

Calderdale 2012 Motions – full versions

numbering as per prioritisation document

5) Accountability of the Board of Friends of the Earth

Proposed: Calderdale FOE

Seconded: Bristol FOE

Statement of intent: This Conference calls upon the Boards of Friends of the Earth to:

- set out a statement as to whether they believe they are accountable or not for their stewardship of the organisation, in accordance with their own adopted governance code, and how that accountability is discharged in practice.
- propose a scheme of 'accountability to stakeholders' that includes a process of annual report and scrutiny, and which is accessible and visible to stakeholders.

Background information 100 words: The FOE governance code requires that "The Board should ensure that the organisation upholds a commitment to openness and accountability at all levels [and] stakeholders have the **opportunity to hold trustees to account** and **know how to do this**". However current Board practice isn't compliant with its own code - a number of illustrations of this are provided - so effectively the Board is accountable to no-one. The absence of this discipline cannot be good for every aspect of our work, so a remedy is needed, is achievable, and it's the responsibility of the local groups 'stakeholder' to ask for it.

Background information 500 words: The purpose of this motion is not to seek accountability for its own sake, but rather in pursuit of better campaigning and a more effective organisation; nor are its proposals or intentions anything other than modest.

The FOE adopted governance code requires that "The Board should ensure that the organisation upholds a commitment to openness and accountability at all levels. This will mean ... ensuring that stakeholders have the **opportunity to hold trustees to account** and **know how to do this**" *clause H7 my emphasis*. The current practice of the Board is however not compliant with its own code in a number of respects.

For a number of years the author of this motion (whilst on the Board as a regionally elected member) has pointed to a fundamental flaw in its governance & accountability model and arrangements: "Whilst it's true that the Executive Director and Senior Management Team are accountable to the Board, who in turn is the Board accountable to?" Other voluntary sector organisations are accountable in some way to their membership (although this is not what is proposed by this motion), and business organisations are accountable to shareholders. The clear implication is that the Board of Friends of the Earth should be accountable in some way to the organisation's 'stakeholders'. The latter include financial supporters (nearly 100,000), major donors, beneficiaries of our campaigning, the general public in some sense, and so on. Accountability therefore cannot be just to local groups or this conference.

There are a number of illustrations of this absence of accountability, including that:

- There is no public AGM. Instead the AGMs of both Trust and Limited companies take place in private, last little more than a couple of minutes with no substantive business, and therefore provide no opportunity for any kind of stakeholder engagement. The irony of a campaigning organisation that itself properly makes use of such AGM opportunities being in this position will be noted.
- The requirement of Conference Standing Orders that 'The Conference shall receive a report from the Boards of the past year's work and their agreed plans' *page 1, BP6* has not been complied with for many years.
- The annual review that *is* published every year is however not approved, or indeed seen by,

the Boards, nor is it formally submitted to Conference.

- The definition of 'members' within the Articles and Associations of both the Trust and Limited companies are inconsistent and non-functioning.

- There is no information available on the organisation's website as to any accountability mechanisms or processes.

The consequence of these dysfunctional arrangements is that the Board does not have to formally account for both its performance, and the performance of the organisation as a whole, to any other parties on an annual basis. Therefore for example there are no opportunities to suggest improvements to delivery, or ask constructive questions. Each year any effective organisation should want to demonstrate that its adopted strategy has been implemented with determination and success over the previous 12 months, with effective stewardship of resources, and identify how it intends to continue that implementation in the next year. The fact that this discipline is not being applied to FOE cannot be good for every aspect of our work.

What accountability arrangements could be put in place? Whilst there are a number of components for such a mechanism that can be suggested (so it's an exercise capable of being undertaken without creating difficulties that cannot be resolved) it would be better if the Board itself were to propose a scheme of accountability that it believes best suits the particular circumstances of Friends of the Earth, and which properly encompasses and balances the involvement of *all* stakeholders.

However it is the responsibility of the local group stakeholders - who have been entrusted with the privilege of electing the majority of both boards - to ensure that the Boards are in turn effectively accountable, and that arrangements are in place, highly visible, and accessible. No other stakeholders have the organised opportunity to rectify this omission.

