

# Motions to Conference 2009

## A background briefing

Please read and consider this briefing carefully before submitting a Motion.

**The deadline for submitting Motions is 12 noon on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2009.  
No late Motions will be accepted.**

### 1. Why do we have Motions?

The Motions process is an important, formal opportunity for local groups to put forward their views and suggestions for the work and direction of Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland as a whole. There are, of course, other formal and informal opportunities throughout the year, and we hope groups will also take those up.

### 2. What are the 'rules'?

Friends of the Earth's Motions process is set out in the Standing Orders, which can only be amended by a Motion to Conference. The Standing Orders are available at <http://www.foe.co.uk/events/conference.html>, or on request from the Returning Officer and at Conference.

Please note that Motions cannot commit Friends of the Earth to expenditure, and that there is a prescribed form of wording that must be used. This form of wording is explained in section 4 below and on the Motions submissions form.

### 3. Who can propose Motions?

Motions can be proposed by all licensed local groups which will have been in existence for more than a year by Conference (for 2009 this means that your group must have originally licensed before 1 September 2008 and must have re-licensed by 1 May 2009). Motions proposed by a licensed local group must be seconded (by a different group), and the seconding group must also have re-licensed by 1 May 2009 and be more than one year old by Conference. Motions cannot be proposed by a Board or Staff Member.

### 4. How to submit a Motion

Friends of the Earth send all licensed local groups the relevant paperwork each year, including a Motions submission form. Motions have to be submitted on the Motions submission form. Please make photocopies (or download extra copies from <http://www.foe.co.uk/events/conference.html>) if you wish to submit more than one Motion, but each Motion must be submitted on a separate form. Completed forms must then be sent to the Returning Officer (by email or by post) by the deadline – **12 noon on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2009**. No late Motions will be accepted.

#### a. Putting your Motion into the right category

The Board asks that Motions be categorised, so that we can easily divide them into 'campaign-related' Motions and 'constitutional / organisational' Motions:

- **Examples of campaign-related Motions:** calling on Friends of the Earth to co-ordinate a national campaign against road building; calling on Friends of the Earth to mount a campaign on sustainable food production; calling on Friends of the Earth to develop a policy and campaign on Air Transport; calling on Friends of the Earth to campaign for reform of the land use planning system.
- **Examples of constitutional / organisational Motions:** calling on Friends of the Earth to amend the Standing Orders of Conference; calling on Friends of the Earth to extend the period of balloting in Board elections; calling on Friends of the Earth to reiterate its non-party political stance.

## **b. How should Motions be worded?**

The Board of Friends of the Earth cannot accept Motions that seek to commit Friends of the Earth irrevocably to expenditure; Motions will only be accepted that ask the Board to *consider* or *assess* a course of action.

Motions contain two sections:

- A statement of intent introduced by “This Conference calls upon the Board of Friends of the Earth Ltd. to consider”.
- Up to 500 words of supporting background information introduced either by “This Conference notes” for facts, or by “This Conference believes” for opinions.

## **Motions will not be accepted unless they have both a statement of intent and appropriate background information.**

The Statement of intent should not include any description of the issue. You can use the background information section to explain the context of each Motion.

Please write your statement of intent and background information in plain English, avoiding technical terms where possible, so that it can be easily understood by all local groups. If the Chair of Motions or the Returning Officer feel that your statement of intent or background information are insufficiently clear or overly complicated, they will ask you to re-write the relevant section and please note that the Chair has the authority to make the final judgement regarding the acceptability or otherwise of any Motion or Amendment.

If you're not sure of your facts, or whether Friends of the Earth is already doing (or planning to do) what your Motion proposes, you are strongly urged to check it out with the relevant member of staff.

When submitting a Motion, you will also be asked to consider your Motion in the context of the Five Year Strategic Plan for 2008-2013 ([http://www.foe.co.uk/community/strategic\\_plan/](http://www.foe.co.uk/community/strategic_plan/)).

## **c. How do we explain the background to our Motion?**

Motions must be as short as possible. This ensures that the debate is focussed and that the Motions paper is easily digestible. Therefore, you are only allowed to submit the statement of intent and up to 500 words of key supporting information. As the statement of intent needs to be focused purely on what you are calling for, you can use the background information to provide some further explanation, such as to outline the context of your Motion or the arguments in its favour. The clearer your background information, the better other groups will be able to properly consider the issues your Motion raises.

Background information should be as concise as possible. You are allowed an absolute maximum of 500 words. However, if you consider that the Motion does not require much further explanation, then you should use fewer words.

Background information must be sent in together with your statement of intent on the Motions submission form by the deadline. The detail of each Motion, including the background information, will be incorporated into the Motions paper and sent to all local groups.

