

YOUR GUIDE TO HAVING **EFFECTIVE** **CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR** **PROSPECTIVE PARLIAMENTARY** **CANDIDATES**



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Who are The Climate Coalition?

We are a group of over 130 charities, organisations and communities who are united for people, climate and nature. People across the UK are already taking action to tackle climate change and protect nature. It's time for all politicians to follow suit and commit to ambitious action ahead of the UK general election and in this critical decade for our planet.

To achieve this, we're calling on all political parties to commit to cut emissions, restore nature and support the hardest hit at home and around the world. Join the call for real action on climate change. Together we can raise the climate and nature emergencies up the political agenda as we approach the general election and into the first crucial months of a new parliament. This guide, and everything on the United for People, Climate and Nature hub, is for everyone - to make your voice count, united as part of this powerful and urgent movement across the UK.

Who are Hope for the Future?

At Hope for the Future (HFTF), we believe in the power of democratic engagement in calling for action on the climate and nature crisis. We recognise that getting your voice heard with politicians and candidates can be a challenge. That's why we're here to help. We are a climate communication and democratic engagement charity with 10 years of experience supporting people across the UK to build effective relationships with their local politicians to take action on climate change and nature.

We're really pleased to have created this guide with The Climate Coalition to help you engage with candidates on the doorstep and in the local community - and equip you to make those conversations count! To find out more about Hope for the Future and our work you can visit our website at: www.hftf.org.uk



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[Find your constituency on the Local Intelligence Hub](#)

Your Prospective Parliamentary Candidates

Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs) are the people who will be standing in the general election on 4th July, including your current Member of Parliament (MP) if they are standing again. All candidates will now be focused on being visible in and responsive to their communities to increase their chance of electoral success. Meeting with them before the election means that you can get to know candidates and build a relationship with them before they are in office, moving issues higher up their agenda.

Some constituency boundaries have changed considerably since the last election. You can find the candidates already agreed by the parties on The Climate Coalition's [Local Intelligence Hub](#). You'll also find other very useful background information for your conversations with candidates such child and fuel poverty statistics, insights on local climate and nature issues - as well as links to local groups you might want to contact.

A great opportunity

If we want to see ambitious policy, for climate and nature, we need to show an appetite for that change, and that starts with us as communities. This is your chance to get your voice heard by your local candidates - and that in turn impacts on the national conversation.

The organisations that form The Climate Coalition, and other partners, are joining forces to encourage their supporters to talk to candidates - together we are a powerful force!

If you are part of a campaign in your area then speaking to your candidates could also be beneficial to you. Most parliamentary candidates are well connected people who have been active in their local areas and they might hold positions such as local councillor, parliamentary staff or be a community or business leader.

Connecting with candidates can build strong and useful connections for local campaigns - even if the person is not elected.



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Political Neutrality

If you are contacting candidates as a supporter of one of The Climate Coalition's 130 member organisations or representing your local charity or community organisation, then it is especially important that we all comply with charity and electoral law.

It's critical for activity associated with The Climate Coalition, and the United for People, Climate and Nature campaign developed by its members, that we do not give support, or appear to give support to a political party or candidate, or for or against a group of candidates when we are planning, publicising and running events/activities.

The Electoral Commission guidance states: '*Charities must not support or oppose any particular political party or candidate.*' Detailed guidance on this and more can be found at [Electoral Commission.org.uk](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk) and we have summarised the key info in our [Guide to Hosting Climate and Nature Hustings](#). Of course, writing in a purely personal capacity is a matter for individuals.

Making contact

There are lots of ways in which you might meet your candidates, whether at an arranged meeting or hustings event, or on your doorstep. This guide sets out ways to make that engagement both more likely and more effective.

We'd encourage you to contact your candidates to try to meet them but you can adapt this same approach of researching their motivations and finding common ground works for preparing for any conversation or email or letter contact with your candidates - and in fact any local politicians.





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To build a genuine and effective relationship with your candidates, writing to them and requesting a meeting is a great way to start.

To find candidates' email addresses the resource www.whocanivotefor.co.uk is very useful. The majority of candidates are now known (and the nomination process for candidates to stand in the general election closes in early June).



Local Intelligence Hub

You can find a list of candidates at www.whocanivotefor.co.uk and on the Local Intelligence Hub where you'll also find useful local stats and other insight on the constituency.

Writing to candidates

A good place to start is by researching potential common ground between your campaign objectives and their interests and perspectives.

Candidates standing for office, like most of us, respond best when they feel seen and understood as a person. Those who have served as MPs will be used to high volumes of letters and emails from constituents. This will be different for candidates at elections who aren't MPs. All candidates will be prepared for and expect correspondence from local people - they want to serve the whole constituency. We know that politicians and candidates tend to respond more positively to correspondence which is personal and local. That's why tailoring your letter/email is important.

