



**Friends of  
the Earth**

# earthalert

Bulletin of Friends of the Earth South East

Summer 2003

## Stark protests over GM



**The naked truth:** Ashdown Friends of the Earth and Bare Witness highlight opposition to GM foods and crops. More than 40 Forest Row residents stripped naked and lay down in a field to spell out the words NO GM. Photo David Jonas.

Grassroots campaigners in the South East are stepping up their actions to keep Britain GM-free. Events have been organised across the region putting growing pressure on authorities to act on GM. Ashdown Friends of the Earth is one of a large number of groups campaigning on the issue.

In a recent press stunt (pictured above) they spelt out the words 'NO GM' with their naked bodies. Ashdown are lobbying for a GM-free East Sussex with Bare Witness, Brighton and Hove, Hastings and Lewes Friends of the Earth. **For more on GM see page 4**

# Contents & stuff

## Farewell

Community Campaigns Coordinator, Zoë Mcleod is leaving Friends of the Earth on August 25<sup>th</sup> to train as a secondary teacher. “Many thanks to everybody. I’ve really enjoyed my time working with you all. I’m hoping to continue my campaigning in the classroom to try and inspire future generations of environmentalists! I wish you all the best.” In case of urgent enquiries contact [Brendap@foe.co.uk](mailto:Brendap@foe.co.uk) / 01273 777299

## Available

**Free web page** for your local group. No web skills needed just access to email. Contact Jonathan Nichols on 0207 566 1691.

**17 inch monitors** in exchange for a £5 donation. Collection from London needed. First come first served basis. Contact Brian Collecott [brianc@foe.co.uk](mailto:brianc@foe.co.uk).

**Lots of resources-** advice, information, training updates, events, briefings - <http://community.foe.co.uk> if you’ve not checked it out you’re probably missing out.

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Friends of the Earth inspires solutions to environmental problems, which make life better for people.

# coastal road to success

**Years of transport campaigning came to fruition this summer with the Government's decision to reject potentially damaging road schemes along the south coast.**



**Saved:** the proposed South Downs National Park and key wildlife and landscape areas.

Anti-road protesters have been busy celebrating following the rejection of proposals for trunk roads around Arundel and Worthing in West Sussex, and Selmeaton and Wilmington in East Sussex.

“Approval of these schemes would have gone against the Government’s policy to protect environmentally sensitive areas” said Transport Secretary, Alistair Darling.

“This is excellent news” said Regional Friends of the Earth Campaigner Brenda Pollack. “These schemes would have damaged the proposed South Downs National Park and some of Britain’s top designated landscape

and wildlife areas. The Government has also significantly changed its tune on user charging” she added. Mr Darling wants Sussex to give “careful consideration to congestion charging over the next ten years”. It appears to have accepted that charging is going to happen and is starting to look into it. Councils which introduce charging before 2011 will get to keep the revenue for the first decade.

## **SEERA “appalled”**

The South East of England Regional Assembly responded angrily to the news. Its Planning Committee tabled a resolution to the full meeting saying it was “appalled by the Secretary of State’s decision on the South Coast  
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**What might have been**

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Study” which “risks turning the area into an economic and social backwater.”

Colin Murray of Transport 2000 said, “There is no evidence that road building improves the economy. The Regional Assembly must accept the Government’s decision and get on with finding solutions to the south coast’s problems which won’t destroy our environment”.

## Bad news on roads

It wasn’t all good news. The M25 widening from junction 5 to 7 was given the go ahead, leading to significant damage to the Kent Downs and Surrey Hills areas. The doorway remains open for a damaging road bridge proposal in the South Downs area near Lewes.

Hastings also faired badly. The government may yet accept proposals to build a link road between Bexhill and Hastings which would cause environmental damage. East Sussex County Council has been asked to work on the proposals.

## Are you lobbying your council to go GM-free?



Where ever possible get your GM motions put forward by the majority party in council or ideally get cross-party support. While this can be more difficult and take more time than getting, say a green councillor to submit your proposal, it makes practical sense.

