



**Friends of
the Earth**

Change your world

Get a group going



Getting your Friends of the Earth group going

This is the second guide to help you get your Friends of the Earth group going. Thank you for getting this far. You're not far now from joining the network of 200 local groups taking on the big issues locally to globally. By now you should already have had the first 'Change your world – start a Friends of the Earth group' guide, some background information about Friends of the Earth and other resources to help you attract people in your local area.

In this guide we look at how to get the group off the ground, how to work out what needs doing when, who's going to do it and what paperwork needs to be sorted out. We also include tips and ideas for how your group can decide and get active on the campaigns that matter to you.

What's inside:

- What sorts of things need doing to get going and how to do them.
- What type of meeting to hold first, and how to organise it and publicise it.
- How to run a good meeting and keep people coming back.
- How to start campaigning and how to learn more.
- Information about the licensing papers.

If you have any questions, queries or comments, or would like a paper copy of any of the documents mentioned in this briefing or a print out of any of the web pages mentioned, please get in touch with the **Activist Information Officer** at localgroups@foe.co.uk or 020 7566 1677.

Tasks to get your group going - one off and ongoing

Please also refer to the timeline included. There is a copy of this at the back of this guide for your reference, and you should also have received a large A3 version to help you discuss tasks as a group.

Meetings

Thinking point!

- What kind of an experience do you want your meetings to be?
- What atmosphere do you want? Which local meeting space will help to achieve this?
- How much do you think is reasonable to pay?
- How will you plan the purpose of the meeting?
- How will you make and record decisions?
- How will you follow up on decisions?

Things to do:

- Booking a monthly venue (one off task).
- Buying refreshments (monthly).
- Preparing the agenda (monthly).
- Recording short notes on decisions and action points (monthly).
- Nominate a facilitator who keeps the meeting on track (monthly).

Contact

Thinking point!

Once your contact details are out there you will receive enquiries from Friends of the Earth staff, members of your local community, other local voluntary organisations and the media. So you need to identify how people can contact you and who will respond to different enquiries. Estimating the amount of time it will take handle enquiries is very difficult. It will depend on your priorities and delegation systems. Why not encourage people to try the roles for three months to see how it works out.

Things to do:

General enquiries can be handled in two main ways:

1. One person who is the postal, phone and email contact; disseminating information.
2. Several different people each responsible for their method of contact e.g. the email contact is a different person from the telephone and postal contact.

Handling media enquiries:

1. It may be useful for one or more people to be the contact for the media. We can provide training and resources.

Communication systems

Having systems that work is vital in the success of your group. It relates to your effectiveness, peoples involvement, sharing responsibilities and ownership of the group and its activities.

Thinking point!

- You've thought about having a monthly meeting but how are you all going to keep in touch between meetings?
- Is everyone on email and does everyone have a telephone?
- How will the outside world know you exist?

Things to do:

- Discuss your options for communicating between meetings.
 - You could set up several email lists. For example, one which relates to discussions and questions, the other is for announcements (next meeting, agenda, action points and updates regarding training opportunities).
 - Or try a phone tree system for announcements. This is when each person has someone to call to spread the word.
- The Friends of the Earth Community web site has a section allocated for all groups to add their own information to. Check out what other groups have done:
<http://community.foe.co.uk/groupactivity>
- You may want to consider setting up your own website; this is a really effective way to attract more members.
- Once you have a membership base you could write a newsletter updating your members on your activities and plans. Is there anyone interested in looking at the template and thinking about how it might work for your group? <http://community.foe.co.uk/publicity>

Money

Thinking point!

Local groups vary in the amount of funds they hold but one thing is for sure you will need a bank account, registered signatories and someone to manage the funds (treasurer). Allow two months for setting up a bank account.



