

MANCHESTER CLIMATE FORTNIGHTLY

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Issue 13, December 7 2008

Murky development plans for MERCi

Manchester's first centre for sustainability is reported to have received notice of a compulsory purchase order to make way for a new super-development to be named Holt Town. Cibitas - a consortium that includes private developers and an international investment bank- are leading the project and describe Holt Town Waterfront as a new quarter of Manchester.

The development will span an area of 38 hectares (around 38 football pitches) across East Manchester, including Ancoats where MERCi (Manchester Environmental Resource Centre initiative) is based. MERCi is a charity for sustainable living and established Bridge-5 Mill in 2001 to provide a space for debate and action. The old converted mill has been carefully renovated to high ethical standards, demonstrating the latest in green technology as well as some simple but effective measures. Key features include a living roof, compost toilet, the use of reclaimed timber, straw bale walls and a vegetable patch.

The building hosts a number of progressive projects and organisations, acting as a hub for Manchester-based activist and campaign groups. At the same time, MERCi prioritises the needs of the less privileged and more immediately local population. Although this can be a difficult balance to strike, the project has plenty of success stories to boast of. Local school children with special educational needs are regularly seen volunteering in the garden and the doors are often opened to the community for internet access, open days and fun days. One of the fastest expanding projects is Herbie fruit and veg van that delivers cost-price fruit and veg to streets that lack a local grocery store.

MCFly awaits news of this case as MERCi is soon to begin negotiations with the developers. An optimistic view would note that planners for the new district will be looking for ways to boost their green credentials, and the publicly available plans do not show Bridge-5 Mill as a building to be demolished. None the less, tenants of Bridge-5 Mill brace themselves for a battle.

QWERTY meets Energy

Two Manchester University academics have led work on a report about sustainable energy in the UK. Professor Simon Guy and Dr Patrick Devine-Wright have authored a study with the predictably cheesy title 'Powering Our Lives: Sustainable Energy Management and the Built Environment'.

Over 213 fun-packed pages, it looks at how the UK's buildings and spaces will need to evolve to help cut carbon emissions and cheerfully concludes that the UK is 'locked-in' to using certain forms of energy not because they are better but because 'that's the way we've always done things around here...' i.e. It would cost too much to change the infrastructure and create and enforce the regulations to support it.

Professor John Beddington, the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser and Director of the Foresight Programme (www.foresight.gov.uk), the government think tank that co-sponsored the work with the Department for Communities and Local Government, said: "The energy used to power buildings is responsible for over 50% of UK carbon emissions.... We need to think again about how we

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It's official: Manchester still less green than 2007

Last MCFly we reported on the "Sustainable Cities Index," in which Manchester had dropped from 12th place in 2007 to 15th. However, the whole report had been pulled while the judges - Forum for the Future - re-checked their maths. The report has now been re-released, and although some cities have gone up or down, Manchester is right where it was, 14 places away from its 2010 goal (First, not 29th, for any smart alecks who may have wandered in).

So, two questions need answering. The first is one we fruitlessly asked the council in our first report: What has the Council *actually implemented* in the last 12 months that would give them a realistic expectation of having a better rating than the previous year. The second is - what's the cunning plan for being the Greenest City in Britain by 2010?

Guest

Commentary: **Going South by Northwest?**

On November 6 the Northwest Development Agency (www.nwda.gov.uk) held the 'prestigious and influential conference **'Climate Change: Impact on Change'** in Liverpool. A few hundred delegates from the private and public sectors (with a tiny sprinkling of environmental charities, campaign groups and social enterprises) were updated on the progress the region was making on tackling climate change.

Kevin Bocquet (of regional news fame) chaired the day, which was built around the NWDA's Regional Climate Change Action Plan - Rising to the Challenge. Speakers included Bryan Gray (Chair of the NWDA), Professor Micheal Kelly - chief scientific advisor to the Department of Communities and Local Government, Nichola Hanley of the European Commission, Andy Togher of the Carbon Trust as well as words of wisdom from ASDA, Peel Holdings and British Nuclear Fuels.

The conference was aimed at 'key regional businesses, public sector stakeholders and decision makers' - in particular, national and regional businesses that have previously committed to the Action Plan of November 2006.

As speaker after speaker spoke of the challenges and opportunities, climate change became less and less of an 'Inconvenient Truth', and more a 'convenient economic opportunity' - particularly for inherently unsustainable industries we thought we had seen the back of.

As expected the elephant in the room, (economic growth) was largely ignored. The acknowledgement that we consume too much was illustrated by the 'three planets analysis' but expediently ignored and contradicted by the likes of ADSA who re-iterated its aim of getting the best deal for its customers!

Albert Einstein once said '*We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.*' Going by the conference agenda and delegates list we are all doomed! That is bad enough in itself but to watch our captains of industry tell us how hard they are working to solve this problem (ignoring the fact that this is their doing) was grating to say the least. Perhaps I'm getting old...

