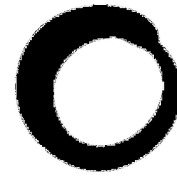


# Blackwater Valley Friends of the Earth



Friends of  
the Earth

## Newsletter

May 2009

# Flying to Destruction

The operators of Farnborough Aerodrome, TAG, continue down the path of environmental destruction with plans to nearly double the amount of plane movements that they are currently allowed. Their recently published Master Plan wants the current annual 28,000 limit of plane movements increased to 50,000. This is despite two-thirds of people that responded to the TAG consultation saying that they did not want an increase. BVFoE did not respond to this consultation and urged their members not to as we suspected that it would make no difference to TAG's plans. TAG would just carry on regardless with their expansion plans - showing the contempt to the local people that they have been displaying since they took over operation of the airfield ten years ago.

The planning application will be submitted by TAG to Rushmoor Borough Council (RBC) in the coming months and will reflect the

Master Plan. In addition to the increase in annual movements it will be proposing an increase in weekend movements to 8,900. It was only a few months ago that the Government Inquiry granted TAG permission to double the number of weekend flights at the airport from 2500 to 5000 per year.

The only good news about the proposal is that the number of large aircraft movements at weekend, between 50 and 80 tonnes take-off weight (Boeing 737 BBJ size), will not be increased under this application. It will remain at 270 per year for the time being (equivalent to between two and three of the monsters every Saturday and Sunday of the year).

TAG's Chief Executive, Brandon O'Reilly, believes that this proposal will allow "better use of

the existing infrastructure" and benefit the national and local economy. It seems, however, that little thought has been given to the bigger picture and the



**Boeing 737 BBJ Business Jet . The largest jet that currently uses Farnborough Airport.**

devastating impacts of such movements on the environment. With an average of just 2.7 passengers per journey, these flights are hugely inefficient and produce up to eight times the volume of carbon dioxide per passenger compared to travelling by train. This makes a mockery of the recent statement by TAG that they would become a "carbon neutral" airport. They can

obviously only do this if they have no flying taking place at the airport!

In addition to the vast quantities of fuel devoured, concerns arise regarding the heights at which the jets release emissions in to the atmosphere once they reach their cruising altitude. This increase will also add to the worsening air pollution around the local area at either end of the runway. The aviation fuel emissions and accompanying nitrous oxides will exacerbate an already high level of local air pollution and the accompanying increase in road traffic will also contribute to the problem. TAG have already admitted that their current operation produces around 1000 vehicle movements on the local roads. We could therefore expect around twice this number under the new proposals.

The increase in noise pollution due to the larger movements is also of great concern to residents around the area. People living in South Farnborough and Church Crookham are concerned at seeing their property prices drop much faster than the national level due to the threat of the airport growth. TAG have found a legal loophole that reneges them of any responsibility to pay compensation to house owners - showing that despite their good words they have no concern for the community in their midst.

It should also be remembered that the airport is one of the most dangerous in the country due to its siting in a hollow (originally Cove Common). Many buildings, including Farnborough College, are sited in the Public Safety Zone (PSZ), a zone either end of the runway deemed so dangerous that no further development is

allowed. An increase in movements inevitably increases the risk of an incident happening in the future in this PSZ.

It is expected that RBC will oppose the application as they did unsuccessfully last year with the weekend 5,000 movement flight application. A recent on-line consultation that RBC ran in parallel to TAG's showed that 68% of people did not want an increase. A rejection of the application will mean another public inquiry with the inevitable thumbs-up to TAG from a government that can only 'spin' green rhetoric but act in the completely opposite way when it comes to bowing to big business.

This proposal comes on the backdrop of recent falling in business aircraft movements at Farnborough Airport due to the credit crunch. Many companies that used the airport have either gone to the wall, or have sold their company plane and are making their executives travel on scheduled flights. TAG however are confident that they will reach 50,000 movements by 2019 meaning that we can confidently expect a new application to raise the level to up to 100,000 movements in five years time.

Ever since the use of the airfield was proposed to be changed from Ministry of Defence to commercial use in 1997, BVFoE has campaigned against flying and argued that the airfield should be partly returned to common land (as Greenham Common has successfully been). RBC and other interested parties such as the Farnborough Airport Residents Association maintained that limited flying should be allowed

and they would be able to control movements. These hopes have proved hollow and the original decision to allow civil flying has turned out to be "the thin edge of the wedge" as we predicted over ten years ago.

## South Downs granted national park status

Sixty years since it was first recommended the green light has finally been given for the South Downs to be granted National Park status. The South Downs covers 627 square miles and its chalklands, woodland and rivers are home to a whole host of wildlife including bats, rare species of butterfly, heathland birds and plants such as the rock rose, early purple orchid and juniper. Hilary Benn, Rural Affairs Secretary celebrated that "South Downs' wonderful countryside will be protected forever for the enjoyment of everyone".



## Local MPs fail to support renewables

One of the most important renewable forms of energy, solar power, has been given a shot in the arm in Parliament by the introduction of two Early Day Motions (EDM).

(An EDM is introduced by a back-bench MP from any party and other MPs can then sign their support. A popular EDM can then be taken up by an MP who wins the Private Members Ballot in the next Parliament as he knows that his Bill based on the EDM stands a good chance of making progress). Both EDMs are garnishing good support; unfortunately our three local MPs (James Arbuthnot (NE Hants); Gerald Howarth (Aldershot); Michael Gove (Surrey Heath) have failed to show any intent to sign them.

