

Involvement Framework

Introduction

This document sets out Friends of the Earth staff responsibilities for ensuring that local group input, particularly via consultation, is effective and consistent. The Framework focuses on the formal approaches and opportunities for local groups to shape Friends of the Earth's work through consultation, but also acknowledges the value of informal discussion and feedback. It has arisen from the review in 2008 of our approaches to activist dialogue, which recommended that we set clearer expectations about the process and purpose of local group consultation in any given instance. It aims to put to full use, within a clear framework, the approaches we already have rather than to change the parameters or amount of consultation. It does not attempt to give a detailed explanation of specific consultation methods, as these will vary with every situation.

In a later draft, the Framework may incorporate Friends of the Earth's intentions and commitments to involve wider stakeholders such as financial supporters and individual activists.

Contents

Page 1	Summary
Page 2	Purpose of Involvement Framework Levels of work open to Involvement
Page 3	Extent of involvement Means of involvement How local group input is used Making a decision
Page 4	Communicating the results of local group input Informal opportunities for involvement Proposing and debating new work for Friends of the Earth Other stakeholders
Page 5	Multiple identities at Friends of the Earth Relationship to Partnership Agreement

Summary

The Involvement Framework sets out Friends of the Earth's commitment to:

- a transparent and consistent approach to seeking local group input;
- stay connected to Friends of the Earth's unique grassroots network of local groups through ensuring that local groups help to shape decisions;
- make clear the parameters of local group involvement, including:
 - ✓ factors determining the extent of consultation
 - ✓ the means of involvement for local groups
 - ✓ timeframes for involvement in a given consultation
 - ✓ how and by whom a decision will be made
 - ✓ how a decision will be communicated to local groups
- maintain and promote systems, such as the annual motions process, to enable local groups to raise new or different issues for Friends of the Earth to consider, debate and potentially act upon;

It also outlines how 'multiple identities' within Friends of the Earth may be managed in relation to consultation (e.g. local group members who are also board members), and the relationship between the Involvement Framework and the Partnership Agreement. Key passages referring directly to Friends of the Earth's commitment are highlighted in *italics*.

Purpose

In this first version of the Involvement Framework the focus is on how you, local groups, can participate in shaping the future work of the organisation. Local group participation is fundamental to Friends of the Earth staying connected to its grassroots and running the best possible campaigns. This document sets out the systems that are available to you for this important part of your role. *Through this framework, Friends of the Earth states its commitment to ensure that local groups are encouraged to input into decision-making processes at Friends of the Earth, and to this being properly valued and recognised.*

Our unique grassroots network is central to our approach. Local groups' consistent involvement in developing the work of Friends of the Earth is more essential than ever to ensure:

- **an integrated Friends of the Earth:** as we continue to work at every level, we need to ensure that we stay connected to local grassroots campaigning and the needs of our grassroots network. Good dialogue can help us make the most of our strengths;
- **impactful, resonant action:** if local groups are to play a central role in delivering nationwide action (as well as their local work), this must take into account what works and what will resonate at the local level. Our solutions and tactics can only be delivered through collaboration which incorporates thinking and approaches from different levels. This requires the input of local creativity and intelligence;
- **inspired action:** doing this well can further inspire and motivate all of us to act effectively.

Levels of work open to involvement:

Local groups can help to shape Friends of the Earth's work at different levels, from the long term strategic level, through to the ongoing delivery of specific campaigns and actions:

- Friends of the Earth's strategic plan;
- decisions that impact significantly on Friends of the Earth's reputation. This could include for example, decisions about who Friends of the Earth forms major corporate relationships with, and when and how the Friends of the Earth brand can be used by other organisations;
- changes to the organisation and structure of the local group network;
- individual campaign plans (e.g. developing tactics and materials for a campaign);
- events and resources to support and mobilise action.

The scope for involvement at each of these levels is summarised below, bearing in mind that timescales and extent are ultimately determined by the factors set out in the next section.

Level of Involvement	Element of Network consulted	Approximate duration
Strategic Plan	Whole network offered option to input and those who are interested engage	At least a year, dedicated to creating each plan
Current top priority campaigns	Offered opportunity to engage if on the relevant Campaigner Network/Advisory group	Several months to develop each campaign
Lower-priority campaigns	Offered opportunity to engage if on relevant Campaigner Network.	1-2 months, involvement limited to key steps.
Corporate Partnerships	As large a proportion of the network as resources and time-constraints will allow	Possibly as little as a few weeks to gather a range of views
Resources	Ranging from a few people to a large number of groups, depending on scale of project.	Over a range of timescales to establish priority resources and the best form for them to take

Extent of involvement

The extent of involvement will vary, due to all the factors in the list below. Therefore, *we are committed to making sure that the extent of involvement is made clear at the beginning of every process.* In some instances, such as shaping specific elements of a campaign plan, we may only seek input from a small group of local group members who form an advisory group over a fairly short space of time. With other work, such as developing our strategic plan, we would want to hear from as much of the network as possible and would expect to phase opportunities for groups to input over a considerable period and through a variety of means. The criteria for determining the extent of local group involvement in any given case are likely to include:

- activist time available; for example we would try to avoid running consultations at particularly busy times for activists nationwide, and would expect less or no involvement from those very busy on a local issue at a particular time.
- time available to make decisions; in some cases, decisions may have to be made quickly, with little or no opportunity to involve local groups;
- the impact a decision may have organisationally; generally we would want to make a particular effort to involve as many of our stakeholders as possible in bigger decisions;
- staff time available to plan, manage and complete a consultation; for example if other priority consultations are on-going, this will limit the scope of any additional consultations;
- appropriateness of involvement; in some instances it may not be appropriate to involve any wider stakeholders in decisions, for example decisions that may directly affect the employment of staff.

