren, FoE Edinburgh

More details about SEStran's work are available online at www.sestran.gov.uk



Coordinator's Comments

Welcome to INFOE, the newsletter for Friends of the Earth Edinburgh (FoEE). Winter has definitely been making its presence felt recently, but there's still one more interesting event to get you out of your house: the final FoEE public meeting of 2006, on the evening of 30th November.

We have invited Alex Macaulay from SEStran to come and explain what SEStran is all about. The remit of all RTPs covers walking and cycling as well as other forms of transport, so let's hope these sustainable modes of transport will be given suitable priority in the work of the RTP and its Regional Transport Strategy.

September's meeting featured the launch of our Vision for Edinburgh, FoEE's environmental manifesto for the Council elections next May. Councillors and potential candidates came along to give their verdict and promised to implement most of our proposals – we will be keeping an eye on them if elected to check they really do! We then had an interesting meeting in October, the first in our new venue at Augustine United Church. Rebecca Walker of SEPA outlined the contents of the Lothian and Borders Area Waste Plan. See the report of these meetings in this newsletter.

Would you like to get more involved in the running of FoEE? Why not consider joining the committee?



There are a number of spaces available on the committee at the moment, and nominations for new members are welcomed. To be eligible, you need to be a member of Friends of the Earth Scotland, and also of FoEE. At £5 a year, there's really no excuse not to be a member of FoEE, and you can help to contribute towards our campaigns and planning our programme of public meetings.

Our AGM is when elections take place, and this is on Thursday 22nd January 2007 at 6.30pm, followed by the first public meeting of 2007 – topic still to be arranged.

Or perhaps you feel that committee work is not for you, but you would like to contribute more to the group's strategy and planning for the coming year?

All members of FoEE are invited to our annual Strategy Day on Saturday 3rd February, 1.00pm-4.00pm at Lamb's House, Burgess Street in Leith. This is an afternoon when we look back over the past year and plan our strategy for the next 12 months.

It's likely that the local and national elections in May will be the focus of our work for the first few months of the year, but we are happy to discuss other targets and campaign ideas.

And finally, it feels a bit early to be saying this as we go to press, but:

“Seasonal greetings to all readers from Friends of the Earth Edinburgh!”

Helen Todd, FoE Edinburgh

An estimated 20-30,000 people took part in the Stop Climate Chaos rally, I Count, on Saturday 4th November in London's Trafalgar Square. Members of Friends of the Earth Scotland attended.



2007 everyone election campaign



The 2007 everyone election campaign, aimed at getting politicians to sit up and listen to public demands for a better environment in Scotland, will be launched on 30th November. The everyone campaign is an initiative by Scottish Environment LINK, the voice of Scotland's environment movement. Friends of the Earth Scotland is a member of LINK and supports this campaign, which will ask for:

- Green Networks for people and wildlife - pollution free, safe walking and cycling networks to all schools and public centres, with links to well managed wildlife-rich places
- Unprocessed, local and organic food in all Scottish schools - 75% of food should be unprocessed, 50% locally sourced, 30% organic
- Measures to tackle climate change and fuel poverty – green technologies in all public buildings and in 40,000 Scottish homes by 2010
- Better protection and management of Scotland's nature – new laws to protect our seas and landscape and more funding to help halt the loss of species in Scotland

You can get involved – we are looking for people to organise political question time meetings and other local events.

Go to www.everyonecan.org for more information

FoE Edinburgh goes capitalist!

FoEE has been supporting renewable energy on paper for many years, but now we have put our money where our mouth is. We are now investors with a stake in the first wind farm co-operative in Scotland.

Boyndie Co-op was established in 2005 to allow the community in Banffshire and further afield to own a share in the 7-turbine project at Boyndie. Located on a former WWII airfield between Portsoy and Banff on the north coast of Aberdeenshire, these turbines will generate enough energy to supply around 8,500 homes.

The electricity produced by the farm will flow through underground cables to a sub-station located on the site. From the sub-station the electricity feeds into an existing electricity line for distribution to customers in the area without the need for any new overhead lines.

As FoEE had raised enough funds over the past year to cover our campaigning expenses, rather than leave the money in our bank account we felt it would be a useful experience and hopefully a profitable investment to be part of this co-operative. Over 700 investors raised £730,000, with 95% of members coming from Aberdeenshire.

The co-op will now purchase its stake in the wind farm from the operators, Falck Renewables, and all the members will share in the financial benefits over the life of the project. The co-op is democratically managed and the Directors are considering a programme of local environmental initiatives aimed at local schools.