The author of this motion (Board member 2002-11) was on the 2004-5 Governance Review, and responsible (with one other colleague) for the review of regionally elected Board members' responsibilities and election rules approved at 2010 conference

6) Implementation of Friends of the Earth 'Planetary Emergency' strategy

Proposed: Calderdale FOE

Seconded: Manchester FOE

Statement of intent: This Conference calls upon the Boards of Friends of the Earth to:

- explain to the 2012 Conference and thereafter what progress has been made to mobilise for implementation our new and powerful organisational strategy - 'Sustainable Development in a time of Planetary Emergency' – approved more than one year ago; and to set out a timetable by when all its principal elements will be in place.

- set out the processes and timetable by which the development of the new strategy will be undertaken at a faster pace, reflecting the strategy's own recognition of 'urgency'; and with the appropriate involvement of activist stakeholders and other partners whose resources will be needed to contribute to work sharing and accelerated momentum.

Background information 100: A key aspect of FOE's success is its long-term strategy: identifying new campaigning priorities, within the context of a global analysis, and focusing resources/activists on clearly stated objectives. The new 'Planetary Emergency' strategy is strongly supported but since the Board approved it in June 2011 (12+ months ago) insufficient progress has been made to mobilise it towards implementation, nor has there been adequate engagement with activists about its development. As there must be a real urgency in starting

to tackle that 'emergency' we must proceed at a faster pace otherwise we risk environmental crisis or organisational marginalisation.

Background information 500: One of the key aspects of FOE's success over the last decade has been its long-term strategy: identifying new campaigning and organisational priorities, within the context of a global analysis, and focusing the resources of the organisation and activists on clearly stated objectives. As a result organisational priorities are not constantly shifting every year, and resources not diluted across too wide a battleground. Every successful organisational strategy has three stages: initial preparation and Board approval; then mobilisation of resources behind it, and engagement of participants; and finally delivery and implementation, typically in annual cycles.

In June 2011 - that is 13 months ago; and it will be 15 months by the time of Conference - the Boards approved our new 'Sustainable Development in a time of Planetary Emergency' strategy, and it was launched at Conference that September. The strategy provides a powerful, globally coherent, far-seeing 'analysis and response', an expression of our history and environmental limits positioning, and should be supported by all FOE stakeholders.

But what this motion is asking is - "Given the strategy's critical importance for everything we do, what happened next?" - because the work of actually mobilising and then implementing the strategy only really began with its preparation and launch.

The difficulty that local groups have in monitoring and contributing to the implementation process is their lack of knowledge, and lack of involvement. LGs (possibly just those attending conference?) only received a slim booklet about the strategy, and have never seen or had access to the full 82 page document. After good coverage in *Change your World* between April-September 2011, the strategy essentially disappeared from view. And it never even made it to the website, particularly in the form of the 'big picture narrative' it calls for to communicate and popularise its vision and analysis. The consequence of this 'absence from the marketplace of ideas' is that other campaigning organisations might claim public ownership of our core concept, as indeed Oxfam then did in February 2012.

In fact the strategy contains 25+ pages about the five agreed and interlocking areas of future campaigning, highly relevant to local groups, setting out detailed 3 and 10 Year objectives and much more. If LGs don't know their own organisation's strategy, how can they know where they're heading towards, spread the message, contribute to implementation or ask informed questions about progress? The sheer extent of the strategy also means that its delivery is bound to be extremely challenging, consequently needing the support of everyone. Yet no processes or programme - including online and crowdsourcing collaborative mechanisms - have been established by which local groups/activists can be informed about or participate in the development of the five campaigning 'programmes'; nor have their themes featured in the regional gatherings.

It's easy to anticipate responses such as: 'we're going to do A or B shortly' or that: 'C and D have postponed implementation for X months'. Therefore the question becomes: how long should an organisation take to mobilise and promote its new strategy? Because the rule of thumb is that if it hasn't mobilised it within 12 months of approval then it's far less likely to ever get round to doing so effectively, and (at the time of writing - end of April 2012) that time is almost up. So are we sleepwalking towards 'strategy failure', before we even really started?!

