

MANCHESTER CLIMATE FORTNIGHTLY

Free!

www.manchesterclimatefortnightly.info

Issue 18, Feb 22 2009

Call to Real Action

Earlier this year- as readers of MCFly 15 to 17 will be aware- a report called "The Call to Action" was approved by Manchester City Council. The Council had commissioned a London-based consultancy called 'Beyond Green' to write it. It's fair to say that many Mancunians concerned about climate change had mixed feelings.

While they were happy that the long wait for a climate change statement from the Council was over, at the same time they were underwhelmed by this report. They were unhappy that the 50 page document cost so much (the phrase "70 to 100 thousand pounds" has not been denied), that it ducked important issues (not merely Manchester airport, but also consultation and engagement) and that it was so vague on targets for reducing greenhouse gases.

However, instead of shrugging shoulders and drowning sorrows, various Mancunians have come together with a shared determination to do better (and cheaper) work.

This "Call to Real Action" group, which includes people from various campaigns and also "first- timers" has already met twice. It has discussed exactly what it wants to produce (a report of similar length but superior detail and quality), and how, and what skills to learn and share on the way. Writing groups are being formed to tackle topics as diverse as aviation, engagement, energy production, transport, food, housing, social justice, resilience and the proverbial "many many more."

The group is asking (and plans to answer!) a set of questions about what actions the Council can and should take, what actions the people of Manchester can take to both reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for the inevitable changes that are now 'locked in' because of the too-slow response to scientific warnings over the last twenty years.

Although work has already started, it is not too late to get involved, and there are lots of specific jobs that will need doing that do not take much time or specialised skills.

For more information about how to get involved and see the work as it unfolds, see www.calltorealaction.wordpress.com. If you've questions, suggestions, contacts, you can contact calltorealaction@googlemail.com. There is also conference on Saturday 7th March from 1.30pm to 5pm at the Central Hall, Oldham St, Manchester, where all the above questions will be discussed. [Declaration of interest: MCFly editors are involved in the above group.]

MMU-ving out

Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) has released its plans to build a new £70m campus in Hulme. The site - named Birley Fields - also aims to be the greenest campus in Britain.

It will replace sites in Didsbury and Rusholme and aims to bring together training facilities for 5,000 teachers, nurses, social workers and other public sector professionals. This plan has been formed after plans to expand the Didsbury site were met with hostility from local residents last year.

A master plan for the Hulme site will be published soon before a full of public consultation begins in the late spring. MMU's press release on the matter expressed how enthusiastic the council are about this proposal, with Council leader Sir Richard Leese saying "This substantial investment in the area, and commitment to its continuing regeneration, is particularly welcome given the recession."

Although it is claimed that the development will create jobs and services for residents in Hulme and neighbouring Moss Side, many residents will be angry to see one of their most valued green spaces disappear. The plans are particularly controversial with the Friends of Birley Fields who have campaigned for a long time to preserve the land.

Long-term member of the group Rob Squires explained that "The development is another form of economic growth and given current climate change issues all forms of economic growth should be stopped unless proven to be carbon neutral". Rob is doubtful that this development will be carbon neutral feels that the space should be used for "social and ecological purposes to the benefit of local residents, because even if the campus is green, it will still destroy the Birley Fields forever".

Call to Real Action Conference on March 7th

1.30pm-5pm

Central Hall, Oldham St.

To talk about what Manchester SHOULD look like, what we want the Council- and ourselves- to do to make that vision happen. Topics include food, transport, energy, housing, resilience, the Airport. Includes Q & A

Welcome to a new regular section in Manchester Climate Fortnightly...

The Council Gritter...

for nuggets that fall off the back of a truck...

SHOW ME THE MONEY!!

The Council Executive has tabled its budget for 2009/10, and its medium term financial strategy for three years. The next things that happen are that it goes to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee on February 23, and then to full council on March 4. There is no danger of it failing to pass, since Labour has a 2 to 1 majority over the Lib Dems in full council. The budget makes for fascinating reading.

On page 38 (of 166) we learn that the "Major corporate priorities" are "Waste and Recycling, Reflecting and managing the impact of the economic downturn, Children's and Youth Services, Climate change /sustainability."

