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- Autumn Events

Autumn Issue

How will the Parliament tackle climate change?

September's FoEE Public Meeting

Thursday, 27th September, 7.30pm

Talk by **Patrick Harvie**, Green MSP for Glasgow and Convener of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee in the Scottish Parliament.

Patrick's committee will be responsible for scrutinising the Climate Change Bill through Parliament. At this stage the timescale for this Bill is unclear.

The Bill encompasses energy, transport, food, consumerism and plenty of other issues of interest to environmentalists. He will be explaining the parliamentary process and what consultation will be taking place with the public – and how you can get involved.

This talk will end around 9.15pm

Full details of Patrick's work and interests can be found on his website. <www.patrickharviemsp.com>

Location: Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2JL

Free admittance. All welcome.

See back page for information about **Friends of the Earth Scotland National Gathering** on **Saturday, September 29th** which is all about the **UK Climate Change Bill**



FoEE Campaign Meetings

In addition to our monthly public meetings, for anyone interested in getting involved with our local campaigns, we hold separate FoEE Campaign Meetings

Next monthly campaigns meeting:

Thursday 11th October, 7.30pm

Venue: **Rose Street**

For more information, call **07733 118289** or email: <htodd@foe-edinburgh.org.uk>

Coordinator's Comments



Welcome to the autumn edition of INFOE, the newsletter of Friends of the Earth Edinburgh (FoEE). After having a break over the summer, our autumn programme starts again on Thursday 27th September, when we are delighted to have as a speaker Patrick Harvie MSP, Convener of the Committee for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change. This committee will be steering the proposed Climate Change Bill through Parliament, and Patrick will be able to explain the timetable for this important bill and how we can contribute to the consultation process.

Our last summer public meeting included an interesting presentation on Climate Justice by Kirstie Shirra

of World Development Movement on 28th June, an event timed to coincide with the Edinburgh World Justice Festival. Kirstie involved all participants in discussions looking at various topics such as carbon offsetting. She showed us how these affected the populations of the world's poorest nations, helping to raise our awareness of just how far our own lifestyles impact on the fate of countries like Bangladesh and Zambia.

Our comedy night on 18th July was very successful, raising over £1,100 towards our campaigning activities for the next year. Thanks to everyone involved in organising the event, and to those who came along and gave us their support. The annual FoEE vegetarian barbecue was held on 25th August to thank members and other activists who have been involved in the group over the past year. We even managed to pick a rain-free day, quite a feat this summer!

Our Campaigns group has been meeting regularly throughout the year and we are now focussing our attention on the lack of an effective, enlightened environmental policy for the Edinburgh festivals. This was an issue highlighted in issue 25 of INFOE, and on pages 4/5 of this issue, and we are now pushing more strongly for improvements. There are signs that the Council is listening - a letter sent in July to the Leader of the

Council, Cllr Jenny Dawe, resulted in paper recycling bins being placed on the Royal Mile for all those fliers, but clearly there is much more to be done. Smaller festivals like Hay-on-Wye have shown the way, and with competition from Manchester and other festivals, Edinburgh needs to work a bit harder to retain its place out at the front. If you are interested in getting involved and contributing to the campaign, come along to our next meeting on 11th October, 7.30 at 5 Rose Street.

Finally, a goodbye and a welcome. Katriona Harding is leaving the committee this autumn to head off to Canada to work in ski resorts. Katriona has been on the committee for several years and will be greatly missed, though we hope she will think about re-joining when she comes back to Edinburgh. And welcome to Alice Searle, who was co-opted to the committee at the last meeting. We are pleased that she is joining us, and look forward to assigning all those action points to her! There are still a couple of places vacant on the committee if anyone else would like to join us and contribute to the work of the group.

Hope to see you on this Thursday, 27th September!

Helen Todd
Coordinator, FoE Edinburgh

Ship to Ship Oil Transfers in the Forth - update

In June, the Scottish Parliament approved regulations giving significant extra protection to wildlife sites in Scotland designated under the EU Birds' and Habitats' Directives. The new regulations give Scottish ministers powers to ensure that "competent authorities" properly assess the implications for these sites of all types of development proposal. An authority wishing to consent a potentially damaging proposal must consult with ministers and abide by any direction by them on "imperative reasons of over-riding public interest."

This welcome development expands on earlier changes to the legal regime protecting European wildlife sites, following a 2005 European Court judgement against the United Kingdom. These introduced improved procedures for assessing development plans and water abstraction projects that might affect European sites – but for no other type of plan or project. RSPB Scotland argued in response to last year's consultation that these changes did not go far enough and that existing procedures should be applied to all types of proposal. The

June 2007 regulations take this additional step.