Things to do:

- Start researching how and where to set up a bank account. Some banks charge community groups - the Cooperative Bank has a free community fund for voluntary groups. See www.co-operativebank.co.uk or call 08457 213 213. The Activist Information Officer can provide a letter to verify you are a Friends of the Earth group if required: 020 7566 1677, localgroups@foe.co.uk
- Is there someone who would like to try managing the income and outcome?
- Read the top tips for treasurers and see the draft spreadsheet for recording finances http://community.foe.co.uk/local_groups/running_your_own/basics/
- Was there a previous Friends of the Earth group in your area? Do they still have money sitting in a bank account? You can check this with the Activist Information Officer: 020 7566 1677, localgroups@foe.co.uk
- When you go through to the next stage of becoming a local group you will receive another mailing containing information about a **£100 start up grant**.

Membership & promotion

Members are a vital source of income, an audience for your messages and a source of potential activists. How your group comes across to the public will make a big impact on whether people feel that they want to join.

Thinking point!

- Is there someone in your group with marketing, design or writing skills? If not, consider advertising for someone with these skills to volunteer.
- What do you want the look and feel of your publicity materials to be?
- How and where could you promote your group?
- Could you connect with local businesses for membership discount offers?
- Who feels comfortable meeting new people? Is there someone who would like to make new people feel welcome and find out what their interests are?

Things to do:

- Discuss and decide on a system for banking and recording subscriptions.
- Start to draft a recruitment leaflet.
- Distribute leaflets and posters on a monthly basis advertising your group.
- Welcoming new members is up to everyone. That said it's a good idea to choose one person to liaise with new members as the main support person.
- Discuss what to include in your welcome pack and who could prepare a draft.
- Template recruitment leaflets, welcome packs and posters are available on <http://community.foe.co.uk/publicity>

Get kitted out



Friends of the Earth has a selection of free resources to ensure you look good on your stall and are clearly visible as a local Friends of the Earth group e.g. a banner, rain jacket and T-shirt. You'll receive an order form for these when you license as a group. Also available are trading goods e.g. lifestyle books, rulers, colour pencils. http://community.foe.co.uk/local_groups/trading/.

We also have free information booklets to give away on a range of issues. <http://www.foe.co.uk/pubsinfo/pubscat/free.html> In the mailing after you have licensed you will receive information on these resources and how to order them.

Things to do:

- Start to think about who might order these materials.

Campaigns

Maybe it is very clear to you what you want to campaign on or maybe you are not so sure yet. There are many ways to get your message across. Some groups campaign by lobbying local MP's, others demonstrate their beliefs through projects and solutions, and some concentrate on education by working with young people.

Thinking point!

- Make the time to discuss what you want to campaign on. Friends of the Earth has campaign networks to ensure you receive information, training and resources <http://community.foe.co.uk/campaigns/networks/>

Things to do:

- People to research campaigns and issues.
- People to communicate the campaign back to the group.
- Someone to act as the contact for Friends of the Earth staff.

Co-ordination role**Thinking point!**

With all of this activity the group needs someone who is keeping track of all this. This role can be broken down into three main chunks;

1. Keeping a focus and commitment to action
2. Developing a collaborative and effective team
3. Keeping the group organised

Things to do:

- Discuss what the main things are that the role absolutely needs to do.
- Within the tasks there will be ways to share these out with others.
- If you can't fill these essential roles, it's still not all over! For example, you could temporarily put your campaign activities to one side and concentrate on a recruitment drive. Alternatively you could try advertising the position in a volunteer centre – it's been done successfully before. We can always help with advice and support on how to keep going in these circumstances. All groups go through tricky times every now and then but most get through it and come out stronger.

For more information see the downloadable role description on http://community.foe.co.uk/resource/guides/coord_job.pdf

Meetings

Your first meeting

In order to get the group going you'll want to hold some sort of meeting early on.

- If you know of a collection of people that are keen to join a group, you could invite them to a central location on a weekday evening to discuss what a local group could do in your area.
- If there aren't many of you yet you might want to give some thought to organising a public meeting first to attract more people along. For example you could invite a speaker from Friends of the Earth to talk on a big issue (like Climate Change) or on something relevant to the local area (incinerators or recycling for example). This would also be a chance to collect contact details of anyone interested in getting more involved and then organise another meeting fairly soon afterwards where you could get together to plan the group.
- The Activist Information Officer can help with advice and practicalities for all of this: 020 7566 1677, localgroups@foe.co.uk

Whatever type of meeting you hold first you'll want as many people as possible there, so it's important to publicise it. This is the same with all of your meetings.

