

# Bristol's extinction rebellion

Climate change is the biggest issue we've ever had to face. A rapidly rising movement that began here in Bristol is showing people of all ages how to take action into their own hands.... BY ALEX MORSS



Thousands of children have been walking out of schools for regular #SchoolStrike4Climate and #YouthStrike4Climate protests - here on College Green in Bristol. @strike4youth @earthstrikeuk

**A** symbolically vibrant dawn chorus is defying a torrent of rain and gloom, and echoing a message across the water, as darkness yields to a bleak grey sunrise on Bristol Harbourside. Confused early commuters are dismantled from their urgent treadmills by a gang of smiling, cheering, singing warriors, who are unveiling a giant golden shroud of guerrilla art that engulfs a building outside the Arnolfini. They say it's imbued with life, sweat, tears, urine, grease, sperm and blood from old bed sheets, and it screams out powerful painted warnings about 'ecocide'. This street show is another high profile

piece of impromptu creative mischief from a rising campaign that's appearing everywhere.

They're chanting: 'This is an Emergency' - an anthem composed for rebels by Blythe Pepino, Bristol's environmental activist and singer with art rock bands Vaults and Mesadorm. The protest is an imaginative example of how, here in our city, home of activism, the twin crises of mass species extinctions and climate change are being tackled with innovative and compelling new levels of dramatic action by a rapidly growing, grass roots movement. At the epicentre is Extinction Rebellion, often just called XR.

This massive international campaign is a Bristol

baby, born out of Rising Up Bristol. Its rapid fire of dynamic and cheerful civil disobedience has spread astonishingly fast from inception just 6 months ago to 200 groups around Britain and the world: plotting, swarming, road blocking, blockading, singing; hunger strikes, birth strikes; thousands of them splayed across precincts, shopping centres and airports performing 'die-ins'; glueing and locking on to government and BBC buildings and disrupting Downing Street. Their diverse ranks include grandparents, parents, professors, students and children.

They are clearly having a fair amount of fun as well as achieving huge impact with their messages.





Extinction Rebellion occupied the entrances to BBC buildings across the UK



Jack Everett's giant ecocide shroud created by 30 community artists



ER at BBC Whiteladies Road

You'll find ways to get involved every week on their website: <https://rebellion.earth/> at @xrbristol and [www.facebook.com/XRBristol/](https://www.facebook.com/XRBristol/)

Grandmother, 70-year-old Fi Radford says she's been continuously prepared to get arrested on the frontline of peaceful direct action. Fresh from pouring fake blood on the

to save species, the planet and their grand / children. There is an embracing of a real sense of urgency, not least because there is little sense of responsibility or vision from government, the media and regulators. Some of the children on the recent School Strike were incredibly eloquent and mature when speaking."

and chants, inspired by Swedish 16-year-old world influencer Greta Thunberg.

Extinction Rebellion hosted 3,000 people at a two day Bristol festival 'to train people in non-violent direct action' in March, with music, art, workshops, talks and advice on how to protest against extinctions and climate change. More events are planned.

*"We aim to close down capital cities all over the world, and make governments listen"*

On April 12, a spectacular piece of activist music and theatre will be staged near Cascade Steps in Bristol city centre.

They will stage an International Week of Rebellion from April 15. "We aim to close down capital cities all over the world, and make governments listen," said Fi.

This new dawn is rising. ☀

road outside Downing Street, she told The Spark: "You cannot fail to be touched by the actions, especially of all the children. Police were crying at our last one, it was so moving."

Another supporter, Jill Bird, said: "I am very excited by the speed with which Extinction Rebellion has exploded. I have many hopes and dreams of what could be possible for local people to achieve. Even switching their energy provider to Good Energy and the like - it's simple. I would love for local people to come together to improve air quality and congestion, anything from deluging our council with letters, to mass cycling actions. I would like to see billboards turned to 'Dreamboards', as locals dream their way to the city they actually want. I would like to see local people put the future of their children and the planet first, by taking a stand on the expansion of Bristol Airport. One of the greatest events has been young people calling the adults to account - long may it continue."

She said XR Bristol weekly meetings are 'packed' thanks to thousands of local followers. "Many are completely new to activism and are just responding from the heart. I think XR has also been successful because of the combination of non-violent action with no secrecy and a willingness by many to go to prison, if necessary,

Thousands of Bristol children joined global school and college strikes in February and March, walking out of school en masse and flooding College Green with banners, drums



Help Emily, 8 and Lola, 10 save the planet