Helen Todd, FoE Edinburgh

For more information, see www.boyndie.coop



Boyndie Wind Farm Co-operative

Edinburgh Students Lobby MPs and MSPs to Stop Climate Chaos

On Friday 27th October, hundreds of Edinburgh University students attended a public meeting organised by People & Planet which called on MPs and MSPs to lobby the government to lay out a climate change bill in the Queen's Speech in November. The event was part of the national Friends of the Earth campaign 'The Big Ask' which is calling on the government to set annual greenhouse emission reduction targets of 3% in a climate bill.

Guests present at the meeting included Gavin Strang, MP for Edinburgh East, John Barrett, MP for Edinburgh West and Colin Fox MSP, leader of the Scottish Socialist Party, as well as a panel of speakers from environmental groups, including Ruth Cameron, the Scottish coordinator of Stop Climate Chaos.

The vast number of students at the meeting demonstrated the importance of environmental issues such as climate change to the student community. People & Planet member Dariush Bazazi stressed the importance of the climate bill, saying: "If this bill is included in the Queen's Speech it will allow the government to reach its own target for emission reduction and will be the most significant step the government can take in tackling climate change."

The meeting began with a talk on the science of climate change by Edinburgh University lecturer David

Sanderson who stated that "climate change is real – the evidence is overwhelming", going on to argue that "future climate change in the next few decades is inevitable – we need to start preparing now."

The meeting continued with students challenging the members of the panel about their stance on climate change and questioning the Edinburgh MPs, MSPs and councillors about individual environmental issues, including the proposed extensions to Glasgow and Edinburgh airports, the need to create more cycle paths across Edinburgh, and whether increasing incentives for people to reduce their individual emissions would help the UK to reach its climate targets.

One of the main debates during the evening centred on whether a 3% reduction in carbon emissions was really enough to combat the dangers faced by climate change. Panel member and Edinburgh University Rector, Mark Ballard MSP, responded by agreeing with the concerns of students: "The question is not does 'The Big Ask' go too far, but does it go far enough?"

Labour MSP Sarah Boyack recognised these concerns but argued that "this is just the start of something. Climate change is the most important issue of our time: we face a massive task but this bill would be a key part in the process of reducing the UK's emissions."

There were also a number of members of environmental groups who attended the meeting to question the panel in person on tough climate change issues. Gary Dunion, Scottish coordinator of the environmental group World Development Movement (part of the Stop Climate Chaos coalition) urged MPs and MSPs to commit to action on climate change, stressing that "climate change is a development issue not just an environmental one because poor countries have contributed least to climate change but stand to suffer its worst effects first."

Reflecting on the meeting, Mark Ballard stated that "the questions tonight really challenged all the politicians, including myself, not only on whether they think climate change is a 'bad thing' but whether they are prepared to make the hard choices that would make a real difference to the climate."

Liz Rawlings, Edinburgh People & Planet

For more on The Big Ask, see www.thebigask.co.uk

Editor's note: The Queen's Speech took place on November 15th. A climate change bill was announced, which will make the UK government's long-term goal of a 60% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2050 a legally binding target. However, it makes no reference to annual CO2 reductions targets.



*Ruth Cameron, Scottish Coordinator
Stop Climate Chaos*



Sarah Boyack MSP



*Mark Ballard MSP and Rector of
Edinburgh University*

Auld Reekie? Not if we can help it

On November 25th, a new pressure group will be launched on the streets of Edinburgh, dedicated to combating the spread of gas-guzzling 4x4s in town. The Edinburgh Alliance Against Urban 4x4s, the latest local branch of the National Alliance Against Urban 4x4s, is the first branch in Scotland. Gregory Norminton explains the group's motivation.

With the seemingly unstoppable growth in transport-related emissions, there has never been a greater need to promote a cultural shift away from irresponsible driving. Our goals are to make driving a big 4x4 as socially unacceptable as drink-driving and to increase taxes on big 4x4 vehicles. We are also demanding an end to 4x4 advertisements in the mainstream media.

Does anyone really need a powerful off-roader to get around the streets of Edinburgh? The fact is that urban 4x4s are appallingly inefficient and dirty, burning as much fuel as three



SMART cars and emitting as many ground-level pollutants as two estate cars. They are dangerous to pedestrians, other car users, and even their own drivers: insurance data shows that urban 4x4s are involved in 25% more accidents than ordinary cars.

