



**Friends of  
the Earth  
Scotland**

## **2016 referendum on membership of the European Union**

A referendum on whether Britain should remain in the European Union is to be held on Thursday 23 June 2016. Friends of the Earth Scotland believes that for the sake of our environment, we should remain part of the EU. **If you care about the environment you should vote to remain in the EU.**

### **Membership of the EU has transformed the UK's environmental laws for the better:**

- In the 1970s and 80s the UK was known as the “dirty man of Europe” with the highest sulphur dioxide emissions from power stations **causing acid rain across northern Europe**. EU agreements meant sulphur dioxide pollution fell 89% between 1990 and 2010. In 2016, Scotland said farewell to its last coal-fired power station.
- **Raw sewage** used to be routinely pumped into the sea and in 1976 only 27 beaches across the UK were deemed clean enough to swim off. EU action meant by 2011 there were 597 designated beaches. Now almost all our beaches meet EU quality standards. In 2014, Scotland's 84 designated bathing waters achieved a mandatory pass rate of 98% and new standards from Europe mean the water will have to be even cleaner in future.
- In 2013 the Scottish Government campaigned to keep **bee-killing pesticides** on the market in Scotland. The EU's “precautionary principle” meant that the worst of these products were banned from use on the crops most visited by bees.
- European rules have meant that **thousands of dangerous chemicals** have been removed from everyday products, like lead from paint and gender-bending bisphenol-A from baby bottles.

We believe it makes sense to work together across Europe on many of the environmental and social challenges we share. Only by working together on the European scale did we stop acid rain and **only by staying together can make the large, global emissions cuts needed to tackle climate change**. The EU now has the biggest programme of environmental legislation in the world and sustainable development is written into its treaties. A vote to leave would put our progress on the environment, as well as the employment and social rights and protections we enjoy, at risk.

The EU is far from perfect, with currently a EU's dogged prioritisation of economic growth at any cost, secretive TTIP trade negotiations, threats to nature laws and resistance to democratic reform.

The EU needs to rediscover its way and make environmental and human welfare a core purpose if it is to continue to get support from EU citizens. We support a EU where employment, social and environmental rights in the European market are better protected. The current UK government appears to argue for staying in an EU with fewer protections.

Friends of the Earth Scotland calls for the EU to:

### **Change priorities**

- The EU's priorities should be improving people's lives and taking care of the shared environment we depend on, not a blind pursuit of economic growth.
- The free trade ideology that is currently flourishing in the EU should be done away with and negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and other similar deals must be abandoned.

### **Improve laws**

- The EU should not be allowed to weaken laws that protect the environment or public health. Policies like the Common Agricultural Policy and Common Fisheries Policy should be overhauled to put long-term, sustainable protection and management of our environment at their centre.
- Countries should be free to introduce stronger environmental laws that set an example to others in the EU.

### **Reinvigorate democracy**

- The elected European Parliament should have the power to initiate environmental and health legislation and be given an equal say with national leaders on final decision-making.
- The opinions, discussions and activities of EU members on environmental matters must be published publicly and when corporations, NGOs or others try to lobby and influence decisions, this should be made transparent.
- The subsidiarity principle, which clarifies at what level of government action should be taken, must be given more weight and interpreted to better preserve local democracy and ensure that decisions are taken closest to citizens.
- It should be possible for people and NGOs to challenge EU decisions in EU courts if the EU is breaking its own laws.
- EU commissioners wield huge power in the EU, deciding what legislation is introduced or cut. The European Parliament should have the power to reject unsuitable potential commissioners, for example when they have no track record, little interest in or are hostile to environmental protection.
- Commissioners and EU civil servants should spend at least as much time talking to public interest groups (such as charities) as they do to corporations.
- Representatives with corporate interests, or those paid by them, should not form a majority on advisory groups to the EU Commission.

### **Useful links:**

- The EU referendum and the Environment – detailed analysis - <https://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/eu-referendum-environment-81600.pdf>
- Environmentalist for Europe campaign group - <http://www.environmentalistsforeurope.org>
- Further resources - <https://www.foe.co.uk/page/eu-referendum-environment>

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### **Friends of the Earth Scotland - June 2016**

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