

Copenhagen, Friends of the Earth and the Age of Stupid

In 2009, UK climate change activists will have a vital opportunity to stand alongside their counterparts in countries all around the world to influence the summit at Copenhagen in December. Actions will be building throughout the year, linking in to the Local Government campaign (name still to be agreed) and the Food Chain campaign, as well as connecting Friends of the Earth activists with people all around the UK and the world mobilising to get a just and sufficient international climate agreement at Copenhagen.

To kick things off, we've been working alongside the makers of *Age of Stupid*, a film which stars Pete Postlethwaite as a man living alone in the devastated world of 2055, looking back at "archive" footage from 2007 and asking: why didn't we stop climate change when we had the chance? The film makes a powerful case for acting fast to secure a safe climate future.

The rest of this pack aims to do three things:

- Explain what Friends of the Earth wants from Copenhagen and why
- Make suggestions for how local groups can engage with Age of Stupid to build support for the campaign
- Provide tools to make that process straight-forward

Copenhagen: why it matters

What is it?

The full name of the summit in Copenhagen is Conference of the Parties 15 (usually abbreviated to the marginally catchier COP-15). COPs are the conferences held by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (usually referred to as UNFCCC / UNF Triple C). These began in 1992 with the Earth Summit in Rio and discuss the treaty that was first signed at that meeting by 154 countries. The treaty aims to stabilise the levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous climate change caused by human behaviour. Perhaps most famously, this included the meeting in Japan that gave rise to the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. Friends of the Earth have often used these meetings as a vital mobilising opportunity including building the dike around the Hague at COP 6 in 2000 and making the lifeboat at Bonn, Germany in 2001. In 2007, the meeting was held in Bali and in 2008, in Poznan, Poland.

When and where?

The conference will happen in Copenhagen from 7th – 18th December 2009. But not surprisingly (given that an estimated 189 countries are taking part this year), they also meet throughout the year at preparation sessions called 'intercessionals'. These may also end up being important moments to influence the people making decisions.

Why does it matter?

This time, the COP is especially important, for several reasons:

- Climate change is happening far faster than scientists thought when the first treaty was signed, so a just and sufficient agreement at Copenhagen would be a major step in securing our climate
- There is an agreed deadline for this meeting to set tough new emissions targets for the next commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol starting in 2013
- With 189 countries participating, this will be a huge event and a chance to lobby all the key decision makers in one place, at one time
- For campaigners in the UK, our government can put its promises into action by demonstrating real leadership for other industrialised nations (called Annex 1 countries by the treaty), ensuring the UK's climate change act delivers the cuts we urgently need

Friends of the Earth (not to mention plenty of others!) want:

- 1) A strong and just international agreement at Copenhagen which includes steep cuts in emissions to prevent dangerous climate change. This should recognise that rich countries have done most to push our climate to the brink and that they should lead the way by taking action first.
- 2) Industrialised countries to commit to at least 40 per cent cuts in emissions by 2020. These cuts must be made by using green energy and cutting energy demand, not through buying overseas carbon credits. Building clean and prosperous new industries in the UK will help reach this goal.
- 3) Rich countries must provide new money for developing countries to develop in a clean way and cope with the storms, droughts, famine and floods caused by climate change.
- 4) An agreement which avoids current proposals, supported by the UK, to allow rich countries to buy chunks of forest while still pumping out carbon emissions. This won't solve climate change - and it will trigger a land grab leaving millions of people worse off.

Age of Stupid: getting involved

Obviously, it's up to your group to decide whether getting involved with Age of Stupid is something you would like to do. It's only one of the things that we'll be doing on Copenhagen and there will be more opportunities later in the year. We do want to emphasise that we know it's a busy time for local groups and that there are some decision to make about the other big campaigns coming up soon, so this opportunity is very much an added extra if you feel you have the time, capacity and interest to get involved. The 'pros' might include:

- Opportunities to recruit new members
- Chance to promote your group and your campaign on Food Chain / Low Carbon Communities / international climate / other local priorities
- Building relationships with local media or politicians
- Fundraising

If you are keen to get involved with the film, there are various different possibilities, most of which **will be happening in March**. These are:

- 1) Going to see the film with your local group (perhaps have a 'take a friend' night?)
- 2) Promoting the film to your network
- 3) Leaving campaign leaflets at the cinema for audience members to pick up
- 4) Setting up a stall in your local cinema lobby to talk to cinema-goers
- 5) Arranging to speak before the film
- 6) Inviting your MP to come and see the film with you (and perhaps speak before or after)
- 7) Promoting your group's involvement with the film in local media
- 8) Organising your own screening

Here, we've provided details of the different ways you could engage (and we've given a 'difficulty rating' to help you decide what would work best for you).

