

Issue 2

NISCN Newsletter

March 2020



We Can't Ignore a Crisis.

Welcome to the 2nd issue of the NISCN Newsletter. As you are probably aware, globally we are currently experiencing 2 crises, the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis. The spread of this novel coronavirus has led to the cancellation of all physical NISCN strikes for the foreseeable future, but this will not stop us from demanding change. On March 13th, we took the climate strike to social media with the hashtag: #climatestrikeonline.

FEBRUARY 2020 STRIKES

This month's strikes took place on March 13th. Strikes were held across various digital platforms, highlighting how this crisis will not stop our strikers from being heard.



#climatestrikeonline

#ClimateStrikeOnline

Striker Jasmijn wearing her protest socks for the #climatestrikeonline

STAYING SAFE

Understandably, the COVID-19 pandemic has many people worried. Exams have been cancelled, shops are closed, and a government-imposed lockdown has begun. You probably need some reassurance, information, and advice, so, here's the NISCN guide to the novel coronavirus.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19?

The two main symptoms of COVID-19 are a new, continuous cough, and a high temperature. The NHS asks anyone who has either of these conditions to self-isolate and remain at home. You are also asked to stay at home if anyone in your household develops either of these symptoms.

HOW CAN I AVOID CATCHING THE VIRUS?

COVID-19 is highly infectious, so it is important to promote the prevention of this disease. The NHS recommends that people wash their hands regularly for at least 20 seconds. To ensure that people wash their hands for this length of time, it has been suggested by many health officials that people sing Happy Birthday twice while washing their hands. Other songs that have been suggested include 'Toxic' by Britney Spears, 'Truth Hurts' by Lizzo, and Love Shack by The B-52's.

HOW CAN I KEEP MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY ACTIVE IN QUARANTINE?

Our strikers are taking many different approaches to staying active in quarantine. Here's what they're doing to fight off the boredom:

"I'm doing online classes with my Mandarin Chinese teacher, and I'm also taking the time to write more music." - Ailís, Omagh

"Yoga and mindfulness are helping me focus my energy during this period of uncertainty" - Kaitlyn, Belfast

"I'm going for a cycle once a day and constantly listening to never-ending pile of audiobooks that I want to read" - Adam, Belfast

"I am always on zoom calls! Don't have much time to do anything else!" - Anna, Belfast

PEOPLE VS POLLUTERS

Recently, many of our NISCN strikers have become involved with a new emerging international movement called Polluters Out. We spoke to Kaitlyn Laverty, a member of Polluters Out NI and one of our Belfast strikers, to learn more about the movement and why she joined.



Please can you introduce yourself.

My name is Kaitlyn - I am an 18-year-old student-activist from Belfast and a member of Polluters Out NI. I have been a local environmentalist activist for the past few years, but unfortunately, due to the outbreak of COVID 19, many of the organisations I am part of are unable to function due to social distancing measures.

What is Polluters Out?

Polluters Out is a new environmentalist activism project currently based around the logistics of activists socially distancing/isolating, and is therefore organised online. It is a youth led coalition

dedicated to kicking the fossil fuel industry out of COP, universities, government and banks. Polluters Out has three main demands;

1. For the UNFCCC to reject fossil fuel money for the COP and in addition revoke the ability of fossil fuel corporations, executives and lobbyists to take part in negotiations, panels and critical discussions.
2. For Indigenous Rights and Human Rights to be added into Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.
3. For 100% transparency in all climate-related policies and decisions.

Why did you decide to join the organisation?

I decided to join so that I could continue passionately advocating for system change regarding environmental legislation while confined to my bedroom. We carry out our meetings on video calls and stay in contact through social media. These are also the platforms that we carry out our weekly strikes on, which we refer to as Digital Strikes.

What have you done as an organization?

Although it is still early days for the coalition, so far we have taken part in twitter storms, sending emails to targeted companies and have raised awareness via social media in order to put pressure on the fossil fuel industry to remove themselves from the environmentalist conversation. Our Digital Strikes have taken place on video calls, each member with their own Polluters Out sign, and have then been posted online.

How can people support and get involved with Polluters Out?

In the near future we hope to do a press release for Polluters Out NI in order to reach activists who might want to become involved. People can support and get involved with PONI by following us on social media, where they can then find out information about taking part in twitter storms, Digital Strikes and more. We can be found on Twitter and Instagram at @pollutersoutni

POLLUTERS
OUT

STAY CLEAR OF ECO-FASCISM!

