



**Friends of
the Earth**

Northern Ireland

Newsletter

Issue 19 Spring 2010

Friends of the Earth inspires solutions to environmental problems which make life better for people

Copenhagen breakdown

Can we get back on track?



James Orr
*New Northern Ireland
Director.*
page 02



Rock and roll
*The music scene is awash
with activists.*
page 03



No Hopenhagen
*What happens post
Copenhagen?*
page 04



Planning
*The planning system is
crucial to combating
climate change.*
page 04

Contacts

Friends of the Earth

7 Donegall Street Place Belfast BT1 2FN

Tel: 028 9023 3488
Fax: 028 9024 7556
Email: foe-ni@foe.co.uk
Website: www.foe.co.uk/ni

James Orr Director

Tel: 028 9023 3636
Email: james.orr@foe.co.uk

Declan Allison Campaigner

Tel: 028 9089 7591
Email: declan.allison@foe.co.uk

Niall Bakewell Activism Co-ordinator

Tel: 028 9089 7592
Email: niall.bakewell@foe.co.uk

Stephanie Kerr Office Manager

Tel: 028 9023 3488
Email: stephanie.kerr@foe.co.uk

Local Groups

Banbridge and Mourne Friends of the Earth

Bonnie Horsman
Tel: 07730 401331
Email: bonniehorsman@yahoo.co.uk

Banside Friends of the Earth

(meets in Coleraine)
Clare Armour
Tel: 028 2955 7289
Email: c.armour@ulster.ac.uk

Belfast Friends of the Earth

Andrew McMurray
Tel: 07909 900883
Email: belfastfoe@googlemail.com

Craigavon Friends of the Earth

Allison Neill-Rabaux
Tel: 07890 190889
Email: sylviali@yahoo.fr
Website: www.cfoe.org.uk

Downpatrick Friends of the Earth

Keith Bradford
Tel: 028 4461 2260
Email: iehynds@yahoo.co.uk

Fermanagh Friends of the Earth

Contact Niall Bakewell
Tel: 028 9089 7592

Larne Friends of the Earth

Leanna Filbey
Tel: 07919 098751
Email: foelarne@googlemail.com

North Down and Ards Friends of the Earth

Lorna Hamilton
Tel: 028 9146 2789
Email: HamiltonPLJM@aol.com

James Orr

The new Director of Friends of the Earth in Northern Ireland, James Orr, took up his post on 22 March. So what makes him tick?

James Orr came to Friends of the Earth from the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust where he served as Northern Ireland Director for the past 18 years. He is perhaps best known for organising the popular and innovative Green Living Fair at Castle Espie.

James Orr said:

“I am delighted to be the new director of Friends of the Earth Northern Ireland – the most respected, influential and broad-based green campaigning charity in the country.

“I’m really excited about working at an organisation that thinks globally and acts locally.

“I’m looking forward to building on the team’s tremendous success over the past decade – for example in accelerating investment in sewage treatment works – and to help create a cleaner, safer and better future for people in Northern Ireland.”

James was brought up in Killyleagh, Co Down. He says his most formative time was when, as a teenager, his playground was the Clea lakes near Killyleagh. There he spent his youth camping, fishing and trying to identify birds.

“This area of inter drumlin lakes and marshes is still one of my favourite places in the world and my interest in birds has never left me.”

He studied law in University College Dublin in the mid 80s. He was greatly influenced by *the Destruction of Dublin* by Frank McDonald. This book inspired him to study planning law in his final year.

“It got me interested in city planning and how pension funds and the roads lobby where literally ripping the heart out of Dublin,” James explains.

While studying at UCD James founded the university Ecology Society with John Gormley TD, leader of the Irish Green Party. Later, James studied planning at Queens, Belfast.

James has an interest in ecological renovation of houses and was the first person in Northern Ireland to get a mortgage from the Ecology Building Society. This drive to restore led him to undertake a major habitat restoration and sustainable build project at Castle Espie.

James has been involved in several local campaigns including: the Friends of Belvoir group roads campaign; the Gocean marina and housing development; and for the last three years the campaign to stop the Toome to Castledawson road re-alignment. He is currently working on a local community project to increase cycling provision and provide more green space in Comber.

James has three children and is currently living in Comber.

“The best place I ever lived was on an island on Strangford Lough in 2008, commuting to work by rowing boat. My daily commute to Belfast along the Comber Greenway is almost as interesting.”

Symbols of Progress

There’s nothing wrong with Northern Ireland having a new story to tell. A society that emerges out of conflict often contains within it the dynamic for change and even transformation. So what are the symbols of ‘post conflict’ Northern Ireland and what is the story that lies behind these symbols?

This story is simple. Northern Ireland is open for business.

