

NEWS RELEASE



Friends of
the Earth
Manchester

Polar Bear Migrates to Bolton in Search of New Home

Embargo 10am
Saturday 20th
October 2007

PHOTO OPPORTUNITY: Campaigners, accompanied by a forlorn polar bear, will be outside Marks & Spencer on Deansgate in Bolton Town Centre from 11am – 2pm on Saturday 20th October.

Campaigners from Bolton Friends of the Earth & Manchester Friends of the Earth [1], accompanied by a polar bear who has been forced to search for a new home due to the melting ice caps, will be coming to Bolton on Saturday to answer questions about climate change and encourage people to write to local MPs, David Crausby, Brian Iddon & Ruth Kelly (who have been invited along) to demand strong action on climate change.

A draft Climate Change Bill was published by the Government earlier this year [2], but Friends of the Earth and three influential committees of MPs [3] have all concluded that the Bill in its current form contains some serious flaws. Friends of the Earth is calling on the Government to strengthen the Bill and commit the UK to cutting its emissions by at least 3 per cent a year. Strong legislation on climate change would make it easier and cheaper for us all, individuals and businesses alike, to be climate friendly.

Elizabeth Shepherd, campaigner and Bolton resident, said:

"Climate change is a threat not only to the homes of polar bears, but also to our homes and the homes of millions of people around the world who are at risk from drought and flooding.

Parliament will be debating a new Climate Change Bill this Autumn. If the Bill is going to work, it needs to include annual targets based on the latest science, and count all emissions including those from international aviation and shipping.

MPs like David Crausby, Brian Iddon and Ruth Kelly in Bolton hold the future of the planet in their hands. Log on to www.thebigask.com and urge them not to let us down."

As well as the local action, Friends of the Earth are also encouraging people to join celebrities like Jude Law, Gillian Anderson and Stephen Fry on an "online march", by recording a short video message to their MP and posting it up on The Big Ask website, www.thebigask.com.

ENDS

Notes to editors

[1] Bolton Friends of the Earth and Manchester Friends of the Earth are environmental campaign groups, raising awareness and lobbying for policy changes at a local, regional, national and international level. The groups consist entirely of volunteers, and their campaigns are funded by membership fees and individual donations. Bolton Friends of the Earth and Manchester Friends of the Earth are part of a network of over 220 local Friends of the Earth groups (further information can be found at www.foe.co.uk).

[2] www.defra.gov.uk/news/latest/2007/climate-0313.htm

[3] www.foe.co.uk/resource/press_releases/joint_committee_on_draft_c_03082007.html

Further information about The Big Ask:

Last year 412 MPs (almost two thirds of all MPs) signed Early Day Motion 178 calling for new climate change legislation "so that annual cuts in carbon dioxide emissions of three per cent can be delivered". As a result, the government announced a Climate Change Bill in the Queen's Speech in November 2006 and published the first draft on 13 March 2007.

The environmental charity Friends of the Earth, is calling for the Bill to be strengthened – this will be essential for it to succeed – specific changes needed are:

- Bigger cuts: The Government proposes 60% cuts of carbon dioxide by 2050. There is wide scientific recognition there needs to be a reduction of at least 80%.
- Annual targets: The Government wants five-year milestones for reducing carbon dioxide. We want shorter, annual targets – to hold the current Parliament to account.
- Aviation and shipping: International flights and shipping emissions are excluded. We need these to be included as they are the fastest growing source of carbon dioxide emissions.

The cuts in carbon dioxide emissions proposed by the Bill need to ensure the UK plays its part in keeping global temperatures from rising two degrees above pre-industrial levels - the temperature rise recognised by the EU as a 'danger level' we should not breach.

Friends of the Earth believe that this requires a cut of at least three per cent each year through to 2050 (which would add up to a cut of around 80% by 2050). The Government's current target - a cut in emissions of 60 per cent by 2050 - is no longer considered to be a sufficient contribution by the UK or other developed countries. In addition it fails to take account of the UK's share of emissions from international shipping and aviation.

Further info at: www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate and www.thebigask.com.