

Friends of the Earth Scotland, Annual General Meeting 2022 - Minutes

Saturday 11th June 2022 – online

10.30am – 12.00pm

Minute-taker: Catrina Randall

Board members present:

- Mark Ballard (co-chair)
- Laura Curtis-Moss (co-chair)
- Catherine Lyons (treasurer)
- Iain Black
- Rowan Gard
- Rachel Howell
- Duncan Wallace
- Daisy Jamieson

33 attendees total.

5 apologies.

10am. AGM opens, Co-Chair's Introduction/ Board's annual report

Laura Curtis-Moss welcomes everyone and runs down the Zoom ground rules

Mark Ballard welcomes members volunteers and staff joining us today.

Mark Ballard: The annual report starts with a thank you from the staff team to all of us for our support, so I would like to thank the staff team on behalf of board and membership for all their incredibly hard work this year in what has been a truly exceptional year. It has been exceptional in terms of responsibility, achievement, finances and the Scottish environmental movement. There is lots to look back and be proud of as a movement.

It is also a significant anniversary as the Rio Summit in 1992 was 30 years ago. It was there I went to a talk by Kevin, the then Friends of the Earth Scotland (FoES) Director, and signed up as a member. So this is my own 30 year anniversary as a FoES' member. Back then we were talking about waste, energy; including Torness nuclear power station and the biggest issues then, as now, was climate change. We were at 355 PPM then. We are now well over 400PPM.

For the last four decades years, Friends of the Earth has always been the leading light in Scotland challenging that relentless upward tick of CO². What made FoES so exciting back in the 1990's was the commitment to environmental justice. It was clear even then that FoES was the first organisation in many ways to point out who was being affected by breakdown of the environment: communities already facing adversity because of class, race, gender, who were seen as trouble-makers when they challenged issues. FoES has long focussed on justice, economic justice, and making sure people have decent jobs while making the transition to a more sustainable society. I am proud FoES has continued to highlight these issues.

Fast forwarding 30 years to COP26. Marching with the banner saying 'system change not climate change' was a really proud moment for the FoES family. 2021 was when COP, the environmental community and big polluters came to Glasgow. From the board point of view it felt incredible to march with the FoES family. Huge congratulations to all the staff involved.

Our big demo was the Stop Cambo demo, a campaign which has been a big feature of our

work. We had a partial success with First Minister coming out against Cambo and shell pulling out, but have now moved on to the next fight which is the Jackdaw gas field. We will continue to mobilise against this.

We've been doing great work up in Aberdeen around just transition. The cost of decarbonising should not fall on working people of Aberdeen and elsewhere. We need to work with trade unions to create a just transition.

Our circular economy work is another example of thought leadership of FoES. The idea of a whole economy that doesn't create waste in first place. We have seen disappointment with delays of the deposit return scheme, but wins on single use plastic bans.

One of the first FoES actions I got involved with was taking a bunch of stickers (given to me by Richard Dixon) highlighting the environmental destruction of banks and sticking them on cash machines around Edinburgh. This links to the success of our current divestment campaign, moving million of pounds of money in pension funds out of fossil fuels. This involves detailed technical work by colleagues. It is a long slog but is seeing successes.

The march at COP included many local groups, and Young Friends of the Earth Scotland. The day before there was a massive climate strike coordinated by Fridays for Future. Colleagues have been supporting these young people very much in the background, as they should be, but they have done a power of work and we can be really proud of the contribution we've made in supporting and sustaining the youth climate movement.

Our staff team has now grown to largest number ever, 23 people. It was swelled due to COP26 staff. They have all done amazing work through the pandemic in a really difficult time, huge congratulations to you all.

Huge congratulations and thanks to Richard Dixon for all he achieved at COP26. He was there 30 years ago. I volunteered with him briefly in the FoES office when he was Head of Policy. He has done an amazing job over his 10 years as director, taking us from a low level of activity to the influential organisation we are now. Richard decided to leave after COP26. I want to pay tribute to Richard and thank him both personally and professionally for everything he achieved in his stint as director.