Downstairs at the same time in the conference venue MTV were holding their annual European Music Awards. And it made me wonder - are these the two choices for our society? One a corporate top-down technological (we'll try to) fix it or a 'fiddling whilst Rome burns', celebrity, instant gratification, consumerist hell?

Along with the speakers and workshops, there were the usual stalls with two reports prominent: The **Northwest Climate Action Plan** - summary Progress Report 2008, which started with the bold words: 'The past year has seen a significant increase in action across the region to achieve our vision of a low carbon and well adapted Northwest by 2020' The second report, **Sustainable Future - investing in sustainable development as an economic advantage for England's Northwest**, states 'engaging the region in climate change is all about fostering a real sense of ownership of the issues.'

Indeed.

For more information and a less cynical analysis visit: www.climatechangenorthwest.co.uk

MCFLy had contacted the NWDA before the above commentary landed in our lap. We wanted to know how "sustainable" the conference itself had been. Here's a bit of what our incredibly well-paid reporter wrote:

The venue itself was accessible by public transport and produces 50% less CO2 emissions than a standard building. The conference released the 2008 review of the North West's progress towards its Climate Change Action Plan, as well as the launch of a £10m High Growth business support programme. All workshops - which ranged from adapting to climate change, engaging employees in reducing emissions reducing emissions - are available on-line as PowerPoint presentations for those who weren't able to attend. Materials and signage for the event were recycled where possible and a survey asked for method of transport and mileage of the attendee to help offset the event. The Northwest Climate Change Partnership (NWCCP) and Northwest Climate Change Unit (CCU) are hoping to utilise information from the conference as part of their ongoing work...

QWERTY meets energy (cont from page 1)

produce and use energy and this report explores the link between the energy we use to power our lives and the places we use it in."

The report says there is no 'magic bullet' to reduce carbon emissions or 'decarbonise' the energy we use. However, it does propose behavioural and regulatory changes which could be introduced over the next 50 years, to overcome this inertia. Three key areas for change are: Upgrading of buildings and spaces to be more carbon neutral, a move to decentralised energy systems and changed human behaviours in the built environment.
www.manchester.ac.uk/aboutus/news/display/?id=4196
www.foresight.gov.uk

You heard the man- go to it!

"We need people not just to come with us, but to push us for more. We need popular pressure - pressure on me, on local councillors, on our public services and businesses."

Ed Miliband, Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change.

Nov 25 to Environment Agency shindig.

www.decc.gov.uk or maybe www.decc.org.uk, it's so easy to get confused...



How green are my valleys!

The Welsh Assembly has announced the multi-million pound creation of Europe's largest 'low carbon zone.' The Heads of the Valleys area will benefit from a targeted campaign to cut child poverty and fuel poverty through domestic energy efficiency and energy reduction measures which have never been attempted on such a grand scale in the UK before. The scheme is also intended to create jobs and improve workforce skills through commissioning and training to fit 40,000 microgeneration units, the assessment of 65,000 homes for energy efficiency and improving the sustainability of 40,000 units of social housing, home to some of the poorest people in the UK. The scheme is expected to result in reduced emissions of at least 139,200 tonnes of CO₂ per year. The money is expected to come from central government, social landlords, the private sector and utility company obligations.

Manchester City Council has retrofitted solar panels and other renewable energy technologies on some of its social housing, including on 60 homes on the Baytree estate in Harpurhey in 2006. The North-West has no schemes on the scale of the Heads of the Valleys project, and few government programmes show such as strong grasp of the social and economic benefits of environmental technologies.

<http://tinyurl.com/5nxwz9>

Congratulations in order

•Chorlton's Unicorn Grocery has won joint 'best local food retailer' in the BBC Food & Farming Awards, known as the 'Oscars' of the food world. Judges praised not only the quality of the food that Unicorn sells, but its commitment to community involvement and sustainability. Particular credit was given to Unicorn's local food growing initiative (reported in MCFly 10), its sale of fruit and veg not loaded down with packaging, and to its support for campaigns in the area, including the fight against a new Tesco supermarket. See www.unicorn-grocery.co.uk

•Action for Sustainable Living (www.afsl.org.uk) has won a Guardian Charity Award. Recent projects include a recycling directory, setting up a community allotment and organising an ethical fashion show.

•Marc Roberts, cartoonist for MCFly, Ethical Consumer and New Internationalist, has been the 'hook' for another blog posting in the prestigious New York Times "dotearth blog". <http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com>

Local and Regional

Nov 25 Geoff Hoon, Transport Secretary, announced up to £165 million of Government funding to improve access to Manchester International Airport. New road links between the airport and surrounding roads would provide better access to the UK's fourth largest airport for the 21 million passengers who use it each year.

Nov 28 Chris Shearlock, environment manager at The Co-operative Group, describes the Pre-Budget Report as a "missed opportunity to give tax breaks to construct renewable energy programmes and low-carbon homes."

Dec 3 Lancaster University will host the launch of a new group exploring the NW's tidal energy potential.

Dec 5 Sir Partha Dasgupta, an expert on international development and the environment, will join the University of Manchester, part-time, at the university's

Tesco-funded Sustainable Consumption Institute.

