

GREEN MATTERS

Manchester Friends of the Earth's Newsletter

Railways to Despair

Early in the morning of 16th December, Manchester FoE joined National FoE staff at Victoria Station to protest about the lack of funding going into

outfit? The media's coverage of the campaign was sadly very sparse, but commuters were sympathetic and took the leaflets from us. Each leaflet contained a

'First we had leaves on the line then the wrong type of snow on the line, and now, apparently, too many trains on the line.'



railways in the North of England. Former Manchester FoE transport campaigner Richard Dyer (now national FoE campaigner) was dressed as a school boy, Alex Phillips of National FoE was dressed as a cowboy, and MFOE's own Michael Bane was dressed as a jolly Santa. The message was simple: What do you want for Christmas: a train set or a cowboy

letter to send to the chief executive of the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA).

Unfortunately, the health of the railways continues to decline. The government is cutting services and investment, yet planning to spend more money on roads and airports. Mick Rix, General secretary of the drivers' union Aslef hit the nail on the head:



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Commenting on the Strategic Rail Authority's (SRA) decision to cut 104 train services a day from May, Richard Dyer said:

'While it is good news that the SRA is taking action to make rail services more reliable, this will be little comfort for those passengers who see their train services cut. Desperately needed improvements that would provide capacity for more trains in places like Birmingham and Manchester have already been shelved because of spiralling costs. If the SRA is serious about meeting the Government's target of 50 per cent passenger growth, it must cut costs in the industry. The Government must provide more funding and show its commitment to public transport, rather than building new roads.'

Look out for more reactions from FoE to this sad derailing of the Government's sustainable transport policies.

Transport, Communities and the Environment

This Longsight-based project is progressing well. We've been working with community groups in the Hamilton Road and Northmoor areas of Longsight to find out about problems they have getting around and what ideas they have for improvements. We do this using the technique of Participatory Appraisal (PA) which is designed to be accessible to all, even those for whom English is not their first language.

We've now done 16 sessions, some on the street talking to passers-by and most with established community groups at their meetings. Having amassed a lot of information, we're now moving into a second phase of questions, which will be designed to build on the themes already raised in the first phase. Up-to-date information, including photos and a list of the PA sessions that we have done, is available on our website.

Solar Grants

Thanks to a number of grant schemes from the Government you can now get fully involved in the renewable energy revolution by installing them in your own home or office.

Substantial grants are available towards the installation of solar electricity equipment, whether for householders, businesses or social housing groups. Grants are available worth between 40 and 65% of total installation costs and can be applied for on-line.

It would be good if there is a large take up in the offer between now and the end of the financial year (end March), so that when the Government reviews the scheme they don't decide to cut the amount available.

For more information about the way the scheme works see the Energy Savings Trust website: <http://www.est.co.uk/solar/>

FoE employee Martyn Williams has already taken advantage of the scheme said, 'The grant turned a solar roof from an idle pipe dream to something that was actually affordable. It is enormously satisfying to know that our house is now generating its own power - yet looks no different to any other in the terrace. Being among the first houses in the country to install such a system means the you need the pioneer spirit and have to learn fast - but the results are definitely worth it.'

Manchester Friends of the Earth

Manchester Friends of the Earth (MFOE) is a voluntary group of people who are working with the communities of Manchester to provide a better environment for all. This newsletter illustrates our major current campaigns but there's lots more we're working on and we welcome new people. We hold a regular Campaign Meeting on the second Tuesday of each month, at 7pm in the Friends Meeting House.

This newsletter was printed on 100% recycled paper. For more information on the group check out our website at,

<http://www.manchesterfoe.org.uk> ring us on 0161 834 8221 or email office@manchesterfoe.org.uk

A Third Runway for Manchester?

Take this opportunity to tell the Government where to stick its plans to tarmac over the country.

The Government has published plans for a massive expansion in airports: not just at Manchester but at every airport in the country, and with some new ones thrown in for good luck.

They expect that the number of people flying would increase to in excess of 500 million a year by 2030 (up from 180M now). What this would mean for Manchester is: growth from 18.5M passengers now to a minimum of 40M and more likely 60-65M passengers a year - that is, the present size of Heathrow; the construction of more taxiways and aprons (2010-15), a fourth terminal by 2015, and then possibly a 3rd runway, built during the decade from 2020; plus new roads, more noise and air pollution, climate change emissions and general environmental damage.

The consultation on these proposals is happening now. The aviation industry is unsustainable environmentally and economically, and is unfairly subsidised. MFoE believe it is vital that we take this opportunity to voice our disgust at the plans. If we make our case now at the consultation phase, we are more likely to be listened to later on. At MFoE we are sending our own ten-page response to the consultation to Greater Manchester MPs and planning to report their reaction to the media with the intention of initiating debate.

