

Pembrokeshire Friends of the Earth

Cyffeillion y Ddaear Sir Benfro

Newsletter December 2014



Are the scales starting to TTIP?

Word's really getting around about TTIP – a controversial new trade deal being cooked up in secret between the EU and the US.

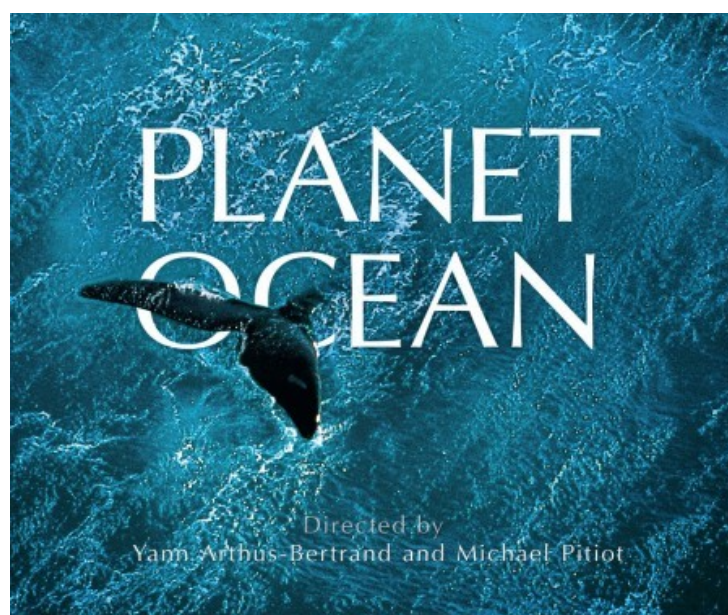
Negotiations between the European Union (EU) and the United States (US) on a transatlantic trade deal – the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)– started in July 2013. Decision-makers on both sides of the Atlantic have repeated that regulatory convergence “should be the main focus of the negotiations: tackling regulatory obstacles to trade” is promoted as a way of resolving current economic and financial crises, supposedly because it will boost growth and create jobs.

Friends of the Earth Europe believes that such aims and claims are worrying because such a convergence is likely to challenge long-established environmental, health and consumer rights and regulations protecting citizens on both sides of the Atlantic. The suggestion is that these should be sacrificed for (yet unproven and contested) economic benefits.

In that regard, one of the biggest threats looming over states' sovereign right to regulate could well come from the obscure investor-to-state dispute settlement mechanism – also known, even more untransparently, as specific investor-to-state dispute settlement (ISDS) provisions, negotiated as part of free trade agreements (FTAs) or bilateral investment treaties (BITs), these empower foreign investors to challenge national authorities in international courts, in order to claim financial compensation if they deem that their investment potential (and related profits) are being hindered by regulatory or policy changes that have occurred at the international level.

Famous cases include attempts by Vattenfall to reverse Germany's decision to shut down its nuclear plants, Lone Pine attacking Québec's fracking ban, oil and gas giant Chevron evading compliance with its legal obligation to clean up the health and environment damages resulting from its operations in Ecuador, and Philip Morris challenging tobacco regulations in Australia and Uruguay. Claims are handled in secret and unaccountable arbitration tribunals, bypassing the national court system. Requests for compensation can amount to billions of dollars and represent significant burdens on states' public finances. In other words, ISDS allows corporations to question the sovereign right to regulate (whether or not it is in the public interest) based on their own commercial interests; it also leaves states

powerless to stop claims and forced to pay the costs.
Take action: Go to : www.foe.co.uk , go to campaigns and type in TTIP on the search engine for latest news and petition. www.38degrees.org.uk also has a petition



Sunday 11th January 7.30pm

The Queens Hall Narberth

Admission £4.50

Free to Film on Sunday club members

Doors open 7pm refreshments available

Winner of UK Green Film Festival Best Film Award

**Can we imagine a film that would change the way people look at the ocean?
Can we explain simply, to everyone, the greatest natural mystery of our planet?
And lastly, can we help our children believe in a better and more sustainable world tomorrow?**

This is the triple challenge of a new cinema adventure signed by Yann Arthus-Bertrand and editor-in-chief Michael Pitiot. Thanks to its astonishing photography, the film takes us on a magnificent and unprecedented journey into the heart of the least known regions of our planet.

Pollution in the Haven, Cheese or Energy?

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum (PCF) have just received £150K from the Nature Fund to carry out a feasibility study of an 'eco-banking' initiative for the Haven. Contrary to the green title, this is a project to look at the feasibility of a market in 'pollution credits'. In other words, would a financial inducement persuade polluters to reduce pollution and earn credits, and would businesses who want to pollute buy them? Clearly this is a somewhat inventive interpretation of the 'polluter pays' principle!

