

Act!on



Positivity in Paris

Jacob reports on the demand for climate action during the COP21 talks

Spring 2016

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The atmosphere in Paris during my three days there towards the end of COP21 was one of solidarity, excitement and determination. With the tragic events there only a few weeks gone and fresh in everyone's mind, I think those looking to mobilise would have been forgiven for thinking of the next climate talks as the time to really push for change.

To the great credit of Friends of the Earth and all of the green NGOs mobilising in Paris, they were able to put on a series of actions and events within a few short weeks, completely scrapping the carefully planned events due to take place that had taken months of preparation, and having to jump hurdles such as a complete ban on public action during COP21.

Local group activists such as myself must send them our greatest commendations for not only managing to make mobilisation in Paris a reality, but also for creating feelings of hope, enthusiasm and togetherness for all those who arrived in Paris to make their voices heard during the time of the conference.

The events on in the city while I was there were many and varied. On my first day there I was able to attend a FoE event in the outskirts of Paris that really brought out the people power in everyone there. Hundreds of banners were made for the various actions on the next day, and rousing speeches towards the end of the event raised everyone up to believe that we really do have a voice that can and should be heard. The sense of community in a room that contained people from all across the continent and the world was simply incredible and a real testament to how a shared cause can bring people together.



A creative way round the ban on public protests at COP21

On the next day at breakfast everyone was buzzing for the multitude of actions across the city. We were spoilt for choice: with a GPS action to spell out Climate, Justice, Peace, a "red line" event to warn of the dangers of climate change and an action at the Eiffel Tower to form a chain of solidarity, who could blame us for being a little optimistic? By the end of the day the news had reached everyone's ears that a record number of countries had pledged to legally keep the temperature rise below 2°C, and many had committed to below 1.5°C too. The news may not have been quite as big a commitment to prevent climate change as we all would have liked, but was welcome news all the same.

The after-effects of Paris and COP21 have really given us a sense of excitement, optimism and belief that we can initiate change in Greater Manchester. As oil share prices fall and fossil fuel giants begin to see their profits slashed, momentum is growing for campaigns opposing them such as divestment and renewable energy campaigns. With such positivity in the air, it's exciting to see where 2016 will take us. Which battles will we fight? Which battles will we win? And what change will happen?

Critical Mass for COP21 and the Ride with Climate Kilometre

Phil rode to Paris from London as part of Climate Kilometre

Imagine being part of 800 cyclists riding round and round the Arc de Triomphe in a huge version of Critical Mass. A very powerful display of cycle power and a manifestation of worldwide aspiration for action to end climate change, the riders came from all over the world. From Vietnam, America, India, Iran, Mozambique and all over Europe, including over 200 from the UK, we kept circling to the consternation of the gendarmes.

We had met in front of the Trocadéro in sight of the Eiffel Tower, a coming together of like-minded bike fanatics ready to make our point. I joined in an armada of blinged-up bikes, with bells, flags, whistles and hooters. As numbers swelled, it became apparent that we would make a huge impact as we rolled out through the streets, to the backing of cheering and waving Parisians. There were bikes of all types, from high-end road bikes to classic Dutch-style city bikes, and riders from all ages, genders and nations. We weaved through the streets to the Place de l'Etoile and the Arc de Triomphe, riding together in a huge mass of international chat, exchanging stories about where we'd ridden from and our exploits in getting there.



The group's triumphant arrival under the Eiffel Tower

I had ridden there as part of the Climate Kilometre ride, from London to Paris in three days. When I found out the details about this ride, in October, there was no alternative for me. I was on it!

On the Wednesday at 8am we gathered in a café by Clapham Common, London: 52 riders from 14 nations, most of whom didn't know each other.

We had one common aim and a shared love of cycling and environmental action. We split into smaller groups and rode out of London through the sunshine towards the coast at Newhaven, ready for a well-earned curry and then an overnight ferry to Dieppe. It was a lovely 70 miles through old woods, over the downs and on to the sea.



The giant Critical Mass at the Arc de Triomphe

After an uncomfortable night (well, five hours) on the ferry, we set off out of Dieppe at 5am under the strong starlight, following Orion along a cycleway on an old railway line for 25 miles until dawn and breakfast. Feeling refreshed, we headed on through the beautiful rolling French countryside until by lunchtime we reached our destination, an ancient farmhouse full of bizarre artworks and stuffed animals.

The next morning was spent on the last 90 miles to Paris, although this day wasn't easy riding. A succession of punctures and a completely jammed chain required major surgery.

Also, the fun of navigating through the Parisian outskirts past Versailles, meant a late arrival into the capital, but for our mini-group it was a great achievement as we stood under the floodlit Eiffel Tower.

