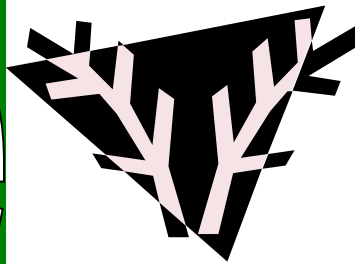


BranchLine



February 2003- Branch Coordinator's Report-

Happy first birthday

It was just over a year ago that 16 members gathered in the Bear Hotel to re-launch the Havant FOE Branch. Our progress since has been steady but firm and we now have almost 50 members and £300 in the bank. On the campaign front we have been active on both the home and away fronts. We campaigned vigorously with local residents against a planning application for an expanded waste transfer station near Havant town centre. Our tactics included picketing, leafleting the local area, numerous items in the News, radio interviews and detailed letters of objection to councillors and officials. A text book campaign in fact.

We have kept in touch with local councils, Havant's MP, residents associations, various NGO's and voluntary groups about a wide range of topics relating to our local environment. We have joined with Fareham, Gosport and Portsmouth FOE branches to become part of Hampshire's green network and also took an active part in the Toxic Ted campaign and the protest against Dibden Bay.

Further from home we gave our views to Government consultants looking at the South Coast future transport needs and the study on new airport runways and supported the FOE's national campaigns on doorsteps collection and GMO's. We are publishing regular newsletters with many contributions from members and have held nine meetings.

And for our next year.....

There's plenty for the branch to do throughout Havant. What remains of our open spaces and coastline will come under even greater development pressures mostly from new homes and new industry. Havant infrastructure has not kept pace with population growth but there is an urgent need to maintain a balance between the area's economic needs, particularly local jobs, with the quality of life of the people who live in the borough, especially for those who live near industrial sites. Waste management and recycling is continuing to the top of the agenda and we plan a seminar later this year to discuss how Havant is doing. As our part of Hampshire heads for gridlock during peak periods we need to keep improved transport alternatives firmly in focus. We have joined Marinet, the marine conservation body, to ensure we're able to contribute to issues threatening our coastline (such as Broadmarsh).

FOE and Iraq

It looks as if we are weeks away from a potentially devastating second war with Iraq. No doubt a vast number of FOE members oppose the war and many (Ray, Sue and Liam from Havant) would have been among those who joined the London Peace March. Less obvious is the immense damage that a new war will cause throughout the region. Last time Iraqi forces destroyed seven hundred wells spilling over 60 million barrels of oil. /continued over

Over 10 million cubic metres of soil is still contaminated and two fifths of Kuwait's ground water aquifers are polluted.

During the nine months the oil wells burned, average air temperatures fell by 10 degrees C. Vast amounts of depleted uranium (DU), used in artillery shells to penetrate armour, litter the desert. DU creates fragments and dust which release uranium oxide into the air. Experts have estimated 50 tonnes of DU inhaled could cause up to half a million additional cancer deaths over several decades.

There are serious threats to the biodiversity on land and marine life as well as birds of the region which is home for five species of marine turtle. The fall out from burning oil in 1991 produced microlayers of toxins on the surface of the sea which destroyed plankton, a vital part of the food chain for a multitude of species.

All this damage is as nothing compared with the unspeakable death and injury to the local population and what is left of their infrastructure after 9 years of Anglo-American bombing and UN sanctions. Nobody can say for sure what is likely to happen. However 'smart' modern weapons may be, the reality is that many thousands of innocent people will suffer. It's hard to say what could be worse-more of Saddam or a country torn apart by factions whose air and water is polluted and heaven know what else.

Campaign Co-ordinators:

If we want to go beyond being a polite talk shop we need to move forward and develop a team approach to managing our local agenda. That means members coming forward to lead on specific subjects relating to FOE's campaigns. In summary these are public transport, cycling, waste and recycling, planning, energy, real food, marine and conservation. If you would like to lead on these topics or contribute in any way, please contact us on havantfoe@hotmail.com or call me on **02392483070**.

Future branch meetings.

It's been suggested that the dates of the next three Havant branch meeting should be published so here they are: Wed. 26 March: Tuesday 29 April: and a General Meeting on the 21 May. March and April meetings will be at 1 Eastern Road, Havant and the general meeting in the Bear Hotel, Havant. All branch meetings are open to members.

David Willetts MP, has written inviting branch members to meet him and discuss local issues relating to FOE's interests in Havant Borough. We're looking at dates in April so if any member would like to join the meeting please call Ray on 02392483070 together with the topic you want to raise.

For the Diary

Date	Event	Venue	More Info
6 th March	Public Meeting. 'The Human Cost of Oil' The OCENSA pipeline	Portsmouth Central Library 7.30	www.columbia solidarity.org.uk
11 th March	Green Drinks	The Wine Vaults, Southsea, 6pm	Info@pompeygreendrinks.co.uk
1,2,8,9,14,15th March	IDEAS HOUSE 2003	Acton Lodge, West St. Fareham	Mark Harrison Fareham BC 01329824357
26 March	Havant FOE Members' meeting	1 Eastern Road, Havant	Ray Cobbett 01329231699
29 March	Meet Havant FOE	Mengham Shopping Centre	Sue Holt 02392 465782