

THE BIG CLIMATE Reconnection

SPRING 2011

LOBBY PACK



WWW.THEBIGCONNECTION.ORG



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The Big Climate Connection is organised by the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition: 11 million strong, we are the committed supporters, campaigners, hearts, minds and voices of over 100 organisations.

INTRODUCTION: THE BIG CLIMATE RECONNECTION

Reconnect with your MP and your community, to reconnect the issues.

In November 2010, people came together all over the country to lobby more than 220 MPs as part of the Big Climate Connection.

This had a big impact on MPs. And we received inspiring feedback about how this joint activity helped to bring people and groups together in their communities to act for change.

In spring 2011 there is a clear need to talk to MPs again – the Energy Bill will be debated in parliament and Government will be deciding on next steps after the Cancún climate talks. More information about what we'll be asking for will be regularly updated at: www.stopclimatechaos.org/bcc2-asks

A key way that you will be able to connect with others in your area and keep the pressure up on your MP this spring will be organising a lobby meeting with your MP in April.

This pack is intended to help you organise a lobby for the first time or to continue pushing your MP at this crucial time whilst strengthening local networks and bringing new people together in your community.

Some groups will also be organising public meetings with their MPs in spring, you can find out more about plans for public meetings at: www.thebigconnection.org

Best of luck with your campaigning. Do get in touch if you need any help or support in your work (details on page 18).

***“I agree with you, I want to do it,
now make me do it.”***

Franklin D. Roosevelt

WHAT IS A LOBBY?

Lobbying simply means meeting your MP, explaining your views and asking him or her to act on them. MPs are our representatives, it's their job to be informed about their constituents' views in reaching decisions.

In November 2010, people all over the country met more than 200 MPs to lobby them about climate change. Many of these had never met their MPs before but got a very positive reception, with most MPs very interested in hearing their views.

Lobbying is not a specialist skill, but the information in this pack can help you make your event as successful possible.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

You can find out if other people in your area are planning to lobby your MP by entering your postcode on the map at www.thebigconnection.org

If there is a coordinator in your area, you can get in touch with them to find out if they've set up a meeting. If not, why not sign up as a coordinator and set up a meeting yourself? There's guidance on how to do this in this pack. Please do let us know you're setting up a meeting.



WHAT WILL YOU NEED TO DO?

If you sign up to be a constituency coordinator you will play a key role in arranging the lobby in your area, but we will provide you with all the information and support to enable you to do so.

YOUR KEY TASKS

Essential tasks for organising a lobby:

- Set up a meeting with your MP (pages 4–5).
- Sign up on the lobby map as coordinator for your constituency, or let us know you are coordinating a lobby.
- Keep others that are signed up in your area updated (page 6).
- Keep us updated (list of mobilisers & contact details on page 18).

Making your lobby much more effective (in order of importance):

- Get other groups and individuals in your area involved (pages 7–8).
- Organise a pre-lobby meet up with your lobby group.
- Relate the lobby asks to your local area.
- Try to get media coverage (pages 11–12).
- Follow up on your lobby (pages 13–14).



SETTING UP A LOBBY MEETING WITH YOUR MP

Find out who your MP is, and their contact details by:

- Visiting www.theyworkforyou.com, and typing in your postcode.
- Calling the House of Commons inquiry line: 020 7219 4272.

Contact your MP to arrange a date for the lobby.

Experience from the Big Climate Connection lobby in November showed us that it can be tricky setting up a meeting date with your MP, so it's best to start as soon as possible and be persistent!

- 1** You should start by sending your MP an email or letter (you can use the sample letter on page 5).
- 2** After a week, if you haven't heard back from your MP or their staff, send a follow up email to remind them of your request.
- 3** After another week, if you still haven't heard back it's time to phone them. You might not get through straight away, but if you leave a message mentioning that you have emailed them several times, they should get back to you.
- 4** If you don't hear back, then keep ringing!

This can be quite time consuming, so you might want to ask others in your group to help with chasing up, but do make sure they make it clear that they are part of the same group as you, to avoid confusion.

Of course if you are getting started close to April, when you want to hold your lobby, it's worth phoning straight away!

Decide on the best time for your meeting. You will need to be flexible with your timing to make sure you do get a meeting with your MP. If your MP gets back to you with a set of options, bear in mind when other lobbyists are most likely to be available (Saturdays and early evenings are best), and ideally check with the group before confirming a date with your MP's office.

