

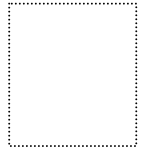


Newsletter

December 2013
No. 312



Bromley FoE: enquiries: Birch House, Grays Road, Westerham TN16 2JB
email: r.watson865@btinternet.com website: www.bromleyfoe.co.uk



December Meeting

Friends Meeting House, Ravensbourne Road, Bromley

What are they doing to our town?

Tony Banfield from Bromley Civic Society speaks about the planned developments in Bromley and their environmental impact

Tuesday 3rd December - 7.30pm

Everyone welcome – bring a friend

Copy for the next Newsletter must be with the Editor by

***** SUNDAY 15TH DECEMBER *****

Contact details inside front cover.

In this Issue:

Diary Dates	2	FoE top stories	9
AGM info	2	Euro online primaries	10,11
November mtg rpt	3,8	Act Now to Save Pubs	11
Marine Crisis	4,8	BACI success	13
Campaigns info	5	Lobbying Bill	13
Make It Better	6	Can GM have benefits?	14
Sevenoaks visit	6,7	Bromley FoE Contacts	15
Bee campaign info	7	Non-members section	16

Don't forget – Seasonal social at December meeting and the AGM in January

Diary dates:

Dec 3rd (Tue)

Bromley FoE's December meeting: Tony Banfield (Bromley Civic Society) - followed by our traditional pre-Christmas social evening with seasonal fayre.

Jan 7th (Tues)

Bromley FoE's January meeting: including our AGM; we will be joined by Cllr Colin Smith, Bromley's Environment portfolio holder.

Jan 19th (Sun)

Bromley FoE group lunch at Croft Tearoom, 12.45pm.
Sign up at December meeting or contact Sheila.

January meeting and AGM

Bromley FoE's January 2014 meeting does not fall on a public holiday this year – see above for the actual date.

This will also be the group's Annual General Meeting. Thoughts, suggestions, ideas etc for our future activities are welcome. We will also elect our officers for the coming year.

Our joint co-ordinators Ann and Sheila would be delighted to hear from anyone willing to take on a job and help to run the group



Annette & Judy from the Bee Team would like to wish you all a merry and peaceful festive season and thank you for supporting our Bee World and campaigning efforts!



Disclaimer: *Please note that any opinions expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of Bromley Friends of the Earth nor of Friends of the Earth*

Next Newsletter - copy details:

Any news, articles, poems, questions, views etc for the next Newsletter must be with the editor by *** **SUNDAY 15TH DECEMBER** ***:

by post to John Street, 82 Babbacombe Road, Bromley, BR1 3LS

by phone to: 020-8460-1078, **by email** to: johnstreet@gn.apc.org.

The editor reserves the right to shorten contributions for space, or other, reasons

November Meeting Report – Annette Rose and Peter Gandolfi

Nitrogen World

Professor Mark Sutton from the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology spoke on the new environmental challenges that link factories, farming and our personal food choices.

Professor Mark Sutton led the European Nitrogen Assessment report and the Our Nutrient World report of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). He coined the term 'demitarian' and has pioneered the linking of food choice with farming practices and the environment. He is based in the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology in Edinburgh, which is part of the Natural Environment Research Council, the UK's centre for research on the natural environment.

Mark began by explaining that many people are concerned about carbon but not many people are aware of the problems with nitrogen. Nitrogen is a chemical compound with the symbol N. Nitrous oxide is a considerable greenhouse gas and air pollutant.

The air we breathe is 80% Nitrogen but is very unreactive. To be useful it needs to be converted into essential elements such as amino acids and proteins that we can use.

A key compound of Nitrogen is ammonia, commonly used in fertilizers. Mark told us a little about Nitrogen in history. Ammonia salts forming around naturally burning coal seams, along the length of the silk road, achieved the same price as silver and 7kg could purchase a female slave.

Graphs were shown how the use of nitrogen fertilizers has increased over the last century has increased since the Haber process of converting Nitrogen to Ammonia was invented at the start of the 20th century.

