

Earthmatters

A thermal image of a city at night, showing buildings and streets glowing with heat. The image is used as a background for the magazine cover.

Issue 105 • Spring 2023

United for Warm Homes

Thermal images show the
impacts of the energy crisis



Greener streets

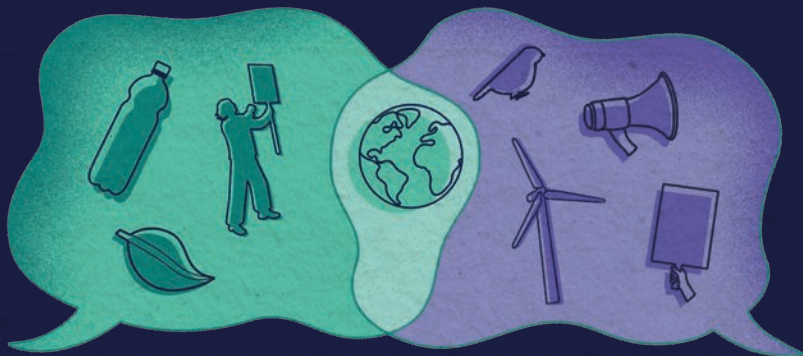
Communities
working together

Divestment now!

Why councils need
to move their pensions
away from dirty
industries



Friends of
the Earth



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Welcome!



As we emerge from an extremely difficult winter for many of us, due to sky-high bills and cold, damp homes, the importance of collective action is clearer than ever.

At Friends of the Earth, we're determined to tackle the climate, energy and cost-of-living crises. We're proud to share our new United for Warm Homes campaign, which is bringing together communities from diverse walks of life to demand warm homes for all – through nationwide insulation, urgent financial support and permanent fixes to our broken energy system.

From greening our streets to pushing for fossil fuel divestment and holding public authorities to account, there are also many other ways we're building a brighter future, together.

SANA YUSUF
Warm Homes Campaigner

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YOUR IMPACT

Successes from across the Friends of the Earth network

People made their voices heard



Fracking defeated – again

Fracking reared its ugly head again in September 2022 when then prime minister Liz Truss lifted the ban, but the government has since re-imposed its moratorium. A massive thanks to everyone who signed petitions, campaigned or wrote to their MPs. This win is a fantastic achievement for people across the country who stood up and made their voices heard.

What do we want? Climate justice!

Members from across our network, including youth activists, anti-fracking nanas and more than 60 group members, came together to take action against the Energy Charter Treaty and stand in solidarity with Friends of the Earth Slovenia. The Energy Charter Treaty allows fossil fuel giants to sue countries if environmental protections get in the way of profits. Slovenia is currently being sued for €500 million for banning fracking.



Activists against the Energy Charter Treaty

Alamy; Ric Lander/Friends of the Earth Scotland; Unsplash

From Calais to Rome

Supporter Dan Page embarked on an epic solo adventure, cycling from Calais to Rome and raising £404 for Friends of the Earth. The aim of his trip was to “raise awareness of global warming and environmental issues, while also raising much-needed funds to help protect our world for future generations”.



Welcoming water voles

Nick from Kingston Friends of the Earth has been working on re-introducing water voles into his area after they went extinct locally in 2017. After 3 years of hard work, he's been able to release 101 captive-bred water voles into local rivers and streams.



Community power

Brighton & Hove Friends of the Earth hosted a local community event to support our United for Warm Homes campaign. Focusing on the cost-of-living and energy crises, the group ran an information and advice surgery and hosted stalls giving guidance on energy-saving measures, rebates and how to eat well on lower budgets.

People all over the nation are **uniting** for warm homes



31,538 have signed Friends of the Earth's petition to demand urgent action to keep people warm this winter.

113 community groups (and counting) have signed up to campaign for warm homes.

20+ Friends of the Earth groups joined the fuel poverty day of action in December.

