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## Petitions, Puppets and Politics

*Damian outlines progresses and setbacks in the fight against fracking*

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The ongoing campaign against fracking has moved back and forth over the last few months. First of all, our petition to Trafford Council to declare itself a frack-free borough was successful—up to a point. Along with our petition and national FoE's objections on grounds of air pollution and waste disposal, the opposition Labour group at Trafford had already tried to get an anti-fracking motion passed. Not long after we handed our petition in, at the next full council meeting at Trafford Town Hall, the Labour group tabled their motion again and this time, after some discussion and amendments from the Conservatives, it was passed. The wording of the motion, 'opposed to fracking until such time as it can be proved to be safe', is quite forceful from our point of view. However, it does not take coal bed methane into account, which is the technology proposed for the Davyhulme site next to the M60. Some Conservative councillors were of the opinion this is a less damaging technology. So we must still wait and see what will come of the Davyhulme application.

Manchester Friends of the Earth activists have also helped our Lancashire neighbours in their long-running struggle against Cuadrilla. We have been to Preston, Blackburn and Burnley, among other places, to get signatures on a petition to Lancashire County Council asking them to refuse Cuadrilla planning permission on their application to frack on the Fylde. The giant puppet Mr Frackhead came along to help get people's attention (see *photo*). In the run-up to the crucial meeting in January, Lancashire's planning officers recommended the application be rejected, on the grounds that fracking would cause too much noise and nuisance from drilling and lorry movements. So the final decision was put off till 30 April. In the meantime, we expect Cuadrilla to try to win the council over with cosmetic changes, so if you would like to help us with the petition or take part in the Fracking Day of Action in Preston on Saturday 11 April please get in touch at [office@manchesterfoe.org.uk](mailto:office@manchesterfoe.org.uk).



*Mr Frackhead on tour in Lancashire last autumn, outside Accrington Town Hall*

The setback at the national level is rather more serious. You may have been among the 300,000 people who signed the online letter asking the Government not to frack under our homes. As part of the Infrastructure Bill, the Government didn't just go ahead with their proposal to remove people's right to object to fracking under their properties. They also watered down a Labour amendment that would have protected at least part of the countryside by banning fracking under national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty and water catchment areas. Labour stated that if the Government didn't include these protections, it would come out against fracking altogether. What the Government did was to allow fracking under these areas so long as the wellhead is situated outside their boundaries, making a mockery of their protected status.

It wouldn't be fair to finish without one more mention of Mr Frackhead, and true to form he made a public appearance in Manchester as part of the divestment campaign aiming at getting the high street banks to pull out of dirty energy. On Valentine's Day we went to Barclays Bank in Market Street to highlight their support of fracking company Third Energy, who threaten to start fracking in Yorkshire. Carla from national FoE went in to try to close her account, but the staff were uncooperative and barred the doors. However, we got our message across to the public on a busy Saturday and Carla managed to remove her funds at a later date.

## Citizen Science Tackles Pollution

*Sue Hare reports on the Clean Air Workshop*

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A 'Clean Air Workshop' poster on Twitter caught my attention, so I signed up fairly last minute for this event; it seemed a good way to spend a cold Saturday January afternoon. The event was led by Andrew Wood of the Network for Clean Air and organised by Manchester FoE. Arriving with my daughter, we were greeted by a lovely group of people from all over Manchester, Salford, Stockport and Chester.