It can be argued that ammonia feeds the world. Ammonia is in fertilizers that are essential to feed the people. Without our production of fertilizers half the world population would not exist as they could not be fed.

The innocent polluters are the cows, pigs, chickens and sheep. They eat the grass, but as their conversion into meat is low, 80% of their input is wasted as dung and urine.

We were shown very detailed maps of where the ammonia is going and it is clear that cattle are the biggest source of ammonia. In many areas it has gone past the amount the ground can handle although it is a patchy picture in Britain.

So what are the implications?

The excess Nitrogen in the form of Ammonia from farmland can pollute nearby nature areas, where the added nitrogen can allow other species to out compete the protected ones. It is clear that we can't shut down farms because of our need for food security. Mark showed us pictures of a healthy tree with lichen on it and compared this to a slimy mess on a tree where the excess nitrogen has allowed other species to out compete the original lichen.

/continued on page 8

The Marine Crisis - Blackfish Presentation, John Bassendine and Ann Garrett

Sevenoaks FoE group and guests, including Ann Garrett from Bromley and Howard Porter from Tonbridge group, had a stimulating presentation on 29 October from the Blackfish founder Wietse van der Werf. There were slides and a short animated film, many disturbing facts and impressions, and a lively Q&A session from the 30 or so who attended. Some major points made by Wietse and audience members were -

1. Illegal fishing and corruption are endemic in European and international waters, including the Mediterranean and the North Atlantic, and mafia organisations are deeply involved. When fines are imposed they are covered by marine insurance, and their impact is spread throughout the fleet in each insurance club, rather than suffered by the offending boat owners or operators.

2. Regulations imposed by the EU and individual countries are totally inadequate to halt the loss of marine stocks, but even these are routinely flouted and enforcement by most governments is very weak. Blackfish volunteers collect evidence where they can and notify the public and regulatory agencies in an ongoing campaign to save the oceans. Iceland, Norway, Australia, & USA have strong enforcement within their waters, so it can be done if political will and resources are devoted to it.

3. Gross over-fishing is certain to lead to further catastrophic loss of biodiversity throughout the oceans by 2050, echoing the earlier collapses of fisheries such as in Chesapeake Bay

in Virginia in 19th century and on the Grand Banks off Newfoundland in 20th century.

4. Industrial scale fishing with huge boats & nets, modern technology (sonar, GPS) and mother-ships for processing are denuding the oceans of all life in the areas they target, and often destroying the marine floor ecosystem with heavy-duty trawling. Sea birds suffer grievously from direct impact (albatross species caught on long-line hooks) and loss of seafood (puffins, gannets etc). Ghost nets detached from boats drift in the oceans causing havoc to wildlife.

5. The two largest fish markets in the world are Tokyo in Japan and Vigo in Spain. Some fish goes for direct human consumption but very large quantities go for fertiliser and to feed livestock - pigs, chickens, fish farms, cats, dogs.

6. EU fishing subsidies cost EU taxpayers over 1 billion Euros annually and are a key cause of over-fishing by the EU nations, by encouraging the modernisation of the EU fishing fleet and effectively increasing the capacity to take more fish and destroy the ocean ecosystem. Marinet, the marine arm of FoE, is campaigning now to reform these subsidies and re-direct them to conservation, via Avaaz - see websites - avaaz.org/EUfish and marinet.org.uk

7. The EU fishing fleet scours the world's oceans to bring fish back to the EU market, sometimes via fishing

/continued on page 8

Campaigns, Climate and Energy – Ann Garrett

Campaigns

Help is needed for 'buddying- up ' and support for the following six campaign areas - The Bee World, Sunny Schools, Fracking, Make It Better, Transport and Planning.

If you've a particular interest in or an affinity towards one of these, it would be valuable for the main campaign leaders to have support with research, preparation of materials, organisation, drafting press releases and writing letters.

It's often a lot for one person to do this alone, and two or three minds can be really useful in formulating ideas. Please let me know if you are interested, and could spare at least a little time.