But kindly remove your thumbs from the cork of that bottle of 1990 Dom Perignon White Gold Jeroboam, because there's **No New Money**... "*Specific provision for Climate Change / sustainability and Events was made in last years budget.*"

Yes, that'd be the million quid that they still haven't spent from the infamous "Carbon Reduction of Innovation Fund" (see MCFly #6 passim ad nauseam). Sigh.

For more on the Budget, see the MCFly blog

Board Rigid?

One outcome of the "Call to Action" report was an "Environmental Strategy Performance Board," chaired by Sir Howard Bernstein (the Chief Executive Officer- top bureaucrat- of the Council). The Board is made up of [at least] 21 folks, mostly council officers, but also includes the Airport's top environment bod. It has already met twice and our saucy source says reports are being commissioned left right and centre, from both within the Council and also beyond into the private sector. MCFly don't know if it'll be able to get the minutes easily (we've asked sweetly) or with a bit of a tussle, but see them we shall. The ESPB might become an extremely effective tool for overcoming inertia and lack of co-ordination between council departments.

Here's hoping...

But where's the oversight and transparency? As we asked in MCFly 16:

Who will be the external (outside of Greater Manchester)



people on it be? Will these people be given access to all documentation, and the time and authority to audit/ask uncomfortable questions of the City Council's employees and elected members? Will the meetings of this Board be open to the public? Will the public be invited to give evidence to the Board?

MCFly has learnt that various individuals have been approached to be on some sort of "Environmental Strategy Advisory Board". But would it be able to commission independent research, and have a secretariat that enabled it to hold the ESPB to account? If not, wouldn't they just be like non-executive directors at so many companies that have been hit by the credit crunch? Anyone worth asking is too smart to risk their reputation to be seen as a fig leaf or rubber stamp. If the Council is casting around for a model of how this all might work, they could do worse than look at what Sheffield has been up to- They've got a mixed board, and the minutes get published.<http://tinyurl.com/dfmmmu>

The green and the good have been interviewed for five 'non-political' posts on the Environment Commission (see MCFly 17, page 2). The full-bodied Commission will meet for the first time in early March. More info as it comes to hand...

Manchester City Council recently went to the trouble of advertising for a Director of Environmental Strategy (or some such similar title). And they went to the trouble of short-listing. And interviewing.... and, whoops, they didn't appoint any of the candidates. So, watch this space- when it's re-advertised, we'll let all you budding strategists know...

Coming soon... More on the ESPB... Proud Of Manchester? You will be... In the wake of the TIF-referendum, wounds have been licked, cups cried into, and now there is a plan B (of the Bang?) in development...

Putting all this in perspective: We focus on Manchester not because it is the worst. Quite contrary, within the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (Bolton, Wigan, Oldham Trafford, Stockport, Tameside, Rochdale, Bury and Salford), Manchester can plausibly claim to be head, shoulders and most of a spinal column ahead of t'others. Because they're the busiest, there's the most to say. And it's where we live. With any luck, Salford/Bury etc Climate Fortnightly will spring up and pay the same close attention to what's going on there too...

Local and Regional

Feb 11 Around 35 students hold a climate change 'Eviction Demonstration' outside (and on top of) a Royal Bank of Scotland branch at the University of Manchester Students Union. People and Planet want the Students Union to discontinue their lease.

Feb 10 Around 30 people hear Richard Cowell and Victoria Johnson talk about local and global issues around climate change, at the last ever Manchester Climate Forum event.

Feb 10 The Northwest Regional Development Agency will put £3.8m into Bury to make 73 hectares of brownfield land into a community woodland.

Feb 13 Manchester Airport becomes first airport in the UK to gain the Carbon Trust Standard, certifying a reduced carbon footprint commitments to further reductions.

Feb 13 Stockport company Fairfield AD Ltd. to build £3m anaerobic digestion plant to create green energy from food leftovers.

Feb 13 United Utilities is to spend £300,000 on helping North West communities go green, in partnership with environmental charity Groundwork.

Feb 13 A zero carbon 650 home building scheme near Wigan is shelved due to diminished financial viability.

