



# The Big Ask

## Autumn 2007

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How to use this guide:

- Please read it (and Part 2 with the background information)
- Take it to your group meeting. Celebrate all the great work you have done to get so far
- Discuss what you want to do
- Organise options into a project plan
- Write up a parallel media plan
- Let us help – send us a copy of your plan for feedback
- Put your plan into action and contact your MP

#### 1. Summary of what we are asking

- Autumn 2007 is a crunch point in the progress of the Climate Change Bill.
- The draft Climate Change Bill was published for consultation in Spring 2007 and is currently being redrafted by Government. We expect the revised Climate Change Bill to be published in November 2007.
- Since the publication of the draft Climate Change Bill we have been suggesting 3 key ways the Bill could be strengthened:
  - **Bigger cuts.** The Government proposes a 60 per cent cut of carbon dioxide by 2050. We need reductions of at least 80 per cent.
  - **Annual targets.** The Government wants five year budgets for CO<sub>2</sub>. We want shorter targets - to hold the current Parliament to account.
  - **Aviation and shipping.** International flights and shipping emissions are excluded. We want these included.

- We want MPs to be pushing for these 3 asks.
- They will only do that if they are under pressure from their constituents.
- That is why we are asking you to focus on The Big Ask over the Autumn with these aims:
  - Make sure your **MP knows their constituents want them to vote** for a strong Climate Change Bill (by sending them lots of postcards and letters and visiting them personally).
  - For your MP to make **public statements** in support of a strong Climate Change Bill (in the local press, and through public speaking in local meetings and the House of Commons).
  - That your MP **contacts Ministers**, including Environment Minister Hilary Benn, asking them to strengthen the Climate Change Bill in the 3 key ways.

## 2. What we want MPs to do

There are 3 things we want all MPs to do:

1. Know that a strong Climate Bill this is the number one issue for their constituents.
2. Make public statements (in letter form, verbally at public meetings, and in the local media) stating their commitment to strengthening the Climate Bill.
3. Contact the relevant Ministers (Hilary Benn as the environment Minister, but all members of the Cabinet and Gordon Brown also important) asking that they support a Climate Bill which has the key improvements we have been calling for.

We want **MPs to speak and ultimately vote in Parliament in support of strengthening the Climate Bill.**

- **Are there priority MPs?**

All MPs are important as they all have a vote that they can use to support either a tough or a weak Bill. However as the majority of MPs are currently Labour, it will be the Labour MPs who hold the key to improving the Bill. If you are in an area where you have more than one MP, and one of those is a Labour MP, then this may be the best use of your efforts. Equally, if you are near a Labour MP constituency where there is no local group, then it would be great if you could contact community groups in that area to ask them to take action.

- **What if my MP is fully supportive already?**

Please keep the pressure on. It's easy for MPs to have been supportive, but to then feel they have made enough of a difference and settle for whatever the Government offers. They may become rather elusive when you try and pin them down to exactly what they are doing to do to support the Bill. And even if your MP is 100% behind the Bill and our asks, they probably want to be able to show Ministers that they are under pressure to vote for a tough Bill – especially if they end up deciding to rebel against the Government line on this Bill. However, if you live in an area where you could also help put pressure on a neighbouring Labour MP, then please focus on that MP.

## 3. Suggested activities for your group

See also 'Section 3 – Action' of the new Local Groups handbook for more advice

### 3.1 Holding an Inconvenient Truth screening with an MP question and answer session – or holding a public meeting

There are still plenty of people who aren't sure about the science of climate change, and showing the Inconvenient Truth is a great way to get the message across. Following it up with a 'Question and Answer' session with the MP has proven a great way to focus the debate on to the Climate Change Bill.

