



INFOE

Newsletter of Friends of the Earth Edinburgh

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Candidates on the Spot in our Election Debate

Candidates for the upcoming Scottish Elections were asked to respond to questions under three main headings – waste, transport and planning, and energy. There was also time for a few more general questions at the end of the debate. This allowed one member of the audience to ask an illuminating question about what each candidate saw as their party's distinctive policy, or philosophy, in relation to the environment.

The first question put to the candidates was how local markets could be

ensured for the **reuse of waste**. Their perspectives on this issue ranged from Colin Fox (SSP) suggesting that market forces could not be trusted to resolve this issue, to Peter Finnie's (Con) view that it would be important to remove impediments to a free market. Robin Harper (Green) emphasised that there were already a variety of possible end uses for a wide range of recyclates. He also indicated that it was important to provide cheap supplies of materials, by making provision for them to be sorted at source.

Cont'd on page 2



Picture by Colin Hattersley

Co-ordinator's Message

The election is almost upon us and I am amazed at the lack of any serious well publicised political debate about environmental issues no doubt drowned out by the blanket coverage of the war in Iraq. Despite not being able to attend the FoEE Election Debate I have heard favourable reports of the meeting and I do look forward to attending the next FoEE meeting on the 24th April to hear the responses from the NGO's.

In my work over the past year I have been dealing with some of the big names in the fast food business and I have to report that I have been surprised at the lack of awareness that they have exhibited over what happens to their waste from their operations, whilst they are acutely aware of their inputs particularly in financial terms.

Whilst I am extremely aware of the environmental issues and the associated costs of compliance that faces businesses I cannot say that I am aware of this in my private life. I was therefore not surprised at the meeting earlier this year when we learnt about peoples' attitudes to waste and what happens to it once it has been put in the bin. Equally I was not surprised that people generally had no idea of the costs for the disposal of their domestic waste.

The issues of waste and the costs associated in both environmental and financial terms need to be more

clearly spelt out to the public at large and businesses in particular. I hope that the FoEE waste campaign can satisfactorily address this issue over the coming months.

Chris Bond

Election Debate

Con't from page 1

The candidates were divided in their opinions as to whether a **plastic bag tax** would be appropriate for Scotland. Robin Harper, Mike Pringle (LibDem), Kevin Pringle (SNP) and Sarah Boyack (Labour) all indicated some support for the idea. Peter Finnie claimed that his party were not keen to increase any tax and that it was better to educate people to avoid using bags. There was an interesting disagreement between the candidates as to whether imposing such a tax would be within the remit of the Scottish Parliament, with Kevin Pringle suggesting that the Scottish Parliament does not have this power, and Mike Pringle suggesting that it does.

In the area of **transport and planning**, congestion charging was a hot topic. As might be expected, Peter Finnie was against such charges, seeing them as an infringement of individual liberties. The Chair, David Spaven, pointed out that this does not take into account the effects of car use on the liberties of those who do not own a car! Robin Harper was strongly in favour of charging and pointed out that some areas of Edinburgh are already experiencing pollution above safe

levels. Several of the other candidates focused on the need to put better public transport in place before considering charging. The Chair reminded the group of David Begg's observation that Paris has excellent public transport and yet high car use, suggesting the need for stick as well as carrot. Peter Finnie's suggestion that the Greenways had been a failure and should be ripped up was met with derision from the audience.

On **energy**, the candidates generally agreed that it would not be a good idea to replace Torness with another nuclear power station. Peter Finnie suggested that nuclear has the advantage that it does not create CO₂ emissions but Robin Harper pointed out that it is necessary to look at the life cycle of a power station, including construction and dismantling. He explained that this perspective shows that nuclear power is worse than gas in terms of carbon dioxide emissions, whereas wind power is slightly better.