1) Going to see the film (Difficulty: *)

Resources: membership leaflets; information local Friends of the Earth campaigns

From Friday 20th March *The Age of Stupid* will be screened in about 12 cinemas across the country. There will be two, three or four screenings per day in each. There will be more confirmed in the next few weeks - check on www.ageofstupid.net/weekone. The first week of the release is make or break for any movie. All the cinema chains look at the number of tickets sold - especially on the opening weekend - and then decide either to book the film in more cinemas, or to dump it in the bin. *An Inconvenient Truth* started very small (four cinemas, we think), but then went on to nationwide release for week two. So if help can pack out the first weekend and the first week, then the film will gather a momentum of its own. Book to go and see the film in your nearest cinema with other members of your local group during the first week. If you can, make it a take a friend night. You'll be helping to make the film a success, recruiting potential new members and hopefully having a bit of fun in the process!

TOP TIP: Book early to avoid disappointment!

2) Promoting the film to your network (Difficulty: *)

Resources: details about local screenings of the film

As a local activist, you'll be well-connected to local networks, whether local newsletters, e-mail lists or Facebook groups set up for your neighbourhood. You might also have local journalists or bloggers in your group. Use the networks of your members to get the word out about film and encourage people to go and see it early in the run, if you can.

TOP TIP: Check and double-check the information you provide, especially telephone numbers – small mistakes can be a disaster!

3) Leaflets at the cinema (Difficulty: *)

Resources: recruitment leaflets; campaign posters; volunteer to act as the contact point for new recruits; information about your current local campaigns

Leave Friends of the Earth leaflets at the cinema for people to pick up during the time the film is showing. Ask the manager or front of house staff if it's OK, and to advise on the best place to leave them. See if they'll let you put up a poster in their bar or café, or even in the toilets – people pay good money to advertise in the space behind the doors! You'll catch people at the moment when they're still thinking about the message of the film but haven't yet decided how to take action. Make sure there are local contact details available and that the person they are contacting respond quickly, to ensure we catch as many people as possible while they're still feeling motivated. Your group will grow in size and strength and we'll have made sure that no one leaves the cinema feeling hopeless about the future, because we've provided them with a way to take action.

TOP TIP: Take a variety of leaflets and posters, because different people will notice different posters and be motivated by different issues.

4) Setting up a stall in your local cinema (Difficulty: **)

Resources: recruitment leaflets; campaign posters; volunteer to sit on the stall; information about your current local campaign; tables and chairs on which to sit / display information

Some cinemas will be prepared to have local organisations present in their lobby during some or all of the time they are screening Age of Stupid. In the case of festival screenings (which are one-off screenings), it will be the organisers of the festival who get to decide. Check the Age of Stupid website to see who the 'Not Stupid' contact is for that cinema. If there is one listed, contact him or her to find out about having a stall. If not, then contact the cinema directly. If there is a Not Stupid contact listed, please do approach them rather than the cinema directly, as the cinema may already be feeling overwhelmed by the amount of interest generated by the film.

TOP TIP: Remember to order extra copies of any additional materials as soon as possible – it will be a busy time for resources.

5) Arranging to speak before the film (Difficulty: *)**

Resources: recruitment leaflets; information about your current local campaign; volunteer spokesperson

It may be that cinemas are willing to have local activists speak before the showings in some cases. If there's someone in your group who would be keen to speak, then get in touch with your Not Stupid co-ordinator, or the cinema itself, to ask whether you can address the audience before the film starts. Remember: keep it short (no more than 3 or 4 minutes), keep it simple and stick to the main messages on Copenhagen and climate change in this pack – lots of the people in the cinema won't be familiar with the issue. There are lots of materials available for free from Friends of the Earth to help you prepare or you can talk to your Network Developer. Encourage people to visit the website

(web address confirmed soon) or to take a leaflet about joining your local group. Make it sound fun, rather than scary or depressing – remember that fear isn't usually what motivates people to take action.

TOP TIP: Practise what you're going to say several times before to make sure you don't overrun on the night and remember to thank the cinema for letting you speak.

6) Take your MP / AM to the cinema (Difficulty:*)**

Resources: MP invite letter; 'official' photographer from your group to take pictures; information pack for your local MP about your group and climate change; adapted press release; pen and paper to record any promises they make about tackling climate change!

A persuasive film like Age of Stupid has the power to convince people to change their minds about the importance of climate change. Of all the people whose minds we'd most likely to change, politicians with the power to make decisions that affect our future are top of the list. Whether it's because they don't do enough, or because they do nothing at all, taking your MP or AM to see the film with representatives of your local group (and their constituency) could be just the push they need to start taking action. If you don't have the time to invite the MP yourselves but would still like to go to the film with them, let your Network Developer know and we can send the letter from Underwood Street.