#### Top tips

- Your MPs diary will be busy – contact them early on to make sure they can come along. If they have seen the film before, then arrange for them to sneak in 5 minutes before then end and just take part in the Q&A.
- As soon as the date is in your MPs diary, let us know and we will organize a speaker from Friends of the Earth. Contact Alex Phillips on 020 7566 1673 or [alex.phillips@foe.co.uk](mailto:alex.phillips@foe.co.uk)
- If you are putting on a public screening of a feature film you will need a license. If your screening venue already has a Public Video Screening (PVS) license then you do not need to buy an additional license. If it does not, you need to purchase a Single Title License, which should cost £75 plus VAT, you can do so from: <http://www.filmbank.co.uk/>
- If you want to get a feel for previous showings, scroll down to the bottom of this page to watch clips of the Q&A with David Miliband and Menzies Campbell:  
[http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/news/inconvenient\\_truth/index.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/news/inconvenient_truth/index.html)
- For more information check out:  
<http://community.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/materials.html#film>

### 3.2 Using your MPs surgery and going to visit your MP

Face to face lobbying helped put the Climate Change Bill in the Queen's Speech. Meeting your MP is a hundred times more powerful than one postcard. To meet your MP just contact their office and arrange a time, or just go along to one of their standard surgeries. While you are there, try to raise the 3 main ways that we would like the Bill to be stronger. If they agree, then ask them to make representations to Ministers on this issue. Make sure to ask them to record their opinions in a letter and send it to you afterwards, so you can follow up on the meeting.

### 3.3 Getting a commitment in the media

(see also 'The Big Ask Media Messages' in the Appendix on the back page of this document, and 'Section 4 – Profile' of the Local Groups Handbook for more advice)

Getting good local and regional media coverage is a key way of getting your MP to publicly state their support and for you to get your message across. MPs closely follow the local and regional media and joint media work with MPs can engage them in the campaign giving them the valuable media coverage they want. If MPs have shown public support for a stronger bill it also makes it harder for them to back down.

Ideally, we'd like to ask groups to try to achieve two pieces of local media coverage (in print, on radio or TV) in their constituency by the second reading of the Climate Bill. For example, this could be an event and a photo stunt. To have as much impact as possible, it would be fantastic to involve the MPs too.

To help you we've added photo opportunity ideas and template press releases to the Community website.

### Template press releases

New to media work? Pushed for time? Download a template and tweak it to make it more interesting for your local media. Use the 'How to...Use the Media' and 'How to...Write a Killer Press Release' guides for help. Templates will be available for: MP visits: pub quizzes, Inconvenient Truth screenings, and photo opportunities.

**If you want to do more** here are a few ideas for media-friendly campaigning with your MPs:

- **Visiting your MP?** Try a photo stunt showing a muscular 'strongman' delivering postcards to the MP to highlight our call for a 'tough' bill.
- **Involve other community groups:** Try to find groups who could bring a new angle to photo opportunities with the MP, such as karate or dance groups.
- **Use the online march:** Ask a local celebrity such as a well known local actress or religious figure to support the Big Ask and film a clip for the online march. Tell your local media and use it to invite a response from the MP or encourage others to join the campaign.
- **Gather support** from a range of local people who represent the community, such as a school teacher/business person/religious leader/nurse/pub landlord/retired person. Or get an entire street to back the campaign. The media can cover it as a collective voice of your community calling for your MP to take action. Ask your MP to give a quote or be part of the photo.
- **Local climate solutions:** invite an MP (or if your MP is not very responsive, a different local figure - such as the Mayor) to try out a local climate solution such as cycling to work for a week - link it by highlighting the need for the government to take action as well as individuals.

If you need advice or want to suggest additional templates, just contact your Network Developer.

### Linking local stories to The Big Ask

The bottom line is if you don't mention The Big Ask campaign, neither will your local media. It sounds obvious, but where possible try to link your media work to The Big Ask. If there are local environment issues in the headlines, jump on the back of it - suggest an action, refer people to the web or your group.

