

Tony Juniper and Friends of the Earth successes

The Big Ask and the campaign for a new climate change law

Climate change has been the main focus of Friends of the Earth's strategic plan over the past five years. And in particular the organisation has put its energies into securing new legislation to tackle the UK's contribution to the challenge.

In 2005 Friends of the Earth launched The Big Ask campaign with Radiohead front man Thom Yorke. The campaign called for a new law to be introduced in Britain to cut the nations carbon dioxide emissions by at least three per cent every year. This is equivalent to a cut of about 80 per cent by 2050 (based on 1990 figures).

The Big Ask campaign has been highly effective. Friends of the Earth:

- co-ordinated a huge coalition of NGOs, unions, institutions and trade bodies to support the campaign;
- mobilised well over 170,000 people to take action (such as lobbying their MP);
- persuaded nearly two thirds of MPs to back our call for a law;
- persuaded all the main political parties of the need for a climate law.

The campaign has also used a variety of tactics to communicate the need for a new law and empower people to take action. This includes:

- Music events, through The Big Ask Live, including Radiohead's Thom Yorke and Jonny Greenwood, Kate Rusby and Gruff Rhys (Super Furry Animals);
- A 'solutions day' hosted by Razorlight's Johnny Borrell;
- Ground-breaking reports on climate change solutions;
- Days of actions across the country by Friends of the Earth's network of local groups;
- A unique virtual 'on-line march' featuring video messages in support of the campaign from members of the public and celebrities such as Jude Law, Stephen Fry, Gillian Anderson, KT Tunstall and James Blunt;
www.thebigask.com

The Big Ask won the Public Affairs category of the CIPR's 2007 Excellence Awards <http://www.cipr.co.uk/excellence/pastwinners.html>

Just two years after we launched the campaign the Government introduced a draft climate change Bill.

But the campaign still has some work to do. We want the Bill to be tougher, setting a target of 80 per cent carbon dioxide cuts by 2050 (the Government

currently advocates 60 per cent – but is asking the new Committee on Climate Change to advise on whether this should be increased to 80 per cent); and including the UK's share of international aviation and shipping emissions.

The campaign has already inspired similar action internationally. In February this year we took The Big Ask to Europe: 17 European Friends of the Earth groups are now campaigning for similar measures in their own countries: evidence of the way the UK campaign is setting an example for the rest of world.

Other Friends of the Earth successes under Tony Junipers' leadership include:

- achieved a succession of wins for the environment – from the introduction of a new law on doorstep recycling in 2003, to keeping GM out of our food chain, crucial reforms to company law in 2006, breathing new life into international climate talks, winning the argument for an independent environmental watchdog in Northern Ireland, and exerting telling pressure on supermarkets to review their sourcing of palm oil. .
- helped drive the environment from the margins to the mainstream of politics and public life.
- grown in size and expanded the range of people ready to support positive change - reaching 100,000 financial supporters and raising the number of active local groups to more than 220; developing the skills and capacity of grassroots activism; and playing a key role in extending our international network to more than 70 countries.
- led the field in the quality and impact of our work – we have been recognised by the public, and official and professional bodies for excellence in campaigning, public affairs, creative communications, publishing, supporter care and employer practice.
- consistently been one of the NGO most referred to by the media, and, our research shows, are increasingly front-of-mind for the public.