The cinema may be willing to let them speak for five minutes before they start the film (it might be good to check with the cinema before you invite them: politicians usually find it hard to walk away from the limelight!). Write down anything they promise to do to tackle the problem so you can follow them up if they don't do it, and let your Network Developer know if they say anything you think it would be helpful to know about nationally. It's also a good idea to take photos of them with your members – you'll probably find they find it useful for their own website or newsletter and you'll also be able to use them for your own materials (the office in London would also be keen to see them too).

Finally, don't forget to let your local media know you're there with your MP – there's a standard release below that you can adapt for your local area. Give your local papers and radio station a ring too to invite them along if you have time – journalists aren't always very good at checking their e-mails. Ask for the 'newsdesk' when you ring up and be ready to send the release again if they ask you to. You'll build and strengthen the campaigning ties your group needs to have an impact locally and nationally, whilst also reaching new audiences by getting coverage in local media.

TOP TIP: if your MP or AM can't make it, how about inviting your MEP, or local council leader? There are vital decisions being made at all levels of government on climate change this year.

7) Promoting your group's involvement with the film in local media (Difficulty: *)**

Resources: media briefing FAQs; media release template

Whatever your engagement with the film – whether having a stall, having a speaker, etc – you may want to let your local media know about it using the template release we've attached here. It's a good way to raise your local profile and build ties with local journalists that may be useful in the future. Try to find a local 'hook' for the story – is your area featured in the film? Has there been a recent local news story that could be related to climate change?

Also, be ready to put someone forward as a spokesperson, who knows the facts and can present them simply and interestingly. If you can find someone in your group to offer a different perspective on the story, that would help to persuade them to cover your involvement, too – is one of your group members from an area of the world severely affected by the consequences of climate change? Or does someone have friends or family in a place directly affected? If you do, make sure you mention that they are available for interview in the notes for your release, and remind journalists about it when you phone them to follow up the release. Whenever you do media, make sure you mention Friends of the Earth: you can't rely on journalists to introduce you fully and they might get it wrong, even if they do remember. Also, it's usually worth checking out details on the interview itself – is it live or pre-recorded? And will your part of a panel? If so, who else will be on it? The more you know, the better you can prepare.

TOP TIP: don't be put off if journalists are impatient on the phone – they're just busy. Keep it short and avoid deadline times, like late afternoon for newspapers. And keep trying – someone different usually picks up every time!

8) Organising your own screening (Difficulty: **)**

You could arrange your own local screening of the film, either in a cinema or another venue. The film will be available free of licensing restrictions from the Age of Stupid team (in other words, it will be much more straightforward than showing *An Inconvenient Truth*). You may want to make it a fundraising event, or use it as a campaigning tool. You could show it somewhere unconventional, such as in your local council offices (especially if you're active on the Low Carbon Communities campaign). Or you could go for a more traditional screening venue, like a cinema, but invite lots of local decision makers from the council and local companies. It could be free, or you could charge to raise funds, or ask for donations to cover your costs. At the moment, it's hard to know when the film will be available for smaller, private screenings – it could be in the summer, but if the film is a big hit, then it might be later. Let your Network Developer know what you'd like to do, where and when and they can pass it on to the team liaising with the film itself. They will then get back to you when a decision is made about starting screenings and you can decide if you'd still like to take part. There will be a more detailed pack provided on organising these events once we know when this process will get underway.

TOP TIP: let us know as soon as you have an idea about a screening, so we can make sure we're prepared once it's time to get started!

SIGN UP TO HEAR MORE....

If you'd like to hear more about Friends of the Earth's long-running campaign on climate change, please leave your details here and we'll be in touch soon. And don't worry, we won't pass your details on to anyone outside Friends of the Earth.

Name	Address and postcode	E-mail	If you're a new supporter of Friends of the Earth, tick here if you would rather <i>not</i> receive other communications from us (see Stay in Touch)

Friends of the Earth is a collective name for Friends of the Earth Trust, registered charity 281681, company number 1533942, and Friends of the Earth Limited, company number 1012357, both of which may use the above information. In both cases the registered office is at 26-28 Underwood Street, London N1 7JQ. www.foe.co.uk

Stay in Touch; Friends of the Earth will use the contact details you have provided on this form to keep you up to date on our work and what you are helping us achieve. If you are already on our database, we will continue to honour the choices you have previously made about the communications we send you. If you are **not** currently on our database **and** you do not wish to receive any further communications from us, please tick above.

