

Pembrokeshire Friends of the Earth

Cyfeillion y Ddaear Sir Benfro

Newsletter April 2011



Pembs FoE Best in Wales

Pembrokeshire Friends of the Earth has won the Mike Jacob Award for the best local FoE group in Wales in 2010.

The award was given because of the group's broad range of successful activities that included fun events, such as the trip to Skomer Island in June, the screening of films at the Narberth film club, stalls at festivals, lobbying in support of the Sustainable Livestock Act, meeting and writing to MPs and AMs on issues from climate change to local salvage tug cover, actively supporting the Wear Point wind-farm, organising an election hustings meeting, helping to persuade the EC to investigate the environmental impact of Pembroke power station, getting extensive media coverage, and maintaining a strong supporter base and sound finances. So, well done.



Pembroke Power Station

The European Commission has responded positively to our complaint about the unacceptable environmental impact of the gas-fired power station being constructed at Pembroke. It informed us in February that it was seeking clarification from the UK authorities about the effects of the power station on the Pembrokeshire Marine Special Area of Conservation. 'Seeking clarification' is EU-speak for smelling a rat, and if its initial sniff is borne out by the UK's response, then a formal infringement procedure should follow.

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Green Question Time

Your chance to quiz the parties before the Assembly elections

Come and question Preseli Pembrokeshire Candidates on their vision for a Greener Wales, on the platform will be:

Rhys Sinnett– Plaid Cymru

Terry Mills– Labour

Bob Kilmister– Liberal Democrat

Paul Davies– Conservative

Friday 15th April

The Picton Centre, Haverfordwest

Doors open 7 pm,

Refreshments available

Meeting starts at 7.30pm

Chaired by Jake Holyfield

Continued:

If the rule of law is to mean anything, the approval process for the power station should have been put on-hold to allow the Commission's investigation to take its course. Disappointingly, Wales' Environment Minister, Jane Davidson, has turned down our request to do this.

More Trains For Fishguard

Wales' Deputy First Minister, Ieuan Wyn Jones, has announced that funding is to be provided for five additional trains a day to run between Fishguard and Carmarthen. The trains will run Mondays to Saturdays from September. Congratulations to the North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum for their campaigning on this issue.

Save the Coastguards Campaign

We have supported the campaign to prevent the closure of the Milford Haven coastguard station.

Although improvements can no doubt be made to the service, we believe that local knowledge is vitally important. The Sea Empress disaster demonstrated this. In the months before the tanker grounded at St Annes Head, we became aware that local pilots and tug-boatmen had voiced concerns about deficiencies at the port. Then when the Sea Empress ran aground, local pilots stated that they could have taken it off the rocks in the first day or two. They were not listened to and tragic consequences followed.

Since then, traffic in hazardous fuels has increased with the opening of the LNG terminals. In the future, Milford Haven might become even busier if the port has a role in servicing the development of marine renewable energy systems, such as wave and tidal power and offshore wind-farms.

This is not the time to be making cut-backs in the Coastguard service or in the availability of powerful salvage tugs. Pembrokeshire's magnificent marine environment deserves the best protection possible.

The 24th March consultation deadline has been extended by six weeks. Details are available here: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/open/2010-41/>

Incineration

Thanks to those of you who have objected to the proposed incinerator at Merthyr. This FoE Cymru campaign has had a phenomenal response with over 10,000 people objecting to the Infrastructure Planning Commission by the cut-off date.

Please support the petition against incineration FoE Cymru has now launched on the Welsh Assembly website:

Saesneg / English:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/gethome/e-petitions/sign-petition.htm>

Cymraeg / Welsh:

<http://www.cynulliadcymru.org/gethome/e-petitions/sign-petition.htm>

Merthyr Tydfil already suffers some of the worst levels of health, unemployment and deprivation in the UK. Now the American Company, Covanta, wants to build a huge incinerator above the South Wales town. 75,000 Tonnes of rubbish a year could be dumped on one of the country's most deprived communities.

Covanta's application is one of the first to be considered by the new infrastructure Planning Commission(IPC), making it harder for local people to be heard and to challenge decisions. The IPC does not look at the impact on Climate change.



Volunteers building straw bale walls

Lammas Eco Village, Glandwr

Building of this exciting project is progressing well. Check out their website at:

<http://www.lammas.org.uk/ecovillage/news.htm>

or take a look for yourself at one of their **Open Days**. These will be on each Saturday between 16th April and 16th July.



