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February 2016
No. 338

newsletter

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

February Meeting

Friends Meeting House, Ravensbourne Road, Bromley

Fairtrade in Action

**Helen Long from Liberation Foods &
Laura Heintz from Divine Chocolate**

In the run-up to Fairtrade Fortnight, come and hear about Ecovillages, Brazil Nuts, Divine Chocolate (with samples) and the cocoa farmers who benefit from the Fairtrade initiative + Traidcraft stall

Tuesday 2nd February – 7.30pm

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Copy for the next Newsletter must be with the Editor by

***** SUNDAY 14TH FEBRUARY*****

Contact details inside front cover.

Interested in the accounts for 2015 ?? See page 6

Diary dates:

Feb 2 (Tue)	Bromley FoE's February Meeting: Helen Long (Liberation Foods) and Laura Heintz (Divine Chocolate, with samples)
Feb 29 onwards	Fairtrade Fortnight
Mar 1 (Tue)	Bromley FoE's March Meeting: Davina Misroch (Ethelbert Road Action Group)
Apr 5(Tue)	Bromley FoE's April meeting
Apr 30 (Sat)	Bill Priestley's Open Garden
Jun 3/5	FoE's BASECAMP at Castleton, Derbyshire

BASECAMP 2016 – June 3rd to 5th - Tickets now on sale.

You are invited to BASECAMP 2016: a life-affirming weekend with the environmental movement. Basecamp is a weekend spent with people like you - people who want change.

We're building a movement of people to make change happen. Basecamp is back for its fourth year and is still the best place to get organised around environmental action and have fun together. Campaigners from our powerful network of Local Groups, and members of other groups and networks, will be gathering to plan our work together.

Last year 96% of people said they felt more inspired and 98% said they felt more informed after Basecamp. 86% of attendees said they left with new friends and contacts.

Basecamp sold out early last year, and some people were disappointed they couldn't come - so please book your tickets early if you can.

Contact Sheila Brown if you're interested in going this year.

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 14TH FEBRUARY***:**

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.

New Year message from Craig Bennett, FoE's Chief Exec

Editor's Note – This item has been shortened because of lack of space.

Together we achieved so much in 2015. Every pound donated and every petition signed has been vital to the progress we made last year. Thank you.

Here's your well deserved round-up of what your support achieved in 2015.

What. A. Year. From keeping fossil fuels in the ground to protecting precious wildlife and nature sites - look at what we've achieved together in 2015.

1. Lancashire celebrates fracking decision

Lancashire County Council rejects Cuadrilla's application to frack in Little Plumpton.

Campaigning to reduce the UK's dependency on fossil fuels, Friends of the Earth has been supporting communities threatened by fracking. Our experts have been providing legal and campaign advice as well as helping with logistics. And tens of thousands of you have taken action with us.

2. Helping bees and other pollinators

From the Scillies to Shetland, you've been supporting The Bee Cause and helping bees thrive.

In May we partnered with Buglife and Waitrose to bring you The Great British Bee Count 2015. You spotted over

100,000 bees. The data is giving experts a greater understanding of bee health in the UK. More than a quarter of our bee species are under threat.

Together with local communities around the country, we've created at least 185 Bee Worlds this year. These will provide much needed havens for bees and other wildlife to thrive.

3. Record-breaking response to defend EU nature laws

During the summer over half a million people told the European Commission not to weaken laws that protect our nature sites and wildlife. It was the biggest ever response to a European consultation. We joined forces with 100 UK voluntary organisations and European conservation organisations to enable as many people as possible to feed into the consultation.

4. South Wales rejects opencast mining

In South Wales there was high drama. An application for a new opencast coal mine near Merthyr Tydfil was unanimously thrown out by the local council. It was a testament to the community's sustained campaigning, supported by Friends of the Earth. Thousands of our supporters signed a petition backing the local people.

We're championing this success to urge the Welsh Government to introduce a moratorium on opencast coal, as they've done already on fracking.

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Craig Bennett's New Year message – *continued*

5. The return of native beavers

Hunting once drove them to extinction. Now, thanks to you, beavers have made their home in the English countryside for the first time in hundreds of years.

A surprise colony was spotted in 2014 in Devon. Our campaign, against the Government's plans to remove them, won widespread support. It was a huge victory for local people, and the public, who wanted the beavers to remain in the wild. Over 10,000 individuals took action on our website. Video footage of the beavers, on our Facebook page, received nearly 50,000 views.

6. Biofuel bubble bursts

Europe is finally turning its back on using biofuels in transport. In April, the EU committed to cut the crop-based biofuels target by a third.

