

MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY

NorthEast

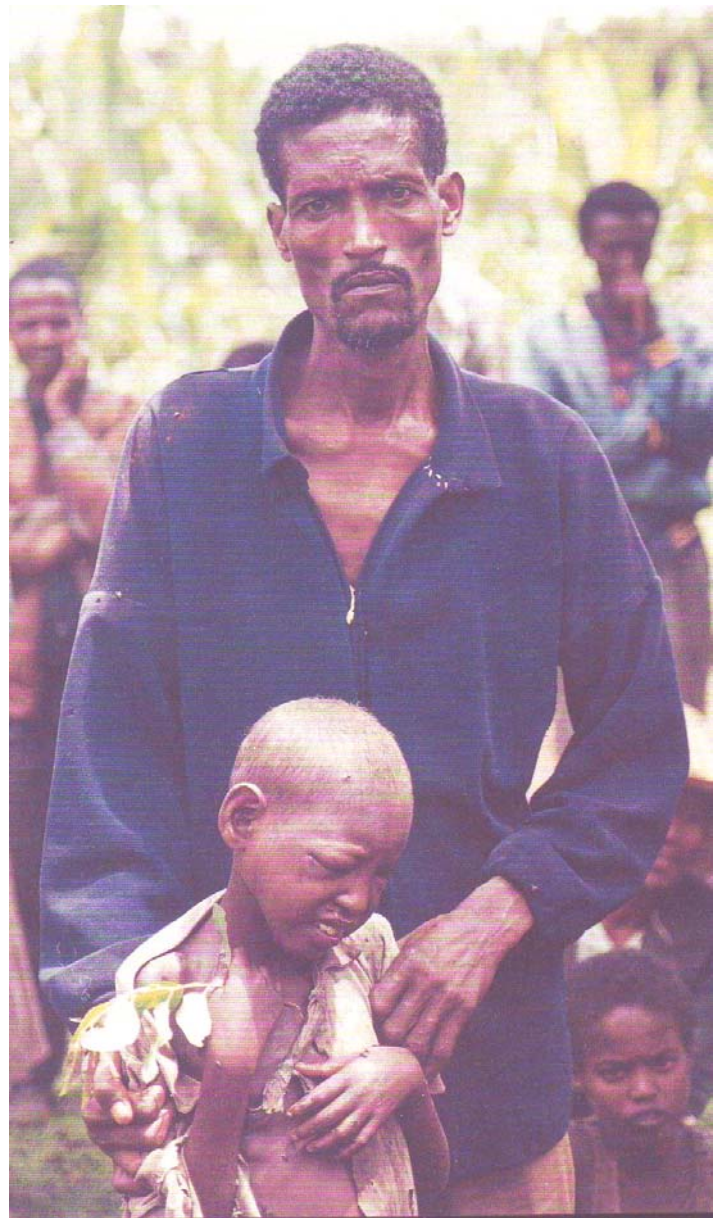
July 2009

*“For the children of the poor today...
and for our own children and grandchildren tomorrow!”*

“Zewdie Tamirat’s eyes were swollen shut through malnutrition and her delicate skin was no longer able to mask the skeleton beneath. Brushing away flies from her face with a small twig, the little girl stood quietly as, in 2000, her father explained how three years of crop failure in Ethiopia had left his family facing starvation. Pitiably, she attempted a smile for the cameraman” (Tearfund).

Some images remain in the mind and little Zewdie’s was one such and helped keep me going with poverty campaigning for the first few years of the millennium. However, it came like a bolt from the blue when, reading up on climate science early in 2006, I read that global warming is *“probably responsible for the drop in rainfall in Ethiopia since 1996”* (Lord Robert May, President of the Royal Society). In other words, rich country pollution is *already* doing terrible damage to the world’s poor.

But this is not only about ‘the children of the poor’. ‘Tomorrow’, the catastrophe will certainly engulf our own children and grandchildren unless we change our ways. *“How could I look my grandchildren in the eye and say I knew about this and did nothing?”*, asks Sir David Attenborough. [David Golding]



Courtesy, Jim Loring/Tearfund

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July 2009

Get ready... get set... for an active campaigning Autumn

“For the children of the poor today...

