

Issue No. 28

April/May 2007

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Spring Issue

Vote Anarchist?



Public meeting talk by
Prof. Alan Carter

Thursday 26th April,
7.30-9.00pm,
Quaker Meeting House

Free admittance.
All welcome.

Interested in politics but fed up with politicians arguing amongst themselves?

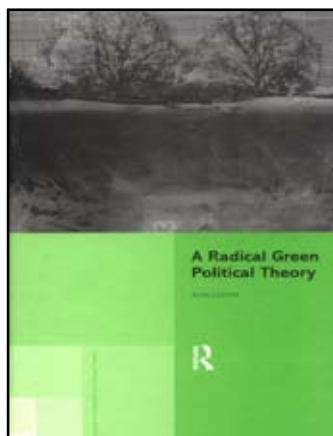
Concerned about the environment but not sure if our institutions are able to respond to climate change?

We may have the answer to your problems: come and listen to Professor Alan Carter give a talk on **“Marxism, anarchism and radical green politics”**

Alan Carter was a member of the Board of Directors of Friends of the Earth (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) for nearly a decade and chaired its Local Groups Committee. He is the author of “A Radical Green Political Theory” and is currently Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow - a position previously held by Adam Smith.

All welcome, free admittance.

Note: our public meetings have now moved back to the Quaker Meeting House, Victoria Terrace



FoE Edinburgh Campaigns Group

Want to get more actively involved in FoE Edinburgh? Come along to our monthly campaigns meetings.

The next one will be held on **Thursday 10th May, 7.30pm**, Lamb's House.

For more information, call Helen Todd

07733 118289

or email:

htodd@foe-edinburgh.org.uk



Coordinator's Comments



Welcome to the latest edition of INFOE, the newsletter of Friends of the Earth Edinburgh (FoEE).

Spring is finally here, and so is election fever. In a couple of weeks, on 3rd May, we will have the chance to vote in our first PR local elections in Edinburgh, and also to elect a new Scottish Parliament, possibly involving a change of government. At FoEE we have been working with other environmental groups and engaging with politicians at both levels. We are trying to push the environment up the agenda of all political parties. In February we had a talk by Duncan McLaren, Chief Executive of FoE Scotland, in which he outlined which issues he felt would be important in the

coming election. In March we held an environmental hustings co-hosted with WWF Scotland and chaired by Rob Edwards, Environmental Editor of the Sunday Herald. Both these meetings were very well attended, showing that there are a lot of people in Edinburgh who are concerned about green issues and also interested in the coming elections. See reports of these meetings in this newsletter.

However, if you've had a bit too much electioneering by now, our next meeting on 26th April may be more of interest, as Professor Alan Carter discusses 'Marxism, Anarchism and Radical Green Politics'. Alan is a member of FoEE, so we are pleased to have an opportunity to listen to what he gets up to in his day job, and ask him a few questions. Our following meeting on 31st May features Osbert Lancaster of the Centre for Human Ecology and we will have one more meeting on 28th June. Please note that we have returned to our former home at the Quaker Meeting House for all forthcoming public meetings this spring and summer.

Just to get you in the mood for the festival season, we will be holding our annual Comedy Night at the Stand on Wednesday 18th July. This is always a sell-out event and the money raised is crucial for funding our campaigning work, so please

come along and join in the fun. Details on how to get tickets are given in this newsletter.

We now have a regular campaigns meeting on the second Thursday of every month, and are planning various long and short, easy and more complicated actions. Last weekend we had a stall on Princes Street, encouraging people to "Vote with Your Feet", in support of the everyone campaign (see <www.everyonecan.org>) and we need more activists for future work. The next campaigns meeting will be held on Thursday 10th May at 7.30pm at FoE Scotland's offices at Lamb's House, Burgess Street.

We hope to see you again soon at one of our public meetings or a campaigns meeting, and in the meantime, don't forget to tell electoral candidates how important the environment is to you!

*Helen Todd,
Coordinator, FoE Edinburgh*

Fix the Bridge!

