

## Seeds of Weeds Will Please Bees

*Bees, bugs, birds and bats boost biodiversity in the City Centre, reports Damian*

Autumn 2012



Manchester Friends of the Earth have been busy with the Bee Cause campaign, aimed at halting the decline in bee populations by promoting bee-friendly planting and biodiversity.

Seed bombs made their appearance in July at both Envirolution, in Platt Fields, and the summer party at Hulme Community Garden Centre. MFOE campaigners mixed clay, compost and seeds of selected species of wild flowers specially chosen to appeal to bees. Then visitors to our stall could join in and get their hands dirty rolling the mixture into a tiny ball. If they weren't up for this, they could take away some we'd made earlier, wrapped up in bits of egg boxes, to do a spot of guerrilla gardening in their own backyard or a bit of local waste ground that could do with some bee-friendly wild flowers to brighten it up.

In August, we had our first ever outdoor Full Group Meeting, in the form of a nature walk around the city centre with Manchester City Council's biodiversity officer Dave Barlow. We started just round the corner from Green Fish at the Hilton Street 'bug hotel', showing the unglamorous end of urban wildlife is not forgotten!

Then we moved on via Deansgate (unfortunately without the peregrine falcons this time) to take in the bird life hotspot of Parsonage Gardens, on the way to the Irwell and the urban oasis of St John's Gardens, where Dave showed us an award-winning display of herbs and apple trees which won a gold medal at the Tatton Park flower show.

As dusk fell, the walk ended up at the Rochdale Canal, where accommodation has been laid on for the local duck and bat communities, as well as



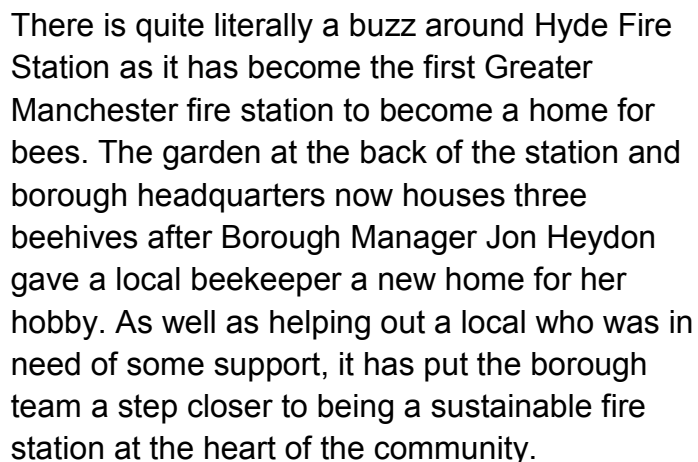
*Dave Barlow showing the group round the gold medal-winning garden*

underwater planters full of tall purple loosestrife flowers. Unfortunately, despite the growing darkness, we failed to spot any bats—although we may have a second chance, as we are considering having a bat evening later in the autumn. Watch this space for more information.

### Inside this Issue:

Hive Aid	2
Powering the Future	3
Join the Land Army	4
Last Round of Toast	6

## Greater Manchester's firefighters come to rescue a community beekeeper



Jon said: "The crews themselves have been interested in keeping bees so this is a nice introduction to having them at the station and seeing how it works. It give us access to a group who we might not otherwise have been in contact with—and hopefully the connection with them will be mutually beneficial. Again, it puts the fire station at the heart of the community."

Beekeeper Catharine Edwardes-Evans, 67, has kept bees for more than five years and is part of the Cheshire Beekeepers' Association. She initially kept them on a field, but had to move them when the charges became too much and moved them to some allotments, which was not a suitable location and meant she lost three colonies last year.

Catharine met Jon by chance at the allotments and he thought the space at the back of Hyde Fire Station might be the solution to her problems. Catharine, a retired theatre nurse from Hyde, said: "I thought it was a brilliant idea and the benefits are fantastic. Most of the food you eat is pollinated by insects—if bees died out, man would last about four years before dying out too. They are now supporting the natural environment around the station."

There are around 40,000–50,000 bees in two of the hives and around 20,000 in the third—the two larger hives at the station could produce around 50–60 pounds of honey per year.



## It's a hive of activity at Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service

The Cheshire Beekeepers' Association runs beekeeping courses in Stockport. Some of the firefighters from Tameside, who are interested in keeping bees themselves, may be signing up.

A guide to keeping bees on Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) sites has been produced by the GMFRS sustainability department, after firefighters and staff were asked for green ideas last year and Watch Manager Adrian Tonge suggested that fire station grounds might make an ideal home for bees. Environment Manager Sam Pickles said: "Hopefully, as many stations as possible will take up this wonderful opportunity and, as a result, gain another route into their community. Increasing biodiversity supports the aims and objectives of our sustainability policy."

