

North Herts Friends of the Earth

May 2010

www.nhertsfoe.co.uk

A recipe for disaster? America's food system - coming here?



On Saturday the 23rd of October at Walsworth Road Baptist Church SG4 9SP at 7:15 North Herts Friends of the Earth present "Food, Inc", a film that exposes the dangers of an over industrialised agricultural system. The film showing will be followed by a discussion with a local GP, a local farmer and a Friends of the Earth representative.

US agriculture is controlled by corporations that often put profit ahead of consumer health, the farmer, workers and the environment. This is causing increased illness in the shape of e-coli, and an epidemic level of obesity and diabetes. Yet this is the model that many want the UK to

follow. Poor standards of farm animal welfare combined with over-reliance on antibiotics; pressure from government to adopt GM technologies; routine pesticide use polluting our land and water supplies; major corporations controlling our food systems - these are all features of our very own British food system. *Food, Inc.* reveals surprising—and often shocking truths—about what we eat, how it's produced, and where we are going from here. For more info, see <http://foodinc.dogwoof.com>

Councils petition Climate Secretary for local action on climate

Leading councils are backing Friends of the Earth's petition for a law to ensure every council does its bit to save the planet.

The councils are spearheading a call for a nationwide system of local carbon budgets. The legislation would help every council lead ambitious action on climate change in its area.

ACTION: Please write to your MP asking them to write to the Energy Secretary, Chris Huhne MP, asking him to introduce Local Carbon Budgets legislation in this Parliament.

An impressive cross-party group of council leaders launched the petition. Now we want all council leaders to add their name. The petition will be presented to Climate Secretary Chris Huhne this autumn.

The petition argues that a nationwide system of local carbon budgets would create a "coordinated approach to tackling climate change between local and national Government".

The petition says action by some councils is already cutting emissions, "bringing tangible benefits to local residents, employees and businesses". And

it calls for "area-based action to tackle climate change to be rolled out nationwide".

Local action on climate change would boost the economy, slash energy bills and create much-needed jobs.

Local action:

- * Makes deeper emissions cuts possible
- * Involves local people in decisions about their own communities
- * Can be more cost-effective
- * Brings benefits like better public transport, thriving town centres, and new local business.

In North Herts Marcus has an ongoing dialogue with council officers responsible for climate strategy, having met them twice and in Stevenage Andy has met with council officers responsible for their climate change strategy. Both councils appear willing, but face internal barriers and financial restraints that restrict their ability to be ambitious and both are lagging behind even their own timetables for a strategy. North Herts Friends of the Earth is hoping that our input will help the councils cut local CO2 emissions. If you'd like to help please contact Marcus for North Herts: barber_marcus@yahoo.co.uk or Andy for Stevenage: holthams13@btinternet.com

URGENT! HELP NEEDED!

A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR A COMMITTED ACTIVIST IS AVAILABLE. WELWYN AND HATFIELD FRIENDS OF THE EARTH REQUIRE A GROUP COORDINATOR.

Develop your organisational skills and help protect the planet! Looks great on a CV. Contact: Adrian Toole, 116 Sweet Briar, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL7 3EA 07966 239464 (anytime) or 01707 322193 (evenings or weekends only please) adriant@sweetbriar.demon.co.uk

Ask your MP to back meat and dairy law

We did it! Thanks to pressure from activists like you, Robert Ffello MP has introduced the Sustainable Livestock Bill in Parliament. Mr Ffello, Labour MP for Stoke-on-Trent South, was the second name pulled out of the hat in the annual Private Members' Ballot on 10 June.

Being drawn so early in the Ballot, his Bill stands a real chance of becoming law. Now is the crucial time to ask your MP to support a new law for rainforest-free meat and dairy. But now that politicians are back in Parliament we need you to ask your MP to show their support for the Bill. Take Action at: http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/biodiversity/press_for_change/back_sustainable_livestock_bill_24522.html

Stop the Drop: Litter and fly-tipping

Help reduce litter and increase recycling.