Approval of the latest regulations follows cross-party parliamentary support for concerns expressed by local communities and councils, as well as environmental groups, over proposals for commercial ship-to-ship oil transfers in the Firth of Forth.

The transfer project was first mooted in 2005, and oil spill contingency plans were approved in 2006 by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency, following public consultation.

However, the harbour authority (Forth Ports) has the final say and is responsible for carrying out the Habitats Directive assessments. The new procedures should apply to this project – so Scottish Ministers now have the powers to ensure that seabirds and waterfowl of the Firth of Forth are protected from the potentially catastrophic consequences of an oil spill resulting from this proposal.

Forth Ports have also undertaken to seek the views of "key stakeholders" on their Habitats Directive assessment before coming to a final decision.

According to answers to written parliamentary questions lodged by Sarah Boyack and Robin Harper, it is Scottish Ministers' understanding:

"that Forth Ports' appropriate assessment is on-going and we continue to monitor its progress. The regulation of ship to ship oil transfer is currently reserved to the UK Government under Section 130 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995 and our discussions with the UK Government on this matter continue."

"The First Minister met with representatives from Forth Ports on 31 July 2007 and discussed a number of issues, including the ship-to-ship oil transfer proposals in the Firth of Forth."

More information on:

www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/sites/scotland/firthofforth/index.asp

Richard Evans,
RSPB Scotland

Greening Edinburgh's Festivals

In 2002 I accidentally became involved in running the recycling scheme at the Edinburgh International Book Festival which takes place every August in Charlotte Square. Although the scheme helped reduce the book fest's environmental impact, what struck me as its real importance was how it could be used to promote good practice to a wider audience. I've worked in everything from a farm to whisky bottling and electronic plants. If organisations applied even the basic techniques used at the book fest to their own existing schemes their recycling rates would rocket and waste disposal costs decrease. A festival provides an excellent platform for this and potentially many other issues – energy efficiency, green products, wildlife gardening and environmental education.

From 2002 to 2006 I worked every summer at the book fest hoping that I would help its management develop a full, comprehensive and pioneering showcase for environmental best practice. The 2000 Sydney Olympics exemplified this approach; it was only a case of repeating it on a smaller scale. This would only be appropriate. The book festival does have environmental and conservation themes as part of its event programme and receives support from WWF Scotland. It could also help to obtain greater support and publicity for the book fest which is a registered charity and allow it to operate much more efficiently. It would be an excellent example for the rest of the world's largest arts festival to follow.

Unfortunately it became obvious that this was the typical case of an organisation using recycling as an excuse to do nothing else. They continued to buy tropical hardwood garden furniture, never fixed the lights so that they weren't on 24 hours a day and acquired seven patio heaters. No reusable bags in the book shop, no recycled paper in the festival brochure. Trying to get hands on environmental education projects for kids was a hopeless

exercise.

On a more positive note I learned of another literary event the Hay Festival in Wales. In a very short period of time it went from a basic recycling scheme to a comprehensive environmental one promoting locally grown and organic food, nature, composting, fair trade and recycling workshops for children and carbon minimisation. Before long it appeared that it was doing more in environmental terms than the entire Edinburgh Festival far less the Edinburgh International Book Festival. Why was it happening in a Welsh market town with 1,500 people and not in Edinburgh?

I got a chance to find out in May when I went there on a working/fact finding trip. What struck me immediately was a much greater level of innovation than I had seen at the Edinburgh book fest, specially published short stories to raise funds for the Festivals of Literature Charitable Trust and stand pipes so that the public could refill water bottles. Welsh National Cuisine was promoted.

The environmental work did not disappoint. There was a RSPB event for children, an exhibition promoting energy saving technology and conservation issues were raised via a stand from Countryside Council for Wales. The Festival program contained recycled fibre and they opened with a conference on how the creative arts could reduce their ecological foot print. They are looking at replacing existing lights with more efficient LED ones and selling their own branded reusable water bottle to take advantage of the stand pipes. If this idea takes off it could significantly reduce the production of plastic bottles at Festivals and the ridiculous environmental impact caused by bottled water.

So why is all this happening? Because the director, Peter Florence, had the foresight to give a genuinely keen member of staff, Andy Fryers, the green light. The result is a truly

proactive scheme that is constantly on the look out for improvement and new initiatives. This couldn't be further from the situation in Edinburgh, where the limited environmental work seems to occur largely as a result of pressure from the public, sponsors or the press. It is reactive not proactive. Nothing happens without 'prodding'. There is no-one like Andy Fryers in the whole of the Edinburgh Festival. It needs several.

