

Trafford Says No to Fracking

*The Frack Free Trafford petition attracts over
1,300 local signatures*

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If you read the summer edition of the Manchester FoE newsletter, you may remember an invitation to add your name to the list and say NO to fracking in Trafford. Fracking company IGas, which was involved in the exploration on Barton Moss last winter, had applied to drill for coal bed methane at Davyhulme next to the M60, and we decided to show the extent of public opposition to their plans in advance of Trafford Council deciding whether to grant the company permission to drill.

So we went ahead and took our campaign to the people of Trafford, starting at the Altrincham Festival on a fine afternoon in July and taking in Sale, Stretford Mall, the Flixton, Urmston and Davyhulme Carnival, and Old Trafford before finishing up among the shoppers in Altrincham town centre. Although a higher proportion of people in Flixton had heard of the issue and were already opposed to the development, wherever we campaigned we were pleased to find well over 100 local people prepared to say no to fracking, making a total of 1,350 for the borough.

Meanwhile, Trafford Council's planning development control committee continued to delay their decision—the IGas application did not appear on the agenda for August or September, but was finally lined up for consideration on Thursday 9 October. To show the extent of public concern in advance of this vital meeting, we went along to Trafford Town Hall first thing on the Wednesday morning (see picture opposite) and presented the council officer with the 1,300-strong petition. The following evening, MFoE campaigners were scheduled to take part in a protest on the roadside by the Town Hall.



Ali, Damian and Renate join more than 1,300 Trafford residents in saying NO to drilling in Davyhulme

However, the petition was not the only approach we used. National FoE carried out an investigation and found out that issues related to climate change, disposal of hazardous chemicals and air quality all require an Environmental Impact Assessment to be carried out. We emailed all the members of the planning committee the week before the application was due to be considered.

Midway through the Thursday afternoon we discovered that the planning committee had agreed to defer consideration of this application as it had 'raised a number of detailed and conflicting environmental issues'. They stated that they would consider the application once they were 'satisfied that these issues have been addressed'.

The protest still went ahead, with dozens of local campaigners taking part. We await the planning committee's next meeting on 13 November!

Inside this Issue:

'Going Dutch' in Holland	2
Join the Scrutiny Team	4
<u>Urgent</u> —Vote for Wild Flowers!	8

‘Going Dutch’ in Holland

What have other European cities got that we haven't? asks Cat

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Manchester FoE's sustainable transport group, through its Love Your Bike campaign, encourages Manchester to 'Go Dutch'. With some Dutch cities achieving more than 40% of local trips made by bicycle, they must be doing something right—but what?

A useful question to ask our local councils and transport authorities. So this summer two campaigners decided to use part of their holiday to find out more.

Heading to Assen in Northern Holland, we joined a cycle study tour and over four days 11 of us explored the finer points of Dutch cycling planning from drop kerbs to the timing sequence for intersection lights. Some guys had even brought along tape measures and spirit levels to measure bike and car lane widths.

Assen is an inspiration on what can be achieved to increase cycling levels, with nearly 50% of short trips being made by bike. While there are issues in comparing this town of 57,000 people with Manchester, there are plenty of lessons to be learnt on how we can start the journey towards increasing cycling numbers here.

But it will take time and planning. In the 1970s the Netherlands had similar low levels of cycling to Britain. But whereas Britain continued to design our cities and towns for motorised traffic, the Dutch decided to refocus planning on increasing levels of active travel, recognising that this would have the multiple benefits of reducing road deaths, traffic congestion and air pollution, and improving the health of the nation. In short, they created a 30-year bicycle master plan.

Because infrastructure planning doesn't just mean building some separated cycle paths, it meant ensuring that all new homes included a place to store bikes and that shops used every day, such as food supermarkets, were built within easy reach by walking or by bike.



The school run—‘Dutch-style’

Nor did it mean making car driving impossible. In Holland huge efforts have been made to provide drivers with motorways and ring roads that are fast and quiet and to provide them with plenty of car parking which is free. It is just that even more effort has been made to ensure that shorter, local journeys are easier and more convenient by bike.

