

*FoE Cymru*

## **Letter-Writing Scheme**

The FoE Cymru Letter-Writing Scheme ([www.mng.org.uk/letter\\_writing\\_scheme/](http://www.mng.org.uk/letter_writing_scheme/)) is based on the following main ideas:

- Local newspapers and local radio stations ('media') are an excellent way to communicate 'green' ideas to the public because it is relatively easy to get a letter or even an article published in local media and because local newspapers are widely read and many people listen to local radio. (For the sake of brevity in the rest of these notes, "letters or articles" will be referred to as "letters").
- The non-green 'opposition' (eg people who oppose wind farms for narrow NIMBY reasons) are often very well organised and make very effective use of local media. FoE needs to be at least as well organised and successful in getting its views across.
- To be effective in promoting the 'green' perspective, letters should be not merely expressions of concern. They should contain significant and useful information and cogent arguments.
- Given the range of green campaigning issues and their complexity, it is very difficult for any one person or any local group to be fully conversant with all the facts and arguments that are relevant to any given issue.
- In principle, FoE full-time staff can provide advice but, realistically, most of them are already overloaded and cannot easily spare the time to help local groups in drafting letters for the press.
- Fortunately, many non-staff members of FoE are very well informed on particular issues and it is likely that many of those people will be willing to give advice or to draft letters when required. Someone who is familiar with a particular area can draft a letter much faster and much more effectively than someone who is not familiar with the ideas.

### *How the Scheme is intended to work*

Here is the letter-writing scheme as we see it now:

1. The scheme needs a MANAGER. This can be a full-time member of staff or volunteer in FoE head office, or even an FoE member outside head office. For an initial period, Gerry Wolff has volunteered to administer the scheme, in consultation with Gordon James and Bleddyn Lake of FoE Cymru. Gerry's contact details are: [Gerry\[AT\]mng\[DOT\]org\[DOT\]uk](mailto:Gerry@MNG.org.uk), 01248 712962, [www.mng.org.uk/green\\_house](http://www.mng.org.uk/green_house).
2. The Coordinator of each local group should describe the scheme to their local group and find volunteers to be READERS or EXPERTS. Any one person can be one or the other or both.
3. One (or more) READERS for a particular medium should try to read/listen to it on a regular basis looking for opportunities to send in letters or articles.

4. The Coordinator of each local group should try to ensure that all local media are covered.
5. An EXPERT is someone who takes a close interest in a particular area such as climate change, nuclear power, chemicals in the environment, etc. Any one person can be EXPERT in more than one area and there can be more than one expert for any one area.
6. Each Coordinator should send the MANAGER a list of EXPERTS in their group, with telephone numbers, email addresses and areas of expertise. The MANAGER will put this information on [www.mng.org.uk/letter\\_writing\\_scheme/](http://www.mng.org.uk/letter_writing_scheme/) so that everyone can see it (with anti-spam measures to protect email addresses). The website will also contain sample letters for each area of concern.
7. When a READER spots an opportunity to publish a letter (or article), they should identify an EXPERT with the right kind of knowledge who would be willing to draft the letter or at least give advice. After any necessary revisions, the letter would be submitted for publication with the READER's name on the bottom, or the EXPERT's name, or the name of any other FoE member that approves the letter. ***Remember that EXPERTs are volunteers and may not have the time available to respond to every request.***
8. Letters will probably have more impact if authors write as individuals, not as representatives of FoE. This also avoids the risk that a badly-drafted letter would damage FoE's reputation.
9. Since some members of the non-green 'opposition' are sending the same letter to large numbers of local newspapers, FoE should consider whether it can afford not to do the same.
10. From time to time, each local group Coordinator should check that the group's READERS really are monitoring their assigned medium or media and, where necessary, find a new volunteer. Likewise, Coordinators should check and update their list of EXPERTS and send revised details to the MANAGER. Copies of published letters or articles (with prior letters where appropriate) may be displayed on local group web sites where everyone can see them.

### *Exchanging information*

Ideally, everyone using this scheme will have access to email and the internet. If, for example, you want an EXPERT to draft a letter in response to another letter that has appeared in your local press, then it is very convenient to be able to send a scanned copy of the earlier letter to the EXPERT as an email attachment. Likewise, the EXPERT can use email to send back the text of any letter that he or she may have drafted. Most newspapers like to receive letters for publication as plain text in the body of an email, rather than hard copy.

But the scheme can still be used even if you do not have access to the internet. Phone calls and ordinary post will work perfectly well, even if post is slow compared with email.