## **d. What if another Motion is submitted which says roughly the same thing?**

The Conference Organising Committee and the Board have the right to combine Motions on the same subject. If this occurs, each proposing group concerned would be contacted and given the opportunity to redraft and agree on the combined text.

## **e. What happens after our Motion is submitted?**

Motions are checked by the Board and the Returning Officer to ensure that they are consistent, unambiguous and that they comply with the rules. If your group's Motion does not comply then you will be asked to

amend it accordingly, and should this be the case then you should hear from us within ten days of the appropriate deadline. It is quite normal for us to suggest minor changes to the wording of Motions at this time – these changes should not in any way affect the meaning of your Motion, they are designed to clarify the meaning and to ensure that it cannot be misinterpreted.

We are always subject to a very tight timeline between the submission deadline and the next Motions mailing out to groups which will mean that we will need you to respond to us speedily if we do come back to you to ask you to make minor changes or to clarify details with you. We will try to ensure that we give you as much time as possible to check with other group members and to confirm details to us; and we will tell you when we need to hear back from you by. If we are unable to contact you regarding your Motion, if we do not hear back from you in time, or if we are unable to agree on the final wording of the Motion, the Chair of Motions reserves the right to either enforce changes to your Motion's text or to reject your Motion.

## 5. How to submit an Amendment

### a. What are Amendments?

Once all Motions have been submitted, local groups have an opportunity to submit Amendments to Motions. The purpose of an Amendment is to improve a Motion. For example, a Motion might be in three or four parts, and your group might support some of the things it says, but wish to develop one of the parts. In this case, you could submit an Amendment to the Motion, deleting the bit you wish to improve, and replacing it with your chosen wording.

You can only submit Amendments in reference to the statement of intent of a Motion. Amendments proposed which refer solely to the background information of a Motion will be disregarded.

**Please note also that the Chair of Motions reserves the right to assess the suitability of all Amendments and to reject an Amendment which does not relate sufficiently to the relevant Motion or which does not constitute a valid improvement to the original Motion text. The Amendments process should not be used as an attempt to submit a late or original Motion.**

### b. Who can submit Amendments?

As with proposing Motions, only licensed Friends of the Earth Local Groups can propose Amendments. An Amendment form will be circulated with the draft Motions paper on or around the **26<sup>th</sup> June 2009**, and Amendments must be submitted on this form. As with Motions, you are asked to keep your Amendment as short as possible, and to provide background information to explain the context and/or the arguments in its favour; a limit of 100 words of background information applies to all Amendments. The deadline for submitting Amendments is **12 noon on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2009**.

The new Standing Orders for Conference (adopted in 2008) introduce a requirement for all Amendments to also be seconded by a licensed Local Group.

### c. What happens after our Amendment is submitted?

Just like Motions, all Amendments are checked by the Board and the Returning Officer to ensure that they are consistent, unambiguous and that they comply with the rules. If your group's Amendment does not comply then you will be asked to amend it accordingly, and should this be the case then you should hear from us within ten days of the appropriate deadline. It is quite normal for us to suggest minor changes to the wording of Amendments at this time – these changes should not in any way affect the meaning of your Amendment, they are designed to clarify the meaning and to ensure that it cannot be misinterpreted.

We are always subject to a very tight timeline between the Amendments deadline and the next Motions mailing out to groups which will mean that we will need you to respond to us speedily if we do come back to you to ask you to make minor changes or to clarify details with you. We will try to ensure that we give you as much time as possible to check with other group members and to confirm details to us; and we will

tell you when we need to hear back from you by. If we are unable to contact you regarding your Amendment, if we do not hear back from you in time, or if we are unable to agree on the final wording of the Amendment, the Chair of Motions reserves the right to either enforce changes to your Amendment's text or to reject your Amendment.

#### **d. How are Amendments incorporated into Motions?**

The proposing and seconding group of the Motion to which the Amendment refers will be asked if they wish to incorporate the proposed Amendment. If they do, the Motion will be changed to include the Amendment. If not, the Amendment will be debated and voted on separately at Conference (if the Motion is prioritised). If the Amendment is passed by Conference, it is immediately incorporated into the Motion, and then the Motion (as amended) will be debated and voted on as a whole. If the Amendment is not passed by Conference, it fails and the Motion is debated and voted upon in its original form.

### **6. What about the prioritisation ballot?**

We usually receive more Motions than we have time to debate at Conference. Therefore, prioritisation ensures that the Motions which local groups think are most deserving of debate get discussed thoroughly.

Prioritisation will take place **prior** to Conference. Each local group will receive a list of Motions, with amendments, on or around **7<sup>th</sup> August 2009**, and information on the number of Motions to be prioritised (usually 5 or 6) along with a form to complete and return to register their preferred Motions (the "prioritisation ballot form"). The deadline for returning the prioritisation ballot form is **12 noon on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2009** and forms can be returned by post or by email.