We are recruiting a new director currently. Thanks to Mary, Alice and Kerrigan for their work as co-directors keeping us moving forward in the interim.

Thanks to current staff, and staff who have departed over the year.

Thanks for the work of Louise Bowen, our secretary, and Rachel Howell. Both will be much missed on the board.

It has been an amazing year of amazing work but let's be under no illusions – the climate clock is still ticking and we need to continue to work with redoubled efforts and bring message of environmental justice to wider audience. Thanks to staff members and local groups for all work over past year to make this happen.

Laura Curtis-Moss echoes thanks.

Approval of Minutes and report of 2020 AGM

13 votes for, 4 abstain. Minutes approved.

Financial Report and Accounts for 2020; Appointment of Auditor

Presentation by Catherine Lyons, treasurer.

Income:

- Total income increased to £1,433k compared to £1,319k for the previous year, an 8.6% increase (£114k).
- Donations and legacies, charitable activities, and investment income have increased while other trading activities income decreased.

Expenditure

- Expenditure has increased for the year to £1,504k compared to £838k for 2020, a 79% increase (£666k).
- The increase is largely down to a £139k increase staff costs, £303k increase in campaigning & events costs, £98k increase in professional & freelance costs and £30k increase in design, printing & stationery costs. There is a general increase in all other costs as expected with the increase in income this year.

Cash and reserves

- Total funds held have increased by £372k to £1,063k compared to £691k for 2020.
- Total reserves have decreased by £72k to £976k compared to £1,048k for 2020.
- Fund balances at 31 December 2021:
Unrestricted £420,923 Restricted £555,247 Total £976,170

Activities made possible by COP26 income:

- The FOES Appeal paid for extra staff time
- FOE England Wales and Northern Ireland enabled the appointment of the COP Logistics Coordinator
- Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung resourced online mobilisation
- People's Postcode Lottery funded buses to Glasgow, staffing, the ceilidh, and legacy work in 2022, and a membership campaign
- Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust supported Young FoES' activism
- European Climate Foundation supported mobilisation, in particular visa support for visitors from the Global South

Catherine recommends that the membership votes to confirm Thomson Cooper as the auditors.

Vote on auditors: 21 votes for, 3 abstain.

Thomson Cooper confirmed as auditors for 2022.

Director's report

Mark Ballard introduces the director's report.

Mary Church presents the first part of the director's report.

Mary Church: I am joining from train returning from FoE Europe (FoEE) AGM in Prague which kicked off the process for the new FoEE strategy – it was really inspiring to spend time with our network, reminder that we are part of something bigger, plenty of learnings from informal discussions as well as the more focussed discussions on strategy and ways of working. Plenty of food for thought to take into our own strategy process which will begin when we have a new Director in post.

Thanks for joining what will hopefully be our last online *only* AGM. To say that two years of living and working through the pandemic has been challenging is of course an understatement, but things do at last seem to be moving in the right direction and we are happily in the process of implementing a hybrid working arrangement that enables a return to office working while retaining some of the benefits of home working.

Cases might be down, and a version of the 'new normal' emerging, but (at a societal level) we have surely not yet collectively processed the full impact of this experience nor realised the positive changes that can come from it. Just as the Black Death is thought to have helped bring about the end of feudalism in Europe and spurred the Renaissance, it's hard to predict the longer-term impact of the pandemic, but our work – the narratives, ideas and demands we seek to mainstream – is more vital than ever in helping shape the change that is surely coming as the reality of what the current trajectory of planetary destruction means becomes ever more apparent.

And despite the difficulties of Covid, we have achieved so much together over the last year, so much so that it's a challenge to do justice in this short report!

COP26 has been a huge focus for us over the past two years. Knowing that the negotiations themselves were doomed to failure because of the positions that world governments took into them, our approach was to use all the attention and energy around the summit to get leverage for our campaign demands – particularly on oil & gas phase out – and as an opportunity to build the climate justice movement for the work that continues long after COP has left town.