One of the roof lights under construction



Skomer Island Trip – On Sunday 8th May, or, if the weather is poor, the following Sunday, the 15th.



Pictured is a Skomer puffin and our guide for the day, wildlife expert Mick Brown on a trip to the Antarctic.

The cost to visit Skomer is £10 (£7 for under 16s) for the boat crossing plus a landing fee of £8 for adults, £7 for senior citizens and £3 for students. Please phone 01437 563670 or email karina.russell@phonecoop.coop to let us know if you will be coming and to arrange lift sharing.

Foe Cymru Conference 2011

The Conference was held in March in the new Margam Discovery Centre. Set in 850 acres of beautiful parkland, overlooking Port Talbot, the centre is a state of the art low carbon footprint building designed by The Welsh School of Architects.

The conference began with a Green Question Time meeting on Friday night in Swansea where the public were invited quiz the assembly

candidates on their vision for a greener Wales; it was a lively meeting chaired by Gordon James.

Saturday began with an update of FoE Cymru's work and future developments. They have produced a Manifesto for a Greener Wales which proposes that the Assembly Government should use its law making powers to introduce an Environmental Rights Law. This would establish the right to live in a healthy environment, and protect it for the benefit of future generations; a number of European countries have this built into their constitutions already.

Nick Pidgeon, Professor of Environmental Psychology at Cardiff, gave a talk. Studies show most people are concerned about climate change but this has so far not led to a huge change of public behaviour. We looked at how can we overcome this.

In the afternoon there was a workshop on renewable energy in which Steve Hack of Carmarthen FoE, gave a presentation on Feed in Tariffs. He explained that there are grants for community ventures awarded by the Welsh Assembly of £30,000 for objective one areas. This means there is no risk of financial loss to a community for getting their project to planning. Once a project is through planning bank loans are easily obtainable because feed in tariffs offer a consistent income and is index linked.



On Saturday night we were entertained by singer and harpist Bethan Nia who brought along some harps for everybody to have a go on. The playing and singing went on until the early hours.

On Sunday morning Jane Davidson who is stepping down as Minister for the Environment Sustainability and Housing was interviewed.

She said, Wales has put sustainable development as it's central organizing principal; it has already gone further than any other government in the World. It has set statutory targets for recycling at 70% by 2025; where the UK government has slashed funding to reduce fuel poverty by two thirds, in Wales the money is protected.

She is disappointed that these policies are undermined by officials at the Department of the Environment and Climate Change and the Infrastructure and Planning Commission has taken power away from Ministers and these rulings can't be appealed against.

Pembrokeshire.FoE will be having a stall at



If you have any luscious lovely seedlings or plants you would like to donate phone Eleanor on: 01437 532575

Climate Changing Emissions Rise

The latest figures on UK carbon dioxide emissions show that they increased last year by 3.8 per cent. This follows a decline the previous year as a result of the economic recession.

http://www.decc.gov.uk/assets/decc/Statistics/climate_change/1515-statrelease-ghg-emissions-31032011.pdf

At the same time, two reports – one from the Sustainable Development Commission and the other from the Green Alliance - have cautioned about the limited effectiveness of behaviour change. The Green Alliance found “that households are happy to make green changes that are seen as easy and normal, but far fewer people adopt green behaviours that are deemed difficult, expensive or unusual”. This confirms the need to campaign, lobby politicians and to take legal action, as we are doing at Pembroke, as well as encouraging behaviour change.

New Tidal Energy to Make Waves in West Wales

An innovative new project to generate tidal energy in Ramsey Sound off Pembrokeshire was today given the go ahead by Energy and Climate Change Secretary Chris Huhne.

Tidal Energy Limited's 1.2MW 'Deltastream' device will provide green electricity to the local distribution network during its 12 month test period, with the potential to power up to 1,000 homes.

The device will be assembled in West Wales and provide skilled jobs for the local economy. It has been specifically designed to be sensitive to the local environment.

Chris Huhne said:

“The UK's great marine heritage and our engineering genius make the potential for wave and tidal energy here vast. We must make the most of our natural marine resource, not just to cut our emissions, but to boost energy security and create jobs.

“I wish Tidal Energy the best of luck with testing their Deltastream device off Wales. This is exactly the kind of innovative and exciting project I want to see more of.”

Pembrokeshire FoE Contact Info

Post: c/o Span Arts, Town Moor,
Narberth SA67 7AG

Website: www.foepembrokeshire.co.uk

Telephone: 07768228584