Great ways to make sure people know you're there include:

- Putting up posters around town in shops, community centres, libraries, colleges and so on. You may already have received some posters with the first mailing, contact the Activist Information Officer if you'd like more: 020 7566 1677, localgroups@foe.co.uk
- Telling the local newspapers and radio stations (we can help with advice on this).
- Using Friends of the Earth to mail all of the national members in the area: http://community.foe.co.uk/local_groups/running_your_own/resource/tools/
- Informing like-minded organisations that meet in the town, like Local Agenda 21, World Development Movement, Greenpeace, The Green Party, Amnesty or local community groups.
- Setting up a website and keeping it up to date – increasingly groups are getting lots of new members this way.

Holding your first group meeting



At some point you will want to sit with others keen on being in a group and discuss what to do and how to do it. Most group meetings tend to last around two hours. A simple way to run such a meeting could be along these lines:

1. Have everyone introduce themselves and say why they are there.
2. See if anyone has ever been involved in campaigning before and make a list of their experiences and skills.
3. Make a list of everyone's big interests and discuss what key national and local issues and campaigns people are interested in.
4. See what sort of activities people would like to get involved with. A selection would include:
 - Helping to run or organise stalls
 - Letter-writing
 - Lobbying politicians

- Talking or writing to the media
 - Helping to organise public meetings
 - Managing a campaign
 - Helping with the core group things like organising group meetings, taking action points or making drinks
 - Looking after new people who come along or being the treasurer
 - Making a group website.
5. Agree that at the next meeting you will plan out some campaigns and actions to get involved with. Make sure you agree a time and date for the next meeting – it's best to have meetings on the same night and time each month, in the same place (e.g. The third Tuesday of the month at 7pm).

Running meetings

There are all sorts of ways of keeping a meeting going and making it work. The most important things are that you can agree what you want to do and it's an enjoyable experience. It's important to have some sort of plan for the meeting (an agenda) and to try to time it out in advance so you can stay on track. It's also important to have someone who keeps the meeting to the agenda, helps ensure that people take it in turn to speak and tries to steer the group towards decisions. This is the 'Facilitator' or 'Chair'.



Some groups take it in turns to do this and others have one person who always does it. The Activist Information Officer can advise on this: 020 7566 1677, localgroups@foe.co.uk

For a meeting to go well it's a good idea to agree certain things you will and won't do, so that everyone's happy. The best meetings tend to include these things:

- Take it in turns to talk and don't interrupt each other.
- Put your hand up if you want to speak and let the facilitator come to you. If you have a really urgent point to make let the facilitator know by raising two hands.
- Only have one conversation on the go at any one time.
- Keep focussed on the job in hand and try not to wander off topic.
- Respect the facilitator – if they say you've said enough or it's time to move on, then go with it unless the whole group wants to stay with the topic.
- Turn mobile phones on to silent.
- Don't get too worked up if you disagree with one another – try to calmly come to a consensus as shouting or arguing isn't usually much fun and doesn't usually get the group to where it needs to be.
- Have fun! Take time for a break or a chat or go to a pub or café afterwards. It's much more fun to include a social element to the evening.

Making decisions

Again, different groups make decisions in different ways. It's generally thought best to try to make decisions by consensus, discussing the options and coming to an agreed course of action, rather than to go straight to taking a vote. Voting can be effective and useful but is a little more confrontational than consensus if used regularly. It's something to discuss amongst yourselves and decide on.

How to keep people coming back

Well, if you've had a successful first meeting that's great! Now all you need to do is make sure people keep coming back. There are a few tricks of the trade that help you to do this.

- Try to keep everyone in the meeting involved by letting everyone have a say.
- Keep the evening enjoyable by providing tea and coffee or having a short break to get a drink and have a chat.
- Try not to use too much jargon or too many acronyms that others might not understand.
- Share out jobs and ask if anyone can help with activities – don't just let the same people do all the work.
- Welcome newcomers when they arrive – chat to them about what they are interested in, why they came along and what the group gets up to and try to involve them in the meeting. Some groups bring along “new member packs” with information about the group to give to new people when they arrive. See <http://community.foe.co.uk/publicity/>
- Probably most important of all, keep the group focussed. Try to make sure you're discussing your group's issues and what you are going to do about them. People come along because they want to know that they are helping to make a difference, not just join a talking shop.

