

DIARY DATES

Hull FoE meetings are usually 1st Thursday in every month, 7pm for 7.30pm start at Blondes Vegan café, 106 King St Cottingham HU16 5QE. At present, due to coronavirus, we are not able to meet at Blondes and are holding our meetings by Zoom. Our 'regulars' will be sent connection details, but if you don't receive them or are new to the group just let Lee-ann know (see back page) a few days before the meeting that you want to join in.

Sat 25 July 10am to approx 12 noon

'Socially distanced' litter pick starting at former Stepney Station Beverley Road HU3 1TY. Bring own gloves; we'll provide the rest. Let Claire know on clairegribben@me.com or 07740 381905.

Thurs 6 Aug 7pm

Meet on Zoom. Let Lee-ann know on 07583 194313 or leeann@hfoe.org.uk

Thurs 3 Sept 7pm

AGM. Meet at Oak Room, Cottingham Civic Hall. Let Lee-ann know you are coming a few days before if possible, or if you want to join in by Zoom

Thurs 1 Oct 7pm

We'll let you know how we are meeting; or contact any of us on back page.

*Eco Deadline Items for next ECO by 1st October please.

*Stall Bookings for Green Fair start Contact Hilary hilary@amskaya.karoo.co.uk

Sat 21 Nov 10am start

Green Fair at Cottingham Civic Hall (we hope!)

Better bike routes

Both Hull City Council and East Riding Council have recently been successful in getting 100% of the government funding they bid for to improve cycle routes. The aim is to build on the resurgence of cycling activity which has taken place during 'lockdown' and get more people to cycle or walk as their preferred mode of transport for short journeys.

Hull approved a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) in February, which was developed by monitoring existing travel patterns in Hull and sets out Hull City Council's priorities for the next 10 years. The plan identifies possible extensions to existing cycle routes and new routes. The funding has meant they have been able to start work straight away.

Councillor Hale said: "We are aiming to reduce congestion, increase options for sustainable travel and improve safety and clarity in terms of clearer signage on the cycle networks. It also helps to improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport, a vital part in our response to declaring a climate emergency in March 2019.

We will be aiming to separate vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians where it is possible to do so. However, Hull's boundaries are tight, so this will not always be achievable due to the compact nature of the city landscape."



PHOTO: Hull City Council

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Twenty-one 'core network routes' which have been identified for improvements in Hull are, in order of priority:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Beverley Road | 6. Hessle Road | 12. Foredyke Route | 16. Mount Pleasant |
| 2. Cottingham Road/Clough Road | 7. Brunswick Way | 13. Leads/Ings Road | 17. Holderness Road |
| 3. The Avenues | 8. Freetown | 14. Chamberlain Road | 18. Marfleet |
| 4. Anlaby Road | 9. Stoneferry | 15. Hornsea Route | 19. Preston Road |
| 5. Thornton | 10. Sutton Fields | | 20. Exeter Grove |
| | 11. Holwell Road | | 21. Hedon Road |

Hull Friends of the Earth aims to 'test drive' some of these routes later in the year.

How about coming with us? Don't worry if you haven't been on a bike for a while; we'll set a very gentle pace. We might even take a few Councillors along with us! **Get in touch with Alan on ajgribben@yahoo.co.uk**, or any of us on the back page of this ECO.

Hilary

Source: <https://www.hullccnews.co.uk/04/02/2020/hulls-most-popular-cycling-routes-to-receive-makeover>

ECO Chit Chat



Hull FoE Zooms

Who would have guessed we'd have met every month in lockdown on Zoom! Thanks Lee-ann for setting that up! If you haven't found us that way yet, its very easy. Just let Lee-ann know that you want to be included (details back page) and you will be sent a code which you click on shortly before we are due to start. Its possible on a smartphone as well as PC, laptop or tablet.

Although we've missed seeing you in 'the flesh' one nice thing has been that people who live too far away to get to normal meetings have been able to join us. We'd love to continue to see you when we return to 'normal' so make sure Lee-ann knows you want to join in by Zoom.