If the core of the strategy's analysis is that there's a 'planetary emergency' then it must follow that there must be a real and visible urgency in starting to tackle that emergency. For an environmental campaigning organisation that in turn requires the whole organisation - staff *and* activists, + partners and funders - to be involved as soon as possible in building up that momentum. So far this hasn't happened.

The author of this motion (Board member 2002-11) was Chair of Campaigns Committee 2005-11 and negotiator for the Board of the Planetary Emergency strategy 5 campaigns programmes.

7) Breadth of Friends of the Earth campaigning

Proposed: Calderdale FOE

Seconded: Bradford FOE

Statement of intent: This Conference calls upon the Board of Friends of the Earth to: ensure that the full breadth of our sustainable development campaigning agenda - which is a unique strength of Friends of the Earth - is supported to the extent possible (either directly or indirectly, and using partnerships or volunteer resources where necessary) and made available as a campaigning menu for local groups to choose within.

Background information 100: The central FOE organisation has to concentrate its campaigning resources onto a small number of priority, achievable targets but as a sustainable development organisation the extent of our campaigning cannot be limited to this. There's a range of additional campaigning opportunities of great/ongoing significance *within* the five Programme areas of the Planetary Emergency strategy, and then others *outside* the strategy where local groups themselves wish to be active on their own. At the moment the approach to these latter two campaign categories is quite unclear. Local groups need to be offered a broad menu of campaigning opportunities to choose from.

Background information 500: In any year the central Friends of the Earth organisation has to concentrate its campaigning resources onto a small number of priority, achievable targets; that's how for example we were able to promote and secure the hugely significant Climate Change Act 2008. So far in 2011 two new campaigns have been launched with considerable success - 'Clean British Energy' as part 2 of the UK energy/climate change campaign (following part 1 Final Demand); and the Bee Cause, a UK biodiversity campaign - and staff are to be congratulated on the quality and expertise of these activities. A third 'new' campaign relating to greener products (and resource efficiency) is understood to be in preparation to be launched later in 2012.

However as a sustainable development organisation the extent of our campaigning cannot be limited to a small number of headline campaigns. In addition to the three 'new' campaigns there will be, within the five Programme areas of the Planetary Emergency strategy, a range of other topics either of great or ongoing significance, or alternatively where local groups themselves will wish to be active. These include:

Climate & Energy Security: International climate, UK transport, UK aviation, Biofuels

Nature and Ecosystems Security: International biodiversity, marine (rather than terrestrial) biodiversity, forests, ecosystem services

Land Use, Food & Water Security: Environmental limits, land/food/water security, population

Economics & Resource Use: Economic growth, recycling & incineration

Fair & Planned Transition: Planning and local sustainability, rights and inequality

Strategy as a whole: Sustainable development and 'planetary emergency', Rio+20 (in 2012)

The new strategy is clear that there will be different types of policy and campaigning work, distinguishing between public campaigning and tracking research. Then there will be still more potential campaigning topics where local groups, exercising their autonomy, may wish to be active on areas outside and beyond the total extent of approved strategy, for example genetic engineering, geo-engineering, supermarkets and so on.

Consequently Local Groups and individual activists need to understand within a finite period of the strategy's approval:

- What will be the range and timetable of the full extent of the central organisation's priority campaigns, and then also the secondary or ongoing campaigns, which they can expect to see on display or offered to them to participate in? From this LGs will be able to determine what is the opportunity and support for their own campaigning beyond that list.

- What is the allocation and extent of the staff resources to a specific campaigning topic? Despite the fact that the reorganisation of the campaigning staff was substantially completed by November 2011, there has still been no communication to activists as to the full menu of supported campaigns and which members of staff are available to provide support (to whatever extent, or not as the case may be).