In town centres and where people live, streets are for pedestrians and cyclists. On the whole, they have been designed to exclude motor traffic.

Locally, the most direct route will be by bike. You can drive but that will mean taking a longer route to get somewhere.

If you would like to have safe, convenient and direct cycle routes where you live, where your kids go to school and to get to work—join the demand for Space for Cycling. See www.loveyourbike.org

Pomona—much more than a Metrolink stop!

Manchester FoE discover this wildlife haven between the canals, reports Dom

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A lovely late-summer's evening saw a Manchester FoE group heading onto the equally lovely Pomona Island, a local nature spot which, I must admit, I hadn't known to exist until this trip. This is in spite of it being right on my doorstep, I might add. The island is surrounded by canals on three sides and is nestled right between Manchester and Salford.

As detailed by our guide, local wildlife expert Dr Luke Blazejewski, the island was once the site of the Royal Pomona Palace, with the island and the eponymous palace having been named after Pomona, the Roman goddess of fruit and trees.

After the palace burnt down in an accident in the late 19th century, the site became home to a thriving series of docks, but fell into disuse in recent decades. Now it is relatively quiet—owned by the estate investors Peel Holdings but remaining undeveloped.

Despite the ever-looming threat of the site being built on, and a clearance of larger shrubs every few years by Peel Holdings, Pomona Island has become home to a stunning range of flora and fauna—especially interesting given its location right at the heart of two cities. In the hour and a half we spent there, we saw all sorts of birds flying about and caught sight of a beautiful heron as it flew across the shrubland—even kestrels are known to hunt around this site.

The plant life of the area was also very varied and, as Dr Blazejewski explained, included many edible species suitable for urban foraging. To me, as a person who has been known to struggle in preparing a tin of soup before now, this was fairly astounding. Also growing on the island, although probably not on the menu, is the poisonous and somewhat psychoactive fly amanita. Unfortunately, and despite evidence of attempts to burn it away, there was a crop of Japanese knotweed, one of the most invasive



Dr Luke showing us some rosebay willowherb, very common on waste ground in August and September

plant species on the planet. If left unchecked, this plant has the potential to cover whole fields, and it is very difficult to remove due to its expansive root system and propensity to return again and again after removal.

After walking across the island and down towards the tranquil waters of the canals, the sun had almost set and it was time to go. There was one last surprise, however, as the hour and a half we had spent there was crowned by a stunning supermoon which rose to greet us as we walked back out of the island. Now I know about this site, I shall certainly be coming back here again before winter sets in!



Manchester FoE's group gather by the Ship Canal, with the unmistakable Beetham Tower in the distance

Join the Scrutiny Team

...because Manchester needs a seventh
scrutiny committee, reports Marc

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The People's Environmental Scrutiny Team is a new Manchester-focused network of individuals. In its short life, it has produced two major reports—*The Case for an Environmental Scrutiny Committee* and *Total Carbon Footprint – time for a second step?*—and a series of shorter reports. These reports are free, accessibly written and aimed at both the 'general reader' and also councillors of Manchester City Council. (A 'total carbon footprint' measures all the energy that has gone into creating a product, not just the energy in using it. Think about your computer...)

Future reports—which anyone can get involved in writing—will include:

- Project X: it's secret (we could tell you, but then we'd have to kill you...) and a lot of fun
- How prepared is Manchester for a short, sharp shock? People's plans, ward plans, 'resilience'
- What is a low-carbon culture?

We may also do reports on veganism, democracy and other subjects. If you have any interest in any of these topics, and you have, or want to develop, skills in researching, writing or graphic design, then please get in touch.

As well as writing reports, we hold interactive meetings, so that people can find out who has what skills, knowledge and ambitions. We ask people to fill in an 'audit' of how good they currently are (from novice, through practitioner and expert to 'ninja') on a host of skills: social media, lobbying councillors, blogging, letters to newspapers/writing press releases, research, public speaking, report writing, video making, meeting design, facilitation and project management.

We also find out if there are any of these that they wish they were better at, and then create projects where those with specific skills can



mentor those who want them. (One of the projects is to make a short film about the FoE weekly electronic digest!)

