

Strategy

2024-2026



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Introduction

Who we are

Young Friends of the Earth Scotland (YFoES) is the youth network of Friends of the Earth Scotland (FoES), open to those aged 16-30 with an interest in climate and social justice. YFoES was initially formed in 2016, emerging from a Young Friends of the Earth Europe summer camp hosted in Forfar. We had the initial aims of empowering young people to take action and strengthening youth voice on environmental issues in Scotland, recognising the potential of young people as powerful agents of social and political change.

Over the years our network that has been made up of various combinations of local groups, working groups, allied organisations and passionate individuals, from Dumfries to Orkney and everywhere in between. Youth leadership and the creation of youth spaces has always been at the core of our work, with decision making led by a steering group of young people elected by the network.

Throughout our existence we have skilled up and empowered hundreds of young people from across Scotland to take action in their communities. We have delivered workshops and trainings, ran and supported campaigns, hosted skill shares and gatherings, made sure youth voices were heard in decision making spaces, and much more.



Context

There have been significant changes in the context that YFoES is operating in since we first came into existence. The political landscape has evolved hugely, with social and environmental injustices only intensifying, and an increasingly hostile government. The effects of COVID-19, the cost of living crisis and the acceleration of the climate crisis cannot be ignored.

As the climate crisis intensifies, so do the emotional reactions of those grappling with it without meaningful support. We are seeing more and more young people struggling with the mental impact of living through the climate crisis – climate anxiety, climate distress, climate doomism, and burnout are all familiar terms.

We have also seen a massive uptick in young people getting active and joining the climate movement in Scotland, with the rise of Fridays for Future, Extinction Rebellion, Just Stop Oil and activities surrounding COP26 in Glasgow – as well as the waning of the media attention given to youth voice.

Climate change is increasingly understood as an overarching and intersectional issue, rather than something ‘separate’. Through the lens of climate justice people are making links between environmental, social and political issues. We are also seeing that solutions which connect struggles are the most powerful.



Despite this, Scotland is far behind where it needs to be to have any chance of ensuring a liveable planet for future generations. January 2024 was the hottest on record.¹ While total Scottish emissions are falling, the Scottish Government continues to miss emissions targets,² and global emissions from energy continue to rise.³

We are far beyond the need to simply raise awareness or change our individual habits, despite the narratives pushed by those in power. We need system change.

In many ways youth voices have been platformed more than ever in the past few years. Despite this, we have been listened to very little. We realise that to achieve the radical action that we need on climate change, we need to build our own power rather than just appealing to power. We need a strong, connected and supported movement for collective action, with a diversity of tactics and solutions.



1 <https://wmo.int/media/news/world-had-warmest-january-record>

2 <https://news.stv.tv/scotland/scottish-government-fails-to-meet-greenhouse-gas-emissions-reduction-target>

3 <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/jun/26/greenhouse-gas-emissions-from-global-energy-industry-still-rising-report>

Our strategy process



Given the changing world in which we're operating, and with FoES embarking on its strategic review for 2024-6, we began our own collaborative strategy process. We aimed to reflect on our role in the landscape of Scottish climate action, capture our ways of working and values, and outline our areas of strategic focus over the next few years.

We drew on the expertise and wisdom of YFoES members past and present, allied groups and young individuals from across the Scottish climate movement in order to create a new strategy with the ideas and needs of young people at the heart of it.