You can tell there's an election around the corner; the politicians are falling over themselves to promise the earth to anyone with a voting card in their hand. As usual, one of the biggest target groups for the parties are the motorists and road enthusiasts. Business leaders and chambers of commerce are fuelling the notion that any threat to the 43-year old road crossing between West Lothian and Fife will devastate the local economy, ruin thousands of Fifers and lead eventually to economic meltdown across the nation.

These doom-mongers ignore the fact that a newly upgraded Kincardine Bridge will soon be open to traffic, siphoning off lorries and passenger traffic bound for central Scotland, as well as the south; one glance at a road atlas demonstrates the myth being put about by the bridge and tunnel campaigners that southbound freight and passenger vehicles need the Forth road bridge in order to get to England. The truth is that most road traffic from northern Scotland would far prefer to go by Kincardine and down the M74.

But myths maketh the MSP, and thereby the parliament. If the myths are believed, we are going to end up with a make-believe government, trying to implement Neverland policies. In the febrile atmosphere of a general election campaign, it's hard to separate myth from reality, and then to communicate that distinction to enough voters to prevent them from being misled.

Take for example Brian Monteith, the Evening News columnist who goes by the strapline: BLUE-SKY THINKING. Mr Monteith didn't bother to read the Greens' manifesto properly, and thus managed to misunderstand it completely. He claimed that the Green party wants to scrap "the replacement Forth Road Bridge." They don't. The party supports my campaign for ministers to wait until

independent consultants report whether or not the road bridge can be repaired. Not content with that little piece of misinformation, Mr Monteith then piles on another distortion. He claims that the rail bridge can barely take more trains. But the truth is that the limiting factor - slow-moving coal trains - is about to be removed. This summer the line will be freed up for passenger expansion when Kincardine power station gets its coal trains in from Hunterston direct.

The problem is that many newspaper publishers have vested interests in policies which boost their businesses. Take the Scotsman, owned by the same crowd which run the Evening News. A huge part of the papers' income is from advertising property, much of it in Fife, so any transport policy which might just threaten the opportunities for Fife housebuyers to drive to work in Edinburgh has to be opposed; cue the paper's successful campaign to persuade the Executive to pledge a new crossing. There are plenty of other commercial lobbyists campaigning hard to convince candidates and voters that more road links are a good idea.

The lobbyists know that some awkward buggers (like me) will question their antics. So they indulge in dis-information, a subtle form of manipulation in which the voter is duped into believing technical jargon and scientific gossip as fact. In the case of the road bridge, technical opinion is widely varied. Engineering, after all, is a science, and there are sometimes few hard and fast answers in science. The people who run the bridge, the Forth Estuary Transport Authority report that it is suffering from a number of worsening problems, from cable wire corrosion, to anchor point deterioration. They warn that if nothing is done then heavy lorries may have to stop thundering across the bridge by 2014, with cars banned a few years later. So the newspaper hacks and the pro-roads campaigners rush out a tell everyone the bridge is doomed.



(The idea of making lorries slow down a bit to reduce wear and tear is never even suggested). But FETA also say that they intend to save the bridge using a variety of methods ranging from de-humidifying the cables to arrest the corrosion (a technique which has been successfully used in Japanese suspension bridges) to replacement of the cables (which worked on the Tagus suspension bridge in Lisbon). If de-humidification works, I was told, the bridge could last 120 years. That's right, over a century!

There are a lot of vested interests rushing to condemn a 43-year old bridge which just needs a bit more respect and TLC. The tunnelers, bridgers and politicians can bleat all they like about needing a new crossing. But if they want to do it with our money, they should wait until the expert consultants have published their reports, and not use bridges to win elections.

Sign the petition at:

<www.epetitions.scottish.parliament.uk>

Bruce Whitehead

Bruce is a South Queensferry cyclist and doesn't want a new crossing in ANYONE'S back yard

brucek3@aol.com
07944 928 702

Trams, trains and a bridge too far!

There's a real railway revival flavour to current goings on in the Edinburgh transport world. However there has unfortunately, also, been some backward transport policy regarding a Second Forth Road Bridge.

Fifty years on from when trams last operated in Edinburgh works on the 21st century Edinburgh tram project have now begun in the north of the city.