Find out more at unitedforwarmhomes.uk



WORLDNEWS

The global stories that matter to you

President Lula da Silva



Brazil's climate hope

Brazil's newly elected president Lula da Silva has sparked climate optimism worldwide. In his victory speech, he vowed to fight for zero deforestation, promote the sustainable development of communities living in the Amazon region and work to preserve the Amazon itself. The new president also said he's committed to indigenous peoples, other forest peoples and biodiversity. A brilliant victory for Brazil.

Climate deal taking centre stage

COP27 took place last November in Egypt and saw a step towards wealthy nations providing loss and damage funding for vulnerable countries that need help with the impacts of climate breakdown. While this was welcome, little progress was made to commit to phasing out coal, oil and gas, and securing the action needed to prevent catastrophic climate change. As leaders and negotiators met, Friends of the Earth Africa launched *Don't let Africa burn!*, a report that says no to gas exploitation and calls for a just transition to renewables.



COP27 attendees

Nepal's forests recovering

Nepal's forest cover is now up by 22%, with trees covering nearly half of the country. This was made possible by radical government policies and a team of community foresters, who volunteered their time and effort to protect and renew the forests. Decades on, after this brilliant effort, Nepali people are reaping the benefits, with citizens experiencing steady rainfall and less flooding.



Green tariff for EU imports

The EU has become the first leading economy to legislate for a “green tariff” on imports. This means that countries face a tax and penalties if they fail to decarbonise industries such as iron and steel.

Biodiversity climate talks

World leaders met in Montreal for the UN biodiversity talks (COP15), where countries agreed to protect 30% of the planet's land and water by 2030. Now governments worldwide must take urgent action to realise this ambition.

Solar panels to cover large car parks in France

Legislation has been approved by the French Senate to require existing and new car parks with space for at least 80 vehicles to be covered by solar panels. The French government believes this move will generate 11 gigawatts of clean energy.



Thermal imaging shows Iqra's sister warming her feet in the living room

Standing united for warm homes

Audrey's cold hands

Many people are finding it hard to cope with eye-watering energy bills and heat-leaking houses. So we're fighting for warm homes that don't cost the Earth

In Rhyl, North Wales, 78-year-old Audrey is struggling to keep warm. She's only heating 1 room – her bedroom, where she tries to stay during winter because of health issues – leaving the rest of her house cold. She wears 2 pairs of gloves due to poor circulation in her hands, but she can still feel the chill, even when the heater is on.

Over in Bradford, 21-year-old Iqra and her family are also putting up with a cold and draughty rented property. “Our insulation is terrible,” she says. “Everything is just escaping.” Heat also escapes through a bathroom window that doesn't close properly, and the cold kitchen is prone to damp. But with their energy bills more than doubling and alternative housing hard to come by, they're unlikely to be able to move home anytime soon.

And in nearby Halifax, community organiser Ilyas is all too familiar with the impacts of the energy and cost-of-living crises. Every Tuesday, the organisation he

works for hands out up to 60 hot meals to people who need them, and he's concerned about people having to choose between heating and eating, as well as the toll on their mental health.

These are just 3 stories, but up and down the country millions of us are worried about keeping warm, and too many are having to

make impossible choices. While people are showing incredible resilience, like establishing foodbanks and warm hubs in their communities, such support shouldn't be needed in the first place.

A triple whammy

Sky-high bills and heat-leaking homes are fuelling

the energy, cost-of-living and climate crises. Our reliance on gas puts us at the mercy of volatile energy prices, and our poorly insulated homes – almost 5 million without even basic energy-efficiency measures – are expensive to keep warm as heat escapes so easily. And

“The lengths people are going through to try and stay warm just shows you how difficult this energy crisis is”
Ilyas, Halifax



with almost all this wasted energy coming from dirty fossil fuels, the energy crisis is also contributing to climate breakdown.

Although we're all affected, some are being impacted worse than others. Older people, people of colour, those on low incomes, big families, disabled people, renters and those living in social housing are among those hit hardest.

The fight for warm homes

So, what's Friends of the Earth's answer? We're powering a new campaign for warm homes that don't cost the Earth. United for Warm Homes is a growing alliance of diverse groups and communities, including those most affected by the energy crisis. From environmental activists to foodbanks and renters' groups, we're working together nationwide to support people who are worst impacted and to secure the following solutions.