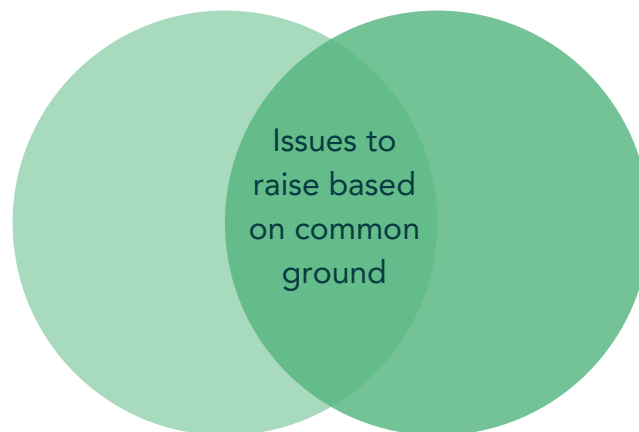
Doing some research into the candidates that you are going to contact is the first step to creating a personalised letter and toward positive engagement. This doesn't have to be exhaustive, you just need to know a bit more about who they are, what might they be interested in, and where might you have common interests. This could be done through looking at their social media platforms and websites, any election material they have produced and distributed online or in person, any news articles they have written or appear in, or even just through word of mouth by asking around in your community!



Picking your topic

Below is a helpful diagram to use when thinking about the topic area of choice to discuss with your candidates. Focusing on the area in the middle of the Venn Diagram can help you decide which topic area is most suitable for your letter. Some will be motivated by leading the way with technological and scientific expertise required by the climate crisis. Others may be motivated by the concept of working towards a 'just transition', green jobs and pursuing policies of 'climate justice'. Candidates will also have an interest in current important local issues in your community.

**Your
interests**



**Politician/
Candidate
interests**

Your area of common ground doesn't have to be a whole policy area. It could be something small, such as attending the same event. If you have difficulty picking an area of common ground that is directly relevant to your topic then you can also use elements from your personal life. You could have attended the same primary school or share the same hobby like cycling for example - this is a good way to start building rapport with candidates who may be less engaged with the climate change agenda as something you can build upon throughout and after the election.

With a bit of digging, you should be able to find relevant facts and information to make your topic area really relevant to your local area, for additional help check out the [Local Intelligence Hub](#) and enter your postcode.





Motivations

When you are planning your letters, it can also be helpful to think of what could be motivating your candidates to run for office.

These motivations could include a sense of public service, a drive to represent the community they live in, or to offer leadership in a particular area of policy. A sense of what is motivating candidates can help you with framing the issues you raise.

Tailored requests

Before your meeting/s it can be helpful to think of an action you would like them to take/ issue you would want to see them raise.

Below we have compiled examples of few types of requests that you could tailor towards the candidate/s and your topic. It's not an exhaustive list - be creative in thinking about what they could do to help us achieve real action on the climate and nature emergencies.

If you need help developing an ask, **don't hesitate to reach out to us at Hope for the Future** as we can support you in this process.

Make a proposal for official party policy through an existing party official

Meet with you to discuss a topic

Attend an event like a hustings or community meeting

Make a statement in the local press or on social media

Sign a pledge



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Template letter

Here you'll find some guidance on what you could include in a letter to your candidates.

EXAMPLE LETTER

Body Your name and address

Full name

Re: The main focus of the conversation

Include this to ensure the main aim of the letter is clear.

Introduction

- Introduce yourself: Include relevant details about yourself such as where you live, any previous engagements you have had with the candidate, and if you're representing a local group
- Introduce your topic: Briefly outline what your topic is. This part only needs to be one sentence, such as: "The key issue for me at this election is local transport links. I am contacting you regarding your plans, if you are elected/re-elected, to improve low carbon and active travel in our local area"

Acknowledgement

- Candidates like all of us, like to feel heard and appreciated. This, in turn, will make them more receptive to your letter. Acknowledging positive actions, statements, and/or commitments that the candidate has made can be a useful way to build a positive relationship between you both on an area where you share common ground. This information can be hard to find, especially if your candidate has not stood for election before, so don't worry if you can't find personal information for this stage. However, many candidates are councillors, local campaigners or play big roles in local communities so this may help when looking for positive actions to acknowledge. You can also use election pledges made by the candidate in their, or their party's, campaign material.