Press Release 1: local screening / adapt for other local Age of Stupid event your group has organised

[YOUR AREA] Friends of the Earth press release

Embargo: For immediate release, day date month year

Contact: [YOUR NAME], [YOUR AREA] Friends of the Earth

NEW FILM TO SHOW DANGER OF BEING STUPID ON CLIMATE CHANGE

BROADCAST/PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

- [TIME, DAY, PLACE]
- [YOUR AREA] Friends of the Earth is organising/attending/speaking at a special screening of new climate change film *The Age of Stupid*
- [NAME OF SPOKESPERSON] from [YOUR AREA] Friends of the Earth will be available for interview

On [TIME, DAY], [YOUR AREA] residents will have their eyes opened to the urgency of climate change at a local screening of a powerful new film called *The Age of Stupid* – supported by [YOUR AREA] Friends of the Earth.

The Age of Stupid stars Pete Postlethwaite as a man living alone in the devastated world of 2055. The film looks at opportunities for tackling climate change that we are today ignoring then fast-forwards into a desolate future where climate change has wreaked havoc. It makes a powerful case for acting fast to keep climate change within safer levels.

The Age of Stupid hits cinemas in the run up to a crucial United Nations climate summit in Copenhagen, Denmark, at the end of 2009 – where countries from around the world will try to agree how to protect the world from dangerous climate change.

Friends of the Earth is calling for a strong and just international agreement in Copenhagen in December which includes steep cuts in emissions to prevent dangerous climate change. This should recognise that rich countries have done most to push our climate to the brink and that they should lead the way by taking action first.

[NAME OF SPOKESPERSON] from [YOUR AREA] Friends of the Earth said:

“The Age of Stupid will open everyone’s eyes to the urgency of tackling climate change – it presents a stark vision of a desolate future where climate change has wreaked havoc.

“The film shows today’s dilemmas on climate change in a new light, making us realise that by not investing in a low carbon future now we are now passing up opportunities for a safer future.

“Having seen the film, people should take a message to the Government that we mustn’t squander the chance to achieve a strong and just international climate agreement at the United Nations talks in Copenhagen this December.”

Franny Armstrong, Director of The Age of Stupid said:

"The more I worked on the film over the last five years, the more I understood how desperately serious the climate crisis has become. Our hope is that the film inspires everyone everywhere to join the effort to move human civilisation out of The Age of Stupid and into a new era based on equality, sustainability and happiness"

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. Contact [YOUR TOWN] Friends of the Earth on [CONTACT PHONE NUMBER] or [MOBILE NUMBER] or [EMAIL]
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3. Friends of the Earth believes the environment is for everyone. We want a healthy planet and a good quality of life for all those who live on it. We inspire people to act together for a thriving environment. We campaign on a range of issues including climate change, biodiversity, waste, transport and food. For further information visit www.foe.co.uk

Press Release 2: Taking your MP / other politician to see the film

[YOUR AREA] Friends of the Earth press release

Embargo: For immediate release, day date month year

Contact: [YOUR NAME], [YOUR AREA] Friends of the Earth

NEW FILM TO SHOW DANGER OF BEING STUPID ON CLIMATE CHANGE

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Letter to MP / AM / other representative

Dear [either first name, if you've met them, or firstname lastname if you don't],

I am writing to invite you to accompany the Friends of the Earth [place] group to the cinema to see a showing of 'The Age of Stupid' during the weekend of 20th and 21st March at the [X] cinema in [X].

The film corrals compelling scientific evidence about the consequences of current projected increases in the world's temperature and suggests that if we don't take action to avoid these disastrous results, this period in history will come to be known as 'The Age of Stupid'. Using recent archive footage from 2007, Pete Postlethwaite presents a picture of the mounting body of evidence of the damage caused by rising global temperatures. Without decisive action from global decision makers (such as the UNFCCC which meets in Copenhagen later this year), we are in serious danger of seeing climate change spiral out of control well before the end of this century.

While the film does paint an alarming picture of one potential future, it is also optimistic about the possibility of change, not least through political channels. Emphasising the role of global institutions and national governments as the key to lasting change, the film urges the audience to engage with their representatives to get a different result from the forthcoming climate negotiations.

For this reason, we hope that the trip would provide you with an opportunity to discuss your own views on climate change and the international measures being taken to avoid dangerous increases in the world's temperatures, as well as giving both you and the group the chance to see a film which is likely to go on to reach a global audience of millions.

Many cinemas have expressed an interest in having local MPs come and speak prior to screenings of the film. We would like to know if you would be interested in addressing the audience. Friends of the Earth are planning media work around the film, and we would like to create local media interest in your visit to the cinema with our group, perhaps including a photograph at the screening.

We look forward to hearing from you. Please do contact us at [e-mail] or on [phone number]. There are several showings of the film during this opening weekend, so if you were able to come we could perhaps liaise directly with your diary manager about the best time to attend.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

[role – e.g. co-ordinator] [local group]