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Winning the War on Waste

The Waste Campaign run by Friends of the Earth Edinburgh has this year scored two major victories - expansion of kerbside recycling and rejection of mass burn incineration in the Lothian and Borders

Area Waste Plan. In the light of these two successes, the Waste Campaign Group met to evaluate whether it made sense for waste to continue to be the major campaign, and if so what the campaign would target.

As noted above, one major success is that partly as a result of our influence, the City of Edinburgh Council committed to expanding kerbside paper recycling from 14,000 households to 120,000 households. This is part of the council's overall aim to increase the rate of recycling to 25% by 2005/6.

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Picture: Colin Hattersley

**Fundraising Fun for FoEE!
 Put this date in your diary now**

Saving the planet isn't all serious, worthy stuff. FoE Edinburgh cordially invite you to an excellent evening of high-class silliness at our Comedy Night. A positive orgy of comic talent will be unleashed on Tuesday 15th July, with top comedians from around the globe. But the evening has a very worthy cause — the serious purpose of

raising hard cash for our planet-saving activities for the next year.

Past shows have been total sell-outs - so get your order in as soon as possible!

Tickets £6 (£5 concessions) from The Stand Comedy Club, York Place, Edinburgh. Tel: 0131 558 7272.



Co-ordinator's Comments

Hello! The sun is (occasionally!) out, and we at FoE Edinburgh are preparing to wind down for the summer months, and give everyone time to rest, sunbathe and re-charge their batteries!

The public meeting about Urban Renewables, which took place on the 22nd May is the last public meeting until we re-convene on the 25th September.

Over the summer we will still be holding waste campaign meetings and putting in appearances at events that FoEE have an interest in (see Diary Dates). We will also be holding a number of social gatherings - the biggest being our major annual fundraising event, the Comedy Night to be held on the 15th July. I hope everyone will be able to attend, and make it a fabulous stand up success!

Our waste campaign meetings have been very productive, with a lot of new ideas

coming out of the brainstorming sessions. We have also organised a meeting with Edinburgh's new environment chief, Cllr. Bob Cairns. We plan to talk to him about the waste issues we are concerned with and generally attempt to forge a constructive and positive relationship with the City Council. The waste campaign now comprises of a number of different threads, which are all looking very promising and exciting!

I hope everyone has a splendid summer, and you all manage to find the time to come along to our events. Until next time,
 Katriona x
 Katriona Harding



Picture: Colin Howden

Winning the Waste War

Continued from page 1

This March also saw the release by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) of the Area Waste Plans. The Area Waste Plans set out how waste arising in each of Scotland's 11 Waste Strategy Areas will be managed. Though the Plans are published by SEPA, they are compiled by the local areas, in our case the Lothian and Borders Waste Strategy Area Group (WSAG). The Area Waste Plans are important, because they will govern the approach taken to dealing with waste for many years to come. The biggest problem on the horizon for the government is potential large fines from Europe if we don't significantly reduce the amount of waste going to landfills. Luckily, there is broad recognition that the best way to

deal with waste is not to produce it in the first place, and reduction does form a part of the National Waste Strategy. However, Friends of the Earth Edinburgh was concerned that incineration would be seen as a reasonable and 'practical' alternative to landfill usage. This is far from the case as incinerators give off toxic emissions that cause cancer in humans as well as polluting the environment. Happily, our campaigning on this issue led the WSAG to unconditionally rule out mass burn incineration from any future sustainable waste management systems in the Lothians and Borders. This is a major success and should have a positive effect for many years to come.

Over the past year, FoE Edinburgh also completed and published a survey of

Edinburgh Councillors' attitudes towards waste management and created an approved Mailing Preferences Service (MPS) form. Details of the councillors survey can be found in issue 6 (April 2003) of *INFOE*. The MPS form can be filled out by anyone to stop the vast majority of bulk/junk mailings. If you haven't already filled out this form, please do so as reducing the amount of junk mail can really help. For the whole of the UK, the amount sent to consumers doubled during the 1990s to 3.3 billion items in 1999. Current estimates (again for the UK) are that only 13% of this is recycled!

