

# North Herts Friends of the Earth

January 2011

[www.nhertsfoe.co.uk](http://www.nhertsfoe.co.uk)

## National Climate March 2010

The icy winter weather did not prevent a small group of NHFOE members travelling to London on 4th December to join the annual National Climate March. This year the key demands of the march were a zero carbon Britain by 2030, and the creation of a million green jobs. The march started in Hyde park where demonstrators participated in a photo opportunity writing 2030 in people on the grass. The march then progressed from Hyde Park to Parliament Square travelling via Piccadilly, Trafalgar Square and Whitehall. Parliament Square is now cordoned so demonstrators gathered at the end of Abingdon Street to hear the keynote speakers.

Compared with 2009, when Copenhagen was grabbing everyone's attention, 2010's march was less well attended. The December weather must have taken its toll on the turnout.

Nevertheless those of us that could make it were able to remind a few people that Climate Change did not vanish with the failure of Copenhagen.

*Sent in by Andy Holtham*



*Alison, Andy and Peter from NHFOE help make the "3".*

### Herts County Council cuts school transport and increases traffic and climate change emissions.

Free school bus services are to be cut across Hertfordshire. This will result in a massive increase of traffic on Hertfordshire roads with worsening pollution, safety and climate implications for us all. Using our area (Lilley & Offley) as an example, unfortunately there are no safe cycle or walking routes that children could take as another option to travel to school so parents are likely (along with the rest of the rural villages) to drive into the Hitchin schools. As you know the congestion around Hitchin is bad enough at the moment let alone if you add more school run traffic in the morning.

One of the other parents from our village has done a CO2 calculation to give a rough idea of how much extra Co2 would be produced if all the kids from just our village were driven into school rather than use the bus. Multiply this by all the other rural villages in Herts and it is a big increase.

Lilley > Hitchin = 8km  
Therefore, 32km per day assuming 2 return journeys  
50 extra cars on the road  
Average CO2 per car = 164g/km (source:carpages.co.uk)  
So, additional CO2= 50 x 32 x 164g = 262,400g or 262.4kg  
Annually, this would be 200 school days = 52.48 tonnes of CO2

To put it in perspective, this amount equates to over 250 flights from the UK to Madrid.

(A Boeing 737 produces 90kg per hour)

Most of us locally are against the cuts because if the free bus is taken away in Sept 2012 children will either have to;

-walk/cycle to school (not an option no safe routes)

-be driven (not great for the environment or, if you have to get one child to one school and one at another location for 8.45am)

-pay up to £947 per academic year for your child to go on the public bus (if they have space).

*Sent in by Nicky Sadler*

**ACTION: Please express your opposition to these cuts by writing to:**

Robert Gordon

Leader of the Council

County Hall,

Hertford,

Hertfordshire SG13 8DE

Tel: 01992 556582

[robert.gordon@hertscc.gov.uk](mailto:robert.gordon@hertscc.gov.uk)

For more information please contact: Nicky Sadler,  
[nicola\\_sadler@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:nicola_sadler@yahoo.co.uk)

**In 2010 North Herts Friends of the Earth had 84 members and a budget of around £2000.**

### Incinerators being pushed back across the country, but not yet in Herts

DEFRA has withdrawn private finance initiative (PFI) funding for 7 large waste projects as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

This is great news - it means the planned projects, most of which include incinerators, are unlikely to go ahead. Thank you if you emailed the Government to stop this funding.

PFI projects tend to lead councils to build expensive and unnecessary incinerators at the expense of recycling.

This decision will prevent long waste contracts being signed, meaning over the next 30 years we'll save:

- vast amounts of resources that can be recycled instead of burnt
- energy and climate emissions that are avoided by higher recycling
- many millions of pounds of council tax money

## Incinerator campaign successes

There have also been many recent victories for anti-incineration campaigners around the UK.