- Recognising that the breadth of our sustainable development agenda means that it will never be possible for campaigning/staff resources to be available for all potential topics, what are the partnership or volunteer arrangements that had been organised in substitute? As examples: it's been suggested that Campaign for Better Transport (former Transport 2000) could provide detailed transport support which FOE, now properly focusing on other aspects of climate and energy, can no longer do; 2012 will be an important year for aviation campaigning, but in the absence of a staff campaigner, how will that be undertaken; and since the new strategy doesn't support work on GM or supermarkets, have arrangements been made with e.g GM Freeze and Tesco to provide campaign support instead?

- What are the arrangements for local groups and individual activists to participate in either FOE Europe campaigns, or those involving the European Parliament, where local groups are strongly positioned to get involved?

Reconciling the inevitable tension between campaign/resource prioritisation and a broad sustainable development agenda, and resolving it into a sufficiently broad menu of campaign opportunities from which local groups and individual activists can make their own choices, requires the central organisation to quickly develop, reallocate and communicate new arrangements for campaigns support; and the Board to ensure that the resultant broad menu is made available for activists every year. So far - in 2012 - this hasn't happened, and as long as this semi-vacuum continues, campaigning opportunities are being lost and local activists not properly served.

The author of this motion (Board member 2002-11) was Chair of Campaigns Committee 2005-11.

8) Improving Friends of the Earth's communications

Proposed: Calderdale FOE

Seconded: Bradford FOE

Statement of intent: This Conference calls upon the Boards of Friends of the Earth to: ask the Executive Director to produce a concise top-level communication strategy - missing for a decade - in order to sharply improve communications effectiveness, built around 'big picture narrative', greater focus on campaigning, and our brand potential; so that FOE communications activity properly supports our response to the 'Planetary Emergency' and underpins Friends of the Earth's long-term future.

Background information 100: Any organisation advocating change needs effective communications and this will be either a powerful contributor to or limitation on its ability to achieve its objectives. But FOE has not had a top-level communication strategy for a decade, and concerns expressed at previous Conferences reflect activists' anxieties about communications performance. The new strategy should drive forward our 'big picture narrative', improved awareness levels, stronger brand & positioning, online competitiveness,

and more 'urgency' and 'truthfulness' about the 'planetary emergency'. We might have the best campaigns in the world but if insufficient people know about them we're not going to win.

Background information 500: For any organisation advocating change, and particularly under-resourced environmental campaigning organisations, its ability to communicate with - to speak to, engage, convince, cajole, made even pressurise! - the range of audiences it needs to achieve its objectives will either be a powerful contributor to, or powerful limitation on, its actual success. We might have the best causes, arguments, and campaigns in the world but if insufficient people know about them relative to the particular issue then we're not going to win; nor will they know about our successes; or the opportunities to support us financially or with activism.

In that sense an organisation like Friends of the Earth can either live or die by its top-level communication strategy. FOE has not had one for a decade, and the concerns that have been expressed at the last two conferences about communications performance probably reflects activists' appreciation of this state of affairs. The component parts of such a strategy would include the following topics:

'Narrative': the new Planetary Emergency strategy made an important organisational breakthrough by calling for a 'big picture narrative' - that told a global long-term story integrating all five programme areas - and campaign 'narratives' as well. However some 10 months later there is no sign of these narratives, which have not previously featured in our communications.

Brand: An organisation's 'brand' isn't just its logotype or visual style - as have very recently been refreshed by Friends of the Earth - but rather should be the concentrated expression of what it really believes in. Consequently the strength and distinctiveness of FOE's brand proposition is of great importance to us, but it remains unclear what that proposition is. Structural weaknesses within the brand - such as its failure to visibly incorporate all the levels of 'Friends of the Earth activity' (International/Europe/EWNI/local), and our local groups USP - remain untreated and unexploited.

Positioning: The displayed positioning of Friends of the Earth (from example, on our homepage) isn't really that of a focused **campaigning** organisation - in strong contrast to the case with our two national competitors Greenpeace and WWF - but is rather a diluted and fragmented mixture of 'some campaigning' and 'lifestyle' which tend to cancel each other out. Rather than specifically highlighting the extent and breadth, and continuity of our campaigning work, our website instead hides these. There is no explanation for these strange choices.

