

Manchester Climate Fortnightly

www.manchesterclimatefortnightly.info

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Biofools?

The University of Manchester has recently announced a partnership with Shell that will bring £5million of the oil giant's money into University coffers to fund biofuels research.

The Centre of Excellence in Biocatalysis, Biotransformations and Biocatalytic Manufacture will undertake work to advance biofuel technology and increase Shell's profits, which last year hit £13.9billion as a result of rising oil prices, a record for a UK listed company. The specific focus of the project will be 'white' biotechnology, which utilizes microorganisms to increase speed and energy efficiency in the process of transforming organic material into ethanol that can be burnt in place of conventional oil-based fuels.

Biofuels technology seems set to become an increasingly prominent field of research. The European Parliament's Committee for Industry, Transport and Research (ITRE) confirmed in September a commitment to make biofuels constitute 10% of fuel used in the transport sector by 2020, as part of the EU's Renewable Energy Directive. The issue is expected to go before the European Parliament in December.

Many environmental and social justice campaigners have reacted with alarm to the coming biofuels expansion. Biofuels

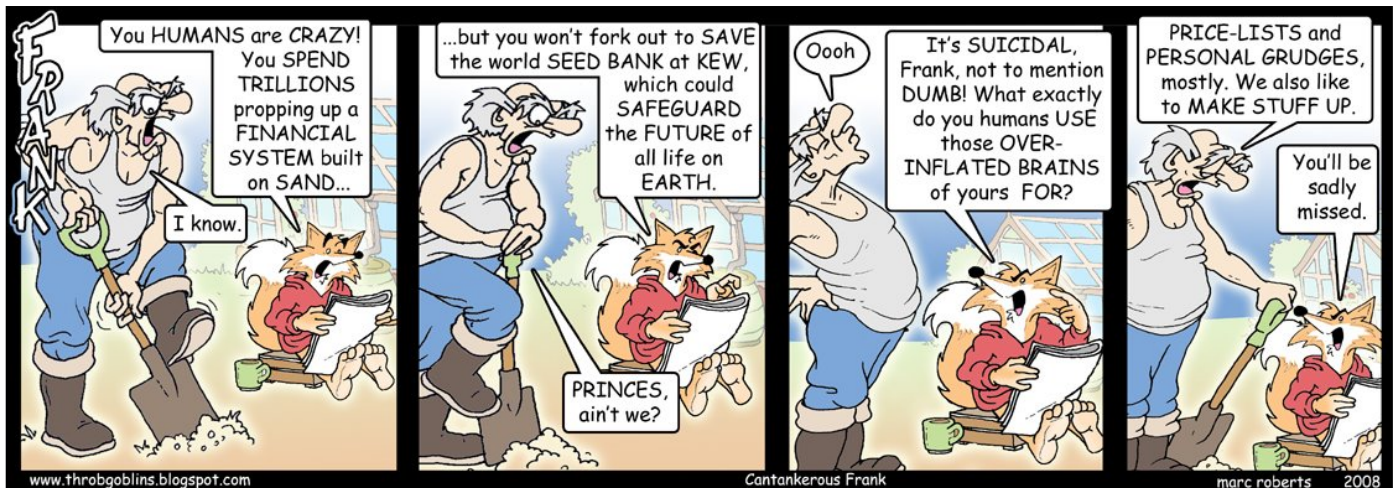
Watch, a UK based NGO, asserts that biofuels may represent a greater threat to sustainability than fossil fuels since their mass production will entail destruction of large forested areas in the developing world that act as crucial carbon sinks. Furthermore, biofuel production is partly blamed for recent global food price rises, as land used for food production is switched to supplying petrol pumps.

Environmentalists in Manchester have therefore responded angrily to the University's plans, which come in the wake of several recent controversial partnerships between the University and other multi-national corporations with poor environmental records. Most notable among these are the £25million tie-in with Tesco which established the Sustainable Consumption Institute, and the £4million deal with BP to fund executive education programs. Manchester University Students Union Communications Officer, Robbie Gillet, commented, "The

University Management don't seem to realise that by engaging in partnerships with companies like Shell, they are endorsing and legitimizing their abysmal environmental and human rights records."