It was a significant victory after a 6-year campaign during which we carried out joint advocacy work with RSPB and Greenpeace. Together we succeeded in getting the Department of Energy & Climate Change to publish its biomass carbon calculator, which confirmed our findings that burning whole trees for electricity creates more greenhouse gas emissions than burning coal. Significantly, the EU has also committed to ending member state aid for crop-based biofuels after 2020.

7. Observer Ethical Award winner

Campaigner Anna Watson won Green Briton of the Year in the Observer Ethical Awards. She was recognised for her groundbreaking work leading

our Run on Sun campaign to make it easier for schools to get solar panels.

1,050 schools signed up to the campaign. It also inspired the creation of new community energy groups in Manchester, Liverpool, North Tyneside and Hull. We've reached an amazing 40,000 new people and 34% of schools in Northern Ireland now run on solar power.

8. Legal action to protect Lough Neagh

In Northern Ireland we've been fighting to protect bird and wetland habitats. The unlawful dredging at Lough Neagh, probably the biggest unlawful quarry in Europe, takes place in the middle of a Special Protection Area. It has no planning permission. The Lough has seen a 75% decline in migratory bird populations and water quality is at breaking point. We're taking the Northern Ireland Government to court for failing to protect the Lough.

9. Wales promises well-being for all

Wales could become a world leader in redefining economic success. In March, the Well-Being of Future Generations Act became law after 3 years of campaigning by Friends of the Earth Cymru and 30 other groups. The Act puts the wellbeing of people, nature and future generations at the heart of decision making. It ties Wales into the UN's Sustainable Development Goals to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all..

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Blue New Deal Cross-Party Parliamentary Briefing

On Tuesday 24 November 2015, the New Economics Foundation (NEF) hosted a cross-party parliamentary briefing at the House of Commons about the Blue New Deal initiative. Thanks to Peter Aldous MP for making this possible.

The Blue New Deal aims to deliver more and better jobs for coastal communities in the UK, through a healthier coastal and marine environment.

In the next months, NEF will be working in collaboration with the many different voices and interests in our coast to develop an action plan that can help turn the Blue New Deal vision into a reality. In a context of increasing environmental and economic pressures, this initiative is looking for solutions that reconcile employment creation with environmental protection, bringing a fresh and hopeful perspective to coastal communities around the country.

The initiative wants to see coastal communities taking pride in their coastal identity and working towards reversing a story of unfulfilled potential. Part of that is demonstrating how our wealth of coastal and marine assets, if well managed, can play a key role in delivering solutions to the many problems affecting our coastal communities.

Maritime sectors which rely on a healthy marine environment to generate economic benefits already support over 750,000 jobs in coastal areas – that's the equivalent of one in ten jobs in UK coastal areas. Healthier

and more productive seas could be an engine for more and better jobs in the future and make these fragile communities more resilient to economic and environmental shocks.

If you would like a fuller report, please contact Ann Garrett (contact details on page 19.)

Craig Bennett's New Year message, concluded

10. Helping people eat better

Our Meat Free May challenge inspired 1,000 people and several businesses, including Triodos Bank, to take part in 2015. Eschewing meat for a month, participants posted tantalising photos of their meat-free meals on Twitter and Instagram. Most said they would eat less meat in the future. Meat and dairy production causes at least 14.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

11. Launch of new book

In November we launched our new book, *Why Women Will Save the Planet*. The book is a collection of articles from women across the globe. It demonstrates that gender inequality is both a symptom and a cause of an unequal and environmentally damaging existence. We hope it will help to unite the environment, women's and social justice movements in their pursuit of a fair, equal and sustainable society.

Again, thank you. None of this would have been possible without you. We look forward to doing more great things with you in 2016.

Bromley FoE Accounts for year ended December 31st, 2015

Bromley FoE Accounts for year ended December 31st, 2015

	2015	2014	2013
Balance at January 1st	867.86	781.42	969.64
Income			
Subscriptions	229.00	357.00	299.00
Donations (1)	513.03	221.00	121.00
Hall collection	427.89	334.00	305.00
Tea profits	58.47	57.24	67.00
Stall income	177.38	113.95	(4)215.08
Open Garden	549.25	418.47	0.00
Prior year adjustment	0.00	0.00	(3)286.00
	1,955.02	1,501.66	1,293.08
Expenditure			
Hall hire	462.00	462.00	440.00
Newsletter (2)	449.90	353.60	508.00
Stall rentals & other expenses	102.34	12.97	53.96
Goods for resale	97.99	0.00	166.95
Speaker expenses/gifts	100.00	81.00	138.70
Conference subsidy	0.00	79.50	0.00
Payments to other organisations	399.50	162.50	100.00
Donations to National FoE	220.00	200.00	50.00
Other (including gifts)	7.02	63.65	23.69
	1,838.75	1,498.42	1,481.30
Surplus / (deficit) for year	116.27	86.44	(188.22)
Balance at December 31st	984.13	867.86	781.42