## What’s happening next?



Join the Tractors & Trolleys Parade – Monday 13th October 2003, Central London

Consumers and farmers will unite to demonstrate their strong resistance to GM crops and food. A fun, peaceful and good humoured event. Get involved: [www.tractorandtrolley.com](http://www.tractorandtrolley.com) Keep up-to-date with GM news (see back cover for more details). Website [www.GMFreeBritain.com](http://www.GMFreeBritain.com)

# GM – how are we doing?

## Hampshire GM launch

Hampshire local groups' network is the latest to launch a county wide anti-GM campaign. In just a few weeks it has collected hundreds of signatures. A motion to keep the area GM-free is being tabled at Hants County Council in early September.

## Groups out in force

To date there have been more than 450 public debates on GM organised by Friends of the Earth and other groups. The overwhelming vote is that people don't want their food, farming and environment contaminated with GM pollution.

"We must keep the pressure on. The more authorities that pass GM-free resolutions, the harder it will be for the government to give the go-ahead to the planting of GM crops" said Friends of the Earth campaigner Clare Oxborrow.

To be considered a GM-free area, we believe authorities should pledge to apply to prevent each GM crop from being grown in their area (using European legislation), ban GM crops on the land over which they have control, and adopt a GM-free policy for services such as school meals.

## Which areas in South East will go GM-free?

The race is on to be the first authority to go GM-free in the South East. There is currently a motion awaiting a vote at Oxford City Council. Oxford, Chinnor and Thame, and Bicester groups are also lobbying at county level.

Wokingham Friends of the Earth is confident that it's making good progress following a presentation members gave to their Unitary Council. Groups in Elmbridge, Reading and Shepway in Folkestone are also taking action to influence their local authority,

Motions are in the pipeline at Brighton City Council and Hants County Council in September. As yet, not one South East authority has declared itself GM-free. The question is who will be the first?

### GM-areas update

East Riding in Yorkshire is the latest area to go GM-free. It joins Cornwall, Cumbria, Devon, Dorset, Lancashire, Warwickshire, Shropshire, Somerset, South Gloucestershire, the Lake District National Park and Wales.

# RPG on transport

## Where's Brenda?

It's a question that has been asked by many of you. South East Campaign Regional Coordinator, Brenda Pollack, has been busy trying to influence Regional Policy on **Energy, Transport and Waste** in the early stages. In the last few months all of these chapters of Regional Planning Guidance (RPG9) have come up for review.

Friends of the Earth along with



members of the South East Forum for Sustainability (SEFS) have been frantically researching, reviewing and submitting responses to the Regional Assembly. The strategies that are adopted will influence planning in these areas until at least 2016.

## From crisis to cartastrophe?

**The outcome of the Regional Transport Strategy - *From Crisis to Cutting Edge*, now rests with the Department for Transport. Here Brenda Pollack gives the low-down on our work so far.**

"I've been working to influence this Transport Strategy for years now. We've been involved in numerous consultations, made various submissions, lobbied key decision makers, and recently appeared at the Public Examination.

### What does the Strategy say?

The strategy as it stands lacks real vision. It fails to accept that we can't build our way out of the current transport crisis and still links economic growth to transport growth. We have consistently argued that it places too

much emphasis on building large scale road schemes and not enough on alternative measures to deal with local travel (e.g. safe roads to schools, better pedestrian and cycling facilities). There is also no mention of carbon dioxide emissions or climate change and no strong statements encouraging road user charging as a way of managing road use.

### What will the outcome be?

It's impossible to tell. The planning inspector has to issue a report based on all the evidence. Based on this and national policy, the Minister for Transport will make a decision. It is unlikely to be adopted in its current form. Not least of all because the Government is assessing congestion charging and has already rejected road schemes on the south coast.

