

# Pembrokeshire Friends of the Earth

## Cyfeillion y Ddaear Sir Benfro

Newsletter March 2016



**Demonstrators in Paris following the Paris climate agreement which promises to “pursue efforts” to limit the increase to no more than 1.5°C**

Kevin Anderson of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research said of the agreement “If the global community is to maintain emissions with the 2°C carbon budget, there needs to be much greater recognition of the profound and immediate challenges we face. The scale of emission reductions will not be delivered through eloquent speeches, win-win rhetoric and green-growth spin”.

“Zero carbon energy technologies are a prerequisite of a 2°C future – but they are far from sufficient. They will only deliver the necessary levels of mitigation if they are accompanied by fundamental changes to the political and economic framing of contemporary society. This is a mitigation challenge far beyond anything discussed in Paris- yet without it our well-intended aspirations will all too soon wither and die on the vine. We owe our children, our planet and ourselves more than that. So let Paris be the catalyst for a new paradigm – one in which we deliver a sustainable, equitable and prosperous future for all”.

Kumi Naidoo, Executive Director of Green Peace International: “Parts of this deal have been diluted and polluted by the people who despoil our planet, but it contains a new temperature limit of 1.5 degrees. That single number and the new goal of net zero emissions by the second half of this of century;

*continued: page 2 1<sup>st</sup> column*

**Pembrokeshire Friends of the Earth presents**

**Friday 18<sup>th</sup> March 7.30pm**

**At The Seminar Room  
Bloomfield Narberth**

**Admission Free Refreshments from 7pm**

Inspired by the acclaimed book by Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway, **MERCHANTS OF DOUBT** takes audiences on a satirically comedic, yet illuminating ride into the heart of conjuring American spin. Filmmaker Robert Kenner lifts the curtain on a secretive group of highly charismatic, silver-tongued pundits-for-hire who present themselves in the media as scientific authorities – yet have the contrary aim of spreading maximum confusion about well-studied public threats ranging from toxic chemicals to pharmaceuticals to climate change.



Wall Street Journal-  
"Provocative and improbably entertaining."

Los Angeles Times "An enthralling film. As fascinating as it is horrifying"

will cause consternation in the boardrooms of coal companies and the palaces of oil-exporting states and that is a very good thing. The transition away from fossil fuels is inevitable”.

Craig Bennett, Executive Director FOE “It will be an outstanding hypocrisy for the Government to trumpet the new climate change agreement unless it does a U-turn on energy policy”.

December 2015 in the UK was the warmest in the record dating back to 1910. It was also the wettest calendar month in the last 105 years, the Met Office recently announced.

There is mounting evidence for an increase in heavy rainfall in the UK over the last 40 years or so. In fact, the preliminary results of an attribution study released just yesterday claim to show human activity made the heavy December rainfall 50-75% more likely.

## No War No Warming

“Military activity has been recognised by UNESCO as being a major driver for environmental destruction which itself perpetuates conflict. Militarism is a significant contributor to deforestation, pollution and loss of biodiversity.

“Climate change itself will lead to increased conflict as ecosystems collapse, countries scramble over increasingly restricted resources and populations flee the consequential impacts.

“National governments spend \$trillions to maintain a military machine that globally possesses an estimated 16,300 nuclear weapons, consumes vast quantities of oil and diverts large amounts of resources, which could otherwise be used to address the issue of climate change.

“In Britain, arms trade subsidies amount to around £700 million each year. And the cost of replacing Trident and maintaining it is estimated at £167 billion. Britain spends 30 times more on weapons research than research into renewable energy. An Arms to Renewables programme could transform the clean non-nuclear energy sector in Britain.