For instance:

*"Its great to see that Underworld is encouraging staff to travel to work by bike. It shows that people in Wetherfield are willing to do their bit in tackling climate change. It's time the Government did their bit too. That's why we are asking [name], our local MP, to demand the Government strengthens its proposed climate change law."*

With practice you'll get more confident at linking stories. Do send us copies when you're successful.

### Where to go for more help and resources

There's a range of media resources to help you. Take a look at the guides on the Community website:

[http://community.foe.co.uk/resource/how\\_tos/index.html](http://community.foe.co.uk/resource/how_tos/index.html) and  
<http://community.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/materials.html>

- How to...Use the media
- How to...Write a killer press release
- How to...Get your letter in the paper
- How to...Run a photo opportunity/stunt
- How to...Give a great interview
- Big Ask event template press releases
- How to...Fake it as a photographer
- How to...Use the online march
- Online march MP poster (to hold while filming their video clip)
- How to...Get your message across
- Generic press release template

### 3.4 Local Networking

For the Government to take our insistence on a stronger Climate Bill seriously, we need support beyond our traditional members.

Friends of the Earth local groups have already managed to get scout brigades, churches, shops and Pensioner Action Groups from around the country pledging to support The Big Ask and writing to their MP. Colchester Friends of the Earth has even got their local karate club signed up – now that's inventive.

It would be great if we had even more local community groups showing their support.

You can help us by simply asking groups you know to show their support by completing the pledge form. We have information for them, and have also created materials to help you plan and carry out talks.

Please visit <http://community.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/materials.html#engaging> or contact Jill Andrews, Activist Information Officer, on 020 7566 1677 or e-mail [localgroups@foe.co.uk](mailto:localgroups@foe.co.uk) for materials and information.

The good news is that – at the time of going to press – Christian Aid, World Development Movement, RSPB, Oxfam, CAFOD, Women's Environmental Network, and Airportwatch local activists are also being encouraged to take action on the Bill, so there may already be other groups raring to go in your area. Contact us to find out how you can get in touch with the activists near you.

### 3.5 Season of events - street campaigning, pub quizzes, or socials

The simplest yet effective form of campaigning is inviting people to sign postcards. MPs take note when they start to receive hundreds of cards on the same issue.

It's simple and easy, just order some postcards and take to the streets to remind MPs their constituents care.

If you would prefer to hold an event, then why not hold a **pub quiz** or a **big ask social**?

A pub quiz is a lighthearted way to get more people involved in the campaign and raise the profile of your group at the same time. And if a whole evening of climate questions seems a bit hard core, why not organize a quiz and include a climate round?

<http://community.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/materials.html#pub>

Or if you fancy something a bit more friendly, then the Big Ask socials are a good way forward. There is plenty of scope for being inventive – as Camden Friends of the Earth showed when they organized a Big Green Curry evening in a local restaurant.

<http://community.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/materials.html#socials>

## 4. Resources

### 4.1 Printed resources for any stalls etc

- **Postcards** (the main resource, still valid all autumn, available in large numbers)
- **Booklets** (A6 sized, to give to anyone who signs a postcard, available in large numbers)
- **Friend magazine** (a collection of A5 cards summarising the Big Ask campaign in 2007. A great all-in-one resource to give to local green shops, libraries etc)
- **Badges** (small black and white badges with The Big Ask logo. Great for kids and adults alike)
- **A2 posters** (large green image, same as the postcard to use for a backdrop)
- **A4 posters** (green image, with space to overprint your own event details)
- **A5 flyers** (2 to a A4 page, so you can overprint details of your events and the cut in half)
- **Community group pledges** (for non-Friends of the Earth groups who would like to show their support to The Big Ask)
- **Change Your World magazine** (Special Big Ask issue Sept 2007, extras available for any community groups, new local group members etc)

You can see all these materials online here:

<http://community.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/materials.html>

To order any of these materials contact: Alex Phillips on 020 7566 1673 or [alex.phillips@foe.co.uk](mailto:alex.phillips@foe.co.uk)

### 4.2 DVD resources

- **The Big Ask history** – an inspiring 6:48min DVD which runs through news coverage of the Big ask from start to present day. (Please note: we do not have permission from news outlets to use these clips, so please use with caution)
- **The Big Ask solutions** – a short 3:00min DVD intended for directly after an Inconvenient Truth showing, to set the scene and provide a more positive and upbeat platform to start a Question and Answer debate.