With global warming threatening all of us, the time has come to dissuade people from buying gas-guzzling vehicles. The recent announcement of Richmond Borough Council's plan

to increase parking charges for the more polluting vehicles is a sign that – in some places at least – sense is beginning to prevail on this one. But we must keep up the pressure: too many people stand to make too much money from the status quo for us to take positive change for granted.

That's why Saturday 25th November will see volunteers going round Edinburgh issuing fake 'parking tickets' to 4x4s. These spoofs of the city parking ticket explain the damage that urban 4x4s cause, and raise awareness of the link between climate change and public behaviour.

Gregory Norminton, National Alliance Against Urban 4x4s

www.stopurban4x4s.org.uk

For more information or to get hold of some spoof tickets for your own use, visit the blog <http://stopedinburgh4x4s.blogspot.com> or email Gregory Norminton at gdrn@totalise.co.uk

Aktive8

We are happy to announce that we have agreed a reciprocal arrangement with 'Aktive8'. Friends of the Earth Edinburgh members can now take advantage of a 10% discount on full-price items on sale in their shops.

Aktive8 is Edinburgh's leading independent retailer of outdoor clothing and equipment. They have two outlets in Edinburgh: an outdoor shop at 103 Lothian Road, and a bike shop (under the banner of The Bike Chain) at 30 Rodney Street. All their products are also available online at www.aktive8.com. Aktive8 stock all the brands you'd expect to see as well as a few you maybe don't see very often, and pride themselves in being a small company with a big range. The bike shop also offers an extensive repair and



customisation service, carried out by their highly experienced mechanics. Staff at both shops are keen outdoor enthusiasts of many disciplines, from race-winning mountain bikers to hill walkers to ice climbers, so you can be assured of sound advice about most outdoor activities.

FoE Edinburgh members can already take advantage of the deal we have arranged with the Edinburgh City Car Club - www.citycarclub.co.uk.

Contact us if you would like details of the arrangement.

We'd also be interested to hear from other organisations who would be interested in setting up reciprocal arrangements with Friends of the Earth.

Colin Howden, FoE Edinburgh

Visit www.aktive8.com

Edinburgh Groups Faslane Blockade

On 1st October 2006, Faslane 365 was launched: a one year continuous peaceful blockade of the Trident base at Faslane, during which time a wide range of local, national and international groups from all sections of civil society will come to make their visions for a just and peaceful future visible. The first Edinburgh Groups Blockade took place on Friday 13th - Saturday 14th October. Edinburgh activist Lucy StJohn reflects on the experience.

A friend recently asked me about the Faslane 365 experience, implying that she couldn't see much point in this kind of protest. It's something we often have to think about, whether the direct actions we do are genuinely constructive.

The experience itself was wonderful: from the point where the students from the Edinburgh group met at the Mosque Kitchen to gorge ourselves in preparation for the next two days until the moment we all returned, there was a lovely atmosphere. When we arrived at Faslane Peace Camp late on Thursday, expecting to find a patch of floor to hoist our tarp over, we were instead offered shelter in caravans by the campers. This place is amazing: established in 1982, it has common rooms, a toilet/compost heap, and loads of caravans, one with a chair nailed on top, which temporarily confused me, but apparently is used for star gazing.

A few of us went for a wander to the South Gate on that first night to understand better where we were. It's an odd mix: we spent half the walk on a floodlit concrete road next to lethal looking barbed wire fences, followed by cameras, the other half tramping through muddy countryside hardly able to see (I got whacked by branches more times than I was happy with), trusting blindly in our guide to lead us back to camp (he did). The camp is surrounded by trees, so that you could almost forget there is a nuclear weapons' base just down the road.



A policewoman watches over Amy Naumann and Will Roper, Edinburgh People & Planet activists

We arrived at the North Gate the next morning at around 7am. Our theme was carnival and there were all kinds of colourful props: balloons, ribbons and hats, juggling balls. We even had a unicyclist. Other people from the Edinburgh group had a sound system, so music and banners added to the effect. There was also a plan hidden behind the festivities: for some of the group to lock on to each other and block the North Gate, stopping the traffic flow.

But a plan which had seemed logical in Edinburgh suddenly seemed ridiculous in the light of around thirty police officers guarding the gate. I don't know how long everyone would have waited before making a run for it, except that one lock on tube got impatient, and fell out of its hiding place to the floor and lay there, quite obviously - which was a bit of a prompt! The lock-on-ers ran out, and simultaneously two brave gentlemen jumped over the fence. Presumably because they were male, the majority of the police dived at them, so it is probably thanks to those two that the lock-on worked!