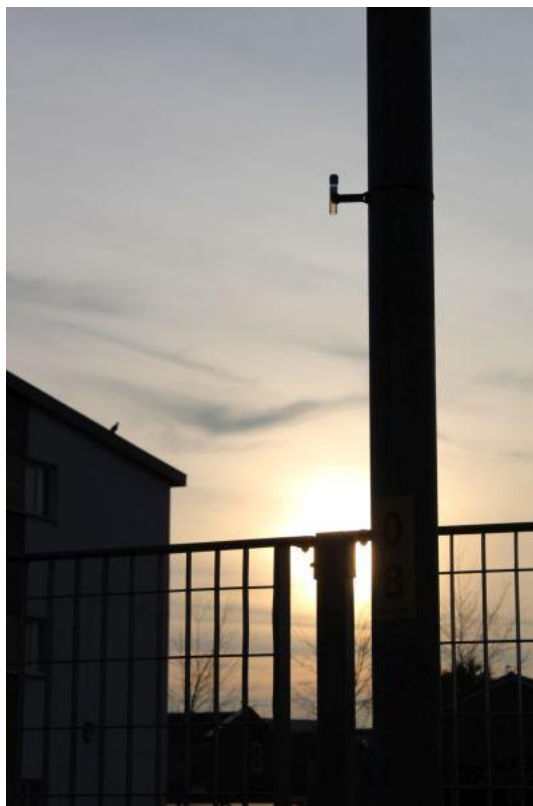
Andrew gave us an excellent overview of air quality and the main pollutants that are monitored in the UK. He explained, for example, the difference between particulates PM10—particles such as dust and pollen—and PM2.5, which are microscopic organic particles, small enough to penetrate the bloodstream. Andrew also told us about nitrogen dioxide, an invisible air pollutant which has known health effects.

The citizen science project that we would be conducting in Manchester would monitor nitrogen dioxide for one month at 25 locations using diffusion tubes. After much discussion, we worked out where we wanted to monitor pollution levels and which pairs of participants would position the tubes. The areas chosen included the Wilmslow Road corridor, St Mary's Way in Stockport, and Ashton Old Road. These were chosen for reasons including heavy use by pedestrians and cyclists, the busiest bus route in Europe and proposed widening of a bypass.

Positioning the tubes was somewhat challenging. They had to be placed 2.5 m–3 m above ground and so required a stepladder. The diffusion tube cap was tight and difficult to remove in near-zero temperatures, and putting the tubes up without being too visible and attracting attention also needed consideration.

Alice and I chose an early Saturday morning to put ours up. After they have been up for four weeks, they will be taken down and sent to a laboratory for analysis. I'm looking forward to discovering how polluted our air is.

Having seen some of the air quality data that exists for Manchester, it's unlikely to be clean and pure—apologies for the pessimism in advance of finding out the data. It's been a very enjoyable project to be part of nonetheless.



*On the side of the lamp post you can see a diffusion tube, ready to start collecting nitrogen dioxide*

## Wellbeing Campaign

*Friends of the Earth has launched a new campaign to prioritise wellbeing*

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We are all aware that we are consuming the earth's resources at an unsustainable rate, but we may not know that the developed world's pursuit of economic growth has not led to a corresponding increase in general wellbeing. This has remained static since the 1970s.

As a response to this, Friends of the Earth have decided to focus on how we can shift our economy's emphasis on growth to deliver wellbeing instead. If you would like to get involved, there will be a free training day at FoE's head office in London on Saturday 25 April where you can take part in an interactive workshop—see [www.foe.co.uk/page/wellbeing-training-discussion-day](http://www.foe.co.uk/page/wellbeing-training-discussion-day) to learn more.



## Bike Friday—bigger and better

*Cat invites all new riders to join in*

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The Love Your Bike Campaign hosts a monthly bike ride, Bike Friday, which is held on the last Friday of every month except December. From eight different starting points across Greater Manchester, volunteer cycle leaders join the commuter traffic to meet up at a central Manchester location—most often a coffee shop!

The rides, which are designed to promote commuter cycling, whether to work, college or the shops, start at 8am—except for the Stockport and Worsley routes, which get going a little earlier, being that bit longer. Each route has an experienced ride leader who will welcome all cyclists, from those of you new to cycling or returning to your bike after a break to those who have been cycling for years. Being aware that having got to your destination in the morning you might want help with your ride home as well, we are happy to help out where we can, with a bit of notice.

Over the years we have often themed the rides to help with our campaigns, such as calling for people to back our cycling manifesto, or to support local bike-related projects. We recently worked with the FutureEverything festival to try out one of their cycle apps. We have even donned bike ‘Mostashes’ as part of Movember!

Our rides generally end in Stevenson Square, at Eastern Bloc Records, where those who have a little time catch up over a coffee and cake (or carrot muffin, toasted teacake, etc!). However, the end point can vary, so please check our website for updates.