(1) of which LUSH donation £361.03

(2) Newsletter 2013 overcharged £83.20; this amount deducted from 2014 figure

(3) to bring accounts in line with bank statement balance

(4) reflects sale of Bee goods in 2013

Comments on Annual Accounts ++ AGM Report

Comments on Annual Accounts

Income:

Subscription income is down. The two donations from LUSH boosted our funds. Monthly hall collections (the infamous 'pot') were up, due to donations for Bill's produce, second-hand books and other for sale items brought to meetings. Average £31.50.

Stall income was up as the previous year's rain kept us away from the Cudham Fete. Bill's 2015 Open Garden took a whopping £549, up £130 on 2014. WOW – what can we say? THANK YOU, Bill, and helpers.

Expenditure:

Hall hire fees stay the same for the coming year; we actually get a very generous rate for use of all the rooms for the whole evening. The slight rise in Newsletter costs reflects the increase in postage costs.

The high amount for stall rentals etc includes stall hire fees, prizes, photocopying and publications plus postage for these (we were at Coolings, Keston, Whitehall Rec and Cudham). Goods for resale were 60 Bee Guides plus postage = £66 and Plants for Open Garden which were not shown separately in 2014.

We gave donations to Willow Wildlife Rescue, Marinet, Suffolk Coastal FoE and FlightpathWatch and £200 to Friends of the Earth.

Report of the AGM

A review of 2015 was published in the January newsletter (p 6). Ann Garrett and Sheila Brown thanked all those who had worked to contribute to the success of the group during the year.

Copies of the accounts had been prepared but not made it to the meeting. These will therefore be considered for approval at the February meeting and can be viewed on page 6 of this newsletter.

In the absence of other nominations, Ann and Sheila agreed to continue as joint co-ordinators but mentioned that they would like others to consider stepping into their shoes in a year or so. The Group's secretary position is still vacant; admin work is being undertaken by the Admin Team of Judy Palmer, Rob Clark and Annette Rose. Treasurer: Sheila asked if anyone would consider taking this on; no-one came forward so she indicated her willingness to continue. All these positions were proposed, seconded, and approved by the meeting.

Those in the positions of Membership Secretary, Newsletter Editor and Fundraising Officer had indicated willingness to continue and were approved by the meeting. The position of Press Officer remains vacant; Ann has undertaken to continue to act in this role. Peter Gandolfi will continue to maintain our website and Rob our Facebook page. Mary Stirling has stepped down from reviewing planning applications;
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January meeting report – Ray Watson

As the saying goes, you never know what is round the next corner – and that certainly was the case for our January meeting when we discovered that adjoining Bromley Borough boundary was a zoo, an animal rescue centre and a home for exotic creatures. And, for good measure, it is also an educational centre for wildlife students.

Beaver Water World's Karen Wheller said that the centre had opened as an aquatics shop more than 20 years ago when someone took a python there asking for advice. To keep the python happy, another one was acquired – and Beaver World was now home for hundreds of animals, birds and insects. It is now licensed as a zoo and a charity.

In contrast to exotics such as giant tortoises, bearded dragon and snakes, there is also a wildflower garden, established to provide a food source for bees and other insects.

Much of its work involves liaising with police and animal organisations such as the RSPCA, to rescue wounded animals, many of whom have been ill-treated. Indeed, part of the centre's work is to educate the public to buy suitable pets.

It also helps the police take care of illegally imported animals – a recent case involved the arrival of 200 tortoises from Gatwick airport.

And recently a Croydon pet shop went into liquidation and Beaver World suddenly found it handling dozens of new guests. Karen admitted that on such occasions the pressure on space

results in staff taking animals home to ensure they are properly looked after.

As part of their educational programme, the centre visits schools or has visits from schools. It also provides facilities for students studying at collages such as Hadlow and Bromley and has a team of volunteers who work with the inhabitants.

The centre is also involved in animal behaviour research programmes at home and overseas, the latter includes saving threatened species in the rainforest of the Caribbean nation of Belize.

Answering questions, Karen said that Beaver World receives no Government money but does get some help from Surrey County Council and Tandridge Council in return for its work in handling strays and wounded animals, but nothing from Bromley Council. Also, a supermarket sends its waste such as outdated meat, which was helpful because some animals eat large amounts of food, plus power and water bills were huge.