Although the environmental initiatives were impressive, what really stunned me was the amount of work the Hay Fest carried out with charities. They gave them a free stand to promote their cause, some events raised money for charity and at others volunteers collected donations from people leaving talks on issues relevant to the charity's work. Hay could never be accused of 'all talk and no action'. Three years ago the Edinburgh Book Festival would not let me have a receptacle to collect mobile phones for Oxfam from visitors and school parties in their entrance tent. They felt that they already did enough for charity (isn't that when you can do no more?) and were 'pestered' by charities so didn't want to encourage more enquiries.

The people of Scotland are badly served by the world's largest Arts Festival. If what Hay is already doing, and it will do more and do it better, was scaled up proportionately at the Edinburgh Festival the benefits to the environment, charities and the local community would be immense. Let's remind the Edinburgh Festival that it is supposed to be an enlightened and enlightening institution for everyone's benefit not an 'elite'.

Les Wallace
FoE Forth Valley
<les@wallacerecyc.fsife.co.uk>

(This feature was written and distributed before the beginning of this year's festival.)

Edinburgh International Book Festival 2007 - Environmental Issues

Les Wallace reports on this year's Edinburgh Book Festival. Les is a member of FoE Forth Valley and is involved with the FoE Edinburgh Campaigns Group.

POSITIVE

Recycling: - There was a continuance of the efforts seen in previous years and there was an actual improvement in the signage for the recycling scheme.

Environmental Education: - For the very first time ever there was a significant environmental and conservation element in the children's programme, long overdue, but hopefully this will be maintained and developed – its absence was always a serious weakness.

Absence of Patio Heaters: - These are a staggeringly wasteful use of resources and producer of CO2. Their absence from the book festival this year was hopefully due to deliberate policy.

Reusable Bags: - It was also encouraging to see the book festival providing a reusable bag as an alternative to its usual plastic one. Its price at £5.99 was, however, expensive and it would be great to see a version designed specifically for the Children's Book Shop.

Lights Off: - After years of comments from staff and the public it was refreshing to see the book festival manage to turn its lights off during the day! It did itself no favours by blatantly wasting energy and money.

Standpipes for Water: - Another positive sign was to see the book festival follow the example set by the Hay Festival of Literature and the Arts when it provided a standpipe from which visitors could refill their water bottles. Bottled water is an incredible waste of money and environmentally ludicrous, increasing packaging waste and transport pollution for something that can be accessed by turning on a tap.

Involving Contractors in Waste Reduction: - Apparently contractors (food and beverage suppliers on site) were asked to reduce the amount of waste they produce – another positive step.

NEGATIVE

Work with Charities: - The Hay Festival did a considerable amount of work with charities including significant fund and awareness raising. This included stalls and collecting money for certain groups. There is scope for the Edinburgh Book Festival to have stalls and raise funds through environmental initiatives i.e. by having a collection point for old mobiles in its entrance tent. It has proved extremely reluctant to take this path and it has been noted.

The Main Body of Charlotte Square: - Although there was a very welcome amount of environmental education work in the children's programme, it was significant that this was restricted to within its tents. There was still no sign of project work in the main body of the park – a loss of a wonderful opportunity. In fact there do not appear to be even any play areas for children in the open at Charlotte Square – out of sight out of mind? Environmental education is appropriately enough especially effective in the open air. There is great potential for working with Eco-Schools and the Grounds for Learning initiative. The park would also benefit from stalls run by other organisations (see previous points) a source of interest and discussion for the public. Charlotte Square is an attractive site, but at present not very stimulating if you are not visiting a book shop or attending a talk – it needs 'pepping' up.

Use of Recycled Products: - None of the Festival programmes or literature seemed to use recycled fibre, again an area where Hay is ahead. There is little point in recycling if there is no market for the material collected.

No Comprehensive Environmental Policy: - Although there were encouraging signs environmentally, there is still no evidence of a comprehensive environmental strategy, there was no mention of one in the book festival's literature and there was no appearance of an environmentally benign purchasing policy for instance. A serious beginning was finally made this year, but the Edinburgh International Book Festival still has a way to go and is lagging behind other events such as Hay and the Olympics.

Comedy Night: Friends of the Earth Sell Out

We have been selling out for 5 years now!

Friends of the Earth Edinburgh (FoEE) held our annual sell-out benefit night this year on Wednesday 18th July. As usual the Stand was packed out and the Chef was doing his usual amazing job, working overtime to provide many hungry punters with their delicious food.

The compere was Sian Bevan, a 25 year old who has been working as a comedian since 2004. Sian likes to do stand up, and writing her own material, and luckily for us, MC-ing comedy benefit gigs for the Stand!

