

## **South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth; our constitution, what we do and our policies**

South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth is a democratic, local and totally voluntary community group that has a formal partnership agreement with national Friends of the Earth. We have an Annual General Meeting every year in November in which you as a member have a vote to elect officers such as Coordinator, Treasurer, Publicity Officer etc. Important decisions for the group are decided at group meeting and any concerns or issues can be aired at these meetings. We have committee of 9 people (again who will be voted in at the AGM) who deal with the more administrative technical and organisational side, in order to allow our regular meetings to have the time and space for all members. We have a range of policies covering Equality and Diversity, Health and Safety, Data Protection, Complaints Procedure etc. these are all on our website with our constitution. [www.southbedsfoe.co.uk](http://www.southbedsfoe.co.uk) I am very happy to answer any questions on any of these issues.

## **Relationship with national Friends of the Earth**

Due to the Partnership Agreement between South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth [https://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/partnership\\_agreement\\_grp.pdf](https://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/partnership_agreement_grp.pdf) we are semi-autonomous but we cannot openly campaign against the views of national Friends of the Earth. Friends of the Earth provide us with expert information and advice and support. We support their national campaigns. Friends of the Earth nationally were responsible for the Household Recycling Act in 2003 which created the household collections from people's houses, and the Climate Change Act in 2008 which has had huge influence in reducing CO2 emissions and more recently working in partnership with the Women's Institute was effective in persuading the government to launch the National Pollinator Strategy which aims to help reduce the decline in bees. Friends of the Earth campaigns on Climate Change and Biodiversity which therefore includes campaigning for public transport cycling and walking to reduce CO2 emissions, renewable energy and insulation, as opposed to fossil fuels, recycling, international biodiversity and local biodiversity. "Think global, act local" is a key phrase of Friends of the Earth.

## **Local Campaigns**

Locally we are campaigning for better public transport and cycling facilities and successfully campaigned for the Dash Direct Bus service, the cycle parking at the station and improved information at the High Street and station bus stops. We campaign to cut our carbon emissions so that global warming is limited to 1.5 degrees. This includes an urgent switch from fossil fuels to a mix of renewables such as wind, solar, tidal etc. and dramatic improvements in insulation. We campaign to support the town centre by opposing Out of Town Retail Parks and supporting Town

Centre shopping directories and promotions for the market, the farmers market and town centre shops. We are involved in local and regional planning. We gained the funding for an “On the Go” recycling centre in Parson Close in 2009 which we installed with the Town Council and work in partnership with them on recycling. More details of our campaigns are on our membership leaflet and website. On biodiversity locally we set up **“Keep the Buzz in Leighton Buzzard”**.

“Keep the Buzz in Leighton Buzzard” is a project set up by South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth in partnership with Leighton Linslade Town Council, Central Bedfordshire Council and the Greensand Trust with the help of local residents, schools, town centre retailers and local businesses which has created around 17 bee friendly habitats across the town. Following campaigning by Friends of the Earth, the Women’s Institute, the National Trust the Government launched the National Pollinator Strategy in November 2014 and following a visit by the Environment Minister, Lord De Mauley, Leighton Buzzard became a national case study for the project. The National Pollinator Strategy has a “Call to Action” to landowner to help bees which has five actions; - grow more flowers, shrubs and trees, let it grow wild, cut grass less often, don’t disturb insect nests and hibernation sites, and think carefully about whether to use pesticides. We aim to implement this. We have lost 98% of our wildflower rich meadows since World War 2 hence there is an urgent need to create habitat of flowers for nectar throughout the year as well as long grass and stems etc. for hibernation. There is increasing scientific evidence that neonicotinoids destroy the navigational abilities to bees to find their way back to their hives or colonies and hence the European Union has banned their use. We support this ban and disagree with the relaxations brought in by the UK government. We are urging the UK government to do significantly more research on alternatives in order to help farmers.

## **Policies and how we conduct ourselves**

We have a range of policies that we observe from Health and Safety, Equality and Diversity, Data Protection, Complaints Procedure etc .

