

Ideas for Young Greens groups

(Or how to build a group beyond a Freshers Fair)



So you've got a group, had your first meeting. Now what?

First of all, it's vital to keep people interested. If meetings just seem like a talking shop with little actually happening, people will rapidly lose interest. Keep up the momentum by holding regular events and group activities.

Here are a few ideas:

• **Get a speaker in!** To inspire, educate and provoke there is little better than getting someone in to speak to your group.

It could be someone from your local party who's stood for election (or better still someone who's actually been elected), someone who works for an Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) like Greenpeace or a think tank like the New Economics Foundation (NEF), or anybody who knows a lot about a particular issue and has something interesting to say.

• Have a film showing! This can be done on the cheap and is pretty easy to organise.

There are numerous political or activist film/ documentaries out there. Franny Armstrong's *Age of Stupid* is well worth showing, as is *This is What Democracy Looks Like* which documents the Seattle protests of 1999 to a roaring soundtrack of Rage Against the Machine, et al.

Equally interesting is *Just Do it: A Tale of Modern Day Outlaws* which explores the undercover world and direct actions of environmental activist groups such as Climate Camp and Plane Stupid.

Or better yet: make a film! If anyone in your group can get hold of a video camera and fancies themselves as a budding film maker then give it a go.

Q: BUT HOW DO WE GET THE EQUIPMENT FOR A FILM SHOWING?

A: Booking a room is easy – if you're an official society – just ask in your Students' Union about booking a room and they should be able to tell you who/ where you need to find a book a room (usually there is a facilities or estates office), then all you need to tell them is when/ where and how many people you expect.

As for the TV/ DVD Player, most Universities will also have an office where societies can book audio/visual equipment.



REMEMBER: always check whether your university library has a video selection. This is both cheap, easy and can yield some surprising gems- my university library contained a film about Noam Chomsky and how the media Manufacture Consent, as well as a fantastic documentary on the radical anti-car activist group Reclaim the Streets.

Also remember to make sure you advertise the event. Let people know the YOUNG GREENS are showing the film; put up posters, send out emails, print flyers, etc.

Then on the night make sure you get the email addresses of all the people who attend so as to build up your email list and make sure your able to tell them when and where your next meeting is.

• **Start a Green reading group!** This is a brilliant way, to both cement friendships and get informed.

What's more, reading group discussions inevitably spawn ideas that can be turned into campaigns and actions. So choose a text, pick a chapter, makes sure everybody has a copy and then pick an evening when you can all get together over a bottle of fair-trade wine or mug of hot chocolate and discuss the book.

• **Run a People & Planet campaign.** P&P are a nationwide network of student societies campaigning to end world poverty and halt environmental degradation.

P&P are backed by a professional office that supplies ready made campaign materials for a variety of fun and effective campus campaigns.

So whether you would like to campaign for your university to switch to Green electricity or stop Arms dealers funding your university departments, P&P can help you out with materials, advice and support.

Contact the office on 01865245678 or visit: www.peopleandplanet.org

Q&A

Q: DON'T WE NEED TO BE A P&P CROUP TO RUN ONE OF THEIR CAMPAIGNS?

A: No, P&P are more than happy for student environmental and political societies like YOUNG GREENS to run their campaigns.



• Organise a society trip. There's no better way to bond with the rest of your group than by organising a weekend away.

And fortunately there are plenty of enticing Eco-attractions across Britain to form the focus of a great green weekend away. Cornwall for instance, is an excellent location for a Young Greens weekend; not only do you have beautiful scenery and gorgeous beaches, but there's also the Eden Project (near St Austell) and the GAIA renewable energy centre in Delabole to educate and inspire your group. If this doesn't catch your fancy, how about going on a sustainable camping trip, for a great bonding experience?

Q. ISN'T ORGANISING A TRIP A BIT EXPENSIVE?

A: If you're an official university society you should be able to fund a significant portion of your expenses from the society budget.

• **Start your own campaign.** Is there a local issue you or your group feel passionately about - why not launch your own campaign?

Get your university to stock Fair Trade products. Lobby for better recycling facilities at college/ university. If the lowest paid workers at your university do not get the living wageget the university to introduce it.

Lobby your MP/MEP/Local Council.

It's easy to feel frustrated with democracy in this country - decision making often seems far removed and it seems that in-between voting every few years we don't get to participate in democracy very much. But remember, you don't have to bottle up your frustration. You can go and take it out on your local MP/ Councillor/ MEP.

Q. HOW DO I GET A HOLD OF MY MP/MEP/Councillor?

A: MP's and MEP's have surgeries in which they'll listen to whatever issue is bugging you and your group. Alternatively, if you're too shy for a face to face meeting, write to your local elected MP/ MEP/ etc. The address and email can be found at www.writetothem.com



• Organise an Alternative 'Ethical' careers fair!

Helping students in your locality find careers that don't damage the planet or its people can be a gratifying experience. But be warned this takes some organising. The hardest bit is to get companies to commit...so make sure you start early. You definitely need to start a few months in advance.

Q. BUT...WHERE DO I START?

A: Well, it's a good idea to first set the date and find a venue. However, it's worth remembering that deadlines can be motivating but if unrealistic can end in disaster. Don't make it 6 months ahead - this is too distant. Do, however, make sure you give yourself at least eight to ten weeks to investigate, correspond with, and book interesting companies/ organisations.

Q. OKAY, SO WHAT NEXT?

A: The next step is to try and get your Student Union onboard. Getting your Union onside is useful. Union involvement will enhance credibility (companies are more likely to take an invitation from a Student Union seriously) and ensure financial viability (most Unions will have a contingency fund [money for special events] which, with a little luck, and a sympathetic executive committee, could be tapped into).

Q. WHAT KIND OF THINGS DO WE BOOK?

A: You could try NGOs, volunteering organisations, renewable energy providers, or any other Green companies you can find. One tried and tested method is to organise your fair into industries and sectors, then select (and invite) the Greenest in each sector - for instance in the printing industry you might invite Beacon press or in the Green energy sector you might choose Eco-tricity.

Get a Young Greens page in your student newspaper!

What better way to get your views across the student body than to have a column or page in your student or local paper? Quite often student papers are crying out for articles so it's normally pretty easy to persuade them to let you have a page or column. If you would like ideas on what to write about, contact press@younggreens.org.uk. We can provide you with press releases which may help you.



Happy Greening!

If you have used this booklet, have suggestions for changes, or even have experience with events and ideas not included here, please email studentsupport@younggreens.org.uk. Also, send us your photos of events for inclusion in the national newsletter.