

## GRANDPARENTS FOR A SAFE EARTH. NEWSLETTER no.5: AUTUMN 2017



"We are a network of grandparents and elders who care about the world our descendants will inherit. We have learned that the current plans of energy companies and governments will, if not radically changed, put our grandchildren's future at risk. We seek to cooperate and enter into dialogue with others. Where other actions fail, we are prepared to take direct action, in a spirit of non-violence and respect." (from our website).



In May the world's largest oil giant **Exxon Mobil** held its Annual General Meeting in Texas, against the background of a long-term refusal to acknowledge the dangers from human-created climate change. Two of our members joined forces with a climate action group from Salisbury and Christian Climate Action ([www.christianclimateaction.wordpress.com](http://www.christianclimateaction.wordpress.com)) outside Britain's largest oil refinery at Fawley near Southampton, offering leaflets to staff arriving for work. Local TV reported on the protest (see - <https://youtu.be/7WUE1ydJVtU> and <http://www.itv.com/news/meridian/2017-05-31/protestors-urge-church-to-sell-shares-in-exxonmobil-as-climate-change-vote-due/>) which was particularly directed at the Church of England's continued investments in Exxon Mobil.

We are a small group, and much of the time one or two members join larger campaign groups on specific issues. One such group is Share Action ([www.shareaction.org](http://www.shareaction.org)) which promotes responsible investment. In July one of our members had a joint meeting with them and Client Earth ([www.clientearth.org](http://www.clientearth.org)), a group of activist lawyers committed to securing a healthy planet, and tried to persuade The Pensions Regulator (an arm of the government Department for Work and Pensions [www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk](http://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk)) to put pressure on pensions providers to withdraw investments from fossil fuels.



The Regulator acknowledged the issue of the long-term financial risks from such investments, although it came to the conclusion that the future risk to the planet and its inhabitants lay outside its remit! Two of our members continue attending West Country Council pensions committees and have made contact with other pensions activists from Yorkshire who are following a similar line.



Some members attended the Bristol **March for Science** in April, specifically to represent GFASE's support for climate science.

Adopting the angle of **financial risk from fossil fuels** seems to carry greater credibility in some investment quarters, whether because of the risk of "stranded assets" and poor financial returns or anticipated retrospective legal action against corporations and governments over health problems from fossil fuels. Two of our members met with Norwegian climate grandparents (BKA [www.besteforeldreaksionen.no](http://www.besteforeldreaksionen.no)) in August at a seminar run by a number of large insurance companies on the topic. They also took part in the hustings where the planned oil exploration in the Arctic was one of the biggest topics in the lead-up to the recent General Election there. Greenpeace Norway, with legal help from BKA, is taking the State to court on 13<sup>th</sup> November, arguing that oil exploration is contrary to the section 112 of the Constitution and its duty to protect nature for future generations. In a similar vein a group of 459 Swiss grandmothers

([www.gpclimat.ch](http://www.gpclimat.ch)), possibly inspired by the successful legal case by the Urgenda Foundation ([www.urgenda.nl](http://www.urgenda.nl)) against the Dutch state in 2015, recently tried to sue their government over its approach to climate change, on the grounds that global warming creates specific health problems to women over 70. The above only goes to show that grandparents are already **crossing continents**! Two of our members will be meeting with our Swiss (and Belgian [www.gpclimat.be](http://www.gpclimat.be) and French [www.grandsparentsclimat.france.fr](http://www.grandsparentsclimat.france.fr)) grandparent counterparts and some grandchildren in Brussels on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> November to share ideas.

At the local level, **fracking** (hydraulic fracturing) has a particular resonance for us in the West of England, where concessions for exploration for fracked gas are already being issued. The dangers from fracking, which has provided a source of energy for decades in the USA, are well-documented, and the basic issue remains: if climate change is not to get out of control, remaining supplies of all fossil fuels must stay in the ground. We have links with other local groups, although it was in the North West, one of the first areas where exploratory drilling for gas was about to commence, that some of our members joined forces with other anti-fracking groups and Friends of the Earth ([www.foe.co.uk](http://www.foe.co.uk)) during a long, tense campaign. They made a speech about Elder Activism, and this was well received. You can see some of the action by following this link [https://youtu.be/q\\_xTiAmmzXk](https://youtu.be/q_xTiAmmzXk).



The **Climate Coalition** ([www.theclimatecoalition.org](http://www.theclimatecoalition.org)) is the UK's main umbrella group for people dedicated to action against climate change, and it has the ear of important Government agencies and departments. We have been members for three years. At the Annual General Meeting one of our members spoke about the problems of continuing to support an economy based on endless economic growth, given that we are already living as if we have the resources of three planets – instead of one – at our disposal. He also warned of the dangers of compromising on key issues in seeking to maintain positive relations with government.

An economy that depends on increased growth and **increasing consumption**, with its catastrophic effects on the climate, has long been a matter of concern to us, and in September three of our members tabled an objection at the public inquiry called by the Secretary of State around the expansion of Cribbs Causeway, already the largest out-of-town shopping centre in the west of England. Road travel to such centres and increasing personal consumption both represent a clear threat to the climate.



As well as focus on specific issues, as elders and grandparents we try to keep in touch with the general concerns and interests of our generation. We have been present at the annual **Celebrating Age** Festival in Bristol for some years, and two of our members are now running a Climate Change awareness study group as part of the programme of the University of the Third Age ([www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk)). Both of these are good settings for meeting members of the public we might not otherwise come across.

Visit us on <https://network23.org/gfase/>

Follow our actions on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) by typing Grandparents For A Safe Earth into the search box.