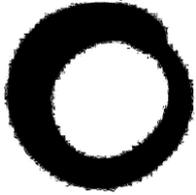


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Welcome to Nottingham Friends of the Earth. We are one of around 250 local Friends of the Earth groups campaigning for a better environment locally as well as nationally and internationally. **Friends of the Earth** has a reputation for effective campaigns backed up by authoritative research.

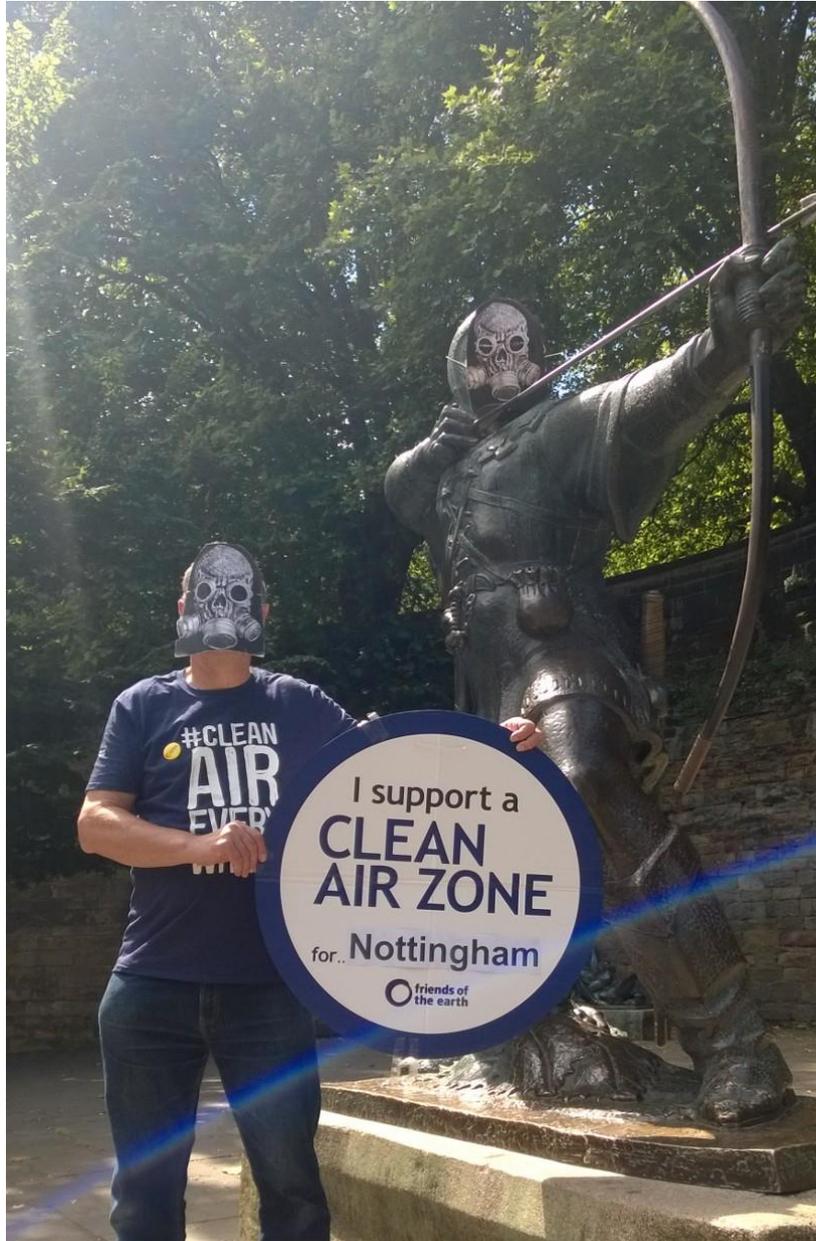
# On target for clean air?



Nottingham  
Friends of  
the Earth

NOTTINGHAM FRIENDS OF THE EARTH

# Down to Earth



Nottingham FoE  
at the Robin  
Hood statue  
during the Clean  
Air Zone day of  
action in June  
2017

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**A Weed we Need • Kids against Plastic • Air pollution and citizen science • Frack Free Notts update • Electric cars • Midland Mainline electrification campaigning**



## A Weed we Need

Without pollinators - bees, butterflies and other insects - we would still have a food supply, but it would be restricted and impoverished - and nutritionally deficient. For this reason among many others, the well-being of pollinators is important. The way we as humans do certain things can have a major influence.

A number of bee specialists have highlighted a key part of the life-cycle of bees: the importance of dandelions in spring. Dandelions are richer in both pollen and nectar, and bloom earlier, than most spring flowers. When bees emerge in early spring there are several crucial weeks during which dandelions are, in many areas, their principal source of food.