Hull Friends of the Earth

AGM

Thursday 3 Sept 2018 7-9 pm
At Cottingham Civic Hall, in the
Oak Room (upstairs in the old building)

This is a large room where we should be able to meet well spaced out; *it would be helpful if you could let Lee-ann know a few days before that you are coming* so that we know numbers, and if you can't come in person we hope to be able to welcome you on Zoom.



Green Fair

We have still kept our booking for the Green Fair on **Saturday 21 November 10am to 4pm in Cottingham Civic Hall**. However, I won't start taking stall bookings until **1st October** by which time hopefully it should be very much clearer exactly how things have to be organised (or even if its possible!) Last year tables got booked up very quickly, so make a note to **let Hilary** (details back page) **know on Thurs 1 October that you want a stall**. Last year stalls were £15.



Website

It's taken a while but we now have a working website. Many thanks Michael Boyce who set this up for us. www.hfoe.org.uk



Hull Climate Change Strategy

Please do take the time to read and comment on the Hull City Council's Carbon Neutral Strategy. You have until at least the end of the year. I know these

documents are quite dense to read but the Council did the right thing in declaring a Climate Emergency and giving staff time over to work on a local strategy; the least we environmentalists can do is to comment on their ideas for dealing with it. (See page 9)



'Burned' film

We had to cancel our showing of this film about timber from USA which feeds Drax power station and is misleadingly subsidised as 'renewable energy'. However, you can see a version on <https://vimeo.com/286550378>



Hull Community Diggers get on their bikes.

Congratulations to Hull Community Diggers, based behind Kingston Youth Centre on Beverley Road, who have got a grant from Sport England to provide their vulnerable volunteers with bikes so they can get to the site without risking public transport.



Beware fake honey

Beekeeper Chris Coulson warns us that commercial honey is often adulterated with water, rice syrup or corn syrup. Buy locally produced honey, preferably with the name and address of the beekeeper on it, to be sure of getting nothing but the real thing.



West Newton drilling continues

Despite the low oil prices, Rathlin Energy continue with testing at the West Newton A-2 well and drilling and testing at the West Newton B-1 well. A monitoring camp has been set up on Flinton Lane and they need firewood.

Save our Marine Meadows

Seagrass is a small, flowering plant living in the UK's shallow waters which can absorb and store at least as much carbon per hectare as trees in UK woodlands. Seagrass meadows are also a hotspot for a wide range of marine species like seahorses, cuttlefish, sharks, cod, plaice and pollock.

But it urgently needs our protection — 35% of seagrasses worldwide have been lost or damaged over the last 40 years; boats dragging their anchors are part of the problem. **A donation to The Marine Conservation Society's 'Save our Marine Meadows' appeal** will help install better moorings and replant and cultivate these vitally important seagrass meadows.

www.mcsuk.org.uk/donate/marinemeadows

Council publishes Hull Carbon Neutral 2030 Strategy

IN MARCH 2019, HULL CITY COUNCIL VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO DECLARE A CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND COMMITTED "TO DO EVERYTHING WITHIN THE COUNCIL'S POWER TO MAKE HULL CARBON NEUTRAL BY 2030." THE CARBON NEUTRAL (CN) STRATEGY DOCUMENT [1] WAS PUBLISHED IN APRIL 2020 AND IS CURRENTLY IN A 12 MONTH PUBLIC CONSULTATION.

Here is a critique of the document by Kevin Paulson of Hull Carbon Neutral 2030 (info@hullcarbonneutral.co.uk).

By the end of 2019, 245 local authorities in the UK had declared a climate emergency and 149 of these have set a target of reaching zero emissions by 2030 or earlier [2]. Hull's declaration is special, and potentially world leading, due to Hull being the centre for UK offshore wind power and developing hydrogen based industries. Furthermore, Hull's carbon accounting will include both the carbon emitted in the city (production carbon), and that emitted in the production of goods elsewhere but consumed in the city (consumption carbon).

The CN commitment has the potential to drive innovation around the "Energy Estuary" to make the region internationally leading and create tens of thousands of high-pay green jobs. It will revolutionise the look and character of Hull, and radically change the way we live our lives, all for the better.