And for our own children and grandchildren tomorrow!”

September, October and November:

Another series of our ‘Autumn Roadshows’ – a most attractive campaign feature which is probably without its like anywhere in the world. Why not invite us to visit you, right where you are? See page 9.

Sunday, 20th September:

Great North Run, with our 40-strong team of runners. Look out for the Make Poverty History t-shirts and given them a cheer!

October, Sat 17th- Mon 19th:

UN World Poverty Day and GCAP White Band Day, Sat 17th, with ‘Stand Up’ actions with anyone, anywhere, anytime between Sat’ and Monday.

Saturday 5th December:

THE BIG ONE! Grand national gathering and march in London to show support for the Stop Climate Chaos coalition, and urgent and effective action on climate change. Coaches already booked from ‘Every city, town and village in the Region’! Well, almost! ☺ See pages 9 and 12.

25th December:

Enjoy Christmas with your family and friends with a good conscience, knowing you’ve played your part and you’ve done what you could for...

“For the children of the poor today...

And for our own children and grandchildren tomorrow!”

Make Poverty History *NorthEast* Website: www.mph-northeast.org.uk
Contact: Development Coordinator, Dr David Golding CBE, d.w.golding@ncl.ac.uk

Please ensure we have your current email address!

*"For the children of the poor today...
And for our own children (and grandchildren) tomorrow!"*

2008: That was quite a (campaigning) year!

One thing we have to say about 2008: this was a year which 'made history'! Unhappily, it did so in many of the wrong ways, most notably in the collapse of a financial bubble generated by a combination of incompetence, recklessness, greed and corruption on a scale which almost beggars belief. In some ways, the banks have been behaving as they did in the 1970s and 80s, when corrupt lending was directed towards corrupt recipients in poor countries, leaving the world's poor to carry the burden for decades to come.

Our coalition emerged during 2008 as one of the country's leading regional campaign groupings and the year was a very special – and very stressful - year for us!

During the early months, we campaigned hard for an effective climate change bill and most NE MPs were lobbied in person and/or by mail. And we got almost everything we asked for! (But see next page).

The month of May saw the 10th anniversary of Jubilee's mould-breaking gathering at the G8 in Birmingham and we sent a very good contingent to the 'Journey to Justice' event. We also made a contribution of national significance, securing support for the Fast Day we called for 16th May from a list of international (including two Presidents!), national and regional leaders.

This year, 2009, calls for our continued commitment. We must 'play our little part' in influencing affairs of immense importance, such as the successor of the Kyoto Protocol in Copenhagen in December and, here in the NE, the threat of the construction of new, largely unabated, coal-fired power stations, which would leave the credibility of our much-vaunted national commitment to action on climate in tatters. But we must also make sure that we in MPH-NE will not forget our responsibilities to the billions of people suffering *right now* from the scourge of what Bono calls, 'stupid poverty', resulting from economic injustice.

Please accept my sincere apologies for the long delay to which this newsletter has been subject!

In the autumn, we mobilised widespread support throughout the region for the UN's World Poverty Day, 17th October, to urge world leaders keep their promises to relieve poverty. Furthermore, we had the absurd idea of calling for a target to be set for participation, of 1% of the world's population, no less - i.e., 67 million. Absurd or not, this inspired campaigners across the country and beyond, and was even trumpeted by the Director of the United Nations Millennium Campaign, Salil Shetty. In fact, nearly 117 million took part - the best part of two percent!

In December, we acted as co-sponsor for the major climate conference, 'Spirituality for Survival', in Durham and, on the same day, supported the Newcastle Fairtrade Market.

David Golding (Editor)

*"For the children of the poor today...
and for our own children and grandchildren tomorrow!"*

MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY *NorthEast*

working together with



'Just Say No' – Say No to...

'Factories of Death'

I say to you, with the utmost sincerity, that the evidence for the occurrence of global warming, and its causation mainly by the use of fossil fuels, is overwhelming. I say to you, *with equal conviction*, that climate change poses the greatest possible threat to the world's poor in the near future, and to our own children and grandchildren thereafter.

