



**Friends of  
the Earth  
Scotland**

## **FRIENDS OF THE EARTH SCOTLAND** STRATEGY 2024 – 2026



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To hope is to accept despair as an emotion but not as an analysis. To recognise that what is unlikely is possible, just as what is likely is not inevitable. To understand that difficult is not the same as impossible. To know that the future will be what we make of it in the present. To know that joy can appear in the midst of crisis, and that a crisis is a crossroads.

Rebecca Solnit, *Difficult Is Not The Same As Impossible*, 2023

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# Vision

Friends of the Earth Scotland's vision is of a world where systems of power and resource use are transformed so that all living beings and ecosystems have what they need to flourish, now and in the future.

# Mission

- Friends of the Earth Scotland exists to win campaigns for transformative solutions to the root causes of environmental problems.
- We campaign for an end to the climate crisis, for the flourishing of the Scottish environment, and for a democratic Scotland which cherishes and protects the natural world of which we are part.
- We work for an economy oriented towards the needs of communities, ecosystems, and the planet.
- We support people in Scotland to take individual and collective action for environmental and social justice locally, nationally, and globally.
- Working with partners in Scotland and across the globe, we integrate research, political advocacy, strategic communications, mobilisation, and movement-building into focused and ambitious campaigns.

# Values

## Hope

Our vision is a vision of a possible world, and that we can act in the here and now to create changes that make that world more likely. In acting on this hope, we do not ignore the enormous environmental losses that have already occurred, the likelihood that many more will occur, or the magnitude of the systemic transformations that are needed to bring our vision about.

## Care

Care requires systemic measures that recognise the capacities and limitations of people and ecosystems, as well as individual attitudes of kindness and concern. Our internal operations, our interactions with partners, and our campaigning goals will be oriented by care for people and planet.

## Justice

Environmental and social harms are disproportionately caused by systems of domination and extraction developed by the elites of majority white countries in the global North, and are disproportionately felt among people who are economically, socially, and racially marginalised in the global North and South. We act in solidarity with the people most affected by environmental harms in our campaigning for transformative solutions, and we work to centre fairness and anti-oppression in our internal systems and processes.

## Collaboration

We see ourselves as one part of a wide, diverse ecosystem working for transformative solutions to environmental problems. At every level, from our staff team and our Board, to the FoEI network, our membership, and our external partners, we work in generous partnership and in support of democratic participation.

## Creativity

Defending against attack is necessary but insufficient in achieving our organisational vision: we need new relations and systems linking people and ecosystems to do that. Developing these systems is the work of creating as well as dismantling, and we will hold space for creativity in our internal and external work.

## Integrity

We understand our values as things we hold and things we do. We put them into practice across our internal and external activities, and we reflect and reorient when we fall short of them.

# Our Strategic Context

This strategy is based on SWOT, PESTLE and movement-mapping analyses conducted with the benefit of the wisdom of FoES staff, Board, membership, and external partners. It is an emergent strategy, recognising that the context in which it has been drafted will not remain static – indeed, the one reliable operating trend over the last few years for NGOs has been increasing unpredictability and instability in the external context.

## Averting climate breakdown is absolutely fundamental to FoES achieving its vision.

We are in a crucial decade for averting climate breakdown,<sup>1</sup> and already living through the environmental disasters that FoES was founded to prevent. June 2023 has been the hottest on record for the UK.<sup>2</sup> According to the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, to maintain a 67% chance of remaining within 1.5°C of warming compared with pre-industrial levels, wealthy nations, including the UK, need to phase out fossil fuel production by 2031.<sup>3</sup> While total Scottish emissions are falling, the Scottish Government continues to miss emissions targets,<sup>4</sup> and global emissions from energy continue to rise.<sup>5</sup> The fossil fuel industry has swung its might behind false solutions like hydrogen and carbon capture and storage in a bid to prolong its life.

It is entirely possible, through a fundamental transformation of the ways in which we live, for Scotland to reduce emissions to a level consistent with 1.5°C warming.

