

# IMPACT REPORT 2023



people & planet





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**THANK YOU!**

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR TRUSTEE BOARD



It's been an absolute privilege to watch People & Planet go from strength to strength over the last 12 months. This year we've been lucky enough to have some **new trustees** join the Board, as well as some **amazing new additions to the staff team**. With these transitions, we also bid farewell to a couple of cherished members of our team, leaving behind a **huge legacy of contribution** to the work that we do.

The past year has been a resounding success for our student groups across the U.K. With multiple campaign wins, they've demonstrated their **dedication to driving positive change**. The year saw an abundance of workshops and movement-building activities that **rekindled the momentum within our student network**, highlighting our collective commitment and ambition to making a **lasting impact, fighting for migrant and environmental justice**. This past year stands as a testament to our shared determination to create a better future, and I can't wait to see what 2024 brings!



ELLEN CARTER  
(BOARD CHAIR)

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR MANAGEMENT

“**What a year 2023 has been.** Across the country students in the People & Planet network have attended workshops, organised demos and disrupted masses of careers fairs as they’ve **demanding their unis take a stand for climate and migrant justice.**”

Our highly regarded University League has seen **more engagement than ever** as universities respond to student concerns about ethics and the environment. Reading may have gained the top spot this year, but the stiff competition suggests it will be **keenly contested in 2024.**

We’re constantly seeing the impact of our work as **students secure win after win** in all of our campaigns. Momentum is building across the board as more and more universities are being forced to recognise **it’s time to break all ties with the fossil fuel and border industries which profit from misery and destruction.**

These successes have been achieved **thanks to all the donations and grants from you.** We are truly grateful for this support which has directly contributed to our success and will help us build into the future. **Roll on 2024. We can’t wait!**”



ANDRÉ DALLAS, GRAHAM GILLIONS, VIRGINIA MOFFATT, IAN WILLIAMS

# 2023 IN REVIEW



**31 CAMPAIGN WINS**

**11 FOSSIL FUEL DIVESTMENTS**

**5 BORDER INDUSTRY DIVESTMENTS**

**4 FOSSIL FREE CAREERS EXCLUSION**

**POLICIES**

Clockwise from top:  
Activists at the  
University of Surrey  
(2023), Fossil Free  
Careers activists at  
Swansea University  
(2023), FFC staff Maddie  
& Fergus with Bishop  
Grosseteste University  
management (2023)



**8 STUDENT UNION MOTIONS &**

**3 WORKERS UNION MOTIONS**

**PASSED IN FAVOUR OF CAMPAIGN GOALS**

# 53 ACTIVE STUDENT CAMPAIGNS

Fossil Free co-ordinator Regina gives a workshop at Strathclyde (2023)



28 FOSSIL FREE CAREERS

12 DIVEST BORDERS

13 FOSSIL FREE



Durham's Eco DU (2023)



Glasgow Against Arms & Fossil Fuels (GAAF) rally (2023)



Migrant Justice co-ordinator Sasha speaks at Boomtown Festival (2023)

## HIGHLIGHTS

**A DIVEST BORDERS DAY OF ACTION**

**NATIONAL AND LOCAL MEDIA COVERAGE**

**MIGRANT JUSTICE-FOCUSED GO GREEN WEEK**

**CAREERS FAIRS DISRUPTED ACROSS THE UK**

**WORKSHOPS ON TACTICS, ESCALATION & COMMS**

# THE UNIVERSITY LEAGUE

Since 2007, People & Planet has produced a comprehensive and independent annual league table of UK universities, ranked by **ethical and environmental performance**, to encourage and incentivise the Higher Education sector to be **transparent and accountable** about their commitments

Our volunteers research publicly available university documents and assess UK universities against our marking criteria which cover a wide range of climate and social justice issues including **decarbonisation, fossil fuel divestment, ethical banking, workers' rights and environmental management.**



The Sunday Times Good University Guide, including our sustainability ratings (September 2023)

The results of this work has been garnering more and more attention each year. Since 2021, **the Guardian** has included the University League in its Student Guide, and this year the **Sunday Times Good University Guide** included a sustainability rating based off our research.