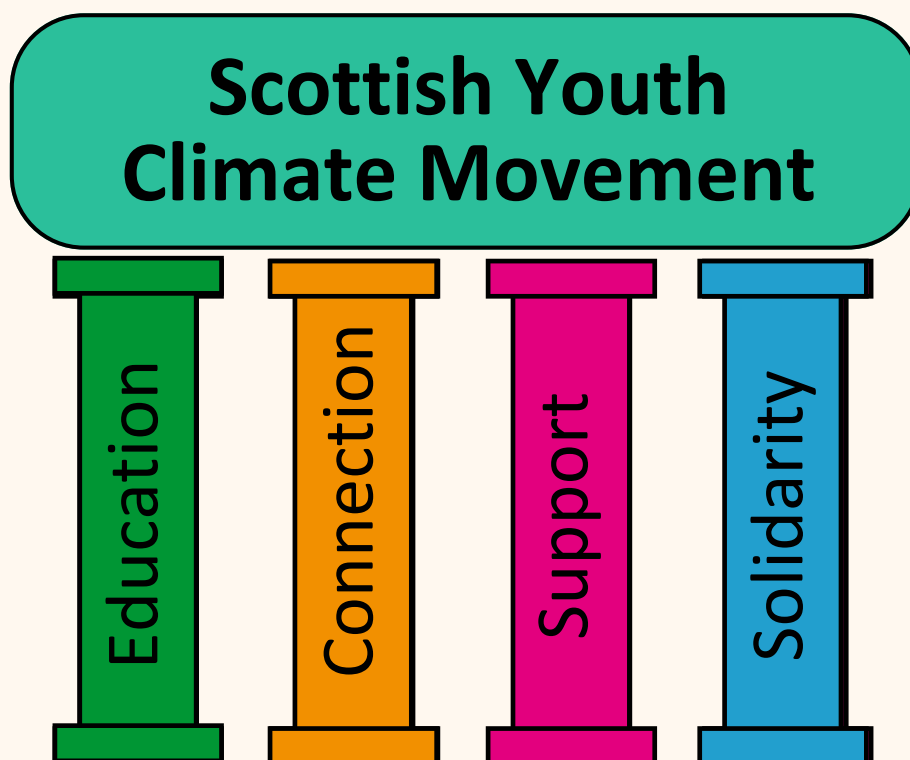
Movement support

Our new strategy

Our new strategy focusses on the best of what we do, solidifying our strengths in building the foundations of change.

Our main overarching focus is on **movement support**. YFoES is well positioned and well-resourced to support and strengthen the grassroots youth movement, benefitting from a level of security and stability as part of a larger organisation. We undertake this work acknowledging that we are one part of a broader ecosystem of groups working together in pursuit of system change.

Over the next pages we have captured our core values, refreshed our aims and objectives, and laid out our four areas of strategic focus that support these: **education, connection, support, and solidarity**.



Our values

**Climate
justice**

**Non-
hierarchy**

**Youth
leadership**

Climate justice

Climate justice is a term which recognises that the effects of climate change are not felt equally across the world, and that responsibility for climate change is also unequal. In fact, those who have contributed least to climate change are usually those who suffer most from its impacts.

Valuing climate justice means we act in solidarity with the most affected. We recognise the links between climate and other struggles, work to understand the systems of oppression, domination and extraction that fuel the climate crisis, and demand transformative solutions that are fair and just for all.

Non-hierarchy

We believe that everyone's voice matters, and that power should be shared as much as possible, no matter someone's age, experience, background, or role.

We strive to work in ways that are as non-hierarchical as possible, creating spaces for collective decision-making and collaboration. This is reflected in our work through our commitment to consensus decision making and the values of popular education. We also aim to be aware of the dynamics

inherent in having staff and volunteers, and being part of a larger NGO, aiming to be as transparent and accountable as we can.

For us, valuing non-hierarchy also means recognising unfair social hierarchies and working to remove barriers to participation, increase accessibility, and centre anti-oppression in our work.

When we work in this way we build trust, build relationships, and create the change we wish to see in the world.

Youth leadership

Young people have always been powerful agents of social change. In a world that often dismisses or tokenises youth voice, YFoES aims to work in a way that puts power, autonomy and decision making in the hands of young people. Our work is by young people for young people.

Youth is a key time when many of us develop our politics and realise our own agency and changemaking power. When we focus on young people we are building the future of the movement and developing a new generation of activists.

As reflected by our value of non-hierarchy, we understand leadership as something collective rather than individualistic or hierarchical. We value shared leadership, shared responsibility and collective decision making.



Aims and objectives

To equip young people across Scotland to engage and inspire their communities to take action together towards an economically, socially, and environmentally just world.

To connect and strengthen the youth movement, and ensure that the voices of young people and future generations are heard in decisions that affect us.

We will do this by:

- Finding creative approaches for engaging young people in global and local issues
- Creating spaces for young activists to come together to share ideas, skills and resources
- Delivering bespoke training and support to other young activists and activist groups

We recognise that youth is a very broad term and that young people are not a homogenous or organised group. When we talk about the youth movement, we are talking about young people collectively fighting for social change.

Areas of focus

Education and upskilling

There is a lack of access to political education and organising/activist skills for young people, with these topics not being prioritised by traditional educational institutions. We aim to provide opportunities for education and upskilling, support people on a political learning journey, and facilitate young people learning from each other.

