

Pembrokeshire Friends of the Earth Cyfeillion y Ddaear Sir Benfro

Newsletter November 2015



Black marks for Blackbridge biomass power station

Questions are being asked about the sale of land at Blackbridge near Milford Haven to an obscure Cypriot firm Egnedol. They hope to build a biomass power station on this site to produce electricity and to utilise the waste heat within a cheese factory, prawn farm, fish farm, algae production unit and green houses nearby at Waterston. They claim the £685m investment could create 560 jobs.

“It sounds quite concerning because it involves gasification and no company has ever managed to successfully run a biomass gasifier in the UK. Worldwide, the vast majority of biomass gasifiers designed to supply electricity (rather than just heat) have failed and the few that are being successfully run needed extended periods of solving problems and overcoming technical challenges. And those 'technical challenges' can translate into serious adverse impacts on communities, such as explosions (because the syngas produced is highly explosive and flammable) and excessive air pollution.” Almuth Ernsting, Biofuelwatch UK

Biomass and waste gasification and Pyrolysis is being heavily promoted by the UK government and particularly generous subsidies have been made available for generation from these technologies. Yet far from encouraging energy innovation UK government support measures have ended up encouraging investment in start up companies which have lost their investors tens of millions of pounds after more than a decade of support, for these technologies have not contributed anything to energy generation. <http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Biomass-gasification-and-pyrolysis-formatted-full-report.pdf>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhxyowPWYyQ>



Sunday 22nd November
7.30pm Queens Hall Narberth
Admission £4.50

Free to Film on Sunday club members
Doors open 7pm refreshments available
We buy it, we bury it, we burn it and then we ignore it. Having faced the worst through much of TRASHED, Jeremy Irons turns to hope. He goes in search of solutions. From individuals who have changed their lives and produce almost no waste, to increasing anti-waste legislation, to an entire city which is now virtually waste-free, he discovers that change is not only essential, but happening.



Caerhys Organic Community Agriculture (COCA)

This August COCA hosted an open day and barn dance to raise funds. Gerald Miles who has lived and farmed in this location all his life, lead a farm walk and told us the fascinating story of his life as a farmer. He started off dairy farming, but resisted the pressure from the banks to borrow and intensify his farming. Instead he branched out into developing a B&B and growing potatoes and other vegetables.

There were talks and films. Gerald is a active member of GM Free Wales attending meetings and campaigns throughout Europe. In 2003, as part of a mass protest, Gerald Miles spent a week travelling 349 miles at a top speed of 18 mph.

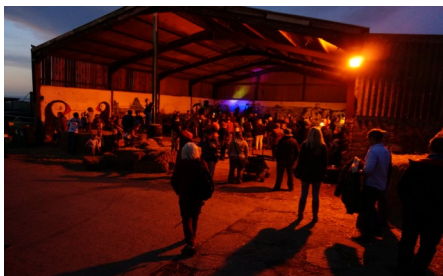


The tractor he drove still stands in his yard. Caerhys Organic Farm is at Berea. It is in the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, in a magnificent location overlooking Abereiddy and the cliffs of the north coast.

COCA is managed by a voluntary “Core Group” of members – which meets once a month to direct and plan the day-to-day work carried out by the different working groups on behalf of all members. www.coca-csa.org/

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

www.communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk is a partnership between a community group and a farmer. The aim is to produce local, seasonal produce, supporting local farmers directly and involving people in the life of the farm. It is cultural and educational as well as productive. There are currently around eighty CSAs trading in the UK and more in development. The concept is growing fast. New research has shown that CSAs have significant social, economic, environmental and health benefits.



Wales Retains GM free Status

Wales has confirmed its long-standing GMO-free status. At present there is just one variety (MON810 maize) approved for cultivation within the EU, and seven others in the pipeline. All 8 are now banned from Wales.

Speaking for GM-Free Cymru, Dr Brian John said: "This is great news, for which we have waited for 15 years since Wales was first threatened with the growing of GMO crops which nobody wants and nobody needs."