### **Health and Safety**

We are covered by Public Liability Insurance and Employers Insurance from Friends of the Earth. This is really important when we hold stalls and do practical physical work creating, planting and maintaining bee habitats. We always produce risk assessments.

In line with our Health and Safety policy we have to ask to read through our risk assessment for the bee friendly/ conservation site or activity so that you are aware of it and understand it and it is fresh in your mind on the day. The person in charge will have a copy. through and that you have understood it and will abide by it. The person in charge of Health and Safety from South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth will happy to explain if anything is difficult to understand or if reading is a problem (reading glasses left at home etc etc)

If you have any needs or health issues that the person in charge of safety needs to know to ensure your health and safety, you must let them be aware.



<http://www.southbedsfoe.co.uk>

Coordinator; Victoria Harvey, 41 Corbet Ride, Leighton Buzzard, LU72SJ tel: 07815 817108 [emailvapharvey@btinternet.com](mailto:emailvapharvey@btinternet.com)  
Treasurer; Ken Barry, 97 Bideford Green Leighton Buzzard LU7 2 TJ tel: 01525 372 036 [kenwbarry@aol.com](mailto:kenwbarry@aol.com)

We have never had an accident in the work of South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth, but accidents can happen, and in the very unlikely event of a serious accident we would need to have the phone number of someone to call on your behalf. Can you make sure that person in charge of Health and Safety has these details?

## **Equality and Diversity**

South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth has a strict Equality and Diversity Policy and expect those who work with us to respect this. No member of South Beds FoE or volunteer working with us should receive favourable treatment because of; sex, ethnic origin, age, race, disability, party politics, sexual orientation and/or marital status. All members and volunteers should avoid using language which in anyway belittles any race, culture or religion, a person's sexual orientation, women and/ or men, any orientation to a political party, dismissive or prejudicial reference to immigrants. No form of sexual harassment will be tolerated. Overall South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth is keen to be a friendly welcoming organisation that makes people feel comfortable and welcome and accepted for who they are, It is understood that sometimes despite the best intentions, comments can be made that unintentionally cause people to feel uncomfortable and we also understand and keen that these work parties are an occasion for people to relax and enjoy the environment and not feel that they have to worry about what they say and so we will just gently challenge any comments that might cause offence and we ask that if someone feels uncomfortable due to any comments, the person raises and challenges the comment if not publically, then with the organiser. It is important that members remember that we are not party political and that people should not in any way be made to feel uncomfortable due to their political preferences. We may challenge the present government on its environmental policies but many environmentalists do vote conservative and so the governments attitude to the environment not give grounds for any dismissive comments on Conservative voters or the party in general. There is a complaints procedure in the South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth website that be followed if the person feels that the issue is not dealt with.

Details of our policies, complaints procedure are on our website [www.southbedsfoe.co.uk](http://www.southbedsfoe.co.uk)



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# **South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth**

South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth is a voluntary organisation of local residents who work in partnership with National Friends of the Earth on Climate Change and Biodiversity. Friends of the Earth nationally was responsible for the Household Recycling Act in 2003 which led to the household collections of recycling and for the Climate Change Act in 2008. Locally we are campaigning for better public transport and cycling facilities and successfully campaigned for the Dash Direct Bus service, the cycle parking at the station and improved information at the High Street and station bus stops. We campaign to cut our carbon emissions so that global warming is limited to 1.5 degrees. This includes an urgent switch from fossil fuels to a mix of renewables such as wind, solar, tidal etc. and dramatic improvements in insulation. We campaign to support the town centre by opposing Out of Town Retail Parks and supporting Town Centre shopping directories and promotions for the market, the farmers market and town centre shops. We are involved in local and regional planning. We gaining the funding for an “On the Go” recycling centre in Parson Close. More details of our campaigns are on our membership leaflet and website.

**KEEP THE BUZZ IN  
LEIGHTON BUZZARD** 

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