

Standing Orders for Conference

Revised May 2008 – Final Version

Introduction

Friends of the Earth (the collective name for Friends of the Earth Trust and Friends of the Earth Limited) holds a Local Groups Conference every year. The Local Groups Conference observes the following guidelines:

- Every licensed Local Group can send a nominated representative to the Conference.
- Local Groups responding by the booking deadline are also guaranteed a second place at Conference, with up to four further places prioritised for each group. The organisers may be able to offer groups further delegate places if, after the booking deadline, places remain unfilled.
- Friends of the Earth staff may also attend the Conference.
- Local Groups have one vote at the Conference, which is exercised through their nominated representative. No representative may hold more than one vote. Board members and staff may not vote.
- The Chair of the Conference will be appointed by the Boards.
- The Conference shall receive a report from the Boards of the past year's work and their agreed plans.
- The Conference shall discuss Motions submitted by licensed Local Groups and any Motions submitted directly on behalf of the Boards at a Motions Debate.
- Motions put before the Conference shall be carried upon receiving the assent of a simple majority of votes cast excluding abstentions.
- As the final decision-making authority in Friends of the Earth Ltd and Friends of the Earth Trust rests with the Boards, Motions have an advisory function. The Boards will, however, undertake at the earliest opportunity to consider the Motions passed and take appropriate action. To this end, The Boards will each year appoint a "Friend of the Motions" who will monitor the response to and progress of successful Motions on behalf of the Boards.
- The Boards and the Friend of the Motions will provide a full report to the following Conference on staff actions taken in response to Motions and provide reasons for any non-implementation of Motions passed.
- A Conference Organising Committee of at least three nominated people and a Returning Officer will be established. Any queries or complaints from Local Groups regarding the Conference should be sent to the Returning Officer, care of the Capacity Building team at Friends of the Earth's Head Office.
- The Conference agrees to operate within the Standing Orders agreed by that Conference.
- A special Conference may be called by the Boards as and when deemed necessary. The Conference shall be governed by the same rules and procedures as laid down here for the Annual Conference.

Standing Orders for Conference

1. Conference Organisation

- 1.1. Each year the Conference Organising Committee will appoint a Returning Officer who will publish the procedure for the proposal of Motions to Conference (“Motions”) and Amendments to a Motion (“Amendments”). The exact dates will vary but the process and timetable shall include:
 - 1.1.1. A covering notice for Conference, Motions and Elections to Board to Groups – not less than 20 weeks prior to Conference;
 - 1.1.2. A closing date for submissions of Motions and Nominations to Board – not less than 12 weeks prior to Conference;
 - 1.1.3. A Draft Motions paper and Conference booking form circulated to Local Groups – not less than 10 weeks prior to Conference;
 - 1.1.4. A closing date for Amendments to Motions and Election ballot papers circulated to Local Groups – not less than 6 weeks prior to Conference;
 - 1.1.5. Any process and closing date for the prioritisation of Motions by groups eligible to propose them, including circulation of prioritisation ballot paper – not less than 2 weeks prior to Conference;
 - 1.1.6. Distribution of Conference papers including final Motions paper and an agenda – by beginning of Conference;
 - 1.1.7. Close of elections and announcement of Election and Motions debate results – at Conference.

2. Local Group Eligibility

- 2.1. A Motion or Amendment may only be Proposed or Seconded by a Licensed Friends of the Earth Local Group (a” Local Group”) and may not be signed on behalf of the group by a Staff or Board member. To propose a Motion or Amendment the Local Group must be of not less than 12 months continuous licensed standing;
 - 2.1.1. at the date that the Motion or Amendment is proposed or seconded and accepted by the Returning Officer and;
 - 2.1.2. at the date of the last day before the day of the Conference Motions Debate when the Motion or Amendment is Proposed or Seconded to Conference.

3. Voting

- 3.1. In all cases one voting representative is allowed for each licensed Local Group of one year's continuous standing as at the day before the date of the Motions Debate. The voting representative should be selected by their Local Group, accredited with Conference Organisation Team and receive their voting card before the start of the Motions Debate. No other individual or Local Group can vote. The voting representative may not be a Staff or Board member.

4. The Motions Process

- 4.1. A Motion will only be accepted if it is accompanied by up to five hundred words of background information covering the most important information relating to that Motion. Friends of the Earth staff may also subsequently provide up to five hundred words of additional background information to any Motion, to provide context and to highlight aspects of the Motion which will provide opportunities or issues for Friends of the Earth should the Motion be approved.
- 4.2. The Boards shall appoint a Chair of the Motions Debate (“Chair” or “Chair of Motions”).
- 4.3. The Chair shall have complete control of the procedure of the Debate, will guide the Returning Officer on behalf of the Board, provide final judgment regarding the acceptability or otherwise of Motions and

Amendments, will have the right to decide who shall speak and to rule speakers out of order, and when to take procedural Motions with the exception of a vote of “no confidence” in the Chair, and where the procedure is already covered by one of the following Standing Orders.

