



**friends of
the earth
Bromley**



December 2015

No. 336

ewsletter

Bromley FoE: enquiries:

email: bromleyfoe@gmail.com, website: www.bromleyfoe.co.uk

December Meeting

Friends Meeting House, Ravensbourne Road, Bromley

**Craig Bennett, CEO of Friends of the Earth
shares his vision, hopes and plans for the future**

The second half of the meeting will be Bromley Friends of the Earth's Seasonal Social with Festive Fayre. There will also be another chance to look at old photos of group campaigning activities, plus bee information and free seeds!

Tuesday 1st December – 7.30pm

In this Issue:

Diary Dates	2	Hands Off FOI	14
December mtg info	2	Traidcraft	14
Craig Bennett on 13/11	3	Climate change, Env'ment	...
November mtg rept	4,5,7	... and Militarism	15
Campaigns & Climate	6,7	Housing & Planning Bill	16
Andy Atkins	7	Solar cuts	17,18
Nature Update	8,13	Fracking stall photo	18
Recycling in Bromley	9-12	Bromley contacts	19
Orpington Priory	13	Non-members section	20

Copy for the next Newsletter must be with the Editor by

***** SUNDAY 13TH DECEMBER*****

Contact details inside front cover.

Recycling in Bromley – Pull-out in centre pages

Diary dates:

- Dec 1 (Tue)** **Bromley FoE's December Meeting: with** Craig Bennett, FoE's new CEO, and our Seasonal Social
- Dec 5 (Sat)** **Progressive Bromley Film Co-op:** Social evening with comedy films. 6pm shared food, film starts 7pm. Friends Meeting House, Bromley
- Jan 5 (Tue)** **Bromley FoE's January meeting:** Karen Wheller from Beaverworld, followed by our AGM

December meeting – December 1st

Formerly Director of policy and campaigns Craig Bennett became CEO of Friends of the Earth in July of this year. He feels that Friends of the Earth needs to 'escape its white, middle class ghetto'.

In an interview in The Guardian in August, he said, "We have to go back to the trenches, use the older tactics. It's back to the future. This government is completely out of touch. Politicians talking to politicians do not understand what is going on. They have declared war on renewables (such as wind and solar power) but everyone supports them. They have backed fracking but no one wants it. We have people on our side everywhere.

"My generation has to have a vision of restoration, of turning the whole direction of travel", he says. "We don't want to just slow the decline. We want a positive future. We mustn't listen to the naysayers."

If you are able to contribute items of food or drink for the evening, please contact Sue Boccock. Non-alcoholic drinks only. We shall be serving our traditional non-alcoholic Punch.

Disclaimer: *Please note that any opinions expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of Bromley Friends of the Earth or 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 13TH 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.

**Craig Bennett, Chief Executive of FoE,
on the bombings in France in mid-November**

Craig Bennett, Chief Executive of FoE, circulated this shortly after the attacks in Paris on November 13th.

I wanted to get in touch and reach out after a very painful few days for people everywhere.

The devastating terror attacks in Paris, Beirut, Baghdad and so many other places lately have left us all reeling. War and conflict have become a horrific daily reality for too many of our fellow citizens around the world. The broken bodies of men, women and children that continue to wash up on the shores of the Mediterranean are just one indicator of the desperation faced by many.

It's very hard to know what to say in these situations and I can't pretend to know exactly what the next few weeks will bring, but there are a few things that I can say for certain.

The first is that we are standing in solidarity with everyone affected by these horrifying events and sending them our support and love at this difficult time.

The second is that we will be monitoring the situation in Paris very closely, along with Friends of the Earth France, and will let you know any developments as soon as possible. Hundreds of us are due to travel to Paris together for the climate talks next month and I want to assure you that safety is upmost in all of our minds. We will be in touch soon with updates about our plans.

And finally, I want to say that it is more important than ever for us to stand together against all violence and injustice to people everywhere and to our planet. We must continue to unite against climate change and other root causes of conflict and injustice. And we must combat the risk that attacks such as these can be used to divide people and drive prejudice, discrimination and violence.

Let's make sure that our fear, an emotion all of us feel, brings us closer together and doesn't drive us apart.

We are fighting for a fairer, safer, and more peaceful world where both people and nature thrive. This can only happen if we support each other, take care of each other and speak with one powerful voice for a better future for everyone.

