



# Friends of the Earth Pembrokeshire Cyfeillion y ddaear Sir Benfro

## Lockdown newsletter May 2020

### How are we going to emerge from this crisis?

FoE and other environmental groups are looking at how we can become a more equal and more climate-friendly society

We could create a new normal. One that builds on the amazing community innovation, resilience and kindness that has sprung out of this crisis. One that values those who protect us and provide critical services. One where we invest more in climate-friendly industries and don't provide unconditional bailouts to climate-wrecking companies.

FoE Cymru has had an initial online meeting with local group coordinators. FOE Cymru are working closely with other organisations in Wales through two coalitions - Stop Climate Chaos Cymru and Healthy Cymru – to come up with a united response to the crisis.

Longer term, FoE is carrying out futures work, and imagining different scenarios. They are looking for people to input into that process through webinars and Zoom conferences.

Support the FoE campaign - Should the government put people and planet before polluters?

<https://youtu.be/LCOfeU0etw>

Greenpeace asks in an open letter to the UK Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, if he gives airlines a bailout, then they must protect their workers and massively reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Sign the open letter: <https://secure.greenpeace.org.uk/no-free-airline-bailout-ems>

**Pembrokeshire Food Network** had a Zoom conference with speakers including: Clare Morgan – Pembrokeshire chair of National Farmers Union, Holly Tomlinson – Cymru policy coordinator of the Land Workers Alliance, Chris Roscoe, Gerald Miles, Duncan Fisher OBE, Cllr Gareth Davies.

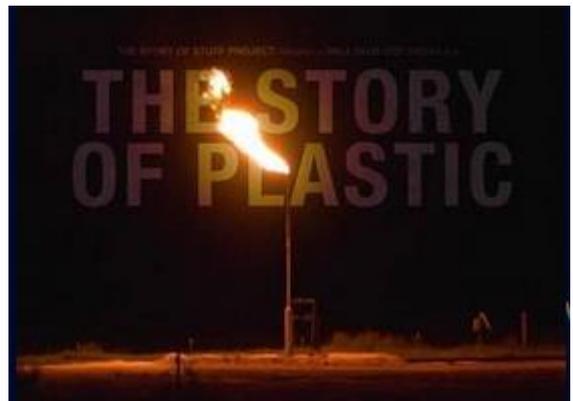
At the moment 90% of food bought by public bodies comes from outside Wales. Duncan Fisher is lobbying the Welsh Government to have one third of this food coming from Wales by 2022. They are establishing an online farmers market.

The new Agricultural Bill now going through the UK parliament will provide a new system of farm support, which aims to move away from the EU's Direct Payments structure and move instead towards a system where farmers are paid 'public money for public goods', such as enhancing air and water quality, tackling climate change or improving animal welfare.

There are 170 CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture) in Wales at the moment. Fishguard town councillor Gareth Davies is calling for the Pembrokeshire County Council to help create, foster and facilitate CSAs.

### A virtual event coming up

You should have received an invitation (a screener) to watch the film 'A story of plastic'. We now invite you to take part in a zoom discussion of the film on Thursday 21 May at 8 pm. We will send out the zoom invite a few days before. It would be great to see you there!



## Update on the Llandewi Velfrey and Redstone Cross bypasses

As you will remember we put in an objection to the Llandewi Velfrey bypass development mainly based on the increased carbon emissions this will cause. Ellie, Rebecca and Bettina consequently took part in the opening day of the public inquiry in March, just prior to the lockdown. The opening day set out the case of the Welsh Government who is the sponsor of the scheme. We gave our evidence on the last day of the enquiry, and answered several questions from the sponsor. We very much hope that our case for a low carbon alternative that will benefit the village and encourage active travel and use of public transport, will prevail. The case is now with the Minister for Transport who will take the final decision.

The next development that will be put forward is the Redstone Cross proposal which is even more questionable, since it does not even benefit any village. We will keep you up to date with any objections we make, but will argue that the project is very much oversized and that the focus should be on road safety and traffic calming without building yet more roads.

## Are Wales' New Trains Fit For The Future?

Arriva Trains Wales was replaced by a joint-venture of Keolis and Amey, trading as 'Transport for Wales', in October 2018. The new operator inherited 128 trains of various types and plans to replace them all, despite some having at least 10 years of useful life remaining. Clearly there are thorny devils hidden in the details of this headline-grabbing policy.

