Number 95

Spring 2026

Welcome to Nottingham Friends of the Earth. We are one of over 200 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.

Quarry planning application crumbles

Activists from the campaigning group Save the Ancient Valley Environment (SAVE) demonstrating against the proposed quarry

In December 2025 a campaign to prevent a new gravel quarry near Barton-in-Fabis and opposite the Attenborough Nature Reserve succeeded in getting the County Council to reject planning permission. But this may not be the end - see https://www.savecampaign.net/.

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NOTTINGHAM FRIENDS OF THE EARTH

Down to Earth

Rethinking transport funding

EMCCA Climate Coalition transport demo, June 2025.

During 2026 our new East Midlands' Mayor will be drawing up a Transport Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. Previously we had four separate plans for the two cities and two counties.

The East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) Climate Coalition which was convened by Friends of the Earth (see Down to Earth No 94) has broadly welcomed the Mayor's proposals for the Plan – particularly "the need for reliable, inclusive and sustainable connectivity" and "reducing reliance on private cars".

However, the Climate Coalition wants to see clearer targets for traffic reduction, to eliminate "Transport Related Social Exclusion" and to reduce carbon emissions and transport-related deaths and injuries.

In 2025 it called on the Mayor to reallocate roads funding to sustainable travel, with a detailed report outlining a number of schemes which could be funded for a lot less than had been allocated for roads. This included:

- Hourly buses to every village
- Planning around active travel
- Low traffic neighbourhoods and school streets
- Public control of buses
- Reallocate road space from cars to walking/cycling and buses

They also set out the principles which should underpin a Transport Plan. You can download the Climate Coalition reports from our website at https://nottfoe.gn.apc.org/RethinkTransport.html

Nigel Lee

Santa gives Better Buses petition to Mayor

Better Buses East Midlands meets Mayor Claire Ward (front centre)

The Better Buses East Midlands campaign took a petition to the Mayor before Christmas 2025 calling for public control of buses. This was because the Mayor was taking over responsibility for bus services early in 2026. Father Christmas, with some elves, handed over the petition as a Christmas present. And the group sang bus themed Christmas carols, such as: Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way; will the Mayor's buses get us all the way? Mayor Claire Ward said "It was the type of protest I like! … Crucially, they also read out some stories from real people across the region who struggle to access reliable or affordable public transport."

As well as the petition they had produced several pages of comments about the dire state of services in some parts, particularly in rural Derbyshire. Hopefully the Mayor will take these into account in deciding how the buses need to be improved.
See further details on our website at:
https://nottfoe.gn.apc.org/BBEMxmas2025.html

Nigel Lee

Does the East Midlands need nuclear power?

The “Small Nuclear Reactor” (SMR) is a compact nuclear power design being developed in the United Kingdom by Rolls-Royce

Why does our East Midlands Mayor Claire Ward seem obsessed with expensive white elephants when it comes to energy policy?

One of our region’s assets in the past was coalfields close to the River Trent. So we had large coal-fired power stations every few miles from Willington, near Burton-on-Trent, down to West Burton, near Gainsborough. Some called it Megawatt Valley.

We now have many large sites well connected to the electricity grid. Just the thing for grandiose projects. Such as nuclear fusion, nuclear fission, AI data centres, and even a large waste incinerator.
It is perhaps nuclear fusion that makes the most sense – good research jobs which could eventually provide a major source of energy. But that won’t happen tomorrow. The plan is to

produce a working prototype by 2040. So we are unlikely to see a commercial energy supply much before 2050. The Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production (STEP) project is planned for West Burton with a consultation to 11 March 2026.

What makes less sense is nuclear fission – an established technology proven to be expensive with harmful radioactive waste. Derby-based Rolls Royce already produces very small (and very expensive) reactors for nuclear submarines and is promising larger 'small modular reactors' (SMRs) – perhaps 470MW – about the size of the original reactors in the 1950s. But there is as yet no proven design for SMRs. So they are unlikely to produce useful energy much before 2040.
In spite of this, the Mayor told a meeting of the EM Combined County Authority Board in January 2026 that SMRs would be considered for AI Data Centres which have been proposed for power station sites at Cottam and Ratcliffe on Soar. Has anyone told her that AI data centres need lots of energy now, not in ten years' time? She did confirm that there are no governance arrangements yet in place to control environmental impacts of data centres. So no great urgency then!

Meanwhile, much less is being spent on retrofitting people's homes. Yet investment in energy efficiency can save more energy than the energy produced by investing the same amount in generation. To be fair to the Mayor, the limited investment in energy efficiency is due to the distorted priorities of national government.