- 4.4. In addition to the Chair, the Boards shall also appoint a Deputy Chair of the Motions Debate (“Deputy Chair” or “Deputy Chair of Motions”), who must be from a different Local Group (if applicable) to the Chair. The Deputy Chair shall assume the role of the Chair in the following circumstances:
 1. In the event of the Chair being unavailable to discharge their duties due to some unforeseen circumstances (e.g. illness), for the duration of the Motions Debate, or;
 2. In the event of the Chair voluntarily resigning their duties, for the remainder of the Motions Debate, or;
 3. In the event of a resolution for vote of no confidence in the Chair being submitted, for the duration of the vote, or;
 4. Following a successful vote of no confidence in the Chair, for the remainder of the Motions Debate, or;
 5. In the event of a real and/or perceived conflict of interest between the Chair and the Motion or Amendment which is to be debated, for the duration of the debate on that Motion or Amendment only.

In the unlikely event of the original Chair and the Deputy Chair both being unable to discharge their duties as a result of the circumstances listed above, the Motions Debate will be suspended whilst the Boards appoint a new Chair.

- 4.5. The notes and agenda published in advance of the Motions Debate shall include time limits for speeches. These limits may be amended by the Chair, if, in their opinion, the timetable demands it.

5. The Conduct of the Debate

- 5.1. Persons entitled to speak to Motions and Amendments shall include members of the Boards and staff of Friends of the Earth, its paid consultants, registered supporters of Friends of the Earth and members of Local Groups only. Any other person may only be heard if specifically invited to do so by the Chair of Motions.
- 5.2. Each Motion or Amendment is to be formally proposed and seconded by members of its proposing and seconding Local Group in person, although at the discretion of the Chair, a Motion may be accepted with only its proposing group present.
- 5.3. The Motion is to be introduced by a member of its proposing Local Group. Local Group Motions cannot be proposed by a Board or Staff Member.
- 5.4. If there are Amendments to the Motion, these are introduced, formally proposed and seconded, debated and voted on individually in the order indicated on the Motions Debate paper. At the discretion of the Chair, Amendments to the same Motion may be proposed and seconded as a block, and debated together, but will still be voted on in the order they appear on the Motions Debate paper. Only when all Amendments have been dealt with will the Motion as amended or otherwise be debated.
- 5.5. If there is opposition to a Motion or an Amendment, a speech against the Motion or Amendment is to be taken next.
- 5.6. Speeches for and against the Motion or Amendment are then to be taken until the issues have been debated sufficiently.
- 5.7. If after a Motion or Amendment has been proposed and formally seconded there is no-one who wishes to speak either in favour or alternatively speak against it, the Chair may at their discretion put the Motion to a vote without further debate.
- 5.8. If any opposition to the Motion or Amendment has been expressed, the seconder of the Motion or

Amendment or his or her nominee (who may be the proposer) shall be given the opportunity to make a closing speech in which no new matter may be introduced.

- 5.9. A Motion or Amendment, once on the final agenda, may not be withdrawn except by leave of Conference.
- 5.10. Except as provided elsewhere, no-one shall speak more than once to any Motion or Amendment.
- 5.11. Procedural resolutions may only be submitted after opportunities have been given for speech for and against the Motion. They shall then be put to the vote with no debate:
 - 5.11.1. a Motion to refer back the resolution under debate;
 - 5.11.2. a Motion to move next business;
 - 5.11.3. a Motion that the resolution now be put to a vote;
 - 5.11.4. a vote of no confidence in the Chair.
- 5.12. Any person may raise a point of order concerning these Standing Orders and shall be entitled to be heard forthwith providing that they:
 - 5.12.1. State the Standing Order covering the matter they wish to raise;
 - 5.12.2. Do not speak for more than one minute.
- 5.13. When the seconder of a Motion or their nominee has spoken, no point of order may be raised until a vote has been taken.
- 5.14. In the event of the procedural resolution of a vote of no confidence in the Chair being submitted, all other business will be suspended whilst a vote is taken as to whether the Chair should continue to discharge their duties. Should the vote of no confidence be carried, the Chair will immediately resign their position and hand over to the Deputy Chair.

6. Emergency Motions

- 6.1. In exceptional circumstances Motions received after the Motions proposal deadline may be accepted by the Conference Organising Committee and the Chair of Motions as Emergency Motions, but only if in the opinion of that Committee and the Chair:
 - 6.1.1. the Motion is of a substantive nature;
 - 6.1.2. relates to events that have occurred after the original Motions deadline and;
 - 6.1.3. concerns a matter of substantial importance to a significant number of Local Groups.
- 6.2. No more than two Emergency Motions shall be debated. In the event of there being three or more such Motions accepted, there will be a prioritisation ballot which will be conducted during the conference Motions Debate.
- 6.3. In the event of an Emergency Motion being proposed or seconded by a Local Group of whom the Chair of Motions is a member, the Deputy Chair of Motions will decide, in conjunction with the Conference Organising Committee, whether or not to accept the Motion.

7. Other Matters

- 7.1. No changes will be made to the rules governing the running of the Local Groups Conference without consultation with Local Groups through the Local Groups Conference.