On the question of their **parties' distinctive policies or philosophy** on the environment, Kevin Pringle focused on his vision of an independent Scotland as a good citizen of the world. Mike Pringle discussed the importance of getting people more involved in decision-making about the environment, by improving the system of proportional representation. Colin Fox stressed the importance of prioritising the needs of those least

well off in our society. Peter Finnie came back again to the importance of individual responsibility. Sarah Boyack emphasised the need to make hard long term decisions and noted that the Labour focus on social justice in relation to the environment was distinctive. Robin Harper told the audience that his party questioned the validity of an economic system based on the need for a 2-3 % expansion per annum. He emphasised the way in which such a system leads to depletion of scarce resources.

Now that the parties have had a chance to have their say, we thought that it would be good to hear how some of Scotland's environment groups rate the manifestos. See the back page for details of our next meeting, when representatives from FoE Scotland, TRANSform Scotland and WWF Scotland will take up the debate. Then, of course, we have to wait and see how much of the rhetoric will actually translate into real change. The 'For better or worse?' report, recently commissioned by Scottish Environment Link, suggests that much more has been achieved in the first four years of the Scottish Parliament than might have been expected. The report does, however, go on to suggest that "on too many occasions policy was announced and strategies published, but the delivery ... was too slow, or is still awaited." Watch this space ...

Velda McCune



Picture by Lang Banks

Launch of Recycling Week and 'Too Good to Waste'

FoEE was represented at the Council's launch, on 17/3/03, of their Recycling Week and the relaunch of 'Too Good to Waste'. The main source of funds for recycling, which is operated by LEEP (Lothian and Edinburgh Environmental Partnership), is via the landfill tax and Viridor Waste Management; this resulting in £3m extra each year in the budget for services. Other new initiatives will follow the successful pilot of kerbside recycling of paper, including collection of garden waste from 12,000 houses for composting. The aim is to achieve 25% recycling by 2006 and already the rate has doubled from 5% to 10% last year.

As part of Recycling Week there was also the relaunch of 'Too Good To Waste' (TGTW) which is now in its

third edition in Council hands. It is good to remind ourselves, however, that the initiative was a FoEE one in 1996 when we produced the first version with a little Council funding help and then expanded this with money from advertising. It proved so successful that the Council took it over and LEEP (and later RAGS) did the work of keeping it up to date. This fact is now acknowledged in the booklet and the Viridor representative mentioned the booklet as having been listed as an example of 'best practice' which is now being taken up in some areas of England. There is also talk of the basic structure being promoted for use all over Scotland. Well done Francesca Loening, whose 'baby' it was and who did the original research, with admin assistance from the Treasurer. From little acorns ...

Brenda Carmichael

Junk your Mail

Reduce unwanted mail and help the environment at the same time!

Many people receive a lot of unsolicited post from 'direct mail advertisers.' You may not know it, but there is a free service called the Mailing Preference Service (MPS) that can put an end to most of this mail. Not only will you cut down on unwanted junk mail, but you will help the environment significantly by both reducing the amount of paper produced and the amount that goes into landfill. If you aren't already receiving junk mail, signing up with the MPS will prevent you from receiving it in future (your name can be added

to mailers' lists when you open a bank account, buy insurance or similar activities).

As part of our waste campaign, Friends of the Earth Edinburgh has created a form that you can use to sign up with the MPS to stop most of your junk mail. Simply visit our webpage (shown below) where you can get more information and download our simple form. The form includes the freepost address to send it to. If you can't access the website, contact us and we can send you a form in the post.

www.foe-edinburgh.org.uk/waste/

Jolin Warren



Picture by Colin Hattersley

Everyone Campaign

An environmental agenda for the next Scottish Parliament

Everyone is a campaign initiative from Scottish Environment LINK – the network of environmental organisations supported by around 500,000 Scots. Here we set out its six priorities for action in the next Parliament.

- **Clean air**

ACT NOW: Reduce road traffic levels 10% by 2010. Tackle air pollution and climate change by redirecting at least two thirds of the £900 million planned for road-building to public transport, walking and cycling.

- **Less landfill**

ACT NOW: Reduce waste by providing doorstep recycling for every household and introduce a plastic bag charge. Set a 1% per year reduction target for total waste produced by 2010.

