



**British Youth Council
announces new priority campaigns for 08/09
“Votes at 16 and Equal National Minimum Wage top poll”**

The British Youth Council (BYC) have announced their six priority campaigns from their 2008/09 Youth Manifesto.

These are:

- an equal minimum wage for young people
- votes at 16
- more incentives and recognition for volunteering
- more radical and urgent climate change targets
- accessible and free transport for young people
- fairer funding for those attending higher education

These 6 topics were voted top of a poll by young people at BYC’s Annual Meeting on Saturday 16th August 2008.

Over 150 young people attended the national three day Convention and annual meeting which finished with the campaign debate. Delegates from member organisations included Girl Guiding UK, the Scouts Association, the National Union of Students and a range of local young people led groups including Local Youth Councils from Cornwall to Kent. They debated issues ranging from knife crime to the portrayal of young people in the media with MPs, journalists and writers, as well as with each other.

The highlight of the annual meeting saw young people aged 14 to 25, queuing up for the “open mike” session where they spoke passionately for their favourite cause prior to delegates voting for a top six priority list.

Lucy Clare (18 from Gloucestershire) who spoke in support of Votes at 16 said: “I believe the votes at 16 campaign is what BYC is fundamentally about, as we’re a youth organisation committed to giving more young people a voice.

I recently spent three hours on the streets of London talking to the public about this issue and I collected 90 postcards to send to Gordon Brown calling for a reduction in the voting age. So I’m personally aware of growing support for Votes at 16 amongst the general public.”

BYC Chair Emily Beardsmore said “This Convention, our largest ever, demonstrated that young people care passionately about and propose solutions to the issues that ultimately affect us all – education, fair pay, and climate change. Perhaps most importantly of all we want to have a say on who the politicians are who influence all of these through giving us the right to vote!

We call on the Government to introduce legislation to reduce the voting age to 16 and allow thousands more young people who want to exercise a right of vote to do so.”

James Cathcart CEO of BYC said “The Convention delegates were enthusiastic, passionate and inspiring and the decision by the Council to prioritise Votes at 16 is a major boost to the campaign and to the coalition of other key organisations and political parties who already support it. The vote is timely as this week we will be giving evidence to the Youth Citizenship Commission which is considering the case for and against lowering the voting age.”

“The British Youth Council is an organisation led and run by young people elected to a Board of Trustees. We support young people to have a voice and be heard, and the majority we have surveyed on votes at 16 would also put that voice into action if they could exercise a right to vote”.

Notes to Editors:

For more information on BYC and Votes at 16 see www.byc.org.uk

1. Photographs from the BYC Annual General Meeting and of Lucy Clare are available for use. For images please contact Helen Deakin using the details below.
2. The British Youth Council (BYC) is led by young people, for young people aged 16 and under across the UK. We connect with our community of member organisations and network of Local Youth Councils to empower all young people, wherever they're from, to have a say and be heard. Our take on training and volunteering and our powerful campaigns, both local and global, inspire young people to have a positive impact and make their voices count.
3. In 2008, to celebrate 60 years of BYC empowering young people in the UK, BYC has been championing a "16 at 60" campaign to lower the voting age from 18 to 16. The delegates vote at this year's vote means Votes at 16 will remain a priority campaign. BYC is a member of the Votes at 16 Coalition— see www.votesat16.org.uk.
4. An online survey revealed that 58% of young people believe in votes at 16.
5. Of those attending BYC's democracy programmes last year 90% said that they were now more likely to vote.
6. There are over 600 young people led youth councils across the UK. BYC's member organisations can reach a network of up to 7 million young people
7. Press enquiries to Helen Deakin 020 7022 1974 or out of office hours 07809 507356.