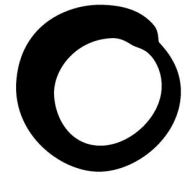


North Somerset Friends of the Earth

THINK GLOBAL, ACT LOCAL



**Friends of
the Earth**

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2008

Number Two

NO to the Severn Barrage

Julian Carpenter and Neil Crumpton, Friends of the Earth Cymru, presented the arguments against the Severn Barrage to Clevedon Civic Society on 14th February. 60 people attended, £30 was raised and 9 jute bags were sold - a huge success.

The proposal, in principle, has the backing of all the main political parties. But there are serious arguments against it:

- It is uneconomic, costing at least £15 billion;
- It could lead to massive ecological damage, affecting 65,000 birds and nine endangered species, and decimating fish stocks;
- It will produce only 1.1% of our energy needs and in two massive pulses per day. Other power stations would have to be brought on-line and off again to compensate, which is costly and inefficient;
- The tranquil environment around Brean would be destroyed, with a 20-tonne lorry every 30 seconds and, maybe, an extension from the M5;
- Technical and financial resources would be diverted away from other renewable energy that would be modular, such as tidal stream power, off-shore wind and tidal lagoons; Some of these technologies should be developed both for home and export markets;
- An optimistic completion date is 2019 - too late the help bridge the looming 'energy gap'.

We can now offer a presentation on the subject to other interested local groups.

JUTE BAGS



With Gordon Brown's budget statement that plastic bags should disappear from the High Street, our Jute Bag campaign couldn't be more timely.

We have distributed over 500 reusable jute bags to local shops in Portishead, Nailsea, Clevedon and Backwell, which shoppers can buy for £2.99 and of which 75p goes to the local shop.

More than 13 billion plastic bags are issued in Britain each year – an average of 220 per person. Each will take up to 500 years to biodegrade and, although some end up in landfill, a significant proportion end up caught in fences and trees, blocking sewers, drains and waterways, and in the throats of birds and the stomachs of sea life, killing 100,000 marine animals a year. Special compostable bags sold in some supermarkets, such as the Co-op, make up less than 1% of the market.

Currently, retailers spend over £64 million a year on providing plastic bags to shoppers, but Ireland has already seen a 95% reduction in plastic bag use since introducing its 'bag tax' in March 2002.

If you can help distribute more jute bags, please contact Phil on 01275 790549.

Arsenic in Weston?

In the face of apathy from public authorities, Weston residents have approached us about toxic waste found at a construction site in Atlantic Road South, near Knightstone Pier. A report commissioned for North Somerset Council revealed levels of arsenic as high as 593 mg/kg at six of the nine bore holes - nearly 30 times the permitted maximum level of 20 mg/kg.

The site used to be a quarry and may have been used as a dumping ground for toxic waste. There have been a rash of cancers and stomach ailments, which might possibly be related to the high levels of arsenic.

At a public meeting we attended, councillor Andrew Horler dismissed angry residents' concerns as 'scare-mongering'. We have contacted the Environment Agency and the North Somerset Primary Care Trust, and Bristol FoE has provided some links to other toxic waste campaigners. The response from the Environment Agency has been encouraging, but we need to pass responsibility to the Council.

At a residents' meeting we agreed that we would compose a letter to the Council, copied to the local MP and the Weston Mercury, asking for tests on neighbouring gardens and for new site tests of toxic levels, as the last ones were undertaken in 2005. Thanks to Gill Deacon for suggesting we involve Dr Richard Lawson, ex-GP and former Green Party candidate for Woodspring, who we hope will talk to a public meeting in April.

Help is needed with this. If you have any expertise in this area, please contact Julian.

The 'Line on Waste'

To meet requirements to reduce waste sent to landfill sites, the ex-Avon Local Authorities have formed the West of England Partnership to look at ways of reducing waste and getting rid of what is left. One option is for one or more incinerators for all four authorities.

The public consultation last year about a preferred method of incineration left most of us reeling in its technical detail and was silent on the resulting pollution. The Government is encouraging 'Energy from Waste', but this may actually be very polluting, generate little power and leave extremely toxic residual material.

The Partnership will shortly be required to submit an 'expression of interest' to the Government to qualify for PFI (private finance initiative) funding. This would mean private investment and building up-front but would leave the taxpayer to pick up the bill over a long period of time.

A further complication is that Bristol could easily go it alone, and BANES looks certain to pull out because incineration goes against its policy of increasing levels of reduction and recycling.

The combined local FOE position is strongly against incineration, and, in general, supports the BANES policy. The monster, which would almost certainly be housed in

Avonmouth, would have to be fed to make it viable, meaning much less incentive for reduction and recycling and the spectre of importing waste from elsewhere to keep it happy.

Look out for a further consultation on the long-term waste strategy for the region and, in the meantime, make your opposition known to local councillors.

IN BRIEF

UPHILL VILLAGE SOCIETY ENVIRONMENT DAY

29 March, 1.00pm – 3.30pm

We have been invited to run a stall on the theme of the environment. Several people have volunteered. We'll be selling jute bags, providing general information and may provide something on the marine reserve issue. **If you can help sell jute bags, please contact Phil or Julian.**

GARDENING CAMPAIGN May – September

We would like to approach local gardening societies to discuss more organic approaches to gardening – reducing use of pesticides, fertilisers, peat, etc. We will discuss this at the March meeting. **If you have any thoughts or ideas, please contact Gill Deacon.**

FUTURE ARTICLES

If you would like to contribute to the next newsletter, please forward items of interest to me at felicityharper@lineone.net by 20th June 2008.

Want to keep good stuff out of landfill and get yourself a few goodies into the bargain? Then sign up to Freecycle.

The Freecycle website offers people the chance to advertise unwanted goods and to browse through what others no longer have any use for. The basic rule is that everything must be free to the collector. Freecycle is a worldwide movement, but groups are set up to serve the local area: the North Somerset group currently has approximately 2400 members. To sign up, all you need to do is to write a brief note about who you are and why you would like to join, and, as soon as you are approved, you can start 'freecycling'.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NorthSomersetfreecycle/>

DATES FOR THE DIARY

Next meetings

WEDNESDAY 7.45PM

**26 Mar
23 Apr
21 May
18 June**

All Saints Church Rooms,
All Saints Road,
Clevedon

Group Coordinator: Julian Carpenter info@nsomerset-foe-org.uk 07775827118

Website: www.nsomerset-foe.org.uk and <http://www.foe.co.uk/>