Energy and Climate

Fracking

A Public Health England report has stated that fracking is safe and unlikely to have any effect on public health if properly regulated, since many of the chemicals associated with the extraction are already found in existing industrial processes. Any ground water contamination is only likely to be caused by a leak in a well's borehole, meaning good construction was essential, the PHE report added.

However, according to environmentalists it did not consider the wider issues of climate change, the use of sustainable water sources, and nuisances including noise or odour from fracking. How much confidence have we though, in pollution side-

effects from existing industrial processes ?

Sellafield Clean-up

The £70 billion project to rid Sellafield of its waste legacy is more than a decade behind schedule and is managed in shareholder not taxpayer interests, a report has revealed. This has been condemned by the Commons Public Accounts Committee, and the problem has been to trust a private company with the process.

Nine of the 11 biggest projects to make Sellafield safe (if that is possible, including building a storage facility for radio-active sludge, are £2bn over budget. Over the years Sellafield has had a number of serious security issues as well.

A spokesperson for the NDA (Nuclear Decommissioning Authority) has said: "The NDA continues to resolving the underlying issues at the site while ensuring its safe stewardship."

This certainly highlights the problem of nuclear power when things go wrong, and it will no doubt be the story of Fukushima (as it is indeed with Chernobyl) in the centuries to come. It is vital that we continue to campaign hard for sustainable alternatives.

Make it Better Campaign, from Annette Rose

The Make It Better Campaign was relaunched in November. Previous actions were deemed a success and the mobile phone companies admitted the links in their supply chains to the island of Bankor, where tin mining is causing damage to people and the environment.

The new focus is to target the Secretary of State for Business, Vince Cable. He is being asked to support the Make it Better Law. This European law will make businesses more accountable for their supply chains and will make them disclose details of where they get their materials from.

You can support this campaign by adding your name to the petition. On the site there is an interactive video for you to make your own perfect cup of tea. You can make your cuppa and then sign the petition! Please go to the FoE website and sign the Make it Better petition. It only takes 2 minutes. This is the reply you will receive.

Dear friends,

*I just signed a petition to make companies come clean about damage they do to people and the environment. Please sign it too:
<http://www.foe.co.uk/makeitbetter>
Right now politicians are seriously considering writing new laws that would force companies to admit risks they pose.*

That could include risks like those that led to hundreds of fashion industry workers being killed in a building collapse at Rana Plaza, Bangladesh.

But the Make It Better Law needs the support of thousands more people to make it happen.

*Add your name to the petition today:
<http://www.foe.co.uk/makeitbetter>*

Is it not about time we were able to love our products, and the way they are made?

Thanks

You may remember that a letter was sent to our MEP Mary Honeyball and there were discussions about a possible meeting. It has now been discovered that Mary Honeyball won't be able to vote on this law so action is concentrating on other MEPs that do have a vote.

Visit to Sevenoaks Wildfowl and Nature Reserve – Anne Clark

A bright Autumn morning drew many of us down to Bradbourne Vale Rd. Riverhead, to the Jeffery Harrison Visitor Centre, of the Sevenoaks Wildfowl and Nature Reserve.

A chilly wind blew across the vast lakes carefully landscaped from exhausted quarries of past years, and used by birds without danger from attacking foxes and the like. The river Darent weaves its way through and was nearly a metre higher than usual.

We were met and led by the very knowledgeable keeper who told us of the Harrison's dream to make this into

/continued on next page

Bee Campaign, update from Judy Palmer

You may remember we co-hosted a film evening in November with the Progressive Bromley Film Co-op when we showed 'More than Honey', and it was a great evening. The movie was really well put together, the food people kindly donated for us all to eat was in abundance, and the money raised for the evening was over £25.00 – so a big thank you to all involved! *(Please see elsewhere in the newsletter a listing of the next movies being shown by the Co-Op.)*

Paul de Zylva came to our November meeting (nice to see you Paul!) and he updated us on the progress of the implementation of the new National Pollinator Strategy (NPS), a draft of which should be completed by the time you read this, with luck! He seems to be attending lots of meetings with the Government, DEFRA and other partner-organisations where he and his colleagues are working towards producing a realistic and effective action plan.