Karen, replying to a question about potential dangers of working with animals said that she had suffered nips and scratches but nothing serious. She also revealed that as a zoo, Beaver Water World was required to have animals examined for e.coli disease every few weeks.

Beaver Water World, near Tatsfield, is open to the public (£5 fee).

David Bowie: 8th January 1947 – 10th January 2016

“Lots of tributes to #DavidBowie Here's v special one; he helped launch @wwwfoecouk in early years
#ThanksDavid” So tweeted Friends of the Earth's Chief Executive, Craig Bennett.

“Bromley has lost one of its truly ground-breaking citizens but his legacy will live on through a body of work which will continue to inspire forever!” So said Community Links Bromley.

David Bowie was born in Brixton as David Jones, moved to Bromley in 1953, attended Burnt Ash Junior School where he failed the 11-plus and then went on to Bromley Technical High School, which he left with one O-level, in Art.

Amongst other places, David Bowie lived at 4 Plaistow Grove, not far from where Ann Garrett now lives. As David Jones, Bowie merits a verse in a poem Ann wrote about her neighbourhood in 2011:

*At number 4 the ‘ghost-like’ tones of
Davy Jones’s boyhood voice still
hovers
A foretaste of ‘Major Tom’
Unnerving cosy respectability around*

At Burnt Ash, Bowie played the recorder, also the ukulele and tea-chest bass as extra-curricular activities and a plastic saxophone that his mother bought for him when he was 14 (he was at Bromley Tech by this time) and a real saxophone a year later.

In 1964, aged 17, he released his first record single, which sank without

trace, with a group called the King Bees, which did likewise.

David Bowie experimented with various pop / folk groups and organised a folk club at the Three Tuns in Beckenham in 1969; the folk club morphed into the Beckenham Arts Lab and the Three Tuns is now a Zizzi restaurant.

In more recent years, he supported efforts to restore the bandstand at the Croydon Road Recreation Ground in Beckenham, where he once performed at a free festival in 1969 on the same weekend as the slightly more famous Woodstock in an attempt to raise money for the Arts Lab.

“David Bowie was at the absolute cutting edge of the generation which contributed to the seismic sea change in music and fashion styles, which continues to inspire passion both locally and internationally to this day.” So said Bromley Councillor Colin Smith, Deputy Leader and Executive member.

“Our job locally now, in respect and recognition of the unique talent that once walked amongst us, is to redouble our own efforts, to ensure that when it is finally completed, the renovated Beckenham bandstand, which is so indelibly linked with David Bowie and where he famously performed all those years ago, becomes a fitting and enduring tribute to his memory.”

*David Bowie died in New York on
January 10th this year.*

Campaigns, Climate and Energy – *Ann Garrett*

Campaigns

A reminder that we are holding a stall in The Mall precinct with Bromley Against Fracking on March 19th from 2.30 - 4.30 pm. Your support would be greatly appreciated. There will be a sign up sheet at the next meeting. It is still important to keep the public informed and reminded of the dangers of fracking and to get more of our cards signed and eventually sent to Bromley Council. It's a slow and difficult process.

Climate and Energy

Paris Climate Deal Comments

Following the Paris contract, David Cameron stated “We have secured our planet for centuries to come - and there is nothing more important than that,”

Sadly his government has cancelled the Green New Deal, stopped onshore wind, slashed subsidies for solar and abandoned carbon capture and storage. He is also now subsidising the development of a fossil fuel in the form of shale gas and bypassing local authorities over fracking applications. As a result we can have little hope that he is really committed to help solving the problems of climate change. We have a lot to do in challenging this.

After the initial relief that at least a deal had been made, environmental groups have voiced their concerns. Global Justice says that “it undermines the rights of the most vulnerable communities and has almost nothing binding to ensure a safe and liveable climate for future generations.”

There is criticism that the world's richest states are offering just \$100bn (£66bn) a year in climate finance for developing countries by 2020, with a vague commitment to further finance in the future. The goal to keep global temperature increases well below 2C and to pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5C is going to be the most tremendous challenge to achieve.

Fracking Update

Scores of new licences have been handed out for shale gas exploration in a move that could open up swathes of the country to fracking. Some 93 onshore licences covering 159 areas or 'blocks' across England with about three-quarters relating to shale oil or gas exploration, have been granted by the Oil and Gas Authority.

Drilling in national parks and protected areas has been backed by MPs and energy minister Andrea Leadsom said “The licences would drive the industry to provide secure, home-grown energy for decades”.

This has been challenged by shadow energy minister Lisa Nandy accusing ministers of lack of debate and calling for a moratorium on fracking in Britain until ministers can prove that it is safe and will not present “intolerable risks” to the environment.

