

Friends of the Earth Press Release
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KEEP IT LOCAL AND SAVE OUR SMALL SHOPS
New "Shop Local First" Campaign Launched

A new campaign urging people to support their local shops is launched today (Friday 28 April 2006) amid growing concerns that unless shopping habits change, the great British high street will disappear. Friends of the Earth wants shoppers around the country to Shop Local First [1] and says that by switching our shopping allegiances, we can also help in the fight against climate change.

Launched ahead of the Office of Fair Trading final report on its enquiry into supermarket dominance in the market place [2], Friends of the Earth local groups around the country will be joining the "Shop Local First" campaign to promote the benefits of small shops.

Small shops are currently struggling to survive due to the power of the big supermarkets, with more than 2000 independent shops going out of business in 2004. The problem comes from the growing power of the supermarkets, with the four biggest already controlling over three quarters of the grocery market, with Tesco alone taking 30 per cent.

Friends of the Earth supermarket campaigner Sandra Bell said:

"Local shops are being put of business on a daily basis because of the growing power of supermarkets. Popping to your local shop for a pint of milk will no longer be an option unless more shoppers change the way they shop. If we all Shop Local First, then we can help save our local shops, boost the local economy and also help do our bit to tackle climate change."

Earlier this year an all party group of MPs gave a stark warning that many independent shops would go out of business by 2015 unless action is taken now to curb the power of the biggest supermarkets [3]. Tesco recently announced plans to improve its environmental credentials, but Friends of the Earth says that shopping locally is still a better option, especially if you leave the car at home and buy locally-sourced food.

Campaigners around the country will work with local shopkeepers to develop local shopping promotions, such as loyalty cards, discounts, posters and local shop directories.

Friends of the Earth said there are great benefits from shopping locally, including:

- Local shops are more likely to provide local food that hasn't been flown halfway across the world;
- Local shops offer a much more personal service than big supermarkets;
- Local shops keep money circulating in the local area so they support other local businesses;
- Local shops and street markets often offer better value than big supermarkets for fresh fruit and vegetables [4];
- Local shops are more energy efficient than huge superstores – it would take more than 60 greengrocers to match the carbon dioxide emissions from just one average superstore [5];
- A diverse range of local shops provides more choice than one big supermarket.

Friends of the Earth also wants the Competition Commission to implement measures which will redress the balance between the big supermarkets and local shops – but warned that if consumers waited for the Competition Commission to act, it could be too late.

Notes:

[1] For more information about the Shop Local First campaign, contact the press office at Friends of the Earth on 020 7566 1649.

[2] The Office of Fair Trading is expected to make a final decision in early May about whether to refer the grocery market to the Competition Commission for a full

investigation

[3] All Party Parliamentary Small Shops Group (2006) 'High Street Britain: 2015' House of Commons

[4] A Friends of the Earth survey in 2003 found that apples were cheaper in greengrocers than supermarkets and in 2005 a study for the New Economics Foundation found that street markets in London were "substantially cheaper" than supermarkets for fruit and vegetables.

[5] Sheffield Hallam University (2002) Energy use in the United Kingdom non-domestic building stock

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