The UK Government are targeting the removal of all diesel-only trains by 2040. However, trains typically last 30-40 years meaning the large fleet of new diesel trains ordered by KeolisAmey would still be running in the 2050s. Would this jeopardise the 2050 net-zero emissions target?

KeolisAmey's new diesels are for long-distance services, replacing two existing classes. If these existing trains had their lives stretched to 40 years one type would be retired around 2030 and the other around 2040. The extra time would facilitate extension of electrification, allowing bi-mode trains to be procured instead of pure diesels.

You could of course argue that newer, more comfortable, trains would encourage people out of cars and hence it doesn't matter that the trains are

diesel. Unfortunately KeolisAmey have specified very basic trains which are unsuitable for the long distances they will be working. The following table shows how the new trains compare to the current long-distance fleet.

	Class 158 (existing)	Class 175 (existing)		New Class 197 (due 2022)	
	2 coaches	2-car	3-car	2-car	3-car
Toilets	2	2	3	1	2
Seating Capacity	134	118	186	116	188
Seating Bays*	16	12	22	10	16
Legroom	Limited	Excellent		Medium	
Body Design	Express	Express		Suburban	

\* a seating bay is two pairs of seats facing each other, normally with a fixed table between. All other seats are 'airline-style' facing the back of another seat.

The reduced toilets mean that the new trains fall below the best practice standard for long-distance trains. Additionally, the suburban body design means that the toilet doors open directly into the seating area. The existing trains have toilets leading off vestibules which have internal doors separating them from the saloons and minimising draughts.

Unfortunately construction of the new fleet has commenced so design changes or outright cancellation is now impossible. Surely production should be cut, the new fleet restricted to shorter routes and the existing long-distance trains retained to facilitate electrification.

Do write to the Welsh Government and Transport for Wales to communicate your views.

## Some inspiring lockdown watches

You can follow a series of highly interesting discussions about the climate emergency and the corona crisis on Fridays for Future program 'Talks for future': <https://www.instagram.com/talksforfuture/>

The digital Hay Festival line-up looks like it will be addressing these issues in a range of relevant events, which are all free to watch:

<https://www.hayfestival.com/digital>

**Costing the Earth "Zero Carbon Britain"** news about how improvements of technologies can get us to net zero carbon emissions by 2050

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000hmg5>

## Get your daily Puffin fix with Skomer Live

Skomer Live with Iolo Williams and Lizzy Daly, and live webcams.

[https://www.welshwildlife.org/islandacom/lights-camera-action/?mc\\_cid=6f53eaba05&mc\\_eid=ebeb20e332](https://www.welshwildlife.org/islandacom/lights-camera-action/?mc_cid=6f53eaba05&mc_eid=ebeb20e332)

## Some good news

### Scottish Government decision: Victory for save Coul links campaign

The Coul Links proposed golf development planning application was formally refused by Scottish Ministers on 21 February 2020. The Ministers' decision was final but any individual unhappy with the decision had the right of appeal to the Court of Session within 6 weeks. The applicant has not exercised this right although the worry was that the Covid-19 pandemic may have allowed some opportunity for not abiding by the deadline. The applicant previously had a lax regard to post-Inquiry deadlines. However, Coul Links Ltd's solicitors have informed the opposition group Not Coul's counsel that there will not be any appeal.

The opposition group thank 38 Degrees and all those individuals and organisations that have contributed to the Save Coul Links campaign, a great victory against a wealthy adversary and considerable disinformation, without the depth of UK wide media coverage and celebrity backing it deserved.

## Sad news

We heard the sad news that one of the world's leading climate scientists, and a supporter of Friends of the Earth, Sir John Houghton has died of COVID-19.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-52325374>

Despite his world-renowned expertise, Sir John retained an extremely humble and down-to-earth approach to life. Some of you will remember him addressing a packed Queens Hall, Narberth meeting organised by Pembrokeshire FoE. He drove down from his home in Aberdovey and met a few of us for a meal at Bank Farm Guesthouse at Robeston Wathen, where Roz & Pete provided him with accommodation for the night. When we arrived at the Queen's Hall, the Weightwatchers were clearing up having just finished their session. On seeing this, Sir John promptly grabbed hold of a broom to help and then joined us in setting out the seating for the meeting. He would not accept any payment for the expert presentation he gave nor for his travelling costs.