Topic for Discussion

- This section will look different in every letter, but usually consists of two or three short paragraphs. Any topic you may chose to write about is, like your chosen candidate, unique, so it is important that this section is personal and tailored based on your topic, candidate, and local area (check out the [Local Intelligence Hub](#) for local info on the big climate topics).
- Provide the context of the issue(s) that you would like to discuss
- What the issue is, the background of the issues, any data and information locally that demonstrates this importance
- Why this issue is important to you and the local area, and links to national and international issues as applicable

Request a meeting or action

- You can now ask the candidate to take a specific action, such as signing a pledge. Secondly, you could request a meeting with the candidate to discuss your topic in person. In person meetings are a good way to build personal relationships and make an impression on the candidate. If they are elected, you will be starting your relationship with your newly elected MP on solid footing!

Highlight the importance of acting for climate change and nature to you.

Sign Off

Other routes to engagement

Community Visit: Through your letter you may arrange a community visit with your candidate/s or attend a community meeting, event or visit that is already planned and advertised. If this is the case, then it is a great chance to engage them on the issue that you want to bring up. A good example of this could be inviting your local MP/candidates to your Great Big Green Week event.

Hustings: Another route to engaging with your candidates is through a hustings event. A hustings is a meeting where election candidates address potential voters. You can either host a hustings event yourself or if there already is one, you can attend it. At a hustings event, you could ask candidates questions directly and compare their answers to each other. Our guide to [Hosting a Hustings Event on Climate and Nature](#) offers more useful information - and if you need more help do get in touch via our website.





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Doorstep conversations

We all appreciate that one candidate cannot knock on every local door, so if you do have campaigners at your door, they may be campaign staff/volunteers for the candidate. You could ask them to pass on that you would like to talk to the candidate about climate and nature. It's also important not to invite canvassers into your home. It's not easy to check credentials and it's important to keep everyone safe and comfortable in this process.

If you do get to speak to the candidate though, you could be speaking to your next MP - it's powerful and valuable time, however brief.

Our friends and coalition partners at WWF-UK have created this poster. It's an additional, useful and really visual way that together we can let candidates know on the doorsteps that we would like to talk to all candidates about climate and nature. You may be in a position to print extra copies for your neighbours, or share with colleagues or groups you belong to.

You can download the poster [here](#).

You might want to draw candidates' attention to these posters going up in your area, letting them know it's because those constituents, like you, want to see all political parties to commit to cut emissions, restore nature and support those hardest hit by climate change at home and around the world.





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Here, you will find some areas for engagement on the doorstep, which work best if you connect them to your family and community - so if you have family with you, you can refer to your hopes and fears for them in the future, or you might talk about the local economy and how that affects your business, jobs or the local high street - linking that to what action on the climate might also do for your community.

You might want to give some thought to how you might approach talking about what matters to you and others in our movement in ways that encourage the candidate to listen and understand that this matters to you and the wider community.

Thinking about questions to ask candidates on the door step

Ask candidates about their plans, and tell them what matters to you. Why do you care - how are the people, things and places you love already affected? **You can find some examples here:**

- 'I've seen (on the Climate Coalition's Local Intelligence Hub) that X percentage of households in this constituency are in fuel poverty - how would you help us get warmer homes that don't cost the earth to heat.'
- 'How will the country replace polluting fossil fuel energy with sustainable renewables?'
- 'I know lots of local children have asthma, etc - how would you support cleaner air through investment in walking, cycling and public transport and speeding up the shift to electric vehicles?'
- 'How will we address loss and damage caused by climate change in the hardest hit countries?' 'Would your party deliver on on promises to provide funding to help poorer countries adapt so they are more resilient to the pressures of climate change, and pursue sustainable development?'
- 'Could the UK increase the budget for nature-friendly farming and provide guidance on a climate-friendly diet?'
- 'How will you protect and restore the UK's priceless forests, rivers and moors, and establish a right to clean air, water and access to nature?'





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Next steps

However you think you might start a conversation with your local candidates, visit the [United for People Climate and Nature hub](#) for more on campaigning this election and into the crucial first months of a new parliament. Hope for the Future are also happy to offer individual support to help you make your voice count this year.

Remember, your candidates want to hear from you! Engaging with them is your opportunity to have your voice heard on the climate and nature issues that you are passionate about and move them up the agenda.

You may also want to think about hosting a hustings event in your local area. Hustings events are an important way of building relationships with candidates and setting out a framework for holding them to account. Additionally, these community-led events help strengthen the local movement for action on climate change and protecting nature, building connections for future community events and campaigns.

Hope for the Future can provide additional support for hosting a hustings, and don't forget to check out the [United for People, Climate and Nature hub](#), here you can see what else is happening in your area including other groups you could connect with.

[Find the United for People,
Climate and Nature Hub here](#) 



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