Dismay at Biggin Hill Airport Decision

Here's the text of letter sent to the press following the most recent Council decision regarding Biggin Hill airport's opening hours –

/continued on next page

Newbury, 25 years on ++ Climate and Energy, cont'd

Newbury, 25 years on

Judy Palmer writes: BBC on-line recently did an article on the 20 year anniversary of the construction of the Newbury by-pass, posing the question of whether the protest by the eco campaigners had a lasting impact on transport policy.

The article showed the statistics of the cost of building the by-pass and interviewed four people – the then Under Sheriff of Berkshire, two of the protesters and a reporter from the BBC who covered the story at the time.

And the consensus of opinion is that, yes, the campaigners did win, even though the by-pass was built. The protest changed the transport policy for the next couple of decades, as over five years a multi-billion pound road building programme was reduced down to zero.

Among the statistics of the build – 10,000 trees were felled; one oak tree was spared as a minor concession. Really, I hear you think, one tree?! Well, 200,000 trees were planted as replacements and seedlings were collected from where the trees had been cut down – and re-planted away from Newbury.

But a photo taken at the time also speaks volumes – someone wrote on the bottom of a felled tree: “and pray... what will you tell them when they ask you WHY?”

I wonder what the inhabitants of Newbury think now, stuck in a traffic jam on the by-pass.....

Climate and Energy, continued

Bromley local Friends of the Earth group are appalled at the decision at a special Council meeting by members of the Executive and Resources Policy and Development Scrutiny Committee, to uphold the original Council Executive decision to extend Biggin Hill Airport operating hours.

This will only lead to increased noise from aircraft all over the borough, increased traffic pollution in the Biggin Hill area, and open the way to further airport expansion. Any creation of local jobs will be at the expense of the environment.

Surely the Council are aware of the severe effects of Global Warming as seen in the recent UK floods, extreme weather disasters throughout the world, the pledges by 200 countries to commit to legally-binding initiatives at the Paris Climate Contract last December to reduce carbon emissions, and scientific proof that aviation fuel contributes massively to depletion of the ozone layer.

Friends of the Earth, an international organisation, have been at the forefront of exposing dangers to the environment, and are thoroughly opposed to airport expansion and supportive of development of rail network infrastructures and clean energy road transport.

The local group will want to see thorough monitoring of Biggin Hill airport emissions and noise and will expect the Council to provide a regular detailed statistical proof of the results.
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Biggin Hill - Councillors defeat the residents – Ray Watson

Bromley's executive group of councillors - its 'Cabinet' -- may have defeated opposition to stop expansion at Biggin Hill Airport by the leader's casting vote, but the fight by residents was carried on when some councillors opposed to the extension of operating hours forced a 'call in'. This is a rarely-used device under which another council committee votes to decide whether a call-in, or re-examination, is justified. The committee decided it was not.

But it was not a straightforward debate. This is how Flightpath Watch, the residents' organisation, (of which Bromley FoE is a member) reported some oddities of the debate:

Thank you to the 150+ Flightpath Watch supporters who attended the Council Chamber to observe the Executive Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee (PDSC) perform its duties. By contrast it appeared the few attendees in support of extended hours consisted mostly of airport managers and workers.

The PDSC was unfortunately unable to carry out this task and due process was brought to an abrupt halt when Cllr Judi Ellis (Cray Valley West) moved that the first motion, to refer The Decision back to The Executive, be voted on after only very superficial scrutiny had taken place. This left the committee with no real information on which to make its decision so the first motion was rejected.

This left the second motion, proposed by Cllr N Bennett, be voted on. That

motion proposed no further action and was successfully carried. Thus the final decision was to permit the additional operational hours we all fought so hard to avoid.

As one resident said, "It does seem absurd that those people scrutinising the decision were (in a majority) those who actually voted for the proposal - hardly an unbiased review of the procedure". We are also advised by a number of residents at the meeting that they have lodged formal complaints about the apparent disregard for residents and curtailment of the democratic process.

Flightpath Watch is determined to continue representing residents and persuade our elected representatives to reflect their ward residents' views accurately.

Our options are now restricted to communicating further with the Ombudsman and/or launching a full Judicial Review. Please continue to support these efforts by talking to neighbours and friends and encouraging them to register for membership of Flightpath Watch and our regular Newsletters, which can be done on www.flightpathwatch.co.uk

Climate and Energy, concluded

It was encouraging to see that Cllr Colin Smith, deputy leader and holder of the environment portfolio, voted against increase in operating hours at the original Executive meeting as part of his commitment to enhancing the environment, and we will look forward to his leadership in this in the future

Remember our Questionnaire ?? Annette Rose

A year ago we included a questionnaire in the newsletter which gave all our members an opportunity to comment on aspects of the running of our group. This included questions about whether you found the newsletter useful, whether you attend meetings, if you help on days of action and whether you would like to become more involved with our campaigning.