This shows that **the tide is turning** in the Higher Education sector, and that sustainable and ethical considerations are becoming **increasingly important to students.**



# 1ST PLACE 2023: UNIVERSITY OF READING

The resulting league table is a **powerful bargaining tool** to support our central campaigns. Higher education institutions **rely on their public image** to sustain their reputations. As the UL gains weight within the sector, we have been able to engage with university managements and place pressure on them to implement the policy changes outlined in our campaigns in order to improve their scores.

We allow an appeal period for universities to alter their ranking before publication, which often leads to campaign wins.

University of Reading proudly display last year's ranking (2023)



THIS YEAR, THE  
UNIVERSITY LEAGUE  
HELPED TO BRING IN:

**8 FOSSIL FREE WINS**

**5 DIVEST BORDERS WINS**

**3 FOSSIL FREE CAREERS WINS**



# FOSSIL FREE

*people & planet*

This year has seen highs and lows for the UK climate movement. Whilst environmental activists have been escalating their resistance, the Conservative government has rolled back on vital climate policy and green-lighted more destructive extractivist projects.

Despite the clear impending crisis, higher education institutions continue to both **financially support** and **give social license** to extractive industries through investments, research and other partnerships with companies like BP, Shell and INEOS.

## FOSSIL FREE DEMANDS THAT UNIVERSITIES

**EXCLUDE THE FOSSIL FUEL INDUSTRY FROM THEIR INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO(S)**

**INTRODUCE A PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE ETHICAL INVESTMENT POLICY WITH THESE EXCLUSIONS**

**COMMIT TO AND FULLY DIVEST FROM ALL FOSSIL FUELS WITHIN 3 YEARS**

Demanding that universities go Fossil Free is a concrete way to challenge polluting industries and act in solidarity with frontline struggles, and to force university management to put their money where their mouth is when it comes to sustainability and **shaping a fossil free future.**



Top to bottom:

Divest Aberdeen (2019)

Cambridge Climate Justice (2022)

Divest Newcastle (2019)

Since we began campaigning over a decade ago, Fossil Free has become a national movement, with **107** universities having made full divestment commitments in the UK. This amounts to over **£17.6 billion** of university funds withdrawn from the fossil fuel industry, thanks to the tireless work of People & Planet student groups and a vast network of dedicated climate activists across the country.

The resounding success of the movement sets a powerful precedent, and there are so many successful past campaigns that our student activists can learn from. This year we supported **13 Fossil Free campaigns**, and are putting in the work to expand to new institutions.

## SPOTLIGHT: RGU GO GREEN

At Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, Scotland, the student campaign group RGU Go Green succeeded in pressuring their university to divest from fossil fuels, becoming the **103rd university** in the UK to do so.

In an amazing campaign supported by People & Planet, RGU Go Green got a motion passed through their student union and brought about divestment, **all in under a year!** Considering the city's historic ties to the oil industry, this is a **huge success in the move towards a just transition.**



RGU Go Green with co-ordinator Regina (2023)



Cambridge Climate Justice (2020)

# 2023 CAMPAIGN WINS

# 11 FOSSIL FUEL DIVESTMENTS

Royal College of Art, University of Portsmouth, Salford University, University of Greenwich, Royal Holloway, University of Chichester, Liverpool John Moores University, Plymouth Marjon University, Robert Gordon University, University of West London & Norwich University of the Arts



As the campaign goes from success to success, we can develop robust and dependable action plans which can be applied in different contexts. We are prioritising divestment organising at universities which have historically been less involved with the movement, such as **non-traditional, specialist, and post-92 institutions**.

We are currently working with **7 groups** on these types of campuses, and in December we launched the **2024 Campaign Training Program** to further this outreach work.



