



Friends of the Earth Pembroke Cyfeillion y ddaear Sir Benfro

Newsletter December 2022

Nadolig llawen a blwyddyn newydd dda



Back to real life...

We've had some busy months trying to be part of and arrange some real events again. We had a presence and stand at the Big Soup days in Narberth, which involve a community lunch organised by the Foodbank volunteers, and a litter pick around town to round off the day. We put on a showing of the 'River' film in September, followed by a discussion with Councillor Josh Beynon about the PCC zero carbon work. We showed 'A Life on Our Planet' in November, David Attenborough's message on the emergency we are facing, and his message of hope that lies in the restorative potential of natural ecosystems. We met with Councillor Mark Tierney to discuss the PCC zero carbon work, and hear his views on the climate crisis.

In November we supported the Global Day of Climate Justice in connection with COP 27, and the rally in Carmarthen, see the photos:

Winter Pride Fair

This was held in a warm room in the Halliwell Centre in Carmarthen, with its large windows looking out on to the frozen countryside and occasional flurries of snow. Carmarthen XR had their stall next door to ours, Carmarthen Together which was recently established with funding from the Transition Movement and Repair Café Llandeilo also had stalls. Ellie was hoping to attract some interest from young folk by demonstrating how to make earrings from old newspapers /magazines, gift boxes from old Xmas cards and print your own wrapping paper; a few stall holders came and made earrings.

West Wales Climate Coalition (WWCC) met with Pembrokeshire County Council on 28th November 2022

This was a follow on meeting, earlier in the summer WWCC met with CEO Will Bramble and Steve Keating. This time Chris Samra (Transition Bro Gwaun), Sian Vaughan (Extinction Rebellion), Vicky Moller Grwp Resilience, Eleanor Clegg (Friends of the Earth) Steve Keating (Energy & Sustainability Team Manager), Cllr Neil Prior, (Cabinet member for Corporate Improvement & Communities), Andrew Shaw, Darren Thomas were present.

Chris Samra gave a presentation about Transition Bro Gwaun (TBG). Chris described how council processes had held up TBG projects, delaying on planning permission, resulting in lost time generating electricity, increased costs of building, and a cut in tariffs, so there was a permanent reduction in earnings. It wasn't clear whether community benefit was taken into account. TBG is hoping to acquire land through a Community Asset Transfer. They want to build some kind of hub for the community that will actively generate power through the building materials.

Vicki gave Grwp Resilience update. They are frustrated at putting so much energy into talks re land transfer for growing which in the end came to nothing. Building on Chris' comments regarding challenges around barriers to sustainable development, she questioned the validity of planners arguing that community benefit is not material consideration. PCC said they would look into this. They have been successful in developing a piece of land, part of a sports field in Haverfordwest given to them by a local farmer, as a community veg garden.

PCC is reluctant to release land which could be sold as a source income. They recognised the land could provide benefits other than sale value, the question was how to measure these benefits. The Corporate Asset Management (CAM) team is reviewing all PCC assets and Will Bramble CEO is heading this. CAM is a new approach.

Sian (XR) - queried whether there had been any movement on staff or public engagement. The council climate emergency website is still under construction with only dummy text. The materials have been written but need tech staff to upload. Sian mentioned the need for staff to be fully aware of climate issues so they understand why certain actions are being taken. This Message needs to permeate council

communications - to help build understanding, acceptance, consensus.

Eleanor asked whether the council was benchmarking against others (eg. <https://takeclimateaction.uk/> scroll down to "Learn from Others" examples of other councils taking action on Climate Emergency.)

PCC presented their plans for major green energy projects to enable Pembrokeshire to lead as a carbon positive county with negative emissions for the county as a whole. This would be achieved by using the sea as a green energy source, eg floating offshore wind, and by being a green hydrogen hub. The possibilities of creating micro grids is to be explored by PCC. They see green hydrogen as key to store and distribute green energy.

PCC now does have political mandate to really work with communities. This new policy direction will be announced by cabinet member after cabinet sign off.

Rook and swift added to threatened bird species list in Wales

Number of species on red list in the country doubled in last 20 years:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/dec/07/rook-and-swift-added-to-threatened-bird-species-list-in-wales>

New coal mine in Cumbria

The decision from the UK government on the new coal mine in Cumbria is truly shocking. Sadly this climate-wrecking project has been given the go ahead. This would be the UK's first deep coal mine for 30 years and will produce 2.78 million tonnes of coal per year until 2049 – a disaster for both the planet and communities.

This is disappointing news for everyone, particularly the local campaigners in Cumbria who have put so much energy into the campaign so far. But the fight is far from over. FoE is currently looking at next steps for the campaign so watch this space. In the meantime, it's important that we make as much noise as we can about this decision to show the UK government that local communities won't stand for it.



www.greenpeace.org

Update on the Mozambique gas line financed by the UK

You'll probably remember that last year FoE took the UK government to court over its decision to fund a dirty gas mega-project in Mozambique.