Eight themes

The strategy is developed around eight themes: heat, power, mobility, consumption, innovation, skills and jobs, carbon sequestration and fair transition. Fair transition is vital to the success of the strategy which requires the engagement of everybody. Fundamentals, like the way we move around the city and heat our homes, will need substantial investment to transition to low- or zero-carbon alternatives. The Council has committed that everyone will benefit from the transition and it will not create additional burdens for vulnerable residents.



Making wind turbine blades PHOTO: Hilary Byers

A ninth possible theme: nature; does not appear in the strategy leading to a risk that the CN objective be prioritised over biodiversity or the production of other pollutants.

Needs a plan to achieve

The strategy document provides general guidance but lacks many of the specific contents that many would expect. There is no plan to achieve CN; no costs, timeline or milestones. To some extent, these deficiencies are due to many critical decisions being outside the Council's control and reliant upon technological innovations over the next decade. Central government decisions will have large effects on Hull's CN transition; for example on national infrastructure, the welfare and tax systems, natural resource management, devolution of powers and budgets, and subsidies and protection for specific industries.

The transition from natural gas to hydrogen for the heating of buildings and fuelling industrial processes, requires technological innovation in hydrogen production, transport and associated carbon capture, use and storage (CCUS). Despite these constraints, it would

have been useful to have a strategy with a costed and timetabled transition plan based on current technology and government policies. Analysis by the Centre for Alternative Technology has found that transition can occur with existing technology, [3]. Relying on innovation and policy changes adds considerable risk and uncertainty to the strategy. A strategy based on the current situation would give more confidence that transition will be achieved, while innovation could make transition faster, cheaper or better.

What do we mean by Carbon Neutral?

Most people interpret CN to mean that activities that produce greenhouse gasses (GHGs) are reduced to a minimum and carbon sequestration processes are created to lock away an amount of CO2 equivalent to the GHGs produced. The strategy redefines CN in terms of a trajectory that limits the total cumulative amount of GHGs produced to meet climate change targets. This definition is far more complex to state and understand. Furthermore, it relies upon a dubious definition of a "fare share" of GHG production. The strategy's choice of CN definition weakens the

continued on page 9

On yer bike!

Busting a cycle of myths

Great news for people like myself who prefer to leave the car at home! Work has begun to improve Hull's cycling infrastructure to secure the first phase of £1.36m funding from the Department for Transport. A massive opportunity for those who may be deterred from getting on a bike due to traffic – which creates a cycle (no pun intended) of car dependency and more traffic. This is bad for our health and our environment.

Amongst the good news, I keep hearing false myths about this form of transport which has a key role in tackling obesity, climate change and poor air quality. Despite passing my driving test at 17 I've regularly cycled for education, work and leisure for nearly 30 years so I'm going to bust a few of these myths.

Alan Gribben

(Alan recently joined Hull Friends of the Earth and is passionate about the health and environmental benefits of active travel).



PHOTO: Alan Gribben

✖ MYTHS AND ✔ REALITIES

✖ CYCLISTS DON'T PAY ROAD TAX

✔ Nobody pays road tax as it was abolished in 1937. Vehicle Excise Duty is an emissions tax on cars, paid directly into the Treasury and is not ring-fenced for roads. Ultra-low emission vehicles are exempt. We pay for the roads whether we drive or not. Over dependence on private cars is estimated to cost English urban areas up to £49bn per year in pollution, noise, climate change, road casualties, health impacts etc.

✖ CYCLISTS NEVER HAVE INSURANCE

✔ It comes with membership of most cycling organisations. It's likely included in your household policy —possible because of the very low risk to other road users.

✖ CYCLISTS SHOULD HAVE TO PASS A TEST

✔ 80% of adult cyclists hold a car licence. The cost of administering a test would outweigh any safety benefits and deter people from a positive transport choice. Training schemes such as Bikeability are worth considering.

✖ WE DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT WEATHER FOR CYCLING

✔ Hull gets much lower rainfall than many places. A proper soaking on a short bike ride is rare. The Dutch have a saying "You're not made of sugar, you won't melt in the rain" but I keep my waterproof handy just in case.

✖ BIKE LANES WILL ADVERSELY IMPACT TRADE & BUSINESS

✔ Research in Copenhagen found that cycling customers spend €2.05bn per year vs €2.04bn for cars. When San Francisco replaced car with bike lanes on Valencia Street, two-thirds of merchants said this improved business.