But, as we all know, dandelions are seen as an urban nuisance, a weed to be eradicated in towns wherever they appear. Their prolific seeding only adds to the urgency of destroying

them. Their image as a symbol of neglect and decay makes dandelions a rich source of complaints to local authorities if they are allowed to proliferate in public areas.

We need bees - and bees need dandelions. But we need to revise our ideas, to ensure that dandelions are not treated as mere weeds. Local authorities have an important role. They could:

- Stop Spring mowing and herbicide use on verges, roadsides, roundabouts etc to allow dandelions and other nectar-rich plants to thrive.
- Make the case to local residents for more 'weediness' as a benefit for bees and other pollinators – this has been achieved in many European cities already, such as Paris.
- Plant more bee-friendly varieties throughout the year on Council-controlled land to help pollinators.

The yellow flower's image makes the 'bees need dandelions' campaign a difficult sell - but it is a very worthwhile one.

See:

[www.pan-uk.org](http://www.pan-uk.org)

[www.britishbeecoalition.org](http://www.britishbeecoalition.org)

[www.riverofflowers.org.uk](http://www.riverofflowers.org.uk)

The first of these, Pesticides Action Network, has co-operated in creating a campaign postcard you can download.

*Jeremy Jago*

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## Kids against Plastic

Spurred on by David Attenborough's disturbing coverage of the impacts of waste plastic pollution on marine life (and ultimately us) in the BBC series Blue Planet 2, two Nottingham schoolchildren have launched their own campaign 'Kids against Plastic' (<http://clearplasticuk.net>) to draw attention to the increasing problem of plastic in our environment. The campaign has received backing from a number of scientists and TV presenters, and support from Vernon Coaker, MP for Gedling. It has inspired others to take action and do their bit for the planet.

Not only is waste plastic litter a very visible example of environmental damage, but bisphenol A (BPA), a chemical found in plastic food packaging is described as 'a pervasive endocrine disruptor' being linked to gene mutations, changes in sex hormone levels and decreased fertility in men.

The UK has a very poor track record of plastics recycling compared to most European countries. Here, only 58% of plastic bottles are

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## Kids against Plastic (contd from page 2)

recycled compared with 97% in Norway, this figure being achieved by a bottle deposit return system that has operated successfully for over 30 years.

Micro-plastics, including manufactured micro-beads and other microscopic plastic waste fragments, broken down from the 8 million tons of plastic entering the Earth's oceans annually, are being detected in marine ecosystems at all levels of the food chain, including fish for human consumption. Scientific analysis carried out in early 2018 of arctic ice confirmed that plastic pollution has now reached every corner of the Earth's surface with an average 234 pieces of plastic found per litre of melted arctic ice. Moreover, micro-plastics act as magnets for toxic chemicals dumped in our rivers and seas. At each stage of the food chain, the levels of these toxins increases, a process called bioaccumulation, eventually entering our food.

The recent UK ban on micro-beads in cosmetics and cleaning products is a welcome first step. But there is far more we can all do to put this right for future generations.

Kids against Plastic has identified four aims:

1. **Learn** about, and talk to family and friends about, the negative environmental impacts of single use petroleum plastics (go to <http://clearplasticuk.net>)
2. **Refuse** plastic coffee cup lids, bottles, bags and straws.
3. **Clear up** Kids against Plastic is aiming to collect 100,000 pieces of plastic beverage litter. Sounds ambitious? There is reason behind this rather challenging task - around 100,000 sea mammals die each year from entanglement or ingestion of plastic in the oceans.
4. **Clear off** - get supermarkets to clear water in plastic bottles off shelves and start stocking more environmentally friendly alternatives. Sign this petition: <https://www.change.org/p/uk-supermarkets-let-s-see-non-plastic-bottled-water-alternatives-on-the-supermarket-shelves>

If children at the Mellers Primary School in Radford have made public their determination to radically reduce plastic use, there is no reason why we cannot make a similar commitment.

*Karl Barrow*

## Air pollution and citizen science

Nottingham, along with Derby, Birmingham, Leeds, Southampton and London have been singled out as cities suffering from the highest levels of air pollution in the UK. Major contributors to this are nitrogen dioxides (NOx) and particulates from vehicle exhaust pipe emissions. These pollutants can lead to serious health conditions including respiratory diseases such as asthma, stroke, heart disease and cancer.