Here in Britain, we've blazed a trail to deal with this challenge. Last year, *Stop Climate Chaos*, the coalition of all our great aid agencies, able and enterprising environmental groups, and many others, with the support of leading scientists and many backbench MPs, persuaded Parliament to pass an excellent Climate Change Bill – the first in the world!

But it was a battle we won, not the war! *Then* the challenge was to turn rhetoric into policy; *now* it's to convert policy into action. First and foremost, we need to 'Just Say No' to the construction of new 'Factories of Death', as Professor James Hansen, one of America's leading climate scientists, calls 'unabated' coal-fired power stations (i.e., without 'CCS' - carbon capture and storage). These are by far the most polluting way of generating electricity.

The Government's proposals on CCS "fly in the face of reason", says North East MEP, Fiona Hall (I'd say they're just plain barmy!). Mrs

Hall also says that, *"The idea of starting with small-scale 'pilot plants' for CCS is a sound one. But it is vital that the pilots are designed to capture all the CO₂ being emitted - otherwise we will be trialling a system which is only marginally better than the non-abated coal powered plants that exist at present. With climate change happening faster than anyone predicted, the fact is that coal-fired stations without 100% CCS are killers."* [Wow! I wouldn't have dared say that, even though it is true.]

We make no criticism of CCS as such. On the contrary, we would warmly welcome appropriate efforts to develop this technology, which would be of incalculable value in the fight against climate change. What we are saying is: *"By all means press ahead with CCS demonstration plants, but wait until the process is proven before embarking on large scale new coal build, when CCS can be applied to all their emissions from the start of operations."*

Cont'd

*“For the children of the poor today...
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In other words, we are totally opposed to the construction of ‘death factories with fig leaves’ - new, full sized, coal-fired power stations, trying vainly to hide behind itsy-bitsy, teeny-weeny CCS units! Two are planned for our region – at Blyth (Cambois) and on Teesside. The weasel words, ‘Clean Coal’, are routinely applied to such systems, but they are anything but clean. **They would start belching out their carbon – the Blyth station alone would produce**

15-20 million of tons of it each year – at the very time (around 2015) when global emissions need to begin to decline if we are to have any chance of avoiding runaway climate change. Furthermore, if CCS cannot be made to work at an acceptable cost - and we have to face up to the fact that this possibility, however unwelcome, is a very real one – we will have shackled ourselves to these highly polluting monstrosities for decades to come.

All three North East MEPs, Martin Callahan (Conservative), Fiona Hall (Liberal Democrat) and Stephen Hughes (Labour), have kindly indicated their broad support for our stance. We thank them most sincerely!

For all you teckies...

The Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, Ed Miliband, announced proposals on 23rd April for up to four new coal-fired power stations, each with a ‘demonstration’ CCS unit initially capable of capturing only a small fraction (probably 20-25% at most) of the station’s emissions. When the CCS has been shown to work well, the process will have to be scaled up, within five years, to apply to all the stations’ emissions. This means that the stations would be largely unabated for the best part of ten years, and quite possibly far longer.

Question: “But how do we keep the lights on?” **Answer:** “Very easily! According to the Government’s own figures (DECC, Press Release, 23rd April, 2009), closure of existing coal-fired power stations due to new European environmental standards will reduce the contribution of coal by about 10% of current national generating capacity. However, during that time, the UK is committed to increasing its level of generation from renewables from 5% to over 30% of national capacity and, in addition, to making substantial improvements in energy efficiency – thus covering the shortfall several times over.

Action this day!

Please write to your MP to ask him/her to press the leaders of his/her party to ask for adjustments to the Government’s current proposals. Using your own words, make it clear you support the development of CCS pilot plants, but believe it would be quite wrong to go ahead with new, full-sized coal-fired power stations until CCS has been shown to work. For further information, see our Briefing at:

www.mph-northeast.org.uk or www.panic-stns.co.uk

By post to: [Your MP’s name] House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

By email: go to www.writetothem.com [You can find your MP’s name at this site.]

“They talk about goals which sound impressive, but... the actions are such that it will be impossible to reach those goals”
(Professor James Hansen). **Just so!**

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End the Vulture Culture!