✖ CYCLISTS WON'T USE THE NEW ROUTES

✔ Other UK cities have seen a huge switch to bikes thanks to new high quality infrastructure. I regularly use my bike in London – which I would never have done before they built the "Cycle Superhighways"

✖ CYCLING IS NOT ACCESSIBLE TO DISABLED OR OLDER PEOPLE

✔ There are many types of adapted bike available and e-bikes are becoming more popular and affordable. Better infrastructure will make their use easier and safer.

✖ CYCLING IS DANGEROUS

✔ The evidence is that the health benefits outweigh the risks. However 60% of the British population agree/strongly agree that it is too dangerous for them to cycle on the roads – which is why these infrastructure improvements are so important if we want to broaden the appeal.

✖ I LIVE TOO FAR AWAY TO CYCLE

✔ 68% of UK trips are under 5 miles and 23% of trips are under 1 mile

✖ YOU NEED TO BE FIT AND WEAR LYCRA

✔ Poet Philip Larkin described Hull as 'very nice and flat for cycling'. You don't need a top bike, fancy gear or great athleticism. I cycle to work in my office clothes.

✖ YOU CAN'T CARRY SHOPPING ON A BIKE

✔ There are many cargo bikes and trailers available as well as very stylish baskets and panniers.

✖ I SOMETIMES STILL NEED A CAR BECAUSE...

✔ Actually this might not be a myth...but let's limit our private car use as much as we can. It will massively benefit the environment, health, safety and the economy. We're also reducing congestion for those critical car journeys.

Now is a good opportunity whilst traffic levels are reduced and new cycle lanes are going in. I promise you'll soon start feeling the physical and mental health benefits. You'll experience all the things you miss in a car – the friendly people, the wildlife, the sights and sounds and smells of nature, the changing seasons – all whilst helping the earth. It's a win-win.

Carbon in trees

Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) is tree food. Trees suck it up from the atmosphere and with a little zap of sunlight use it in photosynthesis to make sugars for growth, repair and reproduction. They even throw out a little oxygen for us — they're good aren't they?

Some of the carbon which trees absorb is quite quickly returned to the atmosphere when leaves and deadwood decompose and greenhouse gases (GHGs) are released. Some is stored in tree biomass—in stems, branches and roots—but trees also pump carbon into the soil. Roots release carbon-rich exudates to catalyse the uptake of nutrients (like nitrogen and phosphorus) by making them more bioavailable, and indirectly by attracting fungi and microbes. Afforestation, therefore, generally increases carbon storage in soils, at least in mineral soils and especially on soils low in organic matter.

It's worth considering that there are still a lot of uncertainties about trees' interactions with GHGs. Recent studies suggest that whilst they might pump CO₂ into soil, trees can be chimneys for methane and nitrous oxide which they emit from their stems and leaves. More than just funnelling methane from the soil, they actually produce it in their heartwood. Dead trees left standing could also have a chimney effect, pipelining GHGs from the soil into the atmosphere. Whilst I'm not suggesting trees are detrimental to the climate, this does highlight the importance of fully assessing their impact. What else don't we know?

For lots of woody plants, current concentrations of CO₂ are limiting their growth, therefore increasing the concentration could have a fertilising effect. This might mean that the terrestrial carbon sink increases as forests suck up more carbon. We're really not sure though; even the IPCC



PHOTO: Hilary Byers

can't make their minds up. They use a range of earth system models for future carbon uptake predictions which range between 0 and 30% uptake of CO₂ emissions.

We can reduce these uncertainties by improving our experimental knowledge. The Free Air CO₂ Enrichment (FACE) experiment at the Birmingham Institute of Forest Research pumps extra CO₂ into woodland patches to raise the local atmospheric concentration to 150 parts per million above the local norm.. Scientists then measure several compartments of the ecosystem. This gives us a glimpse into the future at how temperate forests respond to elevated CO₂.

FACE is already helping to answer some of the big questions. For example, as atmospheric CO₂ is increased, more is emitted from the soil, which suggests that although the extra CO₂ is assimilated, it may not be stored long-term. This evidence contributes to concerns that forest soils, which are currently a net carbon sink, could become a net source as CO₂ increases.