And that strategy paid off with the Cambo oil field development coming up for approval in the months before COP enabling us to illustrate the hypocrisy of both governments claims of climate leadership while backing maximum extraction of oil & gas in the North Sea. Our work on this issue, alongside key allies and a groundswell of activism, has resulted in a substantial shift in rhetoric from the First Minister on oil and gas that has seen the party of 'its Scotland's oil' announce that "the Scottish Government will no longer support unlimited recovery of hydrocarbons including oil and gas", and say no to Cambo specifically. While the policy for what they will do instead has yet to materialise (we are working to influence what it will look like) it is encouraging that these positions have held in the face of energy price rises, unlike the UK government which is using the war in Ukraine as an excuse to push offshore extraction and even revisit fracking.

Through our work with the COP26 Coalition – an organisation that along with our friends at War on Want we provided all the infrastructure, back office and fundraising support for – we managed to bring together trade unions, faith groups, racial and migrants justice networks, direct action, youth, NGOs and climate justice groups to pull off the biggest climate justice mobilisation in the UK, with 150,000 on the streets of Glasgow and thousands more at more than 50 mobilisations around the country and 300 worldwide. Daily assemblies linked those working 'inside' the negotiations with activists on the outside. A four-day hybrid Peoples Summit saw 500 events on a huge range of issues with participants from all of the world.

Our demands, framing and messaging for all of this work built on the work of the international climate justice movement since Copenhagen and before. We also safely and warmly hosted over 40 people from the FoE International (FoEI) family, making sure everyone could navigate the complexities of the Covid situation and UK borders, to enable campaigners from the federation to do their work at COP26.

One really important aspect of the impact of this work is that the main areas in which we act and seek to influence – the Scottish Government, Holyrood, the media, activist circles,

engaged audiences – have effectively had a crash course in climate justice. So, concepts that are key to a climate-just response to the crisis - like fair shares, loss and damage, critiques of the sophisticated greenwash that is net zero - are out there in a way that they simply weren't before. This enables us to get deeper into the issues and discussions with decision makers and allies that need to happen to start implementing the real solutions to the climate crisis.

The grim reality is that as the current economic system starts to reach its limits we find ourselves lurching from one crisis to another. Out of Covid-19 into the cost of living crisis, barely giving us time to breathe after COP.

Our work on Just Transition is so important in this respect. The relationships and common cause that we have been building with trade unions and workers over the years and that was so visible during COP26 with our picket line solidarity with striking refuse and rail workers. Our organising with offshore workers since the last AGM has seen us lobbying for practical changes to training regimes to enable workers to move more easily from jobs in oil and gas to jobs in renewables, and running a series of workshops with offshore workers to get to grips with the issues they face and start co-creating demands for a just energy transition. We have also created a new role of Just Transition Organiser in Aberdeen which gives us a presence in the locus at the heart of energy transition.

I mentioned false solutions a moment ago. This is another area of our work that is becoming ever more important as politicians try to work out how to meet climate targets without actually changing anything. Last year we published a report debunking the idea that carbon capture and storage will help meet our 2030 climate targets, and now we are about to launch a report setting out why hydrogen won't help either. At the same time, we are gearing up to put these somewhat techy arguments to use in a real-life case as a planning application for a new carbon-capture and storage ready gas power plant at Peterhead has been submitted. Carbon capture and storage readiness on a new power plant might sound familiar – Hunterston coal plant anyone? – and in the decade since that proposal was defeated nothing has changed in terms of the technology actually being properly ready. Like Hunterston, the Peterhead proposal has a footing in the national planning framework so it's going to be a tough one to win. Equally though it's an area over which the Scottish Government has full powers so a real test of its climate leadership post COP.

Our work on waste and circular economy has seen important breakthroughs with the SG commissioned incineration review recommending a ban on new incinerators, and the long-awaited consultation on a Circular Economy bill making proposals that would enable consumption and material-based targets – something we've been fighting hard for over the last couple of years.