One of the actions FoE asked our group to undertake recently was to write to MPs who hadn't signed the Bee Petition, which a number of us did. The Orpington MP Jo Johnson was top of the list to contact as he has previously stated he believes bees to be of utmost importance to the environment.

As a campaigning pressure group, letter writing / email sending is just one of the ways we can help make a difference. *(If anyone is interested in helping out in the future, please contact a campaigner!)*

Into next year, and we as a group have the lovely task of deciding on how to spend our Coolings vouchers (our prize for our Bee World at Tugmutton) – where shall we have another Bee World?!

Sevenoaks Nature Reserve visit - continued

a reserve and then to take us through to a "hide" where we could watch the many hundreds of birds : gulls , terns, lapwings, mud - feeding , geese, cormorants, herons and many more, even using a telescope for detail.

We then embarked on a nature trail through various special plantings of assorted trees, seeing flora ,fauna, some very interesting fungi and lichen.

They had acquired goats to keep the scrub down in places ,and then there were little picturesque, bankside nooks and crannies ,but we were soon glad to get back to a hot soup or coffee at the visitor centre and shop where we could learn even more.

I found out more about which birds were which from their stuffed examples and a tray full of every type of bee & hoverfly which was relevant to FOE at the moment.

A place worth visiting in all Seasons. Thank you Sue and John for another successful outing.

November meeting report (*cont'd*)

So what can farmers do about the problem?

There are a range of strategies that will make a difference such as putting covers on slurry stores and using low emission techniques when slurry spreading.

It seems clear that there are 5 threats from Nitrogen and these can be summed up in the acronym WAGES.

Water quality

Air quality

Greenhouse balance

Ecosystems

Soil quality

Nitrates in our drinking water can cause colon cancer, air pollution is life shortening and causes coronary heart disease, greenhouse gases thin the ozone layer and soil becomes more acid.

A major study carried out by 200 experts from 21 countries, estimates that the annual cost of damage caused by Nitrogen across Europe is between £60 - £280 billion, (around £130 - £650 per person a year).

All this makes us look at our own diet and whether we can make a difference by eating less meat. Mark offered the choice of 'demitarianism' The demitarian diet is to limit ourselves to "half" the standard portion of meat products that would be consumed in a regular meal. This portion is to be replaced with a correspondingly larger portion of vegetables or other food products. This would free up land that is being used to grow animal feed.

There were then some interesting questions posed by the audience, including the problems of countries such as China beginning to consume large quantities of meat and which meats might be a better option to choose to eat.

More information can be found at: www.youtube.com and search for 'European Nitrogen Assessment'.

Blackfish Presentation – *continued*

deals with third-world governments, which end up by destroying the coastal fisheries utilised by the local inhabitants.

8. Marine conservation zones are grossly inadequate and usually cover very small areas, except where conservation and enforcement are taken seriously within national zones of control - within international waters there are no effective controls.

9. Tuna and shark species are under sustained attack throughout the world to supply the Asian markets - tuna meat is now more valuable than silver and as the numbers drop the value of remaining stocks increases. This principle also applies to other species.

10. Fish farms are not an answer to over-fishing, since most farmed fish are carnivorous and rely on wild-caught fish - 7 kilos of dead fishmeal to achieve one kilo of farmed fish ! Only vegetarian fish, such as tilapia, overcome this problem.

FoE - Top news stories of a week in November

Friends of the Earth's New Media volunteer Aaron Fauch looks at some of the biggest stories of the week from the worlds of politics, energy and the environment in our regular news blog.

Developed nations are turning their backs on fighting climate change

Despite the scientific consensus, the record breaking weather, and their promises, developed countries around the world are disregarding their climate change obligations.