We also asked if you had any ideas for future speakers or for outings. Your feedback was very useful and we were able to take up several of your ideas.

Since then we have been able to continue to have a very good range of speakers at our meetings and our average attendance at meetings is 24. It has been great to have been able to welcome a number of new people at our meetings and we have some new members.

The letters we have had in the press on topics such as Biggin Hill airport extension of hours and Fracking have helped make more people aware of our group. (Please see Sheila's list of our 2015 achievements in the January newsletter.)

Our website is an important first call for people who are interested in our group. Our Facebook page has grown from strength to strength over the last year. We have 69 'likes' now and sometimes reach more than 200 people with our postings. Do have a look at our page if you are a Facebook user.

We continue to welcome people to join our campaigning activities. One idea

under discussion is to have a 'campaign team' so that people can join this but be fully supported by experienced campaigners within the group. We would welcome your comments on this and if you feel you would like to become part of this, do let us know.

And finally, if you missed out on completing the questionnaire last time or have recently joined the group, it is never too late to have your say! If you have an idea for a meeting or would like to make a suggestion, give your ideas verbally or on paper at the monthly meeting or you can email us at bromleyfoe@gmail.com.

We look forward to hearing from you.

AGM Report, continued

Tamara Galloway will continue doing this. John and Sue Bocock will continue to arrange walks and outings, Anne Clark will carry on looking after merchandise and Mary Ingledew and Sylvia Chance agreed to continue providing Teas.

We are looking at reorganizing our Campaigning with a Campaigns Team, and this will be discussed at the next Planning Meeting. Paul Enock will be joining the Campaigns Team.

The Co-ordinators expressed their thanks to all who have filled and continue to fill these roles so ably.

Environmentalism and Ideology – translated by Paul Enock

Craig Bennett's remarks at our December meeting in response to the question how far protecting (regenerating) the environment is compatible with Capitalism reminded me of this article by the Italian environmental blogger Michele Governatori, which I translate here:

How hard it is to hold an opinion without becoming a flag-waver for one ideology or another. And flags get in the way of seeing other people's ideas and changing your own.

What's worse, pre-formed opinions often come in packages: if you think in a certain way about one issue, people assume they know your opinions about other seemingly connected issues.

I think I will soon join the many who have taken a vow of political silence, rather than having to explain to my friends once more that Yes, I believe in private enterprise and in the social virtues of individual striving to make a profit, but that Yes, I also believe - just fancy - that markets can work well only where the state is strong enough to guarantee trust in contracts, transparency of information and curbs on monopoly positions.

On top of which, I also think that employers should fire employees if they are unproductive, but that unemployed workers nonetheless have a right to a minimum wage which should be paid by the state.

But what are you, a libertarian or a socialist? they ask me. Make up your mind! they say. And so I think again about my vow of silence.

A recent article in an Italian left-wing daily reports on the earth tremors that have been triggered by gas extraction in the Groningen region of the Netherlands. It reports how local residents won a class action in September 2015, winning huge sums in compensation. I have not studied this case, but I have no reason to doubt the report. Scientists have long acknowledged links between earth tremors and mining activities.

But I find it does not help when the left-wing reporter summarises the problem ideologically, saying that it's all down to how oil companies think only about "maximising revenues". What does this mean? Would earth tremors be any more enjoyable if the oil company was making less money? Maybe if they were just fracking for the fun of it? Who says that if you want to safeguard the environment, you have to be against profits?

What about the view that oil companies are perfectly justified in maximising their revenues, but that governments and independent regulating agencies should impose all the limitations on their activities that cutting edge science, including climate science, tells us are necessary? The problem is not the profit motive driving the oil companies, but the capacity of institutional agencies to bring out and to quantify opposing interests without giving way to corporate pressure. The problem is the strength of our institutions and the transparency of their argumentation.

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38 Degrees success story – Sheila Brown asked for this to be included

Dear Sheila,

Six and a half years ago, I sat down with a friend called Hannah to write the first ever 38 Degrees email. We hoped it would launch a new kind of organisation, and bring people together from all over the UK to stand up for the things that matter.

We were nervous. We spent forever trying to make that email perfect! When we finally sent it, it went to just 400 people. Today, if I write an email to every 38 Degrees member, it goes to over 3 million people.

There's a simple reason for the difference between those two numbers: people like you, believing that 38 Degrees can make a difference. Thank you.