Firstly, we need a free, street-by-street insulation programme, starting with neighbourhoods hit hardest by the crises. Ilyas has heard of Halifax residents using makeshift measures to retain heat, like placing foil behind radiators. But government investment in insulation – at least £8 billion a year – is necessary to permanently reduce bills and meet climate goals. No one should have a cold home when a windfall tax on oil and gas companies' staggering profits could help fund nationwide insulation.



Halifax

“I think the only way around this is we need renewable energy sources. We need to get rid of these bills somehow”
Iqra, Bradford

Next, we need urgent additional financial support to keep people warm and well. Although existing government assistance is welcome, it's been poorly targeted and more is needed, particularly for the 40% of people in poverty who won't get the help they need as they're not receiving benefit payments.



Lastly, we need to transform our broken energy system. Installing renewables like solar panels is the best way forward if we're to break our dependence on expensive fossil fuels that harm our climate. By developing the UK's huge potential for renewable energy, which can be up to 9 times cheaper than gas, we can address all 3 crises at once.



Coming together as United for Warm Homes, we'll become a force too powerful to ignore. You can help us protect those worst impacted and ensure the government takes decisive action.

Demand home insulation for all:
foe.uk/em105-warm



GREEN SPACES

Greener streets

Friends of the Earth's postcode gardeners work with local communities to bring nature to urban places



While the problems we face on a global level can seem overwhelming, we know our communities are full of creativity and want a better world. So, the Experiments team works alongside communities to catalyse ideas for inclusive, community-led projects that cut carbon emissions and help people and nature to thrive.

Bringing in the green

In this project, we brought together residents of Daubeney Road in Hackney to explore how to make their street 10xGreener. We soon learned that while the community was keen to get involved – and people enjoyed making connections with their neighbours – few individuals had the time, money or skills to develop and maintain green spaces.

Our solution was to recruit a professional gardener – Kate Poland, the UK's first “postcode gardener”. Since 2018 Kate has worked with community partners including ecoACTIVE, Daubeney Fields Forever, Daubeney Primary School and Clapton Park Forest school to remove concrete, sow seeds and help plants and wildlife to flourish. Her work has



We all need to spend time in green spaces. But for many people, especially those living in urban areas, access to nature isn't easily found.

In 2018 Friends of the Earth started a pilot project in Hackney, East London, to bring more nature into the area for the benefit of both people and wildlife. We called it “10xGreener”.

Experimenting with a purpose

The Hackney pilot was developed by Friends of the Earth's Experiments team, which aims to find solutions that help to restore our natural systems, reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and reconnect people with each other and with nature.



spanned public and private land. It's bringing biodiversity to front gardens, taking down unnecessary walls, creating window boxes, planting around pavement trees and even establishing a new community wildlife garden.

The 10xGreener initiative then expanded to 2 further locations, following interest from their communities – Bideford and Chester. These projects have all been running for over 3 years, with postcode gardeners paid for by crowdfunding, subscriptions and grants. Improving social connection and wellbeing were key outcomes from all 3 postcode gardener projects. Some 95% of survey respondents in Hackney said 10xGreener had benefited the

neighbourhood – enhancing the natural environment, connecting residents with nature, creating wellbeing and strengthening community relationships. We're now considering how to make these projects more financially sustainable for long-term growth, while spreading our roots and branches.

Growing the idea

Our Experiments team has recently been liaising with the 3 communities to consider longer-term funding solutions. One idea is that people who can afford it could pay for a nature-friendly gardening service in their own gardens, which would fund community greening work locally. That's something we're trialling right now.

We also need to consider how to

Kate Poland

The Hackney community were so inspired by greening their streets and protecting nature that they successfully campaigned for their council to stop using the herbicide glyphosate in their area, creating a 'no-spray zone'

reach the people who have the greatest need for a healthier local environment. In 2020 we carried out an innovative piece of work, mapping the availability of green space in England. Our analysis revealed a marked disparity depending on people's incomes, and a strong correlation between green space access and ethnicity.

