

# GET SERIOUS ABOUT CO<sub>2</sub> – CAMPAIGN CASE STUDIES

**GET  
SERIOUS  
ABOUT  
CO<sub>2</sub>**

## 1. Bristol City Council

**Basics:** On 10<sup>th</sup> November 2009 Bristol City Council unanimously passed a motion committing the city to cuts of 40% in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2020, after a short campaign by Bristol Friends of the Earth. What were the success factors in this win?

**Background:** Bristol Friends of the Earth is a relatively large and well established local group, which has enjoyed a good profile in the city for many years. It has a membership of around 75 and a larger email list of over 200 contacts.

The group has been running high profile campaigns, in alliance with others, against expansion of Bristol airport and for the establishment of an Integrated Transport Authority for the area.

In 2007 Bristol Friends of the Earth helped set up a new campaigning alliance, BAMBI, against a mass burn incinerator being built on the outskirts of the city at Avonmouth. The alliance involved close co-operation with the City Council's Liberal Democrat group, then in opposition. This campaign was successful in changing the waste strategy for the area, and it was also instrumental in overturning the political control of the council, with the Liberal Democrats taking over the administration from Labour in 2008.

In all this Bristol FOE strove to remain party politically neutral, seeking alliances with politicians from all groups and maintaining dialogue with them.

### The Get Serious About CO<sub>2</sub> Campaign

Bristol was one of the first local groups to take this campaign out onto the streets, collecting photos and signatures at the Festival of Nature in Bristol over the weekend of June 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup>. The cards proved popular and over 100 were completed.

An early meeting was held with the Council's sustainability officer, who was impressed with the campaign policy manual and broadly supportive of its aims.

In early August two of the local group members and the RCC met cabinet members, who also were sympathetic and the sustainability lead, Neil Harrison, agreed to put a motion to the full council at the earliest practical opportunity. Neil was already working on the early stages of developing a climate action plan, in response to the recommendations of the previous year's Climate Change Select Committee. Cabinet members liked the campaign because they saw it as an opportunity for Bristol to build on its green reputation (the City at the time was ranked number 1 in the UK for sustainability by Forum for the Future and was, for the second year running, the only UK city in the running for the EU Green Capital bid). They realised that commitment by cities was important, and that the 40% target was proportionate in view of the latest climate science, but they also recognised that the target could not be achieved without significant central government intervention to decarbonise electricity supply and the transport sector. It was also helpful that the Core Cities (the 8 largest English cities outside London) had already declared support for a 34% by 2020 target, so the 40% was not seen as a step too far.

Importantly, the cabinet members also supported the other aspects of Get Serious and committed to the production of an action plan and declared support for a statutory duty on councils to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from their areas. The wording of the Get Serious sample motion was changed slightly with the full agreement of Bristol Friends of the Earth.

Bristol FOE agreed with the cabinet members that we should go for cross-party support. Bristol has one Green councillor who had already declared his support, so the main effort was directed at Conservative and Labour councillors. Even without cross-party support the motion was assured of success because the Lib-Dems have an absolute majority on the council; the issue was whether or not there would be time to debate it at full council meetings, and whether or not the other parties would add amendments which might create confusion or water down the motion. Cross-party support was also recognised as important because this is a long-term campaign and none of us wanted the commitments the council made to be vulnerable to future changes of political control (which happen quite frequently in Bristol).

Bristol FOE co-ordinator, Jane Stevenson, takes up the story:

*“After the Festival of Nature, I did a breakdown of the completed cards by ward. I actively tried to recruit volunteers from wards where we didn't have many cards signed, and from Labour/Conservative wards - knowing the Lib-Dems to already be on-board. Using the Bristol Environment email network, emails to members, and networking with other groups in target areas, I distributed a lot of cards around Bristol. I just asked volunteers if they'd be prepared to get 10 people in their area to sign cards. This would actually be quite a productive way for smaller groups to work - it's a much easier prospect than taking stalls to all areas of a city, and allows you to target your efforts.”*

The motion first came before the full council in September. The first batch of signed cards was delivered and Jane also emailed all Councillors, to say the motion was supporting a Friends of the Earth campaign, and asking them if they'd like a copy of our report on how councils could deliver 40% CO<sub>2</sub> cuts. Unfortunately on this occasion the motion was timed out, but was at once re-submitted for the November meeting where it rose to second place on the agenda and had a much better chance of getting through.

Bristol FOE's membership includes media professionals and Claire Evans, who makes films for the BBC Wildlife Unit, now used her skills and contacts to produce a [six minute film](#) that the group featured on their website. This was well received by councillors and helped increase the profile of the motion.