The Campaign to Protect Rural England's new research shows that a UK-wide deposit refund scheme for drinks containers would have clear economic, social and environmental benefits. Importantly, it would have a big impact on litter levels, as well as increasing recycling and diverting waste from landfill.

The Government says it's a priority to reduce litter, increase recycling and work towards a zero waste economy. The Secretary of State has said 'we need a new approach to waste - one which works for the new economy'. CPRE agrees and believes a

deposit refund scheme is part of this new approach.

The Government is currently holding a public consultation on how we deal with waste. You can show your support for the benefits of a deposit refund scheme by filling in and sending the e-card at:

<http://www.cpre.org.uk/campaigns>

GM Crops

The EC has approved growing genetically modified crops for the first time in 12 years. But 60% of Europeans feel we should get the facts first before growing foods that could threaten our health and environment. Friends of the Earth Europe is calling for a ban GM food until the research is done.

A new initiative allows 1 million EU citizens a unique chance to make official requests of the European Commission. **Let's build a million voices for a ban on GM foods until the research is done. Sign the petition** and spread the word. - please sign the petition today, and help us reach 1 million signatures at http://www.avaaz.org/en/eu_gmo/?v (when I signed it was at 900,030 so it is a real possibility - Dan).



Apple Day Stall
23rd October Hitchin Town Square 10:00am - 2:00pm
Come and help on the stall.
Contact Simon on
07958114275 or
siwebb@ntlworld.com

Low carbon transport revolution

A **low carbon transport revolution** is vital for local action to tackle climate change to be successful. But the Department for Transport budget is likely to be slashed this autumn.

We need to make sure the money left goes on schemes that give us the maximum bang for our bucks - like **local schemes that promote**

cycling, walking and public transport use. Not on expensive, destructive road schemes.



ACTION: Please email Transport Secretary Philip Hammond today and ask him to ensure Government spending goes on local green travel schemes:

http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/press_for_change/smarter_travel_choices_24971.html

Land Share!

Not all of us have access to space for growing. Yet there's loads of UK land that's under-used or forgotten. Some of it could be cultivated for vegetables and fruit. Which is where Landshare comes in.

There are more than 100,000 people on allotment waiting lists in England alone. That's a lot of people looking for land to grow things. Do you have a spare bit of garden you're not using and you'd like to share? Interested in getting some free fruit and veg in return? Or maybe you have acres and dream of a community farm?

Landshare brings together people who have a passion for home-grown food, connecting those who have land to share with those who need land for cultivating food. Since its launch through River Cottage in 2009 it has grown into a thriving community of more than 55,000 growers, sharers and helpers.

It's for people who:

- * Want to grow veg but don't have anywhere to do it
- * Have a spare bit of land they're prepared to share
- * Can help in some way - from sharing knowledge and lending

tools to helping out on the plot itself

* Support the idea of freeing up more land for growing

* Are already growing and want to join in the community

<http://www.landshare.net/>

Organic land available

Primrose Cottage is a 7.5 acres farm in Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire that is partially certified by the Soil Association as organic, promotes practise of forest, fruit and flower gardening, biodiversity protection and also has bed and breakfast facilities. We welcome school visits and other educational partnerships. In addition, we are part of the WorldWide Working Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) and regularly have international volunteers contributing to life on the farm. There are also opportunities for caravan storage at a reasonable fee.

The ethos behind the project is that we firmly believe in promotion and practise of organic principles while at the same time supporting the local food economy within the wider context of sustainable development. We also support and would like to develop the co-operative values that are essential for sustainable social enterprises to become and remain successful within the organic movement. That is why, it is with pleasure that we are inviting interested parties to lease 2.5 acres of land which can also be managed collectively so long as organic principles are observed. There will be no charge for the rest of the season till April next year apart from electricity and water. For more information about Primrose Cottage, please see our website: <http://www.future-living.co.uk>

Kind regards,

Angela.