Nigel Lee

Situated on the banks of the river Trent, West Burton is a former coal-fired power station, and has been selected as the site for the UK's prototype fusion energy plant

Solar panels – one year and counting

Solar panels positioned with optimal spacing can be connected to battery packs to store energy generated from the sun for use at other times

Over a year ago I decided to make the green transition and had solar panels installed, along with a Tesla battery. From three quotes I settled on a company in East Leake who knew my requirements, had me relocate my TV aerial to avoid bird problems and recommended three arrays of solar panels.

PV panels are quite cheap so it makes sense to have a group to catch the evening sunset.

A battery is essential to make the best of peak/off-peak pricing and the right kit will allow you to charge up between 2 and 5 o'clock in the morning, optimise use during the day then export to the grid later in the afternoon. The best batteries give surge protection and will cover power cuts – you don't even know you have suffered a power outage until a message arrives on your phone.

My electricity supply is with Octopus and the whole process of fitting panels and a battery is quite intuitive. You cannot export electricity as soon as your panels are fitted – there are legal hoops to go through first. The good news here is that you get used to configuring your battery to match the electricity pricing structure. Later on you get to export to the grid.

Fitting panels in November meant that every day got brighter and the Tesla app had better news as the months went by. To begin with the battery gave us cheap electricity at dead of night and the panels topped us up during the day. In summer we were generating huge amounts of electricity and getting into serious credit with Octopus.

With a full 12 months of billing history I am more than happy with our cost savings. We have fallen into the trap of using more electricity now that it is 'free' and this will only get worse when we exchange our gas cooker for an electric unit with an induction hob. However, this all part of the transition; swap hydrocarbons for clean electricity.

Richard Lumb

Hydrogen – ‘What’s not to like?’

This phrase, or its spirit, is inevitably invoked when discussing hydrogen's possible roles. Undeniably versatile, hydrogen comes with a clean, futuristic feel, in implied contrast to fossil fuels. After all, as someone always points out, it burns leaving nothing but water vapour.

With the UK's commitment to carbon net-zero by 2050, hydrogen has moved beyond theoretical discussions. In the East Midlands, gas supplier Cadent has just announced a consultation on a £150m hydrogen pipeline from the Humber to Newark. Independent, impartial examination of hydrogen in detail is very timely. The Climate Coalition Energy Sub-Group, with members from science and engineering, works within the area of EMCCA (East Midlands Combined County Authority). The group's position papers summarise its analysis of five areas of energy use. These are linked from our website at https://nottfoe.gn.apc.org/H2NO.html. For further information or comments on any of the information contained in the Position Papers please contact Tony Harris tonyh4489@gmail.com.

Defining terms ... what do the colours mean?
Hydrogen is an indirect energy carrier - not a source in itself, as there's no natural hydrogen supply. So it has to be made by using other energy sources to split it chemically from raw materials. The product thus has several origins depending on method, raw material and energy source. The 'colour' is shorthand for origin. Hydrogen itself is zero-carbon - but its production often has a significant carbon footprint.

Grey hydrogen is made from natural gas by 'steam-methane reforming', releasing the carbon dioxide byproduct without capture. Over 95 % of hydrogen used is grey.

Blue hydrogen uses the same process but with carbon capture and storage (CCS). Its carbon intensity depends on the capture rate and the permanence of storage.

Green hydrogen is made by electrolysis of water using renewable electricity. It has near-zero direct emissions - but it competes for the same renewable power needed elsewhere.

How to approach hydrogen?
The Energy Sub-Group argues that hydrogen’s roles must be judged by clear principles:

- Use hydrogen where electrification cannot reach.
- Produce it only when the input energy is genuinely low-carbon.
- Avoid diverting renewable electricity from direct uses.
- Plan infrastructure for concentrated industrial clusters, not dispersed end-use.

Be Real ... and Selective
The Sub-Group's summary observes hydrogen's ambiguous place in the transition to a low-carbon economy ... both essential and over-promised. Essential because there are no other practical decarbonisation options for certain industrial processes and very long-range transport; overpromised because in many other uses, direct electrification is better and costs less. So EMCCA’s strategy should emphasise realism and selectivity: support hydrogen where it genuinely adds value, but prioritise rapid electrification in all other sectors.

Jeremy Jago

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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
https://nottfoe.gn.apc.org

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

See national website https://friendsoftheearth.uk for easy online actions.

We meet online on the second Tuesday of each month, between 7.30pm and 9.30pm. Please email nottinghamfoe@hotmail.com for details. You would be very welcome.

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AGM Announcement

Our next Annual General Meeting will be held online on Tuesday 10 March 2026 at 7:30pm. Email nottinghamfoe@hotmail.com for details.

We look forward to seeing you there.