

Wycombe Friends of the Earth - Minutes of Monthly Meeting

Wednesday 5th February 2014, 7.30pm at The Environment Centre,
Wye River Studios, 17 West Wycombe Road, High Wycombe, HP11 2LG

Who's here and who's missing

Present: 9

Apologies: 5

The business bit

Frequency of WFOE meetings

A member's suggestion to meet every 2 months with a general interest input (talk/film) with focus group meetings in between for business and actions was discussed.

It was decided to meet in March and then bi-monthly from April on the even-numbered months, thereby not meeting in the problematic January slot.

Wycombe Environment Centre will be moving in April. Venues are being considered. More will be known in March. WFOE can meet at the present site in March but not April.

What's on

Linking up with other Green Groups – suggestion by a member

A member's Open University course has recently involved studying the possibility of local Green groups overlapping and combining forces. He has interviewed personnel from various groups. Green Drinks (a meeting over a pint in High Wycombe for those interested in green issues). The co-ordinator attended one of these meetings in High Wycombe recently. It is not anticipated that there will be a regular, frequent series of meetings. There was an invitation to contribute to Marlow Green Radio in order to publicise groups or activities etc.

GM talk possibility

We will return to this when we have more information re venue. Also population film/programme. Other ideas for talks/films welcome.

Green living. A suggestion by Gemma for Ecotip of the Month - Toothbrushes that can be composted and others that have replaceable heads.

What we've been doing

Feedback on green spaces subcommittee meeting

- ▶ Gayhurst Road green space – has been cut and it is understood that this will be managed as an area for wildlife.
- ▶ Red Kite are promising to take forward 2 more sites.
- ▶ Sites where slight changes in management would improve biodiversity were discussed,
- ▶ Bassetsbury Allotments site – WDC will consider alternative uses eg, residential development and/or wildlife site. WWG (Wycombe Wildlife Group) have enquired about this. the co-ordinator will enquire further.
- ▶ WDC frequency of cutting is confirmed as being changed from 10 to 6. There is possibility to encourage further reduction and/or to suggest more careful timing to enhance wildlife. WDC will also cease weed spraying and in 2015/16 work is to be done with 3rd party organisation (volunteer organisations?) to undertake management of grass verges etc.
- ▶ Weakness of planning policies with regard to biodiversity will be monitored where possible.
- ▶ Bees walk leaflet will be regenerated.
- ▶ National pollinator strategy has not yet appeared.

Further Green Spaces ideas and decisions:

- ▶ A member will plant up a wasteland corner in Middlebrook Road in the Spring. A working party will be invited to help clear the site – members please note.
- ▶ Churchyards – perhaps churches could be encouraged to leave corners to wildlife. A member will contact the WWG on how best to take this forward. (Living Churchyards)
- ▶ A member will contact WDC re areas in Hughenden Park

- ▶ Urban sites which could possibly be planted up – the co-ordinator talked to Mike Donald of WWG and they will discuss this at their next meeting. With a bigger pool of volunteers (eg WFOE and WWT combined) more could be done.
- ▶ A member mentioned road verges that could be left to grow wild flowers.

What's happening out there

Marinet – on Feb 14th Marinet will respond to queries about their proposal to be independent from FOE. FOE have brought forward their intentions on marine campaigning, perhaps in response to this.

Marlow Community Market – once a month in Liston Hall, Chapel Street, Marlow.

Campaign ideas

Sunny Schools

A member has reviewed orientation and likely yield of solar panels on Marlow schools. This methodology could apply to other areas. He will email Quentin Gibbon at national FOE to ensure that this information will be valuable. There are grants available to support schools for installation of energy efficiency measures including solar panels. Packaging of utility monitoring will also be available so that energy can be more efficiently managed. There is a possibility of an 11% return. Perhaps there could be a community owned package in order to fund such measures for local schools. Stokenchurch School have solar panels.

Local waste contract.

The co-ordinator contacted WDC with revisions. WDC would appreciate feedback on the new contract. Perhaps WFOE members can give positive feedback as feedback tends to be negative.

WDC housing numbers – Local Plan

- ▶ WDC has issued booklets explaining the new Local Plan which should be distributed this week. It is at the first stage of consultation on how many houses/ businesses will be built over the next few years. WDC need to assess housing needs in the district and find land to accommodate it.
- ▶ Over the last few years immigration into HW has been more than forecast and projections have to be extrapolated from this.
- ▶ Wycombe District has areas of Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which reduces the amount of land that has potential for development.
- ▶ Population of HW district is projected to increase from 172,000 in 2011 to 190,000 in 2031. Therefore, housing needs to be increased to accommodate this migration by a possible mixture of the following:
 - Intensifying in towns.
 - Building on previously developed sites in the countryside
 - Building on greenfield reserve sites eg Abbey Barn south and north, and Gomm valley.
 - Expanding villages (limited as many are in AONB and this won't be changed)
 - Review of the Green Belt (which could potentially be changed) eg Flackwell Heath/Bourne End.
 - Expanding Princes Risborough (possibly on garden city principles).

In order to accommodate the required extra 10,000 houses some bits of all of the above will have to be considered.

- ▶ HW society is unhappy with the 10,000 projected extra houses.

Role for WFOE?

- ▶ Perhaps encourage sustainable energy efficient housing/provision for cycling.
- ▶ Perhaps we could discuss the different areas proposed for development with regard to biodiversity/green space etc. Members please read the leaflets dropping through your doors and email thoughts and/or areas you wish to be discussed.
- ▶ Major topic for WFOE March meeting – the local plan and our response to it.

Fracking

A member suggested that WFOE could look at Fracking from the point of view of insurance. Insurance companies may not cover properties for any fracking within 200m of the property. This could be indicative of potential problems for properties despite reassurance from fracking companies. This point was discussed. It was thought that fracking operations are unlikely to be operated within 200m of a property and there are no plans at present for fracking in Bucks. However, WFOE should bear this in mind for future discussions.

Anything we've forgotten

- ▶ A member is working through the Food Directory in order to make changes/updates.
- ▶ A member mentioned discussion of flood plain for a later date.

The next meeting will be **on Wednesday 5th March 2014** at 7.30pm at The Environment Centre but IT WILL BE THE LAST MEETING AT THIS VENUE – check the website for venue for future meetings..