The technological solutions are already available – in renewable, publicly-owned energy, public transport, well-insulated and sustainably heated homes, and more. The major shifts required are in political power and will.

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**This seems an age of catastrophe, but it's also an age equipped, in an abstract sense, with all the tools it needs. Utopia is available to us. If, like me, you lived through the civil-rights movement, the antiwar movement, you can never discard hope. I've seen social miracles in my life, ones that have stunned me – the courageousness of ordinary people in a struggle.**

Mike Davis, 2020

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Considering the internal and external contexts, for 2024 – 2026, FoES will work towards **two strategic aims**:

## Strategic aim 1:

Scotland is on track to make a just transition away from fossil fuel production by 2031

## Strategic aim 2:

FoES is a thriving, resilient and inclusive organisation, and a best practice employer

Strategies that set out ambitions without identifying obstacles, or exploring how they might be overcome, are fantasies. If FoES's aim for 2024–2026 is for Scotland to make a just transition away from fossil fuel production, it has three key obstacles to contend with:

- 1** We have extremely limited time to bring Scottish emissions down to levels compatible with 1.5°C of warming
- 2** There is a significant implementation gap between the Scottish Government's rhetoric, and its actions
- 3** The internal dynamics, culture, and ways of working at FoES affect our ability to deliver on our mission

The following theory of change and key campaigning areas set out how our strategic approach over the next three years will take account of these obstacles.



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The precise point where **system reform** becomes **system change** will be subjective. Change can be represented as a continuum, with one type of system at one end and another type at the other end. Or there may be a tipping point whereby a whole series of changes is triggered, cascades and becomes unstoppable. It may be gradual and predictable or dramatic and nonlinear.

FoEI, *Pathways to System Change*, 2023

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# Our Theory of Change

The aforementioned implementation gap, the scale and speed of the transformation required to meet the strategic aims for this strategy period, and the polarised information environment mean that inside track lobbying, which FoES has prioritised over recent years, is insufficient for obtaining the system change necessary for averting climate breakdown.

## **Mass mobilisations and support – people power – in conjunction with outside track campaign tools and tactics are required to achieve this change.**

FoES should rebalance its campaigning towards the generation of outside pressure on parliamentary and policy processes, and building towards alternatives that would replace existing systems. FoES also needs to devote less energy and fewer resources to managing relationships and coalitions of existing funded climate and environmental NGOs in Scotland, and, subject to internal anti-oppression work, more energy and resources cultivating strong relationships with groups, NGOs and unlikely partners working towards broader social justice and progressive agendas, in Scotland, the UK, and internationally.

At present, FoES uses research, parliamentary lobbying, media work, mobilisation and movement building to achieve its campaigning goals. This strategy proposes a shift from reactive media work to strategic

communications,<sup>6</sup> and the addition of strategic litigation to FoES's campaigning tools and tactics. Strategic communications are key to mobilisation and movement building, and to the generation of outside pressure on decision-makers, while strategic litigation is a key tool located outside of the parliamentary system for challenging decisions made by public authorities and corporations.<sup>7</sup>

FoES cannot do away with inside track tactics entirely – being able to identify the implementation gap and weigh whether Government commitments, policy and legislation actually constitute system change requires specialist expertise and credibility that FoES has built up over decades. Where needed, it should apply these tactics at Westminster as well as Holyrood, given that many decisions governing Scottish climate impacts are taken there.

In terms of substantive campaigning objectives, FoES should expend fewer resources on negative, defensive, and reactive campaigning, and more on proactive campaigns that build towards transformative solutions.

## **Criticising existing policy proposals and systems has its place, but is ultimately less effective at moving people from apathy to action than a strategy that builds towards a positive vision.**

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The right to a peaceful life does not mean a life without joy and fervor, but the capacity to exercise one's imagination, to allow oneself to daydream, to partake in aimless activities, or activities that require time and patience... it is this right to rest, to a peaceful life, that needs to be developed to counter violence. We need to dare to dream of a peaceful life.