We had ridden together through thick and thin, sun and rain, and kept each other going: Hannah from Basingstoke; Marieke from Germany and Oxford; Libby from Connecticut and Nottingham; and Hardy from Iran and London.

When we eventually left the Arc de Triomphe in the Critical Mass, we rode on to the main Red Lines demonstration, which we entered down a noisy corridor of cheering demonstrators. As the final part of our Critical Mass, most of us lifted our bikes above our heads in elation to the accompaniment of bells and cheers.

We dispersed into the truly international crowd. I joined a choir from Mozambique, watched a Santa rocking out complete with inflatable guitar, marched with silent, bloodstained angels in solemn protest, and later danced under the Eiffel Tower to the sounds of a Belgian brass band singing songs of protest and solidarity in a variety of languages.

Particularly moving was the vast, long red carpet covered in red tulips in memory of victims of climate change.

It was amazing to be part of such a huge, positive international throng, and the ride to Paris was an unforgettable experience. Whether the COP21 agreement will make a difference or not, time will tell, but as a global gathering of positive energy the event was unmissable. The ride was very well organised by the Oxford Climate Society, in conjunction with www.wearedonation.com and Friends of the Earth.

Would I do it again? Why, of course I would, and I'll be looking for more to join in next time!

If you'd like to watch Climate Kilometre in action, you can check out the film of the event at <https://vimeo.com/149306854>



The giant tulip carpet to commemorate the world's climate change victims

Eating Meat Free in Manchester

The results of the voting are in...



In what is now an annual event, this is the month we encourage people to go meat-free as part of Friends of the Earth's Meat Free May campaign (see www.foe.co.uk/page/meat-free-may). At Manchester FoE, we set up an online poll to find out which were people's favourite places to eat out meat-free in Greater Manchester. Thirty places made the nominations, and we can now announce the winners!

In third place came the Chapati Café on Wilbraham Road in Chorlton, serving '*three curries from a wide selection, freshly cooked each day*'. Runners-up were Teatime Collective, based in St Wilfrid's Enterprise Centre in Hulme, which is a '*fully vegan café and ice-cream parlour*'. And in first place, the Sidney Street Café, based at the LGBT centre on the street of the same name and serving '*veggie and vegan food made from scratch*'. [The quotes are from the outlets themselves.]

If you have a favourite place that serves veggie or vegan meals, we would love to include it in the Manchester FoE Real Food Guide (see www.realfoodguide.org.uk). Please send details to damian@manchestefoe.org.uk.

Our reply to Transport for Greater Manchester



Although air pollution may not be as visible in the 21st century as the smog from coal fires, it is still a killer. Levels of nitrogen oxides and microscopic carbon particles contribute to over 1000 deaths every year in Greater Manchester alone, and the European Union has taken legal action against the Government for not taking adequate steps to address the problem nationwide.

Locally, Air Quality Management Areas have been set up owing to the high levels of nitrogen oxides in the City Centre, near the airport, and along the M60, M602 and M62. However, the measurements taken at the (limited) number of monitoring stations have shown no real decline in pollutants—largely due to the rise in the number of diesel vehicles on the road.

Against this background, and to comply with national targets, Transport for Greater Manchester drew up their own Low-Emission Strategy and Air Quality Action Plan, which was open to public consultation up to the end of April. Manchester Friends of the Earth's sustainable transport campaign, led by campaign coordinator Graeme, took a look at this lengthy document and decided that, although they were a step in the right direction in several ways, the TfGM proposals needed some further improvements and were inadequate as they stood to address the scale of the current problems.

We feel that the main priority must be to cut down on the number and length of journeys made by diesel- and petrol-driven vehicles, to have any chance of meeting the targets. The TfGM plans did not, in our opinion, go far enough. Although electric vehicles, for instance, are less polluting and would be beneficial in large numbers, there are far too few of them on the road to have any impact. Therefore, the proposals in the plan to increase the number of charging points would be largely irrelevant in the short to medium term.

The plan also intended to 'undertake an appraisal of the effects of Clean Air Zones' (where highly polluting vehicles are either charged for entry, or banned altogether). Although this is a welcome step forward, we also need adequate funding and targets to see the effects of this policy in action.

Another proposal that would have an impact here is the plan to set up Urban Distribution Centres, where HGVs would drop off loads to avoid entering heavily polluted areas. However, we believe research is needed to make sure this would not result in emissions being shifted from one area to another. TfGM need to ensure these centres are not located near vulnerable sites (such as primary schools or sheltered housing complexes for the elderly).

There were other, welcome commitments to increase the proportion of short journeys made by bike, from the current level of only 2% to 10% by 2025. However, we would prefer this figure to be 20%, and the target should be reached in 2020 instead. The TfGM plan does at least recognise that this shift, together with an increase in public transport use, will ‘not be sufficient to meet targets without radical action to clean up vehicle engines’.