# Climate Update

## **As temperatures rise Friends of the Earth turns up the heat on coal-fired power stations in Oxfordshire and Kent.**

In a new league table published by Friends of the Earth, Didcot power station in Oxfordshire and Kingsnorth in Kent have been named and shamed as among the worst climate polluters in the UK.

Power stations are still the biggest source of emissions of greenhouse gases in the UK. The UK is the second highest emitter of greenhouse gases in Europe.



Our sixteen remaining coal-fired power stations, which are over 30 years old, still generate 35% of our electricity at enormous cost to the environment. They pump out three times as many green house gases as new gas-fired stations.

"Didcot is a carbon dinosaur. It has no place in a modern and clean energy system. It's time to make way for less damaging alternatives," said Mary Finch of Oxford Friends of the Earth.

**To help shut down the Carbon Dinosaurs check out our website  
[www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/press\\_for\\_change/carbon\\_dinosaurs](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/press_for_change/carbon_dinosaurs)**



**Say YES TO WIND POWER IN  
THE UK. Log on to Friends of the  
Earth's new online campaign  
[www.yes2wind.com](http://www.yes2wind.com)**

## **South East gets off-shore wind farm.**

Congratulations to Canterbury and other Friends of the Earth local groups for all your hard work.

The decision to build an offshore wind farm in the Thames Estuary off Herne Bay has been approved by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). It is one of eighteen proposed wind farms across the country.

# Changes on waste

## **Reduce Resource Use comes on board**

The waste campaign is shifting its emphasis away from the way in which we manage waste (landfill, incineration, recycling) to reducing resource use. For many of you this is the realisation of what you've been saying for a long-time.

It's no good just recycling and composting our waste we need to reduce the amount we actually produce. This is the new focus of Friends of the Earth's waste campaign which will kick off this November.

**Get creative?** - we need a name for this campaign. Send your suggestions to [georgib@foe.co.uk](mailto:georgib@foe.co.uk)

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## **Incinerators too hot to handle**

Since January 2001, ten applications for incinerators have come before planning committees in England, Ireland and Wales. Six of these were turned down outright while three were judged too controversial – they were either referred to the Government for a decision or called in by the National Assembly for Wales. Only one was given permission.

### **Shelford SWERF burning up**

The future of the Shelford incinerator in Kent looks wonderfully unstable as Brightstar's parent company, EDL, pulled the plug on their finance. Brightstar, who made a joint proposal to build the waste burner in Kent, think they can find someone else to take them over. The technology has not lived up to expectations.

EDL's shares hit rock bottom and it has suffered adverse press. It's possible that Shelford will not go ahead.

### **Capel Incinerator application withdrawn**

SITA has withdrawn its planning application for an incinerator at Capel, Surrey. The news was greeted cautiously by waste campaigners.

"This is likely to be a strategic move, explained waste campaigner Anna Watson. SITA wants to give Surrey County Council the time to review its waste management plans so that this application doesn't get rejected for the same reasons as the incinerator in Hull. It is likely they will resubmit."

# No time wasted



**Angry:** Campaigners protest in Guildford against the Regional Assembly's plans to build up to 61 incinerators in the South East.

Campaigners wasted no time in getting their voice heard on incineration this summer.

More than 1,700 individuals and groups responded to the Regional Waste Strategy which proposed building up to 61 incinerators in the South East by 2025.

Friends of the Earth is calling on the Assembly to say no to mass burn incinerators. We want to see: recycling and composting targets for municipal solid waste of 50% by 2010; targets for waste minimisation and an aspiration to zero waste; and a commitment to local, small scale greener and cleaner alternatives.

As part of the campaign a media stunt

was organised in Guildford, the Regional Assembly's home town. This involved a gigantic map of the South East showing a potential distribution of the waste burners (see photo). Local groups from across the region took part. Many thanks to all those that came along.

