



Friends of the Earth Ireland Strategic Plan 2021-2025

Adopted by the Board – 23 December 2020

Our Mission and Vision

We campaign and build movement power to bring about the system change needed for a just world where people and nature thrive.

Our Role

We support people to come together to transform our world until social justice is the foundation of resilient and regenerative societies that flourish within the ecological limits of our one planet.

We have particular experience in participatory education, campaign strategy, shaping public debate and driving policy change. We are committed to joining forces with other organizations and networks, of diverse experiences and perspectives, to build our collective power. We support people and groups working autonomously to connect their local work to the bigger national and international picture. We work with others to try to make sure our focus is transformational change, often by creating moments that exert maximum pressure on decision-makers

Our Values

These values are the foundation of our work. We endeavour to consciously incorporate these into everything we do both internally and externally. They underpin our work and we strive to adopt and integrate them into all of our activities.

Solidarity, Participation & Inclusion

We endeavour to ensure that everyone, particularly marginalized and disadvantaged groups who might be affected by policy, is considered and included in the conversation. We acknowledge our privilege and the fact that there may be barriers to participation. We strive to expand and diversify civic engagement by creating spaces for everybody to participate and be included in activism and political change.

Nature and Social Ecology

We appreciate the intrinsic value of nature and the earth as the source of all life. We value work that conserves and protects our natural world and work to end the destructive systems of extractivism, pollution and environmental degradation that prevail.

We work towards regenerative, cooperative, diverse & inclusive systems, taking a sustainable approach to creating change where the welfare of people and the movement we are part of is considered and nurtured.

People and Communities

We strive to build relationships and collaborate with people, communities and organisations around us. We work towards connecting communities around environmental issues and we endeavour to share our resources fairly in order to strengthen these connections and communities.

Science and Education

We value evidence based and scientific solutions to the climate and biodiversity crises. We value learning and sharing our learning through educational activities. We strive to understand and overcome the inherent injustices present in our society and to unpack institutional privilege as part of our own and shared learning experience.

Social Justice and Climate Justice

We recognize that the work we undertake can have both local and far reaching consequences and we endeavour to embed the need for social and climate justice into all that we do as we transition to a better future.

Culture and Creativity

We take a creative approach to our work. We value the arts and culture as a means of expression and communicating our values and goals. We believe that the use of imagination helps us to envision the world we want to see and the solutions to achieve that vision.

Transparency and Accountability

We are open and transparent in all we do and have systems in place to hold ourselves accountable to each other and to our stakeholders.

The Context

Friends of the Earth Ireland is a community at the heart of the growing movement here for a just world with zero pollution. We are part of the world's largest grassroots environmental network, which celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2021.

The world faces three interconnected crises: mass extinction, climate breakdown, and crippling inequality. They have the same root cause, 40 years of neoliberal capitalism and market fundamentalism driving overconsumption and exploitation of people and the planet.

Nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history. Earth has lost half its wildlife in 40 years and the rate of species extinctions is accelerating. Since 1980 greenhouse gas emissions have doubled and global temperatures have risen by 0.7°C. In 2019, the world's billionaires, just 2,153 people, had more wealth than 4.6 billion people.¹

In 2015 world leaders adopted the Paris Agreement on climate action and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. But they have consistently failed to embrace the system changes we need to actually achieve those goals by 2030. And powerful vested interests across the world, such as the fossil fuel industry, continue to resist even incremental change, putting their short-term profits ahead of the wellbeing of people and planet.

Earth is our only home and we will do everything in our power to protect it. The logic of the current economic system is destroying our life support system, which supports all living things, the natural world, human civilisation and human potential.

Only a mass movement will have the power to drive the changes we need fast enough and fairly enough. Like the movements that made slavery illegal, secured the vote for women or basic rights for

¹ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report/>
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/sep/29/earth-lost-50-wildlife-in-40-years-wwf>
<https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/time-care>

many workers, now more than ever it will need to be a global movement. The indigenous peoples resisting land grabs and pipelines, the communities resisting fracking, the students campaigning for divestment, and the school strikers protesting for their future, have all begun to show us what that looks like. Our job now is to help build our movement's power fast enough to bring about the system change needed, and to ensure no one is left behind.

Our Theory of Change

Overview

Our Theory of Change is rooted in a commitment to an ongoing process of educating ourselves, engaging and listening to those most impacted by the issues we work on, and in taking collective action to make change.

We are committed to a process of consistently learning and unlearning about the systems of power and oppression that influence our lives and the world around us. We believe that we need to understand systems in order to effectively change them.

