

Havant &  
East Hants  
friends of  
The earth  
See things  
differently

# Branchline

AUTUMN 2012

News from FOE [www.havantfoe.org.uk](http://www.havantfoe.org.uk) plus Facebook and Twitter

## Switch on the solar

A site in Fareham could become Britain's largest solar farm. The 132-acre site is on grade 2 farmland in a strategic gap between Stubbington and Fareham. It could provide power for up to 14,000 homes, saving 25 million tonnes of CO2. Proposed by a small German owned firm that has already built six installations in the UK, Fareham would be the biggest. The panels are made in China and the whole site could be connection-ready in just 12 weeks. Five acres of community space will be set aside, all rights of way maintained and cabling buried underground. An environmental assessment has been requested from Fareham Borough Council to be followed by a full planning application. No call-in is expected under the new planning regime. Main issues could be visual intrusiveness, loss of an emergency landing site for light aircraft and loss of farmland.



Sun power for 14,000 homes

There are no noise, smells, drainage or access issues. The estimated carbon cost payback is around two years or less than 10% of the site's life. A site management plan will be submitted with a planning application before the end of the year. Allowing 12 weeks, the site could be operational by June 2013. FOE local groups have pledged their support.

### Solar facts in the UK

Almost 250,000 solar projects have been installed in the UK delivering between 750 to 1000 Megawatts. The government reckons that 4 million homes could be solar powered by 2020 to help reach it's renewable target of 20%.

## Prepare for floods to come

Hampshire County Council has started work on a new management strategy to deal with future flooding in the county. Flooding can arise from surface and ground water and overflowing watercourses. Climate change is expected to increase the risks and, when combined with rising sea levels, flooding will become a major problem. Havant FOE is part of a consultation group of community groups, land owners and councils helping to develop the plan. The greatest risks coincide with river valleys around Basingstoke, Winchester and the Test Valley. Locally, Battins in Leigh Park has been identified among wards that seem to be at the highest risk of groundwater flooding. **The draft strategy can be found at [www.hants.gov.uk/floodriskstrategy](http://www.hants.gov.uk/floodriskstrategy) and it includes an online feedback for comments by 5th November.**



Rescue in Bridge Road, Emsworth during floods in 2011

## More planning changes means less democracy



Courtesy the Guardian

The government has announced major changes to how planning is to be done in future. Large housing projects can be referred to bureaucrats while provision for affordable homes will be relaxed together with some national building standards. The effect of these changes are to reduce democratic accountability by removing some decision-making powers from local councils. Under the Planning Act, large infrastructure projects such as airports, motorways and large retail, are dealt with by assessors who make recommendations to the government. Large housing estates are set to be added thus removing local authorities from the approval loop. Planning gain, known as Section 106, is benefit provided by developers such as schools, roads etc, to a wider community. Now the government wants to renegotiate or even scrap some of this to improve the profitability of schemes. Sustainability is likely to be downgraded in the rush to encourage more building at the same time as national standards are weakened. It looks as if ministers are pushing localism while diminishing the powers of local councils' and with it the voices of the people they represent.



## Southern Water should clean up its act

Despite repeated public assurances, Southern Water continues to be criticised for discharging unscreened raw sewage into Langstone Harbour. Filters get blocked with solid objects during heavy downfalls and sluices have to be opened to prevent backing-up within the wider network. If left unattended, streets could be flooded. Observations made by FOE members show various unpleasant objects left on the tide strands posing a threat to wild life.

A local MP is calling for stiffer fines and the Environment Agency, which has prosecuted the water company for dozens of illegal discharges, is considering further action. Langstone Harbour is within an AONB and is a Site of Scientific Interest and an RSPB protected breeding ground for gulls, terns and various wading birds and home to Brent geese.



**Birds  
Of  
Langstone  
Harbour**

## Government hints it hasn't given up on fracking

In his speech to the Tory Party Conference, Chancellor, George Osborne, hinted at offering generous tax relief for UK fracking projects. Energy analysts had concluded that UK deposits of shale rock were not economically viable. FOE described the chancellor's dash for gas as 'reckless' as business leaders warned that if the UK didn't show a more positive attitude towards renewables, they would be quitting and taking their investments elsewhere.

**Join the people who want to change the future**  
**[www.havantfoe.org.uk](http://www.havantfoe.org.uk)**



ecoisland

## Ecoisland- a vision of the future or just a pipe dream?

Ecoisland was launched in 2011 and aims to make the Isle of Wight self-sufficient in power and be sustainable and carbon neutral by 2020. It claims to be already well on the path having on occasions been a net exporter of power through solar and other measures. It is also pioneering new technologies to manage a smart grid across the island to balance power demand and supply. Other ventures include a hydrogen storage scheme, food hub for local producers and 'Greenback' card discount scheme. The island's eco ambitions were dealt a blow earlier in the year when planners turned down a wind farm at Wellow while others are lobbying against the off-shore Navitus array to the west.



