

Report from the Board of Friends of the Earth on the Conference Resolutions 2010



Friends of the Earth

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The Motions are tabulated below in order prioritised by local groups in the prioritisation ballot. Each of them is treated in turn in the following pages, providing the Motion and the Board response.

Prioritised Order for debate	Motion	Board Committee responsible
1 st	Marine Biodiversity and Sustainability	Campaigns
2 nd	GM Campaigning	Campaigns
3 rd	Broad Range of Campaign Experience and Media Profile	Campaigns/Engagement
4 th	A National Eco-literacy Campaign: Youth & Education Network	Campaigns/Engagement
5 th	Develop the Human Rights and Justice Component of Environmental Campaigning	Campaigns
N/A	Board Motion 1: Process for review of Election Rules	Operational Excellence
N/A	Board Motion 2: Additional Duties of Regional Broad Members	Operational Excellence
N/A	Board Motion 3: Removal on prohibition on employees of local groups standing as candidates for the Board	Operational Excellence
N/A	Board Motion 4: Changes to the current Motions process	Operational Excellence

Debate results:

Motion	For	Against	Abstained	Result
Marine Biodiversity and Sustainability	74	3	4	PASSES
GM Campaigning	67	5	12	PASSES
Broad Range of Campaign Experience and Media Profile	72	2	10	PASSES
A National Eco-literacy Campaign: Youth & Education Network	54	9	19	PASSES
Develop the Human Rights and Justice Component of Environmental Campaigning	72	5	6	PASSES
Board Motion 1: Process for review of Election Rules	48	14	18	PASSES
Board Motion 2: Additional Duties of Regional Broad Members	73	0	5	PASSES
Board Motion 3: Removal on prohibition on employees of local groups standing as candidates for the Board	73	2	11	PASSES
Board Motion 4: Changes to the current Motions process	64	3	18	PASSES

1st prioritised Motion - Marine Biodiversity and Sustainability

This Conference calls upon the Board of Friends of the Earth Ltd. to consider:

1. Devoting some resources to running a campaign demanding that the Government use its powers under the Marine & Coastal Access Act to implement the recommendations contained in the 2004 Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution report "Turning the Tide";
2. Liaising with our sister organizations in other EU countries, via FOE Europe, with a view to running a campaign around the review of the EU Common Fisheries policy, calling for:
 - a) The establishment of an extensive and ecologically coherent network of "no take" marine reserves throughout EU waters;
 - b) A binding requirement to set catch limits in line with scientific recommendations;
 - c) A moratorium on all fishing for endangered species, such as bluefin tuna;
 - d) An end to deals allowing EU fishing fleets to plunder the fishing grounds of less developed countries.

Board response:

The Friends of the Earth strategic plan 2008-2013 (or 'SP2') includes a strategic aim on biodiversity:

"To halt biodiversity loss and reverse the loss of ecosystem services by 2030 at the global, regional and national levels, in ways that protect the rights of people who depend on ecosystem services and enhance the sustainable use of natural habitats".

When it came to proposing and developing an implementation programme for this aim, the recommendation of staff, accepted by the Board, was that it could focus on campaigning around a critical and iconic biodiversity habitat – tropical rainforests. This, in turn, was in response to previous Motions adopted by conference calling for more campaign work on forests. Forest campaigning is, in itself a significant and challenging area of work and consequently a choice had to be made between campaigning either around terrestrial biodiversity or marine biodiversity, otherwise we would be spreading our resources too thinly and risk being ineffective.

Equally a campaign to change the Common Fisheries Policy would need to be undertaken at a European-wide level, and with the prioritised support of Friends of the Earth Europe (FOEE) and the national Friends of the Earth organisations. Instead FOEE has chosen to prioritise activity around the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.

For these reasons, it will not be possible to devote campaign resources to this area immediately and over the coming calendar year; however the possibility of providing some information or comment on our website will be investigated. For the future, we should recognise that campaigning on marine biodiversity in the UK / EU may represent an opportunity to galvanise the public about an iconic habitat, and the impacts of unsustainable consumption, close to home and the Director of Policy and Campaigns (Craig Bennett) is keen to explore what options may exist for some sort of marine campaign in 2012.

To this end, he has already asked the independent consultant (Chris Rose) to give special consideration to marine issues when undertaking a review of options for biodiversity campaigning in early 2011. The consultant has also been provided with a copy of this Motion and associated materials.