We are always looking for more people to join our rides. Whether you are an experienced cyclist or new to the joys of bike riding, the more people we have taking part, the easier it is to put forward our case for more resources for cyclists. In particular, we have vacancies for ride leaders on our Withington and Prestwich routes—training and support can be provided.

For details of our routes, lead contact details and what we have got up to in the past, see

[www.manchesterfoe.org.uk/loveyourbike/bikefriday/](http://www.manchesterfoe.org.uk/loveyourbike/bikefriday/) or email [cat@manchesterfoe.org.uk](mailto:cat@manchesterfoe.org.uk). See you at the end of the month—bring your bike!

## GM Maize—as safe as it seems?

*Food campaigners at Manchester Friends of the Earth pass on an alert from FoE Europe*

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The risk of pollen from genetically modified crops, specifically maize (sweet corn) escaping into the wider environment has been drastically understated, a new study reports. On the back of these findings, FoE Europe has called on the new EU Food Safety Commissioner to immediately stop all cultivation of GM maize in the EU. The European Commission, under pressure from the biotech industry, is understood to be imminently considering allowing cultivation of a second crop of GM maize crop. At the same time, the European Food Safety Authority has announced a new investigation into the safety of all GM maize types either currently being grown in Europe, or scheduled to be grown in the future.

However, researchers from Germany have monitored over a 10-year period how far maize pollen can travel and found that it can be spread over several kilometres. Currently, the guidelines suggest buffer distances of 20–30 metres between GM maize and protected sites. To protect species such as butterflies and moths from GM pollen containing damaging amounts of insecticide, the buffer distances need to be in the “kilometre range”, according to the researchers.

Mute Schimpf, food campaigner for FoE Europe said: “This new research raises serious questions about our scientific understanding of the safety of GM maize and the harm it can do to nature and conventional farming. These findings show we need a root-and-branch reform of the safety checks in place for GM maize. It is clear from this new research that it is nearly impossible to grow GM maize without widespread damage to nature, as well as the contamination of farms producing clean conventional and organic foods. The only logical and scientific conclusion is to halt the cultivation of all GM maize in Europe.”

## Variety Night at the Carlton Club

*Steph presents MFoE's (joint) fundraiser*

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Burlesque, comedy, bellydancing and music—what more do you want at a fundraiser? On Friday 20<sup>th</sup> February, local artists got together at the Carlton Club in Whalley Range and entertained the audience with a show like no other! Manchester hero and bee lover Bez from the Happy Mondays hit the stage and delivered an inspiring speech to start the evening.



*Local legend Bez meets the Real Junk Food Project (with some of their tasty products on the table behind)*

The Real Junk Food Project served up tasty vegetarian and vegan treats from fresh produce that would otherwise have gone to landfill. Steph Lynch who ran the event says she is 'delighted at the success of the event and fully enjoyed all the performances. I want to say a big thank you to all involved'. The event raised £391, which was split between Manchester Friends of the Earth, Clean Up Salford, Action for Sustainable Living and the Real Junk Food Project.



*Folk act Lucy and Virginia on stage at the Carlton Club*



*Steph dancing to the African rhythms of drummer Soul Monkey*

## Review—Tibetan Kitchen

*Now open and serving you momos and chilli on Upper Chorlton Road, reports Steph*

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Delicious, affordable and environmentally friendly! Tibetan Kitchen is a little bit of Tibet situated on the Whalley Range/Chorlton border, offering a range of meat, vegetarian and vegan dishes. Their sustainability policy ensures that their products are sourced as ethically as possible. Their soya milk, tea, coffee and tofu are all organic and they purchase ingredients from local shops such as Unicorn. Their vegan and vegetarian menu is just as wide-ranging as their Red Tractor approved meat options, so you are spoilt for choice! They use biodegradable cutlery for events and recycle their packaging. If that wasn't impressive enough for a takeaway, they also use ecological cleaning products!

I highly recommend you try the Momos—there are meat and veggie varieties. They were so amazing that I ordered thirds! They come with a subtle homemade chilli sauce that is a hit with the Oldham Chilli Club. They also serve a range of curries and stews where you can have a large portion of one or a choice of three with rice cooked to perfection.

Forget having a greasy takeaway at the weekend. Get down to the Tibetan Kitchen for tasty, honest grub that doesn't harm the planet!