While this idea may be attractive in theory no such a scheme has worked anywhere in the world and it is a 'can of worms' to organise and implement. The driving force for this study is that nitrate pollution in the Haven is reaching worrying levels as a result, to a large extent, of "discharge" from farms, ie. Slurry. As a result there is a very real prospect of most of the County being designated a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ). River water quality is also in decline, according to the Rivers Trust.

Farmers representatives are concerned that a NVZ designation will lead to extra costs for farmers, possibly de-stocking, and in some cases farmers going out of business. On the other hand the Welsh Government (WG) is keen to have another power station on the Haven at the Waterstone site, that it currently owns, which will add to pollution levels.

Put simply, an environmental limit to development has been reached at the Haven and NRW/PCF are seeking to resolve this situation. To increase development without increasing pollution it is inevitable that there will have to be winners and losers, hence the title 'Cheese or Energy?' We have got to this situation, of course, because the pollution control and development control agencies have not been able to enforce those policies which would have protected the Haven.

'Weathering the Storm'

On the 27th November, The Environmental Network for Pembrokeshire (TENP) ran an event which focussed on Community Resilience when faced with extreme weather events.

60 people attended and heard from Rhodri Asby (the Welsh Government's most senior civil servant responsible for Climate Change policy), Emyr Williams from Pembrokeshire County Council (who oversees the production of the Shoreline Management Plan for the County) and Mike Fothergill from the Talybont Flood Group, Ceredigion, who described the impact of flooding on the village. These presentations are available on the TENP web site: www.tenp.org.uk

The presentations were very informative and stimulated many questions, the two most fundamental being

- Who should be responsible for planning for extreme weather events?, and,
- What role should communities take and what can they expect from the public sector agencies?

It is clearly the case that the potential for extreme weather events is not fully appreciated by some communities and even where it is many communities have yet to discuss what they would do and what they expect of others.

It is hoped that this event has stimulated participants to

discuss with their neighbours how to go about preparing an Emergency Plan for their area and the County Council has recently published a guide which aims to help them (contact: steve.jones@pembrokeshire.gov.uk).

This event was the final component of a project funded by NRW and led by TENP with support from PCC, PAVS and PLANED. The final report to the Pembrokeshire Environment Forum (PEF) is on the TENP web site. PEF minutes are on the PCC web site.

EU opens door for dirty fuels imports to Pembroke Dock

The European Commission has dropped plans aimed at regulating the import of so called 'dirty fuels' into the EU, following intense lobbying by the Canadian and US governments and major oil producers.

Pembrokeshire Friends of the Earth has been campaigning with UK Tar Sands Network over its concern that diesel derived from Canadian tar sands bitumen will find its way into the UK via Valero's Pembroke Dock refinery.

This capitulation by the EC is a tragedy as it will contribute to further climate change. Oil companies have now been given the go ahead to increase CO2 emissions at a time when all efforts should go into decreasing them by developing cleaner and more efficient forms of energy. James Hansen, one of the world's top climate scientists, has said that fully exploiting tar sands would effectively mean game over for the climate. Extracting oil from Canada's vast reserves of tar sands is 20 per cent more polluting than from conventional forms of crude oil and devastates vast areas of pristine wilderness. <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/eu-accused-caving-fossil-fuels-lobby-over-tar-sands-u-turn>



A 13ft tall "solar tree" is set to be installed in the centre of Bristol. The steel tree, covered in 36 solar panel "leaves", will replace a real tree due to be removed due to old age in Millennium Square. Embedded with solar-powered phone charging points, the "wind blown" sculpture will also offer free wi-fi.

Dan Quiggin, from Demand Energy Equality which came up with the idea, said the "large spectacular object" was to increase awareness of energy issues. The solar tree sculpture will be installed next March, subject to planning consent.

A Good Read

“This Changes Everything” Naomi Klein .

If you are looking for direction and inspiration to take you into the New Year. I recommend this book.

It clearly explains the connections between capitalism and climate change and how we can seize the crisis to transform our failed economic system and build something radically better.

I was able to get a better grasp of concepts such as Carbon Trading and TTIP's. I feel empowered, in a world in which multi nationals seem to tower over us, that we still can take back control.

Green Apple Nursery: a One Planet Development



John Hargreaves bought a plant nursery with 4 acres of land in Coshaston, near Pembroke seven years ago. His plan was to develop the nursery and to hold courses there and he put in a planning application through the One Planet Development policy to build a house there. This planning policy was adopted by the Welsh Government in 2011 as part of its One Wales: One Planet Scheme.

Applicants for the One Planet Development policy are required to produce a detailed management plan and ecological footprint analysis which demonstrates their commitment to sustainable living, including how they will provide for their basic household needs from land based activity within five years. John's site is within the National Park and it took a lot of time and hard work to get the plan accepted, but following two appeals his application was successful.

