

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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Final Demand – Turning Up the Heat on the Energy Companies

We need to break the stranglehold of the Big Six energy companies on our supplies, writes Ali

The Big Six energy companies have a lot to answer for. Public anger has been growing as record prices, with average annual bills topping £1,300 for the first time, are matched by record profits, up from £15 per dual-fuel customer in June to £125 in October.

But it's not just about the one in four UK households who won't be able to afford to heat their homes properly this winter. These same energy companies are lobbying hard for permission to build a new generation of gas- and coal-fired power stations, which could cost the average household an extra £300 per year by 2020 as fossil fuel prices continue to rise.

That's why Friends of the Earth has launched its Final Demand campaign.



It's time to break the stranglehold of the Big Six over our energy system, and to break our addiction to fossil fuels. It's time to invest in clean, renewable energy and in cutting energy waste. It's time to give individuals, communities and businesses the support they need to take power into their own hands.

Friends of the Earth is calling for urgent action to stop the Government killing off small, clean energy providers, and a full public inquiry into the Big Six's power over consumers and influence over politicians.

To join the campaign, visit
<http://www.foe.co.uk/finaldemand>.

Autumn Recipe – Beetroot and Pear Cake

Say goodbye to gluts with this quick and adaptable treat from Cat

This is a great recipe for using up beetroot and pears (or apples) which are in plentiful supply at this time of year. It is also adaptable as to shape (try as cupcakes!) and you can change it to use other ingredients – try dried figs rather than sultanas, or almonds rather than walnuts.

It is also super easy and super quick!

Ingredients:

120g beetroot (grated)

100g chopped pear or apple

110g sultanas

60g chopped walnuts or almonds

140g self-raising white flour

180g self-raising wholemeal flour

170g sugar

1 tsp cinnamon

1 tsp ginger

100ml sunflower oil

100ml soya milk

200ml water

Dash of vinegar

1/2 tsp vanilla essence

Method:

Preheat the oven to 190°C. Stir dry ingredients together and then mix in the liquid ingredients.

Pour the mixture into a medium-sized cake tin which has been greased.

Bake for 45 minutes and then reduce to 160°C and cook until a knife inserted into the middle comes out clean. (About another 20 minutes.)

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

Young Friends of the Earth went on a mission to the heart of Europe, along with MFoE's Alex

On Monday 10th October the environmental ministers of Europe were meeting, and we were going to show them they couldn't ignore young people! We have been asking people from across Europe to send one penny (or cent) to their government environment department as a symbolic investment towards our future and, as a more direct version, a petition! The BUNDjugend (Young FoE Germany) group had made a giant

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Annual General Meeting

The 2011 AGM of Manchester Friends of the Earth is on Monday 5th December



You are all invited to the 2011 AGM for Manchester Friends of the Earth, to be held at Bistro 1847, Booth Street, Manchester.

6.30–7.15pm: AGM Our AGM will be held in the restaurant and all are welcome to attend this whether or not you wish to stay for a meal – there is no charge to attend.

7.30pm onwards: Meal / Christmas social We will stay in the restaurant to enjoy a four-course meal for a set price of £16.95. We do need to select our menu options in advance so please take a look at the Christmas menu at www.bistro1847.co.uk to make your choice and email s.cohen@manchester.gov.uk with your options, no later than Monday 21 November. All food is vegetarian and the only non-vegan meal is the blue cheese and pear tart starter.

Election of Officers

Group officers for 2012 will be elected at the AGM. If you wish to nominate yourself for a role please contact the current group co-ordinators on office@manchesterfoe.org.uk by Wednesday 30 November. You can get more information on the roles from the coordinators (*see page 8 for a list of vacant roles*). Please note that you must have been a group member for a minimum of 28 days before the AGM to nominate yourself for a role AND to vote in the officer elections at the AGM. If you are not yet a member and want to join please visit our website for information on the options available <http://manchesterfoe.org.uk/support-us/>.

Constitution The AGM is our opportunity to review the group constitution and, where required, to make amendments to it. The constitution can be viewed on the wiki at <http://manchesterfoe.pbworks.com/w/page/32086783/Constitution%20-%20Revised%202010> or email office@manchesterfoe.org.uk to request a copy.

