

Friends of the Earth Scotland

2020 Annual General Meeting

Saturday 27th June 2020, 10.30 am – 12.37 pm

Scotland is currently under lockdown due to Covid-19. The AGM was held via Zoom video conferencing, with online “sign-in” starting at 10 am.

Draft minutes for approval

Minute-taker: Wing Yen Yip

Board members present:

- Amanda Grimm
- Ben Murray
- Heather Urquhart
- Iain Black
- Louise Bowen
- Máire McCormack
- Mark Ballard
- Trina Halberg

Plus 35 members

Board apologies:

- Zarina Ahmad

10.30 AGM opens, Chair's Introduction

Iain opened the AGM and welcomed those present.

1. Board's annual report from the Chair (Prof Iain Black)

Iain spoke about the current Covid-19 situation. The next stage is not to return to the old normal but to address the issues that have led to the current difficult times and improve our way of life. FoES will lead on this with the new Just and Green Recovery campaign.

Looking back on our successes, this year we have pushed policy makers to go further than they instinctively would prefer. Resulting in tougher targets in the Climate Bill and the new powers that the council will have from the Transport Bill to improve air quality. To supporting the school climate strikers and the creation of the Environmental Rights Centre, all are needed to ensure Scotland take the necessary steps in dealing with the climate emergency.

While there are successes, we must remain vigilant and continue to push for a ban on Fracking, through our Divestment campaign to stop the funding of oil and gas investments, in our Just Transition campaign we need to support communities in their transition.

Thanked members for attending the AGM, Donors and Funders for their continued support, and the Board and Staff for their incredible work. Expressed his thanks to Board members who are stepping down.

2. Approval of Minutes and report of 2019 AGM

The approval of the 2019 AGM minutes was conducted through a poll via Zoom video conferencing, majority approved.

3. Financial Report and Accounts for 2019; Appointment of Auditor (Trina Halberg)

Trina screen shared the financial update. The Statement of Financial (SoF) Activities 2019 shows the difference between total income (£687k) and total expenditure (£688k) to be less than £1k. The 2018/19 Income and Expenditure breakdown showed an increase in both income and expenditure from 2018.

Income shows that we are still reliant on membership donations. Though 2019 has seen an increase in donations, specifically from 2 exceptional donations this year.

As with previous years, the expenditure has increased. Notably this year's expenditure has shown an increase in staff cost due to several new staff members joining the organisation.

The retrospective view and scenario planning showed an incremental increase in income and expenditure. Spending and income 2020 are on track. Due to Covid-19, the scenario for 2020 includes a 7% decrease in membership subscriptions. To aid in long-term planning, two scenarios for 2021 based on the 2020 scenario was drawn up, (A) our expectations and (B) worst case.

Poll via Zoom video conferencing to approve Thomson Cooper as auditor, majority approved.

No questions.

Several members expressed thanks to Trina in the chat box.

4. Director's report (Dr Richard Dixon)

Richard thanked all for attendance and expressed disappointment on the lost opportunity to physically see and informally chat with members as per usual at AGMs.

Spoke on the effects of the current Covid-19 situation. Hopeful the public will see the importance of public services and maintain their changed habits/perspectives for the better. Staff are working from home and some campaigns have been reorientated. It will be at least a month or so before we slowly reopen the office.

Looking back: climate issues were at the forefront of the public and our campaigning work before lockdown. Though this has now stalled, we will be building this back in with Just and Green Recovery.

This year we welcomed 3 new FoES staff and 4 hosting staff. This is significant growth from only 6 staff members just 7 years ago.

Membership has continued to grow this year.

2020 is financially stable but we will be striving to make savings, as 2021 will be hard to fundraise for. Due to Covid-19, some funders will be financially constrained, and/or changing priorities, such as looking to support social recovery, not environment. We are in conversation with several potential funders though.

Spoke about the new campaign, Just and Green Recovery. Managed to get some funding for this work and Caroline Rance will be leading on this campaign.

Air Pollution:

There have been some successes, Low Emission Zones (LEZ) though 3 have been delayed, the Transport Act with the potential implementation of workplace parking levy charges. During the Covid-19 situation many road spaces have been reallocated – with some pedestrianised and new cycle lanes added. The campaign will look to capitalise on the positive changes being made.

Climate:

The long-anticipated Climate Act went through with tougher targets than originally proposed though not tough enough. On reflection, FoES have been campaigning for tough targets for about 25 years now.

COP:

The newly recruited staff member to deal with Glasgow COP is now on furlough as it has been postponed. We, FoES especially Mary, have been instrumental in creating a COP26 coalition (grassroots, justice, migrants, environment) designed to work well at UK and Scottish level. The COP may possibly be the most important ever environmental event in Scotland.

Divestment:

In our work on the Scottish National Investment Bank (SNIB) we were able to have ‘requires the bank to invest in just transition to zero carbon’ in the founding legislation and to have some ethical standards for investment as an objective. SNIB will be more important now as it may be a vehicle for the green recovery money to be invested.

Environmental Rights:

Has managed to find enough funding to create an Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland, 2 staff members have been recruited. Exciting possibility of a Human Rights Act, likely in the SNP’s upcoming manifesto which could ensure people the right to a decent environment.

Fracking:

Back in October there was an announcement from Scottish Government that we will not have fracking, but the next step is to convert it to a binding planning policy.

Just Transition:

Last year, Ryan joined as the Just Transition campaigner, which has increased our work with unions especially on the Bifab campaign and the Sea Change report was produced.