Now he says he is pleased to be building a house here right from scratch. He's using local timber for the frame and insulating the floor with a foot of expanded foam on top of the insulated foundation. He explains that he is using a cutting edge ecological design.

He wants to encourage local people to visit, to inspire them by showing them a cheaper alternative way to live and to build their homes. He also has started holding courses here,

he had a reading group in the summer.

John had a wonderful crops of peaches this year in his polytunnel, but he's particularly pleased with his tasty carrot crop free of carrot flies. He sells his produce at the gate. Along with that he grafts and sells his own apple trees and has planted 700 mixed, native broad leaf trees with the help of a grant and local people and friends who have helped with the planting.

It's a beautiful site near the estuary, sunny, sheltered, with distant views of the Preselis. He is already producing a cornucopia of delicious organic fruit and veg.

For more info. go to:-<http://www.greenapplecross.com>

Proposed Slurry Lagoon

Velindre Farm, St Nicolas near Aber Mawr Beach and Strumble Head, has applied for planning for a slurry Lagoon to Pembrokeshire Coast and National Park (PCNP). PCNP are strongly opposed to this application, but the elected officers (appointed by Pembrokeshire County Council) are supporting it.,

This is near one of the most beautiful sections of the North Pembrokeshire Coast path.

Objections to the application need to be in before 21st January 2015

National Park Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock
SA72 6DY

Tel: 0845 345 7275

info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk

The planning application reference is: 14/0311

Narberth pool now owned and being run by the community.

Following the launch of the Narberth Energy Limited's community share offer we have raised £150,000, the target the PCC set for the community to take over the pool. The biomass boiler has been ordered and will be installed by the time the pool reopens after the Christmas break. So a big thank you to all those who have purchased shares.

The negotiations with the council have been hard and there is still a long way to go but the progress has been tremendous and it has all happened very quickly.

If you missed the opportunity to buy shares the offer is still open, and you can obtain the documents from the SwimNarberth or NEL websites.

Once the biomass boiler is in place the next phase will be the installation of the solar panels.

Now we all need to get swimming and stay healthy.

**Stop Press: Planning Application
for the old school Narberth
(14/0724/PA).**

Pembrokeshire County Council Consultation

In October the council held a number of evening consultations on how we would like to see savings made. Pembrokeshire FoE members pointed out that energy saving and renewables should be at the top of the list. While the council may be being forced into cuts by central government policies, we question why Pembrokeshire County Council has the highest paid executives, the lowest council tax, the highest reserves at £67 million and the same old policies, support for the oil industry and dualling of the A40.

Why is this money not being used to invest in a new green and thus prosperous future for our county?

M4 Relief Motorway

Sadly road building is back on the political agenda. As well as mention of dualling of the A40 coming up in the press again the Newport M4 relief motorway across the Gwent level is a very real threat.

FoE cymru have been arguing for alternative solutions and the alternative Blue route proposed by Professor Cole.

Sign the petition and support this campaign

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/stop-the-proposed-m4>

Oily sludge & Filter Cake Pyrolysis Incinerator: proposed in Pembroke Dock

Pembrokeshire FoE and FoE Cymru are supporting local opposition to a planning application by Baracud Energy Ltd. Cardiff.

Milford Haven Waterway already has more than 50 Industrial chimneys flue stacks, flares on refineries, power stations and LNG receiving terminals.

The proposed Incinerator chimney flue stack is only 40m high. There are many facilities in the vicinity at or below this elevation: eg Cosheston CP School (down wind), Princes Trust, Pembs Adventure Sailing School, Pembrokeshire Technium/E-Commerce Centre, Bangeston Hall Autism Centre, Bush Comprehensive School, Pembroke Dock Community School/Youth Club, Pembroke Dock Rugby Club.

The standards that are set for incineration emissions do not take into consideration the cumulative and cocktail effect of different sources of pollution in the same area. Incinerators emit fine smoke particulates known as PM 2.5 which can be absorbed straight into the blood. The US has tough laws limiting these emissions, unlike Britain. A [recent research paper by the EU](#) indicates that particulate air pollution is a significant factor in mortality, particularly for elderly people and people with cardiovascular ailments. It's a major factor in the summer when of course Pembrokeshire is full of tourists. The nearest pollution monitoring station is 16 miles away in Narberth, but PM 2.5's are not monitored there.

The application was due to come before planning on 16th December, it has been postponed and no new date has been given.

Our Very Best Wishes for 2015

A big thank you for all your support you have given over the year. It means a lot to us when you turn up at events, help on stalls or just read the newsletter.

Please remember if you would like to do more our business meetings are normally held on the first Tuesday of the month in Narberth area.

Other ways you can support the group are to join our monthly draw or persuade a friend to become a member, the more members the louder our voice. Both forms can be found on our website.

Contact details bottom of page.



TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY HERMIT CRABS

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