

Press Release



Advance notice: Tuesday 1 June 2004

GM-FREE BRADFORD: NOW OR NEVER

PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

1pm Tuesday 1 June, outside Bradford Town Hall, Centenary Square

26 local election candidates and councillors wanting Bradford to stay free of genetically modified (GM) crops will meet anti-GM campaigners and have their photos taken with the caption "I support a GM free Bradford" [1].

Campaigners from Bradford Friends of the Earth are calling on councillors and candidates, once elected, to join the growing number of local authorities supporting a GM free Britain and push for Bradford council to:

- ensure that no GM crops are grown on land which it controls;
- adopt a GM-free policy for all goods and services the authority is responsible for, including ensuring that school caterers provide GM-free food to schools.
- write to the European Commission and the Government asking them to prevent particular GM crops being grown in their area to protect the environment; [2]

Across the country over 50 local authorities have passed resolutions opposing GM crops and foods. In Yorkshire and the Humber this includes East Riding District council, Leeds and the North York Moors National Park [3].

GM crops and food remain deeply unpopular. Last year's Government-sponsored national debate, "GM Nation?" found that 86% of people did not want to eat GM food and over half didn't want to see GM crops being grown [4].

Tim Sander, GM Campaigner for Bradford Friends of the Earth said:

"We thank these candidates for reflecting the widespread local opposition to GM crops and foods and supporting a GM free Bradford. GM crops threaten our local food, farming and environment and other councils have taken a stand against them by voting through GM-free policies. We want Bradford Council to make the same commitment and we look forward to working with those candidates who are elected in taking this forward".

The GM-Free Britain campaign comes at a crucial time in the GM debate. In March, the Government gave qualified approval for GM maize to be commercially grown. The biotech company behind the crop withdrew it from the market shortly afterwards. However, decisions are being made on a number of applications to grow GM crops in Europe, which would include the UK and this region, which local authorities can seek to influence. If GM crops are grown in the UK, it would lead to widespread contamination of our food, crops and environment, and could remove peoples' right to say no to GM foods.

More information on Friends of the Earth's GM-Free Britain campaign can be found online at:
www.gmfreebritain.com

Notes

- [1] John Foster (Green); David Hestletine (Con); Robin Owens (Con); Ellen Eaton (Con); Juliette Kinsey (Con); James Newton (Lab); Rita Goulden (Lab); Maktar Ali (Lib Dem); Sameer Shah (Con); Alan Carling (Ind); Andrew Pitts (Lab); Paul Smith (Con); Joan Small (Con); Tomasz Piersscioneek (Lib Dem); James Main (Lib Dem); Brian Hudson (Ind); Mark Blackburn (Lab); Martin Love (Green); Mahmood Hussain (Lib Dem); Julie Cowdery (Green); Chris Greaves (Con); Matthew Palmer (Con); David Green (Lab); Michael Breen (Ind); Glen Miller (Con); David Samuels (Ind)
- [2] Under new European legislation (Article 19 of EU Deliberate Release Directive 2001/18/EC) Local Authorities can request the European Commission to provide legal protection of their area from particular GM crops.
- [3] In the region, the following local authorities have passed GM free policies: East Riding of Yorkshire, York, Leeds, North York Moors National Park, Ryedale, Goole.
- [4] www.gmnation.org

Contacts:

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