Plastics and Circular Economy:

Last year, Sarah joined as the Plastics and Circular Economy campaigner. Much of the campaign work has either been delayed (deposit and return scheme) or abandoned (Circular Economy bill) due to Covid-19.

Also spoke on the good social media work and the parliamentary officer role in supporting our campaigns.

Young Friends of the Earth Scotland:

Have had a very successful year improving access and inclusion in their own network and events, and in supporting youth strikers. During lockdown they have been concentrating on skill sharing, sessions on activism during lockdown, and building a strong network. Have just heard the good news that Young Friends of the Earth Europe have become a legal separate entity in their own right.

Activism:

Shortly after the last AGM was the Summer Weekender gathering, it was there that we started conversations on creating a COP26 coalition. The 3rd Campaign Organisers programme is about to start. And we will soon be launching People Power Network, a non-geographical group of activists which will include non-FoE local groups.

This year started off well, but we are now in very hard times. Plenty to look forward to in the next 18 months ahead.

5. Q&A with Chair, Treasurer & Director

Q: What are FoES's plans to ensure the North East of Scotland, who currently benefit the most from the fossil fuel industry, will benefit and therefore support the conversion to a green economy?

A: We are supportive of the unions and workers and communities in the North East of Scotland and with communities in areas who will be largely impacted by the transition. Our Sea Change report spells out what and how many other jobs there are. We have been sharing this report with politicians to encourage them to say more and support the transition. We will be careful to show our support and give a positive message, but the transition to green energy will not be limited to just the North East of Scotland, new jobs will be created all over Scotland.

Q: How can FoES ensure the correct people are put in place to deal with public services. Many private rural bus service providers have gone bankrupt and thus a loss of service during this Covid-19 crisis.

A: The Transport Act gives powers to local authorities to participate more fully or own local transport companies. As many of the private sectors who are providing these public services will need the Scottish Government's support to continue during and after the Covid-19 crisis, we are working to ensure the Scottish Government's recovery plan will not just be to help them recover in this economy but will use this as an opportunity to have more of a say in these public services in exchange for helping them recover.

Q: What do you think of the impact of Brexit and how we compensate for it?

A: A no deal Brexit is looking more likely. Though the Scottish Government is sympathetic they are powerless. We are engaging with FoE EWNI who are engaged in the parliamentary processes with the UK Government. The job now in Scotland is to keep as many protections that we control and making sure we continue to control them. Scottish Government have also recently published a paper in response to a consultation on Environmental Standards and Governance, which promises how the Scottish Government will prioritise environment and what protection would be in law.

Q: What we are doing to escalate campaigning on the flaring of Mossmorran?

A: FoES has been supporting the local group. Though SEPA had not been communicating well with the local community/group, they have been busy preparing legal papers to prosecute on the flaring of Mossmorran. The situation is better than it was before, and FoES will continue to support the local group.

Q: The UK Government is reinstating the aviation industry – what can we do about the aviation industry in Scotland, the return to mass flying, and redundancy announced at Glasgow airport?

A: The aviation industry is a Westminster issue but FoES have been vocal in the press about the bailout of the industry and are sensitive to the redundancy by the baggage handling firm. There is a grouping of groups who have sent a letter to the First Minister and who are also in talks with Build Back Better about green recovery at UK level, which will include in part the aviation industry. There is an opportunity to capitalise on the lockdown experience to encourage using Zoom/Teams/etc instead of flying somewhere for a meeting.

6. Election of new Board Members

Heather chaired this agenda point as Iain is a Board nomination. As there are more Board members standing down than nominated, all Board nominations will go through uncontested.

Members standing down:

- Ben Murray
- Gregor McAbery
- Heather Urquhart
- Iain Black
- Ian Cowan
- Máire McCormack
- Trina Halberg

Board nominations:

- Daisy Jamieson
- Iain Black
- Laura Curtis-Moss

Each nomination spoke for 2 minutes. The approval for each Board Nomination was conducted through a poll via Zoom video conferencing, all approved.

Iain thanked Heather and the new Board members and wished Heather the best in her travels.

7. Motions

Richard updated on previous motions:

2019: Climate Emergency – the Climate Act was passed last year and our work on climate was mentioned earlier in the Director's report. There will be discussions about Just and Green Recovery to make improvements on several climate issues.

2019: Youth Engagement in Action on Climate Change – FoES have been supporting the activism side, legal side, and engaging with the European network. We have been part of the lobbying to help YFoEE become a legal separate entity.

2018: To amend FoES Rules in order to facilitate network representation on Board and for other purposes – one of the agreed minor change to the FoES rules at the 2018 AGM will not go through, decided by Board and Richard, after an objection from the Financial Conduct Authority (regulators), citing confusion between individual member and an affiliate member.

This year's motions:

Rethinking Low Emission Zones

Proposer: Andy Llanwarne, seconder: Doug McLaren

Andy spoke on the motion. Gavin (FoES Air Pollution campaigner) vocally supported the motion.

Amendments: None

Majority for, motion is carried

Stop the Jewish National Fund (JNF) greenwashing ethnic cleansing

Proposer: Eurig Scandrett, seconder: Angus Maclean

Eurig spoke on motion.

Amendments: None

Majority passed, motion is carried

8. AOCB

None

9. Close and thanks

Iain Black thanked and closed the AGM at 12.37pm

12:37pm AGM ends