

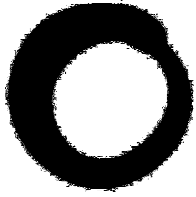
Number
80

Spring
2011

Welcome to Nottingham Friends of the Earth. We are one of around 250 local Friends of the Earth groups campaigning for a better environment locally as well as nationally and internationally. **Friends of the Earth** has a reputation for effective campaigns backed up by authoritative research.

Have you *herd* about this?

[Image deleted]



Nottingham
Friends of
the Earth

13/10/10: Roger Steele, Lima Curtis, and Lorna Jaggard of Nottingham FOE wait patiently for the next tram

NOTTINGHAM FRIENDS OF THE EARTH
Down to Earth

Cow-muters?

[Images deleted]

Last Autumn, Nottingham Friends of the Earth staged a stunt on the tram, to raise public awareness of the Sustainable Livestock Bill.

This stunt was one of the most planned and organised Nottingham FOE has done: Press releases prepared and distributed. Permission from NET obtained. Detailed planning to map out the afternoon's events. 'Props' borrowed from FoE HQ.

One the day, the weather was perfect. The Nottingham Post took pictures, as did members of the public. Whilst the Bill didn't get through the second reading on the 12th November, 62 MPs did vote for it, one of them being local MP Vernon Coaker. Thank you Vernon!

Wind Turbines at Nottingham University

[Image deleted]

Computer – generated visual of how the turbines will look from over the Trent

The University of Nottingham has unveiled plans to build 3 wind turbines, in response to a target set by the Government for the University to reduce carbon emissions by 35% by 2020. The wind turbines will provide 50% of these savings. They will provide about 30% of the University's electricity requirements and save 7000 Tonnes per annum of CO₂ emissions. At the time of writing, a planning application is expected to be submitted in February 2011. If approved, the turbines would be placed on university land adjacent to the River Trent near Clifton Bridge.

Nottingham FoE broadly supports the proposal, with the proviso of there being a satisfactory outcome to the environmental impact assessment (part of the planning application).

To meet targets in cutting carbon emissions, the UK needs to generate much more energy from renewables, and small scale wind projects like this can play a vital part.

Wind is one of the most technologically developed form of renewable energy. Benefits of wind power can be summarised as follows –

- It's clean. Wind power does not produce dangerous waste, nor does it contribute to global warming.

- It's abundant and reliable. The UK is the windiest country in Europe and the resource is much greater during the colder months of the year, when energy demand is at its highest.
- It's affordable. The first offshore wind turbines in the UK are producing power more cheaply than our newest nuclear power station. The UK Government's figures show that all wind power will be cheaper than nuclear power by 2020.
- It works. Denmark already gets 20% of its electricity from wind power.
- It creates jobs. The wind industry could bring thousands of new jobs to the UK.

Although there would appear to be a huge amount to be gained by using this natural resource, there are plenty of myths leading to opposition of their usage. Nationally, of course, there is a well organised anti-wind lobby. Broxtowe Borough Council would appear to be keen that an informed debate is held, and the concerns of local residents are listened to. Public meetings have been organised to give members of the public an opportunity to ask questions to University staff. Nevertheless, a group of people opposing the scheme have already issued a public statement.

One argument used by the anti-wind lobby is that house prices are compromised by having wind turbines sited close to properties.

However, various studies both in Europe and the United States have proved that there is no evidence to support this belief.

A UK government paper released in November 2010 titled 'Wind Farms – distance from Housing' concluded, with regard to the effect upon house prices "Recent studies are not at all agreed on this point, with some studies arguing that house prices have actually increased after erection of a wind farm."

As to suggested problems with noise or vibrations (and the so-called 'Wind Turbine Syndrome'), an independent review panel concluded that:

- There is no evidence that the sounds emitted by wind turbines have any direct adverse physiological effects.
- The ground-borne vibrations from wind turbines are too weak to be detected by, or to affect, humans.
- The sounds emitted by wind turbines are not unique. There is no reason to believe, based on the levels and frequencies of the sounds and the panel's experience with sound exposures in occupational settings, that the sounds from wind turbines could plausibly have direct adverse health consequences.

They conclude that the collective symptoms in some people exposed to wind turbines are more likely to be associated with annoyance at the low sound levels from wind turbines, rather than directly caused by them. Of course, more research is required to fully explore this issue but these findings are helpful.

In terms of the argument that wind farms 'spoil the view', the views seen as spoilt are not necessarily natural views in any event. To put this into context, over the past thousands of years humans have manicured the view, cutting down forests, building hedges and walls to divide fields, diverting rivers and water courses to enable land to be drained or irrigated. Cities in themselves have changed landscapes, as have towns, villages, ports, airports and roads connecting them with processions of cars and other vehicles over roads for many hours each day. Indeed, in the United Kingdom a significant proportion of wind farm planning applications are refused, because it is felt, often by local people, that large numbers of wind turbines will spoil the countryside and ruin the view.