Japan has scaled back its commitment to cut emissions by 2020, after relying heavily on nuclear. Now it is planning to cut emissions by just 3.8% compared to 2005.

In Australia the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, has begun steps to scrap a carbon tax brought in by the previous government. And Canada has patted him on the back for doing so, while they try to expand their tar-sand market into Europe. Both countries are some of the worst polluters per head of population.

Here in the UK, the Government has excluded a decarbonisation target from the Energy Bill, which would have taken the carbon out of our electricity supply by 2030.

EDF accused of "blackmailing" the UK

Energy giant EDF has been accused of blackmailing the UK Government. This comes after they announced smaller increases in energy bills were dependent on the government

reviewing its environmental and social obligations.

EDF customers will see a 3.9% increase in their bills this January. This is lower than previous announcements from four of the other Big Six, but is dependent on the government abandoning some of its policies.

One example is the Energy Companies Obligation (ECO). This commits the Big Six to supply energy efficiency measures, like insulation, to households in fuel poverty. Their targets for ECO are likely to be missed this year. Cutting energy demand with better insulation is a direct threat to energy companies' profits. Is it any wonder that the Big Six are so opposed to their social obligations?

North Sea cod is on the rise, but not safe yet

Things are looking up for North Sea Cod. But it's too soon for Brits to start thinking about the fish returning to our dinner plate, a conservation charity has warned.

The Marine Conservation Society has praised the efforts of Scottish Fishermen to help increase cod numbers to almost 3 times their 2006 levels. But to insure a recovery, their advice to the British public is to avoid eating cod for a little longer.

Understandably, fishermen aren't happy about this. But, if the fish numbers aren't allowed to recover, the progress already made could be undermined.

European Green Party and Online Primaries for the Euro election

John Street writes - There's more info about the online primaries at <http://greenprimary.europeangreens.eu/>

After criss-crossing Europe from early November, the four contenders in the European Green Party's online primary will be coming to London.

The online primary is designed to give over-16s the chance to vote to select two people to be the face of the European Green Party's campaign for the European elections in May.

Online debates are being interspersed with face to face debates in places as diverse as Athens, Cologne, Gothenburg, Prague and Berlin. After the London hustings there will be two more in Rome and Brussels, before the online voting closes on January 28th with the two winners announced at a press conference in Brussels the following day.

The London event will be on Saturday 18th January at the ICO Conference Centre, 22 Berners Street, London, W1T 3DD, There's more info about the venue and a map of its location at <http://www.cavendishconferencevenue.co.uk/noho-soho-conference-venues/>. Doors open at 2pm and the event itself will run from 2.30 to 4pm. It will have a Question Time format and will be chaired by London's Green MEP, Jean Lambert.

Please register for the event in advance at <http://greenparty.org.uk/get-involved/egphustings.html>

Statements from the four contenders follow; you can vote online at <https://www.greenprimary.eu/>

JOSE BOVE (France)

"Member of the European Parliament since 2009, I am first of all, a farmer of the world. On the Larzac, where I milked sheep for years, I struggled to save my land against the army. From Seattle to Porto Alegre, with NGOs, I claimed that our world is not for sale! Since 1970, when my opposition to nuclear power started, my life has been guided by ecology. I fought GMO with civil disobedience and ended up in jail, but in the end, we secured their banning." *Continued on the website.*

MONICA FRASSONI (Italy)

"To restore our self-confidence and have a positive influence on world affairs, we have to transform the next EP Elections into a real competition. We must do it noisily by stirring controversies and debates with the other parties, by mobilising our members and finding new support. We have to convince citizens that they have a say in EU affairs and that, unless they speak up, EU will split again. If they don't, we will not solve the crisis and our collective irrelevance will be inevitable." *Continued on the website.*

REBECCA HARMS (Germany)

"My political work began in 1975 in the German anti-nuclear movement. As Co-Chair of the Greens/EFA Group in the EU Parliament, I have always fought hard for our ideals and aims. The continuing dispute over energy transition and climate protection tells me that we Greens, being a relatively small party, need not just passion, but a lot of patience for our big ideas." *Continued on the website*
/article continued on next page

Act Now to Save Pubs

Act Now To Save Our Pubs

Local Works, which says it is “Campaigning to implement the Sustainable Communities Act” has recently sent his letter to its supporters with the heading “Act now to save our pubs!”