These include:

- an application for an incinerator in Chesterfield was refused planning permission in a 8-1 vote.
- Biffa's planned 300,000 tonne per year incinerator at Shepshed in Leicestershire was refused planning permission.
- plans for a massive incinerator in Coventry were defeated after a 5 year battle. This project is also one of 7 that has lost PFI funding.
- Shropshire Council unanimously turned down Veolia's plans for an incinerator at Battlefield, Shrewsbury, despite recommendations from planning officers that they should approve the application.

These wins are testament to the long and tireless hard work of committed activists - and to the UK Without Incineration Network.

Meanwhile in Hertfordshire, the County Council continue to press onwards with their highly costly (£1billion!), environmentally damaging and unneeded incinerator. Herts Without Waste <http://hertswow.webs.com/>, an umbrella organisation supported by North Herts Friends of the Earth continues to battle against this decision with a mobilisation to help people respond to the waste consultation followed by a recently launched a complaint against HCC. HCC in their "Horizons" magazine, which is distributed to every household in Herts wrote a highly one sided article in favour of their plans for incineration. HertsWOW maintains that this breaks the guidelines that councils are obliged to operate under in their publications. Particularly disappointing is the fact that the one sided story was published at a time when a public consultation on waste was in operation. One argument put by HCC in favour of incineration is that amounts of waste are increasing. Recent findings reject this.

**Take Action:** Have you signed County Wide petition to avoid incineration & opt for the alternative?

<http://www.petitiononline.com/NoAshHCC/petition.html>

## February 2010

Dan steps down as group co-ordinator due to illness. Rest of group agree to share responsibilities as much as possible and to try and ensure that group continues to have a presence in the area and to operate as normally as possible. 2 group members meet with NHDC to discuss Get Serious campaign for local councils to cut their carbon emissions.

## England's recycling rates are on the up

We're producing less waste and recycling more than before, according to the latest figures.

England's rates for recycling, reuse and composting for 2009/10 have increased by 2.1% - though some councils saw much bigger rises than this.

Rugby achieved an 18.8% increase and South Oxfordshire managed 18.6% more than last year.

Although there are still huge variations between different councils' recycling rates, the average now stands at 39.7%. Hertfordshire's recycling rate is relatively good at 46%.

The Which? consumer action group says, 'Our latest research shows that 98% of people recycle some rubbish, but when it comes to recycling everything they are able to, this number drops to less than 46%, suggesting that's there's plenty more we could be doing.'

If you're stuck with an awkward item and are not sure how to recycle it then check <http://www.wasteaware.org.uk>

## March 2010

NHFOE made a submission to the consultation on the Stevenage Core Strategy calling for more action on climate change and stronger sustainability criteria for new developments

## New Joint Coordinators for 2011.

Welcome Peter!

Matt Sutcliffe continues as Main Contact after stepping in last year to help out after Dan resigned.

Thanks for all your work, Matt.

Peter Foord joins Matt as joint coordinator.

All contact details on back page.

## Water and energy saving tips from North Herts Friends of the Earth members

"We don't have any heating in our kitchen, so it is cold during the winter. For the last few years we have turned off our fridge for three months over the winter. We jam the door open just enough for air to flow and don't have meat. It must have saved us a lot of electricity and money over time, as the fridge is one of the most expensive appliances to run."

"We have a water meter. Anyone can have one. That really encourages us to save water. We have cut the amount we spend on water by two thirds and according to our water provider we use less than half of a single occupancy household (and we don't smell (that much!)).

The shower and bath are next to the toilet and we keep a bucket in the shower. We keep used bath and shower water and use it to flush the toilet. Toilets can use up

to 13 litres of water for just one flush! So this saves us loads of money and water.”

“We have fitted a water saving device to our shower that we got for free. It was easy to fit and I think saves around a third of the water we'd otherwise use in the shower. You can get one here: <http://www.eaga.com/freeshowersmart> It might seem like we have plenty of water, but every litre used is cleaned using huge amounts of energy, so saving water saves energy too.”