This narrative creates a picture of

sworn enemies, in the shape of Messrs Paisley and McGuinness, jointly ringing the bell to open up the New York Stock Exchange. It is presented sometimes as a cosy place, such as when Peter Robinson and Martin McGuinness smiled together on an IKEA sofa at the store’s opening. Most significant of all was the association of the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement with the opening of the new Victoria Square shopping mall.

Undeniably, many positive changes have occurred in Northern Ireland since the ceasefires. Other cultures have arrived, we can point to new private sector infrastructure and we have new democratic institutions. The powerful symbolism however has been that the twin goals of political progress and economic development are one and the same.

The trouble with this narrative is that it is reluctant to celebrate the local, it gives property developers an unfair advantage and props up unimaginative development with little or any sustainability ethic.

It has also saturated the market with development of the wrong type and in the wrong place, turned homes into investments and increased inequality. It presumes in favour of international artists and architects at the expense of home-grown talent and contrives our political model on the basis of what we think others want to hear. The boom is gone but

the narrative of growth, at almost any cost, remains the same.

A new narrative is needed. One based on who we are and who we really want to be. One based on addressing the lamentable lack of progress on environmental justice and regulation. Most importantly it calls for a more creative and sensitive economy based on better public transport, local food security, energy security and greenhouse gas reductions.

When the next anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement is celebrated it will not be in the Victoria Square shopping mall. Imagine the symbolism if it were at the Comber Greenway, a cross-community vegetable garden, St George’s Market, an energy efficient pensioner’s flat, Tools for Solidarity, or at one of the many emerging renewable energy businesses. Perhaps it could even be celebrated where we have true and lasting international importance such as the steps of the Giants Causeway, the mudflats of Strangford or the digging fields of Seamus Heaney’s Bellaghy.

Environmentalists should learn from the image making and narrative of the business community. That community successfully sold the image of ‘must-have redevelopment’ (or ‘Northern Ireland is up for grabs’) as a form of consensus building at a time when ideas were scarce.

There is emerging another arena where true consensus can be built. A low-carbon environmental economy could become the new narrative for Northern Ireland.

Editor: Declan Allison **Contributors:** James Orr, Niall Bakewell. **Designed by:** LSD Limited. **Printed on:** Paper made from 100% post-consumer waste.

Friends of the Earth inspires solutions to environmental problems which make life better for people

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 Tel: 020 7490 1555 Fax: 020 7490 0881 Email: info@foe.co.uk Website: www.foe.co.uk, company number 1012357 © Friends of the Earth 2010. All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced by any means nor translated into a machine language without written permission. Friends of the Earth would like to keep you up to date on our work and what you are helping us to achieve.

If you would prefer not to receive any further communication from us please contact: colette.stewart@foe.co.uk or call 028 9023 3488 with your contact details.

A fond farewell

After 14 years of campaigning with Friends of the Earth Lisa Fagan has left the building.

Over the years Lisa has performed many roles. She began her career as a job sharing Local Groups Development Officer, changed to Campaigns Co-ordinator, then Campaigner before acting as Interim Director. She was the first editor of this newsletter and set a high standard that has been hard to match.

Lisa is best known for her fearless campaigning style and ability to cut to the heart of an issue. Many a Minister, MLA and civil servant have been left wishing they hadn't agreed to a live head-to-head interview.

Her gregarious, personable nature enabled her to forge effective alliances with NGOs, politicians, trades unions, business leaders, celebrity chefs and beauty queens. She earned the respect of friends and foes alike with her honesty and integrity. She was the driving force behind Friends of the Earth's campaigns on transport, real food, planning reform and environmental governance.

Lisa was not just an effective campaigner and communicator; she also had natural leadership ability. Her departure is a sad loss, not just to Friends of the Earth but to the whole environmental sector.

Lisa will be focusing her energies on raising two little Friends of the Earth. We wish her well for the future.



Activist round-up

Independent retailers in Banbridge have been given final confirmation that their businesses will be protected from an out-of-town mega-Tesco.

After being initially refused planning permission for what would have been one of the largest superstores in the UK or Ireland, Tesco took its case to the Planning Appeals Commission. If they had been successful, their new store at the Outlet Centre would have drained economic activity from Banbridge's thriving high street.

The Commission rejected the supermarket chain's appeal, and just before Christmas its decision was upheld by Environment Minister Edwin Poots.

Tesco has now exhausted all legal channels for getting planning approval to build their store and an

important precedent has been set for any large chain hoping to embark on similar projects in the future.

Banbridge and Mourne Friends of the Earth allied themselves with the town's Chamber of Commerce and helped fight off the development. Group co-ordinator Bonnie Horsman said:

"We are immensely proud of this David & Goliath style victory. We supported local traders with an independent voice that focused on environmental and social justice issues. We also gained significantly in profile and support within our local community."

Congratulations to all involved.