Vulture funds are private companies that try to scavenge profit from the debts of some of the world's poorest countries. They seek to profiteer by buying up the debts of indebted poor countries at a cheap price, then trying to recover the full amount, often by suing through the courts.

At least 54 of this loathsome and vicious species, many based in tax havens, are known to have taken legal action against 12 of the world's poorest countries recently, for claims amounting to \$1.5 billion. This means money released by debt relief is going into the pockets of wealthy investors, not spent on health and education.



TAKE ACTION

We are working with MPs to bring an end to the vulture culture, but we need your help to persuade the government to take it seriously.



Please use the card provided AND write to your MP via www.WriteToThem.com and ask them to:

- Sign Early Day Motion 1440 on Regulating Vulture Funds
- Write to the International Development Minister to ask the Government to support and introduce the Bill.

Left: Sally Keeble MP and one decidedly non-vicious vulture!

Liberia secures vulture victory!

Liberia has taken the next step on its long journey to freedom from crushing debt by 'buying back' nearly all of its commercial debt, some of it owed to vulture funds, at a vastly reduced rate. Liberia was able to negotiate a deal through the World Bank-

managed Debt Reduction Facility. This has wiped out \$1.2 billion in debts, at a cost of \$38 million, which is being covered by donors including the World Bank and the UK Government.

"Let me commend and applaud the tremendous work you are doing. Our country is an example of how international debt cancellation advocacy, such as yours, can truly move mountains" (President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia, to Jubilee Debt Campaign, May 2008).

Traidcraft says...

"Pledge your support for the Groceries Watchdog"

It's official. A two-year investigation by the UK Competition Commission has found supermarkets guilty of exploiting overseas suppliers - the people who grow, pick and pack our food. As a result thousands of poor

farmers and factory workers are left with little choice but to work in unacceptable conditions: on low pay, for long hours, in unsafe conditions, and with little job security.

To make sure the people who pick, pack and grow our food get a fair deal, the Commission has recommended two vital steps:

- A stronger Code of Practice for supermarkets
- An independent watchdog to enforce the rules

This is a great step forward which could improve the lives of countless thousands people in some of the world's poorest countries.

But we're not there yet! Traidcraft is campaigning to make sure that

supermarkets and the government act to make the watchdog a reality, to make sure supermarkets treat their suppliers fairly. We need public pressure to make sure they do – in other words, we need your help!

ACTION

Please sign our online pledge to add your voice to the campaign!

Google, *"Traidcraft Pledge your support for the Groceries Watchdog"*

"I had a farm in Africa"

(A very little farm!)

Vaati Peter is a 34 year old farmer. She owns one acre of land, and rents a second. Vaati and her husband grow vegetables such as aubergine and baby corn both for export and the local market.

She has a guaranteed price for her produce from the fairtrade company VEGCARE; other farmers are not so fortunate. *"We work six days a week because once a crop is in the ground it must be cared for. It's farming that put up our house and meets our needs",* says Vaati, *"including the children's school fees."*

Completing school can make all the difference to a child's prospects and Vaati has high hopes for her teenage daughter: *"I want her to be a doctor"*. [Adapted from Traidcraft, of whom we in the NE are inordinately proud!]



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Tax Justice Network

The Big Tax Return

What is the issue?

Accounting rules could play a crucial role in helping end extreme poverty. If we could end the current secrecy surrounding the way multinational companies account for profits, developing countries would be able to generate the tax revenue they need to pay for their own schools, hospitals, clean drinking water and other essential services.

Currently, accounting rules mean we cannot tell what profits are made by a company operating in a developing country, or what taxes they pay there. Companies only have to give one total profit figure for the whole world – allowing for a number of forms of tax avoidance and evasion to occur.

If multi-nationals accounted for their profits on a country-by-country basis governments and local organisations in developing countries would have a powerful tool to ensure that the right amount of tax is paid – potentially freeing up a minimum of US\$160billion per year. To plug this

leak we need global accounting rules to change. Companies must be required to report how much profit they make - and tax they pay - in each country in which they operate.

In May MPs held a debate in Westminster and the UK Government is now committed to country-by-country reporting. Vince Cable, Treasury Spokesman for the Liberal Democrats has added his voice to the campaign: *"There is a lot of foot-dragging, and political leadership is needed, but that is the way to stop systematic abuse"*.