Intensification- a Threat to Biodiversity

This October Carol Lever, director of Free Range Dairy Network Community Interest Company (CIC), gave a talk at Wolfscastle Hotel. The CIC have launched the Free Range Dairy Pasture Promise as a way to guarantee that cows have the freedom to graze on a system that works with its environment and does not impose upon it. By demanding clearer labelling and milk that doesn't come from intensive systems, cows can be given the freedom to graze and the opportunity to share their fields with a diversity of flora and fauna.

In a recent statement, Alun Davies AM, Minister for Natural Resources and Food said “...long-term prosperity must go hand in hand with the health and resilience of the environment that supports us. Beyond our basic needs, the environment is in itself a key driver of major growth areas of the economy which attract significant investment and skilled people. A depleted natural environment conversely impacts on the long-term health and wellbeing of our communities and on our ability to grow the economy.” The Environmental Wales Bill is expected to be introduced in the spring of 2016.

The reality in Pembrokeshire is that there is a growth in intensive dairy farming; a ramping up of production and an over supply of milk. An example of this is the recent decision to allow the development of additional farm buildings and a slurry lagoon at Velindre, St Nicholas, North Pembrokeshire in close proximity to a stream that runs down to the coast near Abermawr beach, an area renowned for its tranquillity and remoteness which is attractive to tourists.

The high application of nitrogen to increase the yields of silage, and maize feed stuffs produces a dead zone where nature and wildlife can no longer survive. As the nitrogen builds up it runs into the sea with the same dire consequences.

It's bad news for bees. After months of secrecy our Government has just agreed to let bee-harming pesticides back into our fields this autumn. Despite the use of toxic neonicotinoid pesticides being restricted across Europe – and despite hundreds of thousands of people objecting to the plans – some British farmers will be allowed to use them in the coming months. **Thankfully it's only going to affect some parts of the country** and only for this year's planting season. Pesticides regulations aren't devolved but FOE Cymru will continue to call for this. **Don't give up – you can still help bees where you live.**



Join us for the biggest climate march ever planned in the UK.

As politicians set off for the Paris climate talks, our demands need to be ringing in their ears. No to dirty energy; yes to renewables and climate jobs; justice for those affected by climate change.

That's why we're rising up with huge marches planned in cities all over the world. Can you join us?

Join us on Sunday 29 November in London—Start Point 12pm. Park Lane

A small group from Pembs. FOE will be going to. Please contact (details on back page) if you would like to join us.

Wales Climate Action: Pedal for the Planet:

Join us on Saturday 28 November 2015 for a mass bike ride followed by a rally at the Senedd!

Bring your bike, banners and plenty of energy!

This is a family friendly event, and if you don't wish to cycle we encourage you to be in front at the Senedd at 2pm to welcome the cyclists!

For more information about the day please visit: <http://stopclimatechaoscymru.org/stop-climate-chaos-cymru/wales-climate-action-day-diwrnod-hinsawdd-cymru/>

Mass Mobilisation in Paris 12th December

As the climate summit wraps up, thousands of people will be back on the streets, outside the summit, for the final word. Join us there for a mass mobilisation and the largest civil disobedience action on climate change in Europe.

FOE Cymru and a Pembs. FOE member will be manning the barricades.

What we can expect from the summit

Current commitments on green house gas emissions run out in 2020, so at Paris governments are expected to produce an agreement on what happens for the decade after that, and potentially beyond.

The Paris summit is not actually in Paris but in Le Bourget, one of the poorest suburbs. The conference will be held in a private airport specialising in business flights. Thirty five corporations are footing 20% of the summit's bill, including car manufacturers, an airline company, fossil fuel companies, fracking lobbyists and a coal financing bank.

The negotiations are relying on “intended nationally determined contributions” (INDCs) The world's Governments have set themselves the goal to stop the planet warming more than two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial temperatures. However two degrees is now widely understood to be a dangerous level of warming. Many small island states are calling for a 1.5 degree target instead.