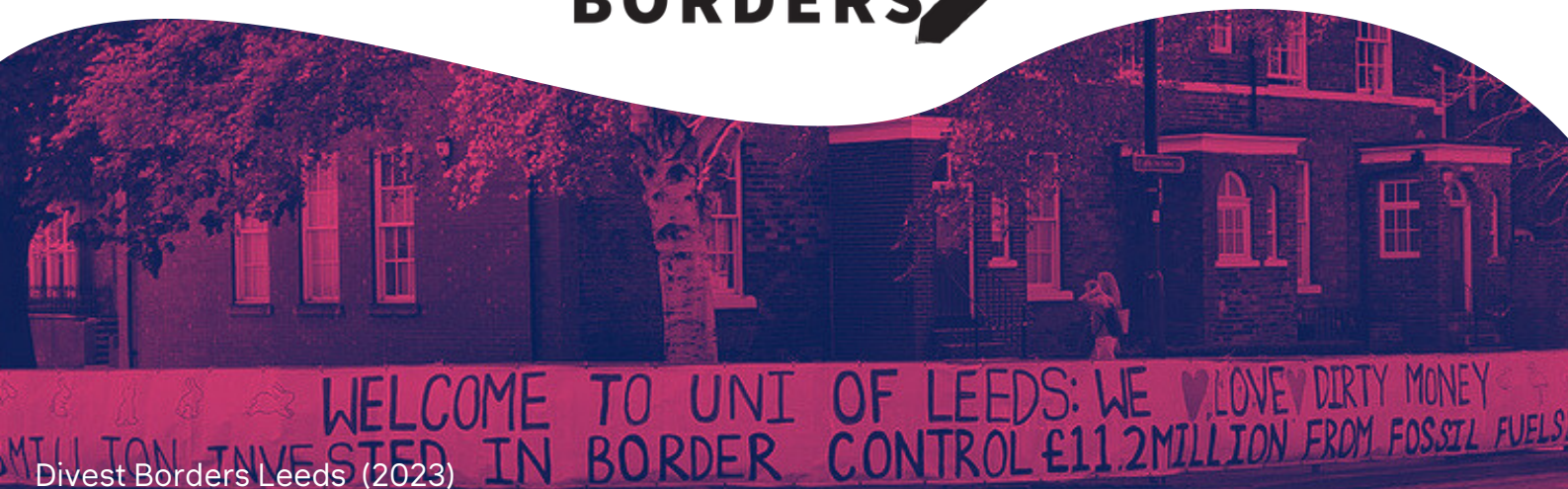
Clockwise from right: FF Liverpool Hope (2023), FF Coventry University (2022), banners from Strathclyde (2023)



The scope of harm and injustice caused by the UK's border regime is **hard to put into words**; negligence and abuse in detention centres, deportation flights which rip families apart, children drowning in lifeboats. These cruel policies are **set to worsen** as the government continues to pander to the far right, and the student movement is primed to oppose them.

UK universities are **deeply entangled** with the border industry, through investments, research and partnerships with **weapons & defence companies** such as Accenture, Palantir, Serco and Thales, but also firms which **uphold the border industry through surveillance** such as Amazon, Microsoft and Motorola. Whilst cutting these ties won't necessarily cripple the industry financially, it's a **vital step in the right direction**.

**DIVEST BORDERS CALLS ON UNIVERSITIES TO**  
**ADOPT A PUBLICLY AVAILABLE ETHICAL INVESTMENT POLICY WHICH**  
**EXCLUDES BORDER INDUSTRY COMPANIES**  
**EXCLUDE BORDER INDUSTRY COMPANIES FROM THEIR**  
**INVESTMENTS**  
**FULLY DIVEST FROM CURRENT INVESTMENTS IN BORDER**  
**COMPANIES WITHIN 3 YEARS**



As seen in the Fossil Free movement, divestment commitments **delegitimise** the industry and **stigmatis**e those who participate in and profit from it, fostering a **collective refusal** of inhumane practices, and **standing in solidarity** with those most affected by the UK border regime.