Additionally, there is an argument raised that wind turbines are a danger to birds. In fact, The RSPB stated in its information leaflet Wind farms and birds, that "in the UK, we have not so far witnessed any major adverse effects on

birds associated with wind farms". Furthermore, a report published in the journal Nature confirmed that the greatest threat to bird populations in the UK is in fact climate change.

Another issue raised is 'flicker' from wind turbines. Tall structures such as wind turbines cast shadows, which vary in length according to the sun's altitude and position. Rotating wind turbine blades cast moving shadows which could under certain conditions cause flickering at nearby properties. In order for a person in a property to experience flickering from a wind turbine the property would need to have a narrow window facing a wind turbine. The sun would need to be relatively low in the sky and be behind the tower. The turbine nacelle would need to be facing a certain direction so that the turbine blades were turning and casting the shadow in the direction of the property. Any flicker effect would only last while the sun is behind the tower and while the nacelle was facing in that one direction.

Shadow Flicker effects on properties are very rare as normally wind turbines are located too far from properties. However if nuisance occurs, a sensor can be installed which shuts down the wind turbine on the rare occasion the above sun and wind direction conditions occur. As far as I am aware this has only been an issue at one wind turbine location in the UK. A wind turbine located 200m from a property was causing flicker and the above sensor mitigation is now utilised.

On the matter of distance between a wind turbine and the nearest property, England has no official separation distance, although noise limits suggest a minimum separation distance of 350 metres for a typical wind turbine. Scotland has guidance suggesting 2km and Wales suggests 500m between a wind turbine and housing. It is noted that a number of countries including Denmark and Germany do have greater statutory minimum distances. Going back to the proposals for the turbines at the University of Nottingham, the nearest property to a turbine in Beeston Rylands would be a minimum of 450m away.

Nottingham FoE are closely following the University of Nottingham turbine project, and over the coming months expect (subject to the environmental assessment findings), to be supporting the project as appropriate. We hope a fair and reasoned debate will ensue during 2011.

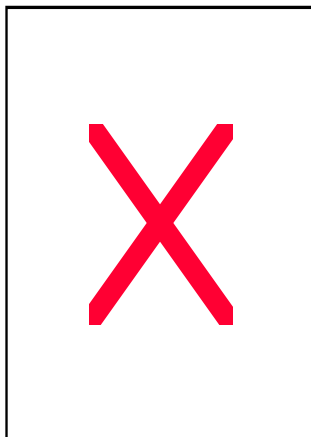
Nigel Gilbert

Greening Campaigning at the grassroot level

The Greening Beeston Rylands campaign got off to a flying start one Saturday last October with help from local primary school children.

Children from Trent Vale Infant School wrote and performed a poem to remind people how to save energy, while the eco-team from Rylands Junior School brought the campaign challenges to life through drama. An audience from across the community found out all about the campaign, picked up some energy-saving tips and devices, and found out more about domestic insulation and solar power. The children also enjoyed delicious fruit smoothies made by bicycle, courtesy of social enterprise Pulp Friction.

Michael Gillie, a local resident, said: 'The Greening Campaign is about local people taking up the challenge to use less energy in day to day living. When individuals take small actions they can not only save money but together can have a big impact on their community.'



[Image deleted]

Every household in Beeston Rylands had a challenge card in the next couple of weeks. The card included ten easy ways to save energy or water, such as turning the heating down by one degree, or draught-proofing doors and windows.

When they have done any five of the ten challenges, people put the card in their window to show their support. On the week beginning 13th November, volunteers counted 74 cards. The Greening Campaign office has estimated that after one year, and every year thereafter (provided the 74 households maintain their energy – saving challenges), CO₂ emissions will be cut by over 46,000kg, more than 67,000 litres of water will be saved, and total utilities bills slashed by about £8,400. Impressive!

The Greening Campaign is a grassroots campaign for communities that want to work together and take practical action to save energy. Greening groups are also active in Stapleford, Trowell, Awsworth, West Bridgford, East Bridgford, Radcliffe, Ruddington and Kinoulton, among many other places in Britain. Steve Barber, local councillor for Beeston Rylands, said: 'This is a really valuable initiative. By applying just some of the simple suggestions on the pledge card we immediately cut our electricity usage as a family by over 10%. This not only reduces carbon emission but saves us money. Energy prices will only ever increase in the future so our savings will become even greater.'

