**Salford CVS Annual Conference**

**30th October 2024**

**Salford Community Stadium**

Afternoon workshop: **Winning hearts, minds and votes**

Number of attendees: **15**

Facilitator: **Jeremy Engineer, Salford CVS**

Panel members: **Nicola Sansom – Hope for the Future, Chris Jeffries – Extinction Rebellion and Pete and Cat – Friends of the Earth**

Panel speaker notes: **Rachel Sadler**

**Nicola Sansom – Hope for the Future**

Hope for the future is a climate and nature focused democratic engagement charity based in Sheffield, working throughout the UK to bring communities and politicians together on climate and nature issues. HFTF believe in the power of research, they do not have their own campaigns, they support local campaigners, to adapt their campaigns and make progress. Nicola explained it is important to recognise politicians are people with interests, passions and motivations. Identifying what motivates your local MP will help tailor your approach for a successful campaign. MPs may not be aware of local issues; it is beneficial to try and find common ground and develop positive working relationships.

Nicola shared some examples where HFTF have supported successful campaigns. Hope Valley Climate Action, through research they identified common ground with their local MP around transport in the area. With that information they met and together were able to secure 100K funding towards rural sustainable transport in their area.

HFTF delivered bespoke training to Zero Hour’s grassroots network, with the aim to encourage more MPs to back the Climate and Nature Bill. The bill, and it has its second reading in parliament in January.

HFTF is happy to work with individuals and groups to help identify the co-benefits of their issues and to develop SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timed) Asks. What do you want to achieve, is there a tangible action which can be followed up and used to hold MPs to account.

In summary to effectively engage with your local MPs, do your research, identify areas of common ground, develop tailored SMART asks, meet your MP and develop your relationship with them.

**Chris Jeffries – Extinction Rebellion**

Chris is a local climate activist with Extinction Rebellion. Extinction Rebellion has 3 simple demands, Tell the truth – acknowledge there is a climate emergency - Salford has done this. Act now by setting a target to meet net zero by 2025. Come together, ER do not tell people how to do things, the aim is for government to create a citizens’ assembly to listen to experts and the issues and come up with propositions for government. ER believe in system change, rather than personal change.

ER believe in nonviolent direct action, built on a history of successful civil disobedience campaigns. Disruption tactics such as road blocking, passive resistance to arrest, protests have all been used. There are some people who choose to take part in arrestable actions, but others are involved in non-arrestable roles within the movement. Activists take responsibility for their actions, if they illegally block a road they expect to be arrested. ER support people through this.

ER is self-organising, local groups have the power and responsibility for local actions, as long as their principles and values align with the movement. ER has a regenerative culture to support members and avoid burnout. There are many local groups across GM. There are also functional groups made up of people with different skills and professions, e.g. doctors, lawyers, accountants.

ER use a lot of theatre, costumes, props, placards, music with the aim of becoming more visible – we want people to see us. One example is the Red Rebels. The tactics used reflect what works and what doesn’t.

In 2023 ER agreed to temporarily shift away from public disruption, they now only disrupt government and corporate organisations. ER work together with other groups, in June 2024, 100K people took part in the Restore Nature march in London. The march got almost no coverage in the mainstream media, this is one of the challenges to the BBC and other media outlets.

Extinction Rebellion use people’s assemblies as well as more visible specific campaigns e.g. Dirty Water and Insure our survival.

**Pete Abel and Cat Thomson –** **Friends of the Earth**

Friends of the Earth is an international organisation with 70 national member groups across the world. It has been the largest grassroots organisation in the world for over 50 years. Campaigning to change or introduce new laws that protect our environment and help tackle climate change. Cat and Pete are volunteers for Friends of the Earth Manchester. When designing campaigns, it’s important to think about who has influence and can make change. It could be an MP, Councillor, shareholders. Who can you mobilise and inspire to bring along on your campaign.

Between 2005 – 2008, Friends of the Earth ran the Big Ask campaign which successfully got the Climate Change Act into law. The campaign needed to be consistent, the plan was to get as many people to contact their MPs as possible. Friends of the Earth had to take the government to court twice to get the courts to say what the government was proposing wasn’t enough. Friends of the Earth continue to lobby MPs and hold the government to account.

Friends of the Earth helped organise a campaign against fracking on the Barton Moss site. In November 2019, the government announced a moratorium on fracking in England. The announcement followed 8 years of campaigning and protests, arrests, demonstrations, and community organising by the grassroots network.

The latest campaign - Planet over Profit - aims for a new UK law which holds British companies legally liable for any socially and environmentally damaging impacts caused by their activities, including their supply chain. In 2023 we held an event outside the Etihad stadium at a Coldplay gig. The key was to have a simple ask and to make it fun and engaging. We managed to get hundreds of people to sign the planet over profit petition.

It is important to think about the 5 Ws of campaigning: **Who** are you targeting, **What** is it that you want your people to do, **Where**, **When** and **How.**

Friends of the Earth along with other organisations provide training and resources to help run campaigns. As citizens we have the power, we need to think about how we can harness that power when it is needed to make change.

**Q & A**

**Q for Chris** – Passive resistance and non-reporting by media has been mentioned, what are your thoughts on how to resolve this and gain more visibility?

**A.** Chris– Firstly we have tried to use more theatre and visuals e.g. Red Rebels. Secondly by making alliances with others, which extends the degree of publicity much wider. Thirdly we have a strong believe that you need to keep on making people aware of the climate crisis by making it regular, so people are constantly aware that ER exists, and the climate crisis is happening.

Cat – Make sure press releases are of good quality, get advice so it is more likely to get covered. Friends of the Earth can help, if you send your press release to them. Keep putting press releases out there. Even if they are not covered people will recognise you as a reliable source of information.

Audience member – Andy Burnham has a hotseat Q and A on Radio Manchester on Thursdays between 10am-11am where the public can submit questions.

**Q.** What role do schools play in systemic change and changing behaviours? Local schools used to regularly do litter picking and would talk to children about the environment which made a big difference in the local community. Could more be done with schools?

**A.** Pete – I know of one school that used pupils to act as wardens when they had an issue with cars illegally parking outside of the school. The danger is putting the onus on kids when it is us that are the problem.

Jeremy – It is great that schools teach children and young people about the climate, they know what needs to happen, but they do not have a vote.

Pete – It is good to teach kids the power of doing, along side litter picking you can teach them about recycling to put into context what else needs to change.

Nicola – More MPs took notice of the climate crisis following the school climate strikes. Nadia Whittome MP ‘s office took pictures sent to them from schools to the MP. Alongside litter picking, schools could also send pictures to their local MP.

**Q.** Do events only exist if they have been covered on the BBC, ITV, etc.? Aren’t there better platforms e.g. social media to get messaging out?

**A.** Chris – We do use social media platforms; it is important to use all platforms in different ways to get the message out. We try to reach all different platforms as well as MP.

Pete – When you look at some of the bestselling newspapers and how they communicate complex issues, they boil it down to simple messages. Need to use the different platforms depending on what you want. If you want to take on corporations – read the FT, if you want to reach ‘middle England’ read the Daily Mail. Need to think about how you get coverage into those publications. Some of these publications reach an enormous audience.

**Q.** I believe in direct action. Notoriety often leads to more press coverage.