- Providing an accessible entry point, education and upskilling to young people new to climate action
- Providing development to those already active who want to strengthen their knowledge and skills
- Prioritising skill sharing and peer to peer learning
- A focus on political education, visioning an alternative world, and practical organising skills and tactics
- Creating opportunities for young people to learn by doing, gain confidence and experience

How

- Running workshops and trainings
- Organising and hosting skill shares
- Creation of resources including physical resources, online resources and social media
- Skilling up and supporting young people to run sessions and share their own skills
- In depth individual mentorship
- Young people involved in every level of our work, creating opportunities for participation no matter level of previous experience



Connecting the movement

A connected movement is a strong movement. We will work to increase connection between youth groups and young individuals taking action across Scotland, linking together likeminded people, and increasing potential for strategy and collaboration. We will continue to provide youth-only spaces, recognising their importance for autonomy and empowerment, as well as being important spaces for emotional support and wellbeing.

- Holding movement spaces for young climate and environmental groups and individuals to come together for strategy and networking
- Creating spaces for connection and support, rejuvenation and recharging
- Helping groups and individuals connect and take action together
- Providing an accessible entry point to the movement for new people

How

- Skill shares and movement gatherings
- Social and networking events
- Signposting new people to groups to join
- Creating ways for people to keep up with what's going on in the Scottish environmental and climate movement, using our platforms and events to do so
- Continued commitment to and improvement of our Safer Spaces policy, aiming to make our spaces welcoming and accessible to as many people as possible



Support and resourcing

Young activists and organisers often have less access to resources and support, due to time constraints, financial barriers, simply not knowing where to start, and more. We aim to be a place people can come for help with their projects and campaigns, providing infrastructure, advice, resources, and a willingness to work collaboratively and with generosity.

- Supporting and resourcing groups and individual young people to take action in their communities
- Strengthening the work of local campaigning and organising groups across the country

How

- Providing or signposting to advice and resources – whether that be sharing what we know about communicating climate justice, connecting a group to an expert, or even just lending out our megaphones
- Delivering bespoke training, workshops and mentorship to groups
- Supporting existing capacity building work where appropriate
- Boosting campaigns and projects on our platforms
- Adding capacity to ongoing allied campaigns and actions
- Working collaboratively with other groups on shared projects or aims



Solidarity and work at the margins

We need to connect struggles in the fight for climate justice. Working together and learning from one another is an important part of this. We aim to create greater connection between young people in the climate movement and other struggles for justice, identifying root causes and shared struggles, building the foundations for solidarity and collective liberation.

- Connecting with those organising for social justice and liberation outside the climate movement (e.g. the trade union movement, migrant justice, LGBT+), and building relationships of solidarity
- Creating opportunities to learn from each other
- Identifying key areas of intersection and shared struggles in Scotland

How

- Continued internal anti-oppression, access and inclusion work, aiming to improve our own spaces
- Creating spaces for connection, discussion and learning with groups and individuals from across the broader liberation movement
- Education work on anti-oppression and intersectionality, making sure this features in our learning spaces and resources
- Responding to calls for solidarity
- Using our network and platforms to highlight important work of other groups fighting for change across different causes
- Partnership work with organisations and groups across the broader liberation movement