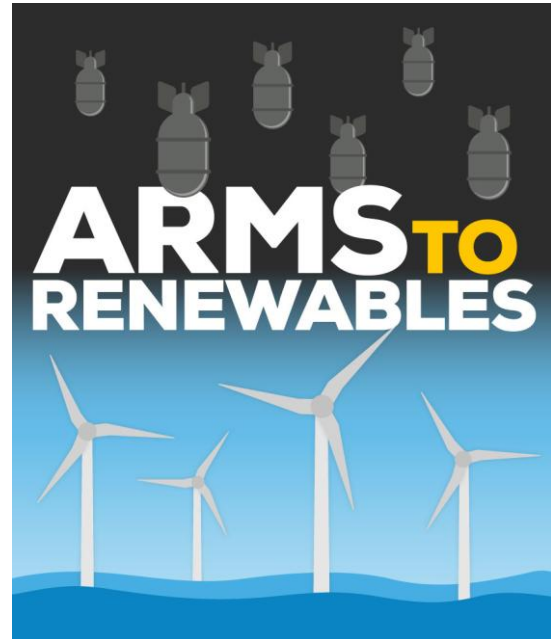
“Despite the Welsh Government foundation of environmental sustainability among its core statutory principles our National Assembly has often fallen short of delivering the truly sustainable Wales to which we had aspired.

“Wales could lead the way in being true to its core principle by developing a genuinely sustainable policy of promoting and investing in renewable non-nuclear

methods of energy production and energy conservation.

“British airstrikes in Syria will not make people in Britain more ‘secure’, nor will they help bring about a peace in the region. More people will be harmed and displaced. British allies vary in their objectives and some are in conflict with one another. As with Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, military action could make a political solution to the Syrian civil war more remote.”

*Jill Gough, National Secretary CND Cymru*



Campaign against the Arms Trade (CAAT) is conducting a campaign- Arms to Renewables:- [www.a2r.org.uk](http://www.a2r.org.uk) and :- [www.caat.org.uk](http://www.caat.org.uk) .

## Dyfed Divestment

Carmarthen and Pembrokeshire FOE groups recently attended a training session given by FOE Cymru on Divestment. Investigative work by FOE Cymru and other environmental campaign groups shows that the Carmarthenshire County Council has over 8% of its pension fund invested in fossil fuel companies including: BP and Shell. Welsh councils currently have over £739 million of their pension funds invested in fossil fuels, 6.6% higher than elsewhere in the UK, an average of £241 per Welsh household.

The Environment Agency Pension Fund worth £2.9 billion” is pulling out of fossil fuel investment “They believe it will help address the risks as the impacts of climate change materialise and is entirely consistent with securing long term investment returns of the fiduciary duty” Mark Mansley, Chief Investment Officer.

Many other public bodies and local authorities including the Church of England, Warwick University, South Yorkshire have committed to divestment.

Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion FOE groups are planning to launch a campaign through petitions, letter writing and the media to persuade the council to support divestment.

Meanwhile local authorities have been warned by the UK government that they will face “severe penalties” if they divest from fossil fuel holdings or boycott oil, coal or gas firms in procurement tenders.

But fossil fuel investments have been branded a “stranded asset” risk by the governor of the Bank of England, and the shadow climate change minister, Barry Gardiner, praised local councils that had divested for showing leadership.

“It is simply not prudent for the government to insist that councils ignore the financial risks of fossil fuel investments”. “Nearly \$1bn has been wiped off the value of coal investments by UK public pension funds in the last two years, and institutions across the world representing over \$3tn in assets have committed to divest from fossil fuels”.



**Feeling excluded from traditional routes of marine protection, a new wave of young activists with an entrepreneurial spirit are going it alone and taking the future of the oceans into their own hands**

Now, the tide is turning. The millennial generation, have arrived, and they're enthusiastic about changing the planet for the better. They have been shown to be independently-minded, innovative in their thinking, adaptable and motivated by purpose. In the marine world, this is perhaps no better personified than by Boyan Slat, the 19-year-old Dutch student who invented The Ocean Cleanup, a device that extracts plastic pollution from the ocean. In 2014, Slat was crowned one of the Champions of the Earth, the UN's highest environmental accolade.

Skipper and ocean advocate Emily Penn, 28 “As for the future of the seas themselves, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the threats that our

oceans are facing. But many young marine conservationists are optimistic about what they can achieve”. For Penn, the huge challenges that her generation faces are also the source of her motivation.

“We're so lucky,” she says. “We get to solve the biggest problem, we get to change the world. We get to make the biggest difference that our species has ever had the opportunity to make.” *Positive News*

## Remembering the Sea Empress

Twenty years ago, on the evening of 15 February 1996, a large oil tanker, the Sea Empress, grounded on rocks while attempting to enter the Milford Haven waterway at low tide.