Over the 3-day hearing FoE lawyers argued that the government didn't properly assess the climate impacts of the multi-million-pound project. But the case ended in legal limbo. One judge agreed with our claims and ruled the UK's decision to fund the project was unlawful. While the other judge didn't agree.

This split decision meant the case was dismissed. So on 6 December, FoE is heading back in court to try to overturn the dismissal. If they can do that, the government will have to retake its decision to fund the project under a new policy. And that policy would rule out any UK support for the project.

The exploitation of Africa by fossil fuel companies was also a hot topic at COP27 in Egypt. FoE campaigner Rachel just got back from COP27. And it was impossible to miss how many fossil fuel lobbyists and companies were there to push African gas as a "transition fuel". They claim that developing gas in Mozambique and across Africa will reduce poverty. But so far it's just brought destruction.

You can read more about the destructive legacy of fossil fuels in Africa and the demands for renewable development in this Friends of the Earth Africa report, Don't Let Africa Burn.

<https://friendsoftheearth.us6.list-manage.com/track/click?u=2025520aace5b8eab03720707&id=0c4267397d&e=53f9d872d8>

Wales Climate Week

1,700 people registered for this year's event and 3,838 viewers tuned in to listen to some of the 88

speakers involved in the 3-day virtual conference. If you would like to watch any sessions, you can find all the virtual conference content available by visiting: <https://www.climateweek.gov.wales/EN/pages/on-demand>

Here are a few examples:

Creating Net-zero housing Our homes are responsible for an estimated 23% of carbon emissions. Without creating energy-efficient, decarbonised homes, Wales will fail to meet its net zero obligations. With 1.4 million homes to retrofit, the scale of the challenge is enormous, especially when we face a cost-of-living and energy crisis. The panel will explore what needs to happen, and by whom, to deliver this transformation.

Developing a Heat Strategy for Wales

The Net Zero Wales Plan supports the development of a Heat Strategy for Wales in 2023, which will embed 'Just Transition' principles and outline policies to support heat decarbonisation across a range of sectors. This session will be an opportunity to hear key insights from the evidence review, learn about the likely themes of the strategy and find out about opportunities to influence its development.

The future of Transport in Wales: Is road space re-allocation the key to cracking our car-dependency?

Lee Waters MS (Deputy Minister for Climate Change) will be joined by a panel of speakers to discuss the challenge of transport and urban systems organised around car driving.

A draft strategy for engaging the general public in action on climate change

The WAG consultation on the strategy was live until 14th December - more info on link below: <https://gov.wales/draft-strategy-engaging-general-public-action-climate-change>

The burning of wood as a renewable energy source has been adopted by the UK and the EU as a sustainable option to replace coal. Selaine Saxby Conservative MP for N. Devon spoke very clearly on the issue in a debate in Parliament in December:

"In the UK, we subsidise the use of biomass to generate energy by £1 billion. Drax is the UK's biggest single-point source of carbon dioxide emissions. Because of the technology installed, the power station must run predominantly on wood pellets and has only

limited capacity for non-woody biomass such as energy crops and organic waste. The whole lifecycle emissions of CO₂ per kWh are 41 grams for solar, 11 to 12 grams for wind and 948 grams for coal. For forest biomass, they are 1,079 grams.

“The emissions from cutting down trees are attributed to the land-use sector rather than the energy-generation sector. As we import the majority of our wood pellets, we are exporting our carbon emissions. Although that may look good, it does not achieve anything, as we all share our atmosphere and the effects that carbon emissions cause. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change allows such zero-rating of emissions based on the idea that every tree will be replanted and its replacement will harness the same level of carbon as its predecessor; unfortunately, that has proven not to be the case. Many studies have shown that the carbon payback times for forest biomass are decades or centuries away, depending on the type of forest cut down to produce the wood pellets

“Trees only grow in their carbon-storing potential as they age. There is a very minimal decline in their efficiency as they photosynthesise and store CO₂ from the atmosphere, but that decline is far outweighed by their sheer size and capacity. A study carried out by 38 researchers across 15 countries measured 400 species across six continents. It found that 97% of trees grew more quickly as they aged and absorbed more carbon year on year. If a tree’s diameter grows 10 times as large, it will undergo a hundredfold increase in leaf mass and an increase in leaf area of between fiftyfold and a hundredfold. Our forests are still the largest remover of carbon, and one study found that, across forests of all ages and types around the world, half the carbon is stored in the largest 1% of trees when measured by diameter. As trees age, they also store more carbon in the soil, so we are looking at not just our canopy but the carbon stored in the earth itself, much as we need to consider our peatlands and the blue carbon stored in the seabed.

