

Campaign Hubs – Frequently Asked Questions

These FAQs are about the new Campaign Hubs site and how local campaigners can get involved. If you need more technical help with Campaign Hubs please go to www.foe.co.uk/campaignhubs and click on "help" on the left-hand menu.

Introduction

1. What are Campaign Hubs?

The term “campaigner networks” within Friends of the Earth refers to groups of individuals who come together to share ideas, strategies and learning, united by a shared focus. This could be a geographical area (such as a sub-regional network, e.g. Greater Manchester) or an issue area related to an aspect of Friends of the Earth’s work (such as the Waste network).

Networks are a means of individuals connecting with like-minded people and sharing information between peers. Some networks meet face-to-face through the year and some only communication via email or other web-tools.

Campaigner networks have been re-launched as **Campaign Hubs** with a specially designed web space: www.foe.co.uk/campaignhubs. Each new Hub will be asked to sign an annually renewable **hub agreement** which details the support that Friends of the Earth will be able to offer, including staff time and web-tool resources.

2. Why are you making changes to Campaigner Networks?

We’ve been conducting a review of Campaigner Networks since 2009, including running a consultation with local group members and forming an advisory group made up of network-users.

We are committed to improving the networks in order to provide a better resource for connecting with others, sharing information, ensuring that updates from campaign teams are shared with networks in a timely manner and supporting networks to build their capacity to campaign or run projects on the issues that matter to them. A key aspect of these improvements is the improved web-resource tool which brings many new features to campaigner networks.

We’ve changed the name of Campaigner Networks to Campaign Hubs to mark this re-launch and a departure from (and improvement on) the slightly ad hoc way we’ve supported networking previously.

3. What will the new Campaign Hubs provide?

Campaign Hubs allows members to create a personal profile which can be seen by other members. This profile gives you the option to include relevant skills you have. Members of the Hubs site can then search for other individuals with particular skills in order to address their queries to members with specific experience in particular areas.

So for example, if you need to find members of the Waste Network that speak Spanish, you will be able to do this and then contact them directly. In addition, Hub members can upload documents, images and videos which can then be tagged and form a searchable document library. Members can decide how frequently they receive updates from a particular Hub or

from the site as a whole, and they receive these updates as an email which links directly back to the appropriate network.

4. Which Campaign Hubs currently exist?

A full list of Campaign Hubs is available at www.foe.co.uk/campaignhubs. This viewable whether you have signed up or not.

5. How do Campaign Hubs relate to Friends of the Earth's central campaigns/programmes?

There will eventually be Hubs associated with each of Friends of the Earth's main issue areas (such as Climate). In addition, there will be a staff-organised Hub on each of Friends of the Earth's current campaigns (such as Energy).

6. Do I need to be good at computers in order to use the new web tools?

No! The web-tool has been developed to be as user-friendly and accessible as possible. You will need to be familiar with using the internet to some degree, but so long as you can use email and have a basic level of knowledge of the internet (such as being able to use Google or buy products online) you should be able to use the web-tool without any further support or training. If you do get stuck you can access online help from within the Hubs site, or contact a person via a designated Help discussion area.

Joining Campaign Hubs

7. How do I join a Campaign Hub?

Signing up to join a Campaign Hub is easy. Click on www.foe.co.uk/campaignhubs and follow the instructions to sign up. You will then be able to select which Hubs you wish to join. You can change your Hub choices at any time, and can leave or join networks whenever you chose.

Networks that continue to function under their own system of organising will have their own sign-up services. These vary from network to network. To see the current list of campaign networks and the means of subscribing please go to <http://www.foe.co.uk/community/campaigns/networks.html>

8. Who is part of Campaign Hubs?

Under the new system, Hub members will be able to see who is part of their Hub via each person's personal profile page. Each member will also have a unique user name which identifies them (you're strongly advised to use your real name so you can be identified easily by others).

Most Hubs are open to anyone joining them, whether a local group member or activist. Some Hubs ask you to submit a membership request which is checked by the Hub moderator before approving the request.

9. Can someone who isn't a member of a local group join a Campaign Hub?

Yes. Most Hubs will be open for anyone to join them, and there will be an option on the personal profile page for individuals to detail which, if any, local group they are a member of. We will be actively encouraging really active individuals to get involved in Campaign Hubs.

Some Hubs may chose to restrict their membership (for example limiting it to people from a specific region), or to only accept new members after they have applied to join a Hub and some follow-up work has been done (such as the Youth and Education network who limit some aspects of their network to people who have a current CRB check in place).

Activist-led Campaign Hubs

10. I want to create a new Campaign Hub, how do I go about it?

If you are a local group member or activist, and you want to create a new Campaign Hub then you will need to complete and return a Hub Agreement (link). Before doing this, you should contact your Network Developer, who can guide and support you through the process. One of the key criteria for setting up a new Campaign Hub is to demonstrate that there are 3 people who are able to support the formation of the Hub, so talk to other activists first and test out the levels of support for you idea.

New Hubs associated with Friends of the Earth's campaign issues will be set up and developed by staff members. For example, if we launch a new campaign, the Campaign Assistant related to that campaign will create a new Hub and promote it to local group members and activists. You are able to join and leave all Hubs (that are part of the new system) whenever you like, in most cases with one click once you're signed up to the site.

