

Hereford Heckler



The bulletin of Hereford Solidarity League
Freedom • Equality • Community
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Free/Donation

★ MARCH AGAINST THE ESG ★

Called by the Hereford Solidarity League

Meet at the Merton Meadow car park. Bring banners, whistles and horns
Come along and let the council know your true feelings
March to the Shire Hall for a mass lobby of Herefordshire Council's meeting (9.30am)
The march will be stopping at ESG Herefordshire Limited's offices on Blackfriars Street

Friday 13th November, 9.00am

OUR HEREFORD!

An open letter to Herefordshire Council and ESG Herefordshire Limited...

Herefordshire is a great county. We love its landscape and scenery and we love its history and culture.

But we recognise that there is also a lot that can be done to make this place better. We are in desperate need of cheap housing for the thousands of the people that are on the local waiting lists. The county needs more leisure facilities, especially the younger generation who in most towns and villages have no space of their own. And like almost everywhere else in the world there is still a divide between the haves and the have-nots; we are still governed by capitalist economics that create inequality and a divisive class system. Capitalism must be destroyed in Herefordshire, and throughout the world.

But what your council clearly believe we need to improve our lives and make us so much more fulfilled is more shops, more chain stores, more useless tat. If only we could afford to buy, buy, buy we would all be so much happier.

Because what the single mother, struggling to get by on benefits really needs is a John Lewis. What the old-age couple living on a pitiful state pension would really love is a Debenhams. What a truly great county Herefordshire would be if you gave us a big shopping centre of our own! And you could really put us on the map; perhaps we could be a proper tourist attraction if Waitrose could boast they have the largest biscuit department in the whole of England.



But what your Conservative-led council has given us is initiative after initiative designed to make more money for the bosses and big business and nothing but cuts in the essential public services that each of us 'ordinary folk' depend on to get by. Cuts in education, leisure, childcare services, drug prevention projects ... the list seems never-ending.

Dearest Herefordshire Council and ESG Herefordshire, we really do have nothing but a deep loathing for your "bright new vision" for the Edgar Street Grid and we will do whatever it takes to get the whole thing scrapped.

You see, because if you get your way and the existing businesses on the grid have to relocate, and many of the independent shops in town close down, it will mean job losses. Many of these businesses are the ones that have already been dealt a hard blow by the recession and the costs of relocating will put many jobs into further jeopardy. That could mean families losing a significant portion of their income, bills

going unpaid, the threat of bailiffs knocking at the door, cutting back on the food shop and the struggle to find another job.

This is what it could be like for many of the people working on the Edgar Street Grid; it's a situation we hope you'll experience too. Although we know there won't really be any bailiffs turning up on your doorstep because all those City firms and dodgy banking companies you've worked for have already set you up for life. Perhaps you'll just have to slum it in Sainsbury's for a bit.

ESG Herefordshire Ltd must be completely wound up. It has already wasted over £10 million presenting its 'grand vision', and this is before any work has even started. Maybe all of this money should've gone straight into paying for things we actually need, like housing.

You've come to Hereford like a gang of cowboy builders with plans that we know won't stand the test of time. The evidence is there from countless other towns that your idea of 'development' doesn't work but you carry on regardless. Maybe one day we'll see you all on Rogue Traders.

We believe that your vision for the Edgar Street Grid will blight the city for years to come. It's not what Herefordshire needs, nor wants. The campaign to stop your plans has the support of the majority of Herefordians. Remember, when we get together and stick together, we are powerful and we can achieve anything. We will win!



HELEN HECKLER

■ First comes the news that on 24th October **the English Defence League are going to have a march through Newport** about Muslims, or asylum seekers, or gays, or something. Oops, apparently that's wrong, as they instead want to be known, for one night only, as the Welsh Defense League, probably in an attempt to stop angry valley boys from beating them up. As much as I hate fascist scum like the EDL, I could forgive them if they began their march by claiming that "tonight matthew, we're going to be..."

■ **An issue on everyone's lips in Herefordshire is that of the ESG**, a plan aimed at 'improving' Hereford on our behalf (since none of us are rich enough to make our own decisions, clearly). That being said, I can't help but feel that the placement of the ESG as a way of helping the town centre is sort of like trying to cure a dog of fleas by shampooing a nearby cat. Which, incidentally enough, is how I hear the right horrible Jesse "my, this fox is delicious" Norman consumates his marriage.

■ In other rural news, hunting season is upon us. **Personally, I don't condone fox hunting**, however I can at least understand the arguments put forward by hunt supporters that any animal which goes out in red and barbarically kills another defenceless animal should be flushed out of its home and ripped to shreds ... anyone else up for going round the huntsman's house later then?

■ I can't help but feel that **maybe here in the Heckler we rabbit on about Maggie Thatcher too much**. Truth be told, many of our younger readers may not even remember Thatcher's time as prime minister. Although to be fair, nowadays I doubt she remembers it either.