Banbridge: the thriving town centre was threatened by an out-of-town Tesco supermarket.

Courtesy of Banbridge District Council.

Get in the Game

Northern Ireland could soon be the only part of the UK or Ireland with no binding climate targets. Stop Climate Chaos has a plan that will plug that gap.

In October 2009 Stop Climate Chaos launched its 'Get in the Game' campaign, calling on the Environment Minister to introduce a Northern Ireland Climate Change Act.

The UK Climate Change Act, passed in 2008, set in law a target to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 80 per cent by 2050. Action on climate change, however, is a devolved issue meaning the targets, though UK wide, are not legally binding on the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Declan Allison, Friends of the Earth's representative on Stop Climate Chaos explains:

"The Assembly has accepted that the UK Climate Change Act will apply to Northern Ireland. However, the UK Act does not set specific emission reduction targets for the devolved administrations. The Act seems to exist in some strange legal twilight zone."

Mr Allison continued:

"Industrialised countries, including Northern Ireland, have an historical responsibility for causing climate change and as a matter of fairness and justice should bear the responsibility for tackling the problem. Assembly climate legislation would send a clear signal to people, business and local authorities that the future will be a low-carbon one."

Stop Climate Chaos has already made the case for a Climate Act to the Environment Minister and Assembly Committees. The next step is to mobilise public support for the 'Get in

the Game' campaign. The coalition will be rolling out the campaign over the summer, asking members of the public to demand the Assembly stop watching from the sidelines and get in the game.

Action on climate change, however, is a devolved issue meaning the targets, though UK wide, are not legally binding on the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Ulster and Ireland rugby star Stephen Ferris has already signed up and took part in the launch event. The sporting theme runs through the campaign – we plan to ask MLAs to pledge their support by signing assorted balls that will be 'passed' to the Minister. It's then up to the Minister whether he runs with it or fumbles.

Activism, politics and rock 'n' roll

The Big Ask proved that activism and rock music make a powerful partnership. With the recent renaissance in the local music scene, how can rock musicians help deliver similar success for Northern Ireland?

"There were two reasons why we started the band," says Ewen Friers of Northern Ireland punk group Axis Of. "The first was playing the kind of music we loved, and the second was writing songs about things that mattered to us. The music we want to hear has changed, but the things we care about haven't."

recently, its e-activist list grew by fifteen per cent in one night.

"We can open the door for others to recruit activists," says Ewen. "It's easier for us to get our message across in our lyrics, and let the detail come from groups like Friends of the Earth."

Axis Of's music may not be to everyone's taste. They are loud, fast and angry, as all good punk should be. What is important is that they reach out to young music fans, who are being won round by the band's political messages.

The hope is that other bands in the scene can be infected by Axis Of's

"We can open the door for others to recruit activists," says Ewen. "It's easier for us to get our message across in our lyrics, and let the detail come from groups like Friends of the Earth."

Axis Of are one of the youngest and most exciting bands to come out of the Northern Ireland music scene in the last few years. They have a large and growing fan base and can attract hundreds to their concerts. Why this is interesting to Friends of the Earth is that the group's members are committed activists who use their gigs as a platform to promote environmental and anti-racist campaigns. When Friends of the Earth set up a stall at the band's EP launch

campaigning zeal. As the fight for a Northern Ireland Climate Act intensifies, homegrown rock stars could hold the key to mass support for a low carbon future.

As Ewen says, "It's interesting how many things music can get you interested in."

Axis Of will be releasing their new single *Port na Spaniagh* in the Limelight, Belfast, on 5th May.



Axis Of: music concerts can be a valuable recruiting ground for activists.

Courtesy of www.punksatonyphil.com.

No hopenhagen

For environmental and development groups Copenhagen was both immensely complex and disappointing. The focus now is on how to ensure a positive ongoing process.

A common assumption by many Parties and civil society organisations was that the COP15 talks in Copenhagen would conclude with a political statement signed by the attending Heads of State that would include an outline of the progress to date and some indication of the possible ambition for 2010.

Instead, negotiations ended with the Copenhagen Accord and the possible derailing of the ongoing two track negotiations - the Kyoto Protocol and the Long-term Co-operative Action. The Accord generated primarily by the Obama Administration and signed by Brazil, South Africa, India and China with the support of the UK, France, Germany, Maldives and others, signalled the potential end of the ongoing multi-lateral process with serious implications for the fundamental principles of scientific

rigour and equity which has guided NGO campaign demands.

The longevity of the Accord hangs in the balance as it faces concerted attacks from some Parties and the overwhelming majority of civil society organisations over both its legality and its content. It has subsequently been further weakened by the decision of China and India not to 'associate' themselves with the Accord and their reaffirmation of the primacy of the UN process.