Given that the main focus, therefore, needs to be on reducing the use of the private car in Greater Manchester, there are a number of measures we believe TfGM should consider implementing. We believe that a multimedia publicity campaign is needed to raise awareness among the public of the dangers of air pollution, as well as measures to reduce single occupancy in cars.

Finally, we are concerned that the plans do not consider the impact of the airport on air quality. Emissions of nitrogen dioxides from aircraft are substantial and plans to increase the number of flights are incompatible with the national pollutant targets. Also, given the need to build a broad public consensus, there is hardly any mention of the role of public sector and local community organisations. We would like to see much greater involvement of these stakeholder groups in future planning on air quality and transport in general.

Cleaning Up Kersal Dale

Manchester FoE newsletter editor Damian joins one stage of the region's biggest ever litter pick

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No matter how unwanted some of your Christmas presents may have been over the years, none of them can have been as bad as what the residents of parts of Salford got last year. During the mildest and wettest December since records began, a day and night of constant rain led to the Irwell bursting its banks on the afternoon of Boxing Day and large parts of Lower Broughton getting flooded.

While the residents will face a long wait before their lives return to normal, the flood left a particularly unwanted gift in the form of tonnes of litter on the riverbanks. As it comprises anything from car tyres to plastic bags, one of the worst features of this litter is that so little of it is biodegradable. We know that plastics take centuries to degrade, so one day's flood will end up having consequences for wildlife and the riverside indefinitely into the future.

Having heard about the efforts to clean up the riverside area, I decided to join in the second of a series of clean-ups organised by the Mersey Basin Rivers Trust. Obviously, the litter ended up all along the riverbank, and this clean-up, on Sunday 13 March, concentrated on the Kersal Dale area, where the Irwell curves round under a steep bank between Lower Kersal and Higher Broughton. Forty other volunteers came along at various points through the day and, after a much appreciated cup of tea and slice of cake, we got to work with our litter pickers and bin bags.

This part of the river has high sandy banks with small trees leaning out over the water and plastic bags, often in tatters, were hanging from the branches everywhere you looked. It was even worse away from the river, as dense piles of dead hogweed stalks concealed everything from catering packs of tissues to individually wrapped plastic spoons. During the flood, a pub near Ramsbottom collapsed into the river and we suspected lots of this debris originated there.



*Some of the volunteers who helped in the clean up
(Photo by Luke)*

Worst of all, polystyrene foam had disintegrated into fragments right down to single beads, which were impossible to clear up completely as many of them ended up buried under piles of brushwood. I can only imagine how many of these will have been washed further downstream into the Ship Canal to leave evidence of the 2015 flood for centuries to come. If anyone ever needed proof of the damage small fragments of plastic can cause to the environment, they don't need to go as far as the Pacific to find out.

Many thanks go to Mersey Basin Rivers Trust for organising the event, as well as the Star Inn in Higher Broughton for feeding us all afterwards!

Nature Campaign News

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The Nature campaign has been focusing primarily on bees over the past few years. On the back of hard work by Friends of the Earth staff and local groups, and working with other organisations across the UK, the Government has agreed to a National Pollinator Plan. The job now is to ensure it is implemented and much work recently has focused on calling for a ban on the pesticides that pose the biggest risk to bees.

Locally, the group has worked to plant 'bee worlds'—bee-friendly wild flower meadows—with local groups around Greater Manchester and to encourage the public to make their own backyards and balconies bee-friendly.

If you know of an area that would benefit from a bee-friendly facelift please get in touch! Contact cat@manchesterfoe.org.uk to find out more.

Getting Completely Eggless

The Scotch pancake goes dairy-free



Three years ago, the United Nations decided to declare 2016 the International Year of Pulses, to promote the use of pulses as a primary source of protein worldwide (<http://iyp2016.org/>).

Maybe this is news to you, and you've been inspired by checking out this website to try out more pulse recipes in your cooking. Or maybe you've been happily tucking in to pinto beans and split peas for years now. In either case, many of your pulses may come in tinned form. However, did you know that when you opened the tin and drained it, you just threw away a completely animal-free alternative to eggs (look up 'aquafaba' online). Next time you open a tin of chickpeas or butter beans, try keeping the juice and using it where you may previously have used beaten whole egg.

For example, it makes perfectly good Scotch pancakes (also known as drop scones). Try out the following recipe as an easy introduction to this egg replacement:

- 125 ml chickpea/bean juice
- 125 ml plant milk
- 2 tablespoons caster sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 100 g flour

As when using eggs, you need to beat the bean juice until frothy (this takes about a minute) before adding the plant milk. The bean juice keeps for at least a week in the fridge but should be discarded if it starts to separate. Both oat and almond milk work. Hazel milk gives a definite nutty taste to the end product. I haven't tried soy milk, though.