Looking ahead, the group decided that despite the successes of the past year, there is still plenty to campaign on. Perhaps most importantly, the council's current plans for recycling, while greatly improved, still fall far short of what FoE Edinburgh would



Picture: Colin Hattersley

What a waste!

like. For instance, there is only a commitment to introduce kerbside recycling for paper, and while 120,000 households is a lot, this does not cover all of Edinburgh. The council's *Recycling Initiatives and Targets* report does state that, "In due course a different container may be introduced to allow for different, recyclable materials (eg glass, plastic) to be collected." However, there is no firm commitment or timescales. The Waste Campaign Group therefore plans to work with the council to increase their commitment to recycling.

Another area for the Waste Campaign in the coming months will be conducting a survey of pubs and clubs about their recycling policies. FoE Edinburgh submitted a proposal for such a survey to the Edinburgh Environment Partnership (EEP) Grants Scheme earlier this year but were unfortunately not awarded funding. The Waste Campaign Group is currently determining whether we have the resources to carry out this survey even without the funding.

As a last note, the Waste Campaign Group is not an 'elite' group of people - anyone can get involved! Whether you have an idea of a campaign you'd like to run or want to help out on one of our existing ones, the Waste Campaign Group would be happy to hear from you. If you are interested, please contact FoE Edinburgh (details on back page) for information on upcoming Waste Campaign meetings.

Jolin Warren is a committee member of FoE Edinburgh

For more information:

Area Waste Plans:
<http://www.sepa.org.uk/nws/guidance/awp.htm>
 Edinburgh Council *Recycling Initiatives and Targets*: Report no. E/385/02-03/E&CS
 Stop Junk Mail:
<http://www.foe-edinburgh.org.uk/waste/>

Toxic Twins at Steaming Seminar: FoE Scotland AGM, 31/05/03

Whilst the rest of Edinburgh enjoyed soaring temperatures, FoE Scotland members from across the country were meeting in the city's Assembly Rooms to discuss the consequences and solutions to global warming and other environmental challenges.

This year's AGM was held in the 25th anniversary year of FoE Scotland. Apart from a growing membership the year had shown real signs of progress with new Scottish Executive targets set for renewables, recycling and fuel poverty. However, despite these campaign highlights, twin presentations from guest speakers set the tone for the day by highlighting the continuing challenges to Scotland's environment and organisations such as FoE.

The first presentation gave members a shocking insight in to everything they (did not) want to know about cancer but were afraid to ask. It highlighted the risks and penalties faced by a society that continues to degrade its environment. **Dr. Phillipa Darbe**, an experimental scientist from Reading University, began by highlighting the soaring rates of breast cancer in the last 20 years. Whilst the reasons for this rise are many and varied, the least understood but most worrying factor remains environmental pollution.

The risk centres on chemicals that can mimic or increase levels of oestrogen, a hormone that in high quantities increases cancer risk. The culprits include pesticides, PBs, PCBs, dioxins, parabens and other complex petrochemicals that occur in water, air and food. Individually, most are toxic, whilst others are known carcinogens

through their ability to attack cells and disrupt DNA.

Incredibly, despite knowledge of the affect of these chemicals in the natural environment, very little research has been done to determine the impact of this toxic cocktail on humans. A series of lab trials has so far proven that increased exposure to these chemicals results in higher cancer risk. In fact some trials were halted due to the horrific results on animals. Meanwhile, other trials showed disturbing concentrations of chemicals in breast milk that was 7.5 times higher than in blood. Despite the fact that fatty tissues in the breast are likely to experience high levels of bio-accumulation, few studies had been



Phillipa Darbe. Picture: Lang Banks

done to test tissues for pollutants. One rare study using tissue extracted from tumours found higher than normal amounts of cancer-causing chemicals. However, whilst further research is needed, the focus of scientific work and funding appears skewed towards cures not causes. One example of institutionalised resistance to new research is under-arm deodorants: these contain a number of toxic chemicals which may be dangerous if absorbed through the skin. Dr. Darbe closed by pointing out that pollution of the human breast is a reality - it is only a case of determining where the safe limits lie.