In 2015, 38 Degrees has definitely made a difference, in so many ways. Here are just a few of the things I've been most proud of:

Tax Credits. Thousands of the UK's poorest families could have faced a tough, worry-filled Christmas if George Osborne had got away with his plan to cut their tax credits. Children's charity Barnardo's described the role we played in stopping him:

"Thank you, 38 Degrees members - you've played a huge role in making sure that vital tax credits have been saved. It's thanks to hundreds of thousands of 38 Degrees members - who signed petitions, emailed and called their MPs, and chipped into the campaign, along with many charities working on the issue - that ordinary

mums, dads and kids are now going to be protected from tax credit cuts."

NHS. The threats facing our NHS are huge, but so is our determination to save it. All around the country NHS services have been protected thanks to 38 Degrees members' campaigning - whether it's a walk-in centre saved from closure in Exeter, a hospital saved in Hexham, or privatisation plans dropped in Stafford and Bristol.

TTIP. This June, David Cameron said he wanted the dodgy TTIP trade deal signed and sealed by the end of 2015. Well that hasn't happened! Pressure from 38 Degrees members pushed more than half of UK MEPs to vote against TTIP in a key vote in Brussels. We've handed out millions of leaflets, and got stories in hundreds of papers. There's a real chance that 2016 could be the year we stop TTIP.

Bees. They are essential to life on earth and without them we wouldn't be able to grow enough food. But the government isn't doing enough to protect them from bee-killing pesticides. 38 Degrees members have successfully pressured hundreds of MPs to voice support for a total ban on these bee-killing chemicals. If we keep this pressure up in 2016, we've got a real chance of getting chemicals which kill bees, banned for good.

There was a lot more in the email from the Executive Director of 38 Degrees, and every now and then there was a request for donations. If you want to see the whole email, please ask Sheila Brown.

Nature Update – Judy Palmer

First, a couple of reminders –

Bromley's **Biodiversity Action Plan** is available to download from the Council's website, at http://www.bromley.gov.uk/info/200023/conservation/246/biodiversity_in_bromley or you may view a copy at your local library.

And on the 30th – 31st January it is the 37th annual **RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch**,

when you can spend a quiet hour counting the birds in your garden. Download the form from www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch.

Talking of birds – to help launch the Bromley Biodiversity Partnership an 'owl prowl' took place last Autumn and the results of this pilot survey of tawny owls are in. 59 records were submitted by 33 people across many parts of the Borough and following on from this it is hoped, expressed at the Partnership meeting this month, it could be repeated this year.

The parts of the borough currently under-recorded would hopefully be concentrated on, so if you would be interested in helping out and live in

- Crystal Palace and Elmers End to the west
- Keston, West Wickham and Bromley Common towards the centre of the borough, possibly linking to the London Borough of Lewisham through Beckenham Place Park to the north.
- The Downe Valley, Biggin Hill, Berry's Green, Chelsfield, Green Street Green, Pratts Bottom, Norsted, Tatsfield and Salt Box Hill to the south

- Hockenden and Kevington to the east

please get in touch. This is being led by the Orpington Field Club, so you could also contact them for more information.

Apparently the only main survey of Bromley's tawny owl population on record was published in 1977 as part of the London-wide bird survey which showed many breeding tawny owls over all parts of the Borough. It would be very valuable to get an updated status on how this lovely bird is surviving in Bromley.

Also if you are interested in hedgehogs – the Partnership hopes to undertake a hedgehog survey in late Spring this year, so more information on that to come.

EU Nature Directives

There was some good news from the EU on this before Christmas. Friends of the Earth's Sandra Bell said "In an EU Environment Council meeting Environment Minister Rory Stewart said that the UK does not want to renegotiate the EU nature directives. Overall the Environment Council agreed that the nature directives need to be better implemented."

So it seems that EU Environment Ministers are listening to the 500,000 plus European citizens that took action earlier this year to say they don't want our nature laws weakened. Thank you for the part you have played in getting us to this stage."

/continued on next page

Concert at Ripley Arts centre ++ Continuations

Environmentalism and Ideology, continued

I don't want to slam the left-wing press, which continues to be a great source of information. But it has also led me to think a little, and to wonder:

If we stigmatise profit, how do we think we are going to improve the world? Should we use cattle prods to stop people running market stalls? If we accept and encourage it, profit can help us aspire to a strong, non-paternalistic state that instead of preaching to people, defends their rights and maximises their opportunities to thrive.

Craig's point was similar, I think: rather than fight Capitalism, we should use it. He gave the example of the exponential growth in the solar sector, which wouldn't have happened without both institutional regulation to protect the environment, but also private enterprise, which is making PV energy ever more competitive.

