



CONFERENCE 2008: Bringing the pieces together

**"Change happens person by person,
home by home, street by street, town
by town"** Donnachadh McCarthy, (Media
Environmentalist and Eco- Auditor) quoted by Jim
Lodge, Southwark Friends of the Earth – winners of
Earthmovers Award for Communicating Powerfully

358
participants



**Friends of
the Earth**

16,110*
uses of the word
"renewables"

2506*
vegetarian and
vegan meals

6,444*
cups of tea

CONFERENCE PROFILES

The most vital part of Conference is you – the people who attend each year. From experienced campaigners through to people who have just started getting involved with Friends of the Earth, there's a real mix of knowledge and everyone is happy to share their ideas and experiences with each other. We asked three people to give us their views on Conference

CONFERENCE FIRST-TIMER



"I FEEL LIKE I'VE COME HOME – THERE ARE PEOPLE HERE WHO GET WHAT I'M ON ABOUT."

Maz Karolia Bradford
Friends of the Earth, (1st time at Conference)

What prompted you to come to conference? "Nobody else volunteered! I was worried as a new member in my local group that maybe I didn't know as much as other people but now I realise that new people should come to conference, it's a steep learning curve. People will answer any question no matter how stupid. You learn even during the lunches and tea-breaks."

What would you say to encourage other people to attend conference? "You'd be crazy not to come. It's awesome, the atmosphere is electric."

"I was terrified of coming but I've met so many kindred spirits. There is an immense amount of knowledge from the staff, the workshops have been great – the staff are natural teachers."

What have you learnt from attending conference?

"How long have you got? I've learnt communication skills, the difference between palm oil and peak oil, how to engage with ethnic minority communities, how to talk to your local council and how much fun Friends of the Earth is. I came to Conference with one bag and I'm leaving with three I've bought so many books and picked up so many information leaflets."



Ali Abbas,
Manchester Friends of the Earth (5th time at Conference)

CONFERENCE VETERAN

"WHAT'S MY FAVOURITE MOMENT OF CONFERENCE? – ARRIVING!"

What's changed since you first started coming to Conference? I think I've

changed. The first time I came it felt huge, almost over-whelming but you understand more each time and the intensity wears off. Each year I get more involved – this year I worked with Penny Markell (consultant on the climate team) on one of the renewables workshop – it went very well. It's exciting to work and learn together, it's mutually beneficial."

What stays the same each year? The buzz, the energy, the inspiration. I never cease to be amazed by the quality of campaigning that's out there."



Tom Wright,
Campaign Assistant, Climate Team (2nd time at Conference, 1st as a staff member)

STAFF MEMBER

"LEADERSHIP IS NOT ABOUT TELLING PEOPLE WHAT TO DO. IT'S ABOUT LISTENING TO THEM AND HEARING ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES."

What's the best thing about Conference?

"It's a wonderful opportunity for staff and local groups

to meet. It's just lovely that so many people with the same attitudes can get together. It's great to finally meet the people you have had email contact with face-to-face. It's an amazing place to find kindred spirits – you feel invigorated. You realise that huge numbers of people are connected by the same issues."

50 per cent*
of people attending Conference for the 1st time

6
hours of music and dancing

78
hours works

new g
Conf

232

local groups across England, Wales and Northern Ireland – the highest number in a decade

109

different local groups presented at Conference

3.5

hrs of shops

13

groups since Conference 2007

“If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

African proverb quoted by Fiona Booth, (Hackney and Tower Hamlets Friends of the Earth) at the beginning of Conference

Leadership

This year the theme of Conference has been leadership as Friends of the Earth welcomed two new leaders into the organisation: Andy Atkins (Executive Director) and James Whiting (Managing Director). So what does leadership mean to you?



“Leadership means to inspire others into action.” Steph Greig, Campaign Assistant for the Corporates and Trade team (6th time at Conference)



“We all have to be leaders over the next 5 years” James Whiting, Managing Director (1st time at Conference)



“There is an urgent need for environmental leadership at every level in society.” Andy Atkins, Executive Director (1st time at Conference)

TOP TIPS FROM EARTHMOVERS WINNERS

Always one of the most popular events at Conference, here’s some choice snippets from a couple of this year’s winners:

“ALWAYS TAKE CHOCOLATE CAKE TO COUNCIL MEETINGS” Victoria Harvey, South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth: winner Successful Solutions Earthmover

“DARLINGTON FOE ORGANISES ITSELF AROUND THE 5 P’S – MAKING IT PERSONAL, POLITICAL, PERSUASIVE, POSSIBLE AND POSITIVE” Kendra Ulliyart, Darlington FOE coordinator, winners of Group of the Year Earthmover

SILENT DISCO

The unexpected favourite moment for many this year, Conference wouldn’t be the same without some enthusiastic, uninhibited and (dare we say it?) downright silly dancing...

“It’s been great fun! I think what Friends of the Earth is fantastic at is celebrating life and having fun.” Andy Atkins, Executive Director



“I’ve never been to a silent disco before. That was a hoot!” Lou Simmons (left), Southport Friends of the Earth

“My favourite part of conference has definitely been the silent disco.” Louise Da Luz Viera, Lambeth Friends of the Earth Coordinator



5
Earthmovers
award winners

2
inspirational new
leaders for Friends of
the Earth – Andy Atkins
and James Whiting

1
amazing
weekend



WHAT NEXT?

One of the key aims of Conference/08 was to ensure that local group members came away brimming with fresh ideas to work on. The question is how can you maintain that sense of motivation throughout the year? Here are some suggestions that you could share with your group:

- Why not arrange to watch the Visual Review together as a group to remind yourselves of the amazing quality and variety of campaigning of the past year? Watch online at <http://community.foe.co.uk/conference/> or order a DVD copy from our Publications Despatch team on 020 7490 1555
- Check out the highlights from Conference including motions, workshops, pictures and capacity building resources: <http://community.foe.co.uk/conference>
- Attend other inspirational Friends of the Earth events – regional gatherings are held each January and May (approximately). After further support? Get in touch with your Network Developer (see back page of Change Your World). They'll be happy to come along to your meeting and to work through any issues with your group.

Overheard!

At Conference, the networking and conversation never stops. Here's a selection of some of the most entertaining, diverting and occasionally frank comments our team of eavesdroppers overheard...

"I was asked how my group recharges its batteries and I said I come to conference, it re-energises you for the whole year!"

At breakfast: *"Can I just get your advice? I'm from a new group and there is a plan to build a new by-pass round us."*

"Of course, I'm not happy unless I do some road campaigning before breakfast!"

"There's no real ale. Someone should get fired for that!" (jokingly, we hope)

"That sounds like a really good local campaign you could run – let's follow it up after conference." **Earthmover winner talking to a neighbouring local group member**

*all figures are approximate

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**The only piece
that's missing?**

You! Make sure you book
your place for Conference 2009,
11 – 13 September,
University of Leeds