Show the Love
Getting your MP Involved
Who are Hope for the Future?

The team at Hope for the Future (HFTF) exists to support you in building an effective relationship with your elected representatives leading to action on climate change. We deliver and develop training and resources on how to have effective and compassionate conversations with Members of Parliament (MPs) about climate change. Our relationship-based approach is grounded in eight years of research and first-hand experience, drawing on climate communications research, influencing theory, counselling techniques and advice from MPs themselves.

What is covered in this resource?

The purpose of this resource is to provide you with the tools and techniques to engage with your MP in the lead up to, and during, The Climate Coalition's (TCC) Show the Love campaign in February 2022. The resource will cover:

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This resource is only one piece of the puzzle, and our team would love to support you, your friends and family, your community groups and wider networks to engage your MP. If you’re using this resource to contact your MP, invite them to an event, or arrange a meeting, we’d love to hear from you at info@hftf.org.uk.

HFTF runs regular training sessions on effective MP engagement. See our upcoming sessions on our website. We’d love to see you there!
Why engage your MP as part of Show the Love?

"Since 2015, people from across the UK have used the power of green hearts every February to ask politicians to tackle the climate crisis and protect what we love from its worst impacts. It's a chance for us to show decision makers that the UK public wants to see real and rapid action to tackle the climate and nature crisis - for the love of our families, our homes, our livelihoods and our planet" The Climate Coalition (TCC)

Meeting with or writing to your MP is an opportunity to see real, tangible action on climate change at both a local and national level. You can create an open dialogue about climate change and build a positive future together.

Contacting your MP

You can get involved in Show the Love by writing to or arranging a meeting with your MP, to deliver your Green Heart to them directly. This is a chance to tell them about how much community support there is for local climate action, inspiring them to take concrete steps in response. Their involvement in Show the Love is an opportunity to keep up the pressure on climate action after COP26.
Researching your MP

It is important to make all of your MP interactions, whether that be a letter, a meeting, or inviting them to an event, as personal as possible. To do so, we recommend researching your MP to find out what might be important to them. Below are some tips on how to do so.

- **Theyworkforyou.com** gives you an overview of your MP's parliamentary activity including their voting record. To find out your MPs priorities regarding climate change, you can look at which debates they attend and search for keywords in speeches that they have made.
- To see if they have submitted any written questions regarding climate change, you can check the UK Parliament website.
- Issues that are prominent in the local area are more likely to motivate or already be important to your MP, you should be able to find out which local issues your MP has been focusing on at their website.
- It is useful to know if your MP is a backbencher or Minister, as Ministers may have more influence than backbenchers, but are limited in what they can speak on. You can find this the UK Parliament website.
- Knowing whether your MP sits in a safe or marginal seat may indicate how willing to take risks they are. MPs in a marginal seat will feel more pressure to keep all of their constituents on side in order to maintain their job at the next election. This can be found on the House of Commons constituency dashboard.
- Your MP's professional background may also be useful in deciding what issues to focus on. This will be available online on either your MP's website or in the local press. For example, if your MP has a background in finance, they may be more receptive to the economic benefits of climate action.
- You can also have a look at what your local council is doing and whether they have plans and strategies related to local engagement and action on climate change.

Don't be afraid to mention this information to your MP in your meeting as it will show them that you have taken the time to do your research. If this feels a bit daunting, we are on hand to assist or undertake research for you. Just get in touch with the team using our request form.
Getting in touch with your MP

Once you've researched your MP, you should have a good idea of where you can find common ground with them. It's important to find a topic that both you and your MP will be interested in. Examples of these topics could be: nature and biodiversity; housing energy efficiency; renewable energy; travel and transport; or flood defences. If you're struggling to think of a topic or to find an area of common ground with your MP, get in touch with the HFTF team.

Once you have done your research, you're now ready write to your MP. You may like to email your MP or send them a letter in the post. We have found that handwritten letters often get the best response, but this may depend on your MP. If you decide to send an email, we would recommend attaching a formal letter to your email as a PDF alongside the body of your email. You can find your MP’s contact details on the UK Parliament website.