A few months later, I wrote a briefing paper on *Climate Change Myths*, a response to those climate change deniers who were always assured of a platform in the media, that was to be launched at the Friends of the Earth Cymru annual conference a couple of days later. When I finished it, I wanted to be absolutely certain that all the facts were correct so emailed it to Sir John and within an hour he'd proof-read and returned it; I then knew it was watertight and ready for release to the public. Around the same time, Channel 4 broadcast the most disgracefully inaccurate and damaging documentary on climate change called, *The Great Global Warming Swindle*. By early the following morning Sir John had emailed a detailed critique for Friends of the Earth Cymru to use.

I will not detail his CV here. It was hugely impressive, as Wikipedia reveals.

We in Friends of the Earth Cymru, and the ordinary people of Wales, were immensely fortunate in having such a knowledgeable and compassionate person to help us understand the science of climate change and to inspire us in our efforts to minimise its impacts.

Thank you Sir John.

RIP, Gordon

Sir John Houghton's obituary on Radio 4 "Last word": <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000hq2b>

Sadly, Dave Robertson died in April this year. He was very active in our local FoE group a few years ago and here is a photograph of him with Rebecca, lobbying parliament in London for climate emergency action.



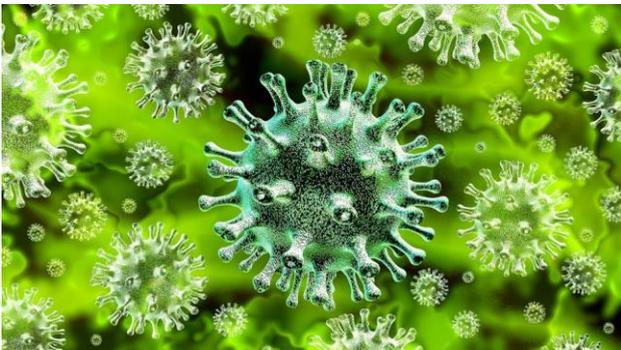
## Bad news: Permission granted to appeal landmark Heathrow legal case

Heathrow Airport Limited and developers Arora Holdings have just been given permission to appeal against the decision to stop them building a climate-wrecking third runway. Sadly this story isn't over. When FoE won our historic legal case in February we knew this might happen. Both companies quickly applied to appeal so we didn't take anything for granted.

FoE legal team has therefore been busy preparing for this moment. And the good news is that we're confident that the Supreme Court will agree with us that it was illegal for the government to support a third runway without considering what this meant for meeting the Paris Agreement and the total climate impacts the development could have. That's why, with your support, we will defend our ground-breaking Court of Appeal victory.

Thank you to everyone who donated to support our legal team earlier this week. If you haven't, please consider chipping in to support our team today. Your donation could help us win our legal case in the highest court in the country, and take a big step towards protecting people and planet from Heathrow expansion once and for all. You can donate [here](#).

## Will the dangers of air pollution exposed by the coronavirus pandemic and the cleaner skies seen during the lockdowns lead to lasting change?



In a normal year according to the World Health Organisation over 7 million people on this planet, die because of air pollution. 90% of us are breathing air that is unsafe and exceeds their guidelines. Air pollution is damaging to almost every organ in the body and can start doing damage before birth.

The coronavirus pandemic is shutting down industrial activity and temporarily slashing air pollution levels around the world, satellite imagery from the European Space Agency shows [this](#). One expert said the sudden shift represented the "largest scale

experiment ever" in terms of the reduction of industrial emissions. "Strangely enough, I think the death toll of the coronavirus at the end of the day might be positive, if you consider the deaths from atmospheric pollution. What surprises me most is that the measures that we take to face this coronavirus are much more severe than the measures we would be ready to take to face climate change or atmospheric pollution." (Director of the Hugo Observation Research Centre).

The overlap between industrial polluted areas and the areas of higher infection and death rates from the pandemic are clear. These are the areas of higher poverty where respiratory disease, cardiovascular problems, diabetes, obesity etc. leave people vulnerable to the virus. Poorer communities are often sited near major roads, have poorer housing fewer green spaces plus the stress of living on a low income.

In Europe the health costs of air pollution caused by road transport has been estimated to range from 67-80 billion euros. In the USA The Koch brothers and Exxon Mobil spend millions on behalf of the petroleum lobbying against tax credits on electric vehicles (EVs). But the switch to EVs is not a magic bullet. The mining of lithium and nickel for batteries is causing environmental devastation in an increasing number of areas round the world

(<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000hvs1>)

Harmful particulate emissions come from the wear and tear of tyres and brakes and of course how green the EVs are depends on their source of electricity

Here in the UK things are changing already because of the Corona virus; Grant Shapps, Minister for Transport has announced a package of £26 billion to help massively increase cycling and walking capacity across the UK. The new transport policy which came out at the end of March is a huge shift with electric buses as well as active transport being prioritised. The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, and Transport for London have since unveiled their 'London Streetspace' programme which will rapidly transform London's streets to accommodate a possible ten-fold increase in cycling and five-fold increase in walking when lockdown restrictions are eased.