Primrose Cottage, High Wych Rd,
Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire
CM21 0HH

Tel: 020 74319426

In order to save biodiversity society's behaviour must change, leading conservationists warn

Conservation scientists advocate a fundamental shift in the way we view biodiversity. In their paper, which was published in the journal *Science*, they argue that unless people recognise the link between their consumption choices and biodiversity loss, the diversity of life on Earth will continue to decline.

Dr Mike Rands, Director of the Cambridge Conservation Initiative, said: "Despite increasing worldwide conservation efforts, biodiversity continues to decline. If we are to make any kind of impact, it is critical that that we begin to view biodiversity as a global public good which provides such benefits as clean air and fresh water, and that this view is integrated not just into policies but also into society and individuals' day-to-day decisions."

The authors advocate that managing biodiversity as a global public good with economic and societal value, providing benefits that far outweigh the cost of conserving ecosystems, should be central to all policy making that impacts on the environment.

They believe it is essential that biodiversity not be considered in isolation, but must extend across all sectors of government from treasury to defence. This is especially important as some of the policies that most damage biodiversity, such as agricultural, transport and energy subsidies, are not overseen by most governments' environmental regulators.

Dr Rands continued: "Valuing biodiversity is vital to changing the way we view this important resource. Because we have received the benefits of biodiversity for free, we take it for granted. The costs of conserving biodiversity are massively outweighed by the benefits."

"It is critical we incorporate the view of biodiversity as natural

capital into management decisions and, more importantly, public policies which reward positive individual actions and penalize negative ones."

As the pressures on biodiversity increase, the number of species faced with extinction continues to rise, with 21 per cent of all known mammals, 30 per cent of all known amphibians, and 12 per cent of all known birds* under threat. Additionally, nearly a quarter of plant species are believed to be at risk.**

**According to the 2009 IUCN Red List*

***According to Global Biodiversity Outlook 3*

Contributed by Alan Massam

Help Paraguay fight the soy invasion

In Paraguay soy is fast becoming a constant threat.

Small farmers are being forced off their land by large landowners looking to expand.

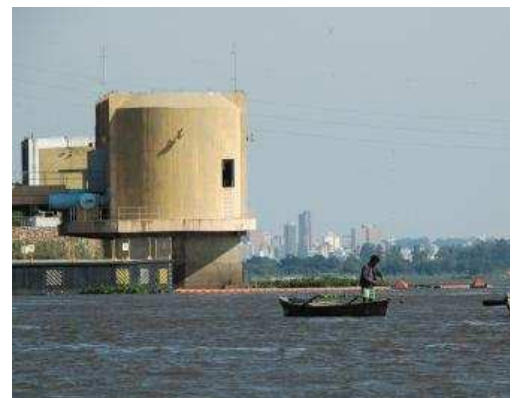
And frequent spraying of pesticides and herbicides is making it really difficult to resist.

The risk

In the city of Asuncion soy is now putting the drinking **water supply at risk**.

The global food giant Cargill has built its own port on the banks of the River Paraguay with plans to expand.

It's only 500 meters upstream from the city's main water intake - a spill could affect the water supply for over **1.2 million people**.



Water intake of Asuncion City

Injustice - In response the Paraguayan Environment Ministry closed down the port and withdrew its licence to operate. But Paraguay's President Lugo **overruled** their decision and re-opened the port.

Environmental abuse is **poisoning Paraguay's people**, and destroying its wildlife.

ACTION: Ask Paraguay's President Lugo to stand up to big business and guarantee clean water for Asuncion at:

http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/fair_future/press_for_change/save_paraguay_soy_take_over_24802.html

Hitchin Urban Transport Plan

Public consultation is open and ends on 15 October. Exhibitions in Hitchin Library on 29 September 3pm-8pm and on 2nd October 10am-1pm.