Looking to the future

It's important that future 10xGreener projects benefit the people that need them most. We're currently investigating options in areas of Bristol, Birmingham, London and Liverpool, and we're looking forward to sharing the insights gathered in Hackney, Bideford and Chester. With the help of our supporters, we can bring nature, wildlife and postcode gardeners to even more of our streets and communities.

Make your area greener

Here are some simple ways to bring back nature to your own green space and local ones:

- Create wildlife corridors – make gaps in fences for small animals like hedgehogs to move between gardens. You could even replace walls and fences with nature-friendly hedges.



- Include a wide variety of pollinator-friendly flowering plants. You could start with a Friends of the Earth Bee Saver Kit!

foe.uk/em105-bsk

- Create a diverse range of habitats, including shrubs and trees, woodpiles for insects, compost heaps and a pond.



- Avoid hard, bare and artificial surfaces, and low-biodiversity mown grass.

Ditching fossil fuels through divestment

Why is divesting good for people and planet, and how are communities campaigning for change?



What's divestment?

In essence, divestment is the opposite of investment, particularly with an ethical goal in mind. For the environmental movement, it's about society – especially institutions like councils and universities – no longer propping up the fossil fuel industry financially, politically or socially. Instead, we should be supporting solutions to the climate crisis, such as green, clean renewables.

Divestment means ditching any unethical stocks, bonds, shares or investment funds. UK local government pensions alone have around £10 billion invested in coal, oil and gas.

Why divest?

Fossil fuel divestment is beneficial for people and planet. As climate breakdown rapidly worsens, it's vital that we transition away from dirty energy as fast as possible. If well-respected institutions turn their backs on the fossil fuel industry, they'll deal a massive blow to its power and reputation.

What's more, they'll help protect people from the damage these companies cause. The climate crisis is a justice issue, with poorer countries bearing the brunt of the fossil fuel industry's profits-over-people mentality and human rights abuses – including premature deaths, poor working



Sign our petition against fossil fuels at foe.uk/em105-FossilFuels

conditions and land grabbing. For example, we're taking the government to court over its funding of a mega gas project in Mozambique, which has displaced people, destroyed livelihoods and reportedly led to blackmail, extortion and even killings.

Divestment makes financial sense too. As the world moves away from this dinosaur industry, it's becoming increasingly risky to invest in energy giants, and more prudent to be part of solutions for a sustainable future. Share prices for renewable companies have grown over 7 times as much as for fossil fuels over the past decade. And green energy like wind and solar can lead to significant job creation and community investment.

UK Divest campaign

We believe in the power of communities to bring about change in local and public

“Local authorities have the power and duty to ensure local workers not only have a pension for their retirement, but also a future worth retiring into”

Rianna Gargiulo, divestment campaigner

Success stories

Apartheid attacked

Divestment isn't always environmental. From the mid-70s to early 90s, a student-led, global effort to divest from companies doing business in South Africa was a key part of the struggle to end apartheid. Universities, cities and countries took a stand, the regime's power was challenged and it eventually fell.



Harvard anti-apartheid demonstration, 1979

Waltham Forest first

In September 2022 Waltham Forest became the first UK local authority to fully divest its pension

fund from fossil fuels. It's removed over £53 million in oil, gas and coal stocks, and committed to making green investments.

institutions. That's why we partner with Friends of the Earth Scotland and Platform to run UK Divest, a coalition supporting a network of more than 60 community groups across the country campaigning for councils to divest their pension funds.

Most councils have declared a climate emergency, and yet they often overlook the enormous emissions caused by their pension investments. From Divest Falkirk to Fossil Free Wiltshire, UK Divest's volunteers are lobbying local authorities – with petitions, divestment motions, trade union campaigns and more – to help save the planet, and to ensure the financial security of those receiving a local government pension. Five local authority pension funds have already committed to divest, and many more are

taking steps to reduce their investments in fossil fuels.

A brighter future

We know the fossil fuel industry can be beaten – just consider fracking, which has been defeated twice in recent years by local campaigning.

On 24 March people across the UK will take part in a day of action, calling on local institutions to cut ties with the fossil fuel industry. This'll follow the release of new data on the fossil fuel investments of local government pension schemes, giving campaigners ammunition to push for action. Why not get involved?