## What happens next?

This was the first round of the public consultation on the waste strategy. The submissions will now be considered by SEERA and changes may be made. The document will then be re-written and reissued – probably in Autumn. We will then need to respond to it again. To find out more about becoming a waste local campaigner contact [georgib@foe.co.uk](mailto:georgib@foe.co.uk)

# Biodiversity – not under



## **Elected board member John Kenward reports back from the latest meeting of Friends of the Earth, England, Wales and Northern Ireland (EWNI).**

It was a momentous occasion though everyone had to be reminded of the significance of the day. After a year's hard work, this summer, we finally approved a five year plan of activities and the finance to go with it. Friends of the Earth EWNI now has a coherent action plan founded on aims hammered out by staff, local groups and outside advisers. It is an impressive achievement that puts us in the forefront of environmental campaigning organisations here and abroad.

### ***Biodiversity worries allayed***

As for the strategic aims, the broad thrust is that the well established work on sustainability and bio-diversity will be brought together with a concern for Environmental Justice.

## **threat** (at Friends of the Earth at least)

While there is some alarm amongst local campaigners that this apparent shift towards being a people-focused organisation means the loss of 'traditional' campaigns like deforestation and natural habitats, this is far from the case.

We will now be working within a broader social and economic framework, and as such can be more effective. Instead of accusations of being middle-class tree and butterfly lovers, bio-diversity issues will have a broad platform supported by the needs of Southern countries and by the rights of disadvantaged people nearer home. Detailed projects, as in Teeside, where Friends of the Earth has been working with residents in low income areas affected by pollution, will strive to ensure that everyone has the right to a good environment.

We will be able to address issues such as sustainability of living conditions (and safeguarding them for future generations) and the way big corporations, the WTO et al can undermine the prospects for decent lives and long term sustainable farming and industry.

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# Group Resources

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Thus the campaigns that local members have been working on for years will not have the rug taken from under them; they will be valued and supported but within a larger and even sounder intellectual and humanitarian framework.

## More support for local groups

The long-awaited roll-out of the Capacity Building programme looks set to commence. This means more staff and skills to support local groups including this autumn the appointment of a new post to encourage training and another to manage information across the whole organisation in an integrated way. This will be followed by more staff to assist regional campaigning.

Perhaps this all sounds remote from the on-the-ground concerns about incinerators, door-step recycling, stopping unnecessary road building, GM crops and sales, and the hundreds of other local issues that local members work on. I hope that this brief report gives some insight into the way the Board and staff enable local problems and international issues to be properly supported.

**John Kenward**

## Does your group need money? ££££££

Your can apply for up to £1000 towards projects or resources that will enhance your group's development or campaigning ability. This includes equipment, consultancy fees etc. More info <http://community.foe.co.uk> or contact Claudia Sartori on 0207 5661677.

## Training

Thanks to everyone who responded to the questionnaire about training. The top areas that people wanted to develop were:

1. Media skills – especially TV and radio interview techniques
2. Web design and maintenance – all levels
3. Public speaking
4. Recruitment strategies

In response to feedback two media workshops have been organised. The next is on Saturday August 23<sup>rd</sup> in London. There will also be public speaking training in the autumn. See <http://community.foe.co.uk> for updates.

# Inspirational voice



Georgina Downs and her father Ray – who has to wear protective clothing against pesticides in his own garden. Photo Drew Gardner.

**Georgina Downs has recently joined Friends of the Earth’s Wheel of Involvement. Prompted by years of ill-health caused by pesticide poisoning, she has been campaigning from the heart for safer farming methods. Here she talks about her search for a healthy place in the country.**

## **Why did you start campaigning?**

In the early eighties my parents purchased a piece of land in the Sussex countryside not far from the sea. Here they designed and built their dream home. They believed it would be a healthy place to bring up a family.

In 1984 a farmer bought the land that bordered our house for intensive farming. We didn’t think anything of it. As a child I used to play outdoors. In summer the windows and doors were always be open. I used to wave at the tractor driver spraying the crops as he passed by our garden.