Finally, mix in the dry ingredients to give a standard batter and 'drop' (as in drop scones) 2–3 tablespoons of the batter onto a preheated lightly greased griddle or frying pan.

The mixture will probably spread a bit more than you may be used to with eggs, so allow plenty of room. It will still start to bubble on top when it's time to flip the pancakes over, and the end product is every bit as tasty as if you used eggs.

Food Campaign News

Chris gives a brief update on his year and ideas for future food campaigning



If you would like to find out more about our Food campaign, here are just a few of the many activities our food campaigners have taken part in over the past year or so:

- Promoting and expanding our Use Your Loaf campaign, which looks at promoting real bread—both outlets that sell it, and recipes and hints for making some yourself—via events such as last year's Sourdough September.
- Keeping in touch with national FoE's food campaigners and local researchers on food waste and food poverty.
- Volunteering with food charities and recycling firms. The campaign against food waste is really taking off in Manchester, with cafés and pop-up events serving food rescued from ending up in the bin. There have also been trips to help prevent food waste further up the food chain, for example salvaging crops from fields, or intercepting food destined to be dumped at wholesale markets.
- Campaigning to make Manchester a Flexitarian City, to build on Bristol's achievements. We may follow Bristol's idea of awarding medals to restaurants, depending on how veggie-friendly their menus are.

If this appeals to you and/or you would like to get involved, to find out more visit www.manchesterfoe.org.uk/food or email chris@manchesterfoe.org.uk.

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Bee Here Now!

Grow Wild's flagship project A Tale of Two Cities has helped improve Manchester (and Liverpool) for bees and local residents alike with bee-friendly urban meadows. Last September saw large areas of Alexandra Park in south Manchester sown with wildflower seed. You are all welcome to join our bee-spotting walk led by a local wildlife expert to find out just how many bees Grow Wild have managed to attract. Meet at the Tea Hive café in the park on Sunday 29 May. The walk will last from 11am until 1pm.

Regular Events

Our monthly **Open Meeting** is on the second Tuesday of the month at 6.45 for 7pm at Green Fish Resource Centre, 46–50 Oldham Street. This is the perfect occasion to find out more about the group. We sometimes have guest speakers and film screenings—see our calendar at www.manchesterfoe.org.uk. Everyone is welcome!

For details of our **Campaigns Meetings**, see <http://manchesterfoe.org.uk/calendar/>. These are also held at Green Fish Resource Centre, usually at 6.30 or 7pm, but times may vary. All welcome. There is one meeting each month for Climate Change/Divestment and Sustainable Transport campaigns, plus Food and Nature.

Bike Friday is on the last Friday of the month (not December). Come along and join in our rides from various locations in Greater Manchester to work, college or university. Our current starting points are Worsley/Monton, Blackley/Middleton (Rochdale Road/Victoria Avenue East), Sale Waterside, Chorlton Library, Withington Library, Levenshulme Station, Prestwich (Bury New Road/Scholes Lane) and Stockport (Mersey Square). From all these starting points, we converge on spacious Northern Quarter coffee house Ezra and Gil on Hilton Street. If you would like to find out more about the rides and their timings (or even lead a ride!) please visit www.bikefriday.org or email Love Your Bike at gmloveyourbike@gmail.com.

Group Officers for 2016

At the last Manchester FoE Annual General Meeting we elected the following Group Officers for 2016.

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| • Coordinators | Ali Abbas and Catherine Thomson |
| • Treasurer | Paul Waring |
| • Media Officer | Pete Abel |
| • Membership Officer | Greg Pike |
| • Newsletter Officer | Damian Cross |
| • Volunteer Officer | Safia Griffin |
| • Web Officer | Graeme Sherriff |

If you would like to put your name forward as our Publicity or Fundraising Officer, we would be happy to hear from you. Please get in touch at office@manchesterfoe.org.uk

Greater Manchester Community Renewables

Would you like to help fund an exciting new venture in renewable energy?

And receive interest on your investment?

Greater Manchester Community Renewables (GMCR) is a community benefit society run by volunteers to install community-owned renewable energy in Greater Manchester.

To find out about our forthcoming share offer, or learn more about GMCR, visit www.gmcr.org.uk or email info@gmcr.org.uk

Manchester FoE is an award-winning campaign group working on issues relating to the environment and social justice. We campaign on issues with a local connection and also lobby for policy changes at local, regional, national and international levels. We work on a diverse range of issues including climate change, corporate responsibility, real food, trade justice, sustainable transport and aviation, and waste and recycling.

For more information about Manchester FoE and our campaigns, see www.manchesterfoe.org.uk

Manchester FoE is backing the City's climate change action plan Manchester: A Certain Future <http://www.manchesterclimate.com>