There's no pressure on people to devote more time than they want, or any expectation that people have to develop skills that they don't want to. However, if people do want to go outside their 'comfort zone', then there will be someone else around who can help make that a useful learning experience for them.

Overall, the Team has two goals.

The first is to create a network of informed and inspired individuals and groups who know each other's strengths, weaknesses and hopes.

a) To offer opportunities for skills and knowledge development, as well as collaborative working, to the people in that network.

b) To seed into that network accurate information about the Council and its performance.

The second goal is to lobby for the creation of a transformative (rather than 'minimal') Environmental Scrutiny Committee as part of the official scrutiny infrastructure of Manchester City Council. We will do this by setting the right example.

Its next meeting is on Monday 17 November, 7pm, at the Friends Meeting House. There are always plenty of ways to be involved without attending meetings. There is a 'jobs list' on the website, with a list of jobs from simple and quick to complex and long.

Learn more at www.environmentalscrutiny.info

Membership Application Form

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Manchester FOE, Green Fish Resource Centre, 46-50 Oldham St, Manchester M4 1LE

As a member you will not only get our quarterly newsletter and a free subscription to national Friends of the Earth's online magazine, "Earthed" but also, if you wish, a membership card offering discounts at selected local businesses. The latest deals are listed on our website (www.manchesterfoe.org.uk/discounts) and will be included with your card.

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Most of our members kindly pay by monthly standing order, which saves us time and money and helps with budgeting. If you are taking out a standing order, please complete the standing order section below (in CAPITALS) and remember to sign and date it before returning the form to us (do not send it to your bank). **Thank you for your support!**

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☐ Tick here if you'd like us to send you a membership card offering discounts at selected local businesses

☐ Tick here if you'd like a free battery charger ☐ Tick here if you'd like a free Love Your Bike vest (size: _____)

Your details will be stored in a database and used to send you information about Manchester Friends of the Earth. We will not pass your information on to other organisations. If you do not wish us to keep your details in our database, please tick here ☐

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Keep Devon's Beavers in the Wild

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Friends of the Earth have just launched a legal challenge to prevent the government, via Natural England, from capturing a family of beavers living happily on the River Otter in Devon. We don't know exactly where they came from, but we're glad they're here.

Beavers are a celebration of how—if allowed—nature can thrive everywhere; they're good for the river, can boost fish stocks and can even help to prevent flooding. They were once found right across Britain and are commemorated in place names such as Beverley and Bardale. They could bring many benefits to English rivers, but the Government wants to remove the Devon beavers and put them in captivity.

As Britain once formed part of the natural range of beavers, and there are already free-living populations in Western Scotland as part of a reintroduction programme, we believe they are protected under the EU Habitats Directive.

This Directive makes it clear that the beaver is a protected species when in its natural range, and this is why FoE is launching a legal challenge and we've created an action to rally support.

In a meeting in the village of Ottery St. Mary more than a hundred local people, including councillors, were in favour of allowing the beavers to remain.

FoE campaigner Alasdair Cameron said 'Beavers belong in England, and are an essential part of our ecosystems—Government plans to trap them should be scrapped.

'The Government needs to listen to what local people are saying, instead of taking a knee-jerk response. This is a fantastic opportunity to study the return of a beautiful and iconic creature.'

Please write to the Minister, Lord de Mauley, and ask him to let the Devon beavers stay in the wild.

<https://www.foe.co.uk/act/keep-devons-beavers-wild>



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TTIP has provoked intense public debate

Thursday 13 November

Tuesday 18 November

Launch of One Million Climate Jobs: the

[illegible]

Our **Full Group Meeting** is on the second

For details of our **Campaigns Meetings** see

Bike Friday is on the last Friday of the month

Can you spare a minute to ring a FREE

If the answer's Yes, you have until Tuesday 4

Manchester is planning to cover large areas

In Liverpool, displays are planned for Everton

How to vote, then? Simple—just visit

Please note that the **Manchester FoF AGM**

Manchester FoE is an award-winning campaign

For more information about Manchester FoE and

Manchester FoE is backing the City's climate