In hope and unity,

Craig and all of us here at Friends of the Earth

November meeting report – Peter Gandolfi

This consisted of a round table discussion about fracking. Taking part were Colin Smith, Deputy Leader of the Council and portfolio holder for the environment and Karen Wheller from Bromley against fracking. Ann Garrett introduced the speakers, and said that the aim was to gain information through a non confrontational discussion.

Sheila welcomed guests in the audience, and said it was their job to give an independent view as they had been unable to get a scientist to speak. Some of the group had heard a geologist speak at an earlier meeting in Sevenoaks, a Mr Golding, but who was unable to come to this meeting. Instead Sheila and Ann read out some of the notes from this meeting (which had been published in an earlier newsletter) and from other scientific papers..

These covered how oil and gas formed in shale, over time at great depth (2-5km), this was far below the water table. How it was extracted by drilling into the shale, then horizontally into the shale bed. High pressure water / sand / chemicals then were used to keep the fissures open to release the gas, mainly methane.

The depth of these formations was generally much greater than in the USA. Earthquakes were mentioned but were considered as tremors and of minor concern. Big companies seemed to not want to get involved as it did not appear to be so economic in the UK and there were lots more regulations over here. Possible problems were also covered such as

well casing leakage, environmental impact and chemicals used.

There were several sites of interest in the UK, these included Northern England, the Weald basin and sites in Wales and Northern Ireland. To date only one well had been fracked, this one being in Lancashire.

The first of our speakers was then invited to speak. – Karen Wheller

Karen showed some slides of the fracking process, and covered the legalities of fracking, and the appeal system in place, and also information on the Environmental agency and their part in the process. It is they who licence fracking, and it was considered that a cut in their funding may limit their effectiveness.

Our government seems to be generally in favour of fracking, offering tax incentives, including 10% of all proceeds to go back into the local economy. It was suggested that fracking could only supply 5% of our oil/gas needs, and would it be worth it?

Concerns covered included:

- Effects on the local geology, which could result in destabilisation / tremors.
- Water shortage problems as so much is used in the process.
- Environmental concerns, with Methane contributing to global warming. It was considered that economic issues could override environmental concerns when issuing licences.

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November meeting report – *continued*

- Health implications, with waste water being irradiated with radioactive materials, as well as the chemicals, often unknown being used in the fracking process.

What can we do? Raise our concerns with councillors, portfolio holders, local MPs and sign petitions.

Councillor Smith then spoke.

He said that we all need more information as technology evolves. As world resources are going we cannot manage without a mix of fossil fuels, nuclear as well as solar and wind generators, without a danger of lights going off in the future. He has an open mind on the subject, and needs to understand more before making any conclusion.

The Dept of Energy and Climate Change will give permission to drill, and they have the responsibility to set risk and monitoring of sites. The Council who are in charge of mineral planning would consider applications, but environmental assessment considered critical to the process. (Disposal of waste/emissions to air/suitable treatment etc).

Health and Safety executive would regulate the safety aspects of extraction. Cllr Smith thought the main risk being the security of the well casing. There was also the possibility of the London mayor being interested in the planning process.

The whole process driven by law and the national planning policy framework is the overarching document for

council planning decisions. If these council decisions don't comply with the national council policy framework, it leaves councils vulnerable to potential challenge by the government inspectors.

Reading from a solicitor's letter, which he thought covered both sides of the argument: It's a controversial subject, untested and with three different government departments involved, with a risk for inconsistent policy on the subject. It was likely that technology will move faster than the policy makers constantly challenged to keep up.

A number of quotes from the national minerals policy were mentioned these included: "Minerals are essential to support sustainable growth and a quality of life, and a need for sufficient energy the country needs".

The summary being - there is a pressing need for mineral planning authorities, to plan positively for fracking or risk the power being taken away from them.

So if a planning authority turns down an application, perhaps because they don't like it, without justification on planning grounds the national planning authority at Bristol will turn against the authority, which is exactly where we seem to be with the Cuadrilla appeal at the moment.

/concluded on page 7

Campaigning

A big thank you to those turned up to help with our joint stall with Bromley Against Fracking on October 24th – *see photo on opposite page*. As it was raining it was a good thing to be under cover, but it's a shame there isn't a suitable place in Bromley High Street any more. However The Mall manager supports our campaigns and Sevenoaks Furnishings are very helpful in letting us leave the table in their store over night.

My fracking letter on our behalf was in all three Bromley papers, but there has been a critical letter in the Bromley Borough News criticising me for not knowing that according to Wikipedia, the Environment Agency doesn't permit the use of dangerous chemicals in the fracking process. I am now investigating this.