Your community pubs are in trouble. Each week, 26 pubs close down. In London alone, over 400 have been demolished. Many more are converted into betting shops, payday lenders or supermarkets.

No consultation is required to knock down a community pub, or to convert it. As a result, we are losing any viable and popular pubs that are the heart of local communities.

What can be done to reverse this frightening trend? We’ve teamed up with our coalition partners, the Campaign For Real Ale (CAMRA) to work on a solution. We want to use the Sustainable Communities Act to change the law so that planning permission is required before a pub is demolished or converted. This would give local people a say in what happens to their pubs. We need to make some noise and let councillors know how much we want this. Can you take two minutes to write to your councillor?

Proposing this change to the law under the Sustainable Communities Act gives the strongest chance of it happening. Central government can’t just say no: it has a duty to try to reach agreement with an independent panel.

Submitting this proposal is our best hope for saving our pubs.

Three councils have already resolved to submit the proposal, and we would love to see more following suit. So can you take a few minutes to let your councillor know how much you would like to see your local pubs protected?

Write to your councillor to save local pubs!
<http://act.localworks.org/ea-action/action?ea.client.id=1810&ea.campaign.id=22937>

Steve Shaw, National Co-ordinator for Local Works

Online Primaries - *continued*

SKA KELLER (Germany)

“I grew up in the Eastern Bloc, but have lived Europe for as long as I can remember. Anti-racism and internationalism became guiding principles as I worked on cross-border solidarity in my home on the Polish border. Young Greens and Green Parties of Europe spoke to this in a way that never quietened, but still calls me today. For our shared environment, for a united Europe of peace and freedom, capable of facing social, economic and international challenges, for the things that hold us together.”
Continued on the website.

Bromley Arts and Community Initiative (BACI) – Successful in two funding applications

John Street writes - Bromley Arts and Community Initiative (BACI - a group set up to save the Royal Bell in Bromley High Street) has recently learnt that it has been successful in both its recent applications for funding.

BACI had applied for funding from Bromley Council's Community Fund and the Social Investment Business Group's Pre-Feasibility Fund.

The group has been awarded nearly £3,000 from the Community Fund and almost £10,000 from the SIB's Pre-Feasibility Fund.

The first thing that the money will pay for is an assessment of the viability of the whole project, both from a building point of view (currently the Royal Bell is very dilapidated inside) and also from the financial sustainability viewpoint.

The money will also fund a public consultation to see what the people of Bromley want from the Royal Bell, as well as a thorough survey of the building to determine just what needs to be done to bring it back to health, plus an investigation into the best governance structure for the project both before and after completion.

This is part of the group's application to the Community Fund

Aims and Vision

The aim of the Bromley Arts and Community Initiative (BACI) is to create a lively, well used, bistro style artistic centre at the Royal Bell. Our plan is to bring back to life the traditional and elegant Grade II listed Royal Bell Hotel

which is unoccupied and gradually deteriorating. All Bromley, businesses and citizens alike, will reap the reward of an improved Town Centre.

The aim of re-invigorating the Royal Bell is to be achieved by forming a business partnership with leaseholders, owners and possible occupiers and applying for funds from the Heritage Enterprise scheme recently launched by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The scheme is designed to bring about heritage led regeneration by covering the cost of restoring privately owned listed buildings and allowing their beneficial use. The bulk of the costs of the project will be met by the Heritage Enterprise scheme whilst the costs of feasibility work will be met from other sources.

The guiding premise of this project is to create a specialised niche for the benefit of Bromley and initially, to compliment Bromley Council's regeneration plans for Bromley North Village. With the theme of co-operation and collaboration, our dynamic and forward thinking, aims to develop local support, resources and culture.