Sloppy kisses,

Helen xx

HUNT SABOTEURS

Bravery in the face of violence

For many people the countryside at this time of year means misty mornings and falling leaves. But for a small violent, sadistic portion of the population it's an opportunity to cause untold suffering and death to some of our most wild and beautiful animals. Yes it's hunting season again.

You don't have to be a vegetarian to see fox hunting as barbaric. Even before the official season begins, the most hardcore animal haters are out 'cub-hunting'. This involves training young hunting hounds by setting them loose in woods that are home to young fox cubs. This is no sport, the cubs stand no chance. All the underground escape routes are blocked by terriermen, and hunt followers surround the wood. The inexperienced hounds often maul the cub for several minutes before they die. Aware of how distasteful this practice is, hunters now refers to it as 'autumn hunting'.

The argument that hunting controls fox populations has been dropped by most hunters. Even they agree that foxes are territorial animals that control their own population, meaning that if one fox dies another will move in to replace it. The vast majority of fox hunters now claim the practice is 'a recreational and social force

embodying a traditional rural pastime'. Like it or not this so called 'traditional rural pastime' is hated for its class issues as well as its animal rights issues.

Many people in the hunting community claim there is no class issue here. Of course there are working class people involved, but hunting could carry on without them. Wealthy land owners and the upper classes are essential to the continued practice of hunting. A gang of dressed up working class people on horse back would soon be arrested for trespass if they tried it on.

So the fight against fox hunting is as much about reclaiming the land that should belong to those people who work it—the working class—as much as one to save animals from suffering. The 2004 Hunting Act that banned hunting is clearly a farce. These blood-thirsty low-lives continue to maim and kill foxes, hares, stags for no better reason than their own perverse pleasure.

We at the Heckler fully support the actions of the brave saboteurs that try and stop the hunts happening. You can get in touch with them at www.hsa.enviroweb.org



Bulmers to axe 65 jobs

Cider giants Bulmers have announced plans to axe almost a quarter of its Hereford workforce.

Despite reporting a relatively stable market, the cider makers said that new working practices were essential for keeping the Hereford site 'competitive'; business-speak for socially irresponsible.

Bulmers have said that as part of a consultation in September a ballot was carried out and the results were in favour of plant modernisation. Would they have voted yes if the threat of job losses had been clearly spelt out?

Elsewhere, postal workers are gearing up for the first national postal dispute in two years after threats to jobs, hours and pay. Actions so far in sorting offices, which have included sit-ins, have seen some 20 million letters being undelivered. Seventy-six percent of union members balloted voted in favour of national strike action, due to begin on 22nd October. "Royal Mail's head-in-the-sand attitude to the problems in our industry is now severely damaging service for customers—with backlogs bigger than in the national strike of 2007," said a spokesperson for the Communication Workers' Union.

Elsewhere workers at a Black Country food-processing firm are hailing the success of an unofficial walkout, forcing management to sack a security guard accused of making racist comments and to come to the

negotiating table. More than 100 staff at Smethwick-based Two Sisters Foods staged a wildcat strike and police were called as their protest threatened to get out of hand. There was a further demonstration outside the firm's premises before bosses agreed to meet senior officials from trade union Unite.

Leeds City Council plans to cut the wages of refuse workers by one third—on average from £18,000 to just £13,000 a year. Not surprisingly workers have responded by taking strike action after the council refused to negotiate any alternative to these massive pay cuts. A spokesperson from Unison said: "If they were imposed on our members, hundreds of workers and their families would lose their homes." In mid-September activists dumped bags of rubbish on the doorstep of the council leader. At the time of going to press, the strike has entered its fifth week with no signs of letting up any time soon.

Gas workers in Newcastle struck last month over the National Grid bosses' decision to make mass redundancies and consider outsourcing. All of the 181 shared services staff at the city site, who risk joining the dole queue, voted in favour of industrial action. The strikes may be set to spread as staff at offices in Warwick and Northampton, who also face being effected, are among 2,500 other National Grid members who voted 40 to one in support of the action in a ballot.

IT'S OUR CITY ... AND WE WILL WIN

Thoughts on the campaign against the ESG

Hereford Solidarity League wholeheartedly supports the It's Our City campaign and fully congratulate its founders in getting it off the ground.

It is encouraging to hear, as we go to press, that over 6,000 people have already signed the petition against the Edgar Street Grid plans. The spirit of resistance can be felt across the whole of Hereford; you can barely move in the city centre without coming across a poster or a banner in support of the campaign.

But what we must recognise is that now we have started our fight against the ESG, so the council will—and already have—up their game a couple of notches. It's Our City have declared war and Herefordshire Council will fight to the death.