Our Bromley FoE letter was handed in to Barclays in Bromley on November 13th, expressing concerns about the bank owning 90% of the shares in fracking company Third Energy. This was part of national FoE action during the Autumn, and Paul Enock handed out leaflets he had designed outside Barclays in Orpington on October 10th on our behalf.

We supported CND anti nuclear waste train transportation at Bromley South Station on November 7th. Waste comes through Orpington and Bromley South on its way from Dungeness nuclear power plant to Sellafield for reprocessing. This is the only waste coming through London at present.

Climate and Energy

The Clock is ticking re CO2 Levels

UN leaders will be meeting in Paris in early December to discuss the serious climate situation. According to the World Meteorological Organisation, the UN weather agency, CO2 and methane hit new highs in 2014. They have stated that this could cause catastrophic damage to the planet, affecting sea levels, wildlife and food production.

Driven by the burning of coal, oil and gas, carbon dioxide levels are now 143% higher than before the industrial revolution, with a global average of 397.7 parts per million. The average is likely to be 400ppm next year.

Some 40% of methane emissions come from natural sources and about 60% from human activities, such as cattle breeding and fossil fuel extraction.

Solar Power for Africa

Entrepreneurs and financiers in London are at the forefront of delivering off-grid energy to hundreds of thousands of homes in Africa. Overseas development minister Grant Shapps is seeking to dramatically speed up the rollout of micro-solar panels.

He believes that up to 600 million people in Africa could be reached within 15 years, partly because the sharp fall in the cost of photovoltaic panels, better technology and more

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Campaigns, Climate and Energy // November report - *continued*

Climate and Energy, *continued*

... efficient LED lights. Low income families are also able to make small payments for their energy via their mobile phones.

Huge numbers of families could now get energy cheaper and cleaner, even allowing for companies supplying the technology to make a profit.

Alternative Insulation System

In a well insulated building the energy emitted by a television, a fridge and two human bodies would be enough to heat it according to Bill Watts, a senior electrical engineer at the engineering firm Max Fordham.

He thinks we could all save energy and money by adopting Passivhaus building standards. This standard, developed in Germany in the early 1990s, leads to homes that are so energy efficient they only need 15kWh/m² per year of heating energy. New buildings can easily install improved insulation, but it's more difficult adapting older buildings.

Investing in Passivhaus standard as a national infrastructure priority would reduce the need for new power plants.

November report, *concluded*

Questions from the floor followed, these included:

As 20% of the well casings failed in America allowing possible contamination of the ground water, did Cllr Smith think that the economic benefits could be seen to override these dangers. Cllr Smith said that he could not possibly know, but pointed back to the national framework policy, and the need to consider all economic benefits.

There was a general discussion on alternate sources of energy, including fusion. Bromley was considered a low risk of fracking by both of the speakers. It was considered that the best approach that Bromley could make would be to use less energy rather than more. If the Environmental Agency seemed unable to monitor and deal with a local rubbish dump, how can we have faith in them monitoring fracking licences.

Ann then wrapped up the meeting and thanked both the presenters.

Andy Atkins

Andy, who stepped down as Friends of the Earth's Executive Director earlier in the year, has been appointed Chief Executive of A Rocha UK, starting in January 2016.

A Rocha is a Christian charity working for the protection and restoration of the natural world, carrying out the biblical mandate to care for the earth and demonstrating Christian hope through practical involvement, campaigning and education.

Nature Update – Judy Palmer

Bees and pesticides

On November 5th Friends of the Earth were at the High Court seeking to get leave to have a full hearing against the Government's approval in July of the application by the National Farmers' Union (NFU) to use restricted bee-harming neonicotinoids in four English counties for this autumn's crop of oil-seed rape. As at the time of writing, the case is being considered. The main point of the challenge is to raise the bar for how decisions about applications to 'derogate' from the current EU restrictions are made.

Friends of the Earth is playing a long-game on this issue as they know that the NFU is to make more attempts to get round the restrictions.

NB. Unfortunately we have just heard that Friends of the Earth has lost their case – “The High Court ruled that the evidence and advice provided to the Secretary of State for the Environment was sufficient for her to legally take a decision lawfully to grant the authorisations and that Friends of the Earth could not challenge this decision. But the judgment did not decide whether she had taken the right decision.”