SAMPLE LETTER FOR SETTING UP LOBBY MEETINGS

*[Your name
and address]*

[Jo Bloggs] MP
Constituency office address

Dear *[Jo Bloggs]* MP

Re: The Big Climate Connection, April 2011

I am writing to request a meeting with you in April *[include more specific dates if necessary]* to discuss climate change, and related issues like energy security, fuel poverty, and jobs. This will be one of hundreds of meetings taking place between supporters of the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition and their MPs around the country.

Please could you let me know when you are available to meet with myself and others in *[constituency]* in April *[or specific dates]*. As there is likely to be a group of us meeting you, if possible please let me know a range of dates that you are available, so we can find the best date for all of us.

I look forward to seeing you in April.

Yours sincerely

[Your name]

If your MP is proving difficult to pin down:

- 1 Persist! It is your right to talk to your MP about issues that concern you. Try emphasising the number and diversity of constituents or mentioning that there will be media there if relevant.
- 2 Be as flexible as possible with dates.
- 3 Ask to meet with someone else from the MP's office, who can pass on your concerns (particularly with high profile MPs).
- 4 If you really can't get a date set up, why not get your group together and take a photo? You can send that to your MP along with a letter signed by all of you, outlining the lobby asks and explaining that you would have liked to meet them personally to talk about these issues.

TELLING THE OTHERS THAT ARE SIGNED UP IN YOUR AREA

You will be able to see how many people have signed up to the lobby in your area by looking at your area summary on the Big Climate Connection map (www.thebigconnection.org).

Once you're signed up as a coordinator, you can also use the map to keep others updated about your meeting by:

- **Posting your lobby meeting as an 'event' on the map:** This will show up as a purple pin, and give people details of your lobby event with a link to a webpage with more details, if you have one (e.g. a facebook event).
- **Sending messages to other local lobbyists** that have signed up in your constituency. This allows you to keep your group updated, and get them involved in your plans for the lobby without them having to make their email address publicly visible.

There is a step by step guide to using the map at:

www.stopclimatechaos.org/bcc-map-guide

If you don't want to sign up as a coordinator on the map, please let us know your plans so we can let others in your area know (contact details page 18).



MAKING LOCAL CONNECTIONS

By joining together we can show the Government the extent and range of support for taking action on climate change.

As well as increasing the number of people at your lobby, linking with other groups has another advantage: MPs pay more attention. The more diverse your lobby group, the more you represent a wide range of your MP's constituents, rather than a small interest group.

There are many different groups interested in climate-related issues, some have been campaigning for a long time and others are just waiting to become involved in climate campaigning!

Local community groups:

These groups will help highlight local interest in climate change and they should have a good idea of what other groups are in your area, so are a good place to start.

NGO local groups:

Many NGOs have local groups. Some, such as Friends of the Earth and Oxfam will have some experience of campaigning, others like Women's Institutes may be less associated with campaigning but may still be interested in getting involved.

Professionals:

Climate change issues influence many individuals because of their professions: health professionals, local insulators, farmers... the list goes on. You could approach these groups directly or via local associations.

Groups interested in efficient homes:

Many groups are interested in improving efficiency in homes because of social justice and fuel poverty issues. Getting these groups involved would be great for broadening your local network.

Faith groups:

Faith organisations e.g. Christian Aid or Islamic Relief also have local groups that are likely to be interested in joining you. You could also invite your local church, mosque or synagogue to join your lobby.

Youth:

Young people joined many of the lobbies in November. You could approach students via youth groups like People & Planet, or encourage local teachers to get school children involved. More guidance at: www.stopclimatechaos.org/bcc-youth-toolkit.pdf

PREPARING FOR YOUR LOBBY MEETING

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON YOUR MP:

Before you meet your MP, it is worth finding out about them at www.theyworkforyou.com or <http://politics.guardian.co.uk/aristotle> including:

- Is he/she interested in climate change?
- Does he/she hold any particular responsibility in the Government or opposition that might be relevant?

MEET UP WITH THE OTHER LOCAL LOBBYISTS:

You will hopefully be a group of concerned citizens from all walks of life meeting your MP and it will help you get your messages across if you can meet the others before your lobby.