Whilst the first presentation centred on

answers that the establishment did not want to believe, the second focused on the questions the government did not want asked. **Alan Dalton**, a trade union health and environment campaigner, recounted the surreal world of environmental regulation. This included tales of the “land hill” in the north of England (a vertical landfill) deemed a model facility by the Environment Agency but a menace by anyone living nearby. Whilst serving on the EA’s board, Alan was charged with investigating and reassuring residents about the site’s safety. Ultimately, he could not, and would not do so after uncovering evidence previously ignored or disregarded by the EA. Problems included dramatic underestimates of environmental impact and seagulls that were persuaded to vacate their landfill feeding ground by detonating explosives, prior to the arrival of inspectors.

A subsequent investigation of an incinerator provided an even more shocking tale. This revealed the use of incinerator fly ash in the production of bricks for housing and even as topsoil for allotments. To commend this sterling investigative work, Michael Meacher, the environment minister took the unusual step of not renewing Alan’s contract. Fortunately, this decision came after the successful conclusion of a campaign to hold the EA’s board meetings in public. Alan now edits the newspaper *Dirt: Telling the Truth About Community Pollution*.

Pollution is only regarded as a problem once the public starts worrying about it

The presentations set the context for the vital work of FoE. Most importantly, the speakers highlighted the all-too-common belief that pollution is only regarded as a problem once the public starts worrying about it. Perhaps this is what the

‘precautionary principle’ means to the engineers of globalisation and deregulation who currently influence so much of today’s government thinking. Such a situation highlights the vital role and relevance of FoE even after 25 years of campaigning. The fact that such campaigning can make a difference was highlighted 24 hours after the AGM when the Sunday Herald revealed the details of Scotland’s first pollution register showing the true impact of the nation’s biggest polluters.

Stuart Hay is a committee member of FoE Edinburgh.

The Sunday Herald exposé Toxic Scotland finally revealed in shock study can be found at <http://www.sundayherald.com/34294>

Moving Motions!

The formal business of the AGM saw a lively Motions debate where resolutions were carried opposing the expansion of air transport and road-building, amongst others. FoE Edinburgh seconded the roads motion which had been proposed by FoE Aberdeen, who are fighting a destructive Western Bypass round that city.



Picture: Lang Banks

The AGM also saw the Chair of the FoE Scotland Board, Mark Huxham, retire from that position after six years. Mark, pictured above, was previously a Coordinator of FoE Edinburgh.

Two Tramlines Tomorrow?

With the promise of trams rolling through the streets of our fair city by 2009, FoEE committee member *Brenda Carmichael* reports on an Edinburgh Council tram presentation held on 26th May.

Interest groups gave a cautious welcome to Edinburgh council’s tram plans, set out at a special presentation by Transport Initiatives Edinburgh (Tie) – a council funded but independent unit. Discussion was about details and timing rather than the principle, which groups supported.

Tie’s remit is to reduce congestion with a £1.5 billion investment package to cover trams, bus and rail improvements, park and ride, and footway maintenance. The introduction of congestion charges would help fund part of the package. Tie will look after project management and delivering the council’s strategy, and

expand the 'One-Ticket' integrated ticketing system for the south east Scotland area. The group has also been charged with constructing an airport rail link and any other new projects that may be needed.

The Scottish Executive in March promised £375 million for two tram lines (Lines 1 & 2), to be delivered by 2009. Should all proceed well, a private bill will be submitted to the Scottish Parliament. It is expected to take two years with contracts given in 2006, for completion in 2009.

Line 1 will be a northern loop linking Leith and the Granton Waterfront developments with the city centre. Haymarket will be a major interchange and there will be 23 tram stops. The line down Leith Walk could affect Greenways and this was a concern but, on balance, it was considered better to have the line in the middle of the street. Cycleways



Edinburgh too could have sleek trams like this one in Strasbourg. Picture: TRANSform Scotland

should be maintained throughout, and George Street was given as an option instead of Princes Street, the latter being closed 37 times during the year for events.

Line 2 would run from Newbridge to Haymarket via the airport along the line previously earmarked for the ill-fated CERT project. Possible plans for expansion of the airport could affect where the line runs so there were options at this point, at the Gyle nearer or further from the shopping centre, and at Roseburn north or south of the railway. On Line 1 trams should run every 6 minutes and 10 minutes on Line 2 and will go up to 50mph outside the city. By December, Tie hope to appoint a tram operator with very detailed planning following thereafter.

