

Wycombe Friends of the Earth - Minutes

Zoom meeting on Wednesday 5th January 2022 at 7.30pm.

Present: 8

Apologies: 10

1. Finance: Bank balance just under £1000. Some subs. still outstanding. Treasurer will follow up.

2. Ecotip:

Do you have a bookcase full of books you don't read or need? Why not sell them to companies such as: We Buy Books www.webuybooks.co.uk or World of Books www.wob.com to enable others to re-use your books instead of buying new. Or donate to charity shops for resale. Of course you can also buy your books cheaply from the above to save buying new. Or use your local library and borrow rather than buy.

3. Housing campaign. The Coordinator had circulated some ideas on the proposed Housing Campaign. A lively discussion ensued.

We started by noting that we should not overlook those who are already struggling with the expense of living and possibly living in fuel poverty. Steve Baker emphasises the alleged unaffordability of reducing carbon emissions for those on low income and is using it as an excuse for not taking action. He needs to be tackled on this.

Other points are:

- Expenses for energy efficiency should not fall on individual tenants.
- Leaseholders do not always have final say on what is installed but have to pay the full cost anyway. Decisions often lie with landlords. How much should the government influence?
- We therefore need to get tenants on board. Support tenants to help them obtain ecologically sound warm homes, not just petition landlords and housing associations.
- Get reluctant landlords to do something, i.e. promote advantages to them such as upgrading stock. Poorest people live in poorest housing stock, which is not ecologically sound. Raise standard of housing stock for the people who have to live in them.
- Gains can be shared between tenant and landlord.
- What role should social media play? Involve newspapers and local authorities. Using WFoE, BCAA Facebook pages and email rings we can already reach quite a lot of people.
- FOE is starting a national campaign. Need to check what they are considering. They have a discussion this month on heating of housing "Beyond Gas". Jan 25, 19:00-20:30: "Beyond gas: how do we secure warm, safe homes for all".
- Council should upgrade housing standard in new local plan. FoE has a 50 point climate action plan with case studies for councils.
- Possible bad practice: Commercial buildings turned into flats, or adding floors to existing blocks do not need planning permission and therefore miss all standards. Building regulations still apply, so these regulations need to contain energy saving regulations etc.
- Wfoe should add local value to other national campaigns and other organisations working on this. Object of campaign is to achieve change. We do not have resources to follow every angle.

Action:

- It is suggested we should put a strong focus on sourcing case studies about landlords who have successfully upgraded their stock both to their own advantage and to tenants
- Find examples of those already working in this field
- Source a list of Housing Associations. There are many, though not all big
- Encourage tenants to feedback their experiences
- Identifying best practice
- Get tenants on board
- Use social media
- Develop letters to housing associations

Some examples mentioned during the meeting:

- Acorn is an organisation working with tenants to gain better conditions, eg cladding issues.
- We do not necessarily have to stick to local examples. Note: "Carbon co-op" in Manchester who achieved the "Ashden Award" for people powered retrofit. Is national FoE looking into examples of good practice? Coordinator to enquire.
- Green Homes Grant: Oxford and Watford scheme refurbishing old homes.
- See Ethical Consumer magazine.

4. Other campaign actions:

No further news on H.W transport strategy. H. W. to Marlow cycle route: no further developments, possibly held up by a landowner opposed to a cycle path across his land. Hopefully, it will happen in time.

5. Feedback from the Mozambique Liquefied Petroleum Gas project actions

The coordinator had circulated his response from Steve Baker, who basically is not willing to take any action just yet.

6. Upcoming events:

Any area local to Wycombe could be considered, but it was felt we should wait for the weather and Covid conditions to improve. A member will follow up.

A reminder of national FoE campaign discussions coming up:

National FOE is holding three consultations (by Zoom) in January, all of which look interesting:

Jan 17, 19:00-20:30: The future for local climate action

Jan 25, 19:00-20:30: Beyond gas: how do we secure warm, safe homes for all

Jan 31, 19:00-20:30: What's next for nature campaigning

7. AOB: None

Next meeting: 2nd February 2022.