Means of Involvement:

Local group involvement has to be incorporated into work design and evaluation, with the extent of involvement dependent upon the factors above. *Those same factors will also be used to determine the means of involvement which are likely to be chosen from the following range of techniques:*

- face-to-face meetings organised specifically for a consultation;
- face-to-face meetings running for other purposes as well;
- web-based consultation tools such as questionnaires and polls;
- 1-on-1 phone conversations and interviews;
- focus groups and advisory groups to develop qualitative understanding;
- paper-based consultations.

How local group input is used

Friends of the Earth is committed to making decisions based on good quality, clear information and local group input is an important part of that in many instances. Local group input is viewed alongside input from staff members and the Board of Friends of the Earth. Views are weighted on the quality and relevance of the input, not who is putting forward that view. Local groups therefore have a responsibility to respond to consultation requests as well as they are able to, so that their input can be understood and used effectively. *Exactly what part local group input will play in a given situation will vary, therefore expectations will be set at the outset of every consultation.*

Making a Decision

Decisions are made after giving due consideration to input from all relevant stake-holders and after considering the best interests of the organisation overall. Who makes final decisions depends on the level of the work in question. Decisions on operational choices, such as the exact development of specific campaigns, or the production of materials for a day of action reside with leading staff members in that area, once input from local groups has been taken into consideration. Larger decisions, such as a recent review on partnerships with companies, are determined by the Organisational Management Team, after considering input from all key stakeholders. For decisions

that change the priorities or direction of the strategic plan, the Board makes final decisions based on information and recommendations from the Executive and Managing Directors and their Organisational Management Team.

In every consultation exercise, Friends of the Earth will clearly state the timings and ownership of final decisions.

Communicating the result of local group input

Pieces of work will take widely varying lengths of time before decisions can be made. *Decisions (and key themes from input) at the higher levels of our work (such as reviewing work with companies or determining our strategic plan) will be communicated to the network within six weeks of a final decision being made. At the beginning of any process of involvement, we will lay out timetables and ways that group members can keep abreast of the process and final decisions* (for example, via the Community website). *Such decisions will be communicated directly to all groups, usually through written communication.* Decisions on more specific areas (such as campaign materials) will be communicated to those group members who have expressed an interest in that area. These decisions will be communicated primarily over the phone or email within one month.

Informal opportunities to input

Combined with the context of wider knowledge, informal feedback and input given to staff and/or board members is often useful and helps to shape perspectives. We would also suggest that you always try to raise your ideas through specific ongoing consultations or through other channels covered here in the framework.

Proposing and debating new work for Friends of the Earth to take on

In addition to Friends of the Earth consulting with the local group network as described above, groups can also introduce other issues into discussion or raise a particular perspective about an existing area of work via the annual Motions process. Through this, local groups have the opportunity to ensure that the Board of Friends of the Earth give due consideration to issues and ideas presently being missed by the organisation's priorities. *Motions are not binding on the Board but, if passed at Conference, they become Resolutions and are looked at closely by the staff and the Board to establish what if any action can be taken. The Board then proposes any action that they believe fits with the organisation's existing strategy and resources.*

Before long, we will take this form of input further, by starting to involve activists more formally in providing input each year to help 'horizon scan' for the organisation – identifying trends and issues arising in the near and longer term future. We aim to tell you more about this later in 2009.

It is also important to emphasise that local groups elect from within their network a large proportion of the Friends of the Earth Limited Board who are then charged with governing the overall direction and work of the organisation. For more information about the Board and the Elections process, follow this link: http://www.foe.co.uk/about_us/board/board_members.html

Other stakeholders in Friends of the Earth

Staff members are consulted on issues around the day-to-day running and organisation of Friends of the Earth, and on issues that determine the future of the organisation. As with input from local group members and Board members, input from staff members is given due consideration in accordance to the value of arguments presented. Some staff members are also members of a local group. Staff members must acknowledge this when inputting into decision making processes and indicate if they are responding as a local group member or as a staff member. This is particularly significant in formal processes such as Motions and staff members are asked to be respectful of these systems.

Board Members are elected or co-opted to the Friends of the Earth Board. The 16 Board members monitor and govern campaign and administrative performance. The Board ratifies decisions that

have a direct impact on the direction of Friends of the Earth's work, with a focus on ensuring delivery of the strategic plan: http://www.foe.co.uk/about_us/board/index.html

Individual activists are a developing area of activism for Friends of the Earth. While the local group network remains at the heart of Friends of the Earth we recognise that there is also potential for more individuals to engage in activism in order to achieve our campaign aims. At present, there are no formal opportunities to involve individual activists in decision making processes at Friends of the Earth. Involvement for individuals will be developed over time in order to test approaches and incorporate this carefully.

Financial supporters do provide Friends of the Earth with informal feedback usually via our supporter service teams; while this feedback is valued it carries no formal weight in determining our activities.

Multiple identities within Friends of the Earth

Friends of the Earth acknowledges that individuals frequently fulfil more than one role within Friends of the Earth, and that, for example, group members are often also financial supporters, and several board members are also group members. We want to be respectful of every individual's experience of Friends of the Earth via all the different routes into the organisation that are possible. We do ask however that if you input into a decision and your experience does not come from your role as a local group member that you acknowledge this in your input.

How the Involvement Framework relates to the Partnership Agreement

It is an appendix to the Partnership Agreement. It is a supporting document and should be read in conjunction with and with reference to the Partnership Agreement, which is available at: http://www.foe.co.uk/community/local_groups/resource/partnership_agreement.html