In the years that followed we all got flu-like symptoms, headaches, and tiredness. I used to get blisters in my mouth. My health eventually deteriorated so badly that in 1991 I was admitted to hospital with severe muscle wastage, muscle weakness and other chronic symptoms. It seems obvious now but at the time we had no idea that we were being slowly poisoned by pesticides from the neighbouring farm.

### **When did you start campaigning?**

Only two years ago. It was only then that the penny dropped. Before then we had complained on a number of occasions to the Health and Safety Executive, but were told that the farmer wasn't doing anything illegal. I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe that it was legal to be spraying untested cocktails of chemicals so close to our home. So I thought right, if it's not illegal then the policy has to be changed.

### **So what's the policy say?**

The official method of assessing the dangers and risks to public health from agricultural spraying (and under which chemical usage is approved) is based the model of a 'bystander' and on the assumption that there will only be occasional short-term exposure of no more than five minutes. Of course, if you're living or working nearby it's nothing like that.

There has also been no adequate risk assessment carried out on the long-term effects of pesticides or the impact of mixtures of these cocktails.

### **What are you calling for?**

There should be a ban on crop spraying near to human habitation - that is near to schools, homes and where people work. It should also be a legal obligation for farmers to notify the public before any spraying takes place and for the public to know what chemicals they are using. That way we can take the necessary precautions to try and protect ourselves.

### **Why have you decided to join the Wheel of Involvement?**

I'm an independent campaigner. My focus is pesticides. I support the work of Friends of the Earth and other green organisations. While I can't spare much time to do other campaigning, I can provide advice and information on pesticides and farming regulation and am happy to help where I can. So far I've been in contact with Hampshire Friends of the Earth regarding their GM campaign. GM could lead to even greater pesticide use and the use of even stronger chemicals. That can't be good.

### **Had you ever campaigned before?**

No never. I've been learning as I go along. I gave up my job to focus on this. I thought it would take a year. It's been two years so far.

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**Your campaigning techniques have been described as “audacious” - what do they mean?**

(laugh). I guess I'm very persistent. I've never had a problem with putting my ideas across. For example, I once attended a conference organised by the Food Standards Agency and made sure I was staying in the same hotel as many of the key scientific advisors. As a result, I managed to speak to the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides for two hours. He then invited me to make a presentation to the Advisory Committee on Pesticides in July 2002. This was covered by the *Today Programme* and got me a meeting with ministers at the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

**What have been the high points of your campaign to date?**

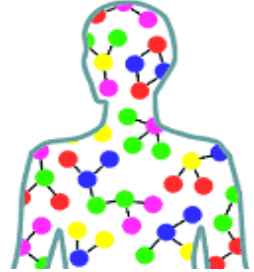
The messages of support and responses from people all over the country. Also, it's satisfying when the issue gets the coverage it deserves in the media. BBC1 trailed my campaign for five months and produced a documentary for the *Food Police*. This got five million viewers.

**And the low points?**

They aren't so much low points as frustrations. It was outrageous last month when the Advisory Committee on Pesticides, after a year of deliberating, denied that there was any health risk caused by spraying near areas of human habitation. It's times like that that I feel like I'm banging my head against a brick wall. But that's to be expected given the potential liability issues.

**Did you know?**

**Our bodies are now contaminated with more than 300 man-made chemicals.**



**Friends of the Earth thinks that chemicals that build up in our bodies should be phased out. For more information: [Http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/safe\\_r\\_chemicals/](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/safe_r_chemicals/)**

**You've raised enormous awareness on this issue and managed to influence the policy agenda on pesticides. What advice do you have for other campaigners?**

I think perseverance is essential. A lot of people think I'm a right pain – phoning them and writing to them constantly. I probably am. Eventually you wear them down though. Often they give you what you want just to get rid of you!

I think creativity is important as well, as is honing your arguments. I used a video to give my presentation to the Advisory Committee on Pesticides. That had a really big impact. The video spoke a thousand words. You need to put things in a really simple and digestible way. There is tendency to get too bogged down in technical detail.