National News

Feb 12 Government announces "green" makeovers of hundreds of thousands of homes, involving insulation and low carbon technology.

Feb 16 Ten new wind farms may be built on Scotland's coast, as Crown Estate gives companies permission to explore the area. Scottish Power and E.On are among them.

Feb 18 The Guardian reports the Department for Transport (DfT) asked pro-aviation lobby Flying Matters to help them keep aircraft emissions out of climate change laws.

Feb 18 Plane Stupid activists try to turn Southampton Airport into a refugee camp. 30 years early, we reckon...

Feb 22 Environmental campaigners from 40 developing countries sign a letter accusing the UK government of being

'climate criminals' for their plans to build new coal fired power stations.

Global News

Feb 10 Mayors from 350 European cities sign EU climate change agreement pledging carbon dioxide emission reductions of 20 percent plus by 2020.

Feb 19 Ceres, a group of investors and environmentalists, create a "Climate Watch" list of companies whose competitiveness may be damaged by their lack of action on climate change. It includes Exxon-Mobil and GM.

Feb 20 It emerges that the world's richest countries have delivered less than 10 percent of the money they pledged to help poorer nations adapt to climate change.

Scary Science

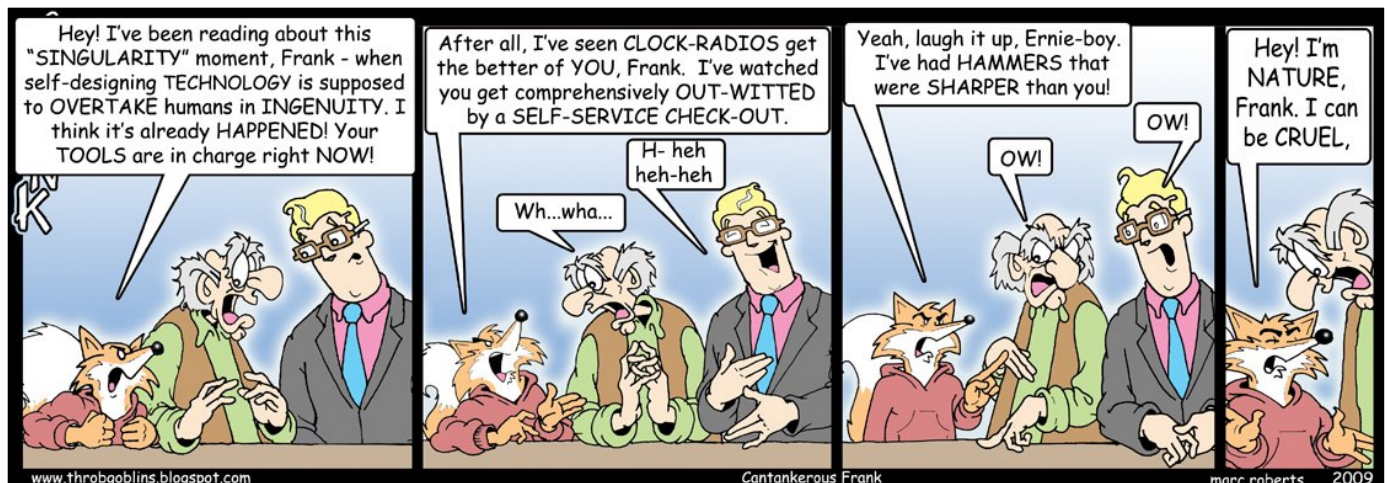
Feb 13 NOAA's Global Monitoring Division reports global concentrations of carbon dioxide, jumped 2.28 parts per million (ppm) in 2008. The Growth rate for CO₂ concentration over the past decade has been 40% higher than that of the 1990s, at 2.1 ppm. Simultaneously, carbon sinks (primarily oceans and rainforests) are absorbing less...

Apocalypso Beat

Feb 9 Northern Ireland's environment minister banned a government advert making the link between saving energy in the home and tackling climate change as "insidious propaganda." Sammy Wilson, a key Democratic Unionist Party figure, says the climate is naturally cooling, not warming.

