



**Friends of
the Earth**

How to: make events work for your campaign

Holding a successful event can say a lot about what you and your group stand for, and provide a blaze of publicity about your group's demands. Events Manager Joanna Watson explains how to make events and actions work for you

Events and actions can make a big contribution to the success of your campaign. You can build pressure on your target; give people an outlet to demonstrate their concerns and explore creative and inspiring ways of getting the message across. Events can help you deliver on your campaign aims whilst building profile and raising awareness; create

strong visual images and give people an opportunity to participate. It's important to think beyond campaign stalls – if people see you carrying out an exciting and media friendly action or running an event they can participate in, they're far more likely to remember you and get a better idea of what you're on about.

Useful checklist – the 5 Ws (and one H)

Why?

**Why do we want to hold an event/action?
What's the opportunity?**

Who?

Who is our target? Who do we want to influence? Who is our audience? Who will participate? Who will do all the work?

What?

What kind of event? A meeting, a photo call, an action, a fundraiser?

When?

When do we want to do it? Is it time critical? Is it weather dependent? Is there an external agenda driving this? Should it be during the week or at the weekend? Do we have time?

Where?

Where do want to do it?

+ How much?

How much is it going to cost and where's the money going to come from?

Why events make good campaigning sense

Have you thought about the benefits of piggy-backing your own local event or action on a big event? Here's how groups helped raise their impact by being part of something big

1 ▶

Networking

Friends of the Earth regularly organises mass events, from parliamentary lobbies to mass demonstrations, often in central London. These provide a motivating and enjoyable experience for groups to participate in, by being part of something big. You can make your voice heard and get together with other like-minded folk. It's a good idea to organise group travel, by train, coach or minibus. It's cheaper and it's a great way to network. At the recent Tractors and Trolleys parade against GMOs, nearly 40 people came by coach organised by Friends of the Earth Cymru and 32 local people, including farmers and campaigners from Wales and Shropshire, took the train together from Shrewsbury.

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It was a fantastic day. We have networked more because of the parade."
Anna Doggart,
Oswestry

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Other than the excellent turnout and spectacle, there were two things that made the Tractors and Trolleys parade really fantastic. Firstly, the feeling and excitement that we might actually win the battle against GM crops in the UK. Secondly, this was a real mixture of Friends of the Earth, the Women's Institute, farmers, other NGOs and direct activists."
Karen Leach,
Birmingham Friends of the Earth.

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I did all the media for the South West GM pilgrims as they came through Dorset and got the parade loads of publicity."
Jane O'Meara, Hilton



Of course, these could all be done without a pilgrim too...

2 ▶

Good hooks for local media

The run-up to an event provides great opportunities to get local media coverage, strengthen contacts in your area and highlight important local and national issues. For instance, many Friends of the Earth local group members supported the green pilgrims who were making their own special journeys for a GM-Free Britain to join the Tractor and Trolley parade in October in central London. They organised welcome and send-off actions and provided sustenance, accommodation and encouragement. Actions ranged from:

- inviting the local Mayor to a photo call
- holding public meetings on GM
- inviting Bayer, the bio-technology company in Cambridge, to a GM-free breakfast on their own doorstep
- inviting Welsh Assembly members from all parties to a send-off action for a tractor-driving pilgrim in Cardiff
- camping outside Devon County Council offices with banners and a tent to collect signatures from passing commuters
- photo calls with the managers of big supermarket branches.

3 ▶

Shared motivation

Just sharing the experience of a big action can be tremendously motivating. Preparing for it can bring your group together and find roles for people who may not be confident as campaigners. Tap their creativity, theatrical flair or practical skills to make eye-catching banners, costumes and props. You never know, your group could catch the eye of national television cameras.

Two inspiring Real Food event sideshows from the Midlands and Brussels

Midlands groups create their own parade

Coventry, Rugby, Nuneaton and Stratford-upon-Avon Friends of the Earth groups got together to create their own event en route to the Tractor and Trolley parade in London. They created a fantastic float with three mad scientists, a giant maize costume, mutant sunflowers, a pink pantomime cow and the well-travelled GeneBee. It was timed to greet Gerald Miles, the Welsh organic farmer who drove his tractor from Pembroke to London. The support and media interest he gained on his journey underlined the strong feeling amongst public, retailers, farmers and local authorities against the commercialisation of GM.