Across the UK, FoE have been promoting 'Citizen Science' air pollution monitoring with thousands of people involved. In 2017, over 1 in 6 sites tested by FoE had levels of NOx over the EU average annual limit of 40µg/m<sup>3</sup> (microgrammes per cubic metre of air). During the summer and autumn, Nottingham FoE undertook measurements, using pollution – monitoring tubes, over parts of the city, and other 'hot spots' within the boroughs of Erewash and Broxtowe. A number of locations

were identified where the 40µg/m<sup>3</sup> limit was exceeded.



FoE pollution monitoring tube (arrowed) attached to a signpost in Basford

Pollution monitoring tubes need to be analysed in a laboratory to obtain the results, which is time consuming. Now recent developments offer the opportunity to purchase affordable portable air quality monitoring equipment giving instantaneous real time and relatively accurate measurements of particulates.

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## Air pollution and citizen science

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Two systems offer particular promise. Firstly, the Luftdaten sensor designed by OK Labs Stuttgart, Germany (<http://luftdaten.info/>). This is now in use by citizens throughout Europe including the UK. The sensors are inexpensive, quick to build and are powered by any USB mobile phone charger. They measure the amount of particulate matter in the air below 10 microns in diameter (10 microns is roughly 1/7 thickness of a human hair) and also the amount below 2.5 microns. These 'PM2.5s' are considered particularly dangerous as they can cross the blood/brain barrier and are believed to contribute to strokes, heart attacks and cancers. The readings data are sent over WiFi connection via a standard smartphone to be displayed on a worldwide air quality map. A Bristol citizen science group, 'Air Apparent'

(<https://airapparentuk.wordpress.com>) has recently started collecting air quality data with these devices.

The second device, from French company Plume Labs, is the 'Flow' portable air quality tracker. The 'Flow' is designed to be carried by pedestrians and cyclists to monitor air quality instantly, thereby enabling them to change their routes to avoid areas of high pollution.

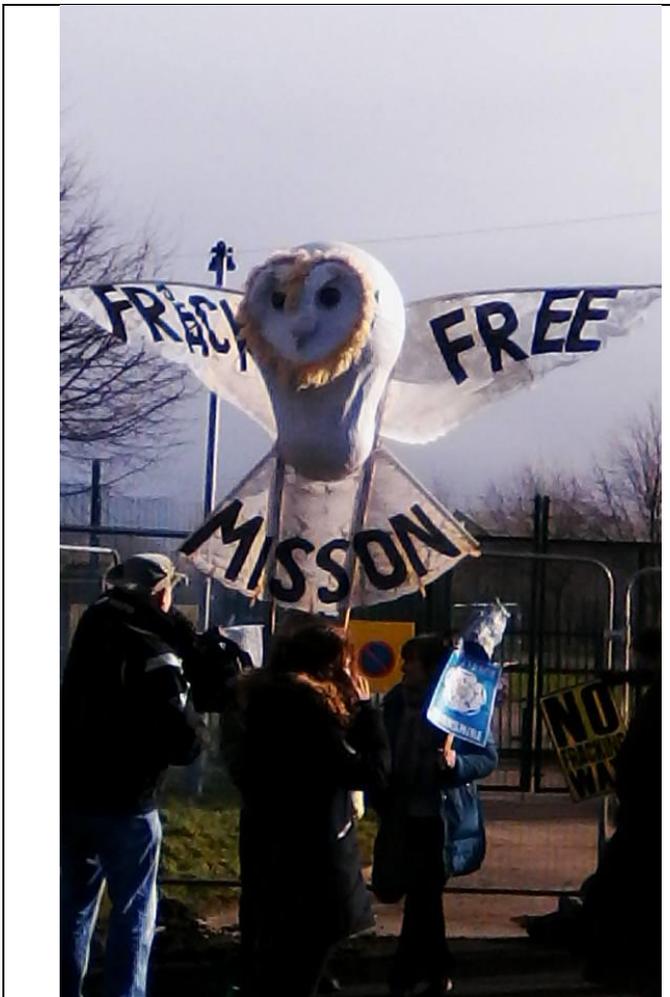
Why not invest in one of these two devices and discover the real level of air pollution in your area - and its health impacts?

Then join FoE's Clean Air campaign (see <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/clean-air>) and use your 'Citizen Science' data to lobby local and national government for urgent action.

*Karl Barrow*

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## Drive out the Sheriff of Frackingham



2017 saw Frack Free Notts and Nottingham FoE campaigning with other anti-fracking groups in the area

March 2018 will be a month of protest against fracking around Sherwood Forest. Friends of the Earth has commissioned workshops for local communities to organise lantern parades – supporting Robin Hood and Maid Marian to drive out the Sheriff of Frackingham.