Check out UK Divest: divest.org.uk

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CHOSEN BY YOU

Each issue, we feature recommendations from staff and supporters we think may interest you



Participants gather on Scafell Pike

Jason Lock

TV RECOMMENDATION

Countryfile: Green Space Dark Skies

The short film *Green Space Dark Skies* is a living, breathing art installation. Set in some of the UK's most beautiful landscapes, this inspirational watch involves thousands of volunteers from different backgrounds coming together to create a visual spectacle. The challenge of choreographing hundreds of people with lights at one time, and up the highest peaks at dusk, was nothing short of phenomenal. Available on BBC iPlayer. **COLETTE STEWART, BELFAST**



A volunteer takes up position

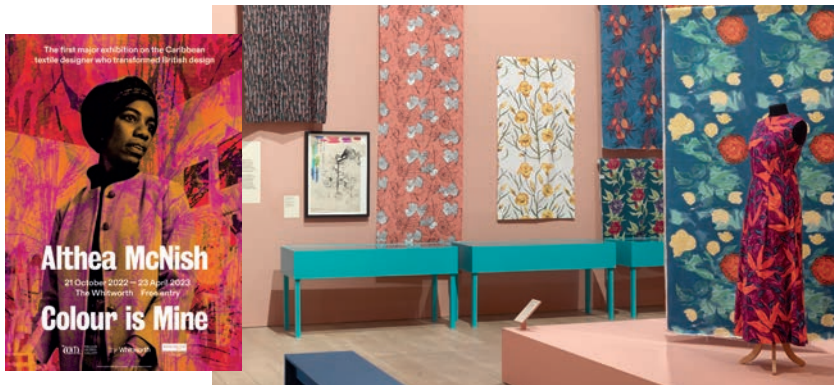
EXHIBITION RECOMMENDATION

Althea McNish: Colour is Mine

Althea McNish revolutionised the textile industry by bringing bold, plant-inspired Caribbean colour into post-war UK households. *Althea McNish: Colour is Mine* is the first retrospective of the artist's work. What makes this show so special is the

chance to explore McNish's recently uncovered personal archive, revealing never-before-seen works. Expect joyous expression, personal history and tropical tones. At The Whitworth in Manchester until 23 April 2023.

SHAISTA HUSSAIN, BIRMINGHAM



BOOK RECOMMENDATION

The Lost Rainforests of Britain

Like many of my generation, my environmental concerns were first awoken by seeing the wonder of tropical rainforests in David Attenborough's *Life on Earth*. Until recently, I had no idea that Britain has its own rainforest. But, as Guy Shrubsole's remarkable and brilliant book tells us, they're no longer lost and we can save them. If you need some hope in our troubled world, or if you just love trees, buy this beautifully written and inspiring book.

MIKE CHILDS, YORK



Judicial reviews

How Friends of the Earth challenges public authorities in court

Court cases are a valuable tool in our fight for environmental and social justice. The type of legal proceeding typically used when we take public authorities like the government to court is called a judicial review. This is when a judge reviews whether a decision or action (or lack of one) by a public body is lawful or not.

The judicial review process

1. First contact We send a pre-action letter to the defendant public authority outlining our concerns that it's acted unlawfully. If it disagrees, we build a formal legal case and submit a claim to court.

2. Permission from court The court considers the paperwork and determines if the case is "arguable". If we're granted permission to proceed, we prepare for trial, and so does the defendant.

3. Trial Before the trial, each party provides a summary called a "skeleton argument". During the trial, our barristers present our full argument, the defence responds and we (as the claimant) reply and close the proceedings.

4. Judgment This can be a few months' wait. If the judgment isn't in our favour, we may decide to take it to appeal, or the other side may appeal if we win.



Protestors against the Mozambique gas project

Net Zero Strategy June 2022

Along with ClientEarth, Good Law Project and climate activist Joanna Wheatley, we secured a High Court victory against the UK government. We showed that its Net Zero Strategy breached the Climate Change Act 2008, because it failed to produce detailed policies to meet legally binding carbon-reduction targets. The government now has to revise its climate strategy to show in detail how key emissions-reduction targets will be met.