The proposers and seconders of all Motions will then be informed whether their Motion has been prioritised for debate. We aim to do this as far in advance of Conference as possible so that the relevant groups have plenty of time to prepare their speeches for the debate. If a Motion is not prioritised, nothing more happens with it and the groups involved in proposing and seconding it will need to consider whether they wish to try submitting it again the following year. Amendments are only taken forward if they relate to a Motion which is prioritised.

### **7. What if we change our minds after submitting a Motion or Amendment?**

Motions and Amendments can be withdrawn up until the final agenda for the debate is drawn up (approximately a month before Conference). Motions and Amendments can also be withdrawn during the debate, but only if Conference agrees to this.

### **8. Do we need to be present at Conference to propose or second our Motion or Amendment?**

Yes. If your Motion (or the Motion to which your Amendment relates) is prioritised for debate, then the proposing and seconding groups must have a representative at Conference to formally stand up in person and propose/second the Motion (or Amendment). The Chair does however have the discretion to allow a Motion to be accepted with only its proposing group present.

### **9. What are Emergency Motions?**

If you miss the deadline for submitting Motions, then there is an opportunity to submit Emergency Motions, but only if the Chair of Motions and Conference Organising Committee considers that:

- the Motion is of a substantive nature; and
- relates to events that have occurred after the original Motions deadline; and
- concerns a matter of substantial importance to a significant number of Local Groups.

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 at Conference.

## **10. How is the debate at Conference run?**

We aim to run the debate as efficiently as possible with key speakers being located at the front of the hall for easy access to the podium. All proposers and seconders of Motions and Amendments will be informed in advance of the debate of the time allocated to their speech – time-keeping will be strict and the Chair will stop anyone running over their allocated time.

The usual format includes the Motion or Amendment being proposed by a member of the proposing group; then debated with the seconder closing the debate with a short statement; and finishing with the Motion or Amendment being voted upon by Conference.

An Amendment is only proposed, debated and voted upon if not already incorporated into the relevant Motion and if the relevant Motion is prioritised. If the Amendment is passed by Conference, it is immediately incorporated into the Motion, and then the Motion (as amended) will be debated and voted on as a whole. If the Amendment is not passed by Conference, it fails and the Motion is debated and voted upon in its original form.

Persons entitled to speak in the debate are 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. However, we aim to give priority to local group members and staff and Board members are urged to only contribute if requested to do so by the Chair (e.g. to clarify a point).

Usually the Chair will open up the debate by asking if anyone wishes to speak out against the Motion or Amendment just proposed. Following this, the Chair will then take speeches for and against the Motion or Amendment until the issues have been sufficiently debated or time has run out. On occasions when an initial show of hands indicates unanimous support or rejection of a Motion, the Chair may use his discretion to allow a speaker “for” to be followed by another “for” and likewise with an “against” by another “against”. The Standing Orders also allow for the Chair to use their discretion to put a Motion or Amendment straight to a vote without debate if no one wishes to speak in favour or against it.

## **11. How do we vote on Motions?**

As votes are made on behalf of the group (one vote per group on each Motion/Amendment), each group will have nominated a voting delegate who will have specified this on their Conference booking form and will have been given the group’s “voting card” in advance of the debate (usually in their Conference delegate pack). Local group members will be given a little time to confer with each other before they register their group’s vote. Votes are made by holding up the group’s voting card at the appropriate moment during the debate – only votes made with voting cards will be counted.

## **12. What happens if a Motion is passed?**

Motions to Conference, if passed, become Conference Resolutions. Resolutions are not binding on Friends of the Earth – they are addressed to the Board of Directors, who ultimately decide about whether and how to act upon them. Resolutions are looked at closely by the staff Organisational Management Team and the Board after Conference, and decisions are made about who should take each one forward.

Once Resolutions are agreed by the Board, a Resolutions paper is circulated to all Groups detailing how (or whether) each Resolution will be enacted; this will normally be in the January/February following Conference. A report detailing action that has been taken on each Resolution will be circulated approximately a month prior to the next Conference i.e. 11 months after the Resolution was passed. This report will usually be followed up at Conference with a verbal update on the implementation of the Motions. The Friend of the Motions, appointed by the Board, is charged with tracking the progress of Resolutions after Conference and seeking their full implementation where possible. The Friend of the Motions process helps to ensure that as many Motions as possible that are passed at Conference are subsequently put into practice.