Next steps

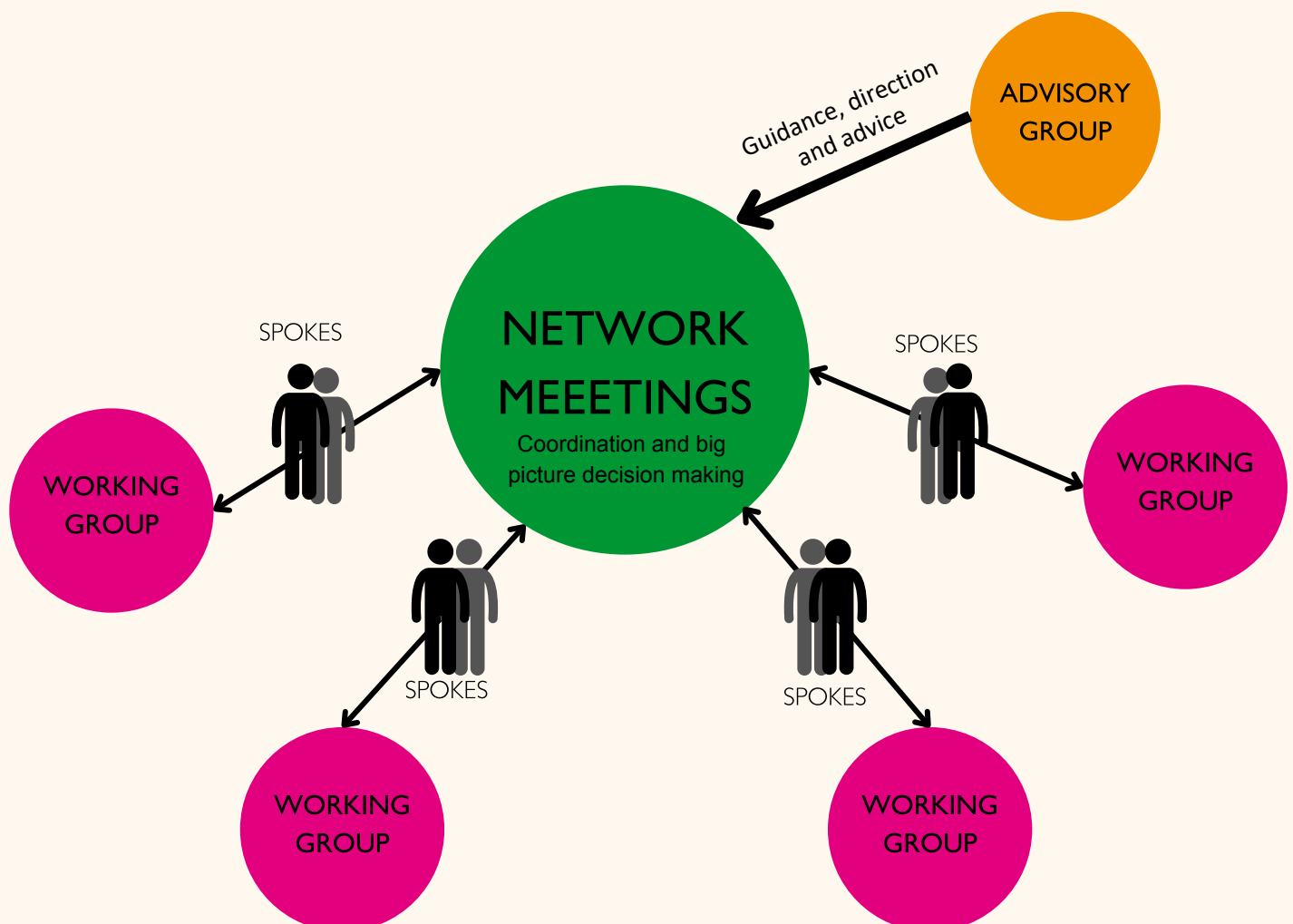
We have identified key next steps in the implementation of this strategy:

- Implementing a new internal structure and recruiting people into it, with a review process after 12 months
- Developing a new induction and training programme for new members
- Improving our online platforms and creating an online resource hub
- Expanding our programme of workshops and trainings
- Creating a working group focussed on exploring building relationships and developing potential partnership work with groups in the broader liberation movement



Our new structure

- A 'hub and spoke' model, with most work happening in working groups and big picture decision making made collectively in coordination meetings.
- Includes an advisory group of experienced young people embedded in the movement to ensure movement feed-in and guidance.
- Keeps the network open and accessible, decreasing hierarchy and increasing youth leadership in line with our values.
- Creates more opportunities for members, as well as increased clarity of purpose, remit and direction.
- Upskilling and educating new people through onboarding and experience.
- A structure and way of working that better reflects grassroots groups across the movement.



Contact us



foe.scot/get-involved/young-friends-of-the-earth-scotland

Thanks

Massive thanks to all of the groups and individuals who have fed into the development of this strategy. We are grateful for your wisdom and expertise.

With thanks to members of People & Planet, People & Planet Edinburgh, UK Youth Climate Coalition, 2050 Climate Group, Fridays for Future Scotland, Youth in Resistance, Glasgow University Environment and Sustainability Team, Glasgow Calls out Polluters, Fossil Free Glasgow, Divest Lothian, Tripod Training, Stop Cambo/Rosebank, Climate Camp Scotland, This Is Ripped, Friends of the Earth Scotland and YFoES alumni.

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