



Fossil Free Law - campaign toolkit

Fossil Free Law is a new climate justice campaign hosted by the Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland (ERCS). We are working with law students across Scotland to challenge the acceptability of law firms working on behalf of the fossil fuel industry.

This toolkit aims to provide an introduction to law students wanting to develop a Fossil Free Law campaign on their university campus, supporting action to challenge law firms over their climate policy and demand a cultural shift within Scotland's legal sector.

Overview

The problem: Law firms provide a range of services to oil, gas and mining companies, enabling transactions that finance future fossil fuel development, litigation against climate accountability, and fossil fuel lobbying. These business activities are not compatible with a safe climate and violate our right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

The solution: We will challenging the social licence of the fossil fuel industry to operate in Scotland by building a student movement to challenge the acceptability of lawyers working on fossil fuel projects.

We call on lawyers to refuse to work for clients in the fossil fuel industry, and on law firms to withdraw their services from companies engaged in fossil fuel production. This can ensure that their business operations remain in alignment with Paris Agreement climate targets to limit temperature rises to 1.5 degrees, and deter reckless behaviour by companies who seek to profit from climate destruction.

How we make it happen: We will hold law firms accountable through public scrutiny of their client base and climate change policies, highlighting examples of both good and bad practice within the sector. We will mobilise our collective voice to amplify climate justice concerns, shift attitudes within the legal profession, and demand long-term systemic change in how law firms operate.

Law students have significant leverage, as the lawyers of the future and the prospective employees of law firms operating across Scotland. While it can be daunting to speak up as an individual against a prospective employer, the Fossil Free Law network will ensure students are supported to speak out and develop public campaigns that can transform Scotland's legal sector.



Getting organised

...on your campus: The first step is finding other students at your university to build a local campaign. To keep in touch, ERCS hosts an online organising platform on Slack, where you can connect with existing members of the campaign by joining the relevant channel for your university. If you would like to be added, please email fllaw@ercs.scot.

You might want to establish a new student society, to make it easier to recruit new members and increase the profile of the campaign, or connect with existing groups such as [People & Planet](#), [Students Organising for Sustainability](#) or student law societies, who have a shared interest in the campaign. If this is the case, this usually requires a constitution, a committee, minimum membership and completion of an application form to your university's student union or student association – check their website for further information.

...across Scotland: ERCS hosts monthly campaign calls for law students across Scotland to coordinate and plan campaigns together – these usually happen on the first Thursday of the month 2-3pm. We also stay connected through Slack, our online organising platform, which we use to share resources and stay in touch. Please email fllaw@ercs.scot if you would like to attend our calls or be added to Slack.

You can stay updated with the national campaign by signing up to ERCS's [mailing list](#) or visiting the [Fossil Free Law webpage](#) – we are also happy to share relevant content such as blogs and news items.

...across the UK & internationally: [Law Students for Climate Accountability](#) (LS4CA) have established a similar campaign in the US, groups including [People & Planet](#), [Students Organising for Sustainability](#), and [Lawyers Are Responsible](#) are active in the UK, and other organisations such as the [Centre for International Environmental Law](#) advocate for strengthening climate laws internationally.

Building a campaign

First steps - engaging with law students

Direct engagement: You can draw attention to the campaign with other law students directly via stalls in your student union or at your university library, lecture shout-outs, distributing posters and flyers, and conversations with other law students whenever the opportunity arises!

Social media: Establishing a social media presence, on whatever platform is most appropriate to your audience (e.g. Instagram, LinkedIn, Bluesky etc), can be a good starting point for raising awareness and building up your campus campaign. ERCS has a number of social media templates that you can adapt for local groups (accessible via Slack). Please



follow @ERCScot and tag us in your posts so that we can boost and reshare them, along with using the #FossilFreeLaw hashtag.

Student media: Student media can offer another route to getting your message out and recruiting new students – media report and comments articles in student newspapers, interviews on student TV/radio, and university bulletins or newsletters are all good arenas to target.

Events: As you build the campaign, you may wish to organise a speaker event, film screenings, or workshop to explore issues relating to law and climate justice. Keep in mind your core audience and who you are trying to appeal to. ERCS will be hosting an online skillshare event in October 2025, which is an ideal way to learn useful skills and build confidence in developing your campaign.

Next steps – engaging with law firms

Surveys & scorecards: members of the Fossil Free Law network are seeking to adapt LS4CA's [Law Firm Climate Change Scorecard](#) for a Scottish context, surveying the practices of Scottish law firms against climate criteria and highlight examples of good and bad practice within the sector. This work will also build on LS4CA's report [The Carbon Circle: The UK Legal Industry's Ties to Fossil Fuel Companies](#). If you would like to participate in this action research, join our next campaign call or the relevant channel on Slack.

There are a number of ways to influence law firms and communicate your arguments – a few ideas are listed below:

Careers fairs: Many law schools host careers fairs where you will have the opportunity to speak with law firms and ask questions. You can ask firms about:

- Their client selection processes, fossil fuel and renewable portfolio, and percentage of pro bono work
- The firm's record on fossil fuel transactions, litigation, and arbitration work
- Whether you will be expected to work on fossil fuel cases.

Careers fairs may also be a good opportunity to leaflet and recruit new law students to the campaign.

Meetings and pledges: Your group may wish to reach out to law firms to request a meeting to discuss these concerns. You may wish to refer to LS4CA's [climate pledges](#) or Lawyers are Responsible's [Declaration of Conscience](#) to communicate your position or secure concrete commitments from firms.



Longer term - amplifying our message

Stunts & protests: As the campaign develops, there may be scope for media stunts or non-violent protests - especially if law firms are hostile or obstructive, engage in greenwashing, or enter into new contracts with oil and gas companies. These tactics can provoke a backlash and while you may wish to escalate your campaign in some scenarios, you should consider the potential risks. ERCS will be providing guidance and support on this as the campaign develops – in the meantime you can check out our guide to defamation law and to the right to protest in the resources section below.

Resources

Below are some resources which may be helpful to your campaign:

- Malcolm/Cooper (May 2025) [Why law students across Scotland are challenging their future employers over the climate crisis](#) (blog)
- ERCS (July 2025) [Landmark climate change ruling reaffirms States' obligations to protect the right to a healthy environment](#) (blog)
- Law Students for Climate Accountability (2024) [The Carbon Circle: The UK Legal Industry's Ties to Fossil Fuel Companies](#) (report)
- The Guardian (2021) [Fossil fuel companies paying top law firms millions to 'dodge responsibility'](#) (article)
- Lawyers Are Responsible (2024) [Counsel opinion on conscientious objection at work](#) (legal opinion)
- ERCS (March 2024) [Guide to defamation law](#)
- ERCS (Oct 2021) [Guide to the right to protest in Scotland](#)
- Scottish Community and Activist Legal Project (SCALP) (June 2022) [Know Your Rights](#)