In the meantime there were more stalls. Jane reports:

*“I had a useful chat with Mark Bradshaw, the Labour shadow Transport & Sustainability member. We hadn't had any really useful correspondence with him up till then, and the chat revealed that Labour were broadly supportive of the motion, but wanted to see a 10:10 component incorporated. They proposed to add this as an amendment. I then had a period of email negotiation with Neil Harrison, about whether or not this might be possible. The Lib-Dems however "trumped" Labour, by announcing their commitment to 10:10 in a press release - bypassing the Council meeting.”*

The Conservative group proved more elusive, but through a social acquaintance and another chance meeting with one of their senior members at a council event, the feedback was broadly supportive. Bristol FOE's experience is that the Conservatives are very business-oriented so you need to pick the right events and networking opportunities to engage with them.

A further batch of postcards was submitted before the November meeting, the total now stood at 380. The group also felt that declarations of support from other organisations would be helpful, and emails requesting this were sent to a range of contacts across the City. These invited recipients to write in their own words but provided a standard text too. This resulted in a number of supportive letters from influential bodies appearing at the front of the meeting papers on the day.

At this stage there seemed to be a reasonable chance of success and a press release was issued in the week before the meeting. Things were hotting up with the campaign nationally too, and Bristol FOE got word that a successful outcome at this meeting would be a welcome boost. This was passed on quickly – on the morning of the meeting – to Neil Harrison, who used his influence to ensure that passing the motion was prioritised by his own group.

In the event it was a nail-biting climax and four hours into the meeting we were still not sure if councillors would talk themselves out. A last minute intervention by a Lib Dem member proposed extending the meeting by 10 minutes to allow the motion to be debated; the other members then spent 9 ½ minutes debating whether to have the 10 minute extension or not because they all wanted to get home for their tea.

Fortunately the chair was on the ball and had stopped the clock while this went on, so the Get Serious motion finally got debated and, with the endorsement of all parties, was passed unanimously.

Bristol thus became the first Liberal Democrat council and, by a whisker, the first large city, to commit itself to Get Serious About CO<sub>2</sub>.

**Conclusion:** the critical success factors were probably:

- Pre-existing networks and a positive reputation that Bristol FOE could draw on
- An enthusiastic council member, Neil Harrison, who used his political skills and influence to steer the motion the complex machinery of local government
- Smart targeting of lobbying through postcards in the most influential wards
- Teamwork between those inside the council, the local group and the campaign nationally and regionally to ensure that everyone played their part effectively.

*November 2009*

*Mike Birkin, South West LRC, with contributions from Jane Stevenson and Julian Jones, Bristol Friends of the Earth.*

## **2. Islington Get Serious success!**

Self-confessed “council virgins” is how Islington Friends of the Earth saw themselves when Network Developer Katie and Regional Campaigner Jenny met a Get Serious sub-group in August. They have now become politically astute, making useful new contacts and allies in their borough – and got a motion passed unanimously by the full council by December.

Although progressive in some ways Islington’s NI186 target was only for a 10.8% cut in CO<sub>2</sub> by 2011 across the borough, so there was a way to go.

The group drew up good plans for how to proceed, aiming for cross party support in view of the closeness of Lib Dem and Labour groups’ strengths, and the local elections next year. Jobs to

research and contact people were divvied up, and an Independent Lib Dem councillor proved a key ally. October saw the Lib Dem council leader receive a 'petition' of post cards as support was building.

Meanwhile hopes for Labour buy-in were growing with local Labour MP Emily Thornberry being supportive – she had invited the group to speak at a Copenhagen & Green jobs public meeting, where they plugged Get Serious. This was followed by a request from Islington Labour to hear from our Parliamentary campaigner.

There was also crucial support from the key officer who wanted stronger targets and thought the 40% target do-able. Everything was in place for the council motion.

Now the group want annual targets added, and will be keeping track of developments in the new year as the council is due to produce a report on how the 40% cuts will be achieved in March – but not before a well deserved festive meal!