Furthermore, as CO₂ becomes less limiting, water and nutrient usage will increase. At some point the balance shifts as other limiting factors supersede, curbing the greening effect. For example, as water becomes scarce stomata (pores on the underside of the leaf used for gas exchange) close to limit water loss by evaporation, which also reduces CO₂ uptake. Further research is required to quantify the long-term effects of CO₂ enrichment.

Nevertheless, the Climate Change Committee reckons that a fifth of all agricultural land in the UK needs to be used to suck carbon from the atmosphere, by planting trees, restoring peatlands and soils and growing bioenergy crops with carbon capture and storage."

(Abridged from "Can Trees Save Us?" by Ben Howard, Birmingham Institute of Forest Research, Smallwoods magazine, Spring 2020)

Rohan Lewis





Litter Picks 2020

Le Walk, Eppleworth Road,
Setting Dyke Community
Way, Stepney Station

Members of Hull Friends of the Earth carried out 'socially distanced' litter picks on Saturday 9th May and Saturday 20th June. For the first event most of us worked within our own households, but for the second some of us were able to meet up socially distanced. We received much praise from passers by and some interest in Hull FoE.

Next Litterpick is Saturday 25th July, meeting up at 10am at former Stepney Station on Beverley Road. We hope to be able to work our way further east along the footpath/cycle track, socially distanced if necessary.

COME AND JOIN IN!
Let Claire know on:
clairegribben@me.com
or
07740 381905

Photomontage by Claire Gribben



PHOTO: Karen Wood

Down to Earth Hull : WORKSHOPS

Down to Earth Hull are launching a series of 10 Workshops which will begin later this month and run into spring 2021. All workshops will be held at **The Plot, Down to Earth's** base, at the south of Edgumbe Street allotment site.

Each 2.5 hour workshop is designed to provide a practical introduction to a different topic, across a broad range of conservation and growing themes.

The sessions will be very much focused on hands-on learning and are open to adults of all ages and abilities. Light refreshments will be offered.

★ Tickets for each workshop will be priced at £10 and can be purchased via **Eventbrite** — <http://d2ehull.eventbrite.com> or via the organisation's Facebook page — www.facebook.com/d2ehull

Dates and topics for the first range of sessions are:

- ▶ **Saturday 25 July — All You Can Eat in Three Square Feet** An introduction to food growing in small spaces, including practical planting activity and learning about how to get the most from a minimal growing area.
- ▶ **Thursday 20 August — Natural Feeds and Pesticides** An introduction to a variety of plants and materials that can be used to make homemade, chemical-free plant fertilisers and pesticides, including instruction on safe usage and the opportunity to make up some feeds and pesticides to take home.
- ▶ **Saturday 22 August — Building Hedgehog Homes** An opportunity to learn how to make a variety of

different types of hedgehog home for your garden or allotment, including practical work to build homes for siting on The Plot and a look at what else we can do to support this fast-declining native species.

▶ **Saturday 19 September — Capturing the Outdoors through Photography**

An exploration of how we can connect with the outdoors by taking a more mindful and creative approach to choosing and capturing photographic subjects, including learning about some basic technical aspects of nature photography and the opportunity to submit photographs to a friendly competition.

In order to ensure participants' safety **Down to Earth Hull** are adhering to the latest government coronavirus guidelines; this includes restricting numbers of attendees at sessions and ensuring physical distancing during activities. Initial sessions are restricted to 5 participants per session, though the group hope to be able to make more places available on future sessions, dependent on the developments around Covid-19.

For more information about the workshops and to book a place please use the Eventbrite link above.

For any general enquiries about *Down to Earth Hull*, please e-mail down-2-earth@outlook.com, send the group a message via their Facebook page — www.facebook.com/d2ehull — or call Karen on 07531191867 or Andy on 07936006452 for a friendly chat.

Andy Steele

Volunteer in the open air

Down To Earth Hull is reopening (post Covid 19) and provides the opportunity for individuals to volunteer on a safe, secure, community growing and nature area—**The Plot**, situated on Edgecumbe Street Allotments, HU5 2HW.