The first EDM (EDM 123) relates to the use of concentrating solar power to produce a large amount of Europe's power using mirrors to concentrate sunlight in large areas of the North African desert. The concentrated sunlight can either then be used to heat water to turn it into steam for conventional power generation, or be converted into electricity directly by the use of an array of photovoltaic solar cells. A network of distribution cables around Europe, similar to our National Grid, would then take this power to the users. Since there is almost guaranteed sunlight in North Africa this could be a very reliable way of generating renewable energy, and could supplement a

similar grid of off-shore wind farms set-up in Northern Europe.

The second one, EDM 689, is concerned with showing MPs support to the launch of the *We Support Solar campaign*. This campaign is supported by a broad coalition from the solar industry; environmental groups (including, of course, FoE); and customers such as housing associations and local councils.

*We Support Solar* rightly claims that globally solar photovoltaic (PV) will be a key climate change mitigation technology. In addition, solar PV in the UK can play an important role in contributing to the UK renewable energy target of 15% of our energy needs by 2020. Even in this country with not a great deal of sunshine throughout the year, the campaign reaffirms that PV can ensure significant carbon dioxide reductions in the built environment and deliver tens of thousands of new green UK jobs.

The EDM also expresses its concern at the negative treatment of PV in the Government's 2008 renewable energy strategy consultation.

Despite requests from some of our members, our MPs have not signed these two important EDMs. This is despite the green rhetoric coming out of the Conservative Party nowadays. Please ask your MP to sign up by writing to him (House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA) or emailing him. Find his address at <http://www.theyworkforyou.com>



## In the middle of a chain reaction

**Without realising it, many of us are contributing to the devastation of the world's rainforests. Few people are aware of the domino effect extending from meat and dairy farms here in the UK to the rainforests of South America.**

UK factory farms require vast quantities of animal feed, a key ingredient of which is soy. Much of this soy is derived from plantations in South America. In order to grow such large quantities, huge areas of forest are being destroyed, creating harmful emissions that contribute to global warming. In addition, the habitats of wildlife are being demolished and often, local residents are forced to leave their homes to make room for more plantations.

These detrimental effects are occurring at an alarming rate; the increasing demand for soy in the UK means that less than twenty percent of the original Atlantic rainforest remains. In Paraguay alone, an area the size of Belgium is taken up with soy and at the current rate, if no action were taken, forty percent of the Amazon rainforest would be destroyed by the year 2050.

We need to make a stand to break this destructive chain! BVFoE has registered its support for *The Food Chain Campaign*, a national campaign aiming to get MPs on board to prompt the exploration of new ways of meat and dairy farming, to support locally produced animal feed and to change the menus in schools, hospitals and care homes.

Currently, 117 MPs have demonstrated their support by signing up to EDM 845 (Deforestation, climate change and livestock). We hope that by November, at least 350 MPs will have done so. At present, none of our three MPs have signed up, but BVFoE plans to visit them to urge them to.

The campaign will be introduced on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May. Following this, there will be a “Summer of Action” (from June to September). Over these summer months, FoE will promote the campaign at events such as summer fairs and festivals, raising awareness and engaging the public to encourage them to put pressure in their MPs to support the campaign.

To find out more about the Food Chain Campaign, visit the ‘Healthy Planet’ section of the Friends of the Earth website. You can show your support for the campaign by asking your MP to sign the EDM 845 at [foe.co.uk/foodchain](http://foe.co.uk/foodchain)

## Local food for local people



<http://www.sxc.hu/photo/96001>

Farnham Local Foods Initiative (FLFI) has been producing local food for local people since 2008. The team consists of a mix of beginners and expert gardeners, but all of them share an enthusiasm for growing fruit and vegetables for local people.

The initiative comes in response to anxieties that produce on supermarket shelves often travels great distances across the globe before reaching us. FLFI currently have allotments in Crondall and Runfold and their aim for this year is to produce over 40 boxes of vegetables.

If you would like to get involved with the scheme, or to find out more about the initiative, visit <http://www.farnhamfood.com/> or email [info@farnhamfood.com](mailto:info@farnhamfood.com)

## Threats to Surrey's Greenbelt

Surrey is at risk of losing greenbelt land according to plans to build 654,000 new affordable homes across the South East by the year 2026.

The bombshell fell when the final South East Plan (SEP) was published on 6th May. Under the proposals, 422

new homes would be erected in Guildford each year until the year 2026 and 292 per year in Woking until 2026.

Talk of reviewing the greenbelt has, naturally, angered many people and prompted MP Anne Milton (MP for Guildford) to campaign against the plans. Of the 7000 responses received during the consultation, 80% were against the developments. Over half of the responses came from residents of the Guildford area. There is a sense of disappointment in a government that has gone back on its word to preserve this land, and concerns over the threat to Surrey's distinctive character. The South East already produces the most carbon dioxide emissions in the country. Building new homes and roads will inevitably impact further upon this, creating more air pollution, waste and road traffic. In addition, there will be a strong threat to local wildlife as well as the area's natural beauty.

## Dates for your diary

- May 25<sup>th</sup> – Donkey Derby 11am – 5pm, King George V playing fields, Farnborough
- May 30<sup>th</sup> – Greater South East Regional Gathering, Bonhill House, London
- June 7<sup>th</sup> – 8.5 mile Dusty cycle ride, 10am Lakeside Park, Ash
- June 9<sup>th</sup> – Public meeting 8pm, Farnborough Community Centre

More info can be found at : [www.bvfoe.freeserve.co.uk](http://www.bvfoe.freeserve.co.uk)

If you are interested in joining BVFoE, please email: [group@bvfoe.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:group@bvfoe.freeserve.co.uk)