And quoting further from the Friends of the Earth press release –
“It's extremely disappointing that our application to challenge the Government's decision to allow the use of banned, bee-harming pesticides has been turned down. We believe this ruling is flawed, ignores important facts and gives too much credibility to pesticide industry evidence to support

the use of its own products. We are now considering an appeal.

“Our legal challenge has revealed fundamental flaws with the decision-making process for these emergency authorisations, which was shrouded in secrecy until the government was forced to provide crucial papers to us.

“The Government's decision was too dependent on evidence provided by the pesticide firms, who have a direct commercial interest in these chemicals and seeing the ban on neonicotinoids lifted.”

MPs

You may remember earlier in the year we were planning to approach our Borough MPs with a letter urging the MP to approach Liz Truss (Secretary of State for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) which asks the Government to update its position on neonicotinoids. We did manage to approach Jo Johnson, Orpington MP, and he has written back to us saying he understands the concerns raised and has written to Ms Truss on our behalf urging her to review the evidence we presented regarding the overall benefits of the use of these pesticides. He says he will be back in contact when he has a response.

25 year plan for Nature

For those of us who missed reading the Conservative party election manifesto, we wish to quote this extract “We set ourselves the goal of being the first generation to leave the natural environment of England in a better

/continued on page 13

Recycling in Bromley – page 1 of 4
Text of leaflet accompanying talk by Cllr Colin Smith

Cllr Colin Smith, Bromley Council's portfolio holder for the Environment, recently gave a talk to Babbacombe Road Residents' Association.

The main points of Colin's talk included:

- Cost of land-fill had gone from £3 per tonne some years ago to £80 per tonne today.
- Most of the current cost is in taxes, thus forcing councils to look at different ways to process their waste.
- Amount of waste currently collected by the borough is 150,000 tonnes of which 50% is recycled.
- Following a downturn in manufacturing there was little demand for those items normally recycled, i.e. paper, plastic, metals and glass.
- John Bosley noted that there was only a demand for brown & clear recycled glass in the UK and that other tinted glass was not required. Cost to transport glass offshore was prohibitive and thus contributed to the 50% of waste that remained unrecyclable.
- The downturn in steel manufacture in the UK also meant that there was little demand for the metal cans.
- Recycling of paper was still profitable especially as the collection nowadays was made up cardboard rather than paper and this created a higher grade of recyclable material.

Colin's talk was accompanied by this information sheet -

Recycling destinations & processes

Paper

Previously sent to Aylesford newsprint in Kent to be recycled into fresh newsprint. Since this has closed, our paper is now sent to DS Smith. It is used in the UK at several paper mills (one of which is in Kent) to manufacture cardboard packaging.

Glass / cans / plastics

In the green box, we collect glass, cans and plastic containers. These are separated out into the various materials at one of two sorting facilities in London operated by Veolia Environmental Services. The sorting processes used vary from the sophisticated (laser opacity beams to identify the various types of plastic, magnets for the steel cans, eddy-current generators for the aluminium cans) to the manual – hand sorting for contamination and the more difficult plastic containers.

Approximately 80% of the glass is used in furnaces in the north of England to make new bottles and jars. Where the glass has been too broken in the collection process to be used in this way, it is sent to Day's Aggregates in East London, where it is crushed down to be used as an alternative to quarry products in road construction.

The steel cans were going to Corus (ex British Steel) in Wales to be recycled into general metal products.

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Recycling in Bromley – page 2 of 4
Text of leaflet accompanying talk by Cllr Colin Smith

The aluminium cans go to a plant in Warrington where they are mostly made back into more aluminium cans.

Once sorted, the plastic containers are sent to a secondary recycling facility in east London where they are further separated into the various chemical types they are made of. Some of these can be directly recycled- milk bottles, HDPE, can be made into new containers.

Generally, plastic bottles are the main post-consumer source of plastics. They can be recycled using a variety of technologies and be used to produce high-quality end products ranging from pipes to fleece jackets. Feedstock technologies also allow post-consumer plastics to be broken down into their component parts and used to produce new plastics.

When plastics are recycled, they are often first chopped into flakes as part of the process. This is particularly relevant to the recycling of post-consumer plastic bottles as the chopping stage is accompanied by washing, which removes any traces of labels, lids and unwanted materials. These flakes can then be used as the raw material for end products.

Chopped waste plastics can then be turned into pellets and coloured through melting processes. The end product is small, lentil-sized pellets that can then be used in the manufacture of new products. There are a variety of companies around the UK who carry out the flaking and pelletising

processes. Some of these produce plastic compounds that can in turn be used in product manufacture.