Down To Earth Hull is looking for volunteers who are willing to give 2-3 hours of their time to help develop and maintain **The Plot**. Tasks will vary according to the growing season and weather, and will include grass cutting, watering, weeding, pruning, planting, harvesting and making wildlife habitats. No experience

needed as full training in the use of tools and each task will be given.

Volunteers benefit from the opportunity to get out in the open air, learn new skills, watch wildlife, make new friends, learn about plants and the environment. *Down To Earth Hull* believes that people learn by doing and everyone has skills and ideas to share.

The Plot is an acre of land that includes a tree nursery, wildlife meadow, pond, fruit and vegetable growing areas. It provides a venue for workshops and courses at which resources are grown for *Down To Earth Hull* activities at other

venues. These include working with schools, children's centres, churches, community centres and other organisations.

In April, *Down To Earth Hull* received a grant from Lottery Awards For All which is being used to build a new shed, purchase tools and cover the day to day running costs of the volunteer sessions.

To find out more and arrange a visit to **The Plot** call:

Karen Wood

01482 851728 or 07531191867

Email: down-2-earth@outlook.com

Council publishes Hull Carbon Neutral Strategy 2030, continued from page 3

document and may have been chosen to provide an easier target.

The principles stated in the strategy will influence Council spending over the next decade. The Council budget for 2020-21 was published before the strategy and included spending on CN projects, such as the installation of photovoltaic (PV) roofs over car parks in the city centre. The strategy does not state how projects will be compared when allocating funds. The term "cost effective" is used but not defined, while "return on investment" lead to funding for the PV roofs. Cost effectiveness could be defined in terms of annual GHG emission reduction per pound but this becomes problematic when there is also a financial return e.g. fitting renewable energy systems and insulation. The definition should also include a measure of environmental degradation to minimise damaging side-effects. Diseconomies, where different people experience the costs and benefits, could also lead to poor choices. It is important that projects to be supported are chosen with a metric that maximises benefit while protecting the vulnerable.

Emphasis on technical innovation

The innovations considered are exclusively technical whereas social innovations could be more effective. For instance, a universal basic income scheme

(UBI) is likely to lead to behaviour changes that greatly reduce GHG emission. The change to home working during lockdown has already demonstrated that behaviour change can have a dramatic effect on emissions.

There is considerable emphasis throughout the strategy on electric cars and charging points. Electric cars could contribute distributed storage in a smart grid. However they could be a counter-productive distraction to the CN objective. The strategy states that very few people in Hull will be able to afford an electric vehicle, even by 2030, and that installation of charging points outside homes is both technically difficult, expensive and a large infrastructure project on its own. Electric cars emit substantially more GHGs than cycling, walking, public transport and other vehicles such as ebikes, escooters and mobility vehicles. Focussing on cars makes it harder to reallocate space to lower emission transport choices.

Conclusions

To spend 13 months to produce a general strategy document, followed by 12 months of consultation, does not seem consistent with a climate emergency. The deficiencies and lack of urgency in the strategy lead to considerable doubt that the CN commitment will be achieved. Failure will be a lost opportunity and have drastic consequences globally. It

is important that everybody engages with transition and pressures local and national government to extend and honour their climate commitments.

References

- 1 Hull City Council, Carbon Neutral Hull: An Environment and Climate Change Strategy for 2020 - 2030, <http://www.hull.gov.uk/environment/pollution/hull-2030-carbon-neutral-strategy>
- 2 <https://climateemergencydeclaration.org/united-kingdom-60-per-cent-of-councils-have-declared-a-climate-emergency/>
- 3 Centre for Alternative Technology, ZeroCarbonBritain: An Alternative Energy Strategy, <https://www.cat.org.uk/info-resources/zero-carbon-britain/research-reports/>

Kevin Paulson

(Kevin is a member of Hull Carbon Neutral 2030 which is independently monitoring our local transition to carbon neutrality.)

Hull City Council is asking what residents think about the strategy, what action can be taken to address climate change and how the city might support businesses and individuals to take advantage of the opportunities and challenges.

Email the council at :
climate.change@hullcc.gov.uk

You might want to tell Hull Friends of the Earth too! Send us your views; contacts on back page of ECO.

