

Friends of the Avon New Cut (FrANC)

Notes from the meeting held at the Southville Centre on 10 January 2008

1. Present

Charlie Bolton, Roy Gallop, Tess Green (Chair), Ed Hall, Laura Murgatroyd, John Purkiss (minutes), Martha van der Lem, Paul van der Lem, Stephen Wickham, Tracy Whale, Sara Worth.

2. Main event

The meeting was devoted to a talk and discussion on the feasibility of generating energy from the Cut. The effect of the construction of a Severn Barrage on the Cut was also briefly considered.

John Sweet and 3 colleagues from Loadpoint Limited outlined their experimentation with a turbine that generates electricity when submerged in a river flow - and will work on both an incoming and outgoing tide. They felt that the device would work in the waters of the Cut, but how effective it will be is dependent on the velocity and quantity of the water at the point where it is located. Silt and debris in the Cut could be problematic, but these problems can be surmounted.

It was suggested that FrANC could work with the City Council's Sustainable City Team based in the Create Centre, with a view to provide power to the EcoHome from a turbine in the Cut. The turbine could possibly be sited close to the Underfall Yard or under Ashton Bridge.

A working party was established to take things forward. Tess, Paul, Charlie, Ed and Stephen expressed their interest in being involved. Tess will seek information on river flows and send the details to Loadpoint, who will then make suggestions on the site for a turbine and the possible output from it. Once we have more information, funding could be sought to take the project forward (a demonstration model could cost in the region of £60,000).

John referred the meeting to a publication "Turning the Tide", which is published by the Sustainable Development Commission and available to download at <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=607>. The publication includes details of a possible Severn Barrage. John's view, which was echoed by several knowledgeable people at the meeting, is that the proposals will not work - not least because the estuary would become silted up and Weston-super-Mare would be subject to flooding. Avonmouth Docks may also become unusable, and the tidal flow on the Cut would disappear.

3. Date of next FrANC meeting

Thursday 17 April 2008 – 7.30pm at the Southville Centre. This meeting will focus on the planning of all future events and activities, not just the energy generation plans.