

Diversity at Friends of the Earth

Maud Grainger/Chris Williams, Birmingham Friends of the Earth
Jenny Thatcher, Friends of the Earth

*Work in the environmental movement is seen as an extension of one's faith for many people. Many religious people don't think this way though so there is a whole new group of people out there to communicate with. Not preach to them but via their faith, we have a means of communicating with new groups of people. Faith is a common area of interest.

*FoE has a new diversity forum and has stimulated debate among staff across the organisation.

*There is a need to learn from each other as some people in FoE have already done activities in this field and so sharing experiences is important.

*Perhaps something should be included in the next 5 year plan on reaching out to new audiences, perhaps with an emphasis on faith groups among others.

*Currently, FoE is not even talking to/ totally unheard by many sections of society.

*FoE has "Broadening Action" as a new area of work. Jenny Thatcher is responsible for this and was involved with Birmingham FoE's work as Birmingham's Multi Faith project was a pilot scheme.

Short summary of Birmingham Multifaith and Climate Change work

*Diversity work at Birmingham includes:

- an event during Islam Awareness Week at a Gurdwara.
- Talks with different groups in the city, not just school children
- Stalls in different places in Birmingham, not just the usual Bohemian ghettos.
- Working with the Broadening Action project and local partners (Birmingham Sustainable Energy Partnership and the Environment Agency) to organise a "Faith and Climate Change" one-day conference in Birmingham. This was attended by more than 90 people representing 8 faiths, as well as people of no faith.
- Putting together an exhibition on Faith and Climate Change, which is touring faith-related venues in Birmingham. Showings of the exhibition are usually accompanied by speaker evenings or other educational events.

For more information about the Exhibition or the Conference (a dvd is available) please contact Birmingham Friends of the Earth - <http://www.birminghamfoe.org.uk>

*The project provides a new avenue for people to get involved with the environmental movement. There is a new language for people who don't normally associate themselves with the green movement.

*A high profile Councillor at our event really boosted our authority, giving us more media coverage and making the event seem more like something worth attending.