Amendments can be suggested by all group members – if you wish to make suggestions for amendments please send details to office@manchesterfoe.org.uk no later than Wednesday 30 November for these to be considered at the AGM.

Subscription Rates The AGM is our opportunity to review our subscription rates. These are currently £4 per year for unwaged, £8 per year for low waged, £18 per year for waged and £30 per year for a group. Amendments to these can also be suggested by all group members – if you wish to make suggestions please send details to office@manchesterfoe.org.uk no later than Wednesday 30 November for these to be considered at the AGM.

Let's Start Talking (to) Business

Good news and new plans for Manchester: A Certain Future, reports Dave



Although it has had to rely almost entirely on voluntary resource until now, the city's climate change action plan's voluntary Steering Group (which is also recruiting new members) has, with City Council support, been able to recruit a part-time support worker, Kate Morley working for Groundwork. There is therefore finally some resource to facilitate better communication regarding all the good work going on in the city, and a long overdue update of the M: ACF website (!)

In separate news, our own campaigning in support of action on M: ACF is progressing. We held a useful 'sticky questions' session at the last Full Group Meeting which will provide the basis for the script for our planned visits to 50 Manchester businesses. These visits are to meet with the business owners or managers to talk with them about simple ideas leading to greater action in support of the plan and in running more sustainable businesses. If you are interested in teaming up with another group member to help with this project or go out visiting businesses, drop Ali an email at ali@manchesterfoe.org.uk

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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be closed during May.**

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All tea and coffee is Fair Trade. All ingredients are
ethically sourced from small local companies.

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Lower ground floor of the Triangle (the old Corn Exchange) on
Exchange Square, Corporation Street, M14 3TR.

Coming Up



Friday 18th November

Feeding the 5000, Trafalgar Square, from 12 noon to 2pm (arrive by 11.30am for briefing if volunteering). Free lunch for 5,000 people taking place in Trafalgar Square, using nothing but produce that would otherwise have been wasted. To volunteer with FoE please contact eleonor.harvie@foe.co.uk For more info see <http://www.feeding5k.org>

Friday 25th November–Friday 2nd December

future MANCHESTER, organised by MERCi. A week-long festival showcasing all the excellent work going on in the city to promote sustainability, celebrate our achievements and challenge, inform and delight the people of Manchester.

Wednesday 30th November

Feeding Manchester 8. Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street, Ancoats, M4 7HR 4–7.15pm Something for everyone involved in the food movement in Manchester, from guerrilla gardeners to food sovereignty via Incredible Edible Todmorden. Tickets £5; book at <http://feedingmanchester.org.uk/civicrm/event/info?reset=1&id=543>

Regular Events



Second Tuesday of the month 6.45 for 7pm.

Full Group Meeting. Green Fish Resource Centre, 46–50 Oldham Street. This is the perfect occasion for new members to come along and find out more about the group!

Last Thursday of the month 6.45 for 7pm.

Campaigns Meeting. Green Fish Resource Centre, 46–50 Oldham Street. All welcome. We split into groups to focus on our main campaign areas: Climate Change, Transport and Food.

Last Friday of the month (not December!)

Bike Friday. Rides from a range of locations in Greater Manchester to work, college or university. Starting points are Worsley (Worsley Road/Chatsworth Road), Stretford Mall, Chorlton Library, Withington Library, Levenshulme Station and Prestwich (Bury New Road/Scholes Lane).

www.bikefriday.org

New Officers Wanted!

Would you like to stand for election as a Manchester FoE group officer? As part of the AGM (see page 5), we will be electing the group officers for 2012.

We are looking for people to fill these roles, which are vacant at the moment:

Coordinator, Media Officer, Events Officer and Fundraising Officer

Please let our coordinators (office@manchesterfoe.org.uk) know by Wednesday 30 November if you would like to put your name forward. You need to have been a member of MFoE for at least 28 days.

Push Europe – Take Action!

Help us demand ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets in a language our politicians understand: money. We are asking people right across Europe to send one penny to their government as a symbolic investment towards our future. Here's how:

1. Login to your online bank and transfer one penny to the sort code 08-33-00 and account number 12480131. The transfer reference name should be "1 Penny to Push Europe".
2. Phone your bank, and ask to send one penny to the sort code and account number above, and again ask them to set the reference to "1 Penny to Push Europe".

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/>