## North West Regional Gathering

*Damian gives a round-up of this annual get-together of FoE local groups*

On Valentine's Day Manchester Friends of the Earth welcomed members of local groups from all over the North West, plus some particularly dedicated campaigners who had travelled from the Isle of Man, to the annual Regional Gathering—this time held at the Green Fish centre in Oldham Street, central Manchester.

After an introduction from Carla on behalf of national FoE, and lead regional campaigner Helen, I went to a session run by Anna from Bradford outlining the next steps for Run On Sun. Far too few councils have taken advantage of solar power to help schools run more efficiently and earn money for equipment and activities. As local (and national) elections are coming up, you have an excellent opportunity to ask your candidates where they stand on making funding available for solar schools, or to back the campaign by visiting a school themselves. This is especially important if you live in a borough outside the City of Manchester.



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– please contact us for details.

Afterwards we headed out onto the street (quite literally as it turned out!) with our banner and placards to accompany Mr Frackhead to Barclays Bank (*see the article on page 2*).

Then we just had time for a quick lunch—with seasonal heart-shaped biscuits courtesy of Carla—before the afternoon sessions started. First Helen introduced Farqan, who will be taking over as North West regional campaigner while Helen is on leave.

Later on we learned more about the Nature campaign and how it is progressing, with hints to pay special attention to the plants that thrive in our local areas when designing our Bee Worlds. At Manchester FoE we intend to get busy on a new Bee World later this spring, and we have already got a primary school in South Manchester lined up as the lucky recipients—if you would like to get involved contact Steph at [steph@manchesterfoe.org.uk](mailto:steph@manchesterfoe.org.uk)

If you missed out on this chance to meet fellow campaigners from across the region, you will have an even better opportunity in a few months' time as Basecamp will be back (*see back cover*), only even bigger and better than last time!





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## Coming Up



### Saturday 18 April

Global Day of Action against TTIP.

Join the fight against this secret trade deal.

To find out more and download an Action Guide on how to get involved in FoE's Day of Action by hosting a meeting, hustings or discussion, see [www.foe.co.uk/ttip](http://www.foe.co.uk/ttip).

### Saturday 25 April

Wellbeing Training Day, FoE Head Office, London. Are you interested in an economy that delivers wellbeing, not just growth? FoE are hosting a free training day in the London office, The Printworks, 139 Clapham Road, SW9 0HP, from 11am to 5pm (*For more details see the article on page 3.*)

### Saturday 6 June

Envirolution. Manchester Friends of the Earth will be having a stall at this annual free celebration of local community and environmental activism, so come along and check us out! Platt Fields Park, 1–7pm.

## Regular Events



Our **Full Group 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 come and find out more about the group. All 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 every month for each of our campaigns: Climate Change and Fracking, Transport and Food.

**Bike Friday** is on the last Friday of the month (not December). Rides from various locations in Greater Manchester to work, college or university. 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). [www.bikefriday.org](http://www.bikefriday.org)

## Book your place at this year's Basecamp!

Last year's Basecamp was such a success Friends of the Earth have not only decided to hold it at the same place again this year (Castleton Youth Hostel in the Peak District) but you can also book earlier this time round!

The event will be held from **Friday 12 June** to **Sunday 14 June**. There will be a similar choice of accommodation to last year—choose between the YHA building Losehill Hall, one of a range of B&Bs in the nearby village, or pitch your tent in the little field just across the stream from the YHA itself.

Book your ticket at

<https://basecamp2015.eventbrite.co.uk>.

## Manchester FoE Group Officers for 2015

On Thursday 27 January we held our AGM at Manchester FoE, followed by a meal at Dough in the Northern Quarter. We are delighted to announce we have elected a record nine group officers for 2015!

**Coordinator:** Ali Abbas

**Treasurer:** Julian Dearlove

**Fundraising Officer:** Stephanie Lynch

**Media Officer:** Lyndsey Fall

**Membership Officer:** Colette Humphrey

**Newsletter Officer:** Damian Cross

**Publicity Officer:** Pete Abel

**Volunteer Officer:** Cat Thomson

**Web Officer:** Graeme Sherriff

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>