For more information contact Judith Dare, 0115 849 0627; for information about the Greening Campaign go to

www.greening-campaign.co.uk.

Judith Dare

Launch event at Trent Vale Infants School

UK Digital Radio - what's the problem?

This article is about Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) - but indirectly. Much has been made of digital radio sets' energy-appetite, but new designs are reducing this. So what is the problem? With DAB itself, nothing. The problem is the associated closure of orthodox stations on VHF FM. Why should this matter? And in what sense is it an environmental concern?

The number of radios in use in the UK is enormous, most estimates putting it between 50 and 100 million sets. The large majority are still analogue, that is non-digital. Digital radios are particularly rare in vehicles. Under current plans, mainstream radio stations are to stop transmitting on analogue at some future point - which would leave most existing radios unusable, except for small-scale community stations. This would be an extreme waste of existing resources, and the replacement sets would entail a huge expenditure of energy and materials.

Until recently, there was a defined date for analogue radio closure. Policy has now been modified to the aim of shutdown as and when it is judged that DAB set ownership is high enough. A still unfortunate provision, which artificially places analogue and digital in direct opposition, since by buying a DAB radio we're now hastening orthodox radio's closure. And how many DAB sets per household would constitute 'high enough' ownership? The pattern of radio listening today, and radio's importance in society, depends on being able to listen anywhere - on radios in several parts of the house, workplace, in vehicles and on foot.

But isn't a radio switchover as natural as the corresponding switch from analogue to digital TV? It isn't. Vastly more radios are involved than TVs, and TV switchover doesn't outmode existing TV sets. With television, digital and analogue occupy the same space in the transmission spectrum, so closure of analogue TV channels really does liberate space for improved digital TV. DAB and FM radio, conversely, use frequency bands widely different from each other (200 and 100 MHz) and can thus co-exist perfectly well. Analogue closure would not contribute in any technical way to digital improvement. Its function can only be as an act of coercion for digital set purchase.

But surely the UK's existing analogue radios, however many there are, will wear out before long anyway? Oddly enough, they won't. Radios turn out to be rather reliable, and it's been estimated that nearly all the FM sets in use today would still be useable in 20 and even 30 years' time. The existing FM transmitter network is fully developed and its running costs are a modest proportion of broadcasting budgets. Rather than a delayed stay of closure, the radio audience should demand a guarantee of retention of mainstream analogue radio services into the foreseeable future. This would be feasible technically, economically and politically.

In case anyone misinterprets this article as 'anti-digital', here's a tip for enjoying the really excellent new radio stations. They're available also on digital TV, such as Freeview. By plugging your set-top box into your Hi-Fi, using the red and white phono sockets provided for the purpose, you have digital radio for the cost of a cable. It can be used without having the TV on and the quality is considerably ahead of DAB. Buy a 'double phono-to-phono' cable and plug it into the hi-fi's 'auxiliary' sockets. If your set-top box lacks audio sockets, use a 'Scart-to-phono outputs' adaptor (all these things are in pound shops!). Tune to Freeview channels 700 upwards for over 25 stations including BBC 6 Music, Radio 7 (comedy & drama), Asian Network and the World Service.

To summarise... analogue closure is wrongly portrayed as a necessary condition of digital expansion. DAB should be allowed to expand, but on its merits. Government should abandon the aim of total replacement of existing radio sets by digitals as impracticable, and environmentally irresponsible.

Jeremy Jago

Climate Change – Jonathon Porritt talks to Notts Green Tech Business Network

[Image deleted]

A wind farm in China

In December, Jonathon Porritt came to Nottingham to talk about climate change. As he was talking to a green technology group, he focused mainly on some of the technological challenges.

Porritt is a former Director of Friends of the Earth and until recently chaired the Sustainable Development Commission which advised the last Labour government (but has been axed by the current Coalition government).

He was relatively optimistic. All parties have accepted that UK carbon emissions need to be cut by 80% by 2050. And they all accept the need to decouple carbon emissions from economic growth, as argued in the Stern Report for the last government. They accept the need to internalise carbon costs (i.e. by putting a cost on carbon) and for fiscal reform. He noted that the Cancun conference in December had agreed to put a money value on forests.

And there is a growing support for innovation in green technology. The important point for business is that sustainability gives a return on the bottom line.

He noted that China is taking a lead, investing \$40bn p.a. in clean technology and is already a world leader in 5 areas – causing some people in the US to worry about falling behind in these areas. China has a battery company which has turned itself into a major car company producing electric cars. And they are developing more efficient photovoltaic cells, aiming to make them competitive with coal in producing electricity for the grid within three

years.

There is a Chinese company already developing this work at the Science Park in Nottingham (where Porritt was speaking).