The main parades will be:

- 6pm, Sat 3 Mar, Edwinstowe
- 6pm, Sat 10 Mar, Eckington
- 7pm, Sat 24 Mar, Sheffield
- 8pm, Sat 31 Mar, Bolsover

(Each preceded by a week of lantern-making workshops. Details linked from [www.foe.co.uk/nottingham](http://www.foe.co.uk/nottingham) Events: Sat 3 Mar.)

Meanwhile, Notts County Council has allowed IGas to continue constructing a drilling rig at Misson Springs, North Notts during the bird-breeding season – even though it is close to a wildlife site with rare long-eared owls. A protection camp has been set up. To visit, its postcode is DN10 6ES (the Igas 'Rocket' site is at DN10 6ET). Donations can be made at a Frack Free Notts stall on the first Saturday of each month, 11am – 3pm, at Sneinton Vegan Market, Gedling St NG1 1DS.

Activities supported by Frack Free Notts and Nottingham Friends of the Earth over the last year include:

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- Feb 2018: Protest at Barclays Bank – which owns Third Energy, the company which wants to start fracking on the edge of the North York Moors National Park at Kirby Misperton.
- Jan 2018: Ramble at Clumber Park in solidarity with the National Trust which refused to allow Ineos on to their land to do seismic testing.
- Nov 2017: 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Charter of the Forest (which in 1217 gave many people rights of access to resources in the King's Forests including Sherwood) – event at the Major Oak in Sherwood Forest, and a conference about the importance of 'the commons'.
- Oct 2017: Global Frackdown: blowing bubbles in the Market Square to say 'Don't finance the fracking bubble'.
- Sep 2017: Solidarity march at Marsh Lane, NE Derbyshire in opposition to a proposed Ineos exploratory drilling site (which was rejected by Derbyshire Planning Committee in Feb 2018 and will be decided by a planning inquiry later in 2018).
- Jun 2017: Protest at Major Oak against Ineos' plans to frack in the Sherwood Forest area.

*Nigel Lee*

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## Electric cars incentives going unclaimed

The latest figures show that 119,821 'alternative fuel' cars were sold in 2017, up by 35% in 12 months. However, they still make up a tiny fraction of all vehicles, with 20 times as many conventional petrol or diesel models sold in the UK last year. This is despite generous government grants for pure battery electric vehicles (BEVs) such as the Nissan Leaf, Renault Zoe and Tesla models. The grants include a £2,500 to £4,500 contribution to the purchase of the car, and up to £500 (including VAT) towards the approximate £800 cost of installing an approved home charging unit.

However one third of the UK's 23 million households, over 7 million homes, do not have access to off-street parking where a home charging unit could be installed. So the government have offered £4.5 million to local councils to cover 75% of the cost installing public charging points on streets, for example by adapting lampposts, a cheap and easy modification.

Only the councils in Portsmouth, Cambridge, Luton, Kettering, and Kensington and Chelsea borough council in London have taken up the offer so far. Jack Cousens, of the AA, said: "Eight out of ten drivers say a lack of charging points is a reason why they will not buy an electric car, so the poor take-up of these grants is disappointing."

However, there are already 13,000 publicly accessible charging points. If councils claimed the £4.5 million, they could rapidly add up to 9,000 additional charging points across England and Wales.

This would go a long way towards dealing with driver's 'range anxiety', the fear that the perceived limited range of BEVs could leave them stranded. However, range for BEVs is improving rapidly. The new Nissan Leaf is capable of over 155 miles between charges. In real life road driving, that's two hours of driving at motorway speeds – time to stop for a break and charge. Motorway and trunk road 50kWh fast charging units restore 80% of the car's range within 30 minutes. So another 120 miles range is available in the time it takes to have a toilet and coffee stop. What is more, we tend to forget that most of the time we don't need this range. The average car journey distance in 2014 was just 7 miles according to the Office for National Statistics.

BEVs have clear financial advantages with no road tax, far cheaper annual servicing and lower repair costs. A typical 24kWh Nissan Leaf has an average 'fuel' cost of 2.7p per mile if charged overnight on green renewable energy Economy 7 off peak tariffs. This compares with about 12p per mile for petrol

*Continued on page 6*

## Electric car incentives (contd from page 5)

and diesel. Finally whilst new BEVs are relatively expensive, 3-4 year old used models sell for less than £7,000.

That is before you even start to consider the environmental benefits; no global climate changing carbon dioxide emissions (transport creates 25% of UK's greenhouse gases) whilst locally, there are no health threatening nitrogen dioxide or particulate emissions (see related air quality article).