It is often useful to divide up what you're saying so that your MP hears all the different voices in your group, but you may only have 15 minutes with your MP so you'll need to plan this beforehand! It might be helpful to give priority to those who haven't lobbied their MP before so that the MP hears a range of new voices.

RELATE THE ASKS TO YOUR LOCAL AREA:

Your MP will listen more to what you say if you can show how the issues are connected with your area, so think about how you can use local examples to get their attention: Perhaps a new business has just started up in your area to help people insulate their homes, creating jobs for local people? Maybe there's a real shortage of homes with decent insulation in your area?

THINK ABOUT WHETHER YOU WANT TO ADD YOUR OWN, LOCAL ASK:

If there are any current local issues such as a wind-farm being contested in your constituency, the Big Climate Connection meeting will be a great time to lobby your MP about these issues.

But do remember that time will be limited, so think carefully about what you add in.

TOP TIPS FOR MEETING YOUR MP

MPs often say that face to face meetings with their constituents are one of the things that has the most impact on them. Don't assume that your MP will know any more than you do about the issue of climate change, and remember: you don't need to be an expert.

Suggested questions and a briefing on the Energy Bill and Cancún will be available from: www.stopclimatechaos.org/bcc2-resources nearer the time. This will be updated as we learn more about the amendments to the Energy Bill and progress after the UN climate talks in Cancún.

Here are some tips for making your meeting a success:

- Keep it short: You may only have 15 minutes, so you will need to be concise, and leave time for your MP to respond. Clarify at the start how much time you have.
- Say at the start of the meeting what you want to achieve.
- Ask specific closed questions not open ended ones, or the MP will fill the time talking.
- Keep the discussion to the point: Your MP will probably be very charming and may attempt to change the subject or focus on one detail rather than answering your specific question. Be alert to this and firmly but politely re-focus the discussion.
- Take notes: This is crucial to record any commitments and so you can follow up important points.
- Make it clear you want to be updated by your MP after the meeting on any ongoing work they do related to the lobby asks – that way he or she will know you expect to see some action after the meeting!

WRITTEN INFORMATION

- A briefing paper will be available for you to print out nearer the time.
- You are not expected to know everything about the campaign asks. It is good to leave your MP with a written briefing, and to offer to follow up in writing with any further detail the MP needs.
- Hand over the briefing at the end of the meeting, not the start to avoid them reading whilst talking to you!

BEFORE AND AFTER THE MEETING

- It is a good idea to meet up with other activists for at least half an hour before the meeting to plan who will say what.
- It is also nice to plan time for 'post-match analysis' as well.

10 STEPS FOR LOCAL MEDIA COVERAGE

Getting media coverage for your Big Climate Connection event will ensure that many more people in your community notice your lobby and will increase pressure on your MP to act more vigorously on the climate challenges we face.

So although media coverage isn't essential, it can be a really useful addition to your lobby. If you don't have the time or energy to organise this, then maybe someone else in your area could?

These **10 steps** are to make the job as quick and easy possible:

- 1** A few weeks in advance of the event identify a person who can lead on media work for the group - you may already have someone in mind, or a simple email request might reveal someone who already has experience. This person should be the main contact person with the media. They can carry out steps 2–10.
- 2** Identify one or more people within the group who are happy to speak to the media. Experience is useful but not essential. If you have a particularly diverse group involved the media will want to talk to a few people (e.g. health professional, poverty worker, local business person, environmentalist, development campaigner) about why the lobby asks matter from their perspective.
- 3** Agree what you want to say to the media, the suggested main media messages are in our sample press release, but the media will also be interested in local angles and the particular interests of those attending the lobby.
- 4** Write a press release to send to the media (no more than 2 pages including quotes). You can see our sample press release at www.stopclimatechaos.org/bcc2-resources
- 5** Decide if you are going to produce a prop for the event: this could also be a photo opportunity for the media.
- 6** Let your MP's office know you are contacting the media, send them the press release and ask if they want to add a quote.