Remember to use your research to personalise your letter. Including a thank you for their recent work is a great way to begin building a positive relationship with your MP. Find a suggested outline for your letter on the next page.

As with any stage in this process, we can give you guidance and support in writing your letter, please contact us at info@hftf.org.uk.
General letter outline

Full name

Re: Meeting Request: [the main focus of the conversation]
  • Include this to ensure the main aim of the letter is clear

Introduction
  • Include a short introduction to yourself, climate change, and why the issue is important to you
  • Thank them for something they have already done that you appreciate and acknowledge the pressure that MPs are under at this time
  • Explain why you are getting involved in Show the Love and why you are interested in speaking with your MP to discuss climate change issues. If possible, tailor this section to your local area, and discuss some ways you feel climate change affects you locally

Main topic
  • Provide some context to show some understanding and ensure you mention the local aspect. How does the topic i.e. food waste or sustainable transport link to your constituency or your MP’s interests
  • Begin to discuss your focus of the letter. Consider if the framing you have decided is appropriate for your MP

Your ask
  • Let them know you wish to meet them as part of Show the Love to discuss your chosen topic

Signing off
  • Highlight the importance of the climate crisis to you
  • Yours Sincerely is appropriate when signing off as the recipient is named.
Things to keep in mind for your letter

TREACLE is a helpful acronym to guide you in writing your letter in a way that will resonate with your MP.

- **Tone** - keep your tone collaborative and receptive
- **Remember MPs are generalists** - they tend to know a little about a lot. Don’t assume that they know the ins and outs of climate science so breaking the issue down can be really beneficial. Even better, try and make the issue resonate with your local area
- **Empathy** - recognise the demands of your MPs job. They have little free time so ensuring our asks clear and thought through is important
- **Appreciate** - let them know the things you appreciate that they’ve done. This could be something they’ve spoken on in parliament, or an action they’ve taken locally
- **Common ground** - hone in on an issue you both care about. Use your research to identify an area of common ground
- **Length** - keep points concise and focused, your letter should ideally be no more than a page long
- **End** with a clear request.

Things to avoid in your letter

PLATE is another acronym to inform you of the sort of language we suggest avoiding, to keep the discourse as positive as possible.

- **Political positions** - do not attack an MP’s party or beliefs
- **Length** - avoid tangents and rambling
- **Asks** - do not hone in on a controversial issue
- **Tone** - avoid a cynical, rude or irritated tone
- **Exposing** a knowledge gap deliberately is unhelpful.

Although you may disagree with your MP or you may be making a good argument, this is not an effective way of convincing your MP to take action. It is important to be polite and to the point.
We know many people are unsure about how worthwhile contacting their MP will be, and many feel daunted by the prospect of doing so. That’s why Hope for the Future exists – we can support you through the entire process, and use our experience of previous meetings to make your engagement as meaningful as possible.

Although people are often apprehensive about meeting their MP initially, people are universally enthusiastic about the experience afterwards. Ultimately, MPs are just people tasked with serving the areas they represent. Meeting constituents who are passionate about a particular area, and who are clear on how their MP can help, is a real highlight of an MP’s job!

The email inboxes of MPs often get swamped by batches of campaign emails saying similar things. While this can helpfully indicate to an MP a strength of feeling about a particular issue, they usually don’t have time to be able to respond meaningfully. Meeting your MP allows you to have a dialogue rather than just a one-way exchange. It is a much more ‘human’ interaction and is therefore a much more meaningful way to engage politically. In the same way, inviting your MP to an event generates a community dialogue between an MP and their constituents.
Meeting with or writing to your MP as representatives of a group can add weight to your message, and increase the effectiveness of your MP engagement.

If you’re planning an MP meeting as part of Show the Love, we find that a group of 2-5 people is best - it allows you to have a clear and focused meeting which can become harder with larger groups, while also allowing a variety of perspectives and avoiding overwhelming your MP. We advise allocating someone to record notes whilst the others lead the conversation.