A Manchester University spokesperson defended the decision, saying, "The most effective contribution to addressing critical issues facing today's society can only be made through an effective university and industry partnership." They also claim the university has a "responsibility" to assist "leading commercial organizations."

"The University Management are endorsing and legitimizing the abysmal environmental and human rights records of these companies"



Local and Regional

Sept 29 The Radcliffe-based "Ascot Environmental" is investing £30m on a waste disposal facility in Scotland, which will provide enough power for 9,000 homes. The 'gasification' site will open next year, and be the first of its kind in Britain.

Oct 6 Lancashire County Council has launched a new project to subsidize the cost of small-scale renewable energy generation equipment. The project aims to help businesses save money on energy bills, while cutting CO2 emissions in the process. Lancashire County Developments, the council's economic development unit, will run the initiative. It is available to any Lancashire-based small to medium-sized business, providing they have carried out an energy-efficient audit. Lancashire County The initiative will last for six months and give up to 50% towards the cost of biomass boilers, solar electricity and small-scale hydro power.

Oct 10 Reverend Greg Forster, of St. Wilfred's Church at Northenden, hopes to emulate the success of the New Mills hydro-electric project. He is launching a campaign to produce green electricity for his parish using water from a weir on the River Mersey. The Environment Agency is currently considering these plans and hopes to make a decision in the next couple of months. MCFly will keep you posted.

National

Oct 3 In the latest cabinet reshuffle PM Gordon Brown created a new office, The Department of Climate Change and Energy (DCCE). The new department, headed by Ed Miliband (Dave's brother), will deal with government policy on international adaptation to climate change.

Global

September 30 A Brazilian government agency that provides land to settlers is the largest illegal logger in the

Amazon rainforest and could face criminal prosecution, Environment Minister Carlos Minc said Monday. Minc criticized the Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform, or Incra, for occupying the top six places on a new government list of the 100 largest illegal loggers.

For a fuller account of the planet's misadventures over the last 2 weeks, see www.manchesterclimatefortnightly.info

Scary Science

According to a new International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) report, 52% of the amphibians, 35% of birds and 71% of reef-building coral are, "particularly susceptible" to climate change. The research identified more than 90 biological traits which are thought to make species most susceptible to climate change. These include: specialized habitat requirements, limited dispersal ability and water-dependent larvae. 3,438 of the world's 9,856 bird species, 3,217 of 6,222 amphibians, and 566 of 799 warm-water reef-building coral species are affected.. Released at the World Conservation Congress in Barcelona, Wendy Foden, of IUCN's Species Program said "Climate change is already happening, but conservation decision makers currently have very little guidance on which species are going to be the worst affected."

The Apocalypso Beat

Good News for Climate Change Denying Clubbers

Low-cost airline Jet2.com is to increase capacity on its Manchester-Ibiza schedule from summer 2009. The airline said it will start a daily service from May 9 and use a larger Boeing 757 on Saturdays and Monday, representing a 27 per cent increase in capacity at peak times. Jet2.com is also starting a new Friday evening service, in addition to the regular daily flight, which will depart Manchester at 8.05pm from early June to September.

New on the blog: We review the "Muslim Green Guide to Reducing Climate Change"

WHAT'S COMING UP

Monday Oct 13 Campaign against Climate Change meeting at the Friends Meeting House 7.15pm.

Tuesday Oct 14 "Sustainable Cities - The Future," Meeting hosted by Manchester Evening News at their offices, from 6pm. Speakers include Tony Juniper, Cllr Richard Cowell, Co-op Estates' Lynda Shillaw, Manchester University Prof. John Handley.

Thursday Oct 16 Stop Expansion at Manchester Airport meeting, 7pm. Greenfish Resource Centre 45-50 Oldham St, Central Manchester.

Wednesday Oct 22 "Engaging the public in sustainable energy futures: lessons from practice". Hosted by the University of Salford, from 9:30am to 5pm. The event is free and is sponsored by the ESRC.

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