

The Association for Free Software



What is the Association for Free Software?

The Association for Free Software (AFFS) is a membership organisation set up to promote *free software* to users, business and government.

Its aims are to secure the status of free software in the UK and increase public understanding of free software among developers and users alike.

What is Free Software?

Free Software is a world wide effort to bring the benefits of the information age to everyone

Free software is about freedom. It refers to the freedom to run, copy, distribute, study, change and improve software.

More precisely, it refers to four kinds of freedom, for the users of a program:

- The freedom to run the program, for any purpose
- The freedom to study how the program works, and adapt it to your needs. Access to the source code is a precondition for this.
- The freedom to redistribute copies so you can help your neighbour.
- The freedom to improve the program, and release your improvements to the public, so that the whole community benefits. Access to the source code is a precondition for this.

A program is free software if its users have all of these freedoms. The Association for Free Software wants these freedoms to be available to all software users and campaigns for them.

Campaigns

Promoting and Defending Free Software

Membership of AFFS allows individual members to promote and defend free software with others in an organised way. We have three strong areas of interest:

Free Software in Education

We would like to increase the use of free software in education, not just as a more cost-effective means of providing access to computers, but also to teach younger generations about the values of

freedom and cooperation. AFFS wants to build a coalition with other organisations to promote free software in education.

Political Education

We would like the benefits of free software to be recognised by politicians of all parties. This is vital if we are to carry out the commitment in the AFFS constitution of ensuring the legal viability of free software in the UK.

We are working with a number of people to organise a year-long programme of meetings introducing free software to national and local politicians with interests in IT.

Opposition to Software Patents

The UK and European Patent Offices have been moving ahead with plans to allow patents on software, taking advantage of ineffective opposition to software patents. AFFS believes software patents reduce innovation and are bad for all software users and developers, whether free or proprietary. We want to raise the issue of software patents and work with other groups on this threat to innovation.

How can I join the AFFS?

Membership is open to everyone who supports the goals of promoting free software.

The annual membership fee is £10, payable by cheque or standing order. Donations are also accepted. Membership forms can be downloaded from www.affs.org.uk.

All contributions will be used to promote free software, by producing literature and organising events. Full accounts will be available to members for inspection.

Members can vote in annual elections for the executive committee which manages the association. The current committee members are:

Dr Marc Eberhard (Chair)

Alex Hudson (Vice-chair)

MJ Ray (Treasurer)

Dr Brian Gough (Secretary)

Richard Smedley (Campaigns Manager)

The Association For Free Software is an associate organisation of the Free Software Foundation Europe (FSF Europe)