

**April 2019**



## **Protest and non-violent action: our position**

Friends of the Earth supports the right of individuals and organisations to take part in peaceful protest and nonviolent direct action where this is likely to support the achievement of its objectives.

When representing Friends of the Earth, local group members may organise and participate in peaceful protest and lawful non-violent direct action where they believe it is the best way to achieve our objectives consistent with our rights to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and other relevant democratic rights.

Local groups are required to adhere to Friends of the Earth's policy on protest outlined below. As such, they should not organise, promote or participate in unlawful activity.

### **Friends of the Earth's values with regard to peaceful protest and nonviolent direct actions**

- We believe that as we live in an active democracy, there is a right and sometimes a moral imperative for organisations and individuals to take part in protest.
- If democratic freedoms are eroded or curtailed, Friends of the Earth is willing to take action to defend and expand the right to protest including by campaigning for the full implementation and facilitation of people's human rights to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.
- We believe in achieving change through empowering people to influence the decisions that affect them.
- Friends of the Earth campaigns to reduce inequalities of power and resource use by promoting good governance and empowerment.
- We will support the democratic right of people to engage in nonviolent protest as a necessary means to protect the environment.
- We will also support and defend people who give up their time and energy to protect the environment for current and future generations.
- Friends of the Earth will use its strengths and expertise to support the wider environmental movement to achieve its objectives.

### **Our approach to nonviolent protest and peaceful direct action**

Friends of the Earth supports the right of individuals and organisations to take part in peaceful protest and nonviolent direct action.

We may organise and participate in peaceful protest and lawful non-violent direct action where we believe it is the best way to achieve our organisation's objectives; consistent with our rights to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and other relevant democratic rights.

And we will actively challenge any curtailment or attempted curtailment of these rights where they are impeding our work to protect the environment.

Friends of the Earth believes that all protest should be peaceful, based on the following principles:

- Friends of the Earth would never support any action that aims to cause physical harm to an individual.

- Friends of the Earth would never support an action that aims to cause psychological harm, humiliation, fear or anger in any individual, whether that be a participant, witness or target. Some direct action can cause negative reactions by individuals that are being protested against or involved somehow in the protest. However, the action should not aim to create this response in the individual. Any action should aim to assess the likelihood of this beforehand, and adopt strategies for minimising and defusing this as far as possible.
- Friends of the Earth does not support indiscriminate and purposeless damage to property.
- Friends of the Earth may organise or take part in lawful peripheral activities in support of the unlawful activities of others (such as legal observing) if it is consistent with our objectives.
- Friends of the Earth may provide comment or develop a position in support of direct action being undertaken by others, including publicly supporting any action that is in line with our policy on peaceful protest and direct action. Any such commentary, positions or support would only occur if they are consistent with our objectives.
- Friends of the Earth will always take responsibility for any action that it carries out.

### **Legality of Tactics**

Friends of the Earth campaigners and legal team are not equipped to advise on the legality of protests or activities that you may be planning. If you have specific questions around the legality of tactics or rights upon arrest you should get in touch with [Green and Black Cross.?](#)