Some plastics, however, simply can't be recycled, as their polymer mix is just too complicated. These items, usually 5 – 10% of our collections, are sent to an incinerator which produces both heat and electricity, ensuring at least some beneficial use is made of them.

Food waste

Our food waste is sent to two hi-tech composting facilities. One is an In-Vessel Composting process in Kent, which used an enclosed system to mature the waste into high quality compost. The material is enclosed to ensure it can be consistently heated for sufficient time to destroy any pathogens in the food.

The other facility is an Anaerobic Digestion facility just west of London. This uses a chemical process to break the food waste down into biogas and a liquid biomass. The biogas is burnt in an enclosed process to generate electricity, and the liquid biomass is refined to produce a high-density liquid fertiliser.

Green waste

The green waste also goes to the In-vessel Composting process. The fibrous nature of the material means it is better suited to this than AD.

Iron

As with the steel cans, this material is sent to the scrap metal market through a facility in Erith, where it is sold on for re-manufacture.

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Recycling in Bromley – page 3 of 4

Text of leaflet accompanying talk by Cllr Colin Smith

Textiles

Most textiles in Bromley are collected by a local Bromley company. The textiles are sorted, and where possible are resold as clothing or footwear, either in this country (for very high quality goods) or abroad. Where the quality isn't good enough, the textiles are sent to plants which mechanically unpick the fibres, allowing them to be remanufactured into lower grade textiles – linings, inner layers, or at the lower quality end, the type of industrial wipes one sees in garages.

Bric-a-brac

This is a general term for anything which can be retrieved from Waldo Road and Churchfields for repair, re-use and refurbishment, such as furniture, garden equipment, sports goods, electrical equipment. If we can avoid needing it to be thrown away, why not do so. Until recently these items were commercially re-sold, but we are developing an arrangement with the Give-to-Give charity to ensure they have access to items they will find useful.

Oil

This is sent to a company in Wales, who clean and filter the waste oil we collect. Where possible, it is recovered and reintroduced to the market for its original use, but if it is too contaminated it is recovered as a base oil for reintroduction to the lube oil market, or at worst, recycled as a fuel oil for industrial use.

Fridges & electronic/electrical goods

Waste electrical and electronic equipment, from fridges to televisions, razors to toasters, in fact anything which has a plug or needs batteries, are taken

to a reprocessing plant on the south coast where they are shredded into small pieces.

Once shredded, strong magnets remove ferrous metals, such as steel, whilst other non-magnetic metals are removed by using electronic currents. Plastic is sorted into types by using various methods such as near infrared light and density separation.

Electrical items contain many different parts which, once recycled, can be used again in a variety of new applications. Some examples of what some of the recycled parts may become are:

Hover mowers contain: strong ABS (acrylonitrile butadiene styrene) plastic that can be used for light, rigid, moulded products such as musical instruments, cases, pipe fittings and car bumpers, copper motors that can be turned into copper pipe, coins in some currencies, jewellery, wire, and as winding wire for motors in new electronic products such as fridges, vacuums, tools, toys and motors. Copper can be mixed with zinc to make brass, or with tin to make bronze.

Games consoles contain: steel that can be used for computer casings, car parts and beams, circuit boards, which have a range of precious metals including gold, silver, platinum and palladium; platinum and palladium are used in catalytic converters and mobile phones...and jewellery.

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Recycling in Bromley – page 4 of 4
Text of leaflet accompanying talk by Cllr Colin Smith

Mobile phones contain: precious metals (like gold, platinum and palladium), a variety of which can be recycled into component plating and low voltage electrical contacts; palladium plays a key role in the technology used for fuel cells, zinc which is used to galvanise steel; it can also be mixed with copper to make brass. Ships and submarines use zinc blocks to stop rust forming.

Gas bottles

These are sent back to their original manufacturers. If possible, they are re-used, otherwise, they become scrap metal.

Wood

The wood is sent to a plant in Sittingbourne, Kent, where it is graded by quality. Following this, it is recycled into a variety of products, such as animal bedding, play areas, equestrian surfaces, panel board feedstock and filter beds. If it is too contaminated, it can be used to produce biomass wood chip, which can be used in heating systems.

Tyres

Tyres are sent to a processor in Gravesend, where they are shredded into a material known as "crumb", which is used as a "filler" material for paving type projects and also moldable products. Paving uses are as a substitute for an aggregate, while examples of rubber-molded products are carpet padding or underlay, flooring materials, dock bumpers, patio decks, railroad crossing blocks, rubber tiles and bricks, movable speed bumps, and curbing/edging.