“The Dogwood Alliance in Mississippi has been tracking the logging of forests in the south-eastern United States and the conversion of whole trees into wood pellets. The south-east is one of the most biodiverse areas of the United States, and another downside to the burning of wood for energy is the fact that such older and more mature forests are home to a greater diversity of flora and fauna. The wood pellets are shipped to the United Kingdom on enormous vessels that are in transit for 21 days. Drax

receives 17 wood pellet deliveries a day, and the plant operates 24 hours a day, six days a week. The energy required to transport the pellets adds to their lifecycle emissions and uses up the very fossil fuels the pellets are supposed to replace.”

Biofuelwatch carried out an investigation, in which it found Drax was releasing particulates - a mixture of tiny solid and liquid particles - "equivalent to adding three million diesel cars to the roads each year, particulates were "an especially dangerous form of air pollution" and linked it to a number of health problems including cancers, heart disease and stroke.” The smaller the particle, the deeper it can penetrate into the lungs and particles of PM2.5 [a diameter less than 2.5 micrometres] and below can even enter the bloodstream and travel to other organs, causing inflammation, DNA and tissue damage and restriction of blood vessels.”

Biofuelwatch, criticised Selby District Council for the lack in air quality monitoring, saying it was "appalling" and called to end [biomass subsidies](#). The council said it had "no statutory duty to monitor emissions from the power station".

Take me too – liftshare

Take Me Too! matches people who need transport with someone who is going their way, and is happy to give them a lift. Together we can help connect Pembrokeshire!

Our goal is for everyone in Pembrokeshire to be able to make the journeys they need and want to make. If there isn't public transport or a taxi available when and where it's needed (or if money is tight) we'll try and find someone who can offer a lift. This way we can help each other out, save money (it's not too expensive for the passenger and the driver gets a bit of help with the cost of the journey) and help save the planet too! It also helps us meet new people and builds happier, more connected communities for us all to live in. Take Me Too! is a small part of a growing global journey sharing movement. People have been sharing journeys in Pembrokeshire since long before the motor car, but not everyone knows who they can ask for a lift or who to offer a lift to. We're aiming to fill that gap.

Are you ready to join us? [Click here to sign up](#)

Save the Teifi

If you've been to North Pembrokeshire lately you may have noticed a smell in the air. It's not the change of season - it's the stench of sewage! Save the Teifi is a community group putting pressure on Welsh Water to reduce the number of times that sewage is leaked into the River Teifi, which is unfit for bathing. On Monday 28th November a group of concerned community citizens met at St Dogmael's for the third meeting to discuss an action plan. Presentations were made by National Resources Wales on their 'Rivers for Life' project and Welsh Water updated the group on how financial investment is approved, as well as potential commitments for the upcoming 5 year strategy 2025 - 2030. Some positive progress was discussed – Welsh Water aims to produce sewage alerts within 24 hour of spills by the end of 2023. Interestingly their data does not indicate that the spills are any more frequent and rise and fall year on year in line with annual rainfall. However, it is clear that increasing population and increasing storms due to the climate crisis are likely to contribute, and the group were keen to see change as soon as possible. Citizens have been advised to be vigilant and report spills where they see them (taking photos and video where possible) to the helpline: 0800 052 0130 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week), to 'stop the block' (only loo roll down the toilet!) and save water where possible.

Tis' the season to be sustainable

If you're keen to reduce your impact on the planet this Christmas, head to the RSPB shop where you can find plastic free crackers, recyclable wrapping paper and gifts which support wildlife:

<https://shopping.rspb.org.uk>

Books for Christmas

Here is a selection of essentials that you might want to read over the break, or give away to your fellow eco-warrior:

'The Climate Book', curated by Greta Thunberg: A fantastic compilation of short essays from the great and the good in climate science and the climate movement. Updates on global heating, the weather, ecosystems, politics, culture, with a framework by Greta summing up where we are, with her amazing energy and honesty.

'The Venomous Lumpsucker' by Ned Beaman: the best climate fiction of the year, dubbed as 'a darkly funny and incisive zoological thriller for the age of Extinction Rebellion.' A must read.

'Regenesis' by George Monbiot: the destruction that farming causes and some ways forward.

Summer walk Slebech Park

We went on a lovely new circular walk encompassing woodlands, the Cleddau, a walled garden, and were led by Jill Simpson from the National Park.



Upcoming dates for your calendar

FoE Pembrokeshire AGM

Thursday 26 January 7.30
pm

Bloomfield Centre Narberth

With speakers: Jess Moore, on regenerative farming, Elsa Pullman, FoE Cymru, further speakers tbc.

Refreshments and discussions



Film: The Oil Machine

Sunday 12 March 2023

7.30pm Queens Hall
Narberth

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