**How did you get such good coverage in the media?**

It hasn't been straightforward. I regularly contacted one journalist from the Sunday Telegraph for a year before he finally published anything. I think you have to keep trying to win them over. It's important to have a peg as well. In my case it was the fact the government hadn't carried out any adequate risk assessments for people who actually live near to regularly sprayed farmland.

**Half of all UK fruit and vegetables contain pesticide residues**

**Campaigning can't be easy, particularly with your health problems. What keeps you going?**

Knowing that I'm right. I don't say that in an arrogant way. The evidence over the years speaks for itself. I can't work full-time because of health problems. In summer we are shut up in a boiling hot house, which is unbearable and suffocating. This is to try to reduce exposure to these chemicals. When the farmers are out spraying my dad has to wear a respirator, goggles and other protective clothing in his own garden because he has been so badly poisoned in the past. It is time that ministers recognise that, to protect the public's health, they must take decisive action on this issue. I've come this far, I can't give up now.

A consultation on crop-spraying has been launched by DEFRA. For details on how to make a submission or more information contact Georgina Downs: [georgedowns29@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:georgedowns29@yahoo.co.uk) . [www.pesticides.gov.uk](http://www.pesticides.gov.uk) or Russell Wedgbury on 01904 455749.



# General Information

You can subscribe to any email list below that interests you. To do this, send an email to [majordomo@foe.co.uk](mailto:majordomo@foe.co.uk) and type 'subscribe list name' in the body of the email. E.g. subscribe realfood

## National Campaign lists

- [gm\\_free\\_britain@foe.co.uk](mailto:gm_free_britain@foe.co.uk) Monthly. This list will keep you up to date with the campaign.
- [realfood@foe.co.uk](mailto:realfood@foe.co.uk) Monthly real food campaign update
- [waste\\_news@foe.co.uk](mailto:waste_news@foe.co.uk) Fortnightly updates to waste campaigners
- [corporate\\_action@foe.co.uk](mailto:corporate_action@foe.co.uk) Information about corporate power and easy web based actions
- [aviation@foe.co.uk](mailto:aviation@foe.co.uk) To discuss sustainable aviation policy and airport expansion
- [transport\\_discussion@foe.co.uk](mailto:transport_discussion@foe.co.uk) –transport discussion forum
- [transport\\_urgent\\_actions@foe.co.uk](mailto:transport_urgent_actions@foe.co.uk) – urgent transport actions
- [climate\\_online@foe.co.uk](mailto:climate_online@foe.co.uk) – climate change discussion list
- [uk\\_wildlife@foe.co.uk](mailto:uk_wildlife@foe.co.uk) – UK wildlife discussion list.
- [briefings@foe.co.uk](mailto:briefings@foe.co.uk) – get sent Friends of the Earth briefings as they are published.



Briefing Sheets

**Friends of  
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You can access briefing sheets on the issues by going to these web addresses:

CORPORATES	<a href="http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/corporates/resource/media.html">www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/corporates/resource/media.html</a>
REAL FOOD	<a href="http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/real_food/resource/media.html">www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/real_food/resource/media.html</a>
CHEMICALS	<a href="http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/safer_chemicals/resource/media.html">www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/safer_chemicals/resource/media.html</a>
CLIMATE	<a href="http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/resource/media.html">www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/resource/media.html</a>
BIODIVERSITY	<a href="http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/biodiversity/resource/media.html">www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/biodiversity/resource/media.html</a>
WASTE	<a href="http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/waste/resource/media.html">www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/waste/resource/media.html</a>
GLOBAL TRADE	<a href="http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/global_trade/resource/media.html">www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/global_trade/resource/media.html</a>

For information and general advice in the South East contact Brenda Pollack 01273 777 385 [brendap@foe.co.uk](mailto:brendap@foe.co.uk). Newsletter by Zoe Mcleod.