Firstly, we need campaign decision-making open to everyone. The It's Our City public meetings could be open discussions for where to go next. We will only win with mass, grassroots support from the people of Herefordshire so we must all have the same opportunities to get involved and have our say.



It's Our City launch meeting

Secondly, we need to fight with determination. We have witnessed in past battles such as that against the Rotherwas access road that the polite tactics like letter-writing are never forceful enough to achieve their goals; certainly not when the goal is something as huge as scrapping the biggest development Hereford has possibly ever seen.

We believe the campaign shouldn't be dragged out, it should be fought as quickly and intensely as possible. We should have regular pickets of council meetings, public rallies and marches. Protests should

be made wherever possible to ESG Herefordshire Limited. Pressure should be put on the councillors who support the plans. Direct action should be considered if work on the grid ever gets underway.

Whatever tactics are used, we should remember that we are fighting a huge development; a campaign focussed solely on a publicity war will never win through. Now is the time for action.

ONE LAW FOR THEM

As we go to press, some MPs are debating whether or not they can be bothered to pay back their fraudulent expenses. Others are still insisting they should get away scot-free.

Meanwhile a Hereford woman has been given a 12-month community order after admitting falsely claiming benefits.

So the rich and powerful are as bent as they come but they can get away with anything they like.

Working class people on the other hand get pulled up for anything and everything. So some of us tell a little white lie on a benefits form just to make getting by that little bit easier. So what! The bosses steal the vast profits we've helped create and they call it capitalism. We nick the odd bit or two from a supermarket and they call us criminals.

They claim for everything under the sun as MPs and call it a perk of the job. We claim a bit more in social security than we're entitled to and they give us hefty fines and prison sentences.

The British class system: alive and well.

VICTORY AS ANIMAL ACTIVIST IS RELEASED

Animal right activist, Sean Kirtley, has been released from prison after a successful appeal.

Kirtley was found guilty of "interfering with the contractual relationships of a [animal testing]

laboratory" for allegedly being the organiser of protests at Sequani Limited, Ledbury.

Police said disorder took place on a number of occasions during protests and claim as the organiser that Sean is responsible for any criminality that took place.

Sean was given four and a half years last May after conviction under the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act.

Speaking at the end of the 18-week long trial, Detective Dave Williams of West Mercia Police said that Kirtley was a dedicated animal rights activist who had organised a sustained campaign against Sequani "with the ultimate aim of closing the company down". Respect.

We wish Sean all the best. Stop Sequani.

CROOKED BILL WIGGIN

No sooner had Leominster MP, Bill Wiggin, declared that police would be taking no further action against his dodgy expenses than he was exposed again.

During 2005–06, Wiggin was found to have consistently claimed £400 for food (no receipts are needed) and £240 for his phone bills (for which there is a limit of £250 before he must show any proof of calls); every month the same amount. Something's not right there, is it Bill? Three words: corrupt Tory scumbag.

We believe that not only are MPs a waste of money but a waste of time as well. We'd do a lot better without them. Who wants someone else making decisions for them anyway!

BASH THE FASH

ANTI-FASCIST NEWS AND VIEWS

■ Scumbag British National Party politician Richard Barnbrook **has been suspended from his position on the Greater London Assembly** for a month following his fabrication of a story designed to create hysteria and tension. The story claimed that there had been three murders in just as many weeks in Barking & Dagenham. There had, in fact, been none. More lies from an incompetent wannabe politician of the BNP.

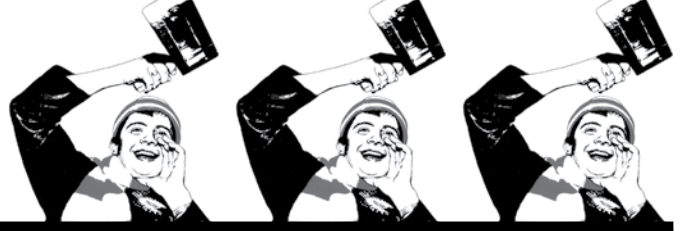
■ A newly formed rag-tag outfit calling themselves the 'English Defence League' has been causing a stir recently. The group (**mainly made up of football hooligans and other assorted knuckle draggers**) claim to be peaceful and not racist. However, chants of 'pakis out' have been common at demos and the fact that they have attacked other protesters and caused numerous mini riots



in Birmingham, Luton and London go some way to disprove this myth. Locals and anti-fascists have met their violence head on, refusing to bow to their intimidation and vowing to defend their communities from these racist nut-jobs. Let's see how long they keep this up.

■ **Hereford Antifa is part of a national network of anti-fascists.** They expose groups like the BNP for what they are: lying, racist politicians with no solutions for the British working class.