Our group, of course, split at this point. After a while the police sawed/cut through the tubes, and added us to our two heroic friends who had already been arrested, chucking in a couple of innocent extras for good measure. In most ways, though, the officers were absolutely lovely. We had a good chat with a couple of them, and in my cell at least were well looked after, even given extra

food, plus pencils and paper. The lady looking after us even hugged us goodbye when the long Bob Marley singing-filled thirty hours was finished.

I can imagine the cell experience would have been pretty different if left on our own the whole time (it is basically just you, a plastic mat and an interesting smelling toilet in a seventeen by fourteen foot cell, and yes, I did count, thirty hours is a long time), but we were lucky, as they put us in groups of three to a cell.

The rest of the Edinburgh group stayed on for the day, getting the anti-nuclear message out to the drivers passing. Some stayed at the ever hospitable Peace Camp another night and left the next afternoon. When everyone re-grouped at home in Edinburgh, there was an incredibly positive vibe from the experience, definitely contributed to by the people we'd met, peace protesters and police alike.

Ultimately, the presence of nuclear weapons seems to be an issue which the government has partly been getting away with thanks to the lack of common public pressure about the issue. Faslane 365, I hope, will contribute to bringing it back to the public eye. If it does that, or even gets the attention of some, then the actions done will be incredibly constructive. They might even in a small way contribute to the changing of our national future.

Lucy StJohn, Edinburgh People & Planet

Petition the Prime Minister not to replace the Trident nuclear weapons system at <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/trident/>

For more information on Faslane 365, visit www.faslane365.org/



September Meeting: Launch of Environmental Manifesto

The launch of FoEE's Environmental Manifesto for Edinburgh was held on Thursday 28th September 2006, at the Friends Meeting House. This meeting was an opportunity to present our vision document and 'demands' to the major political parties, in the hope that they would take our comments and wishes on board when preparing their manifestos for the next council term. All demands were considered to be realistic and achievable over the next council term – that is to say, four years.

In attendance at the meeting, chaired by David Spaven of TRANSform Scotland, were Cllr Maureen Child (Labour), Steve Burgess (Green Party), Shirley Ann Summerville (SNP) and Cllr Mark McInnes (Conservative). Each speaker had their own unique perspective about Edinburgh and its progress in relation to the five vision areas laid out in our manifesto: resources, energy, food, development and transport.

Labour Cllr Maureen Child was very positive about the progress that the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) had made over the last four years, and the plans for the future, labelling the council as 'inspired'. She pointed out many areas in which the council was becoming the lead authority in the Lothians, and well on its way

to becoming the most sustainable city in Europe by 2015. From the current Labour perspective, CEC is a council to be very proud of with its progressive thinking and planning.

Conservative Cllr Mark McInnes was very positive about all the topics that the vision covered, and gave many examples of where the Conservative councillors were pushing a green agenda when their constituents wanted them to, such as when their local bit of green belt was at risk, or campaigning to keep local shops thriving. Although he did not support the whole document, he made it clear that the Conservatives did support certain sections, especially the recycling aspect.

Unsurprisingly, Steve Burgess of the Greens was very supportive of all of the FoEE demands - the Green Party campaign actively on all five of the topics. Shirley Ann Summerville (SNP) did not give her response to our vision as such, instead choosing to speak about the SNP's environmental agenda, which included an anti-nuclear stance and sustainable housing. However, the SNP did make a commitment to incorporate FoEE's vision in their manifesto where possible.

All representatives spoke very supportively of the vision, and all

promised to take the document away and use it when setting out their new manifestoes. We were told that the Greens would work hard at making our vision demands a reality in Edinburgh. The Labour party were very supportive and Cllr Child showed genuine personal commitment to reducing her own environmental impact, as well as working to further the council's environmental policies. The SNP has an environmental agenda, but it is slightly different to ours, taking in bigger issues which the FoEE vision does not incorporate, but the party is happy to look at our vision document when devising its own new manifesto in the coming months.

Finally, I have been very surprised at the commitment that the Conservative Party has recently expressed for environmental issues - Cllr McInnes said that due to David Cameron's commitments, environmental issues were becoming high on the agenda for the Conservatives and that they were taking steps to practise what they preach and to change party practices to become more environmentally friendly. It remains to be seen whether this really will be borne out.