Beware bogus 'renewable energy' suppliers

Friends of the Earth have long promoted Good Energy and Ecotricity, the only two domestic energy suppliers in Britain who supply 100% renewably-sourced electricity, and hopefully some readers of Hull ECO are among their customers. But there is a resurgence at present of misleading claims about green energy from other major suppliers, based on a loophole in the regulations surrounding the Renewable Energy Guarantee of Origin scheme. The material below is adapted from two articles by Ian McKee on the website of my own supplier, **Good Energy**. In the words of the UK's energy regulator Ofgem, the 'Renewable Energy Guarantee of Origin' (REGO) scheme is designed to "provide transparency to consumers about the proportion of electricity that suppliers source from renewable generation." It states that "the purpose of the certificate is to prove to the final customer that a given share of energy was produced from renewable sources."

As originally designed, REGOs were an effective simplification; when a renewable generator produces one megawatt hour (MWh) of electricity (about a third of the electricity an average household will use over a year), Ofgem electronically produce one REGO to prove its source. Meaning that instead of reviewing the provenance of all of their supply contracts to check their sources, all energy suppliers have to do is count up how many REGOs they have to calculate how green their electricity supply is.

So far so good. But unfortunately, it is possible for a supplier to source REGOs without also purchasing the electricity they relate to.

This wasn't a major issue in the early days of the scheme as there was only a small amount of trading in REGOs without their power. However, now this loophole is increasingly being taken advantage of at significant scale, with more suppliers claiming to offer '100% renewable' tariffs, despite holding little or no contracts with renewable generators.

For example, a year ago the oil company Shell bought out electricity supplier First Utility. Immediately, the new "Shell Energy" claimed to be supplying their 700,000 customers with '100% renewable' electricity. Making it seem awfully easy to switch a big customer base to renewable sourced power.

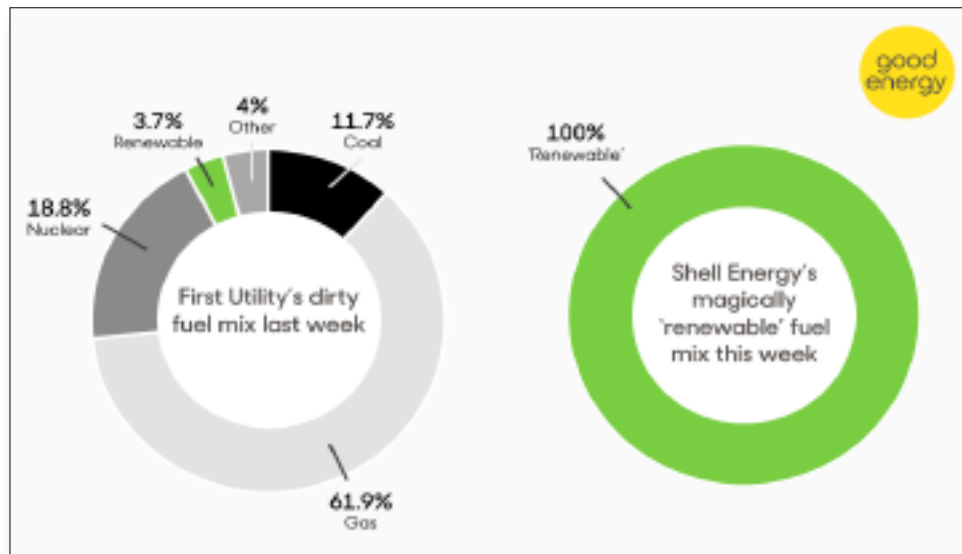
If we look at First Utility's last published energy mix (*below*) **they sourced just 3.7% of their supply from renewables.** But — as if by magic — post-takeover by

customers aren't getting what they think they're paying for. It's a loophole, and an incredibly cheap one at that — the current price for a REGO is £0.35/MWh, or

£1 per customer per year; to put this into context this is 0.1% of an annual bill.

Or, in order to 'green' all 700,000 of Shell Energy's customers' electricity bills, about 0.005% of Shell's 2018 £16bn profits.