The NGO community has identified some serious problems with the Accord:

- It implicitly destroys the Kyoto Protocol;
- It is likely to reduce emissions from developed countries by just 13-19 per cent by 2020;
- It places heavy mitigation obligations on developing countries;
- It remains unclear how much of the financing pledges are loans, how much public funds and how much new money; and

- The long term fund of \$100 billion falls far short of the \$250 billion the UN thinks is required.

There remains an expectation that the Kyoto Protocol and Long-term Co-operative Action process will still provide a negotiating mandate up to the December 2010 meeting in Mexico. A more realistic deadline, however, is likely to be the South African COP17 in 2011. Failure to reach an agreement at this point could mean deadlock for the foreseeable future.

Whilst the Accord has not been able to generate the political momentum to displace the multi-lateral process or its negotiation texts in their entirety, it has however, the ability to create discussions in other less democratic and transparent fora and is likely to become the primary focus for discussions on climate.

Perhaps the last word should go to Tuvalu, a likely early victim of sea level rise. The representative of the small island state described the Accord as an attempt to, "bribe countries with 30 pieces of silver to condemn their people to oblivion".



No binding agreement came out of the climate talks in Copenhagen.

Courtesy of Amelia Collins / Friends of the Earth

Missed opportunity for renewables

Amendments to the Renewables Obligation Certificates have been announced. But will they be enough to boost renewable energy in Northern Ireland?

In April the Assembly approved increases to the Renewables Obligation Certificates (ROCs) for small scale generators. Friends of the Earth has argued the Northern Ireland ROCs should match the Feed-In Tariff (FIT) introduced in

the rest of the UK as part of the UK Energy Act 2009. A FIT scheme pays people a premium when they generate enough renewable electricity to feed back into the National Grid.

The green group claims that a Northern Ireland scheme which matched the level of support available in Britain would boost the renewable energy sector.

The ROCs amendments are an improvement on the previous arrangements and should produce a growth in the small scale renewables sector. However, they fall far short of the UK FIT.

Friends of the Earth estimates that the support approved by Stormont will result in less than 1 per cent of electricity coming from small-scale renewables, compared with the 2 per cent target adopted by Westminster. The green group claims that a Northern Ireland scheme which

matched the level of support available in Britain would boost the renewable energy sector.

Friends of the Earth Campaigner Andrew McMurray explained:

"Small-scale green energy systems such as solar panels on homes and businesses, and community-owned wind turbines could play a crucial role in cutting our emissions and speeding us towards the development of a low-carbon economy. It is important, therefore, that the renewables sector

receives support. The amendments are far too weak compared to those in the rest of the UK, putting at risk our vibrant and growing renewable energy sector."

"An attractive guaranteed price for electricity sold to the grid would allow homes, businesses and communities to play their part in tackling climate change, increasing energy security, reducing fuel bills and creating hundreds of green jobs here in Northern Ireland."

Planning for a low-carbon future

Global warming requires major political, economic and societal change. An effective response must also include a sustainable planning policy.

The latest scientific evidence suggests greenhouse gas emissions must peak by 2015 and decline sharply thereafter. If left unchecked, climate change will have serious consequences, not just for distant countries, but for Northern Ireland. The city of Belfast is facing the spectre of frequent flooding from sea-level rise, storm surges and increased rainfall.

There will be permanent changes in the natural environment but also, and increasingly, substantial challenges to national prosperity and social cohesion. It is likely that the impacts of climate change will be felt first, and disproportionately so, by the most

vulnerable in society. In Northern Ireland, disadvantaged areas where people can neither afford to insure their homes, nor to move, will be hit hardest.

Spatial planning has a major and positive contribution to make in meeting this challenge by promoting policies which:

- promote the highest standards of resource and energy efficiency in new and existing development;
- require land-use patterns that reduced the need to travel by unsustainable modes;
- vigorously promote small and large scale low and zero-carbon energy projects;
- help communities to adapt to the harmful impacts of climate change such as flooding;

- build resilience into the built and natural environment to adapt to climate change; and
- incentivise markets for new and innovative technologies and processes.

Even with effective policies for reducing emissions in place, the world will still experience significant climate change over the coming decades from greenhouse gases already released. Changes in climate are likely to have far-reaching effects on our environment, economy and society for which we need to prepare. The DOE has sought to address climate change through a number of planning policy initiatives. There is however, no equivalent to the strong English Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 1.

An effective response would be the introduction of a PPS on climate change. Such a PPS would identify

action in a number of important sectors ranging from detailed zero-carbon design principles, zero-carbon energy generation, agriculture, biodiversity, transport, water resources and coastal

policy. A climate PPS must address both the reduction of emissions, and adaptation to the unavoidable consequences.



Belfast is at risk from frequent flooding if action is not taken to tackle climate change.

Courtesy of Declan Allison / Friends of the Earth