RESOURCES: MEDIA GUIDE

- 7 A week in advance of the lobby, phone the media, ask to speak to the news desk, and tell them you want to send them a press release (you can find out contact details from the internet or a telephone directory). It's also worth asking those within your local network if they have any good local media contacts. Be aware the media contacts might want to talk to you about your lobby when you call, so be prepared. If you are planning a photo opportunity then tell them early so they know to book a photographer.
- 8 Send the press release to your media contacts, and follow it up after you've sent it with a call to check they got it and ask whether they are going to do a story (journalists get so many press releases they often miss some, so the follow-up phone call is very important)
- 9 If you are thinking about organising a media photo opportunity, think about whether you want to hold your lobby somewhere interesting for a photo. Obviously you'll need to agree the location with the MP. You can also take your own photos to send to the media.
- 10 After your MP lobby, call the media to tell them how your event went, or send a post event press release with photos.

Working with the media is straightforward. The local media has no interest in misreporting or attacking you. You are an ordinary local person who wants to raise a concern. So the most important thing to remember is: be yourself.

Please check to see whether you got coverage afterwards and send copies to fiona@stopclimatechaos.org so we can evaluate the success of the events.



WHAT TO DO AFTER YOUR LOBBY

Once you've put your feet up and had a cuppa after all your hard work, there are a few things you can do to help make your lobby even more effective:

Write to your MP: Write a letter or send an email to thank your MP for their time, reiterate some of the points made and remind them of anything they offered to do.

Tell the local media and send them any photos you took: More tips on pages 11–12.

Tell us what happened and find out about the other meetings and lobbies: We'll be updating www.thebigconnection.org with news on the meetings and lobbies throughout the spring. You can see what's been going on and add your own news by:

- Following the Twitter hashtag [#bigconnect](https://twitter.com/bigconnect), and using it when you tweet about your lobby.
- Checking out photos and adding your own at: www.flickr.com/groups/big-connection
- Emailing us your stories at lobby@stopclimatechaos.org and checking out the website for stories from around the countries.

We will also send you a feedback form to fill in closer to the time, so we know what the MPs have committed to and how you found your lobby.

Help keep people connected: Just as you will have played a key role in bringing people together for your lobby, you could help with the next step in keeping people connected. There's more on keeping your network going on the next few pages.



CONTINUING LOCAL CONNECTIONS

The Big Climate Connection doesn't stop here!

After your lobby, you'll have seen how much stronger you are when you connect with others in your area. Why not carry on working together?

You don't need to meet every month or form a new group, you could just stay in touch and agree to come together when necessary.

WHY STAY CONNECTED?

By staying connected, you can:

- **Use your combined strength to mobilise around important local climate issues:** You could decide between you what you want to achieve as a network over the next year.
- **Keep the pressure on your MP:** You could aim to continue to meet your MP over the next year, perhaps every 3 months to review their progress, to provide mutual support for each other's efforts and to chivvy each other along. Your MP should keep you updated with any progress on the commitments they made during the lobby. If they don't, ask them for updates!

HOW TO STAY CONNECTED

You or your lobby coordinator may be happy to help keep people in touch but someone else, or several others, in your area may want to take on a leading role in keeping your local network connected.

There are a few things you could do to start the network on its next steps:

- Make sure you have each other's contact details!
- You could arrange a meet-up a couple of weeks after your lobby in a pub, a café, or your front room – to get an idea about who wants to continue working together as a network, and how.
- Or you could just agree after your lobby when next to work together, be it several weeks or several months on.

We'll be in touch after the Big Climate Connection to let you know about other opportunities to come together.

CHECKLIST FOR ORGANISING YOUR LOBBY

BEFORE THE LOBBY

Task	Done
Email/letter invitation to MP	
Follow up invitation with phone call	
Tell us when date is agreed – put on SCC website	
Invite other groups along to the lobby	
Agree where the lobby will take place	
Background research on your MP and their interests	
Consider how the lobby asks relate to your local area	
Meet up with other activists to discuss who will say what	
Decide on any prop(s) for the photo op – if applicable	
Agree who will do advance press work – if applicable	
Agree who does press work afterwards	
Decide who will take notes at the meeting	
Decide who will take photos at the end of the meeting – if applicable	
Print off any relevant briefings to take to your MP	
Prepare/ adapt, and send off your press release	

ON THE DAY

Meet with your lobby group half an hour before to talk through the plan	
Check how much time you have available	
Say at the start of the meeting what you want to achieve	
Take notes	
Take photos at the end	
Ask your MP to keep you updated on their work related to the lobby asks	