We will be looking to engage with all age ranges through the provision of a safe and comfortable venue, available to meet the needs of the community. Such needs may include a wide variety of social activities, for example, art classes, singing lessons, dance, theatre and lunch clubs.

Lobbying Bill – Letter to Jo Johnson MP from Graham Hemington

Editor's note – The Lobbying Bill = the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Bill.

Many well-respected campaign groups, charities and community groups have been warning that they would be gagged for the entire year before a general election; these concerns have been raised in the House of Commons and by Graham Hemington in a letter to his MP, Jo Johnson. **Here's Jo Johnson's reply.**

Dear Mr Hemington

Thank you for writing to me about the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Bill. I was sorry to learn of your concerns about the Bill.

I want to stress first of all that these new proposals are only for third party organisations that campaign for the electoral success of a particular political party or candidate. An organisation campaigning only on policy issues would be exempted from these changes.

This Bill is about bringing transparency to the way third parties interact with our political system. Campaign groups play an important role in our political process, helping inform policymaking and allowing differing views to be heard from across society, often giving voice to the voiceless. This must continue.

The Government wants to take big money out of politics. Limiting campaign spending during an election

will help the UK avoid the situation we see in other countries, where unregulated spending by vested interests means that it might not be the best candidate who wins an election, but the one with the richest backers.

The amount an organisation can spend campaigning for electoral success during an election period will be limited to £390,000 across the UK. This is still a very substantial sum. Expenditure will be fully recorded and disclosed.

At present, charities can undertake non-party political activity where the trustees can demonstrate that it supports their purposes. The law prohibits charities from engaging in party politics, party political campaigning, supporting political candidates or undertaking political activity unrelated to the charity's purpose

This will not change. The Government has worked closely with the Electoral Commission and the National Council of Voluntary Organisations on the Bill. It tabled a number of amendments on 8 and 9 October and the Leader of the House, Andrew Lansley, set out in detail how this would make the legislation clearer for campaigners, which I have enclosed for your interest.

I want to repeat that an organisation campaigning only on policy issues would not be included in these changes and organisations such as 38 degrees have nothing to fear.

Yours etc
Jo Johnson MP.

Can Genetic Modification ever have benefits?

This item is taken from a conversation between Ingo Potrykus and Andy Coghlan, originally in the New Scientist.

Concerned about food security and the quality of food in the 1990s, scientists Ingo Potrykus (former Professor of Plant Sciences, at the Institute of Plant Sciences of the ETH Zurich) and Peter Bayer were looking at the problem of a deficiency of vitamin A causing blindness and death in children. Their solution, and one that surprised them that it worked, was a rice that contained a precursor to vitamin A (it is converted to vitamin A when eaten). This has become known as Golden Rice.

Their work was opposed by Greenpeace who said that a child would not eat enough to get their requirement. This could not be proved by either side without the data of an actual trial.

Later in 2005 another group modified the procedure so that 20 times more beta carotene (that gets converted to vitamin A) was produced. Greenpeace continued to say that the rice was useless and that the problem was solvable by other means such as the programs run by the World Health Organisation and others providing vitamin pills, but these cost tens of millions of pounds a year and needed an infrastructure to distribute.

Finally, a trial last year in Boston showed that Golden Rice gave excellent results, with a single serving giving 60% of the recommended serving for children. Also Golden Rice has now been bred conventionally with

those varieties used by poor people in areas where vitamin A deficiency is widespread..

It would appear that certain environmental groups cannot tolerate any form of GM, even those that can be used for the public good. It does have its supporters from environmental groups including Greenpeace founder Patrick Moore, who now supports Golden Rice.

It is a shame that we appear to have a solution for vitamin A deficiency, yet since the invention of Golden Rice, an estimated 2.5 million children have died every year from vitamin A deficiency. Not all of course could have been saved, but perhaps we should consider that in certain cases GM has benefits. Imagine yourself as a poor parent in those areas at risk!