Who makes the rules?

Many companies around the world and every company registered in Europe follow the rules set by the International Accounting Standard Board. Helping to fund that Board - and represented upon it - are The Big Four international accountancy companies: Ernst and Young, PricewaterhouseCoopers, KPMG and Deloitte.

ACTION

We need to urge the Big Four to use their influence at the International Accounting Standard Board and pave the way for country-by-country reporting.

For more information and a suggested email action please go to:

www.christianaid.org.uk/ActNow/the-big-tax-return/index.aspx

Or contact Christian Aid, 391 West Road, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE15 7PY

“For the children of the poor today...
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Announcing our third...

Study Conference Road Show (September-November)

Why not bring Make Poverty History NE to your own neighbourhood, whether it be to a meeting in a village or church hall, a student group, a church service, a trade union meeting – or even your own sitting room?

In the past, some such events have involved two or three concise presentations (15-20 minutes maximum), with time for questions and comments, opportunity to sign campaign postcards and letters, and to socialise. However, shorter and simpler meetings are equally welcome – no gathering is too small to be worthwhile. Although we would wish to include, however briefly, the first topic listed below, you could select your own programme, subject only to availability of appropriate speakers.

“The Road to Copenhagen – rising to the challenge of climate change”

“Shooting down the ‘Vultures’ - banning the unscrupulous companies who siphon off the proceeds of debt relief”

“Amnesty International’s new campaign: ‘Freedom from poverty as a human right’”

“Why the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition says ‘Quit dirty coal’”

“Christian Aid’s new campaign for Tax Justice”

“Does corruption bar the way to ‘Making Poverty History’?”

“Biblical warrant for advocacy for the poor”

Our Road Show programme is unique in the UK and, probably, the world. But it only happens if you stir yourself to invite us! Please help us make it our best ever this year.

North campaigners lead again with:

‘Coaches from every city, town and village in the North East’
(Well, almost!)

The North East is the first region in the country to ‘throw its hat into the ring’ in support of the Stop Climate Chaos national mobilisation in London on 5th December, in the run-up to the crucial international conference in Copenhagen. If we stand united, this could be *our* time – and the time for the world’s poor and for our children and grandchildren.

“Never have we faced such a global threat”, said Lord Robert May, President of the Royal Society. But never have we been offered such an opportunity to bring such benefit to humankind, as that presented by the current challenge to close the centuries-long chapter of carbon profligacy and open a new chapter of environmental responsibility!

We want you to vote with your feet and join us on 5 December.

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Another North East Community goes 'Fair trade'!

North Tyneside is officially a 'Fairtrade Borough' - recognising its understanding of Fairtrade and support for Fairtrade products. The announcement came at the start of the second week of Fairtrade fortnight [in March], and was made by John Harrison (who was then Elected Mayor) at a special Fairtrade business breakfast, where participants met with two visiting Ghanaian farmers whose communities have been helped hugely by the Fairtrade movement.

Cllr Norma Redfearn, who has been instrumental in leading the borough towards the achievement of Fairtrade status, said:

"We are absolutely delighted by this announcement... it justifiably recognises the hard work that businesses, members of the community, schools and others have put in to achieve this. I hope it will kick-start even more good work with Fairtrade in the future."

Hannah Reed from the Fairtrade Foundation said: *"It has been an absolute pleasure to learn of all that's been going on in North Tyneside... A great deal of work and dedication has obviously been put in... which we hope will further enhance and create a focus for the long-standing activity, outreach and educational work by fair trade pioneers in the North East."*

Letter by David Golding, in the News Guardian, on 17th July 2008

I was alarmed to read the complete misunderstanding... of the 'Fairtrade' system expressed in your article, "Council backs fairtrade plan". As Coordinator for Make Poverty History NE, I assure your readers there is no question whatever of *"companies having to support Fairtrade schemes rather than local produce"*. Support for fairtrade is always entirely voluntary.