AFTER THE LOBBY

Send press release to local media	
Phone local newspaper journalists to follow up	
Send a thank you letter or email to your MP	
Upload your photos to Flickr	
Email lobby@stopclimatechaos.org to tell us how it went	
If you've asked your MP to do something – follow up to ensure they do it	
If your MP writes back, send copies to us (lobby@stopclimatechaos.org) and everyone who took part	

CASE STUDY

STEPH, BETHNAL GREEN

Our lobby was formed of people from a wide range of backgrounds: teachers, students, NHS clinicians, graphic designers and NGO campaigners to name but a few. Some were involved with NGOs like Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace or local activist groups (fair trade); others had no previous experience in campaigning but heard about the lobby from word of mouth and wanted to get involved. I was also approached by a Muslim youth organisation, which we will try to get more involved for future lobbies, as a large proportion of our community is Muslim (and Asian).

The broad range of skills and experience in the group made our lobby more effective, e.g: one group member took charge of liaising with our MP, our graphic designer helped produce eye catching props and organised photos and the NHS clinician could speak from experience about the poor health and social outcomes of poorly insulated housing.

As for general tips on running a lobby, I recommend:

- Use your group members' skills to best effect, particularly if some are artistic, have experience of lobbying their MP, have media contacts or are familiar with the issues.
- Similarly, do encourage those who may not have experience in any of these areas, but are still keen on getting involved.
- Use the contacts your group members have with local individuals/group or media to increase the size of your lobby and publicise it.
- Be persistent in contacting your MP. It took us several attempts to arrange our meeting. When we didn't get a response, our group called and emailed the parliamentary office en masse until we got our way!
- Before and after the lobby, meet regularly to ensure actions are taken and people know what's going on.
- Ensure the message you are delivering to your MP is clear, and do not go off track. While group members may have a variety of other issues they wish to discuss, they can do that at another time and place.
- While some group members speak to the MP, have others listen and interrupt the MP if s/he attempts to go off track or avoid a question.

CASE STUDY

MAURICE SPURWAY, EXETER

10 TIPS FOR BUILDING A LOBBY

- 1** It's useful to have an email list that you have developed over a period of time, and is up to date. If your list is general then it is likely that people in other groups will become members, which creates a cross-fertilisation of ideas.
- 2** Send out an email to introduce the idea of the lobby, and ask people to let you know if they want to come. Whet their appetite; this is a golden opportunity to work *with* your MP.
- 3** Get a surgery date with your MP booked up soon.
- 4** Start a facebook group and create a Facebook event. (Beware: Facebook people say they'll turn up, but not all of them do.) In our case our local MP was a member of the facebook group.
- 5** Of all those that are interested in coming to the meeting, build a new list so that you can send out specific updates. This list should be open to allow any of the people on this list to email the others. It is important in the first email to let people know that it is open, and the reason why. This list should not be used for any other reason than the lobby.
- 6** Don't be afraid to add in local issues to get your MP more interested. Our MP is a keen cyclist, so we made a point of introducing cycling into the mix of issues to discuss.
- 7** Don't treat your list as an amorphous group of people. Get to know the individual members well, and what they are interested in, so that they can play a part in building the lobby.
- 8** The lobby is not just about getting your MP to do something. It's about building a long term relationship. You can help your MP by briefing him/her. They can help you by telling you about political weak and strong points and giving useful party angled information.
- 9** Don't forget to involve the media early, followed by individual phone calls to check they're bringing a photographer etc.
- 10** A stunt is always useful as a hook to get the press interested. We didn't do much – just some A4 cards with individual letters that spell out the message when held up.

WHERE YOU CAN GET SUPPORT FOR YOUR LOBBY

We have a fabulous team of regional mobilisers around the country. They are volunteers and work only 1 day per week, but they are there to help you, so please do get in touch with them.

South West – Kate Mitchell
s.west@stopclimatechaos.org

South East – Emily Gould
s.east@stopclimatechaos.org

Eastern Region – Michael Uwins
east@stopclimatechaos.org

Greater London
london@stopclimatechaos.org

Midlands – Peter Robinson
midlands@stopclimatechaos.org

North – Beatrice Greenfield
north@stopclimatechaos.org

If you can't get in touch with your regional mobiliser, please email lobby@stopclimatechaos.org, or call 020 7802 9989.

Alternatively if you heard about the Big Climate Connection through one of the Stop Climate Chaos member organisations, they will also be able to support you.





**SIGN UP NOW AT
WWW.THEBIGCONNECTION.ORG**

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