Starting to campaign

Campaigning is great fun and can make a huge difference. If you've never done it before it can seem a little daunting but there are simple ways to get active and learn as you go along. The Capacity Building team has people and resources that can help you with all of this. Here are some simple steps the group can take to get going:

Choose and prioritise your campaigns

The likelihood is that there will be people with different interests in the group. You'll want to decide together which campaigns you want to take on as a group. As a rule of thumb try to settle on between one and three campaigns – taking on too much can mean you don't get anything done and you can always expand later on if you feel you have the time.

Discuss amongst yourselves which issues are most important to the group. Most groups try to pick one big national campaign to help support (like the climate change campaign or waste issues) and a local issue to take on (like a planned supermarket, road building scheme or promoting greener behaviour like energy efficiency or cycling). Friends of the Earth provides all sorts of resources and packs that make it easy to get involved in helping to win the big Friends of the Earth campaigns. Contact the Activist Information Officer to find out what's available: 020 7566 1677, localgroups@foe.co.uk

Plan your campaign and get going!

When you know what issues you want to take on, you need to decide exactly what it is you want to achieve and how you'll do it. This is the campaign strategy and is a really useful way of planning your activities. There's a simple process you can go through to do this:

1. Once you've agreed on the issue, try to decide on a specific **aim** you're going for.
This might be to convince the local council to adopt a specific policy, to stop a planning application or to increase the number of people using a local organic food box scheme.
2. Then try to think about what steps will get you to that aim. These are your **objectives** – what small things you can achieve that will get you step by step to your ultimate aim. Try to make these as specific as possible so that you're clear what you are trying to achieve.
For the planning application, this might be things like getting 5 newspaper articles by Summer, convincing 6 key council committee members a month before they plan to meet, gathering 1000 petition signatures and putting your objections in to the council by the deadline.
3. Once you're sure of your objectives, think about who you need to **target**. As well as the ultimate decision-makers (like the council planning committee) there are other people who it's useful to have onside.
For example, you could target the local media to get your arguments heard, the local public to convince them and build wider support, local businesses or other like-minded organisations that could help you to campaign.
4. With your aims, objectives and targets decided all you need to do now is to decide what **tactics** you want to use.
See what people are interested in doing and what the group's strengths are (media work,

letter-writing or stalls for example). Talk about what actions you want to take for all of your objectives.

5. Finally, you want to check the **timings** - try to work out how long it will take to do all of this and in what order you need to do things.
Of course, you'll need to be a bit flexible as things change as you go along. However, it's really useful to set it out over the coming months so you know what steps you need to take each month, where you are so far and how you're doing. It also helps you to see if you're taking on too much and need to cut it down a little.
6. Again, there are people and resources to help you with all of this – you're never alone.

Learn more about campaigning and meet other campaigners

Friends of the Earth believes strongly in the power of the local groups network. To support that network we organise all sorts of events where you can find out more about the campaigns, gain new skills and meet other local activists and share experiences.

- The Annual Groups Conference is a great way to meet hundreds of other local campaigns, take part in workshops and plenaries and have a say in how the organisation is run. It's open to all local groups and happens every year in September:

<http://community.foe.co.uk/conference>

- On top of that specialist events take place across the country on specific campaign issues which you can attend to learn more.
- There are also many regional events specifically for groups. These are organised by regional staff and are a chance to meet other activists in your area, share skills and experiences, build up new contacts and hear about the local, regional and national campaigns:
<http://community.foe.co.uk/resource/events/>

- On top of these events, Friends of the Earth runs several campaign networks which you can sign up to. By doing so you'll be kept up to date on specific national campaigns and ways that your group can take action to support them. See <http://community.foe.co.uk/campaigns/networks/>

- A growing number of regions also have a Network Developer who is there to support groups and set up new groups and they are always there to offer you help, advice or information. Contact the Activist Information Officer to get contact details for your Network Developer: 020 7566 1677, localgroups@foe.co.uk



Licensing papers

What are they?