Mozambique gas project December 2021, appeal hearing December 2022

Our judicial review challenged the government’s decision to pledge over US\$1 billion of finance for a climate-wrecking gas mega-project in Mozambique, via its export credit agency UK Export Finance. This case resulted in judicial deadlock between 2 judges who couldn’t agree – a legal equivalent of a draw and a constitutional anomaly! So we’ve now appealed and hope to extract UK taxpayers’ money from this damaging project with a new ruling.



Heathrow expansion May 2019 to December 2020

We argued that plans for a third runway were illegal, as they hadn’t taken the Paris Agreement into account. After losing our initial High Court case in 2019, the Court of Appeal ruled in our favour in February 2020. Yet in December 2020 the Supreme Court sadly overturned the decision, allowing the project to proceed to the next stage. However, the judgment is no “green light” for expansion – it makes clear that full climate considerations would still need to be addressed and resolved if any planning application were

made. Our case also held back development long enough for national targets in the Climate Change Act 2008 to be improved, from the previous target to the current net zero goal. This is a campaign win that’ll make this development much harder, if not impossible.

Sign our petition against airport expansion:
foe.uk/em105-airports



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Money matters

Our Corporate Partnerships Officer Leanne McNulty explains how sustainable bank Triodos is prioritising people and planet

Banks aren't always the most ethical businesses. Many, like Lloyds, Barclays, Santander, HSBC and RBS, invest billions of pounds in fossil fuel industries, financing coal-fired power stations, ultra-deep offshore mining, Arctic mining and more. HSBC and Barclays even own shares in fracking companies.

I certainly don't want my money invested in projects that destroy the environment and the climate. That's why it's so important to consider how what we do with our money will best protect our interests, and those of the planet and future generations.

Our business partner Triodos Bank puts sustainability at the heart of its mission. Its financial products enable individuals and organisations to use their money to help people and planet. It even has a map on its website where you can explore the impact your money is having in the UK.

Investing in the future

In the wake of the energy and cost-of-living crises, funding renewable energy sources has never been more important. After all,

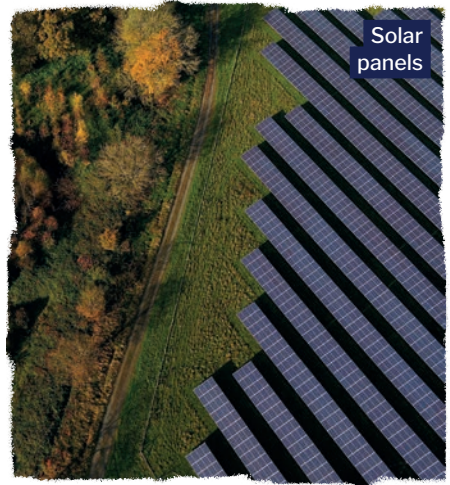
renewable energy is many times cheaper than gas. We need to harness the power of wind, solar and sea to ensure we've got clean, affordable energy for generations to come. This is why I was thrilled to hear Triodos has provided a £3 million loan to help bring a new solar park in Shropshire into 100% community ownership.

The park has the capacity to generate enough renewable electricity to power 825 homes each year. The initiative will also supply an income that'll fund local projects to combat the challenges the rural community faces, like tackling fuel poverty.

Triodos's approach makes money work for positive social, environmental and cultural change. Find out more at triodos.co.uk

OUR BUSINESS PARTNERS

To create a better world, we need allies. That's why Friends of the Earth works with responsible, purpose-led businesses that are committed to making a positive contribution.



“We’re supporting young people”

Ella Wilkinson is a coach on our prestigious environmental leadership programme, **My World My Home**



My background is in youth work, as well as climate activism, workers’ rights and supply chain justice.

Through the My World My Home programme, I work with young people aged 16 to 24 and support them to run campaigns for the environment. This is often their first introduction to environmental activism, and they might not otherwise volunteer to join the movement.