Since launching the campaign, we have seen strong and committed Divest Borders groups spring up across the country, with **12 groups active in 2023**.



## SPOTLIGHT: DIVEST BORDERS FAL-EX

We've run **multiple workshops** and promoted the campaign, allowing us to gain **over 300 signatures** on our petition! We also staged a demo on campus and have **made headway in negotiations** with Exeter University. In the coming year, we hope to **increase momentum** and put **more pressure** on decision makers at the universities to **divest borders now!**

Clockwise from top: a protest outside Exeter's Penryn campus (November 2023), a DB Fal-Ex banner drop (2023), a DB Fal-Ex workshop (October 2023), .



**Collaboration** and **solidarity** with frontline communities is essential to this work. Our groups have been actively building partnerships with local migrant justice organisations, and in June we partnered with **Women for Refugee Women** and **End Detention** to run a **joint workshop** on taking action against the border and detention industry.



Left: Student Rebellion Leeds protest Thales at their Careers Fair (2023)  
Above: Divest Borders Nottingham projection for DB day of action (2023)  
Right: Oxford University Fresher's Fair (2023)

# 2023 CAMPAIGN WINS

## 2 STUDENT UNION MOTIONS PASSED

Fal-Ex SU & Oxford SU

## 5 DIVESTMENT COMMITMENTS MADE

Nottingham Trent University, Northumbria University, Staffordshire University, University of Kent, University of Worcester

Already, student groups have been **making connections** between their institution's ties to weapons manufacturers and the **ongoing Israeli violence in Palestine**, and are mobilising around the demands of Divest Borders to resist this institutional complicity.

Looking forward, we are assessing the landscape of the sector to identify universities with the strongest ties to the border industry so we can **contact activists and build momentum** in potential groups over the coming years

# FOSSIL FREE CAREERS

Whilst the fossil fuel divestment movement has gone from success to success, the ties between higher education and extractive industries don't stop there. University careers services are **actively promoting** careers in oil, gas and mining; they invite companies to attend careers fairs, they advertise vacancies in these industries on their websites and mailing lists, securing a **recruitment pipeline** which funnels a steady stream of talented graduates into exploitative industries, maintaining their **complicity in ecological breakdown**.



Right: FFC Newcastle (2023)  
Left: FFC Liverpool (2023)

## FOSSIL FREE CAREERS

## PRESSURES CAREERS SERVICES TO

**REFUSE ALL NEW RELATIONSHIPS WITH OIL, GAS OR MINING**

**DECLINE TO RENEW ANY CURRENT RELATIONSHIPS**

**ADOPT A PUBLIC ETHICAL CAREERS POLICY THAT EXPLICITLY**

**EXCLUDES THESE COMPANIES**

This campaign was developed in response to evidence that student awareness of the climate crisis means that extractive industries are **struggling to recruit**, threatening the **future viability** of their extraction.



Targeting this vulnerability presented a challenge to our campaign team, but the student movement is **uniquely positioned to stem these pipelines**. By **collectively refusing** to allow these companies on campus, we can halt the flow of students into these industries.

In 2023 there were **28 active student groups** across the country demanding their careers services ditch fossil fuels.

Clockwise from right: a 'sustainable careers' talk disruption in Oxford (2023), FFC ULC (2023), anti-Equinor die-in at Oxford University careers fair(2023)



## SPOTLIGHT: CAREERS FAIR CHAOS!

This year, People & Planet and affiliated groups across the country staged **mass careers fair disruptions**, objecting to the presence of both arms manufacturers and fossil fuel companies. They dropped banners, interrupted talks, barricaded stalls and charked pavements in protest, **engaging with their fellow students** and sharing Fossil Free Careers resources.

In May, Student Rebellion Leeds went into occupation over FFC demands, and in October activists in Oxford staged a die-in outside of the university careers fair, pressuring fossil fuel giant Equinor to **withdraw from the event!** This demonstrates the **power of collective refusal** within the student movement.