Read all about it

Business Week reports that despite the acclaim of Europe's climate-change policies, they aren't actually cutting carbon: the EU's Carbon-Trading policies allow companies to buy and sell permits, the number of which is not actually being reduced. Governments can tout the job creation, business development, and energy security benefits of renewables; and industry has lobbied for a flood of cheap permits - nobody has an incentive to change things. <http://tinyurl.com/c7s3wa>



As the planet **heat**s up

(**Now**, not in 50 years),

it's hard to feel **OK!**

So say **HELLO!** to MCFly's

new gossip column...

Social Clim^{ing}

Rumour reaches MCFly Towers that the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, young Ed Miliband- so fresh-faced that he still gets carded when he goes in his local boozier- will be heading up North sometime in the next month or so, to see how the provincials are coping with this climate change thingie. So, there's a frantic scramble to shovel oodles of money out the door (it needed spending before the end of the financial year anyway). Then Ed, (who proclaimed the need for a grass-roots campaign to keep the government honest on climate change... the day before Plane Stupid shut down Stansted Airport!), can have his photo taken in front of this or that funded wind turbine/CHP plant/cherubic tree-planting tot, and proclaim that the HMG is Giving Us the Tools to Finish the Job.

And who will win the impending turf war within the AGMA commissions over climate change? The fingers-crossed punt is on the Environment Commission. The smart money is on the Economic Development, Skills and Employment Commission (the artists previously known as Manchester Enterprises, and producers of the mini-Stern, and purveyors of Carbon Trading schemes.)

Of course, the *really* smart money is on shotguns, canned food and an island redoubt.

And this, from the Heathrow Cheerleaders

"The TUC and its affiliated unions have asked the Labour Research Department (LRD) to carry out a survey on climate change and the workplace. We hope to find examples of union workplace action on global warming and to identify the problems faced by union reps and activists in this area. The survey will contribute to union campaigning and publications on the environment. The survey is on LRD's website:

www.lrd.org.uk/surveys/climate"

Maybe they could try leading by example?

Support MCFly

Concerned about climate change? Think that local action is vital? The future of MCFly depends on YOU.

We need writers, proof readers, people to do layout and design..and other jobs small and large.

No experience necessary - whether you want to sharpen your journalistic skills or learn from scratch please get in touch editor@manchesterclimatefortnightly.info

WHAT'S COMING UP

Feb 23-27 The IDEa, in association with the Nottingham Declaration Partnership, is hosting the Local Government Climate Change Online Conference on 23-27 February. Attend for free at www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=9371101.

Weds Feb 25 Stop Expansion of Manchester Airport meeting. 7pm University of Mcr Students Union.

Thurs Feb 26 Sustainable Neighbourhoods Partnership Forum. 6-8 pm, Committee Rooms 2 & 3, Manchester Town Hall

Thurs 26 Greenpeace meeting at Ape and Apple, John Dalton St, starting 7.45pm.

Fri Feb 27 Deadline for Manchester 16-25s seeking money for their green projects to apply for £500 from the Green Machine seed fund. Call 0161 228 0459, or email: greenmachine@myvp.org.uk

Fri 27 Critical Mass bike ride 6pm, Central library.

Sun March 1 GAPS allotment day. 10-5pm Bethnall Drive allotments, Fallowfield. Lunch provided!

Tues March 3 Manchester Climate Action social. 8pm, Sandbar Grovosenor St.

Thurs March 5 Black Environment Network conference. 9 to 5.30, Luther-King Centre, Manchester www.ben-network.org.uk/

Thurs March 5 "What do you know? Energy Use and Behaviour Change" at Bridgewater Hall, 10 to 4pm www.energychange.info/workshops

Sat Mar 7 Call to Real Action conference. 1.30-5.00pm, Central Hall, Oldham St.

www.calltorealaction.wordpress.com

Mon Mar 9 Make a Difference Campaign Roadshow. 10.00-16.00, Manchester Town Hall. Free Entry.

Comments, leads, leaks and offers of no-strings money to editor@manchesterclimatefortnightly.info
We blog a lot at manchesterclimatefortnightly.blogspot.com