“After double insulating our loft, we started to see what else we could do. Our floorboards are suspended and although it was a big job we decided to insulate under them where it was possible and cold. We lifted the floorboards and tacked wire mesh across the bottom of the joists. Then we filled the gaps with treated sheeps wool insulation from LILI <http://www.lowimpact.org/> The room we have done so far is much cosier, now”

#### Cut junk mail – Stop the Drop!

Reduce waste by cutting down on unwanted mail. There are some very easy actions you can take, including registering with the Mailing Preference Service and opting out of the Royal Mail's Door to Door service. For more details, including template letters which you can send to companies to ask them to take you off their mailing list, visit <http://www.wasteawareunwantedmail.org.uk/>

#### May 2010

First stall of year held at Walsworth Common Fair, Hitchin on 23<sup>rd</sup>.

NHFOE member attended a joint meeting with CPRE and local pressure groups to discuss the Stevenage Core Strategy proposals.

Film nights have been held at Adrian's house once a month throughout the year and have shown a variety of entertaining, inspiring and educational films

#### June 2010

FOE represented with a stall at Stevenage Day fete for the first time for many years, where Get Serious cards (about 40) were signed to help raise awareness of the campaign and to send to SBC councillors.

A stall was also held at the less busy Triangle Garden Day in Hitchin on 27th

#### Good news for our waterways!

Otters, water voles and species of freshwater fish which had all but vanished from waterways have made a dramatic recovery following the healthiest decade for rivers since the industrial revolution.

The toxic effects of pesticides nearly wiped out the wild otter in the 1970s, but steady improvements in water quality mean their numbers are expected to make a full recovery.

Otters may already have reached their maximum capacity in parts of the south-west of England, Cumbria and Northumbria. In the past 30 years, positive sightings have risen 10-fold, says a report by the Environment Agency.

The return of wildlife in and around the waterways reflects clean-up operations by water companies and environmental bodies to meet national and forthcoming European water quality directives.

Water voles are also returning to riverbanks after serious habitat degradation in the 1990s saw the mammal become critically endangered in Britain. According to the agency, water voles have

recently been spotted in 30 locations. Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust has purchased Purwell Ninesprings Nature Reserve in Hitchin to protect water voles and otters in the area as well as other rare wildlife.

Project manager, Alison O'Dea, said: “We have managed Purwell Ninesprings Nature Reserve for the last thirty years so it was wonderful to acquire the site from the Flint family. This is the best site in North Herts for water voles. The reserve is great for other wildlife too - otter footprints have been seen.”

The number of serious water pollution incidents in the UK has more than halved since 2001, while major conservation programmes have protected and restored rivers, streams and lakes.

Fish are also now thriving in once polluted rivers. The Tyne has seen record numbers of migrating salmon, while the Thames recorded its highest number of sea trout since many species were wiped out in parts of the river by pollution in the 1830s. The agency boosted fish populations with more than half a million farmed fish, including roach, barbell, tench, dace and chub.

Water quality tests on rivers in the Thames catchment area in 2008 found that 80% were "very good" or "good", compared with just 53% in 1990. Officials have recorded 125 fish species in the Thames estuary, which is home to shellfisheries and provides nursing grounds for sole and bass.

Ian Barker, the agency's head of water, said: "Rivers in England and Wales are at their healthiest for over a century, with otters, salmon and other wildlife returning in record numbers."

Water quality will need to improve more if environmental organisations are to tackle pollution that runs into waterways from fields and roads. A further 9,500 miles of rivers and streams are due to be revitalised by the agency over the next five years.

*Adapted from Ian Sample, science correspondent, The Guardian, Friday 31 Dec 2010*

## July 2010

The group agreed to donate £500 of it's funds to help with a large fundraising push from National FOE, which was greatly appreciated. Our stall at Rhythms of the World was recognised as one of best on display that weekend, due to members' efforts to make it interesting to families

## Campaign success as Treasury backs down in battle over green electricity

Campaigning by Friends of the Earth and renewable energy groups has helped save a crucial measure to encourage green electricity from the Chancellor's axe.