Online competitiveness: The world of online campaigning continues to evolve rapidly - with the rise of the all-purpose online campaigning aggregators - and it's essential that Friends of the Earth's own activity remains competitive but also flexibly collaborative. Yet the opportunity to feature e.g the 38 Degrees 'planning' petition (October 2011) or the Avaaz 'bees' petition (April 2012) either on our own site or in some other way, didn't happen.

Awareness: It's not well known that FOE has for a long time had low prompted and unprompted awareness figures, so a critical requirement of any communication strategy would be to put in place measures to start to rectify this weakness within a finite time scale, with quantified awareness objectives and targets. The new organisational strategy recognises the issue at a general level but doesn't set targets and is relying on other communications components (such as the above - ?) to produce that raised awareness.

'Urgency' & 'Truthfulness': Our 'planetary emergency' analysis implies by definition that we need urgent solutions, so that urgency needs to be communicated. Similarly if Friends of the Earth has inside or expert knowledge about the stark direction of present or future global trends then those with whom we communicate ought to be able to rely on us, of all organisations, to tell the truth about that reality. But we don't do either. As an example: in September 2008 the organisation received a clear briefing from Tyndall Centre about the deteriorating prospects of limiting global temperature rises below 4° yet failed to communicate that information, thus exposing itself to reputational risk and charges of unethical behaviour.

A concise communication strategy would be able to provide essential direction on these strategic areas, without which we have communications activity but not effectiveness. Its absence for the last decade has brought us to our current weakened position.

The author of this motion (Board member 2002-11) was Chair of Campaigns Committee 2005-11, which had responsibility for communications until 2009; and a member of the Engagement Committee.

9) Calderdale Composite Motion: Organisational performance and accountability

Proposed: Calderdale FOE

Seconded: Bristol FOE

Statement of Intent: This Conference calls upon the Boards of Friends of the Earth to:

Accountability of the Board of Friends of the Earth

- set out a statement as to whether they believe they are accountable or not for their stewardship of the organisation, in accordance with their own adopted governance code, and how that accountability is discharged in practice.
- propose a scheme of 'accountability to stakeholders' that includes a process of annual report and scrutiny, and which is accessible and visible to stakeholders.

Implementation of Friends of the Earth 'Planetary Emergency' strategy

- explain to the 2012 Conference and thereafter what progress has been made to mobilise for implementation our new and powerful organisational strategy - 'Sustainable Development in a time of Planetary Emergency' – approved more than one year ago; and to set out a timetable by when all its principal elements will be in place.
- set out the processes and timetable by which the development of the new strategy will be undertaken at a faster pace, reflecting the strategy's own recognition of 'urgency'; and with the appropriate involvement of activist stakeholders and other partners whose resources will be needed to contribute to work sharing and accelerated momentum.

Breadth of Friends of the Earth campaigning

- ensure that the full breadth our sustainable development campaigning agenda - which is a unique strength of Friends of the Earth - is supported to the extent possible (either directly or indirectly, and using partnerships or volunteer resources where necessary) and made available as a campaigning menu for local groups to choose within.

Improving Friends of the Earth's communications

- ask the Executive Director to produce a concise top-level communication strategy - missing for a decade - in order to sharply improve communications effectiveness, built around 'big picture narrative', greater focus on campaigning, and our brand potential; so that FOE communications activity properly supports our response to the 'Planetary Emergency' and underpins Friends of the Earth's long-term future.

Background information 100: This overlengthy motion is a composite of the four individual motions submitted by Calderdale FOE about various aspects of strategic organisational performance and accountability, submitted as an interlinked sequence requiring consideration this year as our new strategy gets underway. The number of motions that can be

prioritised/discussed is being unnecessarily limited so your choice is between: prioritising some of the individual Calderdale motions, or selecting this composite permits the essentials of all four to be at least debated. For more Background Information see the individual motions, and full 500 word versions of all motions are downloadable from Constitutional Motions hub.

Background information 500: If this Composite motion gets to be prioritised a 500 word summary of the background information for motions 5-8 will be prepared. For the moment please refer to each individual motion above.