The rubber can also be molded with plastic for products like pallets and railroad ties. Athletic, recreational and play areas can also be paved with the shock absorbing rubber-molded material.

Detritus

This is the material collected from sweeping the streets. It is a mixture of grit, stones, sand and partially decomposed organic material. It is sent to a dedicated plant in Dartford where a washing and sorting facility separates out the stones, grit and sand by size, enabling it to be recycled as road-building aggregate. The organic material is composted. It can't be used for general composting, due to the contamination from road surfaces, but can be used for land reclamation and other non-farming uses.

Cardboard

This is also sent to DS Smith to be recycled as packaging material.

Plasterboard

This is sent to a facility in Kent where it is recycled to make new plasterboard and other gypsum-based products.

Ink cartridges

These are sent to a facility in Acton, which re-distributes them to the original manufacturers, either for re-filling where possible, or if this is not possible, re-manufacturing, which can use up to 90% of the components again.

... state than that in which we found it. This is a big ambition to which we remain committed.” and that it pledged to “develop a 25 Year Plan to restore the UK’s biodiversity...”

Well....., this plan is apparently now in hand – there was an event launch the day *after* Friends of the Earth and other conservation organisations launched ‘Response for Nature’. Good timing eh? The Government’s plan will take a year to produce and supposedly the 25 year plan for food and farming, which appears to have already been written, will be fully integrated into it.

Bromley Council’s Local Plan

In case you missed all the publicity, the month of October was when the Council asked the Borough’s residents to comment on the draft Local Plan which is where they set out the draft policies and designations for consultation and which will, when adopted, form the Development Plan to the year 2031.

This plan is where boundaries of the green belt and other protected land can be re-designated, for varying reasons, and our group, along with other organisations, have expressed concerns over some of the proposals. All the comments submitted will go to the Council’s Development Control Committee and Executive for consideration and another draft Local Plan will emerge.

Sheila Brown writes:

Orpington Priory Regeneration Project

The oldest building in Orpington and home to the Bromley Museum for half a century, Orpington Priory has now become a victim of Bromley Council’s proposed spending cuts.

There was a proposal earlier in the year to move the museum to Bromley Central Library and sell the buildings but following a 2500 signature petition, there was a stay of execution. Now the Museum has been closed and there is uncertainty about the future of the building.

The community has responded by launching the Orpington Priory Regeneration Project so that the Priory buildings may continue to be used by the community for business meetings and functions and general use by the community, to include a Heritage and Arts centre. The group has plans to add a tea-room, toilets and washrooms.

The steering group is currently finalising the business plan for this and recruiting prospective trustees for a charitable trust to be set up to manage The Priory if Bromley Council agree to the community-led proposals. The plan envisages some paid staff alongside a number of volunteers with the hope of generating sufficient income for the Priory to become self-funding.

We hope to have representatives from the project to say a few words at our December meeting.

Hands Off the Freedom Of Information Act

Heather Brooke is a journalist who helped expose the 2009 MPs' expenses scandal: she writes:

The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act helped me to break one of the biggest scandals of the last decade -- revealing the truth behind MPs' expenses.

The FOI request I submitted was simple -- what expenses are MPs claiming from public money? I expected a quick reply from Parliament. Instead, they fought for four years to keep this information secret to save their embarrassment.

I won my case in the High Court and Parliament was forced to compile the data. But they delayed and delayed. They even tried to change the FOI law to exempt themselves from it. They weren't successful, but it wasn't until a whistleblower leaked the entire dataset that the public finally saw the full extent of what MPs had claimed on expenses -- including a duck house, moat clearing and new kitchens. The FOI act exists for the public good, that's why I'm backing the Press Gazette's campaign to protect it.

Now the Government is reviewing the FOI law and considering clamping down on how the public can use it -- we cannot let this happen. The FOI request I made led to an overhaul of the way MPs can spend public money -- it was also the beginning of forging a new relationship between citizens and the state.

A lot of good can come of freedom of information. This is why I believe it is absolutely vital not only to fight off this scurrilous attack on the FOI law, but push for it to be strengthened and enforced.