Part of the procedure for becoming a local group is to sign two documents; the **Partnership Agreement** and the **Trade Mark License Agreement**.

The terms of the Partnership Agreement set out how Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland and each Friends of the Earth local group relate to each other.

This is valid for one year and you will be asked to re register in the spring of each year. If you register after September you will not be asked to re register until the spring of the year after next (e.g. If you registered in November 2007 you would be asked to re-register in Spring 2009).

The Trade Mark License Agreement grants a licence for a local group to campaign under the Friends of the Earth name and explains the limit to rights and use of that name.

The Trade Mark License Agreement only needs to be filled in when a local group starts, changes its name or when the Trade Mark License Agreement is amended.

Why do we have to pay?

When completing your Trade Mark License Agreement you will be asked to return it with a cheque for £20. This is a legal requirement of the Trade Mark Agreement.

From then on every spring you will be asked to return £20 with your Partnership Agreement. This money contributes towards the costs of providing resources and support to local groups.

Why is the Partnership Agreement annual?

It is a definite spring clean, a chance for your group to reflect on its achievements and to evaluate your work against the terms of the Partnership Agreement.

You may want to include the Partnership Agreement into part of your Annual General Meeting. However it is not essential that it does. For example, your annual general meeting might fit better in your group's calendar if it occurs in December and the Partnership Agreement renewal is always sent out in Spring. This should not be a problem.

Tasks to get your group going – timeline

This is a rough guide, the timings will vary and that's OK. Please use a larger version of this to discuss with your group, write on it, add names to tasks and use it to plan next steps.

	1 st Month	2 nd Month	3 rd Month	4 th Month	5 th Month	6 th Month	Beyond
Paperwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You should have received the first mailing including the guide 'Change your world: Start a Friends of the Earth group' already. By this point you'll have received this pack – the second mailing. 		After you have completed and returned the Partnership Agreement and Trade Mark License with £20, you should receive the third mailing which contains copies of these papers and other handy resources.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold an initial meeting of interested people or a public meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold the first proper get-together of the group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold the second meeting of the group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Third meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fourth Meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fifth Meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Etc.
Contacts & Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start thinking about how new members might contact you. How will you all keep in touch with one another? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide on how general enquiries will be handled - various options available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which people would like to be the media contacts? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email lists or phone tree's are up and running. 			
Money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research how & where to set up a bank account. Read treasurer top tips. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would someone like to manage the income & expenditure? 	Around now you should have had the third and final mailing. This will include information about the £100 start up grant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bank account set up. Submit your application to the start up grant (max. £100). 			
Members		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think about what would you want to put in a welcome pack? View templates on Community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designate someone to ensure new members feel welcome. Set up a system for recording membership details. Start to write your welcome pack. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment leaflet & poster complete. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome pack complete. 		Are you a welcoming group? Are people asked what they want? Can people easily get involved and contribute?
Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Display posters Tell the newspapers Tell your friends and other groups about your first meeting Tell Friends of the Earth too. 		Think about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> creating your web page on the Community website. making a membership leaflet running a stall to promote yourselves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up a system for ensuring posters & leaflets advertising your group are out there in the local community. Order your free publicity resources from 'Look the Business' (t-shirts, banner, tablecloth & rain jackets). 	Think about how else to promote your group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through doing media work on your activities Fun events Making sure posters are still up. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community updated with your group information. Think about creating your own website. 	Always try to stay aware of keeping your group's profile high – it's the best way to keep people interested and new members coming along.
Campaigns		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss main interests and what people want to do at the first meeting of the group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide on your campaigns and come up with a plan of action Join a campaign network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise your campaign plans or get active on the campaign(s). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try to stay aware of your campaign plan as you go along – it's a useful guide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try to stay aware of your campaign plan as you go along – it's a useful guide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try to stay aware of your campaign plan as you go along – it's a useful guide.