Dec 6 Manchester Evening News runs a ludicrous non-story about windpower on its front page. See MCFly blog...

National

Nov 25 Sir Michael Pitt, author of a review on the 2007 floods, says Britons are "in denial," which isn't a river in Egypt.

Nov 27-8 Nearly 150 people from across the UK gathered in Nottingham, supported by the City Council for the first ever Transition Cities Conference.

Dec 5 Rolls-Royce and Balfour Beatty will be working with Aveva, maker of nuclear reactors on the new nuclear power plant construction programme in the UK.

Dec 5 In a first, Sainsbury will be buying all the power a new 6MW windfarm near Glasgow can produce.

More info on the planet's misadventures at

www.manchesterclimatefortnightly.info/issue13digest.html

Read all about it..

What are the near term Pearl Harbours? Joseph Romm
<http://climateprogress.org/2008/11/24/what-are-the-near-term-climate-pearl-harbors>

The Election, the Economy, War and Peace, Chomsky
<http://zcommunications.org/znet/viewArticle/19749>

Barack Obamas's hopes of change are all in the mind
by Adam Corner www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/nov/27/climate-change-carbon-emissions

Environmental Failure: A Case for a New Green Politics by Gus Speth
<http://e360.yale.edu/content/feature.msp?id=2075>

Whistling in the Wind by George Monbiot.
"Lord Turner has two jobs. The first, as chair of the Financial Services Authority, is to save capitalism. The second, as chair of the Committee on Climate Change, is to save the biosphere from the impacts of capitalism. I have no idea how well he is discharging the first task, but if his approach to the second one is anything to go by, you should dump your shares and buy gold."
www.monbiot.com/archives/2008/12/02/whistling-in-the-wind/

Government Announces new Climate Activist Capture and Storage scheme www.decc.org.uk/ccas.html

Pending Ecological Debacle blog: Climate Science, Climate Policy (UK focus) and other musings.
www.pendingecologicaldebacle.blogspot.com

European Greens website- useful updates on EU stuff
www.stopclimatechange.net

For more information on Poznan
www.iisd.ca/climate/cop14

Scary Science

Nov 25, The Independent reports that rising carbon dioxide levels are acidifying the oceans 10 times quicker than scientists thought, posing a greater threat to shell-forming creatures such as coral and mussels. Other Shells are doing just fine though...



In the News

Dec 11 European Leaders meet to discuss EU Climate Programme. It could get very fugly.

Dec 12 TIF referendum results

Like falling off a blog...

MEN, eh, useless or what?

Climate Change Committee- A Turner for the Worse?
www.manchesterclimatefortnightly.blogspot.com

What's coming up?

December

Mon 8 at 7.15pm Campaign against Climate Change meeting Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount St www.gmcacc.org

Tues 9 5pm to 7.30pm Open Space fayre at Work for Change, Unit 1, 41 Old Birley St, Hulme. <http://openspace.coop>

Tues 9 from 7.30pm Manchester Climate Action Christmas drinks at the Sandbar, Grosvenor St

Weds 10 at 7pm. Stop Expansion at Manchester Airport meeting at University of Manchester Students' Union bldg
www.stopexpansionatmanchesterairport.pbwiki.com

Thurs 11 from 7.30pm Green Party meeting. Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount St www.manchestergreenparty.org.uk

Friday 12 from 6.30pm Friends of the Earth AGM and social afterwards, Greenfish Resource Centre 46-50 Oldham St
www.manchesterfoe.org.uk

Sat 13 at 10.30 to 12.30 Only Planet Meeting at Cafe Nexus, Dale St www.onlyplanet.info

Mon 15 from 6.30pm to midnight Manchester Permaculture network evening of feasts. Marbella cafe, 52 Newton St. £10- RSVP to winterfeast@ymail.com

Thurs 18 from 7.15pm for Campaign for Free Public Transport in Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street.
www.freepublictransport.org.uk

And dates in your diary for the New Year

Weds Jan 21 Transition City Manchester? SERA meeting at Manchester Town Hall For further information on this meeting ph. Lydia Meryll 0161 249 0943

For further information about transition towns, see www.transitionculture.org

Sat Jan 24 Convention of the Left recall conference at Friends Meeting House www.conventionofthelleft.org

Tues Feb 10 Climate Change: Global and Local
Dr Victoria Johnson of New Economics Foundation will report back from the Poznan climate negotiations, and look forward to Copenhagen. Also discussion of national and local issues and what should be happening. Friends Meeting House, 7.30pm
www.manchesterclimateforum.org.uk

And finally... In a grave development, a Spanish city has installed solar panels in a cemetery. In Santa Coloma de Gramenet, near Barcelona there are 462 solar panels - enough to produce electricity to power 60 homes and avoid 62 tonnes of CO2 emissions annually - atop the mausoleums. Land is at a premium, and t'cemetery was the only viable spot...

Comments, leads, leaks and offers of no-strings money to editor@manchesterclimatefortnightly.info
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