The Government had promised the feed-in tariffs (FITs) payment to councils, communities and homeowners who generate electricity from renewable sources was fixed until 2013.

But reports before the spending review suggested the tariff would be prematurely slashed by a third.

This was despite the fact it is not financed by the public purse.

"It would be incredibly short-sighted for the Treasury to backpedal on this commitment. Damaging investor confidence would ultimately make it more expensive to meet our renewable energy targets," said Andy Atkins, Friends of the Earth's Executive Director

Friends of the Earth's campaigners kept the heat on Government to maintain FITs through meeting Ministers and lobbying at Party conferences.

And two days before the spending review Friends of the Earth warned the Government could face a hefty legal bill if it reneged on its commitment.

Influential Financial Times journalist Jim Pickard blogged about the threat of a legal

challenge, prompting a flurry of activity in Whitehall.

Ministers have said the possibility of expensive legal action helped them land the killer blow in the battle over FITs with the treasury.

The decision to save the feed-in tariff was announced in the spending review on 20 October.

Campaigning and generous donations to our Emergency Appeal from Friends of the Earth supporters was pivotal in this success.

Well done to everyone involved in making it happen.

Throughout 2010 NHFOE maintained its key role at Herts Without Waste David Ashton, NHFOE's waste campaigner has worked incredibly hard to promote alternatives to incineration in Herts. For more info

see: <http://hertswow.webs.com> and sign the petition at <http://www.petitiononline.com/NoAshHCC/petition.html>

## August 2010

Stall held at Royston Kite festival on 1<sup>st</sup> August

A second meeting with NHDC was held to discuss Get Serious, 155 cards distributed to councillors and the leader of the council about the campaign.

Despite Lynda Needham (leader of the NHDC council) responding stating that they were unable to support the campaign, it will have no doubt raised the profile of environmental concerns within the council and we have established two useful relationships within the council.

## September 2010

2 members attend North Herts DC event outlining role of charity sector in delivering public services and taking part in 'Big Society' Letters and material sent to the leader of SBC, Sharon Taylor, and Stevenage MP Stephen McPartland in support of local carbon budgets. Get Serious cards sent to SBC councillors

## October 2010

Final stall of year at Apple Day in Hitchin followed by public showing of Food Inc film to raise awareness of the Sustainable Livestock bill. Although this event was not as well attended as the group would have liked it was well organised and informative to those who did go. Speakers included a local GP, local farmer and a Friends of the Earth national campaigner.

## North Herts Friends of the Earth members go solar!

At least three households owned by local Friends of the Earth members are becoming electricity generators.

Vicky Wyer's family are already enjoying the benefits of the Feed-in-Tariff (Fit) scheme. In just six weeks from installing their system they generated £120. The large 3.8 kw system cost £17,750.

"We are keen environmentalists and had wanted to install solar panels on our roof in the past, but could never afford it" says Vicky.

"When the feed-in-tariffs came it meant that a PV system became affordable for the first time. We pored long and hard over the

figures but realised that even by borrowing the money to pay for the system, we would not be out of pocket, we'd get a great return, while massively reducing our carbon emissions at the same time."

"Every time the sun comes out you get a warm glow knowing that the electricity we consume is no longer contributing to climate change"

Ann and Dan funded their smaller, 1.41kw system through the kind gifts of friends and family to their wedding list and from their savings. Costing £7,027, the system is projected to save 531.14Kg of CO2 per annum and generate £473 of savings/income a year. It is on an East facing roof so is not as efficient as if it was South facing, but it will still be a competitive way to invest money, although for Dan and Ann that is not the point. As Dan says "We will save money in the long term with the panels, but for me it is more important that we save the CO2."



Dan suggests shopping around and being sceptical about figures. "One company quoted us over three times the amount we eventually paid. Also, the system they quoted for wasn't as good. You have to be careful about the predictions of how much energy you'll produce. One company gave us figures as though our roof was South facing. That wasn't accurate."

