

Wycombe Friends of the Earth

Minutes of Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 5th November 2008, 7.30pm

The Environment Centre, Holywell Mead, High Wycombe

Present: 17

Apologies: 2

1. Welcome

- Attendees were welcomed to Wycombe Friends of the Earth's first AGM.
- Everyone was thanked and congratulated for their time, effort and achievements so far.
- Members were invited to renew their membership formally by paying their subscription at the end of the meeting.

2. Review of the year

- The review previously distributed to members by email was outlined. Briefly:
- The Big Ask campaign influenced Government policy, on emissions targets.
- The 'The Inconvenient Truth' showing was a success, involving amongst others, our MP.
- Several members attended the FOE conference, enhancing knowledge and contacts.
- The plastic bag campaign is also making a difference. Several different bag materials are now being used in preference to plastic by Eden retailers. The campaign also has the support of Wycombe District Council. This has tied in with national enlightenment.
- In November 2007 the Schools Energy Survey was launched and will be repeated shortly for the winter 2008/9.
- Early in 2008, the Wycombe FOE website was successfully launched.
- WFOE hosted a talk given by Marinett, an organisation supporting conservation of coastal waters and putting pressure on the Government to strengthen the Marine Reserves Bill.
- WFOE also hosted a talk on Biofuels which was well attended.
- The film 'The Power of Community' was shown in August 2008, highlighting the Cuban initiative which addressed the peak oil problem.
- Links have now been made with St Bernard's School and Bucks New Uni.

3. Finance Report

The finance report previously distributed by email, was outlined, but briefly:

- April 2007 was our start date for accounts purposes.
- Income from membership was £95.
- WDC contributed £100 towards the cost of 'The Inconvenient Truth'.
- Balance is currently £213.88.

4. Election of Officers

- Co-ordinator and Treasurer was duly elected to continued.
- By next AGM the group will investigate implementing a constitution for the group.

5. Plans for the future year and general discussion.

The following questions were posed:

- How could we expand our membership?
- What would entice others to join?

Points that were made on discussing the above questions:

- A greater membership would carry more weight when the group is campaigning.
- Most local FOE groups have a small number of active campaigners, as we do.
- For £5 per annum (this money is spent only on campaigning costs) members would get:
 1. regular updates from Wycombe FOE (including minutes of meetings) and national FOE (members would get the chance to join national FOE campaign networks and stay informed on issues)
 2. invitations to support, and/or be active at, local and national FOE events
 3. the option to join the Wycombe FOE discussion group
 4. attendance and a vote at the Wycombe FOE AGM
- There will probably be a core of people who actively campaign and a wider membership who operate in a supporting role.
- It was suggested that the group concentrated on fewer campaigns but put more work in them.
- The achievements of the group were praised and a newsletter, for others to show interest in was suggested that could outline future possible campaigns.
- A questionnaire was suggested to canvas people's interests, invite people to undertake particular tasks at particular times, and to tap the variety of strengths available.
- Local campaigns can be unpredictable.
- Films and talks help people to become informed and therefore possibly more involved.
- Get the group known locally. Perhaps 'What's on in HW'. Currently we are advertised on the Environment Centre website, with occasional reports in the BFP,
- Could pick up a hot local issue and include a green issue linked to it.
- The HW to Bourne End missing rail link could be supported, for instance. This would reduce journeys by car to the Thames Valley corridor. WFOE would be willing to support campaigns that improved public transport and reduced carbon emissions. This could be considered as one of our local campaigns.
- Another current campaign is the greening of Eden. (Sorting recycling bins will be available in the High Street shortly, but not in Eden).
- We should not be discouraged if campaigns slow down in momentum as there will be peaks and troughs in energy and ability level. Also many small beginnings join up to achieving larger goals, as public opinion is slowly changed.
- The plastic bag campaign has levelled out lately but in a chain-only town, it will always be difficult and many strides have been made. Many stores now ask if shoppers require bags and there are more people carrying non-plastic bags with them.

The meeting closed with refreshments and informal discussion.

11. Next meeting will be on Wednesday 3rd December at 7.30pm until 8.00pm at the Environment Centre (first Wednesday of each month) with a Christmas social gathering afterwards at the pub.