A campaign information stall and public meeting preceded a tour of Coventry by the float, before it was sent on its way by a local samba band, African drummers and a noisy crowd of cyclists and pedestrians. It made a symbolic stop at Ryton Organic Gardens

before dropping in on a Country Club near Silverstone, followed by press photos with the concrete cows at Milton Keynes. The float (see photos right and below) then met up with the parade organisers and fellow pilgrims in London and led the parade with Gerald's tractor. As a result Coventry found people approaching Friends of the Earth in the city centre hassling the group for details of how to join.



Susan Bales/Friends of the Earth



Trolleys in Brussels

Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland is an active member of Friends of the Earth Europe. From time to time we have collaborated in organising participatory mass actions where we have brought pressure to bear on targets in Europe. We have organised travel, accommodation and logistics to enable hundreds of campaigners from the UK to participate in actions such as building the Dike at the climate talks in The Hague in November 2000, when six thousand participated, or building the giant lifeboat in Bonn the following year, to protest against the failure of those talks.

In October 2002, we organised a trolley push between the European

Parliament and the EU Council building. Two hundred campaigners from all over Europe converged on the centre of Brussels with supermarket trolleys full of GM-free food to demand a halt to GM contamination of the food chain. Bryan Atkinson came all the way from South Tyneside in the North East because of concern over the GM food issue. "It was good to work with people from other European countries. By going over there and publicising it, even in the local press, it puts pressure on the government. It keeps

the issue in the public eye". Bryan got his picture in the *Newcastle Journal* and his point across. He even managed to generate interest and publicity for a different local campaign, opposing the Tyne Tunnel, with Green MEP Caroline Lucas, while he was there.



Jennifer Bales/Friends of the Earth

Ready, steady go: Campaigners get ready for a trolley push through the centre of Brussels.

How to...Pull-out section

Strutting your stuff at Conference

Another good way of meeting old friends and making new contacts is to come to Friends of the Earth's annual conference. It's also a chance to:

- * Share good events practice
- * Learn from others
- * Build skills

Local groups get the chance to give inspirational presentations on their own areas of work; organise fringe meetings and co-facilitate workshops; run their own information stalls; take part in the Big Debate on an important or contentious issue; win an Earth

Movers Award – even help with the actual planning for conference.

Conference will be at Leicester from 10-12 September this year. Look out for advance information in *Change your world*.



Networking at conference: a chance to plan strategies that make your events stand out.

Checklist

Preparation is vital – this list should help make your event memorable for all the right reasons

1. **Always do a recce** and check out the location for an event or action. Check sightlines and backdrops – could a photographer take a good picture? Is it obvious where you are?
2. **Think outside the box** Invite 'not the usual suspects' to creative brainstorming.
3. **Delegate** Sort out roles in advance and do NOT try to organise everything yourself.
4. **Tell everyone** Don't forget to publicise your event through press releases, posters, flyers, email networks, newsletters, ads in the local paper.
5. **Placards/banners** Keep messages and slogan short and pithy. Don't forget your group's branding.
6. **Newsy?** Make sure you have a strong news hook.
7. **Caution** Think through health and safety.
8. **Legality** Check what permissions you may need, eg from police or local authority.
9. **Into print** Think about what your action will look like on the printed page. Think captions. Make sure your group gets the recognition it deserves.

Make a note

- **How to...guidelines for events and actions are available on <http://community.foe.co.uk>.**
- **Tried and tested ideas: for local fundraising events is a great guide by Sarah Passingham (Directory of Social Change, £14.95).**
- **Advice is available from the Events team (Joanna Watson or Tom Solly) on 020 7490 1555.**

What's coming up in 2004?

Trade Justice parade - summer, details from www.tradejusticemovement.org.uk.

European Social Forum - autumn, details from www.mobilise.org.uk

Community website

Friends of the Earth's Community website at <http://community.foe.co.uk> is a great place to publicise your campaigns. There are discussion forums where you can share them with others, and get advice on what works and what doesn't.