A YouGov poll commissioned by Greenpeace UK found 71% of people were concerned about the possibility of air pollution returning to pre-lockdown levels once restrictions are lifted. "We just need to treat our air as a vital life source and not a waste-disposal mechanism" (Mums for Lungs)



### Australian Scientists have known that the magical and beautiful Greater Glider was on its way to extinction.

It's been called a cross between a flying Koala and a Possum. In Conjola National Park NSW and the surrounding forests they were making a comeback. It had taken over 20 years. That was until the extinction event of the East Coast Bushfires 2019. Especially the Currowan Fire."

"I am a Firefighter in the NSW Rural Fire Service. The fire was extraordinary. 1 billion animals died and that's a conservative estimate. The lightweight and delicate Greater Gliders had no chance. Now they/we have to watch on as the last piece of richly biodiverse land inhabited by Greater Gliders and supporting an Ecologically Endangered Community is destroyed by Ozy Homes to make way for an unnecessary housing development in our small rural village." Bill Eger

"Rob Stokes the NSW Minister for planning can call a halt to this but explains that Ozy Homes have every right to destroy the forest. The destruction will begin soon. We need you to tell everyone to contact who they can to put a halt to this extinction event now."  
<https://www.change.org/p/robert-gordon-stokes-mp-nsw-minister-for-planning-halt-the-extinction-of-the-greater-glider?signed=true>



Please participate in this important consultation to help stop new subsidies for high carbon biomass power in the UK.

In the UK, around £1.3 billion in renewable power subsidies a year are paid to burn far more wood than

the country produces for electricity. This is bad news for forests and wildlife, for the climate, and for communities living close to biomass plants or to pellet or woodchipping plants supplying them, who are exposed to more air pollution. This is money that would otherwise - and should - be going to finance wind, solar and tidal and wave power, i.e. the cleanest and lowest-carbon sources of renewable energy we have.

After many years of campaigning by Biofuelwatch and our allies, 2018 resulted in the government finally introducing stricter greenhouse gas limits and minimum efficiency standards for biomass plants, which has stopped even more subsidies being awarded to burning wood in power plants.

**But now, those vital gains could be at risk.** The welcome changes in 2018 were only written into subsidy rules that applied in 2019. Now there is a consultation about the next round of renewable power subsidies - and it says nothing about applying the same rules in future! We are asked whether we want to stop new subsidies for coal-to-biomass conversions, which we do - but nothing at all about subsidies for big new biomass plants.

Click [here](#) to participate in this consultation, deadline **22 May**.

UK Government is quietly selling out our future chances of tackling climate change. Link to Financial Times: <https://on.ft.com/2WahQoq>

The EU is making commitment to the Paris Agreement a condition for an EU-UK trade deal, and the UK is resisting because the UK Government is prioritising a trade deal with Trump's USA. The USA position is to rule out any reference to climate change in a trade agreement. And if we do a deal with the USA on that basis, then any US company losing a commercial or public procurement contract in the UK, because the UK Government had introduced measures to address climate change, could sue for damages in whatever transnational judicial system the UK and the USA establish to police the trade deal.

## Earth day

*"If we were not so single-minded  
about keeping our lives moving,  
and for once could do nothing,  
perhaps a huge silence  
might interrupt this sadness  
of never understanding ourselves  
and of threatening ourselves with  
death." ~Pablo Neruda*

This year on 22nd April was Earth Day's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. To celebrate it Biofuelwatch had an online campaign against Drax Power Station in Yorkshire, the UK's largest polluter and the world's biggest wood burner. Much of the wood which it burns as wood chips comes from the clear-felling of biodiverse forests in Europe and the Southern USA which are home to many rare and endangered species. Their film "Burnt" <https://vimeo.com/286550378> is a documentary about this ongoing destruction.

### Michel Moore's film "Planet of the Humans"

Films for Action stated "When [Planet of the Humans](#) first came out, we added it to the site before watching it because we trusted Michael Moore's track record of releasing [quality films](#) that are factually accurate."