Having finally secured Low Emission Zones, which after a Covid-related delay are now coming into operation in the four big cities, and having seen the climate movement's long standing demand for 10% of the transport budget for active travel finally won following last years' Holyrood elections, our transport campaign is looking to build capacity with local groups across the country to put pressure on local authorities to start implementing measures to secure better public transport and measures to enable active travel at the local level.

Our Divestment campaign also took advantage of COP26 to put pressure on Strathclyde pension fund to get out of fossil fuels, securing an important vote to do just that in Glasgow City Council last spring, but with a shamelessly weak policy ultimately drawn up by the Committee. Our Divestment campaigners are keeping the pressure on and exposing the policy for the little it's worth, while at the same time stepping up pressure on MSPs to

support Holyrood pension fund divestment – Labour Leader Anas Sarwar has signed! – and developing a new strand on auto-enrolment pensions.

Aware there's not much time left for this part of the agenda, but I do also want to mention the important work that we are doing to shape the agenda on economic transformation, largely through the capacity we put into Scottish Environment LINK's Economics Group, and to secure environmental rights – both procedural and substantive – largely through the Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland, now flourishing with a team of 5 in its second year of operation. I also want to acknowledge the amazing work that Young Friends of the Earth Scotland have been doing under their own auspices but very aligned with the work of not so young Friends of the Earth Scotland, in particular through their solid support of the Stop Cambo campaign and their workstream on Just Transition which is building bridges with the STUC Youth Committee as well as the Youth Strikers.

To end I want to say / echo that of course this is our first AGM without Richard as Director in a very long time, and that we would not be where we are today across so many of the most important frontlines of the fight against climate and ecological breakdown if it wasn't for the fact that he so tirelessly built the organisation up from where it was 9 years ago to where we are today.

I think I can speak for all of us in thanking him for that, and in looking forward to a new era under a new Director, hopefully in the not too distant future! In the meantime, our priorities as interim Co-Directors are to keep the organisation on a steady footing, and continue the work of processing where we are as an organisation post COP26, coming out of covid, after a period of growth in the team, ready for and needful of a strategy review so as to ensure that our systems, structures and ways of working are fit for the challenges that lie ahead

Kerrigan Bell presents the second part of the director's report.

Kerrigan Bell: Thanks Mary. For those of you that don't know me I'm Kerrigan, Head of Development & Communications and with Mary & Alice currently an Interim Co-Director.

As you've just heard from Mary and Mark, we covered a huge amount of ground in the last year. I wanted to share some images to help paint a picture of our activities.

From helping to organise the largest ever climate march in Scotland & indeed the UK, to numerous public stunts including a Stop Cambo one opposite the UK Gov offices in Glasgow during COP to a mass walk-out on the final day of negotiations.

As well as our less seen work - being pivotal in the formation of the COP Coalition - here one from the Daily Movement Assemblies organised by the coalition as a space to strategise, support and educate climate activists to the warm welcome we gave to FoE Europe & International colleagues as well as our work in SCCS. All in all, we raised over £800k between us and War on Want for Coalition work in addition to our own bread and butter work.

In many ways 2021 was our high-water mark, looking at our income, we received over 2.5 times that which we did in 2018 last year. This was only possible due to the work of Alice and our Admin team, Richard and Mary and other colleagues. But it was not intended to remain at that high level and this year we see a more manageable £900k budget forecasted.

Much of this is still from trusts and grants but it is the one third from individuals, be it memberships, appeals, legacies and Gift Aid that is so important.

I want to touch on membership quickly here - for many years our membership was in slow decline but since 2019 we've turned that around - in part because we talk about membership more now, and when we've been able to, take our stall out to various events like Eco Fairs and have that conversation about FoES with the public and ask them to join that is so important.