**Take Action!** Help Britain's bees by asking the Government to phase out the use of the pesticides that are most harmful to bees, as well as reducing pesticide use in public spaces. Sign up to Friends of the Earth's online action at <http://bit.ly/pesticideaction>

## Powering the Future

*How many ways can we make progress towards a sustainable energy future? Lots of them, as Damian found out*

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The latest of Manchester FoE's 'Big Tuesday' events was hosted by the group at the Green Fish Resource Centre. The title of this event was "Powering the future". We explored this from four angles: campaigning, energy generation, retrofitting and knowledge sharing.

The first of these was covered by Manchester FoE's Ali Abbas, who gave an overview of the Clean British Energy campaign, showing us how we have to move from the present situation, with most of our electricity coming from gas and coal, to a low-carbon energy mix in 2030 dominated by offshore and onshore wind, solar and other renewables. For this to become a reality, we need to persuade the Government to make sure its Energy Bill prioritises energy efficiency and renewables over gas and nuclear.



*Ed Gill from renewables supplier Good Energy speaking at Powering the Future*

Next, we had Ed Gill from Good Energy, the UK's only 100% renewable electricity supplier, who guaranteed to match the Big Six on price – unlike the Big Six, who are dependent on imported gas, Good Energy's prices have been frozen at 2009 levels. Ed also outlined the company's work on supporting local renewable projects, emphasising the importance of community involvement in energy generation.

In the interests of fairness, we also had a presentation sent in on behalf of Ecotricity, who were unable to make the event. While Ecotricity has a lower level of renewables in its energy

mix, it operates a 'not for dividend' business model that ploughs its profits back into installing more renewables, and has built 1 in 13 of England's wind turbines as well as its first sun park.

Retrofitting was covered by Charlie Baker from the Carbon Co-op, based in Manchester. He discussed all the measures we can take to make our homes more energy-efficient, warning us away from heat pumps and going into some detail (with illustrations) about the different types of properties that exist. Each one – solid-walled terrace, semi-detached or flat – needs its own tailored approach, and Carbon Co-op is working to develop a standardised set of retrofit methods to cover all our housing stock.



*Jenni Viitanen introducing her green energy study*

Our final speaker was Jenni Viitanen from the University of Manchester, who is carrying out a study funded by the EU into people's perceptions of green energy. The study's aim is to discover ways of overcoming barriers to the take-up of renewable heat and energy-efficient behaviour, and they're developing a website on which people can share their experiences. Have a look at our [Spring 2012 newsletter](#) for an introduction.

### Take Action!

Call on the Government to support clean British energy, and show your support for renewables by switching to Good Energy or Ecotricity on Friends of the Earth's website:

<http://www.cleanbritishenergy.co.uk>



## Bike Fabulous 3

*The cycle fashion event is back for a third year, bigger and better than ever, says Graeme*



Shoppers in Manchester Arndale on Saturday 23 June were treated to the third Bike Fabulous cycle style event, promoting cool cycling with the motto 'cycle wear, cycle everywhere'.

The event, from 11am to 5pm, featured four catwalk shows with outfits available from the Arndale's wide range of fashion for children and adults. Music came via our pedal-powered sound system, with bikes pedalled not only by our volunteers, but also by many members of the public. Between the three bikes powering the sound system, 300 miles were cycled.

With the Olympic torch passing by Cross Street that afternoon, we had our own torch which was also kept alight by pedal power.



### *Bike Fabulous's Olympic torch, lit up by pedal power*

Alongside all this, shoppers had a range of information on cycling, including maps of Greater Manchester areas (300 of which were

given out) and our Pocket Guide to Cycling, and were also given the chance to win a bike and other prizes.



### *Dawn modelling a cycle helmet at Bike Fabulous*

Youngsters had the opportunity to let their creativity run wild and decorate bike masks—something they took to enthusiastically, making 160 masks in total.

## Join the Land Army

*Manchester FoE campaigners have been getting involved with this project, reports Damian*



Have you heard about the Kindling Trust, Manchester's campaigning organisation working towards an ecologically sustainable economy and society here in the North West of England?

Kindling has set up a volunteer project called the Land Army, where you can go and spend a day helping out with local growers, whether a market gardener or a vegetable garden in a park.

Manchester FoE campaigners have been helping with the Land Army recently. In August I joined the group working at Glebelands City Growers in Sale, which is one of the suppliers for Unicorn Grocery. Glebelands specialises in salads and leafy green vegetables, in line with the market gardening traditions of the area. The plot has obviously been affected by the persistent wet weather this year, but there were still plenty of courgettes and spinach beet growing when I went.