Complete the questionnaire at: <http://www.hitchinutquestionnaire.co.uk/>

Balancing the risks of Greenland's melting ice sheet

Scientists investigating conditions beneath the Greenland ice sheet say their analysis will be vital for helping understand how the ice sheet will respond to climate change.

Researchers from the University of Bristol are to lead a series of new experiments, which could yield important information about the wider risks to global sea levels.

The Bristol-led project will reveal how meltwater generated on the surface of the ice sheet is routed at its base. They will tackle the challenging task of tracing water flow over 100 km and in sub-surface rivers with double the discharge of the River Thames.

The airborne geophysics project, lead by the University of

Cambridge, will focus on ten major outlet glaciers across the ice sheet and will use radar, gravity and magnetic data to characterize the subglacial environment of the glaciers and, in particular, the presence of water and sediment at the bed.

"Together these two projects will provide important insights and new information on the factors that control processes and motion beneath the 1-3 km thickness of ice that covers most of Greenland," said Prof Jonathan Bamber from Bristol.

Greenland's ice sheet extends across 1.7 million km² and contains enough water to cause a global sea level rise of seven metres. The ice sheet is divided into a series of major drainage basins, each typically about 50-100,000 km² in area.

Over the past 15 years, rising temperatures have led to increasing mass loss from the ice sheet and subsequent increase in global sea level. This increased loss has been due to a roughly equal increase in the speed of glaciers flowing into the ocean and increased melting at the surface.

Results from the new studies will make a fundamental contribution to computer modelling of the ice sheet, and how it may respond to changes in air and ocean temperature over the coming decades.

Contributed by Alan Massam.

Dates for your diary:

Film Nights:



Every (or nearly every!) second Thursday of the month



Apple Day Stall
23rd October Hitchin Town Square 10:00am – 2:00pm
Come and help on the stall.
Contact Simon on 07958114275 or siwebb@ntlworld.com

Food, Inc.

Film showing 23rd October, 7.15pm, Walsworth Road Baptist Church, SG4 9SP



Newsletter



Please help with the newsletter. Please send your letters or articles to Tracy at: 84 Jackmans Place, Letchworth, SG6 1RQ or email: tracy@tracypez.co.uk

Deadline for the next newsletter:
Friday January 28th 2011

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LOCAL GROUP MEETINGS

Please come along and get involved

Thursday 21st October
Thursday 18th November
Thursday 17th December

A.G.M.

Thursday 20th January

All 7:30pm-9:15pm
Friends' Meeting House
1 Paynes Park, Hitchin
Come to the pub

One of the most important things to do for the environment:

Put your money where your beliefs are.

Your money may be helping destroy the environment. Many banks invest their customers' money in companies and enterprises that are very damaging to the environment.

If you don't want your savings to be used that way make sure your money is with an ethical bank or building society.

The only bank in the UK offering a current account with a strong ethical policy is the Co-op bank and its internet arm, Smile. They also come tops in customer satisfaction surveys and didn't need to be bailed out by our taxes.

If you have money for savings and investments then Triodos bank is the most proactive. It invests *for* the environment, rather than just not investing in negative companies. Others to look out for are the Ecology Building Society, The Charity Bank and Shared Interest. Change your account now!

"The significant problems that exist today cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them." Albert Einstein

Emails to North Herts Friends of the Earth supporters

We send out occasional (monthly) action email bulletins.

If you'd like to be sent these please contact Peter on

peterfoord@gmail.com

If you want an action to be included in our email bulletins please let Peter know well in advance so it can be added to the email

"First they ignore you, then they ridicule you, then they fight you, and then you win" - Gandhi

Message from Dan Gomm.

Thank you! I have received wonderful support from many people and I'm sure this has helped me maintain my strength and help me tackle my cancer (see previous newsletter). My tumour has halved in size since my course of chemotherapy and I am as well as I could hope to be short of getting rid of the cancer all together. Thank you for all your kind wishes.