Note from Peter Gandolfi: the Golden Rice patents are not owned by a multinational and to my knowledge have been given to the world by its inventors.

DON'T FORGET

Our January meeting (Tuesday 7th Jan) is also the AGM, at which officers are elected for the rest of the year.

If you're interested in helping in this way, please contact Ann or Sheila.

Bromley Friends of the Earth - List of Contacts

Co-ordinators:

Sheila Brown 01689-851605
email – sheilabrown336@msn.com
Ann Garrett 020-8460-1295
anncgarrett@yahoo.com

Campaigns Organiser:

Ann Garrett 020-8460-1295

Secretary:

Ray Watson 01959-571566
r.watson865@btinternet.com

Treasurer:

Sheila Brown 01689-851605

Press Officer:

Sophie Lyons
sophielyons.foe@gmail.com

Programme Organiser:

Sheila Brown 01689-851605

Outings organisers:

John & Sue Bocock 020-8464-5990
johnbocock@hotmail.com

Newsletter Editor:

John Street 020-8460-1078
johnstreet@gn.apc.org

Membership Secretary:

Dan Sloan 01689-838819

Bromley FoE web site:

www.bromleyfoe.co.uk

Peter Gandolfi
petergandolfi@hotmail.com

Campaigns –

Transport:

Ray Watson 01959-571566

Climate and Energy:

Ann Garrett 020-8460-1295

Food and Ethical Farming:

Peter Gandolfi details below

Planning and development:

Mary Stirling
maryellenstirling@hotmail.co.uk
Tamara Galloway 01689-855352
tamaragalloway@yahoo.com

Waste and Recycling

Annette Rose
annette.rose1@ntlworld.com

Bee Cause

Judy Palmer, judy.palmer@talk21.com

Monthly Meeting reporters:

John and Sue Bocock, Anne Clark,
Graham Hemington, Annette Rose and
Ray Watson

Merchandising:

Anne Clark 020-8289-8483

Teas:

Anne Clark / Ivy Smith

Letters to the Editor

Why not write us a letter if you have a strong opinion on something or just want to share your thoughts. Send them in and perhaps even start a discussion - who knows.

Need a lift to meetings?

If you require a lift to Bromley FoE meetings, please contact Ray Watson or Sheila Brown on the numbers shown above.

Reuser Column
Don't throw It away - Reuse It!

If you have any items to sell, or anything that you require, please send details to the Editor. Items will be displayed for three months, the number in brackets after an item indicating for how long it has appeared. Could you please contact us if an item has been sold/obtained, so that it can be removed from the newsletter.

Any donations to Bromley FoE generated from this column gratefully received!

Non-members' Section

If you are not a member of Bromley Friends of the Earth, BFoE, then hello. We are an active local group affiliated to national Friends of the Earth concerned with promoting the understanding of environmental issues. We also campaign on these issues at a local, national and international level.

If you would like to know more about who we are and what we do please contact either of our co-ordinators, Sheila Brown (01689-851605) or Ann Garrett (020-8460-1295); their email addresses are on the previous page. Alternatively, you can come along to one of our free monthly meetings held on the first Tuesday of every month at the Friends Meeting House, Ravensbourne Road, Bromley (that's towards the bottom of the High Street and on the right going south). If you would like to join us then please fill in and send us the form below.

Membership Application/Renewal* Form (*please delete as appropriate.)

Please return this form to: **Bromley FoE, 2 Bucks Cross Cottages, Chelsfield Village, Orpington, Kent, BR6 7RN**. Other enquiries regarding the group should be sent to: Birch House, Grays Road, Westerham, Kent, TN16 2JB; phone 01959-571566, email r.watson865@btinternet.com.

I wish to support Bromley Friends of the Earth and enclose my £8 annual subscription. I also enclose a donation (optional) of To help towards the cost of producing and distributing the monthly Newsletter.

Name.....

Address.....

..... Postcode.....

Email Address.....

Do you have any hobbies or interests that may be of use to the group?

.....