In the south of the city, works at Waverley Station temporarily left passenger trains running along the route of the South Suburban Railway, out of operation as a passenger route for forty-five years. This has prompted renewed calls to reinstate the South Sub route.

Finally on the outskirts of the city debate continues as MSPs rush into an ill-informed decision on a second Forth crossing. For a more in-depth look at some of the issues have a look at Bruce Whitehead's article on page 3 of this issue.

Trams

It has been a long time coming but it looks like the trams are finally on track. Voted in with an overwhelming majority in the Council Chambers in December of last year, the Edinburgh Tram project has enjoyed strong party support from nearly all those represented in the chamber, lone SNP councillor Steve Cardownie being the one exception. The SNP have said that they would cancel the project if come May 2007 they held power in the Executive and would instead put money into the bus network.

Approval of the final business case for lines 1 & 2 is due in September 2007. If you are concerned about ensuring the project goes ahead make sure you write to your MSP and Councillor to let them know before then.

Works are then expected to last four years with the first trams up and running by 2011.

The original proposal outlined three tram lines. Two of these lines have been approved but funds for the Granton spur have still to be secured. Still to be approved is Tram Line 3 which would run from the City Centre towards the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. With the route linking up many of the University of Edinburgh's campuses, students from the university are spearheading the campaign to secure Tram Line 3.

South Sub

Freight still regularly runs on the Edinburgh South Suburban but passenger trains have not been in operation on the route for almost half a century. The circular route connecting Gorgie to Portobello via Morningside, Duddingston and Niddrie is fully functional but no longer has any stations on it. Passenger trains have recently used the route to divert from ongoing works at Waverley station.

The campaign outfit Capital Rail Action Group (CRAG) are currently heading calls to reopen the route as a fully functional passenger line.

Reopening the line at a cost of £15 million would provide those living and working in the Southside of Edinburgh with an efficient a rail link to Waverley and the planned interchange at Haymarket - and at very little cost compared to projects such as the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link.

CRAG are currently collecting signatures in support of their petition to reopen the south sub.

The petition can be found online at <www.reopenthesouthsub.org.uk>

Jenny Brotchie
TRANSform Scotland



A passenger train runs along the Edinburgh South Suburban Railway

So why are trams so great?

From an environmental point of view trams are the bee's knees!

- Running on their own separate lane trams offer a high capacity transport option that won't get stuck in general congestion.
- Trams offer a attractive alternative to the car for die-hard motorists (and have been shown to be more effective at encouraging people out of cars and on to public transport than buses).
- Trams are emission-free at street level (no noxious fumes).
- Trams put in place a transport system that is not reliant on oil (they have the potential to be run entirely on renewable sources).

March meeting: Environmental Election Hustings



Barbara Scott (SSP), Mark Ballard MSP (Green), Siobhan Mathers (Lib Dem), Sarah Boyack MSP and Deputy Environment Minister (Labour), Rob Edwards, Fiona Houston (Conservative), Shirley-Anne Somerville (SNP) and Pat Smith (Solidarity)

Whatever your politics, if you're reading this newsletter the chances are that you are concerned about green issues, and the way each party plans to address environmental problems. Our hustings on 29th March, held jointly with WWF Scotland, was an excellent opportunity to find out what each party's line is on various green topics. Chaired with a firm hand and a sense of humour by Rob Edwards, Environment Editor of the Sunday Herald (who used the opportunity to ask some of his own, rather cheeky, questions), all seven Edinburgh candidates were put through their paces by the audience.

Candidates who let themselves in for this green grilling were Mark Ballard MSP (Green), Sarah Boyack MSP and Deputy Environment Minister (Labour), Fiona Houston (Conservative), Siobhan Mathers (Lib Dem), Barbara Scott (SSP), Pat Smith (Solidarity) and Shirley-Anne Somerville (SNP). Thanks to all of them for their contributions.

First of all candidates were given two minutes to tell us what their environmental priorities were. These included more renewables (SNP), the need to think long-term and conserve our environment (Tory), decentralised energy (Labour), taking 2% from income tax to fight pollution (Lib Dems), a diverse local economy not based on ever-increasing GDP

(Greens), free public transport (SSP) and the recognition that human beings can change the environment (Solidarity).

