

In Contact

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www.harrowagenda21.org

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Harrow Agenda 21 held its Annual General Meeting at Harrow Civic Centre on July 6th and September 7th. The July meeting did not have a quorum and we could not make decisions or conduct votes, but we reconvened successfully in September. There was one important piece of business at the July meeting – the Chair traced Don Liversedge's involvement with HA21 back to the original discussions with Harrow Council which established it, and the meeting recognised Don's long and wonderful service by appointing him as a "Trustee Emeritus".

Harrow Agenda 21 achieved a lot in 2010 -11, with some disappointments – all these are described in the very readable Annual Report, and I commend this to you all.

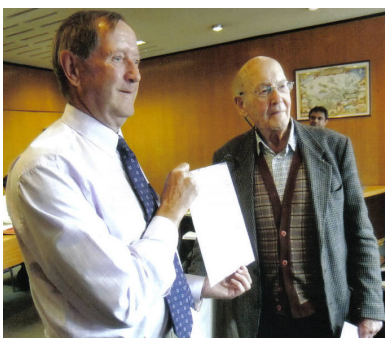
The September meeting accepted the Annual Report for 2010 -11, passed the accounts, re-elected the current Chair and Executive, passed a resolution to change the Constitution to require a single Independent Examiner, and appointed Barry Hiegler to this role.

However, Harrow Agenda 21 faces an uncertain future – we have benefited from a grant from Harrow Council in previous years, but no grant has been awarded for 2011-12. Up to now we have been able to use an office at the Community Premises rent-free, but this arrangement will end in December. A resolution before the meeting was to introduce a subscription fee for members – the discussion on this resulted in an instruction to HA21's Executive Committee to prepare a business plan to identify the activities HA21 could and should conduct, to investigate all possible sources of funding, and to do this within 2 months.

At our meetings we had two speakers who were able to give us a wider perspective on environmental issues which concern us:

In July Stuart Foster, Director of RECOUP (ReCycling of Used Plastics) described ways of capturing a higher proportion of used plastics and making effective use of it, and offered their support for any recycling work Harrow may be considering. Our meeting was a few days after Under One Sky – when HA21 used Millie the RECOUP milk bottle mascot to liven up the parade.

In September Kailean Khongsai of A Rocha traced A Rocha's progress from a Portuguese nature reserve to its local work in Southall. This has converted derelict land abandoned by British Gas into a nature reserve at Minet Country Park, with a canal boat classroom and allotments, with cross-community support from their very diverse community.



Don Liversedge being presented with a certificate for his services to HA21 by Mick Oliver at the AGM in July.

© Photo by Shivakuru Selvathurai

HA21 are pleased to Welcome
The Stanmore Society as an Organisation Member and
Judy Long as an Individual Member

Don't forget
THINK GLOBAL....ACT LOCAL

Mick Oliver's Thoughts from Holidays and Days Out

Call these observations – we don't have the full picture so there could be explanations we are missing. But they do stimulate some thought.

Whitstable

- Wolf fish on the menu – claimed to be sustainably fished and a suitable alternative to cod. Is it?
- You can travel to Whitstable by train from St. Pancras on the HS1 Kent trains, change and save 10 minutes on your journey, but at a higher fare. But half the HS1 carriages are held in sidings at Ashford, unused. Passengers do not wish to use the more expensive service and find St. Pancras remote from the parts of London they wish to reach. The commercial justification for HS1 appears dubious – not a good precedent for HS2!
- Whitstable has a tarmac plant on the quay – you can't miss it – the town smells of bitumen. The aggregate they use is virgin stone, imported from France and Scotland. The Zero Waste option of recycling aggregate from demolished roads and buildings seems to have passed them by!

Belgium

- The Biffa plant in Redcar which separates a stream of mixed plastics (reported in June's *In Contact*) uses technology which is already in use in Belgium. What a pity that Belgium is now discarding this technology and restricting themselves to separating only the bottle plastics PET and HDPE.
- And what a pity that the Open House event at Closed Loop was fully subscribed and that HA21 was unable to visit it.

Ireland

- Irish supermarkets charge 20c for plastic bags – but the cardboard containers that come into the store are available for customers to use (rather than being collected and baled for recycling). Re-use – higher up the Waste Hierarchy than Recycling!
- and as a result – Irish streets are much tidier than we experience here.
- Recyclable waste is collected free. General waste is charged at 6 Euros for a 15 kg sack.
- Ireland considered a nuclear power plant at Carnsore Point (the SE corner). Wiser counsels prevailed and the area now has a wind farm.
- but Ireland still experiences nuclear discharges from Sellafield.
- and uses peat in its power stations and domestic hearths. They distinguish between sensitive areas of peat and abundant areas of no merit. English practice is to consider all peat sensitive and to use alternative materials in our gardens and horticulture.

Norway

Cans of Fuller's London Pride carry the text:



Which shows that in Norway they carry a deposit, worth 6p – a measure to keep their streets tidy and to recover the can for recycling more effectively – in Holland they do the same – and do you remember the Oregon bottle law?