Nature Update, continued

MPs debate on pesticides

You may remember Friends of the Earth organised a debate with MPs on neonicotinoid pesticides before Christmas which was very well attended by MPs from all sides. And over 90,000 people signed an e-petition calling for the use of neonicotinoids to be banned.

In summing up Sion from the Bee Cause Team said: "It's clear from the debate that MPs understand just how strongly people feel about these

pesticides – and how many people want to keep them banned. But the Government is being lobbied heavily by pesticide companies and is sitting on the fence for now. Later this year we'll have the chance to make sure it takes the right decision."

Marine Conservation Zones

A year ago we published a list in our newsletter of proposed new marine conservation zones – and a year on, we have 23 new ones, offering protection for 8,000 sq miles of UK waters. One of the new zones is the Swale Estuary on the north Kent coast, which is not that far from Bromley. There are views being expressed that these are just 'paper parks', but even if this is just a small step, it is a step in the right direction.

Concert – Ripley Arts Centre, Friday 12th February, 8pm

Karl Williams, a long-time member of Bromley FoE, is organising a concert at the Ripley Arts Centre in Bromley.

Karl says "The reason I'm asking is that the musician has a long history of involvement with environmental and social causes - his former band had Newbury Bypass protesters on their album cover many years ago. I also think it is likely to be of interest to some FoE members."

Ray Cooper is a former Oysterband member, and is promoting his recent solo album Palace of Tears. Tickets on sale via www.ticketsource.co.uk and 333 666 3366 (booking fee applies).

Fair fares – but the passenger still pays

This is the season when rail and bus companies increase their fares. But are they fare fares? Here are the views of Anthony Smith, director of the transport pressure group Transport Focus, in Passenger Voice newsletter

The annual festive ritual of the rail fare rises. Not as painful as in previous years but hard-pressed commuters returning to work after Christmas still won't enjoy finding out how much it will cost them. So annual season ticket-holders, remember - buy this month if you can to get it at this year's price!

After years of above-inflation fare rises this Government has listened and kept 'regulated' fare (many season tickets and off-peak return fares) increases to the rate of inflation – so one per cent this year. The shift in funding from taxpayer to passenger has been temporarily halted – now passengers pay almost two thirds of the day-to-day running costs of the railway, whereas ten years ago taxpayers bore that burden. We argued long and hard that passengers had now taken on more than their fair share so this is welcome news.

We tend to look at value for money ratings from passengers. We know from previous research that value for money scores of the railway are relatively low among commuters in London and the South East in particular. The price of the ticket is only part of this story. A free pass is low value for money if your train is cancelled!

Passengers also judge value for money on the basic delivery of the

service – on time, few cancellations, frequent and some chance of getting a seat. Hopefully 2016 will be the year when passengers finally see trains become more reliable, disruption handled better and engineering and investment programmes done more sensitively. Those will be some of the main themes we will be working at on behalf of passengers.

Value for money must also be at the heart of the railway's franchises. The announcement of the new Northern and TransPennine franchises being awarded will be welcome news for passengers, with greater flexibility of ticketing with smart ticketing programmes promised.

This will also be a key concern for passengers making journeys on bus this year. The Buses Bill and the option of bus franchising comes with the promise of a better deal for passengers. Passengers tell us that the most important thing for them is getting a seat on a value for money bus service that turns up on time. Whatever the final outcome it is important that the needs of passengers are at the heart of the decision.

Re-User item

Can anyone re-use pretty biscuit tins, sweet tins etc rather than putting in the recycling?

Contact Sheila 01689 851605.

Bromley Friends of the Earth - List of Contacts

Co-ordinators:

Sheila Brown 01689-851605
email – sheilabrown336@msn.com

Ann Garrett 020-8460-1295
email – anncgarett@yahoo.com

Secretary:

vacant

Treasurer:

Sheila Brown 01689-851605

Press Officer:

Ann Garrett

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

Admin team:

Judy Palmer: Group emails
bromleyfoe@gmail.com

Rob Clark: Facebook co-ordinator
bromleyfoe@gmail.com

Annette Rose
annette.rose1@ntlworld.com

Fundraising Officer:

Bill Priestley 01689-820469

Campaigns –

Campaigns Organiser: Ann Garrett 020-8460-1295

Transport:

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

Climate and Energy:

Ann Garrett 020-8460-1295

Food and Ethical Farming:

Peter Gandolfi details above

Planning and development:

Tamara Galloway 01689-855352
tamaragalloway@yahoo.com

Campaigner:

Annette Rose
annette.rose1@ntlworld.com

Fracking / Clean British Energy

Ann Garrett

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:

Mary Ingledew / Sylvia Chance

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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