Adam and Charlotte soon got us busy getting our hands dirty. The first task we had was to weed a bed of spinach beet, which had got invaded by dead-nettle and small thistles. Then there was a bit of tree and shrub pruning to do, to make room for the growers to drive their tractor without having to duck under the branches! The day ended with planting out kale seedlings, where we covered two whole rows of freshly turned earth 200 feet (61m) long ready for the autumn crop. This is really hard work but very rewarding when you see the rows of little plants stretching into the distance.



*Getting ready to dig over some ground...*

The following week I was joined by Corin from the food campaign to work in the walled garden at Wythenshawe Park. This had originally been used as the kitchen garden for Wythenshawe Hall, but later on became full of ornamental trees and shrubs before reverting to its original use in the last few years. Here, Kindling volunteers worked together with a group of people with learning difficulties under the guidance of Joanne from the park offices. We had to dig over and weed a strip of ground around some apple trees, and after lunch we put our trowels to good use planting a double row of thyme along a walkway, finishing off with the unmistakable scent of silver *Helichrysum* or 'curry plant'.

And the best thing is this is only the beginning! Kindling have many more dates organised, including stepping into the breach to get the harvest in at Moss Brook Growers, another of Unicorn's suppliers, this time based at Glazebury just south of Leigh.



*...and this is what it looks like afterwards!*

If you would like to join the Land Army, the best way to enlist is by emailing [chloe@kindling.org.uk](mailto:chloe@kindling.org.uk).

## Wheels Halted, But Motions Pass

*Manchester FoE takes part in the Local Groups' Conference, this time held in central London*



Over the weekend of 14–16 September, the FoE Local Groups' Conference was held in the heart of London, at Imperial College. Eight of Manchester FoE's campaigners went along to see a packed programme of speeches and meetings, featuring Polly Higgins, campaigning lawyer and creator of the Ecocide concept, Green MP Caroline Lucas and Satish Kumar, editor of Resurgence magazine, recently merged with The Ecologist.

Unfortunately, the group's 3D proposal *Smooth Cycling* only came second in the voting and so was not adopted by national FoE, despite a creative and professional presentation by transport campaigners Katka and Graeme on the podium in the Imperial student union, and support from other group members carrying adverts for the proposal pinned to their backs throughout the Saturday!

However, there was some consolation for the group. Two of the motions we seconded, *Raising the Profile of the Need for Major Economic Change* (presented by Karen from Birmingham FoE) and *Implementation of FoE 'Planetary Emergency' strategy* (presented by Anthony from Calderdale FoE) were passed by large majorities in both cases.



## Last Round of Toast

*Time is running out for the Get Me Toasty scheme, says Stacie from the Greater Manchester Energy Advice Service*

Insulated homes are warmer and more energy-efficient and have lower heating bills than those that are leaking heat through their roofs and walls. 'Heating the Streets' in this way is detrimental to the environment, leading to increased carbon emissions and the adverse effects of climate change.

On average, by insulating your home you can help save around 1,270kg CO<sub>2</sub> per year—for a gas-heated semi—contributing to Greater Manchester's carbon reduction target of 48% by 2020. You could also save yourself approximately £310 per year in reduced energy bills.

The 'Get Me Toasty' insulation scheme in Greater Manchester provides free\* loft and cavity wall insulation to residents of all tenures in the region. The scheme is endorsed by the ten local councils across Greater Manchester, as they are working together to support their residents in making homes more energy-efficient, as well as helping to save residents pounds on energy bills and providing greater thermal comfort.

A massive 10,000 homes have benefited from the scheme so far, but we know there are potentially over half a million homes in Greater Manchester losing heat with inadequate levels of insulation.

If you'd like to book a free, no-obligation survey to see if your home is suitable for up to £700 of free insulation, please call the Greater Manchester Energy Advice Service on 0800 009 3363 now or visit [www.getmetoasty.com](http://www.getmetoasty.com) to book online.

*\*Subject to survey. Offer based on an average-sized three-bedroom semi-detached property with less than 60mm loft insulation currently in place. Offer ends 31 December 2012.*

## Fun Fundraising!

On Sunday 29 July, seven volunteers cycled 48 miles from Manchester to Chester to raise money to support the campaigns of Manchester Friends of the Earth. The ride was fun but challenging, with many hills and what felt like every type of weather apart from snow.



*Ready to set off in Platt Fields Park*



*On the way through Delamere Forest*



*A well-earned rest in Chester at the end of 48 miles*

## Friend of the Earth

*It's time to meet Manchester FoE transport campaigner Katy Carlisle.*



### How long have you been in Manchester FoE?

I started volunteering with the group in Summer 2008, so over four years now.

### What sort of activities have you been involved with?

I began with doing general campaigning, so I didn't tend to focus on any one area in particular—I helped at stalls and with getting postcards signed. I had started cycling to work around the same time and fell in love with it so, after a while, started to attend more of the transport campaign meetings.