You get what you pay for. Shell's '100% renewable' offering is just the same old brown First Utility power



the oil and gas giant Shell they are now '100% renewable'. *And all of this without a single article showing partnerships or contracts with a renewable provider.*

As Good Energy trade with renewable generators every day, if any of this power were truly renewable, we would expect to have come up against Shell in contract discussions. But we have seen no sign of competition from Shell to sign up these assets in what is a highly liquid and competitive market which we're proud to have taken a major stake in creating.

The reason for this is that Shell do not have to contract or even contact any renewable generator to claim that the electricity they supply is 'renewable'. All they have to do is buy surplus REGOs from suppliers who have already used this power to supply their customers. It's little more than an accounting trick and, hidden somewhere amongst the smoke and mirrors, is the reality that some

plus some very cheap REGOs. A prime example of 'if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is'.

A variation on this trick has been performed by OVO Energy (now Britain's second biggest energy supplier, having taken on SSE's domestic customers). And they even charge consumers extra for their 'green energy'.

Yet OVO does not buy any of the electricity it supplies direct from renewable generators, and it does not own any of its own renewable generation sites either. Meaning 100% of the 'renewable' power it supplies is greenwash — it does effectively nothing to support the growth of renewable generation in the UK.

There is a simple solution: REGOs should be traded with the power they relate to, as they are at Good Energy and Ecotricity.

Rohan

Friends of the Earth's Climate Change Strategy

At the beginning of this year, Friends of the Earth England & Wales published a Climate Strategy, calling on the UK government to focus on six key areas in order to tackle climate change effectively. Their proposals can be briefly summarised as:

1 Transport

Halt further airport expansion and introduce a "frequent flyer levy" ie a tax on, say, the second and subsequent flights taken by an individual in any one year.

Progress the switch from petrol/diesel to electricity for road transport.

2 Power

Double the speed of renewable energy rollout and achieve 100% clean energy from the wind, sun and sea, (for example by redirecting the £800million currently spent every year subsidising imported biomass used in UK power stations).

3 Buildings and Homes

Fund an insulation scheme for existing housing stock, and for new buildings shift to homes heated mainly by electricity.

4 Land Use

Double the UK's permanent forest cover, to act as a carbon sink, while correspondingly reducing the land area devoted to meat and dairy production.

5 Consumption

Redesign goods to reduce dependence on single-use plastics and short-lived products.

6 International Justice

Cease investing taxpayers' money in coal, oil and gas projects overseas.



Promoting alternatives to plastic items. Kallum Nicholson at Greener Day in Beverley, March 2019 PHOTO: Hilary Byers

On 24 June Cat Currie and David Timms from FoE head office gave a webinar outlining how these proposals could be adapted, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and the imminent end to the transitional relationship with the European Union, to provide a "green" economic recovery path.

Under transport they propose, in addition, scrapping the current roadbuilding program and raising the tax on petrol and diesel. Together with the tax on frequent flyers, they estimate that this would yield enough money to fund a major initiative to promote cycling and walking, as well as to transition workers made redundant by the Covid crisis into new jobs, notably an estimated 40,000 in fitting home insulation as well as some in forestry.

They also recognised the need for a green approach to financial measures. These should include making financial rescue packages for private companies dependent on plans to reduce carbon emissions and to protect jobs, ensuring that the new trade deals which Brexit necessitates consider environmental impact, and devolving more powers to local authorities.

There is more detail on the "Climate Change" area of FoE's website: www.friendsoftheearth.uk

You might want to use this as a starter when you put together your views on Hull City Council's Carbon Neutral Strategy.

Rohan Lewis



Hull Friends of the Earth

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Hull ECO welcomes news and views of all things environmental in Hull and East Yorkshire.

Deadlines are the first Thursday in January, April, July, October

Please send to Hilary (*details below*).

Coordinator:	Lee-ann Williams, 59 Meadowbank Road, Hull HU3 6XL	Tel: 07583 194313 Email: leeann@hfoe.org.uk
Treasurer and Membership Secretary	Rohan Lewis, 121 New Village Road, Cottingham HU16 4ND	Tel: 01482 844629 Email: rohan2@rohan2.karoo.co.uk
ECO Editor:	Hilary Byers, 170 Victoria Avenue, Hull HU5 3DY	Tel: 01482 445747 Email: hilary@amskaya.karoo.co.uk
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