For a start, most of the products involved are not grown locally anyway! How much coffee, tea, cocoa, bananas or cotton do you see in our fields? The Fairtrade mark just guarantees that the producers are protected by some really basic safeguards – the sort we brought in a hundred years ago when we stopped children going down mines or up chimneys, etc.

Most people in this country seem to have no idea of the appalling conditions which ordinary, hard working families have to endure in the poor countries. Since the age of 12, 'Rosemaria', now 25, has worked in a packing plant supplying bananas for the UK. She has to get up at 4am when it's still dark and is on her feet all day, with few breaks, getting back home in the dark as late as 7pm. Six days a week! She's often made to work longer than the law allows, but when they tried to form a union to protect themselves, the organisers were sacked. *"It doesn't feel like a life"*, says Rosemaria, *"but what choice do I have, with two children to support?"*

What it comes to is this: every time we walk into the supermarket we have a choice: pay a little extra and buy fair trade products and give the producers barely enough to provide for their families; or save a few pence and reduce the most vulnerable people in the world to utter destitution in the process. And there I've indicated two differences between them and us. One difference is that they are poor, whereas most of us are comparatively rich. The far greater difference is that we have a choice and, as poor Rosemaria said, they have no choice at all!



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Put People First is a major new coalition of British agencies uniting to promote the interest of ordinary people, and particularly the poor, throughout the world. Its members include Cafod, Christian Aid, Jubilee Debt Campaign, Micah Challenge, Oxfam, Tearfund, Save the Children, Traidcraft, and scores of others. Website, www.putpeoplefirst.org.uk

There was a church service, march and rally in London on Saturday 28th March, just before the meeting of the G20 group of world leaders and, despite being arranged at short notice, it was well attended and a good event.

David Golding was interviewed about the events of that week on Thursday 2nd April, on **BBC Radio Newcastle**, extracts from which are given below.

Charlie Charlton: Dr David Golding is a member of Make Poverty History North East. Were you protesting in London yesterday? I'm getting you here, so you must have caught the early train!

David Golding: No, I was part of the big 'Put People First' rally and march, on Saturday in London. We had 35,000 people on that. I had my wife, my daughter, my son-in-law and our two grandchildren with me, so it was that sort of protest and, of course, there was hardly a police officer in sight. There didn't need to be.

CC: Now when you say 'that sort of protest', by that you simply mean peaceful?

DWG: Yes, I mean perfectly peaceful and, of course, organised in consultation with the authorities.

CC: What would you like to see changed?

DWG: In a few words, we don't want to see a recovery plan, we want to see a reform plan... so that the people, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable, are put first – 'Put People First'. We don't want to go back to 'business as usual', which has left three billion people in the world in abject poverty, and was and is taking the globe towards climate catastrophe...

We particularly need to remember the people who suffer from our policies – from unfair trade policies, for example; from the



Joseph and David with Tearfund's 'SuperBadger'

debt over-hang; and the tax swindles by multinationals using tax havens.

These are massive flows and they result in misery to hundreds of millions of people... *that is the real violence, it's the violence of economic oppression and exploitation...*

CC: Thank you very much. That was Dr David Golding of MPH-NE etc.

MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY *NorthEast*

together with **PANiC Stations**
people against new coal-fired power stations

**Historic National Gathering
to
Stop Climate Chaos**

London, Saturday 5th December 2009

In the run-up to:

*'The most important negotiations in the
history of humanity, in Copenhagen'*

**Coaches from every city, town and
village in the North East! ☺**

Supported by CAFOD, Christian Aid, Friends of the Earth,
Greenpeace, Oxfam, Tearfund, Trade Unions, and others

Put the date in your diary now

– and tell everyone about it!

Participants must be 18 or over, unless accompanied by a responsible adult

Return fare (provisional) £32

Alnwick	Consett	Hartlepool	Northallerton
Berwick	Cramlington	Hexham	N. Tyneside
Bishop Auckland	Darlington	M'brough/St'ton	S. Tyneside
Blyth	Durham	Morpeth	Sunderland
Chester le Street	Gateshead	Newcastle	Washington

Further details and booking available from September

David Golding, email d.w.golding@ncl.ac.uk;

Marine Science – Ridley Building, Newcastle University, NE1 7RU

www.mph-northeast.org.uk