Porritt suggested that the UK should be able to lead development of offshore wind power and tidal stream power, and maybe also wave power.

He suggested that the most important challenge for 'localism' will be to use the Coalition government's Green Deal to invest in retrofitting existing houses to make them more energy efficient (and criticised the Labour government for endlessly procrastinating on this). He listed a number of elements in the UK "toolkit" for dealing with climate change which he thought are not too

bad:

- Climate Change Act – requiring reductions in carbon emissions
- Feed in Tariffs (FITs) – paying people to put solar panels on their roofs, etc
- Carbon Reduction Commitment – requiring businesses to reduce emissions
- Renewable Obligations Certificate (ROCs) – incentivising low carbon generation
- Green Deal – to deal with existing housing stock
- Renewable Heat Incentive (like FITs, but for renewable heat rather than electricity)
- Green Investment Bank (though this is being cut back)

Porritt also made some interesting comments about the difference between scepticism and denialism on climate change. Good science, he said, is based on scepticism, so we should all be sceptics, questioning what we are told. But denialism is automatic gainsaying driven by ideology or religion where belief comes first and only facts which confirm their bias is recognised.

In discussion afterwards, he was asked what we should do about Roger Helmer (Tory MEP for the East Midlands who is a leading denialist). He suggested concentrating on bringing the public with us behind the evidence, rather than focusing on such problematical politicians.

Nigel Lee

Forestry Commission Sell Off

[Image deleted]

Nationally, opposition to Forestry Commission sell-off is mounting

On the 27th January, the Government published its detailed proposals for the sale of the Forestry Commission, to be included in the Public Bodies Bill. This follows plans outlined in a letter sent to all MPs last October. A 12 week public consultation is now under way.

Opposition to the proposals since October has seen over 250,000 people sign campaign group 38 Degrees' on line petition. Local groups opposing the sale are active across the country, notably at the Forest of Dean, where recently over 3,000 people took part in a rally.

The plans published in January have tried to address some of the concerns, but more questions are raised than answered.

The Government has said that ownership of historic forests such as the Forest of Dean and New Forest will be transferred to charitable trusts. But forest management is extremely expensive, and most organisations such as the Woodland Trust could not afford such an undertaking.

Forests would be classified under different categories, depending upon whether they are seen to be 'heritage' or 'commercial'. But pigeon-holing will be subjective and flawed.

The Forestry Commission have qualified and skilled employees with expertise on everything from tree care and maintenance to researching the disease affecting oak trees that is causing great concern at the moment. The Commission is planning for all these things with the long term in mind. With the dissolution of the Commission, what will happen? Skills and knowledge will be fragmented and lost (as seen with railway privatisation). Investments into the care of forests will demand a commercial return.

Some commercial forests will be bought by big private businesses. But what of those where a buyer cannot be found?

It is the commercial interests that are the big problem with the proposals. Irrespective of any attempts at binding legislation, private buyers would search for ways of making money from the land by some means or other. Transferring ownership and responsibilities from a public organisation to the private sector, whether it be a private individual, a group of investors buying their local wood, or multinational corporations investing in huge coniferous forest for timber production, will mean public accountability is lost. The threat of reductions in standards, and compromised environmental strategies. The threat of demands for commercial returns on investment.

Locally, moves are afoot to step up action opposing the Government's plans for the Forestry Commission sale. At a recent public meeting organised by anti-cuts group Notts SOS, speakers (including Paddy Tipping, Vice President of the Ramblers' Association) called for action: a rally is to be organised, at the world's best known forest of all: Sherwood Forest. Check our website for details when this is announced!

Roger Steele

[Image deleted]

Carrot Top!

**The Green Festival, 23rd
May 2010.**

Gabriella at work. Visitors to the FoE stall who signed a **Get Serious** postcard, got a free (face) paint

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For general information, please visit our website (see below), or write with an SAE to Nottingham Friends of the Earth, c/o Sumac Centre, 245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham NG7 6HX.

For information about joining the group, please mark the envelope "Membership".

For latest campaign news and contact details, visit
<http://www.foe.co.uk/groups/nottingham>

National Friends of the Earth is at 26-28 Underwood Street, London N1 7JQ (020 7490 1555), or email info@foe.co.uk
See national website www.foe.co.uk for easy online actions.

We meet on the first Tuesday of the month (except August) at the Friends Meeting House, Clarendon St, Nottingham NG1 4EZ, between 7.30pm and 9.30pm. Please come and join us. You would be very welcome.

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This Newsletter desk top published by Emma Toone.

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AGM announcement

Our next Annual General Meeting will be on Tuesday, 1st March 2011 (7.30pm, Friends Meeting House – see above for address)

We look forward to seeing you there.