"We were lucky, in that in the end, we decided to go with a company whose senior engineer is a friend of ours, so we were confident about the service we were getting. We used "A Greener Place" and they were helpful and fitting the panels involved very little disruption even though they were put up during the snow"

"One other thing we found out was that it wasn't worth us putting in solar hot water, as our water consumption is low and we have an efficient condensing gas boiler"

If you want more info on our experience please contact Dan at [dangomm@yahoo.com](mailto:dangomm@yahoo.com)



*Dan & Ann's PV solar panels*

**December 2010**  
 3 members attend the Climate Change march in London. Several members attended a talk at Church Farm Ardeley by Tony Juniper on the book "Harmony" that he co-wrote with the Prince of Wales and Ian Skelly.  
 Xmas social held at Half Moon pub

**Tell your MP what it's like living in a cold home**

It's no fun living in a cold home. Houses rented through a landlord or a letting agency are most likely to let in the chill.

We need a new law to help keep tenants warm and well.

Please tell your MP what it's really like living in a cold rented home - past or present. Or let them know about a friend or relative's experience.

And ask them to sign a parliamentary petition (EDM 653) backing a law to protect tenants.

Telling your story could make a huge difference.

**Take Action:** Go to <http://www.foe.co.uk/> and click on Cold Times to add your story.

**Climate is NOT the weather!**

Climate change sceptics continue to make headlines, whilst the science supporting human induced climate change strengthens.

It is increasingly frustrating to be quoted spurious "science" from papers like the Express and Mail (who gain advertising revenue mainly from airline and car ads).

There are over 80 myths doing the rounds none of which are supported by scientific research. If you want the know what the

**November 2010**  
 Members contributed to public consultation on Herts CC waste strategy. The group has also been part of wider group of organisations campaigning against the proposed incinerator in Hatfield

scientific research actually says there are several (respected and science based) websites where you can find the answers:

[www.royalsociety.org/Climate-change-controversies/Royal Society](http://www.royalsociety.org/Climate-change-controversies/RoyalSociety)

[www.newscientist.com/article/dn11462](http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn11462)

New Scientist

[www.realclimate.org/index.php/archives/2004/12/index/# Responses](http://www.realclimate.org/index.php/archives/2004/12/index/# Responses)

Real Climate

[www.nerc.ac.uk/about/consult/debate/climatechange/summary.asp](http://www.nerc.ac.uk/about/consult/debate/climatechange/summary.asp)

Natural Environment Research Council (UK)

[www.scholarsandrogues.com/2007/07/23/anti-global-heating-claims-a-reasonably-thorough-debunking/](http://www.scholarsandrogues.com/2007/07/23/anti-global-heating-claims-a-reasonably-thorough-debunking/)

Brian Angliss

[www.ossfoundation.us/projects/environment/global-warming/myths](http://www.ossfoundation.us/projects/environment/global-warming/myths)

Open Source Systems Foundation

[www.skepticalscience.com/](http://www.skepticalscience.com/) John Cook

[http://scienceblogs.com/illconside/red/2008/07/how\\_to\\_talk\\_to\\_a\\_sceptic.php](http://scienceblogs.com/illconside/red/2008/07/how_to_talk_to_a_sceptic.php)

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### Climate change sceptics love a cold winter: how can the Earth be warming up if much of the northern hemisphere is having a freezing winter?

On the other hand, some proponents of climate change say unusual weather patterns may be the result of global warming.

Climate scientists say: hang on, there's a difference between weather and climate. Weather is local and short term; climate change is global and long term.

So, what were the global climate (as opposed to the local weather) indicators showing last year:

For 2010, the combined global land and ocean surface temperature tied with 2005 as the warmest such period on record, at 0.62°C (1.12°F) above the 20th century average of 13.9°C (57.0°F). 1998 is the third warmest year-to-date on record, at 0.60°C (1.08°F) above the 20th century average.