Craig Bennett has also agreed to sit on the steering group of Marinet for the first six months of 2011 to familiarise himself with the details of work already being done by our local group network that already has an established track record on this issue. While we cannot, at this stage, make any commitments in this area we determined to ensure that all options are given very careful consideration.

2nd prioritised Motion - GM Campaigning

This Conference calls upon the Board of Friends of the Earth Ltd. to consider:

- That in light of the crucial role played by Friends of the Earth and the local groups in preventing the unsustainable introduction of GM crops into the UK and reducing GM imports up until now, that this role should be continued at this critical time.

- That further expansion of GM soya and maize will undermine the objectives of the Food Chain Campaign.
- Reallocating one full time member of existing staff to work on this issue as soon as possible
- Encouraging local group members, activists and supporters to campaign on GM issues whenever it is strategically appropriate to do so.

Board response:

In 2008, as part of the transition from a previous strategic plan (SP1) to the current SP2 (2008-13) - which was the subject of extensive consultation with local groups - campaigning on GM was deprioritised from the position it occupied in SP1 in favour of a greater focus on campaigning around international biodiversity, specifically terrestrial biodiversity (see previous Motion response) and particularly forests. This was a difficult choice but recognised two critical factors: that the overall emphasis within SP2 was the need to respond to two global threats (climate change and biodiversity loss), with the obvious consequence that other individual campaigning areas had to be accorded a secondary priority; and that resources were, as ever, limited and had to be prioritised. That was the position of the Board then, and remains so today. For example, there are no proposals within the current Mid-Term Review of SP2 to reprioritise GM campaigning in its own right.

However, recognising the momentum that had been previously developed within the GM campaign, the great success which Friends of the Earth in particular had achieved, and the continuing interest of local groups, the Board asked that a 'continuity strategy' be put in place to carefully manage that deprioritisation process, and also to support specifically defined but more limited ongoing campaigning; and for the continued support of partner campaigning organisations such as GM Freeze in order to provide a vehicle for ongoing activity by local groups should they wish to.

Friends of the Earth continues to monitor GM issues where they are directly relevant to the campaigns we are currently working on. Highlighting the problems associated with the widespread planting of GM soya, for example, has been important in our work Friends of the Earth Paraguay and we are hoping that this will receive greater attention thanks to a press trip to that country that will be taking place in March.

We are also continuing to engage in the GM debate where it is relevant to do so, such as in the context of 'Food Security'. In November, for example, we offered a robust defence of our position on GM when it was criticised in the Channel 4 documentary "What the Green Movement Got Wrong".

3rd prioritised Motion - Broad Range of Campaign Expertise and Media Profile

This Conference calls on the Board of Friends of the Earth Ltd to consider recognising that one of the strengths of Friends of the Earth is in sustaining a broad range of campaigns at all levels from local to international, and therefore it is desirable that:

- the broad base of campaign staff is protected as a first priority;
- all of the campaign teams are maintaining a strong media profile, with support for a continuing media profile locally and regionally as well as nationally and internationally.

Board response:

The Board and staff of Friends of the Earth share the concerns that were highlighted in this Motion, and also share both of the basic propositions within it - that a broad base of campaigning expertise needs to be maintained, in order to fulfil our sustainable development fundamental positioning; and that we must also communicate across that range, and to local- to-national priority audiences. Our ability to fulfil these two propositions was inevitably diminished somewhat by the 'shock' of the Change Process but we are confident that, as we emerge from and develop renewed momentum out of that period, such consequences for campaign expertise and media profile will prove to be temporary.

Our campaign expertise is critical to our effectiveness as a campaigning organisation, both in terms of the expertise / issue analysis that underpin our campaigns as well as having spokespeople to present our work to external audiences, whether it's politicians, funders or the media.

The whole organisation was impacted by the Change Process, a painful circumstance which we are still coming to terms with and rebuilding from. One of the key impacts of the Change Process was the loss of a

number of long serving high level campaign experts from the Policy and Campaigns Department. The process affected morale but also represented a diversion of resources and attention from external campaigning.

Our figures indicate that there was a reduction of around 10 per cent in overall coverage in Quarters 2 and 3 of 2009, but it is worth noting that bigger variations than this are common in media coverage over any given year. These are not solely attributable to the loss of expertise/work focus in key areas, although this may be part of the reason. For example, while the Executive Director was undertaking a number of high profile media interventions during this period, he was constrained in his availability due to the internal demands of the change process and of other external demands, such as fundraising and maintaining high level relations with government. This was exacerbated in the absence of a Policy and Campaigns Director, as well as by the 'flexible working policy', which means that some regionally-based key campaigning staff are not always available for London-based media opportunities.