Chris Forbes and Ailsa Johnson started the night off for us with a bang. Chris is a young comedian from Glasgow who gigs regularly in Scotland and likes to rant to the world about how much he hates people who play Fifa instead of Pro Evolution on his bebo page! Ailsa is from Edinburgh and had her own

show on the fringe this year and is busy writing new stuff to dazzle us with in the upcoming months. Her favourite festival acts were Jim Jeffries, Seymour Mase, Bruce Devlin's chat show, Phil Nichol and Barbara Nice.

Comedy veteran Kevin Bridges has been doing stand up since he was 17, and, along with our other headliner Vladimir McTavish, is a regular FoEE benefit enthusiast. Kevin regularly works all over Scotland, most notably at the Stand comedy clubs where he is a regular headliner, support and resident compere of his own monthly show. He does shows during the Edinburgh festival and has worked with Karen Dunbar and made a guest appearance on BBC Scotlands 'Off the Ball'.

Vladimir McTavish, once again headlined the benefit, and, once again, had everyone there in stitches. Vladimir 'serves up a delightful feast

of social observation and topical satire, seasoned with his caustic wit and presented via a platter of breakneck-pace patter'. His success means that he is in demand at home and abroad, including all of the UK, Ireland, Holland and Norway. We all love Vladimir, and are honored that he chooses to come back and be part of our benefit nights.

A massive thank you to Jen for helping to organize the night, and all the comedians involved - you guys are hilarious and totally indispensable. Thanks to everyone working at The Stand (techy people, bar folks) and the FoEE committee for their help in selling tickets, rallying the troops and organizing the raffle.

And thanks to all our friends, family and supporters (and those who wandered in off the street!) Sold out for 5 years in a row now - isn't this some kind of record?

Katriona Harding
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 **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, Colin Howden, David Atiyah

On the move

Friends of the Earth Scotland moved offices early in September.

Their new address is :

Friends of the Earth Scotland
5 Rose Street
Edinburgh
EH2 2PR

Tel: 0131 243 2700
Fax: 0131 243 2725

The door to the office is on the north side of Rose Street, between the Abbotsford pub and Fopp records.

Friends of the Earth Scotland National Gathering

Saturday, September 29th, 2007

Rose Street: 10am - 4pm

The theme of the day will be the climate change campaign and how you can help ensure that the UK has the world's first strong, fair climate change law.

You can sign up for the day

online at <www.foe-scotland.org.uk/activism>,
by email to <odavis@foe-scotland.org.uk> or
by phone on 0131 243 2700.

Diary of Events

Thursday 27th September

FoEE public meeting

Speaker: Patrick Harvie
(Green MSP for Glasgow)
Scotland's Climate Change Bill
7.30-9.00pm
Quaker Meeting House,

Saturday 29th September

FoES National Gathering

UK Climate Change Bill
10.00-4.00pm
Rose Street

Saturday 29th September

Edinburgh DoorsOpen Day

see
<www.cockburnassociation.org.uk>

Monday 1st October

Faslane 365: Join the Big Blockade

Coaches leaving Edinburgh 4:30am
PLEASE BOOK NOW to ensure a
space - 0845 4588 365.
See <www.faslane365.org>

Tuesday 9th October

Capital Rail Action Group (CRAG)
Public meeting
Speaker: Councillor Bill Wheeler
(Lead Councillor on Transport for
Edinburgh City Council)
7.30-9.00pm
Quaker Meeting House

Thursday 11th October

FoEE Campaigns meeting

7.30-9.00pm
Rose Street

Thursday 11th October

**Ed. Univ./Stop Climate Chaos
Scotland**

Speaker: Chris Goodall
"Climate Change and Social Currents"
7.00pm
Law Lecture Theatre 175,
Old College Quad, Ed. Univ
Entry is £4 on the door (£3 conc.)

Thursday 25th October

FoEE public meeting

Speaker: tbc
7.30-9.00pm
Quaker Meeting House,

Saturday 3rd November

**People and Parliament against
Trident**

Edinburgh March and rally organised
by Scotland's for Peace
11.30am
Assemble Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 13th November

Capital Rail Action Group (CRAG)
Public meeting
Speaker: Malcolm Reed
Chief Executive, Transport Scotland
7.30-9.00pm
Quaker Meeting House

Thursday 15th November

FoEE Campaigns meeting

7.30-9.00pm
Rose Street

Thursday 29th November

FoEE public meeting

Speaker: tbc
7.30-9.00pm
Quaker Meeting House,

2008

Thursday 31st January

FoEE AGM

time and location: tbc

Saturday 2nd February

FoEE Strategy Day 2008

time and location: tbc