## MPs put bees back on agenda

The Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) has announced an enquiry into the impact of certain pesticides on the UK's population of bees and other pollinators. MPs are not satisfied with the response from Defra to a call to change in regulations for the use of pesticides containing neocotinoids thought to be harmful. Some European countries have already banned the

use of the chemical but Defra says it will revisit its risk assessment but meanwhile will permit its continued use. FOE's national campaign is calling for action now and has welcomed the EAC's intervention.

### Annual General Meeting

The group's AGM was held in the Crown Hotel, Emsworth on 10th October. 11 members attended with six apologies. Reports were presented by the coordinator, treasurer and membership secretary. All showed the group in a positive position with new members, a well maintained and popular website, regular and good local press coverage, newsletters and support for national campaigns.

Nominations were called for coordinator and treasurer and both Sue Holt and Ray Cobbett were re-elected along with Pat Williamson to manage membership. For next year's main event members felt that Havant Park should be kept as a venue. It was agreed that John Auric would work closely with Sue and chair meetings in her absence. Votes of thanks to Officers, especially Patricia and Kevin, for the excellent Havant FOE website.

### WHAT'S ON AND WHERE

#### **30th October 7.30pm**

Navitus windfarm debate  
Allesbrook Theatre  
Bournemouth University  
see [Facebook](#) webpage

#### **13th November 7.45pm**

How to set up a community energy group  
URC Jewry Street, Winchester  
See [WinACC](#) website

#### **19th November 7.30pm**

FOE Meet for Drinks  
Old House at Home, South Street,  
Havant

#### **19th December 7.30pm**

Christmas get-together  
Crown Hotel,  
Emsworth

Tell us your news

[havantfoe@talk21.com](mailto:havantfoe@talk21.com)

Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)

# The unmaking of Havant Town Centre

For years one of the finest streets in the Borough has been allowed to decay. East Street, Havant boasts more listed and landmark buildings than most but for how much longer? Older residents will remember a cinema (the Empire), Gardeners, art shop, Streets, a fine old home bakery, Filarinskis and many others. The unmaking of Havant counts as a local community catastrophe for which successive councils are largely to blame. Their prescription for regenerating Havant was to build a parallel town or retail park to the west soon to be expanded with another 80,000 sq feet and space for 250 cars. Much of this was bound to happen after the

cave-in to Tesco, bitterly opposed by Havant FOE years ago.

But now worse is being planned with a council, later exposed as a Barratt Homes, plan calling for demolition of the White Hart pub and other buildings.



**White Hart future threatened**

Barratt wants to knock down Havant's only parish hall and fill

the space with flats and town houses. The war memorial would be shoved out of sight to make way for a Piazza to replace the historic crossroads. Local residents and FOE have condemned the plan and are calling for a more mixed scheme with some houses, shops, a market and an improved public hall plus the preservation of significant buildings.

The council appears to have lost control of planning in Havant and handed it over to big name developers. It's model of the future with large, new retail and industrial parks for storing, distributing mostly imported products is at least 20 years out of date and unsustainable.

## Fight goes on for Safer cycle crossing

An attempt by the County Council to drop a commitment to a safer cycle crossing has failed. Havant councillors threw out an application to vary conditions attached to the building of Hayling Billy cycleway over a decade ago. As part of the consent, the county accepted a demand that a new controlled crossing for cyclists would be created across the busy Langstone Road. But, they argued, there was now no longer a need for it as there had been no accidents.



Councillors, backed by Havant FOE, challenged the county's case and asked why cyclists should have to depend on the goodwill of motorists stopping to allow them to cross the road safely. The new crossing could cost £100,000 but a date for it has still to be agreed.

## Is biomass greener ?

Fassett has announced a switch to biomass energy at its Langstone Technology Park. The provider is Haven Energy, a company owned by Drax Power whose Yorkshire power coal-burning plant, is one of the largest CO2 polluters in the UK. Drax are aiming to turn over three of its six boilers to biomass often described as carbon neutral. That's because during combustion the material releases the carbon it absorbed while growing, thus not adding to the total carbon in the atmosphere.

In Drax's case most of the feedstock comes from North America so there is additional carbon from an extended supply chain. There can also be competition between land for food or biomass fuels, usually grown as mono-cultures with a serious impact on bio diversity and wild life. Large scale biomass could also lead to de-forestation in some parts.



**Drax power station is the UK's largest producer of power and CO2 emissions**