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Françoise Vergès, *A Feminist Theory of Violence*, 2022





These strategic shifts can be summarised as follows:

### Previous strategic approach

Inside track approach focused on direct engagement with politicians and civil servants, and securing legislation and Government targets

Close engagement with Government consultations proposing technical amendments and tweaks to proposals that work within existing systems

Engagement solely with MSPs and the Scottish Parliament and Government

Time-intensive coalition work with Scottish environmental NGOs in the context of standing coalitions

Reactive campaigning focused on environmental threats

Reactive media work

Few resources devoted to organisational operations and resilience

### New strategic approach

Outside track approach using movement-building and strategic litigation to generate pressure on decision-makers and hold them to commitments

Work that envisions and builds alternatives to existing systems

Engagement with MPs and the Westminster Parliament and Government in limited instances, namely where decision-making levers are located there and are not being targeted by other UK-wide NGOs, or FoES's expertise would make a significant difference

Deep partnership work and relationship building focused on specific outcomes with NGOs and grassroots groups in broader progressive movement

Proactive campaigns for transformative solutions

Proactive strategic communications focused on what is still possible in terms of mitigating and adapting to climate breakdown

Greater resources devoted to organisational operations and resilience



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# Priority work areas

The external dimensions of this strategy focus on Scotland’s production and consumption of fossil fuels as a key driver of Scotland’s contribution to the global climate crisis. Workstreams and campaigns will therefore be organised as follows, with resources split evenly across the three headings:

Scotland is on track to make a just transition away from fossil fuel production by 2031		
Fossil fuel phaseout	Transformative solutions	Solidarity and movement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 North Sea oil and gas</li> <li>2 Fossil free public life</li> <li>3 False solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Just transition</li> <li>2 New economy</li> <li>3 Transport</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Work at intersections of climate and broader progressive movement</li> <li>2 Movement building</li> <li>3 Young Friends of the Earth Scotland</li> </ul>









## Problem

Systems of power and resource use in Scotland are leading to environmental harm, climate breakdown and violations of people’s rights.

# Our Theory of Change

can be summarised as follows

## Activities

- Research
- Political advocacy
- Strategic communications
- Movement-building and mobilisation
- Strategic litigation
- Working effectively and in alignment with shared values

## Outcomes

- People know who is responsible for environmental harms
- People understand that it is not too late to mitigate and adapt to climate and environmental harms
- People are empowered to mobilise against environmental harms and for transformative solutions
- Decision-makers act to minimise environmental harms and to design and implement environmentally and socially just policies
- Decision-makers are held to their commitments by a strong, powerful movement
- Power is redistributed so that decisions relating to the environment are made more democratically, involving more people affected
- Friends of the Earth Scotland is a thriving, resilient and inclusive organisation, and a best practice employer

## Impact

Systems of power and resource use in Scotland are transformed so that all living beings and ecosystems have what they need to flourish, now and in the future.

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**Rather than reacting to myriad symptoms, we must build resilient organisations that can weather internal conflict and external crises. Resilient organisations are structurally sound, ideologically coherent, strategically grounded, and emotionally mature.**

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Maurice Mitchell, *Building Resilient Organisations*, 2022





# Next Steps

## Workplanning

This strategy should be operationalised through annual organisational workplans that span all FoES's internal and external functions. The workplanning process should identify project management roles and monitoring and evaluation processes for all significant pieces of work. Annual workplans may need to be adapted to changes in the internal and external context.

Implement system and process updates, and actions to develop organisational culture.

Workplans for the first 18 months of this strategy must prioritise the introduction and implementation of modern, fit-for-purpose, efficient organisational systems, and the actions required to promote a vibrant, collaborative, and respectful internal culture.

## Sub-strategies

Sub-strategies for 2024 – 2026 on fundraising (including annual targets for each income stream), people and HR, membership, and governance should be developed and presented to the Board by the end of March 2024.

## Strategic review

A monitoring evaluation and learning framework focused on the two strategic aims for 2024 – 2026 should be commissioned by Q2 2024. A review of this strategy should be undertaken by the Board by September 2024. Actions flowing from that review should be implemented in the 2025 workplan.

**Gracie Bradley, Director**  
**September 2023**





# References

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