Interesting to note here that many of our members are in Edinburgh and the surrounds - largely because our office is here and much of our activities for example around the Scottish Parliament are here. But one of the things we'll be trying to do in the coming year is reach out beyond that as well. The other thing to note is that members give an average of £2 - 5 per month - something that has remained stable for many years.

So, onto our short term plans. Firstly, we have a new Fundraising Officer - and Hannah and I will be working closely together on the following:

- Reaching existing supporters who are not members and haven't signed up yet
- Running a public membership campaign - as PPL gave up some COP money last year which we'll use to build on this legacy. It's in the early stages but a part of this will entail work to understand better our current membership and supporters.
- Reciprocal mailing with FoE England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FoE EWNI) - was successful in 2019 and it's now time to do one again.
- Promote legacies. We've been so lucky in the past when an individual chooses to leave us a gift in their will and I'm always moved when I learn this has happened. It's enables us to strengthen the staff team and our campaigning work has benefitted as a result. It's a delicate subject but if any of our members are thinking about leaving FoES a gift in their will or have already done so, please let me know and I'll try to assist you as best I can.

Finally, thanks to everyone on this call today - it's only by joining together can we see the changes we wish to see in the world. Thank you.

Q&A with co-Chairs, Treasurer & Director

Laura Curtis-Moss chaired this section.

Matthew Crighton: What can we do better to increase membership? Is it a good idea to set a target for membership growth in new strategy?

Laura Curtis-Moss: The board take a great interest in membership and are having a lot of conversations about it, which will continue with the new director and development of our new 5 year strategy. We will have a conversation with Kerrigan about targets and what may or may not be a realistic target.

Kerrigan Bell: Last year was a tricky one as everyone's capacity was spread very thinly due to COP and it was hard to juggle everything going on in a continually changing environment. During COP itself it was hard to cut through the noise from lots of different organisations and activities. We will be learning from existing members and supporters and will draw on insights from FoE EWNI membership moving forward.

Mark Ballard: The board are keen to look at what our membership offer is and what our local group offer is. We have done well in expanding the Young FoES network and the activist network. We want to learn how to move that support into membership.

Alice Johson: We did attract lots of new people during COP26 despite challenges. Although we can learn from FoE EWNI, there is a difference between us. They have supporters while we are a membership organisation which is a different relationship. People can come and vote at AGM and have their say. Our connection with people is much tighter and there is more commitment.

Matthew Crighton: What's the state of the local groups and how can we support them?

Mary Church: Covid has made it much harder for local groups, both FoES groups and other grassroots groups we work with. We plan to go back in-person gatherings for our groups and wider grassroots groups, including a late summer activists gathering currently being planned. During COP26 many of our local groups were active under the COP26 Coalition banner. Local groups are an important thing to include in our new strategy process.

Mary Ballard: 30 years ago FoES was a different organisation and the challenges and landscape were different. Lots has changed. We are in a different post-cop, post-pandemic, cost of living crisis, capitalism-not-working era. We need a new strategy to match that. Strategy should be led by the board and engage the whole of the staff team and beyond. We are a democratic membership organisation so we should involve everyone. It's exciting.

Iain Black: Are there barriers to engagement with membership? Are we open to people who are "not like us", who have not typically been part of the mainstream movement?

Laura Curtis-Moss: This is definitely something to consider moving forward and as part of our new strategy.

Mark Langdon: I am interested in FoES' engagement with education and the concept of radical municipalism. How do we create a culture of activism, connecting people into the brilliant work that FoES does at a Scottish level and internationally? Are there opportunities to connect with students and universities on a range of different issues that are not being used to the best of their ability?

Mary Church: Young FoES has good links with universities and students. There have been really powerful expressions of solidarity with university staff striking over the past few years. We don't traditionally go into schools, but do occasional collaborations with universities and academics. We also have academics on our board. Our events such as summer gatherings and activist weekends draw on ideas of popular education. We should certainly be exploring what other routes we can get into education.

Election of new Board Members

Laura Curtis-Moss chaired this section

Mark Ballard
Majority votes in favour.
Elected.

