

# Wycombe Friends of the Earth

## Minutes of Monthly Meeting

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012, 7.30pm

at The Environment Centre, Wye River Studios, 17 West Wycombe Road, High Wycombe, HP11 2LG

**Present:** 13

**Apologies:** 1

**Names** in bold indicate action by that person.

### **1. Welcome and apologies**

Apologies as above. A new member was welcomed.

### **2. Ecotip of the month** will be:

November is the perfect time to plant flowering shrubs and careful selection will mean a succession of flowers to keep bees and other pollinators happy all season. For spring-flowering shrubs, try *Salix caprea* and *Magnolia stellata*. These can be followed by cherries and crab apples. An informal hedgerow will provide abundant flowers from such plants as holly, hawthorn and firethorn (*Pyracantha coccinea*). For summer thyme, rosemary and lavender are bee friendly. Shrub roses and varieties of potentilla and escallonia are slightly bigger. More information at [foe.co.uk](http://foe.co.uk), [rytongardens.co.uk](http://rytongardens.co.uk)

### **Members' tips:**

There is now a collection point in Staples and Sainsbury's for used small HP print cartridges so they can be recycled – these have not previously been collected. £1 goes to 'Childline' for every inkjet cartridge donated for recycling.

### **3. Forthcoming Events and Requests**

- 14<sup>th</sup> November 8pm at Wycombe Environment Centre. Short presentation re water and AGM of Population Matters.
- Transition Towns – thermal imaging camera can be borrowed and TT are asking for volunteers. 2 members volunteered.
- Chiltern Wood recycling – need volunteers to man the 'shop' 10am-2pm Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays. Email the co-ordinator if you can help.
- Christmas social at the December meeting – attendees please bring festive food.

### **4. Finance: Treasurer position and Renewal of FoE Partnership Agreement**

The present treasurer would eventually like to relinquish his role.

Another member offered to take up the position (from next AGM).

£20 will be due in January 2013 for renewal of FOE Partnership.

The FOE questionnaire will be completed by the co-ordinator and sent off.

### **5. Impressions of FoE Conference, London**

A member brought and circulated the brochure for members to view.

The conference was reasonably upbeat and enjoyable. Some good speakers.

NationalFOE is looking at how to progress the Bee Cause campaign.

### **6. Invitation to contribute to planning of future nature campaigning.**

There was some discussion on campaigns on cycle routes and packaging but the nuclear issue won the vote and £10,000 will go to the group who proposed it for them to take this forward themselves as National FOE feels it does not have the resources to take it on.

A member also attended the Marinet AGM and suggested that our affiliation to Marinet is worthwhile.

## **7. Bees Campaign update**

- Sally hopes that WDC will grant permission shortly for us to plant the Sunters Wood Road roundabout with bee friendly flowers next Spring. **Sally** will chase this up.
- 'Change your World' is a magazine that invites local groups to inform others about what they are doing. FOE is making 60 locations bee friendly, hopefully, suggested by local groups. **Mike Ch** will send round a link to this magazine for members to view.

**8. Interactive session led by Nikki Packham from National FOE** about how to maximise Group effectiveness, and members' involvement and enjoyment.

- Manchester and Birmingham case studies might give some ideas for HW.
- The coordinator at WFOE would like to take more of a back seat so that tasks and areas are shared.

### **Manchester**

This is a very large group but only have 15-20 active members.

130 members pay membership (£1.50 per month) with a wider ring of 600 members.

There are 3 joint co-ordinators who meet regularly outside meetings.

Also have lead campaigners.

Other officers cover membership news letter, publicity, media, and they are looking to recruit an events officer.

They have a general monthly members meeting. Every alternate month they have a meeting open to the public (40-60 attendees) and they may have a speaker etc.

Different campaign meetings meet outside these meetings monthly.

Planning meetings – every 6 weeks.

Have a welcome pack for new members, which invites them to indicate their interests so they can be called upon where relevant.

### **Birmingham**

Own their own building and have an organic café.

They have 20-25 active members, several paid members of staff, a support worker with office based volunteers and 2 voluntary co-ordinators.

Strategy committee set topics.

They have lead campaigners for issues they are working on and a full time buildings and maintenance manager.

General meeting every month with action meetings outside this.

3 co-ordinators put agenda together and invite topics for addition to agenda.

### **Ideas for Wycombe FOE**

- We could split tasks so we have campaign leaders.
- Currently it was felt that Mike Ch has good contacts so many jobs are left to him.
- Keep an eye open for up-coming events that campaigns can link into (horizon scanning)
- John mentioned that we have extended pool of resources with other environmental groups.

### **Cycle of Attraction**

1. People – WFOE has a good number of attendees.
2. Teamwork – how does WFOE work together?
3. Action - how do we plan? How do we greet new members?
4. Profile

4 questions were considered in small groups:

#### **1. What do you want from WFOE?**

- Enjoyment and satisfaction
- Encouragement to keep on the cause
- Keep informed of the issues – bringing in external perspectives
- To feel you are making a difference

## 2. What do you think WFOE should be doing?

- Cutting carbon, local to global
- Raising profile of National FOE at a local level
- Improving local environment
- Making people aware of problems and solutions
- Encourage others to reduce consumption
- Helping people to see things differently re economics and environment

These are all elements of campaigning

## 3. What are the meetings like?

- Thought no-one hogged meetings
- Bee campaign seems to have given us good focus at meetings as many of us have personal interest in it. Some campaigns are very technical, so are off-putting
- Meetings are good to exchange ideas and information
- Too few meetings – need to be more frequent (but could be smaller and for a specific focus) to be more effective
- There is some humour in the meetings which is good

## 4. How does the group make decisions?

- Make decisions at the meetings and sometimes by email.
- Decisions made by consensus or by vote.
- Should 1) encourage people to contribute a variety of ideas and 2) have small group discussions to inform decisions.

## Thoughts about how is the work shared out

- We benefit from others in the group who are members of other environmental groups who have expertise in other areas and members who have particular interests.
- Work on larger campaigns are not shared as much as smaller actions.
- Suffer from time constraints.
- People wish to learn and contribute but are hesitant to lead
- We rely on the coordinator to lead and pull campaigns together and organise but he does it well and has good contacts through his many other interests. The rest of us are happy to take on specific jobs rather than leading.

## What could be done to address what more could be done?

- Time is the major constraint.
- Not always clear what people can do.
- Could offer members smaller actions ahead of leading a campaign
- Get 3 or 4 people together to do specific actions, so not relying on one person.
- Break down what it means to lead a campaign and let a small group do it together.

Will discuss email discussion ring versus publicity ring at next meeting.

**11. Next meeting** will be on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2012 at 7.30pm at:

The Environment Centre, Wye River Studios, 17 West Wycombe Road, High Wycombe, HP11 2LG

**Will those attending please bring some festive food to share as this meeting will take on a more social nature. Many thanks.**