What YOU can do:

1. Write to or email your MP, councillor and council planning department urging them to apply for grants for on street charging installations.
2. Find out why and how changing your petrol/diesel car for a low-emission model is worthwhile by going to the government's excellent myth-busting 'Go Ultra Low' website [www.goultralow.com](http://www.goultralow.com), and save money and your planet!

*Karl Barrow*

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## Charge!

Have you noticed certain statements which come up so often in conversation that they become accepted without question?

Countlessly I've heard something like this: 'Electric cars? They'll come, no question. But they'll have to get the batteries right first.' The rising numbers of electric cars are proving this pub 'wiseacre' rather out of touch. The fruits of battery research, much of it funded by the needs of the mobile phone, are benefiting many developments. The drone is one. Another is London's black taxi, of which around 9000 are planned to be hybrid electric by 2020.

Today's improvements in battery power-to-weight ratio are so spectacular that even aviation is expecting a revolution - Norway's airport operator Avinor aims to make all short-haul airliners all-electric by 2040. Electric transport's ascendancy is visible closer to home too: battery buses are an everyday sight and charging points unmissable in today's motorway service areas. Right now, there are about 120,000 battery-powered cars on UK roads, cautiously estimated to reach 10 million by 2035 and to pass 17 million by 2040. The naysayer has a new phrase to intone over his pint ... 'Where will all the power come from?'

It's a fair question. If those drivers returned home from work and charged during the peak hours of 4pm to 6pm, that would add around

3000 megawatts to peak power demand. It's the equivalent of the Hinckley Point C nuclear station. Richard Howard of Aurora Energy Research observes 'There are many scare stories out there suggesting our power system cannot cope with the growth in electric vehicles ... our research suggests that provided EV charging is smart, the GB power system can easily accommodate 15 million-plus electric cars.' What does he mean by 'smart'?

Smart charging means charging when electricity is in lesser demand elsewhere. This includes using the existing cheaper night tariff, but could also be controlled by energy firms according to variations in demand during the day. As so often, optimising the use of energy also offers economic attractions: a typical private car could be powered for £110 per year, against £280 for charging at peak times.

Energy supply and usage are, as we all know, undergoing great changes - including disinvestment in coal, carbon taxation, the growth of smaller power stations, and newly-competitive wind power. To this list can be added the exploration of energy storage, and the recent doubling of the capacity of 'interconnectors' - electricity cable links with Europe. We have the means to create great environmental benefits - and the signs are that we also have the will.

*Jeremy Jago*

# Electrify the Midland Mainline!

In September 2017, Leicester Friends of the Earth organised a 'Big Plug' relay from London to Sheffield as part of the campaign to electrify the Midland Mainline. This followed a government announcement that the line will only be electrified as far as Kettering and Corby.

On 7 October the Big Plug made it to Nottingham. We collected signatures outside Nottingham station to send to 25 different MPs, asking for full electrification.

The government is proposing to buy a new fleet of very expensive, inefficient 'bi-mode' trains. These will have both a diesel engine at each end and electric traction equipment. So

they will run on electricity from St Pancras to Kettering, then on diesel up to Nottingham and Sheffield.

They will be heavier than electric trains, more polluting, take longer to stop and start, and more expensive to maintain. They will probably be slower even than current HSTs – high speed diesel trains. They will lock in extra cost and pollution for decades to come.

The campaign continues with East Midlands Councils and MPs united in supporting full electrification.

*Nigel Lee*



Nottingham FoE petitioning outside Nottingham station last September

## **Contacts**

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For general information, please visit our website (see below), or write with an SAE to Nottingham Friends of the Earth, c/o Sumac Centre, 245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham NG7 6HX.

For information about joining the group, please mark the envelope "Membership".

For latest campaign news and contact details, visit

<http://www.foe.co.uk/groups/nottingham>

National Friends of the Earth: The Printworks, 131-143 Clapham Road, London SW9 0HP (020 7490 1555), or email [info@foe.co.uk](mailto:info@foe.co.uk).

See national website [www.foe.co.uk](http://www.foe.co.uk) for easy online actions.

From February 2018, we meet on the last Tuesday of the month (except August and December) at The Dice Cup, 68 Mansfield Rd NG1 3GY, between 7.30pm and 9.30pm. Please come and join us. You would be very welcome.

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If you would like to receive future editions of this newsletter electronically to save paper, please let us know your email address. You can contact us by email via our website (see above), or alternatively [nottinghamfoe@hotmail.com](mailto:nottinghamfoe@hotmail.com). Please note that the file size can be over 1.2MB.

## **AGM announcement**

Our next Annual General Meeting will be on Tuesday, 27th March 2018 (7.30pm, The Dice Cup – see above for address)

We look forward to seeing you there.