No surprises there, then.

SNP, Solidarity, the Greens, Lib Dems and SSP all stated their opposition to nuclear power, but the Tories still felt that nuclear was needed to fill the "gap" in electricity generation left by renewables. Labour's party line is that nuclear should only be an option once the problem of waste has been resolved, but Sarah Boyack did admit that personally she was anti-nuclear and felt happy to hold that position within her party.

Other questions related to the Executive's transport policies, but there was no consensus within the panel in their support for the trams, a second Forth Road Bridge and the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link. Support was expressed by several candidates for a high speed rail link to London, and also for improved provision for cyclists; but unfortunately cyclists have heard this all before and whether better cycle facilities are delivered or not remains to be seen.

All parties agreed that the environment should be the context within everything else should be considered, except for Solidarity who felt that the economic system was more of a context (although not the system we currently have, needless

to say). There was no agreement, however, on whether the Parliament had done a good job over the past 8 years, with Labour and the Lib Dems feeling proud of what had been achieved, while the SNP, Greens and Tories were less than impressed.

Finally, since climate change seems to be the most important environmental issue, the candidates were asked what was the second most important issue. Answers included inequality (SSP), pollution (Greens), habitat degradation (Lib Dems), spending priorities for Scotland's annual £32 billion (Labour), reducing energy consumption (Tory) and agreement from SNP and Solidarity on scrapping nuclear power and Trident.

The candidates showed themselves to be well-informed and they all rose to the challenges of the audience. Whether they managed to win any support for their parties will be revealed on 3rd May!

Helen Todd
FoE Edinburgh

“The environment and the election: is anybody listening?”

Well, yes, we are, if the turn out to the February FoEE public meeting is anything to go by!

On Thursday 22nd February, Friends of the Earth Edinburgh were joined by well-kent speaker and environmentalist Duncan McLaren, Chief Executive of Friends of the Earth Scotland, to discuss the Environment and the election.

Duncan began his talk by trying to give the attendees an insight into the way that Scottish voters typically vote. It was readily apparent that the people in the room did not vote in the usual way - far from it! Most of the 40 people who attended the meeting based their voting decision on the party that has the policies that they agreed with. The few who did not, voted according to the party that they had always voted for, and a very small minority voted according to the individual who was standing for election.

This way of voting is not the norm it seems. The majority of Scots vote for the party they have always voted for, without taking policy into consideration, and a significant proportion also vote for the candidate if they like them, regardless of policy or party.

But whichever way one chooses to vote there is no doubting that this year the environment has moved much higher up the political agenda, and the parties are keen to plug their green credentials to the electorate.

There are a number of drivers that have lead to environmental issues being taken seriously, including the increased public awareness of issues such as climate change, and the fact that the Scottish economy is buoyant and excellent partnership working from all the environmental NGOs (Scottish Environment LINK campaign).

Duncan predicted that there will be political issues that the environmental sector will tackle,

some which will be popular and others not. Transport, Renewables, Waste, Nuclear and Climate targets will all be tackled by the NGOs but only some, mainly nuclear and Climate targets will be backed by popular opinion across the board.

With Scotland's proportional representation system in place and 7 green MSP's already in place in Holyrood, Duncan predicted that with the increased awareness and the campaigning by the NGO's, Green representation in the Scottish Parliament can only get better.

Duncan finished his talk with a stark warning- the next government is the last government that can stop climate change, as after that it will be too late to halt the slide into climate chaos.

Katriona Harding, FoE Edinburgh

Edinburgh students demand an end to DFID's dirty development

Members of People & Planet (P&P) Edinburgh travelled to East Kilbride where the Department for International Development (DFID) has offices for about 500 of its staff. As part of their 'Ditch Dirty Development' campaign, they are calling on DFID to stop funding oil and gas extraction projects through the World Bank and massively increase support for renewable, decentralised energy in the developing world.