- **Reduction in climate changing gases**

ACT NOW: Tackle climate change by improving domestic energy efficiency by 20% by 2010 and a further 20% by 2020. Introduce energy auditing for all homes.

- **Safe food**

ACT NOW: Treble investment in environmentally friendly agriculture, pay organic farmers beyond the current five year support limit and

introduce a new payment scheme for conversion to organic fruit and vegetables.

- **Healthy seas**

ACT NOW: Appoint a Minister for the Seas, overhaul Scotland's outdated legislation in order to manage our seas and coasts better and introduce 'regeneration areas' to restore fish stocks and wildlife.

- **Protection for wildlife and wild places**

ACT NOW: Stronger protection, and increased funding, to care properly for Scotland's precious wildlife and wild places. Allocate more resources for the police to deal with wildlife criminals. Commit more resources to encourage enjoyment of the countryside, including a Scotland-wide path network.

The challenge to candidates

In the run up to the election in May 2003, the Everyone campaign is calling on all political parties and MSP candidates to outline their commitment to the environment, to future generations and the resources we all depend upon.

If you've not already done so, please write to your candidates to urge them to take these issues seriously. See the www.everyonecan.org website - more details overleaf.



Council waste survey

Beware fiery council candidates don't burn your ballot

Our survey of City of Edinburgh Councillors suggests that incinerators should be a burning issue in the election campaign. In early February, the 58 Councillors were asked two simple questions: 'Do you believe the Council should make funds available for a city-wide kerbside recycling service?' and, 'Would you agree with us that mass burn incineration has no part to play in the future disposal of Edinburgh's waste?'

The Liberal Democrats issued a single response on behalf of their 14 Councillors. This agreed with us on both points. The Conservatives issued a single response on behalf of their 12 Councillors. They agreed with us on the need for kerbside recycling but did not directly answer the question posed on incineration. Separately, Cllr. Alastair S.

Paisley sent a supportive response, although he again did not answer the second question. There have been 14 responses from Labour Councillors (out of a total of 31). Generally the responses agreed with us on both points although there was no consistent view. Significantly, Cllr. Brian Fallon, the Executive Member for Environment, agreed with us on both points. There has been no response from Cllr. Rob Munn, the sole SNP Councillor.

Voters must make sure that the eventual Council winners know they won't get away with turning the city back into Auld Reekie. It is therefore vital that we make it clear to candidates that voters want recycling - not pollution from an incinerator.

Stuart Hay and
Katriona Harding



Make Contact

If you'd like to get involved in the work of Friends of the Earth Edinburgh then please email us. For those without access to email you can call Jolin Warren on 0131 466 8329.

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

info@foe-edinburgh.org.uk
www.foe-edinburgh.org.uk

Take Action

For an easy way to write to your candidates about the everyone campaign, go to www.everyonecan.org then:

- 1) Click on "act now".
- 2) Scroll down to "ask your candidate" and click on the button.
- 3) Click on "send letter".
- 4) Select your constituency (there's a link to the Scottish Parliament constituency-finder if you don't know your constituency).
- 5) Select who you want to write to (you can select both constituency and regional list candidates); you can also edit the text which is provided for the letter and decide which issues you wish to raise.
- 6) Complete your name and address as you want them to appear on the letters.
- 7) Click on "create letter" and you'll see your list of letters.
- 8) Finally print them off and post them.

Events Diary

Thursday 24th April, 8pm

Public Meeting

A Manifesto for the Environment?

See how Scotland's environment groups rate the party manifestos. Come along and find out if any of them deserve your vote! Speakers - Dan Barlow (FoE Scotland), Colin Howden (TRANSform Scotland), George Baxter (WWF Scotland).

Meeting Room, Friends Meeting House.

Thursday 22nd May, 7.30pm

Public Meeting

Topic tbc.

Library, Friends Meeting House.

Tuesday 15th July, 7.30pm (doors), start 9pm

Comedy Night

The Stand,
Queen St.

Tickets £6/
£5 from the
Stand- 0131
558 7272.

