

10 top tips for lobbying your MP

- 1. Make it personal.** Feedback from MPs shows that they receive hundreds of pro forma emails. If you want to contact your MP in writing, a handwritten or typed letter sent to them through the post expressing your concerns/issues in your own words will have the most impact. At the very least re-write an “e-action” in your own words and send from your personal email account. Don’t forget to include your address which proves you are a constituent.
- 2. Pick up the phone.** Very few people lobby their MP by phone however it can have a surprisingly strong impact. Watch this handy video guide about how to lobby your MP by phone – tinyurl.com/phonelobbying. Prepare in advance what you want to say and keep it concise to include, at most, your top three concerns/issues. You are most likely to get through to your MP’s researcher but you may be fortunate enough to be able to speak to your MP directly. You can be put through to your MP’s Westminster office by ringing 020 7219 3000. Be prepared to leave a phone number or an email address that your MP can contact you on to give their response.
- 3. Have a clear “ask”.** However you decide to contact your MP make sure you are clear about what you are asking for them to do and prepare to be persistent. MPs are often happy to debate issues, but if you want them to make a commitment to do something make sure you ask them directly and push them for a direct reply. Be prepared to follow up with emails, phone calls or meetings to get them to respond to your “ask”.
- 4. Face to face.** The most effective way to lobby your MP is to arrange a face-to-face meeting with them. MPs admit that being able to discuss issues directly with constituents has the most impact for them. All MPs have constituency surgeries (usually on a Friday, although sometimes at weekends and evening slots), and you can phone or email their constituency office (you can find these contact details via your MP’s website or from the House of Commons Information Office – 020 7219 4272) to arrange a suitable time and date to meet them. Many MPs will want to know the issues you are going to raise in advance to be able to prepare for the meeting so prepare a short paragraph to summarise the issue.



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- 5. Prepare for your meeting.** Don't assume your MP is an expert on climate change issues, most MPs will have a small amount of knowledge about lots of issues and are likely to know far less about this issue than you. Some MPs may have a special interest in climate change and may be well briefed e.g. Ministers for the Department for Energy and Climate Change will have special advisors to get them up to speed. You can check whether your MP is likely to be very well informed about the issue you want to raise by doing a bit of research about them: Check their website, and also have a look at www.parliament.uk or www.theyworkforyou.com to see if they are members of any related Committees, All Parliamentary Groups, or have spoken about your issue in parliamentary debate. The most important thing to convey is that you are a concerned constituent, not necessarily an expert, but if they want more detailed policy information you can send this to them via email/ post after your meeting.
- 6. Work with others.** Organising for a group of people to lobby their MP face-to-face not only demonstrates to the MP that a number and diversity of their constituents care about this issue, but also can allow you to share the topics and information you want to raise between you, allowing you to focus on the areas you feel most comfortable with.
- 7. Take notes & follow up.** Try to note down, either during the meeting or soon afterwards, the points that were raised, and your MP's replies. In particular, capture anything that your MP agreed to do e.g. raise the issue in a parliamentary debate or write to a Minister. You can send this note as a follow-up to your MP, thanking them for the meeting, highlighting all the things that were agreed and sending them any additional information that may be helpful.
- 8. Build the relationship.** If your MP does agree to act on the issues you have raised remember to thank them. At this point you may want to organise another meeting to develop ideas with them about what more can be done to progress the issue, this could be a larger meeting with representatives from a number of different local groups, or even a public meeting. If they have not done what they had agreed to do, contact them to ask them if they are still intending to carry out what they had agreed and if there's anything you can do to assist them e.g. by providing more detailed information, facts and figures etc.



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9. **Use the media.** If your MP has been particularly helpful on an issue you may want to consider creating a press release to highlight your MP's positive contribution. If this is a positive story reflecting your MP in a good light, their constituency office may well be willing to help distribute the press release to their media contacts and to provide a quote from your MP. This is a good way to foster a good relationship with your MP on which you can build. If your MP consistently ignores your communications or has been particularly unhelpful this is also a legitimate issue for the local media and you may want to alert them to this. Be aware that this could permanently sour the relationship between you and your MP, however it could prove a useful way of raising awareness of the issue, and the local media will want to give your MP the right to reply, thereby creating a useful forum for debate if all other attempts at getting your MP to talk to you about the issue have failed.

10. **Ask an expert.** If you know your MP is particularly knowledgeable about the issue you are raising e.g. they are a Minister or Secretary of State, and you don't feel confident that you have enough information to persuade them, you can ask for an expert to advise you or attend the meeting. Stop Climate Chaos can help arrange for a policy expert to accompany you in special cases (e.g. for Ministers or particularly key MPs) or for an expert to brief you over the phone before your meeting. Do get in touch and we'll do what we can! (You will need to let your MP know in advance if you are bringing a non-constituent in an advisory capacity).

After your lobby...

- Review the process. What went right? What could have gone better? What would you do differently now? What are you going to do next?
- This is just one lobby. You are trying to build a long-term relationship in which you can come back and talk to the MP again and again. The MP is only human, and the more they like you, and feel you share something in common, the more willing they are likely to be to listen to you and act in the way you are suggesting.

It is a privilege to be able to gain such direct access to the workings of government in our country, in a way many other nations don't allow and its one of the most exciting ways a campaigner can use their voice!