## Additional Guidance from the Chair

The Chair of this year's Motions Debate will be Dave Coleman, the elected board member for the North West region. He has added the following comments:

“At annual Conference, a lively Motions debate can be thought-provoking, stimulating and enjoyable and one of the high spots of the weekend. Clearly one of the most important things in achieving this is that the quality of the Motions being proposed is high. This means Motions which are well thought out and meaningful, are positively worded and unambiguous and give a clear expression of feeling or ideas that if carried, “move us on” as an organisation and leave us all better informed.

In recent years Motions Debates have clearly stepped forward in terms of quality of Motions and process and the Capacity Building Team will be working harder than ever to ensure that this year's debate is stronger still. The Returning Officer will work with all proposers and seconders of Motions at the drafting stage to ensure your Motions stand the greatest chance of success. However, the earlier the Motion is submitted the more time the team will have to help you with the preparation and drafting and the easier this will be. The timetable is extremely tight; submit your draft Motion early; don't wait until the deadline!

Here are a few other thoughts to consider when drafting your Motion for this year's debate:

- Motions should be positively worded, stating clearly what you would like the organisation to do should the Motion be passed by Conference.
- Whilst it is reassuring to have Motions that, in effect, approve existing policy, these are unlikely to get past the prioritisation stage unless they offer something that is distinct from what we do now.
- The Board works hard to ensure that the organisation does not under-deliver on any of its campaigning activities and thus there are no assumptions of “slack” in the financial budgets. Should your Motion express a view that we should be carrying out a new or additional activity, it should also indicate which activities we currently do that your proposed activity should replace, or otherwise, how this new activity can be delivered without additional funding.
- Remember also that we have now moved into our new Five Year Strategic Plan, which was arrived at after extensive consultation at every level of the organisation. A Motion seeking to reverse or significantly alter the direction of activities being delivered under the Five Year Plan will be weighed up very carefully by the Conference audience (and ultimately by the Board), so your Motion is unlikely to succeed unless the justification for the change in strategy is extremely strong.

As ever, in submitting Motions to Conference you should consider how they reconcile with our agreed 5-year strategy. The current financial situation has, inevitably, affected our ability to respond to 2008's successful Motions and this may be the case for 2009 also. Whilst we have to continue to work within our available resources – as always – Motions is one of the key routes through which Local Groups influence the strategy of the organisation and we encourage Local Groups to take part.

Good luck!”

Dave Coleman  
Chair of Motions 2009

# Motions to Conference

## Timetable 2009

This timetable includes both the key mailing and deadline dates for the Motions process and some of the key procedures undertaken by Friends of the Earth staff during the Motions process.

Please note that strict observance of the deadlines will be necessary in order to allow sufficient time for the internal procedures. If you have any questions about the timetable, please contact the Returning Officer on 020 7566 1677 or at [localgroups@foe.co.uk](mailto:localgroups@foe.co.uk)

<b>First Motions mailing</b> All local groups are sent the Briefing paper, Motions submission form and accompanying documents	<b>Approx. 24<sup>th</sup> April</b>
<b>Deadline for submitting Motions</b>	<b>12 noon on 5<sup>th</sup> June</b>
<i>Internal processes:</i> Returning Officer works with proposers/seconders over finalised wording for each Motion. Relevant staff respond to submitted Motions. Returning Officer prepares first draft of Motions 2009 paper.	
<b>Second Motions mailing - Amendments</b> All local groups receive the first draft of the Motions 2009 paper, and Amendment Form	<b>Approx. 26<sup>th</sup> June</b>
<b>Deadline for submitting Amendments</b>	<b>12 noon on 24<sup>th</sup> July</b>
<i>Internal processes:</i> Relevant staff revise their response in light of amendments. Returning Officer liaises with proposers / seconders regarding amendments submitted. Returning Officer prepares second draft of Motions 2009 paper.	
<b>Third Motions mailing – Prioritisation</b> All local groups receive the second draft of the Motions paper (including amendments) and a prioritisation form	<b>Approx. 7<sup>th</sup> August</b>
<b>Prioritisation deadline</b>	<b>12noon on 28<sup>th</sup> August</b>
<i>Internal processes:</i> Returning Officer collates results from Prioritisation Ballot to discern the Motions to be debated at Conference. Returning Officer prepares final draft of Motions 2009 paper and contacts relevant proposers and seconders to confirm whether their Motion will be debated at Conference.	
<b>Final Motions paper</b> All local groups and Conference delegates receive the final Motions paper	<b>In Conference delegate packs</b>
<b>Motions debate at Conference</b>	<b>At Conference</b>
Board discusses Conference resolutions. Resolutions paper is circulated to all local groups in Spring 2010.	<b>After Conference</b>

**If you have any queries regarding the Motions process, please contact the Returning Officer, Jill Andrews, on [localgroups@foe.co.uk](mailto:localgroups@foe.co.uk), 020 7566 1677 or at Friends of the Earth, 26-28 Underwood Street, London N1 7JQ.**