Craig Bennett started as Policy and Campaigns Director in September 2010, and this has increased the availability of senior spokespeople who have a broad range of campaign expertise, both directly through media work undertaken by the Policy and Campaigns Director (for example in the Channel 4 debate "What the Green Movement Got Wrong") but also because it has freed up the ED and others to do more media work.

Craig is also working with others in the organisation to develop strategies for addressing these issues longer term. He has identified that the Policy and Campaigns Department needs to allocate resources in such a way that enables the organisation to:

1. Develop and maintain a 'big picture narrative' about Friends of the Earth's long term vision (i.e. sustainable development) and an ability to communicate that confidently and engage in a public and political debate about this, whenever appropriate opportunities arise.
2. Develop and run tightly focussed campaigns with specific, measured, achievable, realistic and timed (SMART) campaign objectives that deliver on particular discrete parts of our long term vision, over much shorter timescales.
3. Develop and maintain a breadth of issue expertise, both to inform and shape our future national and international campaign agenda and provide a certain amount of support to local groups in their local and regional campaigning.

There are inevitable tensions in reaching a balance between these three dimensions of our policy and campaigns work. If, as Friends of the Earth, we want to maintain our 'big picture narrative' and overview on sustainable development, this would suggest we some need staff to be "Expert generalists" as well as others who are "Expert (single issue) Specialists". Similarly, the more we focus in depth on one particular part of the sustainability agenda, however important (e.g. climate change) makes it harder to react rapidly to the more general political debates around sustainability, and develop new areas of campaigning.

We recognise that, going forward, it will be important for the organisation to maintain an appropriate balance between these three dimensions, and so maintain Friends of the Earth's unique role in the sustainability movement.

4th prioritised Motion – A National Eco-literacy Campaign: Youth & Education Network

This Conference calls upon the Board of Friends of the Earth Ltd. to consider:

- The urgent implementation of a national campaign to restructure the educational system, placing Eco-literacy at the heart of the National Curriculum.
- Expanding and empowering the Youth & Education Network to deliver the above campaign and to enable more local group members to work with young people.
- Using some initial staff time and resources to investigate and secure outside funding for a staff member to run this campaign on an ongoing basis.

Board response:

The new Coalition Government, which has stated a headline intention to be 'the greenest government ever', has however already stated that it intends to change its approach to the National Curriculum, and consequently the place of sustainability within it ^[1]. Against this background, and regardless of the views that Friends of the Earth has about the centrality of sustainability and ecoliteracy - as expressed in the Motion - it does not realistically seem likely that an urgent national campaign of the type requested would be successful, and therefore an effective use of scarce resources.

The Youth & Education network, now coordinated by a volunteer (who with colleagues has done a really excellent job in organising the transition from staffed to volunteer coordination of the network, to maintain it in existence) has however been playing its part in the development of an independent Sustainable Schools Alliance: a grouping of 220 NGOs, organisations, schools and individuals involved including RSPB, Oxfam, WWF, Groundwork, People & Planet and Sustrans, which will be formally launched in the Spring. The Board believes that, in the circumstances, the best way forward would be for Friends of the Earth formally to join the SSA, backing the project and encouraging the Youth & Education Network to focus their energies in the alliance as appropriate.

Additionally, The Activism Team have already assigned a Network Developer to give some additional time in support of the Youth and Education Network, particularly focusing on supporting the network to become more self-sustaining and positioned to develop project ideas such as this within its own resources. The forthcoming new Campaigner Networks system will also provide a route to raising the profile of, and improving the interaction within, the existing network, which we would hope may make group-led activities of this nature a stronger possibility.

The new Head of Fundraising has also contacted the network offering to feed in to ideas around independent funding bids that the network may wish to develop for this, or other projects. We will also be looking to explore new ways of getting the best out of the small amount of resources dedicated within the Communications team to this area early in 2011.