To order DVDs contact: Alex Phillips on 020 7566 1673 or [alex.phillips@foe.co.uk](mailto:alex.phillips@foe.co.uk)

### 4.3 Speaker for an event

- If you are able to get your MP along to a public meeting then we will commit to providing a speaker from Friends of the Earth for your event.

As soon as you have your MP date booked contact: Alex Phillips on 020 7566 1673 or [alex.phillips@foe.co.uk](mailto:alex.phillips@foe.co.uk)

## 5. More information

### 5.1 Personal Advice

- Your network developer is here to help provide advice and suggestions for activities your group might like to do over the Autumn.
- If you aren't sure who your network developer is, below is a list of names and phone numbers. All emails follow the pattern of firstname.surname@foe.co.uk

#### **North East. North West and Yorkshire and Humber**

Jess Dolan (0113 389 9964) and Neil Kingsnorth. (0113 389 9952)

#### **West Midlands and East Midlands**

Louise Hazan (0121 643 8017)

#### **East of England**

Howard Whitehead (020 7566 4083)

#### **South East**

Richard Martin (020 7566 1660)

#### **London**

Shared between Richard Martin (020 7566 1660) and Howard Whitehead (020 7566 4083)

#### **South West**

No network developer, but Mike Birkin the regional campaigns co-ordinator is happy to help. (0117 942 0128)

#### **Northern Ireland**

Niall Bakewell (028 9089 7592)

#### **Wales**

Bleddyn Lake (029 2022 9577)

- If you have any **media** specific advice then Tori Ray in the media team may be able to help. She will be prioritising her time helping groups in key areas. Your network developer can help put you in touch if needed.
- If you have a more **general** query or just aren't sure about anything then please contact Alex Phillips, the climate campaign assistant (020 7566 1673)

## Appendix – The Big Ask media messages

No matter what media work you are doing, the key to getting your point across is being clear about what you are saying and repeating your key messages.

You don't have to include *all* of these points in *every* press release but choose the messages that are most suitable depending on the event you are doing. Whether you just use the top line or the fuller details, the messages below will help you get powerful media coverage.

These are *very* top line messages, so don't include the more subtle issues like the Select Committee reports. The idea is that you can choose one or two key points to use in an interview or press release.

### 1. **The climate change law must have muscle.**

The law must commit this and future Governments to setting annual targets for cutting the UK's carbon dioxide emissions. These targets must deliver cuts of, on average, at least 3 percent per year.

Managing our carbon emissions on an annual basis - in the same way we manage our economy - is good for the environment and good for business.

A strong law would allow the UK to play its part in tackling climate change and would set an example that the rest of the world could follow.

### 2. **The solutions are out there.**

We have the means to make the necessary cuts in our carbon dioxide emissions through a mixture of sensible energy-saving measures, clean and safe energy sources, engineering innovations. The law would allow these solutions to flourish.

We can keep the lights on, keep industry buzzing and continue to get around in style.

### 3. **Most MPs have backed The Big Ask. Now they must deliver.**

An overwhelming majority of MPs (412 or 64 per cent) have signed a Parliamentary petition calling for a climate law which commits the UK to annual cuts in its carbon dioxide emissions of three per cent.

They now have the opportunity to deliver this law – they must take it.

### 4. **Everyone, together, everywhere. Join in and pass it on.**

The Big Ask is huge - there is overwhelming support amongst politicians, the public and businesses.

Join in and put your weight behind it too. Numbers count - tell your friends, family, colleagues, neighbours.