We believe that it is important to be clear in our messaging and so we don't shy away from occupying difficult conversational spaces. However, we believe that finding common ground is an important element of change-making, and so we strive to do so with all who want to make a positive difference in the world.

We believe in challenging ourselves to consistently create more welcoming spaces for people to engage in a process of interrogating the root causes of global injustice. By doing this we aim to help grow and work with a more critically informed network of change makers across Ireland.

When individuals and groups are nurtured to engage in a process of critically informing themselves as well as being supported to learn-by-doing, they are more likely to take effective collective action to bring about changes in their own communities and as part of a mass political movement.

When policy makers are the target of both mass movement campaigns and targeted, evidence based advocacy, they are compelled to bring about changes in policy and practice.

The following is a systemic understanding of the root causes of environmental degradation that informs the work that we do.

We believe that it is crucial to address the root causes of the issues we are trying to ameliorate through our work. When we talk about addressing system change, we mean addressing the root causes of social and environmental injustice. That means acknowledging the undeniable and historical connection between the current economic system we live under and the manifestations of injustice globally. Neoliberal capitalism, the economic system we live under, operates via the following principles: extraction of natural resources for profit, privatisation of natural resources, accumulation of resources by dispossession, an economic-model of export-led development, wealth accumulation for the benefit of a few rather than poverty reduction for the many, and externalisation of the true cost of this profit-driven model.

The foundation of this economic model is low or unpaid work, mostly carried out by women, and mainly women in the Global South. Women are impacted first and worst by the climate crisis globally. Additionally, wealth accumulation and extraction has been feasible because it has been done at the expense of people of colour. This is a pattern rooted in the first colonial endeavours of the Global North, culminating in the unpaid labour endemic to the slave trade. Racism and patriarchy are thus operating principles of what is now neoliberal capitalism.

We take our guidance from the Friends of the Earth International System Change Guidance paper.

Outcomes

- Impacted communities are supported as much as possible to engage in social, political and environmental justice struggles.
- Stronger communities that can fight for themselves alongside institutional and political reforms.
- A welcoming space for people to interrogate the root causes of injustice.
- A critically informed supporter base with the capacity to act collectively and advocate for social and environmental justice.
- A network of people ready to emerge when opportunities for change-making arise.



Preconditions for achieving outcomes

Active and meaningful public participation and engagement in political education and campaigning for transformative social change.

Strong relationships across social and environmental justice movements.

A critically informed network of supporters with the capacity to act and advocate for social, environmental and global justice.

A power shift to those who are most impacted.

Campaigns informed by the experiences of those affected first and worst by the issue at hand.



How we cultivate the preconditions we need

Active and meaningful public participation and engagement in political education and campaigning for transformative social change.

Through **education for active global-citizenship** we strengthen active and meaningful public participation.

We ensure our campaigns are underpinned by a **solid evidence base** and built on past experience and knowledge.

We create change by applying **pressure to leverage points** in policy, legislative and institutional spheres.

Strong relationships across social and environmental justice movements.

Through our **solidarity work** and commitment to building and sustaining **relationships across movements** we build a more comprehensive and informed movement.

Applying a **dynamic and flexible approach** to our work allows us to be responsive and attentive to the needs of those most impacted by the issues we work on.

A critically informed network of supporters with the capacity to act and advocate for social, environmental and global justice.

By **identifying connected systems of oppression**, we excavate root causes of injustice.

We apply a **nurturing, learning-by-doing approach**, allowing collective action for change to come about in the critically informed network of supporters.

By building the **leadership capacity** of those we work with and focusing on the **cultivation of strong networks**, we create a critically informed network of people that is ready to emerge when opportunities arise.

A power shift to those who are most impacted.

We facilitate increased **participation and civic responsibility**, encouraging a stronger community that can fight for itself alongside institutional and political reforms.

Campaigns informed by the experiences of those affected first and worst by the issue at hand.

We use influence and expertise to **amplify impacted voices** and give a platform to those most affected so they can shift the balance of power.

Our Organizational Goals

Friends of the Earth has four organizational goals to advance our mission:

A. Building movement power

To contribute to building a diverse and inclusive movement strong enough to bring about system change in a way that supports others' social justice struggles and that aligns with our values.

B. Driving policy change

To drive a fair and fast transition to a zero pollution future.

C. Cultivating our community

To ensure Friends of the Earth supporters feel they are members of a mutually supportive community and present ways for them to participate in and sustain the work of the organization for as long as it is required.

