

# BranchLine

**FOE-Havant Branch \* Co-ordinators Report \* Summer 2003**

## **GM latest**

Unless you spent the last six months on a desert island you'll know that the GM debate is well under way. The government is due to pronounce later this year on whether to allow GM foods and commercial crops to be grown in the UK. They won't be encouraged by the feedback so far. Mori's latest survey puts public opinion firmly against along with that of the supermarkets, dozens of group including the FOE and now the Government's own Cabinet Office Strategy Unit. Their report makes it clear that there are no commercial advantages to growing GM in Britain. Havant FOE is playing its part. We had an excellent public meeting in Bedhampton as well as various sessions with other FOE branches in Hampshire and the FOE national organiser, Clare Oxborough. A countywide petition went out with the July FOE newsletter round so every member can help by asking friends and family to add *their support*. We've been on the street with it and the response has been fantastic. The plan is to present the petition to the county council later this year. Hampshire has already gone some of the way but we would like them to seek protection from the government against any GM farming throughout the county.

## **Fair Trade**

Havant members joined with other concerned groups in the borough to meet David Willetts MP and ask for his support to the campaign to help farmers in poorer countries sell their products to rich nations. This is part of a worldwide effort to focus the minds of policy-makers on what is a continuing and outrageous injustice. If you want to know more about the campaign please contact Jeannie Owens. Meanwhile, let's hope MP's know the difference between Fair Trade and Free Trade

## **Green Fair**

We have a proposal to organise a Green Fair in Havant in the autumn. John Vivian from Gosport FOE and Tim Dawes have offered to lead the effort but he will need some help. We already have a venue in the town centre and there should be no shortage of stalls which could range from other green and environmental groups, the churches, Havant/Hampshire Councils, companies that process waste and suppliers of sustainable products. The Fair is a great idea and thoughts from members on what we should feature or offers to lead group workshops will be very welcome. Please contact Ray Cobbett or Sue Holt for further details

## **National Conference**

The FOE's national conference will be held in Leicester on 5-7<sup>th</sup> of September. Our branch is entitled to send 5 delegates and already 3 members want to register. Apart from the set-piece debates on all the hot topics there are over 30 workshops on everything including using digital

photography, taking on the supermarkets and renewable energy. If you want anymore details we'll send them to you- just ring Ray or Sue Holt.

## **Newsletter**

Perhaps FOE should organise a workshop called how to write a newsletter and stay calm. One member suggested that we give the newsletter a name-any suggestions? I hope you enjoyed the story we ran about Georgina Downs and her remarkable campaign against the uncontrolled spraying of pesticides. Georgina is every bit a campaigner having taken her crusade right up to ministerial levels and gained the attention of national radio and TV as well as national newspapers. Contrary to common belief, one person can make quite an impact. We're always looking for contributions: they don't have to be original articles although these are always welcome. Newspaper cutting, emails, bits and pieces that make us laugh, cry, think or help with a problem. Deadline for the next issue is the end of August

## **Branch Meetings**

These are held more or less monthly in Havant around at my house. They are open to any member to attend and raise issues that are important to them. Several already have. The next meeting was to be on the 24<sup>th</sup> July but this is cancelled due mainly to holidays. We have therefore decided to meet on the **18<sup>th</sup> September at 7.30** at 1 Eastern Road, Havant. Earlier this year we appointed a team of co-ordinators to look after specific issues, namely, transport (Sue Holt), cycling (Jim Jennings), energy and climate issues (John Pilkington) marine conservation (Gill Hibbs), GMO's ( Terry Mitchell), Fair trade (Jennie Owens), Pesticides and Packaging ( Patricia Williamson), Waste/Recycling/Planning ( Ray Cobbett). Call Ray if you want to get in touch with any member of the team

## **Membership**

Our branch membership currently stands at 55. Pat Williamson has taken on the membership secretary's role and she will be writing round shortly to collect subs where they are due. We have about a dozen members with email addresses. Soft copy is so much cheaper faster and easier to send so if you are on email please send it to [havantfoe@talk21.com](mailto:havantfoe@talk21.com) as a note so we can update the current list.

## **Thanks for being a Friend of the Earth**

Ray Cobbett  
Branch Co-ordinator  
02392 483070  
[havantfoe@talk21.com](mailto:havantfoe@talk21.com)

**PS: Farmers markets are being run in Emsworth on 24<sup>th</sup> July, Waterlooville 28<sup>th</sup> Aug. and in Havant 25<sup>th</sup> Sept.**

---