There are serious problems with stubborn and powerful elites who refuse to accept that in a democracy the public have a right to know. Don't let them get away with keeping the truth from you. Sign the petition and support the campaign to keep FOI strong -- visit <http://tinyurl.com/pucr2l4>

Traidcraft

Bromley FoE has supported Traidcraft locally by having stalls at our meetings, especially running up to Christmas. However, if you wish to purchase fairly traded Traidcraft items throughout the year, each Saturday Bromley Parish Church (behind Primark) has "Saturday Morning Coffee" serving Fairtrade beverages and including a Traidcraft Stall between 10.15am and 12 noon.

Do drop in for a cup of Fairtrade tea or coffee, delicious cake, and even toast and marmalade plus a chance to stock up on any items. It is a very welcoming social occasion in a comfortable lounge. (This will not be happening the Christmas or New Year weekend.)

Usually on the third Saturday of the month there is a concert in the church at 11 am. Entry free but donations accepted. These have a variety of music, which can be seen on the church website www.bromleyparishchurch.org.

Climate Change, Environment and Militarism – Paul Enock

Among the causes of the conflict in Syria, how high would you rank global warming? The decisive role played by an unprecedented five successive years of drought (75% livestock death, 50% crop failure) in creating the tensions sparked by that country's 'Arab Spring' was highlighted in **April Humble's** talk: *Climate Change and Global Instability*, one of three fascinating presentations given during the meeting of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, held in Orpington on 14th November.

The talk brought home the point of the observation that 'where no water flows, blood will flow' as it outlined how droughts from Western Africa to North East India, from Central America to the Levant are causing food shortages and mass migration as subsistence farmers abandon the land and head for cities.

When different ethnicities are forced to share limited resources, this can lead, (as we are all too aware), to renewed migration flows, this time as refugees flee political repression and violence. Ms Humble defined the exodus of 4 million people from Syria as the "biggest climate-induced migration the world has so far seen".

As a climate scientist and member of the Earth League, Ms Humble finds "probably an underestimate" the calculation that at current trends of global warming, by the year 2050, 200 million people worldwide will be living as refugees from the effects of climate change. And this global phenomenon of climate migration is closely linked to

the rapid spread of heavily militarised frontiers. As nation states throw up the razor wire, those forced to migrate become (quite literally) human flotsam trapped between borders. Photos taken during a recent visit to Kos brought these points home.

Keynote speaker Margrethe Tingstad (Chair of WILPF Norway) focussed on how military activity is itself a major contributor to climate change and environmental degradation, a fact often wilfully ignored by governments.

For an idea of scale: the amount spent on armaments each year would fund the entire UN projects budget for 615 years. These weapons all need to be tested – regularly: the environmental damage caused by military exercises and weapons testing during peacetime exceeds that of wars themselves.

On impact, a conventional artillery shell generates temperatures around 3,000°C. Not only does this obliterate all surface life, but it can take the subsoil up to 1,500 years to recover.

Meanwhile the military are exempt from environmental legislation and there is little or no research into the long-term effects even of chemical weapons use.

Given the high quality of this event, I can only hope that the very poor turnout, with just a couple of dozen attendees present, will not deter WILPF from scheduling further meetings in Orpington.

FoE - The Housing and Planning Bill: taking power away from local people

What goes on in your neighbourhood could soon be none of your business – if the Government gets its way.

The Government's Housing and Planning Bill is, we're told, about making a "nation of homeowners". But tucked away in its small print are radical changes to the planning system and a reduction in the amount of affordable housing. Most dangerous are the changes the Bill makes to the planning system in England.

It's core to the planning system that locally elected people make local decisions on new developments. This Bill changes that. It empowers the Secretary of State to give "permission in principle" to certain applications. Councils will be unable to turn down this type of application.

You can forget your right to object

This Bill removes an important opportunity to object. When 'permission in principle' is given for a piece of land, you won't be able to object to the development as a whole. You'll just be asked what colour you want the gates.

Shaun Spiers, chief executive of the Campaign to Protect Rural England, commented: "The country needs more house building, but the way to achieve this is through well-planned developments that win public consent. Imposing development without local democratic oversight is a recipe for discord."

This isn't just going to happen for one or two developments. Secretary of State Greg Clark says that 90% of all suitable registered Brownfield land will

have permission in principle by 2020. This could be around 55,000 hectares in England - the same as 80,000 football pitches.

What sort of development?

Permission in principle could be applied to "any qualifying document". Basically, there are currently no limits in the Bill on what could get approved. It seems that it could apply to quarries, incinerators, even open cast coal mines.