Antifa confront fascist ideas, activities and organisations wherever and however they occur. It is important to confront fascism physically, as well as ideologically and politically. Have the BNP recently leafleted your area? Are they meeting in your pub? Have you heard anything at the football? If so then we would like to hear from you. Contact us on hereford-antifa@safe-mail.net or visit www.antifa.org.uk



SENSITIVITY NEEDED WITH ISSUES OF GENDER

Who does the International Association of Athletics Federations think it is? This is the governing body that are meant to work with and support international athletes. So why did they fail so badly when it came to Castor Semanya, the South African athlete who competed in the World Championships back in August. Semanya was the subject of a media circus surrounding her gender after she won the 800m gold medal.

The insensitive way this was dealt with is nothing unusual in a sport that demands an athlete MUST be either male or female. At the 2006 Asian Games, Indian athlete Santhi Soundarajan was stripped of her silver medal after failing a gender test. Soundarajan's case was also played out in front of the world media to the point where the results of the gender test were in the newspapers before the athlete was even told. In a recent interview Soundarajan said "It was a very bitter and humiliating experience for me". She went on to reveal that she attempted suicide after the pressure became too much.

Gender testing was first introduced into athletics competition in the mid 60s when all female athletes had to strip in front of a panel of doctors. This, and other methods, were clearly degrading and were replaced with chromosome testing.

It was quickly realised by doctors that this only complicated things further, when it was discovered that many female athletes are genetically male although they have

developed as women. This is the case with Santhi Soundarajan who has a condition called Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome. It is estimated that as many as one in 500 female athletes have AIS. Gender testing was meant to have been abolished by the IAAF in 1992.



So why was Castor Semanya treated so badly? Questions about her gender were raised long before the World Championships and could have been dealt with in a far more sensitive way. Perhaps those people in charge of the IAAF couldn't deal with a woman being so instantly successful. Many in South Africa believe it was also a race issue. Maybe the IAAF cared more about the media spotlight than the welfare of Semanya.

What seems obvious is that gender is specific to each individual, there is not a clear line between being male and female, some people may be male or female, others transgendered or trans-sexual, but it is certainly not down to sport to decide.

WORLD CUP STADIUM STRIKE

The building of stadiums for the 2010 Football World Cup in South Africa looks to be back on track after workers agreed to end a 10 day strike. In an ever growing show of worker militancy 70,000 construction workers went on strike with one of their demands a 13% wage increase. Bosses, fearful of damaging the multi-million pound World Cup gravy train, have agreed to a 12% increase. The average wages of those people building the stadiums is only £190 per month. Many work in poor conditions that fall well below basic health safety standards. I doubt FIFA will worry about all this though, as long as the money keeps rolling in.

What's On

OCTOBER

17th, WORCESTER—Demonstration against unemployment and capitalism
12.00pm, Worcester Guildhall

24th, NEWPORT—No racist demo in Newport
Counter demonstration against the Welsh branch of the racist English Defence League. Occupy their meeting place.
11.00am, John Frost Square, Newport

24th, LONDON—Anarchist Bookfair 2009
Books, t-shirts, videos, badges etc., plus discussions.
10.00am – 7.00pm, Queen Mary & Westfield College, Mile End Road, London, E1 4NS

31st, HEREFORD—Climate Action Carnival
1–2.30pm, Shire Hall, Hereford.

NOVEMBER

13th, HEREFORD—March against the ESG
9.00am, Merton Meadow car park, Hereford.

20th, HEREFORD—Sicknote (benefit gig)
Cardiff's very own psychic, electro, break-beat, soapbox, dance, rant merchants.
Organised by Hereford Bonobo in support of the Hereford Solidarity League,
Friday, live at the Jailhouse. £5 entry.
www.myspace.com/sicknote

Trewick Out? Turner Out?

What with the disappointment of last season and the terrible start to this one, Hereford United fans are looking for who's to blame. Many want to see manager John Trewick given the boot, while others just see him as a puppet controlled by club chairman Graham Turner. But while all the talking is done on the terraces, in the pubs and on internet forums very little will change. Perhaps it's time



us fans got organised. We are the ones putting all the money into the club as there is clearly no other commercial side raising cash. A well organised supporters group, inclusive of all fans, could give us the voice we currently lack. This wouldn't guarantee success but it would ensure that the community would have a say in what's happening to our football club.

■ Hereford Solidarity League works to build a society based on the ideas of freedom, equality and community ■ Anti-fascism is an important part of our politics, but we believe that all politicians, including those of fascist parties like the BNP, maintain a system of inequality, privilege and control that divides communities ■ Real change does not happen at the ballot box and can only come about by independent working class action; that is, people looking out for each other and organising themselves to deal with the problems that they experience on a day to day basis ■ Our aim is to increase the fighting spirit and self-confidence of working class people to change things for themselves ■ www.herefordheckler.wordpress.com kay.bulstreet@hotmail.co.uk