A third tram line, currently unfunded, is being planned for south-east Edinburgh, while further extensions to Dalkeith and Livingston are being considered.

Power to the People! *Bringing renewables to the city*

At May's FoEE public meeting, we heard from the Castlemilk Community Urban Wind Farm Steering Group who spoke about their proposed wind farm, and the many positive effects projects like this could bring to urban communities across Scotland. This project is unique in that it would be the country's first urban wind farm and is being led not by some major electricity company but by the people of Castlemilk themselves.

Margo Smith told us about their plans to establish a community-run wind farm which the people

Comments from the floor were mainly on detail but there was a concern expressed about the priority apparently being given to a heavy rail link to the airport, despite air being the most polluting form of transport. One suggestion was a form of moving walkway to take people to and from the Western General Hospital. The meeting was assured, however, that successful systems in other places were being studied but perhaps other countries do not have such long-drawn-out, convoluted and expensive methods of gaining approval from government that makes delivering better public transport so difficult in this country.

There is a widespread consultation taking place and a display can be seen at 1 Cockburn Street. A series of public meetings is also being held and the consultation ends on 10th July. If you have not had a leaflet contact 0800 328 3934. FoE Edinburgh wants to see trams in Edinburgh: ensure you send back a supportive reply on the sheet provided!

of Castlemilk will own and control. Energy generated from the turbines will be sold with the profits being re-invested into the community.



Picture: Colin Hattersley

From left to right are Caroline Gallagher, Margo Smith and Jane Leavy from the Castlemilk project

Make Contact

If you'd like to get involved in the work of Friends of the Earth Edinburgh then please email us - info@foe-edinburgh.org.uk or see www.foe-edinburgh.org.uk. For those without access to the internet 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.

Dates for Diaries

Fri 13 - Tues 24 June: One World Festival. "A totally free, fun packed, family fest to celebrate the spirit of a united world." www15.brinkster.com/actionpoint

Weds 18 June, 8-10am: Spokes 'Bike Breakfast', City Chambers, High Street. FoEE will be having an information stall.

Weds 18 June, 6.30 - 9.00pm: 'GM Nation: National Debate on GM crops and GM foods', City Chambers, High Street. Contact: Centre for Human Ecology on 0131 624 1972.

Sun 22 June, 12 noon-5pm: Bikefest, The Meadows. An event for everyone - *not just lycra louts and tabard types!* www.bikefest.org.uk

Mon 7 July, 6.30pm: FoE Edinburgh Waste Campaign Group meeting. Contact Jolin for details on 0131 466 8329.

Tues 15 July, 7.30pm (doors), start 9pm: FoE Edinburgh Comedy Night, The Stand (see front page for full details).

Mon 22 September: European Car Free Day. Edinburgh Council have promised to take part again following last year's successful event.

Thurs 25 September, 6.30pm: FoEE Annual General Meeting, followed at 8.00pm by a short Public Meeting, Friends Meeting House (topic to be confirmed).

The Truth about Trade

Following on from the GATS talk earlier this year, here is some info about upcoming Trade Justice Movement (TJM) events in Edinburgh. The TJM looks at a broader set of trade issues which are perhaps simpler to campaign on than GATS but just as important.

If you would like to come, or just want some more information first, please get in touch with Cameron Smith of Edinburgh & Lothians WDM either by email or by phone: 07980 240 697.

19 June, 7.30pm, German-Speaking Church Hall, 1 Chalmers Crescent, Marchmont: "Further than Debt: Trade Justice & Development". Public talk introducing TJM and why it is important. All welcome. Speakers:

- David Ransom, co-editor of New Internationalist and author of 'No-Nonsense Guide to Fair Trade'
- John Watson, WDM Scotland
- followed by Q&A session

27-28 June: Mass lobby of as many MPs as possible on TJM issues by local constituents within a 24 hour period. We are trying to coordinate to lobby all the Lothians MPs so if any of your members are constituents they would be very welcome to join in.

28 June: 'Weigh-in for trade justice' at 12 noon to coincide with similar weigh-ins across the country. We plan to weigh people in groups and add up the total 'campaigning weight'. This will also serve as a good opportunity to catch the attention of members of the public.

More info about the TJM is available at: www.tjm.org.uk