Make sure you let your MP’s office know how many people will be attending in advance. Also, consider who you are representing and let your MP know; within your group there may be different ages and political persuasions so this provides an MP with a broader representation of their constituents.

If you don’t have a group, do not worry! Meeting your MP alone allows you to have an in depth conversation, and really get to know your politician!

Gillian McAllum and Roberta Eales meeting their MP, Nick Fletcher in October 2021, supported by HFTF
Preparing your 'ask'

An ‘ask’ is what action you are asking your MP to take. Some examples of appropriate requests to ask of your MP include attending an event, suggesting a campaign area for your MP to get involved in, or writing to a minister. Having a defined, specific and achievable ‘ask’ will mean that your MP is much more likely to take action.

What to ask your MP this February

At COP26 in Glasgow, the world agreed that we need to speed up action to limit climate change to protect people and nature. This February 2022, The Climate Coalition are inviting you to come together and call on the Government to make sure they deliver.

As a first step, TCC are calling on the Prime Minister and Chancellor to show us they mean business by acting on the recent recommendations from their independent advisors, the Climate Change Committee (CCC).

Take action to tackle climate change at home

- **Action not words.** The UK’s plan to cut its emissions by 2030 (known as a ‘Nationally Determined Contribution’ - NDC) is ambitious, but the policies are not in place to deliver it. The government recently outlined a Net Zero Strategy (more words), this now needs to be delivered at pace (more action).
- **Cut carbon.** The NDC should be made legally binding. It has to be met by cutting, not offsetting carbon, and should include targets that require every major sector to step up and do their bit.
• **Address the risks.** The UK should considerably strengthen its policies on addressing the risks posed by climate change in the UK, like flooding and other extreme weather events.

• **End all new fossil fuel projects** The climate summit in Glasgow called for a ‘phase-out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies’. The Climate Change Committee suggests the Treasury reviews tax policy to address this. TCC believes the UK must go further than this by stopping new fossil fuel projects at home and abroad, and ensuring all UK finance decisions support their climate commitments.

**Lead on the world stage and support global climate action**

• **Lead on the world stage.** Decisions in 2022 are critical to the chances of limiting global temperature increase to 1.5°C. The UK holds the presidency of COP until November 2022 so it is important that the Government continues to resource the necessary internal capacity to drive forward the agreements made at COP26.

• **Keep climate action on the table worldwide.** The UK must prioritise climate action in the G20 and G7, including:
  - encouraging stronger climate plans (NDCs) across the world;
  - strengthening new initiatives on deforestation, coal and methane;
  - supporting stronger action from businesses and the financial sector;
  - ensuring climate finance promises are delivered quickly and transparently,
  - Ensuring that a constructive dialogue continues on compensation for climate impacts in climate-vulnerable countries.
Your MP has a critical role to play in representing your concern for climate change in Parliament by putting pressure on the UK Government to live up to its promises and lead the world to a safer future. **As part of Show the Love, you can ask your MP to write to the Prime Minister and Chancellor, requesting they mobilise every Government Department to deliver on the Climate Committee’s advice, and provide a response on how they are going to do that.**

**Additional Asks**

After researching your MP, you may find you have common ground with them in a specific topic, whether it be a local issue or national policy change. You may choose to write an additional ask to encourage them to take action. The 3 steps below outline how to do this.

1 - **Choose your focus**

To ensure you can talk in detail, it is best to pick one specific topic to be the focus of your letter or short meeting with your MP. You should decide which issue you want to focus on with your MP. This could be local air pollution, or improving active transport infrastructure, or any other climate issue you are passionate about. Whilst deciding this, it is important to consider which issues you may have common ground with your MP on.