With the current environment, it can be helpful to look for the benefits of the situation. Coronavirus has ruined a lot of things for us all, but eco-fascism is not the way to turn. Yes, the water in the canals in Venice is clear and yes, nitrogen dioxide levels across eastern and central China have been 10-30% lower than normal. But at what cost?

We can look at this all under a positive light, but we would be wrong to do so. This small decrease in pollution is not worth the cost; hundreds and thousands of lives. There have been 37,814 deaths from COVID-19; they are not to be exploited. This is a deadly virus that is taking lives, not an anti-climate change machine. What we, as a population, need to focus on is making changes and taking action that does not involve loss of life. This epidemic has exposed the flaws in our systems and those are what need to be changed; we don't need to risk lives for an environmental cause. We aim to save the lives of the people currently living on a planet that is dying; we do not capitalise on their deaths. Discrimination and death are not the way to reduce emissions.

It is possible that the actual effects of COVID-19 on the environment will be negative, not positive. Due to the drop in aerosols, temperatures could actually rise this year in regions where factories are shut. The ethos of the climate movement is: treating each other better, being aware of how our actions affect others and working together with people from all over the world.

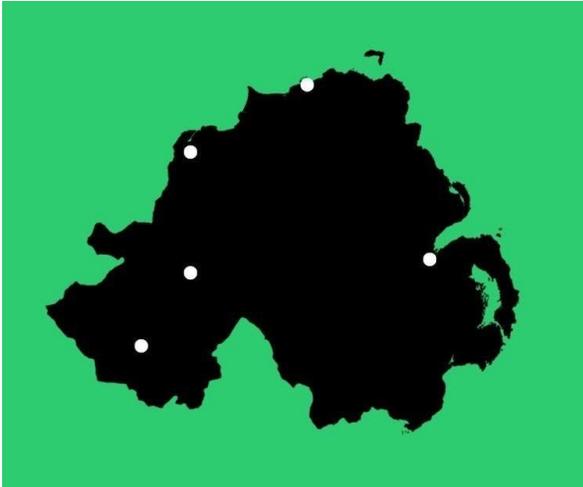
Many people have been claiming that, 'Corona is the cure,' or, 'People are the virus.' These are dangerous statements that are grounded in racism and hatred. People did not create the virus; they are suffering directly from its consequences. It is not 'curing' the world; it is taking mass amounts of life and hurting, more than helping. We can make these changes together, without the help of something so destructive. If we challenge our leaders, take action, educate others and ourselves; we can tackle the climate crisis. We do not need a disease to take care of something system change can easily fix, safely and peacefully.

We urge you to stay away from such beliefs and focus on taking action; and respecting the lives that have been lost during this pandemic.

OUR STRIKES

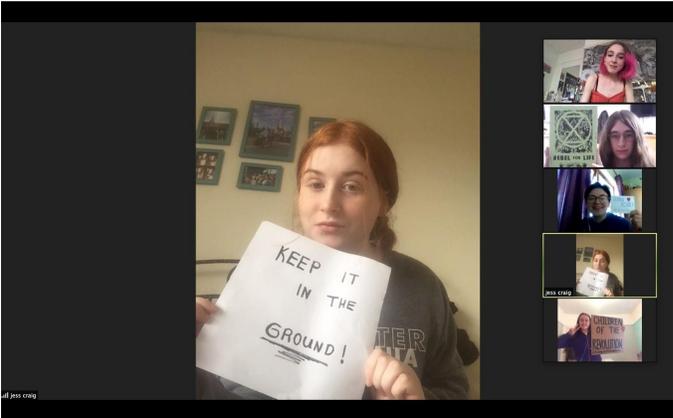
We have strike groups in locations across Northern Ireland:

- Belfast
- Derry/Londonderry
- Enniskillen
- Omagh
- Portrush



NEXT STRIKES: April 3rd

PLEASE NOTE: Due to the current seriousness of the novel coronavirus pandemic, COVID-19, **no physical strikes will take place for the foreseeable future.** Instead, all strikes will take place online. Digital strikes take place on a **weekly basis.** More information about how to take part can be found on our social media platforms.



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Stay safe during this unprecedented time. We'll be back next month for more climate-related news.