- Go to www.manchesterfoe.org.uk to print out a sample letter to send it in response to the consultation, or write to your MP asking him or her to consider the environmental and social implications of these proposals.

Email graeme@manchesterfoe.org.uk

or phone our office if you'd like to get involved in media stunts that will be happening during the consultation period.

Join the European-wide GATS Day of Protest

The General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) is a World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreement that we all should be concerned about. GATS will remove government regulations that are considered to be "unnecessary" barriers to trade in the area of service, from distribution and transport, broadcasting and the arts, provision of basics such as water and may include local authority services too. Friends of the Earth is campaigning to ensure that local communities and their natural environment are protected from the adverse impacts of trade and economic globalisation that GATS represents.

The growing opposition to GATS is gaining momentum in the run-up to the offers deadline on 31st March 2003. Organisations across Europe have declared 13 March 2003 as an international day of protest and action about GATS. It timed to coincide with the decision making meeting of the 133 Committee – the secretive EU body that have decision-making power over the GATS process.

In the UK, Friends of the Earth along with the World Development Movement (WDM) and People and Planet (P&P) are teaming up to raise considerable concerns about the secretive and wide-ranging negotiations, as well as to put direct public pressure on the UK Government.

On 13th March 2003, FoE, WDM and P&P will be targeting the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) sections of the Government Regional Offices across the country. The DTI are the government department responsible for Britain's input to the GATS process. The aim will be to gain media attention and show how Big Business will make a fortune as the Government secretly sells off our services and the right to regulate them.

- You can get involved by taking part in the Manchester Day of Action outside the Regional Government Office at Piccadilly Plaza on Thursday 13th March. We require volunteers to take part in 'mini-street theatre', handing out leaflets and talking to the public and possibly to DTI officials. Please contact the office on 0161 834 8221 or email office@manchesterfoe.org.uk if you wish to take part or for more information.**



Be a Friend of the Earth

To join Manchester Friends of the Earth, please complete the details on the form below and post to Manchester Friends of the Earth, 6 Mount Street, Manchester, M2 5NS. Financially, it helps us if you can take out a standing order. To take out a standing order, complete the details below on the right (remembering to select either monthly or yearly), sign it and return to us at the above address.

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Email _____

Telephone number: _____

The membership rates are given below, please tick the appropriate box:

- Unwaged £3 Low waged £6
 Waged £10 Household £20

I enclose a donation of:

- £100 £50
 £25 £10
 £5 other £ _____

Only complete this section for standing orders:

Your bank account number _____

Your bank account name _____

Your branch name and address _____

Branch sort code _____

Instructions to the bank

Pay the sum of £ _____ on the _____ (day/date) of each month/year starting from _____ (day/date) until further notice to 'Manchester Friends of the Earth' account number 27187308, sort code 72-00-01, bank address: Girobank Ltd, 62 Hagley Road B16 8PE.

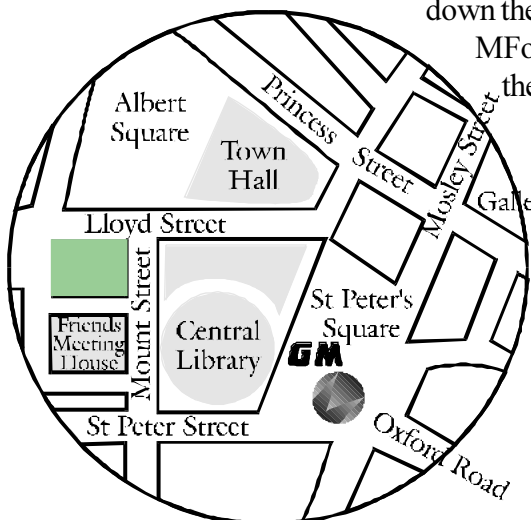
Signed _____

Date _____



How To Find Manchester Friends Of The Earth

Manchester FoE's Campaigns Centre is located in the basement of the Friends' Meeting House (the Quakers' building), 6 Mount Street, behind Central Library. To find the Campaign Centre, take Bootle Street which is down the side of the Friends' Meeting House on the left as you look at it. Ring the MFoE bell if the door is locked or enter and go down the corridor, turn left then immediate right and we're on the left.



The Campaigns Centre is run totally by volunteers, so it is not always open. Please ring us on 0161 834 8221 in advance if you wish to see someone.

Meetings: 7pm on the 2nd Tuesday of the month, in the Friends' Meeting House, generally Room 5.

Manchester FOE, 6 Mount Street, Manchester, M2 5NS.
Tel: 0161 834 8221, email: office@manchesterfoe.org.uk
<http://www.manchesterfoe.org.uk>