We’re hopeful that supporting these young people will shake up the environmental movement and make it a more inclusive and accessible place for everyone. Many of the young people are working class, disabled and/or people of colour, who are historically marginalised or under-represented in the movement.

We work in colleges across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. I’m the coach for South Wales and the South West.

My job is to recruit groups of young people who are interested in the environment, and then support them to find out about local issues and what people in the area care about. They then develop their campaign and I help them to do that.

A group in Bristol campaigned for free bus travel for everyone under the age of 25, and for disabled people to be able to use their bus passes at peak times. In Bridgend, a group campaigned for the council to stop mowing road verges and plant wildflowers instead.

Along with my regular weekly slot in college, I take young people out on training days, to rallies and to take part in activities such as tree planting. We try our absolute best to get the young people we work with into all the right places, where they can have influence and learn about climate and environmental justice.

foe.uk/em105-MWMH

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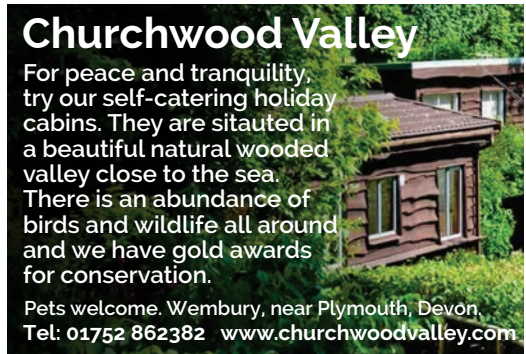
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Message from Aleanna, Supporter Relations Manager

I'm never very good at New Year's resolutions but recently I've been thinking about stuff. Actual stuff. What do I really need? Why do I spend so much on presents at Christmas instead of being present? I've been shocked about the environmental impact and human rights abuses of fast fashion, so I decided 2023 is going to be a no-buy-brand-new year. I love second-hand shops and my colleague Bernie recently taught me how to darn. It's quite a simple thing to learn and my cardigans have never looked better. If you have any great tips to help me make do and mend, let me know at info@foe.co.uk



The impact of my waste

It seems almost impossible to stop using plastics. I remember as a child that drinks bought in glass bottles could sometimes be returned to the shop. I'm also worried about palm oil and the devastation that causes to forests. What can we do?

DAWN, BASINGSTOKE

○ **Aleanna says:** We agree that companies should do more to be eco-friendly. If you have time, write to retailers and manufacturers and tell them your concerns. We need a shift to a more circular economy to help reduce environmental impact. Check ethicalconsumer.org, which can help you choose products that are already making that change.

Also, sign our petition to make companies accountable for harm to people and the environment at foe.uk/em105-accountable

The big picture

Speaking of making things, we were blown away by the talents of the Year 8 students at Hellesdon High School in Norfolk. They raised £212 for Friends of the Earth by selling lino print postcards on the theme of “the human impact on the planet”. I love the polar bear one called “On thin ice”. Anna, who designed it, said, “The world is dying. We MUST make change.”

Anna Grainger, Year 8 student.
Hellesdon School, Norwich



PLANET PROTECTORS



Activities for kids who want to nurture our planet

Our recyclable Planet Protectors packs are full of fun activities including bee-friendly wildflower seeds for them to plant, an activity handbook bursting with quizzes and games, and their very own membership card!

Every donation helps us work towards a greener, fairer and safer future.

Order your Planet Protectors pack today at foe.uk/em105-pack.

Suitable for 5-11 years

Help protect the future of the planet and everybody on it.



Leave a gift in your will to Friends of the Earth.

For more information: visit foe.uk/em105-giw, email giftsinwills@foe.co.uk or call **0800 581 051**.

What we achieve in the next decade will shape our future

"Thanks to support from players of People's Postcode Lottery, we're growing our network of local groups, supporting them to push for change on causes that matter. Together, we're creating a fairer, more climate-friendly world."

Miriam Turner
Co-Executive Director,
Friends of the Earth

Photo

Newbury Friends of the Earth have created Lockdown Woods, planting woodland environments across Berkshire.

Photography
by Lucie Robinson

Supported by players of



Awarded funds from



**Friends of
the Earth**