11. How can an existing Campaign Network transfer over to the new system?

Networks that are organised and run by local group members and activists have all being contacted by Network Developers during summer 2011. The contact person for those networks received at least one letter or email outlining the plans and progress to date, along with the options for transferring to the new system. Local group-led networks will have the option to join the new Campaign Hubs system, or they can continue to organise themselves as they currently do, however this will mean that the new resources outlined above will not be available to them.

Networks that are organised by staff currently will be contacted via the appropriate staff member and network members will be alerted to the changes and have the option of leaving the network if they do not wish to transfer to the new system. In a few instances, networks that have formerly been organised by staff, no longer have staff time associated with them due to changing priorities in around different campaign issues.

This generally only applies to networks that have had no staff interaction over a number of years, and have therefore been effectively dormant for a sustained period of time. In these instances, network members will be contacted and asked if they wish to become an activist led Hub and supported to make the transition to this. If network members do not wish to continue, the network will be gradually wound down.

12. Do all local group-led networks need to be part of the new system?

Not necessarily. We know that many local group-led networks are organised around geographical areas (such as county-networks) and that members may chose to maintain their current way of organising. However, all existing networks have the option to transfer to the new system if they choose.

13. What are the benefits of transferring to Campaign Hubs?

Transferring to the new system enables a network to make use of the new website, developed specifically to support campaigner networks to organise and exchange

information in a way that works effectively for members. The new site enables members to search for other network members via their skills or other information on their personal profile, as well as providing a searchable document and resource library. It also enables members to have a greater understanding of who they are communicating with, as each member will have a personal profile.

It will allow staff at Friends of the Earth to disseminate information in a timely fashion in a way that is targeted, so that the people who have joined a specific Hub will receive more detailed and regular information on the issue they are interested in. In addition, joining Campaign Hubs enables staff support for all Hubs to be organised and to create consistency around support between Hubs.

14. Our Campaigner Network already has an email list/website that we like - why would we want to switch?

If you have an existing email list we'd encourage you to give the Campaign Hubs tools a go. The advantages over an externally hosted discussion list (such as a Yahoo group) are:

- The discussion facility is more secure and it's in our control (Yahoo can and have been known to delete content they don't like; we can control the security of the information, we will keep the information until it's no longer needed by you)
- Using it would enable you to take advantage of all the other benefits of Campaign Hubs (see qu.13) without needed to maintain two spaces at once.
- The discussion facility has all the benefits of a Yahoo group in terms of ease of use, messaging etc. The only difference is that when you receive a message in your inbox, you need to click on a link to reply to it rather than replying directly.
- You can set levels of notifications for particular topics, which you can't do on Yahoo or Google, and you can set to receive digests exactly as you would on a Yahoo or Google group.

Even if you want to keep your existing email discussion tools or website, there are still advantages to joining Campaign Hubs **as well**. The main one will be that you will be part of a much larger online community, where members can find you and your campaign much more easily than they might if they had to find an external site or email list.

If you want to keep your email list but give Campaign Hubs a go, just let your Network Developer know. We can support you in cross-linking between the Hub space and your email list, making best use of the newsletter feature on Hubs to keep both spaces up to date, and signposting potential new members to your email list as well as your Hub.

If you have an existing website that you do not want to dismantle, we can similarly help you to link across, even giving you buttons linking to Campaign Hubs to embed in your site if that's helpful. Again, just get in touch.

15. Can there be Campaign Hubs on anything?

No, Hubs need to be related to some aspect of Friends of the Earth's work and core purpose. If you're interested in setting up a Campaign Hub, talk to your Network Developer first.

Support for Campaign Hubs

16. How much staff time goes into Campaign Hubs?

This will vary according to the type of Hub and the levels of activity. Hubs that are associated with Friends of the Earth's organisational campaign areas (such as Climate or Resource Use) have significant staff time invested in them, as regular updates from campaigners in these areas will be shared with Hub members.

Local group or activist-led networks are supported by a Network Developer who has a small amount of time each month to support the development of issue-led Hubs (e.g. Marinet or Youth and Education). In addition, regional or sub-regional Hubs are supported by Network Developers and Local and Regional Campaigners. The amount of time that each staff member is able to apply to these Hubs will vary, according to the needs of the Hub and the activities of groups and other Hubs across the region.

In addition, there is a small project team currently in existence leading the development and transfer of networks to the new Hubs system. This project team is made up of members of the Activism team as well as the IS (information solutions) team and is guided by the advisory group for Campaign Hubs (who are all local group members).

17. What happens if a Hub takes a position that is contrary to Friends of the Earth policy?

If this were to happen then the Hub would be in breach of the Hub Agreement. There are a number of steps that could be taken, and the hope would be that the issue could be resolved speedily and with the minimum of disruption. However ultimately, if necessary, Friends of the Earth could freeze or shut down a Hub either temporarily or permanently. Full details of the process for resolving such issues can be found in the Complaints procedure and the Hub Agreement.

18. What if a Hub wants to restrict its membership?

See above – that's fine. When you set up a new Hub you can set privacy and moderator settings to the level you require. However wherever possible, Friends of the Earth encourages Hubs to be open to all members.