Katriona Harding, FoE Edinburgh

October Meeting: Scottish Environment Protection Agency

Rebecca Walker, SEPA, gave a talk at the Friends of the Earth Public Meeting in Edinburgh on 26th October to address the proposed Lothian and Borders Area Waste Plan alteration. This proposed alteration is to ensure that what is implemented in the Lothian and Borders is the 'Best Practicable Environmental Option' for the area.

Since the publication of the Lothian and Borders Area Waste Plan in 2003, waste management has evolved, and issues such as new legislation and advances in

technologies need to be taken into consideration. We also need to be certain of the delivery of the Landfill Directive Targets. Whilst our efforts so far, including a continuation of 'Reduce, Reuse and Recycle', will help us to meet the 2010 target, residual waste treatment will be needed to ensure we meet the longer term goals of the Landfill Directive and meet the targets in 2013 and 2020.

A Best Practicable Environmental Option Review and a Strategic Environment Assessment have

been carried out to assess the potential impact of draft options and to compare and contrast these draft options. To maintain the spirit of open and transparent decision-making, the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Best Practical Environmental Option Review will shortly be going out to consultation.

Emma Margrett, FoE Edinburgh

Trams Update

Within a year, we could see the start of construction of a modern tram network for the city. Should the trams go ahead, Edinburgh would benefit from a major improvement in the quality of its public transport services. The City Council is due to agree the business case for the trams at its meeting in late December – and it is important that those who want to see better public transport and less pollution in Edinburgh make their voices heard.

Trams will provide an attractive alternative to the car and make a substantial improvement to Edinburgh's public transport system, thus reducing car journeys, congestion and pollution. Friends of the Earth Edinburgh are strongly supportive of the development of a tram network for Edinburgh, having given evidence to the Scottish Parliament back in 2003. The tram parliamentary Bills have now been passed into law, but it remains to be seen whether the Scottish Executive will provide the funding to make the trams become reality.

Trams offer a number of important advantages. They provide better reliability, capacity and levels of comfort than buses. They allow level access for boarding, allowing easier access for those with mobility problems. Unlike buses, they produce no local air pollution emissions. Finally, they provide a positive image for public transport,

one which has been shown to be effective at attracting people away from car use.

In short, on primary routes such as Leith Walk, the bus system has reached the limits of its potential. Only a tram system can deliver the type of public transport experience taken for granted in many European cities. Nottingham and Dublin have recently opened successful and profitable tram routes, while in Manchester there is public clamour for extension to its tram network.

The opponents of congestion charging in Edinburgh said that no action should be taken to increase the price paid by road users until better public transport alternatives were in place. The trams *are* that better public transport alternative.

Friends of the Earth are calling for those who want to see better public transport and a better environment to make their views known to their local Councillors in advance of December's Council meeting. If the trams don't go ahead – and the last proposals for trams in Edinburgh fifteen years ago failed – then Edinburgh will be a laughing stock across Europe, *and quite rightly so*. Now is the time for the City Council and the Scottish Executive to press ahead and change its pro-public transport rhetoric into action.

Jolin Warren, FoE Edinburgh

Notices

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.

This newsletter is printed on 100% post-consumer waste. Editors: Juliette Daire, Colin Howden, Greig Robertson and Helen Todd.

Would you like to help us out with the next newsletter?

FoE Edinburgh is looking for a volunteer newsletter editor. Duties would entail commissioning articles, chasing up and editing copy, publishing and distributing the newsletter. Editions go out five times a year, and would involve around five hours' work each time. FoE Edinburgh committee members would give support. Contact Helen Todd for more information on 0131 553 6869 or email HTodd@foe-edinburgh.org.uk

Dates for Diaries

Thursday 30th November

FoE Edinburgh Public Meeting

7.30pm, Augustine United Church, George IV Bridge

Alex Macaulay, Partnership Director SEStran, will talk about their Regional Transport Strategy. For more details, see www.sestran.gov.uk

Friday 1st December

World AIDS Day Ceilidh

7.30pm, Greyfriars Kirk, Greyfriars Place

Dance the night away with acclaimed ceilidh band The Reel Thing, in aid of Waverley Care. Tickets available from 0131 2251900

Thursday 25th January

FoE Edinburgh AGM & Public Meeting

6.30pm, Augustine United Church, George IV Bridge

All members of FoEE, and all prospective members, are invited to our AGM. The business part of the AGM will start at 6.30pm, with the usual public meeting (topic TBA) following at 7.30pm. Nominations for the committee are welcomed.

Saturday 3rd February

FoE Edinburgh Strategy Day

1-4pm, Lamb's House, Burgess Street

All members are invited to this annual Strategy Day.