As the weather deteriorated over the next few days, the Sea Empress was allowed to remain close to the headland where rocks ripped larger holes into its hull, allowing thousands of tonnes of crude oil to spew out to contaminate one of Europe's most valuable marine environments and spectacular coastlines.

The immensity of the impact of this tragedy became clear to a horrified local population. Workmen battled in filthy conditions to physically remove oil from beaches and shorelines, often seeing their good work being undone by the next incoming tide. Marine scientists tried to calculate the ecological impact of the pollution. And the world's media gathered in increasing numbers to watch, broadcast and report.

Friends of the Earth began collecting evidence from shipping and salvage experts in preparation for a legal challenge. We had become aware that the port radar had been malfunctioning for some time and that the former chief pilot at Milford Haven, Capt. Ian Evans, had complained that the Port Authority had put non-marine investments before its prime duty to maintain, improve and regulate navigation in the Haven.

Quoted in The Western Telegraph, (p3., March 20, 1996], Capt. Evans said that leading lights were inadequate and, “I believe that had there been such leading lights then the initial grounding of the Sea Empress would not have occurred”.

We also learned that the local pilots who had boarded the vessel after the initial grounding believed that they could have taken the tanker either up the Haven to a jetty or out to sea where the bulk of the oil could have been offloaded to other tankers, thus avoiding most of the pollution that occurred. These local experts were not listened to and the Sea Empress was left in the worst possible place as the weather deteriorated.

The expert evidence we accumulated and our threat to pursue a private prosecution were instrumental, we



believe, in persuading the Environment Agency to take successful legal action against the Port Authority.

*From press release by Gordon James*

## Welsh Government Proposal to extend scallop dredging in the Cardigan Bay SAC

In their response to the Welsh Government's consultation Pembrokeshire FOE have called on them to fulfil their legal obligation to protect the Cardigan Bay Special Area of Conservation (SAC), so that future generations will see the gradual recovery of the seabed.

Scallop dredging completely destroys the seabed having an impact not only on the seabed itself but many other species, including the bottle-nosed dolphins the SAC was set up to protect. Seabed recovery takes decades and will never happen unless it is completely protected from dredging, regardless of any permit conditions.

The Welsh Government claims it wants to protect local fishing but the vast majority of the dredgers come from Scotland and the Isle of Man, they sell the scallops to lucrative markets in Spain and Europe. The local economy gains little. The consultation ignores the important economic benefits to tourism of the wildlife and environment of the Bay, a much more important source of revenue for the local economy.

The Consultation Document relied heavily on Bangor University whose close association with Fisheries and Conservation Science group and the Welsh Fishermen's Association makes the impartiality of their work questionable.

*The consultation closed 17<sup>th</sup> Feb 2016*

## Have Your Say on Environmental Issues in Wales

On 5<sup>th</sup> of May the Welsh Government Assembly Elections will take place with 60 representatives from constituencies and regions across Wales. It's an opportunity for us to **tell** them what's important for us. **Please fill out the questionnaire by 10<sup>th</sup> March-**  
<http://bit.ly/1NR4hkW>

With the introduction of the Well-being Future Generations Act by this Assembly, Wales has made its commitment to becoming a sustainable nation and the next government will be key to shaping our future and showing how we do things differently in Wales.

## Biofuelwatch releases critical report on Proposed Biomass Power Station in Milford Haven

Biofuelwatch published a report on the biomass gasification power plant proposed by Egnedol in Milford Haven, claiming that it is a "high-risk, unproven technology," and casting serious doubt on the company's ability to successfully operate such a plant.

Biofuelwatch's report highlights how similar attempts to build gasifiers in the UK have failed, and outlines the health and safety risks associated with the technology. It also points to the fact that Egnedol has no track record with any power station scheme, anywhere, ever, and has provided no evidence of having any expertise in operating such an unproven and highly challenging technology.

Almuth Ernsting, Biofuelwatch Co-Director and author of the report explains: "Our briefing exposes Egnedol as a company with no proven track record of delivering any projects at all, let alone ones involving unproven and challenging new technologies. It is important that local residents, the planning department and Councillors fully understand the public health risks involved in trying to operate such a plant." *Our website has link to the full Report*



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