At the moment, the World Bank spends vast amounts of money earmarked for 'poverty reduction' on fossil fuel projects, many of which end in exports to the West to sustain our addiction. In 2006, the budget for oil and gas projects went from \$462 million to \$893 million, while the money for new renewables fell slightly from \$212 million to \$190 million. This indicates the totally wrong direction in which the World Bank is heading, entrenching emissions for decades to come despite all the talk of urgent action on climate change by (some) world leaders. The UK is one of the top five shareholders in the Bank, entitling it to appoint a Director to the Board who must approve each funding decision. DFID and the Treasury represent UK taxpayers' money at the Bank and have significant influence.

P&P members demonstrated outside the offices by constructing a giant oil pipeline, along with banners reading 'End Aid for Oil' and 'Don't spOil our World'. They also contrasted this with an 'alternative energy centre' of solar panels and a working wind turbine. In the afternoon, five members were invited to meet with senior civil servants inside the offices. The officials were genuinely interested in the campaign and there was wide-ranging discussion for almost an hour. They argued that revenues from the sale of oil and gas can have a positive development impact, despite all the evidence to the contrary and their inability



to give a single example of a successful project. People & Planet then presented a petition gathered on campus of around two hundred postcards addressed to cabinet minister Hilary Benn.

DFID has stated that climate change posed the most serious threat to the Millennium Development Goals. The recent IPCC reports have warned yet again that it is the poorest who will be hit hardest by climate change so it is entirely inconsistent to be supporting oil and gas extraction with public money. P&P are asking DFID to draw up an energy and climate change strategy to govern all its activities. P&P urge the government to use all its influence in the World Bank to set it on a sustainable path.

For more information, see <http://peopleandplanet.org/ditchdirtydevelopment>

Ben Miller
People & Planet Edinburgh
<http://pandp.eusa.ed.ac.uk>

Edinburgh People & Planet is part of a national network of People & Planet groups throughout UK Universities. They work on many issues, including Fairtrade & Trade Justice, Ethical Investment & Research, Peace & Justice, the Environment & Climate Change and Cooperatives.

Friends of the Vine

The null hypothesis: There are no good organic wines available in the Edinburgh area that cost under £6.

As a part of their civic duty to society, three Friends of the Earth Edinburgh volunteers stepped up to the challenge of rigorous non-scientific tasting of organic wine found in Edinburgh. While all three are passionate about their wine, not one claims to have any 'nose' for proper wine tasting.

Chateau Du Parc, 2005, Coteaux Du Languedoc (6 out of 7)

Available at M&S

Cost: £4.99
Smell: "Yummy"

Slightly flora and oak, but tasters had consumed too much lime-pickle to really clearly tell.

Taste: "It's got porridge in all the right places!"

Full-bodied, thick, fruity, medium dry with not to much length

Colour: Deep Garnet

Aesthetics: Understated colour scheme, with possible visual conflict between the traditional lettering and the mildly-pagan shield. Overall non-offensive but non-inspiring

Does it do what it says on the back of the bottle?

"A soft, ripe red, with a lovely spicy, peppery cherry fruitiness and a hint of toffeed richness."

Soft, ripe red - sure thing.
Lovely spicy, - hmm, can get a hint of that.
Peppery - not really
Cherry Fruitiness - Absolutely
Toffeed richness - eh?

Other notes: Natural Cork, vegetarian



Origin Naturals Pinotage 2005 (South African) (5 out of 7)

Available at the High Street Victoria Wine

Cost: £5.99
Grapes: 100% Pinotage
Smell: Rich, musky, smokey
Taste: Full bodied, lasting flavour - good porridge and stamina; Medium dry;

Rich flavoured; Not fruity

Colour: Deep Plum

Aesthetics: Juxtaposition of oval label paired with rectangular label reminiscent of someone who has just discovered multiple fonts. (Text art not appropriate. In any circumstance.) Individually, labels nice. Bottle colour lighter green, which some members of the panel like. 'Origin Naturals' - what does that mean and why did they trademark it? Reminiscent of organic shampoo or organic feminine hygiene products. Not wine

Does it do what it says on the back of the bottle?

"Ripe and sweet fruited wine, packed full of mulberry, blackberry and damson fruit. Soft smooth finish."