Over the next 12 months, the new SMT are also leading the development of new campaign programmes following the Mid Term Review, which will re-evaluate strategic priorities and consider potential new campaigns. Supporting this work, the Director of Fundraising, Communications & Activism is leading a project to develop an organisational audience strategy, which will review the people we currently focus on reaching and consider audiences that we could potentially engage in the future. Andy Atkins mentioned at Conference the potential for developing "bridges" between Friends of the Earth and different pockets of society (giving the example of a potential education initiative that could provide training on Sustainable Development), and we will be exploring these ideas over the year ahead. The outcomes of this work are not yet known, but provide a fresh opportunity to take into account the thinking underpinning this Motion and ensure that the proposals are given further consideration in relation to other strategic priorities and anticipated future resources.

^[1] "The government is committed to giving schools and teachers greater freedoms over what and how they teach. Ministers have announced their intention to review the National Curriculum in order to restore it to a core entitlement organised around subject disciplines. A smaller National Curriculum will allow schools more freedom and time to build on the core entitlement to provide a rich learning experience for all their pupils and use their professional judgement to organise learning as they see fit. It will still be up to schools to decide if becoming a sustainable school is the best way for them to operate, and the greater flexibility in the curriculum will allow schools wishing to do so an excellent opportunity to incorporate the teaching of sustainability into a broad and balanced curriculum." *Communication from Department of Education.*

5th prioritised Motion – Developing the Human Rights and Justice Component of Environmental Campaigning

This Conference calls upon the Board of Friends of the Earth Ltd. to consider the human rights dimensions of its campaigns as a further tool to achieving its objectives. Reading from our objectives, "Everyone, everywhere, now and tomorrow, deserves to have a good life". However, the justice and human rights element of this value tends to be under-messaged in the campaigning work and materials from Friends of

the Earth EWNI. This would restore to Friends of the Earth EWNI's work consideration of the human dimension of justice, in addition to the work on biodiversity or interspecies justice.

Board response:

In entirely supporting the proposition of this motion, the Board does not however accept the implication that it needs to consider for the first time 'the human rights dimensions of its campaigns as a further tool to achieving its objectives', or that those dimensions were not strongly emphasised within the existing Strategic Plan (SP2). In fact one of the four campaign aims of the strategic plan is the Rights Aim: *"To secure a substantive right to a healthy environment in UK law, strengthen the Aarhus procedural rights; and empower people to use their environmental rights"*. Additionally, a particular effort was made in the preparation of SP2 to ensure that 'rights' elements were included within the other campaign aims, and there has been a continued emphasis on rights as all the campaigns have moved into implementation since 2008. The Board's Campaigns committee reviews the organisation's work on rights every quarter.

This aim is mainly undertaken by the Rights and Justice and the International teams who work to strengthen the environmental rights people already have, campaign for new rights and empower and give communities legal support to uphold their rights. The teams undertake this work both here in the UK and internationally.

We are working with communities in Indonesia - supporting them to resist oil palm expansion. This involves ensuring that communities are aware of their land-rights. We have a Paraguay project with Friends of the Earth Paraguay working to ensure that communities are empowered to resist soy expansion.

In order to protect the individuals, communities and peoples most vulnerable to climate change we are working with Friends of the Earth International (FOEI) to ensure that human rights are incorporated into the international climate framework. This is also a way of ensuring that the scientific and technical debates around climate change do not obscure its human dimension. We are part of the human rights and climate change working group, a group of lawyers that has been making proposals for incorporating human rights language into the negotiating text.

The Empowerment work the team undertakes targets communities and individuals who are already trying to bring about sustainable development where they live. And we build on their skills and knowledge to ensure that they are able to fully use their environmental rights by providing training and support.

Friends of Earth has written and published a new information booklet and webpages that specifically covers and introduces people to environmental justice and our rights work.

The Rights and Justice Team has in the past had a campaigner network and also an advisory group for local group members to be involved in to discuss rights and justice issues. This network has been on hold but the team are hoping to resurrect it soon.

We also have an international network for local groups so we can share news about our international colleagues, their campaign and solidarity actions that local groups could take to support them.

Friends of the Earth is already addressing many of the issues in the motion and with the work we are doing on a new campaigns package for 2010/2011 we will be ensuring environmental justice is a key consideration.

1st Board Motion – Process for review of Election Rules

2nd Board Motion – Additional Duties of Regional Broad Members

3rd Board Motion - Removal on prohibition on employees of local groups standing as candidates for the Board

4th Board Motion - Changes to the current Motions process

Board response:

All four Board Motions are in the process of being implemented. (You can read the full detail of each Board Motion at www.foe.co.uk/resource/event_background_documents/board_motions_2010.pdf)