It was at one of these meetings in December 2009 that another group member, noticing my interest in the area, suggested we do something around cycling and fashion—and so Bike Fabulous was born as our 'cycle in style' campaign!

I've now co-ordinated the Bike Fabulous event in Manchester Arndale for the last three years, although really it's more like a whole group effort. I was also involved with last year's Park(ing) Day where we took over a parking bay in Manchester's Northern Quarter (and did actually pay for the space) to create an oasis of calm and promote the idea of 'more parks, less parking'.

### What environmental issues concern you most?

I'm not sure I'd use the word 'concern', as it sounds a bit negative, but I do think that there is a huge opportunity around encouraging people to use cycling as a more sustainable form of transport, which can actually be a catalyst to them considering sustainability issues in other areas of their lives.

The other areas that I'd say I'm most passionate about are local food and ethical clothing, as both help to contribute to a more sustainable economy as well as better working conditions—and with local food, fewer miles travelled as well.

### Why do you choose to campaign with Manchester FoE?

Oh no, I'm going to have to confess now! I'd been on the mailing list for a couple of years, but had been quite busy with work. I then changed my job and had been intending to get more involved, but just didn't get round to it. Then I happened to notice on the mailing list an opportunity to campaign at a Radiohead concert as part of the Big Ask campaign, so it seemed like an appropriate time to join!

I did go to a meeting before the concert so it wouldn't look like I was just going for the Radiohead opportunity, but I suspect people saw through me... but hey, at least I stayed with the group!

### What would you say to someone considering getting involved?

I'd say don't be worried that you will be judged on your own lifestyle or beliefs—I was massively concerned about this, as I'd only just started to get my head around sustainability issues and until very recently drove a car (which I thought might be a hangable offence).

But it was fine and I've never been criticised about my choices—and actually it has been a really good way of finding out different points of view on the issues.

I'd also say, based on my own experience, that you may not find the area that you want to get involved with straight away, so come to a meeting or event and talk to the people there about all of the different work that we do, and then just try out a few options.

And don't worry if you're not always available—any help that you can give us will be gratefully received!

## Coming Up



### Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> October

Swap Shop, Eighth Day Café, Oxford Road, from 6pm. A chance to recycle your clothes and rejuvenate your wardrobe sustainably. Free with three items of good quality, clean clothing (no underwear), £1 otherwise.

### Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October

The Conservation Volunteers Big Green Weekend, Heaton Park, from 11am to 3pm. Bring the children and build a den, brush up on your tree identification or learn about mushrooms on a fungus walk! Workers will demonstrate woodworking and willow crafts. You can buy locally grown wildflowers. See <http://www.tcv.org.uk/biggreenweekend>

### Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October

Apple Day, Unicorn Grocery, Chorlton, from 12 noon to 4pm. Celebrate the apple season by joining us at Unicorn for traditional apple juicing. There'll be apple tasting in the shop and a pop-up café serving appley mains and puds.

## 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!

For details of our **Campaigns Meetings**, see <http://manchesterfoe.org.uk/calendar/>. These are held at Green Fish Resource Centre, 46–50 Oldham Street—usually at 6.45 for 7pm, but times may vary. All welcome. We split into groups to focus on our main campaign areas: Climate Change, Transport and Food.

### Last Friday of the month

Bike Friday. Rides from a range of locations in Greater Manchester to work, college or university. Starting points are Worsley (Worsley Road/Chatsworth Road), Blackley (Rochdale Road/Victoria Avenue East), Stretford Mall, Chorlton Library, Withington Library, Levenshulme Station and Prestwich (Bury New Road/Scholes Lane). [www.bikefriday.org](http://www.bikefriday.org)

## Are You a Novice or a Ninja?

When it comes to explaining climate science to interested friends, are you a novice or a ninja? Or something in between?

What about your allotment skills? Or your time management?

"Activist Skills and Knowledge" is a new Manchester-based project aimed at helping individuals and groups find out what they are already good at, and make it easy for them to share what their heads and hands can do with others.

- Visit <http://askfortheworld.net> and tell us what other skills and knowledge you would like to see listed.
- Help write the descriptions of what a novice can do, what a practitioner, expert and ninja can do.
- Suggest resources that will help individuals or groups achieve the various levels.
- Be a guinea pig for the project

## Officer Vacancies

At the Manchester FoE Annual General Meeting in December we will be electing the Group Officers for 2013. We currently have vacancies for **Fundraising Officer**, **IT Officer**, **Media Officer** and **Publicity Officer**. Would you like to stand for one of these posts? See next issue for details!

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](http://www.manchesterfoe.org.uk)

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