D. Developing our organization

To ensure Friends of the Earth has the robust governance and effective management systems, and the appropriate financial resources, to maximise our impact and to cultivate a positive working environment.

Strategies 2021 to 2025

These are the strategies, the approaches, we will take to furthering our organizational goals in the coming period. While they're grouped under the most relevant organizational goal, they can be considered cross-cutting too.

Building movement power

- Sharing skills and building capacity
- Supporting activism
- Strengthening relationships and connecting struggles

Driving policy change

- Building alliances
- Shaping public debate
- Informing policy making
- Connecting people power to policy decisions

Cultivating our community

- Being open and responsive
- Connecting people and nature
- Appealing honestly and urgently

Developing our organization

- Ensuring corporate governance
- Nurturing our team
- Achieving financial sustainability

Strategic Objectives 2021 to 2025

Building movement power

1. To be a central and trusted hub for training and capacity building for individuals and groups who identify as being part of the movement for social justice and environmental sustainability. Our role is to train, mentor, promote reflection and develop increasing levels of ownership and leadership.
2. To support the development of opportunities and structures for local organizing and campaigning that contribute to advancing the missions of Friends of the Earth Ireland and International.
3. To collaborate directly and supportively with other groups and organizations whose work intersects with our mission and aligns with our values, and to participate actively in efforts to facilitate connections, coordination, collaboration and mutual support between intersecting causes in the climate movement and wider civil society.

Driving policy change

4. **To establish a new climate governance regime** in Ireland that drives the development and adoption of policies to eliminate emissions in all sectors, based on legally-binding carbon budgets, expert-advice, and parliamentary accountability.
5. **To ensure Ireland's climate-polluting emissions are on track for a 50% reduction by 2030**, and Ireland's actual fair share of climate action is a key issue in the next electoral cycle.
6. **To prevent a lock-in to fossil gas** and enable Ireland to become an international example for the struggle to break the grip of the fossil fuel industry on policy-making.
7. **To shape public debate on key issues related to our mission.**
To create public understanding that much of the change we wish to see will generate positive impacts and opportunities, not costs and hardships. To bring justice and fairness to the centre of the debate about climate and environmental issues - change should happen when justice and fairness requires it, even if it is not popular with everyone, especially the rich and powerful.

Cultivating our community

8. To grow our community
9. To nurture our community
10. To sustain Friends of the Earth

Developing our organization

11. To ensure the organization is appropriately structured to guarantee effective and efficient management.
12. To be accountable and transparent to all our key stakeholders.
13. To foster a culture of collaboration, respect and trust within a staff team where wellbeing is prioritized. To retain and attract motivated, committed and skilled staff.
14. To secure the financial resources to deliver our programmes and achieve our goals while ensuring value for money. To diversify and increase our income.
15. To innovate and support continuous learning and improvement in both management and delivery of commitments. To implement and maintain relevant Information and Communications Technology.

Priority Campaigns 2020-2022

We pursue mission-related goals by adopting and implementing campaigns that draw on and integrate parts of all our programmes and their related strategies.

The campaigns we are already committed to in 2021 and into 2022 (and most likely beyond that) are as follows:

- **Faster and Fairer Climate Action**

This is the campaign to achieve the Strategic Objective on climate governance. It can also contribute to the delivery of the key results of the Strategic Objective on emissions reductions that are not covered by Power to the People (below). This campaign is often, but not exclusively, pursued through our coordination and participation in the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition.

- **One Future**

One Future is the People's Campaign for Faster and Fairer Climate Action launched in the run up to the 2020 General Election.

Our support for One Future is designed to advance the strategic objectives of our movement Movement Building programme to support activism, especially the development of a national network of local, constituency-based, action groups.

- **Making Common Cause**

This is our campaign to find common ground and make common cause with wider civil society networks, where our values align and our causes intersect, to maximize our collective impact. It includes our work on Just Recovery to build back better from the Covid-19 pandemic and our participation in Coalition 2030 on the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

- **Power to the People**

This is the campaign to achieve the electricity-related key results of the Strategic Objective on emissions reduction, by putting citizens and communities at the heart of transition to 100% renewable power.

- **No New Gas**

This is the campaign to directly achieve the Strategic Objective on preventing fossil gas lock-in. Its primary focus is on fracked gas, LNG infrastructure and new exploration licences for oil and gas in Irish waters.

- **Power Up**

Power Up is the collective name for our programme of education and skills training, courses and projects.