Non-starter homes for the neediest

England alone needs 240,000 new homes per year. These homes must be built in a sustainable way, so they're affordable for people to run. They must also be affordable for those who most need them to rent or buy.

The houses the Bill talks about are anything but affordable. The Bill promises 200,000 new "Starter Homes" by 2020. But these starter homes could cost up to £450,000 in London and £250,000 outside of London. This means that families with two adults earning average wages will be unable to afford one in most parts of the country. Starter homes also won't be required to contribute to local services such as Doctor's surgeries, local clinics or schools.

John Healey, Shadow Housing and Planning Minister, said: "If you want to buy your own home, then these so-called starter homes are a non-starter for you, and they are unaffordable to most people on average incomes."

Ask your MP to protect your right to a voice at <http://tinyurl.com/nvptpjy>

FoE news - Conservatives line up to slam Government's solar cuts

Pressure is mounting on the Government to save rooftop solar. An increasing number of Conservatives are leading the call for action. And with a decision due in early December it's essential as many people as possible put pressure on their MP to save solar.

Back in August, the Government unveiled a proposal to review – and essentially bring to an end – support for rooftop solar through the Feed-in-Tariff (FiT). Now the Government's plans to cut the FiT by nearly 90% have come under fire from all sides. MPs from across the political divide are lining up to criticise these deeply unhelpful cuts.

Labour has criticised the cuts as “short-sighted” and said they would “plunge the industry into crisis”. The Green Party deplored that “the renewables sector does not have at least the same degree of support and certainty that the Government is providing for new nuclear power stations and fracking.”

The SNP strongly opposed the Government's cuts as Scottish Energy Minister Fergus Ewing denounced “another attack on renewables and green energy” and expressed his concern on “such an anti-business approach on the issue.”

Crucially, a growing number of **Conservative** MPs have stepped up to slam the Government's plans. So far at least 8 have let it be known that they are not happy. Mayor of London Boris Johnson said “It would be wrong if the cut in the feed-in tariff actually stops people from investing in solar,

because clearly it has many, many attractions.”

Caroline Nokes, MP for Romsey and Southampton North made her views clear in a letter to a constituent. She called the proposed cuts a “bitter blow to the solar industry”.

Jo Churchill, MP for Bury St Edmunds, said “It sends a negative message to investors in the green economy”

Stephen Hammond, MP for Wimbledon, thought that the plans “could undo all the good work done and kill the industry”.

And David Warburton, MP for Somerton and Frome, explained why he is “batting ministers at the Department for Energy and Climate Change”. “This would be a disaster for community energy projects which are putting power – literally – in the hands of local people.”

The Government is beginning to feel the heat. More than 50,000 people responded to the Government's consultation. Over 30,000 people have written to their MPs calling for action. Solar installers from across the country have been to see their MPs to tell them their personal stories – and that the consequences will be disastrous for them if this goes ahead.

We hope the Government is beginning to listen. Ministers have said that they're ‘open-minded’ about the cuts – a hint that there's room for manoeuvre.

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Conservatives slam Government's solar cuts - *continued*

It's nearly crunch time. The Government is mulling this over right now. It'll be making a decision by early December. Ask your MP to save solar. It's crucial that we keep up the pressure for a few more weeks and show that we won't allow these cuts to undermine the solar industry.

See things differently #SaveOurSolar – Write to your MP

Let's give it one more push to keep solar thriving. Soon the Government will be making up its mind on whether to slash support for solar.

If they go ahead, tens of thousands of people could lose their jobs and millions of tonnes of extra carbon will be released. The Government is under pressure to change course. We must

keep it piled high and tell them loud and clear to back solar.

Ask your MP to save solar – visit <http://tinyurl.com/og5bqta>

50,000 people responded to the Government's consultation and tens of thousands of you have taken action against the cuts. Several high profile figures including Boris Johnson and Al Gore have come out strongly against the Government's reckless plans. They're beginning to listen. Ministers are already saying that they're 'open minded' - a strong hint that they're under pressure to compromise.

There are just a few weeks before they make up their minds. Can you help us ramp up the pressure even more? Visit <http://tinyurl.com/og5bqta>

Bromley Friends of the Earth anti fracking stall with Bromley Against Fracking members on October 24th 2015 in the Mall Precinct, Bromley



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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, and 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, and Kent, BR6 7RN**. Other enquiries regarding the group: may be sent by email to *bromleyfoe@gmail.com*, or telephone our co-ordinators at the telephone numbers above.

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?

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