Note from Andrew Cornwell:

*"Just so you and other members of FoE have the text of the final agreed motion I'm pasting it below. You might find it useful to forward this to FoE nationally and to other local groups since this wording recognises the reality of the Executive/Cabinet system (and has been cleared by lawyers!)."*

### **Motion on Get Serious Campaign on CO2 emissions**

*Moved by Councillor Andrew Cornwell*

*Council welcomes the good progress made towards measuring and reducing carbon dioxide emissions in Islington, including the setting up of the Islington Climate Change Partnership, the establishment of the Climate Change Fund, the implementation of energy efficiency measures in council-owned buildings and social housing stock, the promotion of sustainable transport options and support for the 10:10 campaign on CO2 emissions.*

*Council resolves:*

- \* To support the national campaign organised by Friends of the Earth, 'Get Serious about CO2', which calls for more funds and greater powers for local authorities to improve public transport, insulate more homes and install green energy, as well as a new duty on councils that fail to act on climate change.*
- \* To support the principle of reducing CO2 emissions in Islington year on year towards a goal of cutting emissions by 40% by 2020 (on a 2005 baseline).*
- \* To request the Executive Member for the Environment to produce an initial report setting out how this can be achieved, to be considered by the Executive no later than 18 March 2010.*
- \* To request a scrutiny review by the Sustainability Committee into meeting Islington's carbon reduction targets.*
- \* To request that all Executive Members incorporate the 40% goal into all relevant future plans and strategies they present to the Executive and/or Full Council.*

### 3. Manchester adopts a climate plan for 41% cuts

Manchester Friends of the Earth succeeded in getting their council to adopt a climate change action plan, called **Manchester: A certain future**, which contains a target of cutting CO2 by 41% by 2020.



The target was set following a report on the city's emissions from the [Tyndall Centre for Climate Change](#). The plan also aims to truly **engage the community** in climate change by involving individuals, neighbourhoods, and local organisations in rolling out 'low carbon thinking' across the city.

#### **A serious summer**

This follows a summer of **dedicated campaigning** by the group who ran **10 stalls** and collected almost **1500 postcards**. They also highlighted the campaign by getting a **letter** published in the **Manchester Evening News**.

#### **Getting councillors on board**

The group then spent a few weeks travelling around the city lobbying all of their targeted councillors by handing over postcards. See pictures on [Manchester Friends of the Earth](#) website.

#### **Present at the top**

Council Leader Richard Leese was convinced to come on board when the group gave him over **800 gift-wrapped postcards**.

*"I think the council will Get Serious about CO2, and we'll be agreeing this week to a 41% reduction in emissions by 2020. We recognise to achieve[this] we need to get lots and lots of Manchester people engaged with the process and I think campaigns of this sort are a good way to get people first of all engaged and then going on to get them involved because without that we won't succeed.*

Sir Richard Leese, Leader, Manchester City Council

#### **Getting down to the detail**

*"The group also used the good relationship they'd built with the council during their campaign for a congestion charge to influence the plan as it was being written. They commented on the detail and made some key amendments to the plan. It's great news that Manchester City Council has committed to a 41% cut in emissions by 2020, but now comes the real challenge - turning the action plan into reality. We'll be keeping an eye on their progress, and pressing the other nine local authorities in Greater Manchester to show they're serious about climate change too."*

Ali Abbas, Joint Coordinator, Manchester Friends of the Earth

## 4. Haringey votes unanimously to Get Serious about CO2

On the 19 October Haringey Council **voted unanimously** to pass a motion calling in support of the Get Serious About CO2 campaign.



The leader of the council, Claire Kober, had already been **lobbied with 620 signed postcards** collected from local people (see photo with Andy Atkins above).

Before the council meeting coordinator Quentin Given of the **Tottenham and Wood Green** group and **Muswell Hill and Hornsey** coordinator Tim Root met both main parties to explain the campaign. They arranged to speak at the council meeting by requesting a **deputation** in advance, and used this to make the case for the campaign and call for all council members to vote in favour of the motion. Group members then gave councillors postcards signed by their constituents on their way into the meeting.

In the motion the council resolved to:

*“Develop an action plan with yearly targets to reduce CO2 emissions by 40% by 2020 to become a leading member of the Get Serious about CO2 Friends of the Earth campaign.”*

Liberal Democrat councillor Bob Hare strengthened the motion with an amendment that:

- Gave the **Leader responsibility** for delivering the target
- Commits the council to **annual reports** on progress
- Called on the council to **lobby national government** too.

**Every councillor present**, from Labour, Lib Dem and conservative parties, then voted for the motion.

*“This is great news. Haringey has to get serious about cutting its emissions. This will send a message to Government and Copenhagen that people are ready to take serious steps to tackle climate change.”*

Quentin Given, Tottenham and Wood Green Friends of the Earth

Council leader Claire Kober and cabinet member for the environment Brian Haley had both committed to adopting the target beforehand on 2 October. The group had arranged for them to meet with Friends of the Earth Director **Andy Atkins** to create a media opportunity.

*“I’ll use this example when I meet Ed Milliband and world leaders at Copenhagen.”*

Andy Atkins, Executive Director, Friends of the Earth