2 - **Think about framing**

Next you should think about how to frame your focus around values your MP already holds. Some MPs will be motivated by leading the way with technological and scientific expertise required by the climate crisis.
Other MPs may be motivated by the concept of working towards a ‘just transition’, green jobs and sustainable finance, and others motivated by pursuing policies of ‘climate justice’. **We are on hand** to help you research your MP and suggest the best ways to frame your chosen topic.

3 - Set your 'asks'

Next, you need to prepare what you are going to ask your MP to take action on. This might be one of Show the Love’s campaign asks, or you may wish to meet your MP to discuss climate change more generally or talk about a local issue. Either way, your 'ask' needs to be realistic and should take into account your MP’s previous interest in and level of expertise about climate change. MPs with little of either should be presented with less ambitious ‘asks’.

Your ‘ask’ should be SMART:

- **Specific**
- **Measurable**
- **Achievable**
- **Realistic**
- **Timely**

Choosing your 'ask' can be challenging so feel free to [get in touch](#) for further guidance. We release [free, monthly policy resources](#) on issues from green jobs to fast fashion which can provide inspiration for your ask.

### Meeting preparation

Practice a one-minute opener explaining who you are representing, the reason for your meeting and what you are asking your MP to do.

Consider how you could make the meeting memorable. Could you make it part of an event your MP is invited to? Can you think about ways the meeting could be shared on social media? Could you do a write-up of your meeting for your bulletin or community magazine (in which case, ask the MP to provide a quote)?
Tips for your meeting

- You will likely only have around 20 minutes for the meeting with your MP, so don’t expect to cover a lot of ground and try to stay on topic.

- Although your first meeting may not be perfect, try to view it as an opportunity for dialogue with your MP. Ensure you mention your concerns about climate change and try to include at least one of your asks. Express that you would like to continue the conversation.

- Although your MP may be open to talking about climate, they may not actually know much about climate policy, or not have made some of the links to other risks of climate change such as UK poverty, health issues etc. Use this as an opportunity to inform them of these issues without exposing their knowledge gap.

- When communicating with an MP, be careful not to use language that could be deemed as subverting democracy (e.g. ‘we do not have the time to follow ordinary political processes’). MPs may not respond well to this and it may elicit a defensive response. Instead you should try to use positive language, such as talk of global leadership, aspiration, and the UK’s expertise.

- If appropriate, mention ways other MPs (preferably of the same political party as your MP) that are working well in Parliament on this issue.

- If you feel that it would be helpful to have support during your meeting, a member of the Hope for the Future team can dial in to the video call with you. Just get in touch to let us know if this would be helpful.
**Following up**

So what's next? After your meeting you should create an action plan to ensure that all of the agreed upon actions by the MP do happen. Once you’ve met with your MP, it is important to follow up! We find the best way to effect change is multiple engagements. Follow our sign-posts for communicating with your MP post meeting below:

- **Within 1 week** - Email your MP to thank them for their time and recap of all of the agreed action points. This way all the actions are written down and can be referred to at a later date. Attach any photos if you’ve taken any

- **1 month** - Follow up to check if your MP has completed their agreed action points within your agreed time frame

- **1 - 3 months** - You should check in on your MP's parliamentary appearances and actions. Ensure you keep in touch with your MP, to continue to build a positive relationship. We also encourage you to send them updates of your own activities where relevant

- **3 - 6 months** - Organise to meet with your MP again, you could invite them to an event, or work with them on a media piece.

We understand that this can be a long and difficult process; MPs may be busy or bad at getting back to their constituents. If you don't receive a reply to your follow up letter, it may be necessary resend it with a note saying that you are following up because you have had no response.

**We have seen first-hand how rewarding it is when you have a good engagement with your MP, so don't give up!**

Finally, please get in touch with us to give feedback on your experience and discuss how to take your engagement further by emailing info@hftf.org.uk.
You're all set!

For support and any queries please contact info@hftf.org.uk or visit www.hftf.org.uk

Find out more about the Show the Love

- theclimatecoalition.org
- @TheCCoalition
- theclimatecoalition
- The Climate Coalition

Get in touch with The Climate Coalition using their contact form.