

Act!on



**Friends of
the Earth
Manchester**

Let's Fix the Big Six

Manchester FoE gets the new campaign moving with a stunt at the Conservative conference, says Damian



This year it was the turn of the Conservative Party to hold its annual conference at Manchester Central, so FoE decided it was time to bring the message about the Big Six energy companies to the larger partner in the coalition government.

Following on from a similar stunt at the Labour and Liberal Democrat conferences, Manchester FoE activists dressed up as charity collectors raising contributions for a cash-strapped energy boss (in the person of FoE's Oliver Hayes, *pictured*).

Suggested donations included an arm and a leg, your life savings, the shirt off your back... we were sure people would agree with us that, now energy company profits are only up by 600 per cent in the last five months, they need all the help they can get!

The purpose of this action was to highlight the fact that our energy system is not fit for purpose.

The Big Six energy companies make their huge profits on the back of unsustainable fossil fuels which are expensive (and getting more so) as well as being insecure in supply. Their recent rises in profits coincide with massive increases in consumer energy prices driving many people into fuel poverty.

Not only that, they seem to think they can continue investing in coal, oil and gas (75 per cent of their energy is derived from these sources) instead of funding renewable energy such as solar, wind and tide.

This comes against a backdrop of 50 per cent cuts in the feed in tariff, where the government guarantees payment to people who contribute to the grid via their own domestic solar installations.

Winter 2011–12



Friends of the Earth energy campaigner Oliver about to ask cabinet minister Eric Pickles to give generously...

Friends of the Earth needs you to put pressure on the government to reverse these cuts, as well as launching a public inquiry into the Big Six's power over customers and politicians – for more information see *Final Demand* overleaf.

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Say No to Waste and Yes to Taste

It's time to stop the supermarkets throwing perfectly edible food in the bin, says Debbie

On Sunday 9th October, Manchester Friends of the Earth food campaigners asked visitors to the Manchester Food and Drink Festival to take the 'Taste Before Beauty' challenge, by trying a variety of apples and deciding which ones are the tastiest. We brought the public's attention to the avoidable food waste that is created when supermarkets reject large amounts of food because it is not cosmetically perfect.

Fruit and vegetables grown in the UK are governed by European Union regulations, but supermarkets often require producers to meet even higher cosmetic perfection standards, which leads to even more perfectly edible food being 'graded out'.

Our 'Taste Before Beauty' campaign highlights the huge amount of edible food that is being wasted and asks people to tell their supermarket that, given the choice, they would be happy to buy this food as long as it tastes good. We are asking people to:

- Get in touch with your supermarket to say you don't want them to reject perfectly good food. While we know it is more sustainable to support local retailers and producers, the reality is that the majority of food purchased in the UK is sold by a few large companies, so it's important to send a clear message to them.
- Shop at local independent grocers where less stringent cosmetic grading processes will have been used.
- Sign up to a box scheme which supports local growers. The amount of food wasted by small-scale producers working with box schemes is far lower than the more highly packaged food offered in supermarkets.
- Buy fresh fruit and vegetables from a local farmers' market – direct sales to customers do not require producers to 'grade out' food produce.



Manchester FoE's team bringing local apples to the Food and Drink Festival in Albert Square



Packed with flavour, but these apple varieties from the Old Trafford allotment would all have been rejected by the big supermarkets

Parking Space or Open Space?

For one day only, a parking space in central Manchester was transformed into a picnic site, says Damian

On Friday 16th September, one lucky parking space on Thomas Street in the Northern Quarter underwent a transformation into a picnic site courtesy of Manchester FoE. From 9.30am we paid to convert this patch of Tarmac into an urban park with a 'grass' mat, deckchairs and a chess set, not to mention cupcakes and morning and afternoon tea!

The reason for all this? To take part in PARK(ing) Day, an international event highlighting the need for more urban open space and opening the debate about how cities are designed and space allocated for walking and cycling. Over the last fifty years, large areas of our towns and cities have been given over to the car, and our streets have become noisy and unpleasant places for pedestrians.



Time to eat in the street: At Manchester FoE we don't need to travel far (round the corner, in fact) for a picnic

Manchester FoE's message to people is this:

"We are inviting people to help us make parking spaces more sociable, fun and colourful. Imagine if our cities had fewer spaces for cars and more room for people. It's only for one day, but we hope this will inspire people to envisage the future of their streets in new ways."

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