Daisy Jamieson
Majority votes in favour.
Elected.

Mona Moufahim
Majority votes in favour.
Elected.

Stuart Kirkpartrick
Majority votes in favour.
Elected.

Report on 2021 motions

No motions from 2021 AGM.

Motions

Mark Ballard chaired this section.

Laura CM moved the motion.

“The below Board motion was submitted to the AGM 2018 and the AGM voted in favour of it. The changes to the Rules have not yet been undertaken.

Background: When the Governance subcommittee submitted the motion to change the Rules, they were unaware that any changes to the Aims of the organisation registered with OSCR, including grammatical or typographical ones, require approval by OSCR within a specific time limit before the changes are proposed to the AGM. This deadline had been missed for the 2018 AGM.

Various reasons led to further delays in the work and in 2020 the Governance subcommittee dissolved and handed over the outstanding work to the FoES Operations team.

We are delighted to update the AGM 2022 as we have received approval from OSCR to go ahead with proposed changes to the FoES Rules as per the original motion.

Members are asked to consider and approve the proposed changes to the Rules.

Proposed and seconded by the Board 11.06.2022

“Recently the FoES Board considered a proposal that Young Friends of the Earth Scotland (YFoES) be granted standing representation on the Board, and decided that it would be appropriate to create two standing Board positions, one for the national YFoES network and another for the network of FoE local groups in Scotland. The proposal requires changes to the FoES Rules, and only the FoES membership can approve changes to the Rules, so the Board now presents appropriate changes for approval by members.

The opportunity has been taken to clarify in the Rules that FoES group members are not required to pay annual subscriptions, and to make other minor clarifications and corrections to the Rules, almost all grammatical or typographical.

In the attached copy of the Rules, the proposed amendments are shown as tracked changes (i.e. words or letters to be added are shown underlined, those to be deleted are shown crossed through, and each change is denoted by a vertical line in the left-hand margin), and are summarised as follows:

- *The proposed new provision for network representation on the Board is Rule 15e. (All subsequent paragraphs of Rule 15 have been re-numbered, but this formatting change is not shown.)*
- *The proposed clarification on membership subscriptions is in Rules 8a, 8b and 9.*
- *Other minor corrections and clarifications are proposed in Rules 1, 3, 4, 7, 8a, 8c, 8d, 11a, 13b, 14a, 14c, 14f, 15b, 15c, 15f, 15l, 16c, 16j, 17a, 17b, 18a, 18b, 21a and 23.*

Members are asked to consider and approve the proposed changes to the Rules.

Proposed and seconded by the Board, 13 June 2018”

Catherine Lyons put forward a potential ammendment.

Catherine: it appears that a representative candidate can be proposed by YFoES or local group and still need to be put to a vote by the wider membership. Am I right in thinking YFoES or a local group could propose someone and the rest of FoES could say no? It seems excessive to subject them to further election.

Rachel Howell spoke against the ammendment.

Rachel: I would prefer to keep wording. I don't think a block would happen unless there was reason. It is important to keep a democractic process and check in place, and it is useful to have the approval of the whole organisation.

Alice Johson spoke against the ammendment

Alice: To be a board member within the OSCR rules you have to be voted in by the AGM. We cannot legally divest the right of the AGM to vote in a board member. We would have to rework our constituion very carefully to do this.

Mary Church: It is common practice at FoE International that you can have guidelines that sit alongside rules about how you would apply the rules in practice. We can develop something like this to sit alongside this new rule.

Mark Ballard: it would also be helpful to have guidelines that cover co-option in the case of someone not being able to fulfill duties.

Motion put forward without ammendment.

21 approval. 4 abstain.

Motion passed.

AOCB

Rachel Howell: I would like to formally minute our thanks to Richard Dixon and give him our best wishes for the future.

Close and thanks

Laura Curtis Moss: Huge thanks to everyone who attended and participated. Thank you to all members of staff who have supported the AGM, in particularly Winnie.