

P&P IN SCOTLAND: RESPONDING TO DEVOLUTION

Working group

Are you interested in the future of People & Planet in Scotland?
Are you approachable, open and strategic?

People & Planet needs you to represent the perspectives and interests of UK students in a working group on the future of People & Planet in Scotland.

As part of this working group you will be tackling some challenging issues – you will need to take a strategic view and consider the best course of action for People & Planet. Your work will result in a proposed course of action to be considered by People & Planet's management committee.

We are looking for 2 student representatives from Scottish Universities, reflecting the diversity of P&P groups in Scotland, and a student from a UK University outside of Scotland (for practical reasons this is likely to be someone based at a University in the north of England).

Background to P&P in Scotland working group

Internal

During 2005-6, People & Planet has been identifying key issues that will need to be addressed in its long-term strategy from 2006 to 2012. One of these issues, identified in a workshop with students from universities in Scotland, has been the need for People & Planet to develop an effective response to the opportunities and needs created by the devolution of significant responsibilities from the UK Parliament to administrations in Scotland, Wales and N. Ireland.

The P&P network is well developed at universities in Scotland, with groups at Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, St. Andrew's and Stirling. These groups are generally well-organised and capable of sustaining themselves and their campaign actions indefinitely. Some of the biggest groups are capable, and have a history, of organising major events. Nevertheless, there is a feeling that some groups are geographically distant from many of People & Planet's activities, and that the size of the People & Planet network in Scotland could be expanded and campaign activities made more effective if they were closer to sources of support.

This is particularly relevant to our work in schools. Although the university network is well-developed in Scotland, the schools and colleges network barely exists. We have done very little work with sixth formers in Scotland and have no durable groups or campaign successes in Scottish schools. This is a direct consequence of the geographical distance from the Oxford support office, and the distinctly different Scottish education system. It demonstrates how the sixth form project is, in effect, designed with an English education context in mind.

At present all of P&P's outreach support and campaigns development is located in Oxford and support for group activities, regional training and network-wide events is restricted in the form it can take. This detachment from the P&P office and forms of support might be positive in terms of independence of action but it is also a source of criticism from within the network and risks leading to a weak sense of identity with the rest of the network.

Our financial security is uncertain and P&P is not currently in a position to invest any cash in setting up an office or creating the basis for an outreach or campaigning programme in Scotland.

External

The context has changed significantly since the P&P university network was set up in Scotland. These changes are primarily a direct consequence of devolution which means that

- there are campaigning partners, opportunities and targets in Scotland that do not exist in England and are currently being neglected or overlooked by People & Planet

- responsibility for education is a 'devolved issue' and if we want to create an effective P&P network in Scottish schools, we will need to create a tailor-made project
- statutory funding is increasingly determined on a devolved basis. At worst this means that P&P risks becoming an increasingly English organisation because our current statutory donors are more and more confined to funding projects only in England. It also means that there may be sources of funding in Scotland that we could apply for, but are currently prevented from doing so because we do not have the relevant knowledge or an official presence in Scotland.

Responsibilities of working group

On behalf of the P&P Trust and Management Committee, George Tarvit (Development Manager, Sustainable Scotland Network and Trustee of People & Planet Trust) will be asked to convene and lead a steering group made up of

- a) current members of the network drawn from a diversity of universities
- b) people with a specific knowledge of the education context or civil society development in Scotland
- c) existing or former member(s) of the Management Committee or Trust
- d) a member of the national office staff

On the basis of P&P's best interests and prevailing financial circumstances the Steering Group shall

- consider the pro's and cons of developing a distinct programme in Scotland and whether such a programme would be best implemented by having a staffing presence in Scotland
- recommend how to reconcile the challenge of a potentially separate presence in Scotland with strengthening P&P's nationwide identity as the UK's leading student campaigning organisation
- identify possible sources of funding so as to ensure that any changes strengthen and complement P&P's finances

Responsibilities of student working group members

- To be approachable and to actively seek the perspectives of students in the People & Planet network
- To try to communicate and represent the perspectives of a broad range of students and People & Planet groups at the working group meetings
- To seek feedback from students on particular areas as appropriate and keep interested students informed as to the progress of the working group
- To take on responsibility for particular areas of research or thinking between meetings
- To endeavour to have a strategic viewpoint with the ability to keep in mind the best interests of the P&P network as a whole

Practical details

- The working group will meet regularly either face to face or by telephone conference calls.
- The working group will start work in January and is likely to meet every 6 – 8 weeks in 2007. The exact way of working and a timeline will be agreed by members of the working group at the beginning of the process
- People & Planet will cover your travel expenses to enable you to take part in any face to face meetings

How to get involved.

If you would like to be involved in the working group or if you have any questions please contact Emily at the P&P office emily.cantrell@peopleandplanet.org or on 01865 245678 by Friday 15th December.

If there is more interest than places on the working group we will ask the interested students to agree amongst themselves on a representative to attend meetings and would encourage you to work together to ensure the interests and perspectives of a broad range of students are understood and considered by the working group.