"While the film makes many important points, we are disheartened and dismayed to report that the film is also full of misinformation - so much so that for half a day we removed the film from the site". They put it back on because they felt banning it would lead to accusations of censorship and covering up the truth. But scientists and campaigners have called for it be taken down as it is a gift to the fossil fuel lobbyist, with its message that renewables had done nothing towards stopping climate change.

Eleanor watched the film and found that a lot of the material is out of date. It accuses environmental groups of working with fossil fuel companies to build wind farms and solar arrays and of promoting forest destruction for biomass, I wouldn't recommend it. But the film has led to a lot of thoughtful discussion (see the link above). I would agree with Michael Moore that we have a system based on continual growth in consumption and we cannot continue like this.

Felix Padel anthropologist, writer and campaigner has lived in India for many years. His books include 'Out Of This Earth: East India Adivasis' and 'The Aluminium

Cartel' which describe the plunder of resources in the mineral-rich Indian states including Orissa, and Andhra Pradesh. And 'Ecology, Economy: Quest for a Socially Informed Connection' asks: what is real development? How can we transform present developmental patterns to achieve a more truly sustainable path towards collective well-being?

Felix who has given several talks and shown films in Narberth about his campaigns thinks the film has some important points:

"In India, where I know the situation in quite a lot of detail (as I don't in other countries so well), the land grabs by wind turbines around the city of Jaissalmer in the dessert (which actually has a lot of plants and wildlife) is horrendous. Villagers are enticed into loaning or selling their land, and then aren't allowed to graze animals or go there. There are several companies involved, and they are the same energy companies that promote fossil fuels, 'diversifying', partly because they get enormous 'green subsidies'. None of the electricity goes to the villages or local cities. It goes to factories in the state to the south, Gujarat."

"Wind and solar are following exactly the same patterns as coal: I see this repeatedly in India and other countries where I've looked in detail. Of course, small scale usage is different; though I have many unanswered questions about how / where the hardware is made, and where the mining is done for materials. Of course I'm complicit - my home runs completely on wind & solar & I'm proud of this!"

"I see huge under-estimating of the extreme destructiveness of mining/metals in green energy. In my book I looked a lot at promotion of the idea that aluminium is a "green metal", partly because its use in electric cars which makes them lighter therefore more energy efficient."

Crossing Continents- lithium production in Argentina for electric car batteries.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000hvs1>

## The Climate

By Annelyse Gelman September 23, 2019

It was like watching a wave approach  
from a great distance, so great

that at first it is not a wave at all, but  
a mere horizon, static and singular,

so that one, it being possible, presumably,  
to avail oneself of the diversions

of the beach, might turn one's back  
on the ocean altogether, might turn instead

to the sand, heaped and tunnelled,  
the sunscreened hand that fumbles

for a book, indeed, the book,  
the sentence, the syntax, the sun

blanching the page, stained, perhaps,  
with sweat, the creamy pleasure

of not-laboring, when one would otherwise  
labor, the pleasure of wasting

oneself, of decadent uselessness,  
though one might, of course, always alarm

to some emergency, a child caught  
in the undertow, say, who must be

dragged to shore and breathed into  
like an empty balloon, an empty balloon

on which everything depends, might,  
bent over the small body, waiting for it

to rise, to float, casting a shadow  
the size of oneself, not even see,

though one was, of course, warned  
it would come, and soon, the shadow

of that wave, like a new sky, already  
overhead and even now descending.

## Blue Sky Thinking – Gillian Clarke

Let's do this again, ground the planes for a while  
and leave the runways to the racing hare,  
the evening sky to Venus and a moon  
so new it's hardly there.

Miss the deal, the meeting, the wedding in Brazil.  
Leave the shadowless Atlantic to the whale,  
its song the only sound sounding the deep  
except the ocean swaying on its stem.

Let swarms of jets at quiet airports sleep.  
The sky's not been this clean since I was born.  
Nothing's overhead but pure blue silence  
and skylarks spiralling into infinite space,

a pair of red kites flaunting in the air.  
No mark, no plane-trail, jet-growl anywhere.

Gillian used to be the Welsh poet laureate and hails  
from Ceredigion, sometimes to be seen in Theatre  
Mwldan. She wrote this poem in April 2010, the last  
time the planes were grounded following the dust  
from an earthquake in Iceland. It is pertinent today as  
we enjoy the clear, mainly blue, plane-less skies.

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