Ripe - certainly
Sweet fruited - not really
Mulberry, blackberry and damson - eh?
Soft smooth finish - sure, we will give them that

Other notes: Screw top

Sainsbury's SO Organic Shiraz 2005 (French) (4.5 out of 7)

Cost: £5.49
Grapes: 100% Shiraz
Smell: Fruity, pleasant,...like red wine

(Note...in trying to smell this wine, two of the esteemed tasters accidentally inhaled the wine ...)

Taste: initial flavour is very nice, but no length and body has less porridge than tasters would like

Very drinkable, not particularly dry, not hugely sweet

Good when snorted

Colour: Red
Aesthetics: Does what it says on the tin - recognisable. A bit too much text...generic branding - lacks flair.

Does it do what it says on the back of the bottle?

"Full bodied and spicy"

Full-bodied - not really
Spicy - only when snorted

Other notes: Natural Cork, vegetarian

The Chateau Du Parc, 2005 is certainly our favourite to date. Many bottles of this have been consumed since our first meeting with this lovely wine. But there are more lovelies to be found - so stay tuned for our next edition!

Kitty Cook, Zippy Mendelsohn and Jo Walker

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 **07733 118289**

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: Helen Todd, David Atiyah

Environmentalists at Faslane

Thursday 26th April
Chernobyl Day
<www.faslane365.org>

On the 21st anniversary of the Chernobyl Disaster, activists and supporters from a number of Scottish environmental groups and networks will be holding a series of events outside the Faslane nuclear submarine base to protest against the government's plans to build more nuclear power stations and Trident replacement.

Friends of the Earth Scotland will be rallying from 8am to midday at the main gate with their huge inflatable white elephant to highlight that new nuclear power stations are unsafe, unwanted and unnecessary.

Buses to leave Edinburgh at 5am - for more information or to book places

please contact
<environmentalists@faslane365.org> or phone 0131 554 9977

Diary of Events

Thursday 26th April

FoEE public meeting

Topic: "*Marxism, Anarchism and Radical Green Politics*", Professor Alan Carter
7.30-9.00pm
Quaker Meeting House,

Thursday 10th May

FoEE Campaigns Group meeting

7.30-9.00pm
Lamb's House, Burgess Street

Thursday 31st May

FoEE public meeting

Topic: "*Ethical Enterprise*", Osbert Lancaster, Centre for Human Ecology
7.30-9.00pm
Quaker Meeting House,

Saturday 2nd June

Friends of the Earth Scotland Members' Day and AGM

9.30am - 4.00pm
Lamb's House, Burgess Street

Sat. 9th & Sun. 10th June

Edinburgh TreeFest

11.00am - 5.00pm
Inverleith Park,
<www.edinburghreeffest.org.uk>

Friday 15th - Sunday 17th June

Falkland Big Tent Festival

<www.bigtentfestival.co.uk>

19th - 30th June

Edinburgh World Justice Festival

Series of events
<www.ewjf.org.uk>

Wednesday 20th June

Spokes Bike Breakfast

8.00-10.00am
City Chambers

Thursday 28th June

FoEE public meeting

Speaker: Kirstie Shirra, WDM Scotland
7.30-9.00pm
Quaker Meeting House,

Wednesday 18th July

FoEE Comedy Benefit

7.30 till late
The Stand Comedy Club, York Place



Friends of the Earth Benefit Night

Make a Stand for a Better Planet

THE STAND COMEDY CLUB
5 York Place Edinburgh EH1 3EB

Wednesday 18th July 2007

Doors open 7.30pm
Show begins 8.30pm

A night of fun and laughter for a great cause

Hot food available
Raffle prizes to be won

Tickets £7

Available from:
The STAND on 0131 558 7272 or

Friends of the Earth Edinburgh
<comedy@foe-edinburgh.org.uk>

For more info:
<www.foe-edinburgh.org.uk>

Book early – this event is always a sell-out!

Environmental hustings

Events organised by the
everyone campaign

More details at
www.everyonecan.org

Glasgow, 25th April, 7.30pm,
Hillhead Library, Byres Road

Livingston, 25th April, 7-9pm,
Inveralmond High School

Perth, 25th April, 7pm,
St Matthew's Church Hall, Tay Street

Stirling, 26th April, 7.30pm
Stirling Methodist Church