Fit for purpose *writes Mick Oliver*

A quotation from John Reid, about the Home Office, which he found unfit for purpose. He was quoting from the Sale of Goods Act, which expects goods to be fit for the purpose they are intended to serve.

A few years earlier British industry had belatedly discovered Quality Assurance, and the maxim “do it once, and do it right.”

England's opening game of Rugby in the World Cup in New Zealand illustrates these principles. Their black change strip had numbers on the back which were stuck on. They began to detach in 10 minutes and were very shoddy by the end of the game.

How could this happen? Rugby is now a professional game and every aspect of the sport receives much more attention than it did in amateur days. Did no-one realise that Rugby is a robust game with physical contact, and that shirts need to be able to withstand this wear and tear? Did no-one think of stitching the numbers on, or of printing them? Did no-one try the shirts out in practice?

A small example but it illustrates a wider principle - if we are to have a Zero Waste society and to make the most of the limited resources that are available to us, then we need to design the things we use to achieve a long life (one European Directive refers to “an economically reasonable working life”). It doesn't involve much thought – long term it doesn't involve any cost – and it might not involve any cost in the short term either.

On Sunday July 24th, **Mick Campbell reports**, a group of us travelled to Three Mills Island on the River Lee at Bromley by Bow. The Island is an important conservation area its central attraction being the Grade 1 listed House Mill. This building dating from 1776 is believed to be the largest tidal mill still in existence in the world. It only ceased operation in 1941 after bomb damage. History and engineering buffs especially would find a visit to the Mill House something of a treasure trove (one of London's hidden gems).



As we visited on a Sunday, we were able to take advantage of a guided tour of the Mill House. These tours are only available on Sundays May to October from 11am to 4pm. The Miller's House Cafe provides a decent range of light refreshments.



After a most interesting tour of the Mill House followed by an alfresco lunch in the pleasant House Garden our group walked to the Olympic Park via Three Mills Green, the canal towpath and part of the elevated Greenway. We were able to get a good view of the main stadium from the View Tube area close to Pudding Mill Lane station. The group travelled by public transport arriving at Bromley by Bow underground station and leaving from Pudding Lane DLR station.

EDUCATION GROUP UPDATE.....*Marilyn Raymond, Education Group Chair writes*

I am delighted to announce that the £500 Anne Swain Award this year went to Camrose School for their 'Forest School Project', run by Jan Boresta and staff.

The project aimed to engage young pupils experiencing difficulties. The sessions have included topics about recycling, low impact living, propagation, adaptation and habitats.

The aim of Forest School is to promote a positive attitude to learning by focusing on listening, communication and collaborative skills.



© Marilyn Raymond

Forest Schools are woodland-based classrooms that give children the opportunity to learn outdoors and explore the environment. The Pupils take part in child-centred and then child-led activities.

The Education Group Committee had a useful meeting last week. Stephen Bolsover of Harrow Nature Conservation came to update us on the plans to reinstate the disappearing open spaces on Stanmore Common, which are being encroached by bracken and trees. He wishes for schools to be involved in the long term project. There will also be a return visit to Veolia for teachers in the Spring.

I gather that The Shaw Trust are now in situ on the Earth Project site in South Harrow.

**If you would like an e-copy of our termly Education Newsletter, please get in touch.
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Marion Garner-Patel – Planning Chair

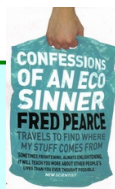
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HA21 member, Nigel Bradley, has asked whether we could help by completing an ethical and environmental survey at www.ethicalandenvironmental.com

.so it's over to you...



Confessions of an Eco-Sinner

by Fred Pearce

Fred Pearce is an author and journalist from Wandsworth. He was curious about the “stuff” he found in his street and has produced a very readable account of his investigations which traced it back to its origins in 20 countries.

HA21 has a copy – available for any member to borrow.

Mauritania

One chapter tells of his experiences in Mauritania. He tells of the once rich fishing grounds there and of how Mauritanian fish is available at classy restaurants near his home. He also tells that these fishing grounds are exclusively fished by European trawlers and that native fishermen are excluded. Having no legitimate livelihood they have developed a people-

smuggling business to the Canary Islands – part of Spain and hence part of Europe.

We have also seen refugees from Libya making perilous trips across the Mediterranean – these were not Libyans but were guest workers from further south, who had sought work in Libya through having no opportunities at home.

Not just in Somalia but on Africa’s opposite coast we again see European over-fishing and greed displacing local fishermen from their legitimate livelihood.

In Europe we exercise strict control over our fishing grounds. Why does European policy allow such a free-for-all elsewhere? And why does no-one see that these actions do not just have environmental consequences – there are social and political consequences as well.

Review by Mick Oliver

Walks in the Chilterns

“The best thing you can do for the environment is to get out into it!” (anon)

Very true – HA21 and other environmental groups do just this.

Harrow is the only borough that is on both the Capital Ring and London Loop – HA21 can recommend both – not just our local stretches but also the more remote ones that can easily be reached by public transport.