# 2023 CAMPAIGN WINS

## 3 EXCLUSION POLICIES IMPLEMENTED

Bishop Grosseteste University, Royal College of Art,  
University for the Creative Arts

## 6 SU SUPPORT MOTIONS PASSED

Durham SU, Birmingham GoS, Fal-Ex SU, Goldsmiths SU,  
Swansea SU, Cardiff SU, Newcastle SU

## 3 WORKERS UNION BACKINGS

UNISON Brighton, UCU Swansea, UCU Newcastle

These wins, hard earned by our diligent activists, give **significant precedent** for our campaign demands. Over the next year, we hope to continue to **build this momentum and energy** and to **bring more campuses onboard** for what we think is the **logical next step for the fossil free student movement**.

Although this work drew on the **campaigning tactics within the HE sector** that P&P has come to perfect over the years, it requires a different approach to previous divestment campaigns, and has involved a huge amount of research and strategising by our CampAct staff to bring an **exciting new dimension to the student fight for climate justice**.



# CATCH UP WITH OUR ALUMNI

We see hundreds of students pass through our network each year, and we're **always amazed by where our alumni end up!** At People & Planet, we try to offer our student campaigners opportunities to grow, **both as activists and as people.**

Being in our student network can be a life-changing experience, a way to **connect with like-minded people** to make real change, and a way to **build skills and experiences** which will serve you for the rest of your life, whether you end up working as a campaigner or not!

“

People & Planet is more than a student society. You don't realise it when you get involved, but it's an entry into a **kick-ass network of great people**, political knowledge and **fab support from the staff team** that lead you on this journey to being an activist that wins campaigns before you even graduate. What I learnt as a student campaigner, staff member and then trustee has **shaped me deeply**, and for that I am grateful! ▶▶



## ANNIE PICKERING - CLIMATE EMERGENCY UK

“

My time at P&P can only be described as **fun, radical and nourishing!** The part that sticks with me the most is seeing people attend their first Power Shift and growing over the year to **develop a political consciousness** across workers & migrants rights and climate justice, and becoming campaigners themselves. I was the climate campaigns co-ordinator in 2018 and P&P played **a huge role in making me the campaigner I am today.** Shout out the People & Planet team, staff, students, volunteers, **always and forever!** ▶▶



## SIMMONE AHIAKU - LONDON RENTERS UNION

“ I made incredible friends through People & Planet, people who **taught me and challenged me and above all inspired me**. My time as a student activist and staffer at P&P also gave me the **critical thinking tools** to notice who wasn't in the space, and I now work with marginalised young people supporting them to take action for the environment. I will always be grateful to P&P for giving me that first exposure to activism and campaigning it was **such a privilege to be part of the network** for three years and I'm still so proud to have been an intern ”



ELLA WILKINSON - FRIENDS OF THE EARTH

WE LOVE HEARING FROM  
OUR PAST CAMPAIGNERS,  
SO PLEASE STAY IN TOUCH!

“ I received a great education, as a student member of People & Planet for three years and then a staff member for another three years, as I led the Fossil Free campaign at University of Sheffield before **coordinating it nationally**.



Through People & Planet, I learned **the politics of climate justice**; became confident in developing and implementing ambitious campaign strategies; and **became embedded in the climate movement**. This has served me well campaigning against fracking, organising for a Green New Deal in the labour movement, working in Parliamentary politics, and **building international solidarity** as with the Free West Papua campaign ”

CHRIS SALTMARSH - AUTHOR OF 'BURNT' (PLUTO PRESS)

ALL THE WORK THAT WE DO, ALL THE STUDENTS WE SUPPORT AND THE CAMPAIGNS WE WIN, IT WOULDN'T BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT OUR DONORS.

NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU GIVE, EVERY PENNY GOES TOWARDS EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ACTIVISTS TO ENACT REAL CHANGE WITHIN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR, AND WE COULDN'T BE MORE GRATEFUL .

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

FROM EVERYONE AT PEOPLE & PLANET