The 2010 Northern Hemisphere combined global land and ocean surface temperature was the warmest year on record, at 0.73°C (1.31°F) above the 20th century average. The 2010 Southern Hemisphere combined global land and ocean surface temperature was the sixth warmest year on record, at 0.51°C (0.92°F) above the 20th century average.

The global land surface temperature for 2010 tied with 2005 as the second warmest on record, at 0.96°C (1.73°F) above the 20th century average. The warmest such period on record occurred in 2007, at 0.99°C (1.78°F) above the 20th century average.

The global ocean surface temperature for 2010 tied with 2005 as the third warmest on record, at 0.49°C (0.88°F) above the 20th century average.

Data from National Environmental Satellite Data and Information Service (US)

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### Planning campaigners start young. Letter sent to the Comet by Thomas aged 6 and a ½

Dear Mr Editor,

My Mummy took this picture from my bedroom window in Woodcote House. It's very Christmassy and it's lovely in the summer too. She says a man called Simon wants to put a tall building for cars in front.

Also Uncle Bob does not know where the market will go. Then we can't get fresh food and toys anymore.

Please can you help stop the builder man so we can keep our lovely view?

From Thomas aged 6.5



### Dates for your diary:

#### Film Nights:



Every (or nearly every!) second Thursday of the month

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#### Please help with the newsletter.

Please send your letters or articles to Tracy at:

84 Jackmans Place,

Letchworth SG6 1RQ, or

[tracy@tracypez.co.uk](mailto:tracy@tracypez.co.uk)

#### Deadline for the next newsletter:

Friday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2011

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**LOCAL GROUP MEETINGS**

**Please come along and get involved**

**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> February**

**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> March**

**Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> April**

**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> May**

**All 7:30pm-9:15pm**

**Friends Meetings House,  
1 Paynes Park, Hitchin,**

**Come to the pub afterwards afterwards!**

**6 Billion Ways: Making another world possible, Saturday 5 March, central London**

With speakers and practical workshops for all ages, debates, films, music and art, 6 Billion Ways is your chance to inspire and be inspired, and to make connections with others who want to challenge injustice and inequality, both in the UK and globally. Friends of the Earth is one of the sponsoring organisations for this free event, with an impressive line-up of speakers.

For full details and registration, go to <http://6billionways.org.uk>

**Emails to North Herts Friends of the Earth supporters**

**We send out occasional (monthly) action email bulletins.**

**If you'd like to be sent these please contact Peter on**

**[peterfoord@gmail.com](mailto:peterfoord@gmail.com)**

**If you want an action to be included in our email bulletins please let Peter know well in advance so it can be added to the email**

**February group meeting – 24th February**

The next group meeting will be on Thursday 24 February at the Friends Meeting House, 1 Paynes Park Hitchin, SG5 1EH, beginning at 7.30pm.

**Please note that this is later in the month than normal (group meetings are usually held on the third Thursday of the month); meeting dates will revert to our normal pattern from next month.**

This meeting is an opportunity for group members to determine the group's campaigning priorities for the year ahead. If you're not able to make the meeting, you can still contribute to the discussion by letting us know which of the main campaign themes are most important to you. The major areas of FoE's campaigning during 2011 will be:

(1) The Energy Bill: campaigning will focus on securing improvements to this government Bill, particularly around the introduction of local carbon budgets and energy efficiency standards for private rented homes (Warm Homes campaign);

(2) Recycling: strengthening recycling targets and moving towards a "zero-waste" society; locally, we can make connections with the County Council's plans to build a massive, PFI-funded incinerator to handle residual waste;

(3) The Food Network: building on campaigning during 2010 on sustainable livestock production;

(4) Climate change: supporting FoE's work towards a just international climate deal, with adequate support to enable poorer countries to develop in a sustainable way;

(5) Decentralisation and Localism Bill: the Bill will have a devastating effect on local democracy.