Only Morocco and Ethiopia have so far pledged cuts to meet the two degree target. As a result senior EU negotiators are already admitting that the talks in Paris will not result in a deal to keep the temperature rise below 3 degrees, let alone two or 1.5.

Christiana Figueres, executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change writing in the Guardian “...we should remember that international negotiations don't cause change they mark it. The change has already been happening”

- The divestment movement has grown to \$2.6 trillion as capital shifts towards low risk opportunities.
- The insurance industry is waking up to the uninsurability of runaway climate change.
- Health impacts from coal causing increased concern.
- It is becoming clear that unpredictable weather and reduced access to water is causing unrest and worsening security problems.
- Moral imperative from major faith groups.
- Falling costs of solar installation. The International Energy Agency in 2000 underestimated the amount of solar deployed in 2015 by more than 18 times.



Abergwaun Community Turbine is turning!

On the 6th of October Transition Bro Gwaun gave people the chance to visit the new wind turbine that they managed to get up and running. The turbine will have an output of approximately 530,000 KWh per year, the equivalent of powering about 130 homes, and annual carbon savings will be circa 290 tonnes of CO₂. And on top of this, the community is guaranteed a huge benefit in form of the feed-in-tariffs as well as the sale of electricity to the grid. Investors are all from the local area and will see a better return on their money than any bank currently offers. After the investments have been paid off which is expected to happen after about 5 years, the profits will be used for low-carbon projects benefiting the Fishguard community. In the current climate of austerity this is a huge resource. Transition Bro Gwaun offers other community wind projects their advice to succeed with their project. Unfortunately if the government goes ahead cutting renewable energy benefits it might be doubtful if other projects such as this could be viable.

Transition Bro Gwaun also organised displays in Fishguard Town Hall by a range of renewables installers, and Peter Davies, climate change commissioner for Wales, gave a brief talk. Glen Peters, developer of the Ty Solar housing project, gave an outline of the project adding his concerns about the suggested cuts in feed-in-tariffs. For more information about the turbine see here: <http://www.transitionbrogwaun.org.uk/abergwaun-community-turbine/>

Environmentally Damaging Policies of the Conservative Government

David Cameron's chief climate change adviser has warned that the government is "clearly failing" in key policy areas to regain the confidence of investors in green technology, in the run up to next month's crucial global summit in Paris. (Guardian 7th Nov.)

Prior to this back in October four of us from Pembs. FOE—Bettina Becker, David Robinson, Gordon James and Eleanor Clegg—went to see Stephen Crabb MP at his office in Haverfordwest. We presented him with a paper written by Gordon entitled Environmentally Damaging Policies of the Conservative Government (Go to www.foepembrokeshire.co.uk) and expressed our disappointment at the slashing of support for solar power.

To our surprise, he responded by saying that he shared our concerns and had written to Amber Rudd, the Energy and Climate Change Secretary, on the matter.

Solar subsidies will be reduced by 87% and tax relief for community clean energy projects removed, leading to the closure of a stream of businesses and potential projects. Mike Parker, head of onshore energy at RWE Innogy UK, said his company was holding back on updating eight turbine sites, which could otherwise produce enough energy to power 55,000 homes. The zero-carbon standard for building new homes is not to go ahead.

Pro-nuclear environmentalists have finally admitted Hinkley C is a white elephant that must be scrapped, but with a Chinese deal now confirmed the damage to the UK's low-carbon future has already been done, argues Jonathon Porritt in the Ecologist: http://www.theecologist.org/blogs_and_comments/commentators/2985918/china_syndrome_meltdown_time_for_pronuclear_greens.html

Imagine if Exxon had told the truth on climate change . With the oil giant vouching for the science of climate change 25 years ago, there is no way we would have wasted decades in fruitless argument :-
www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/Oct/imagine-if-Exxon-had-told-the-truth-on-climate-change



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