But we also have easy access to another exciting walk – the Ridgeway Path/Icknield Way, which is way-marked from Ivinghoe Beacon to Goring-on-Thames.

We can reach it by train, at

- Tring (from Harrow & Wealdstone)
- Wendover (from Harrow-on-the-Hill)
- Princes Risborough (from Northolt Park, or South or West Ruislip)
- Goring-on-Thames (from Paddington or Ealing Broadway)

The walk is on chalk which drains well, and is on a beautiful area with good views and attractive villages, red kites at Watlington, and preserved railways from Princes Risborough to Chinnor and at Wallingford. Worth visiting in its own right, **but the area is proposed for the HS2 rail link.**

HA21 visited the site of Heathrow Runway 3 when this development was proposed, and we found the visit useful in forming our view of the proposal.

The proposed HS2 rail route is a consequence of Heathrow Runway 3 being turned down – does HA21 have a view on HS2 already – or **should we arrange a visit to the areas that could be affected to form our view?**

Mick Oliver

Silicon Roundabout.....Mick Oliver comments

Old Street roundabout just north of the City of London is the centre of a new high-tech business area for internet services, which is housed in existing buildings. We are told we should welcome businesses expanding into sustainable buildings on new sites – these companies in Old Street show that business can prosper using few resources and existing buildings. Which is the soundest environmentally?

And how much of its success is due to new rail links over tracks that had once been abandoned?

High buildings in Harrow

Stephen Kelly, Harrow's Divisional Director of Planning led two community walkabouts to show how the view of Harrow-on-the-Hill which we all treasure (and which is featured on the Harrow Council logo) could tolerate or be affected by tall buildings in Harrow. We visited Grimsdyke, Cunningham Park, and Byron Park, and the central locations of the Grove and Lyon Road.

I (Mick Oliver) found the experience inconclusive – it gave evidence that both of the two alternative conclusions could be valid.

Does HA21 want to repeat the tour and reach its own conclusions?

Westfield

We already have a Westfield shopping centre at Shepherds Bush, but HA21 had a view of the second Westfield shopping development when it visited the Olympic site. One shop that is opening a branch there is HMV. The Daily Telegraph reported that its Chief Executive, Simon Fox criticised the venture as contributing to the demise of conventional high streets. He made the statement:

"We are closing our Stratford High Street store. This is the consequence of building new shopping centres. Money spent at the new centre is not going to be incremental retail spend for the UK. It will come from elsewhere."

HA21 has been concerned at the decline of existing shopping centres. If a business which is using the new shopping centre can make such a statement, what more is there to be said?

Mick Oliver

Mick Oliver comments on The Croxley Rail Link www.croxleyrailink.com

The Metropolitan Line has a branch to Watford, but it never reached the commercial or shopping heart of Watford – it only reached suburban Watford between the Town Hall and Cassiobury Park.

Croxley Green and West Watford once had a separate rail service from Watford Junction and Bushey, with through stopping trains from Wealdstone.

A long-standing dream has been to link these lines, to open new stations to serve Watford and Croxley Business Parks, Watford General Hospital and football ground, and to run Metropolitan Line trains into Watford Junction. The Croxley Rail Link is a realistic attempt to put this dream into practice, and their website includes a video which shows a journey along the proposed line.

The Croxley Rail Link has just completed its public consultation. The proposal will benefit those Harrow residents who live along the Metropolitan Line and do not now have easy access to Watford Junction, and Harrow Agenda 21 has broadly welcomed the proposal.

But we are disappointed at its limited scope – there are possible benefits the scheme does not address.

Harrow can expect 3,000 industrial and commercial jobs to be created on the Kodak site. Access to this by rail using Headstone Lane or Harrow & Wealdstone is realistic, but Harrow-on-the-Hill or North Harrow on the Metropolitan Line are remote. The consequence is that any residents from West Watford, Rickmansworth or Amersham who work in Harrow's new businesses will travel to work by car, which would compound existing congestion, and would be environmentally damaging – the unsustainable option, but perfectly understandable if no alternative were to be provided.

And it is possible to do this - at Croxley there is a triangular junction, and at Bushey there was once a triangular junction. If these were used and reinstated, it would be possible to run train services from Amersham to Watford Junction, or via Bushey to Harrow & Wealdstone and beyond.

The stopping line tracks from Wealdstone to Bushey are relatively lightly trafficked – Bakerloo Line trains once continued north of Wealdstone but they now terminate there – it would involve little change to the infrastructure to continue the service to Bushey, West Watford, Rickmansworth and Amersham.

All of London's railways were built by competing railway companies. South of London the competing companies became the Southern Railway in 1922, which made great efforts to build link lines to connect the competing lines into a single entity, and orbital journeys in South London are easier now as a result. North of London we did not have this experience – rail journeys into and out of London we find easy, but orbital journeys are not.

If the Southern Railway had been in charge, the Croxley Link and the proposed extension described above would have been in existence for 80 or 90 years. The proposed link and this embellishment of it are long overdue.