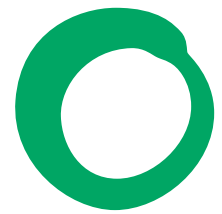


How to:



**Friends of
the Earth**

get your message across

The climate is changing; it's time to ask questions. The Big Ask public awareness campaign is all about creating debate and discussion across society to build broad-based support for action on climate change. We want as many people as possible talking about climate change and asking questions. Local Activism Co-ordinator Raoul Bhambral shares some top tips on how to get people to remember what you tell them

We want as many people as possible asking themselves and each other these questions:

- What is climate change?
- Why is climate change happening?
- Who does it affect?
- What can be done?

But we also want people to ask:

- What is my Government doing about climate change?
- What is my Local Authority doing?
- What are my friends and family doing?
- What am I doing?

Who?

What?

When?

Where?

How?

The Big Ask is an idea that goes to the very heart of what campaigning is all about.

Psyche yourself up

Direct communication with the general public can be hard work and can feel daunting at first, but most people find it gets easier with practice, and lots end up finding it hugely satisfying. Many of you already have experience as a result of activities and events you have taken part in previously; you can share this with less experienced group members to help build their confidence or teach them new techniques.

When preparing to talk to people about campaigns, it's helpful to bear in mind a bit of pop psychology about how our brains work. Read on...

The power of 3

We need to come up with strategies to make sure people remember the things we think are most important. The standard way to do this is to break the message down into a maximum of

three **3** small memorable chunks.

These are your **key messages**, which you aim to get across in the course of a conversation. Keeping your key messages clear and consistent is just as important when talking to your MP as it is when you are talking to the general public. It is probably best to prepare some messages as a group so you can repeat them over and over at any opportunity – **repetition** is the key. Try doing this in a group meeting, or a break-out session.

AUDIENCE PERCEPTION

People's impression of what you say (ie whether or not they take you seriously) will be based roughly on the following:

- 55 per cent on what you look like and your body language,
- 38 per cent on how you say it, **and**
- 7 per cent on the content of what you say.

AUDIENCE MEMORY

Most of what you say will be forgotten. People tend to forget around:

- 25 per cent of what you said after 24 hours,
- 50 per cent after 48 hours,
- 80 per cent after four days, **but**
- the remaining 20 per cent may stay with them for some time

Key messages

You may wish to develop more local messages and reinforce them with a fact

Message 1

Tackling climate change is possible - the ultimate solution is political action. If you hear one thing from us it will be “write to your MP”

Message 2

We are using the voice of the public to make a difference. We will keep you informed about the campaign successes that you have helped achieve.

Message 3

To support our Bill and to show that making a 3 per cent cut is possible, we have developed a strong and realistic package of the technological solutions available to us today.

Fact

We have a Climate Change Bill that will force UK Governments, now and in the future, to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 3 per cent year on year.

Fact

Join us in this very successful campaign. In just one year, we have secured the support of over half of all MPs, and have encouraged 50,000 people to take action. This has led to one action being taken every seven minutes. The Big Ask has been nominated for the Best Environment Campaign of the Year by the British Environment and Media Awards.

Fact

The Government could do a wide variety of things to bring down our carbon dioxide emissions. Wind power is not the only source of renewable energy and we should seek to invest in others.

[Please refer to the pull-out in the previous issue for some of the other solutions we are calling for the Government to put in place. Our Bill would force such policies to be introduced.**]**

Twelve top tips

1 Before getting active, prepare

What kind of event or action are you planning? Which audiences are you likely to encounter – general public, students, the elderly, people with young families? Can you think of a supporting fact which might appeal more to this audience? Which campaign materials would be most suitable for your action or event?

2 Find an opening line which works for you

You'll say this hundreds of times, eg "Hi there, I don't want your money, but could I ask you just one question?"

3 Act as if you are confident even if you don't feel it

People are more likely to take you seriously if you appear confident about what you're saying, and you'll probably start to feel it too. Remember your body language too – don't slouch, keep it fairly relaxed and open. Smile.

4 Listen to what people say to you

All good communication is to some extent two-way. You've got key information you want to communicate, but you're not a robot. Listen to what is said to you, and adapt your messages accordingly.

5 Ask the odd open question

"How much have you already heard about climate change?" "What are you worried about?"

6 Be aware of people's personal space

... and don't crowd it. Make eye contact... but don't overdo it.

7 Have a closure strategy for awkward customers

Remember your objectives for the action (eg to recruit as many people as possible to The Big Ask mailing list). If you spend 30 minutes debating the ins and outs of climate change with each person you meet, you'll recruit very few people. Thank people for their interest, offer them a leaflet or ways to get more information, but don't get trapped.

8 Bring the issue home

Make the issue of climate change relevant to your target audience, eg climate change will affect everyone – more severe weather will affect people's homes, lives and livelihoods.

9 Use local examples

For example: "You'll remember the devastation caused by recent storms in Carlisle – scientists predict more severe weather events."

10 Sound engaging and non-threatening

Avoid lecturing or sounding like you're telling the listener how to live their life. Sell the benefit to them rather than instruct. For example: "We know people are worried about climate change, but many find the issue confusing and are not sure what they can do about it. We're asking people to join The Big Ask campaign and persuade the Government to bring in a new law which will tackle climate change. If we act now, we can make a difference".

11 Don't feel you have to be an expert on the issue

If you do not know the answer to a question, refer the person to Friends of the Earth's information line or website, where they are likely to find a more detailed briefing on the particular area which interests them.

12 Share your experiences and keep morale high

Keep in touch with other local campaigners, share top tips and experiences. Talk to the network developers for advice and direction. We're all in this together. Visit <http://www.foe.co.uk/community> and share your experiences.



Now you have their attention

What do you want them to do?



1 Sign up to The Big Ask climate change campaign, and/or your local group to take action locally.

2 Go to <http://www.thebigask.com> and join The Big Ask email list to keep up-to-date with campaign news and actions.

3 Write to (and lobby) their MP to ask them to do more about climate change by supporting the Climate Change Bill.

4 Help us spread the word and get others asking questions about climate change – at work and with family and friends.

Getting out there and talking to the public is something most people get better at with preparation and practice. Talking directly with the public about The Big Ask climate change campaign is a key way in which we'll win this campaign – hopefully you'll find it an enjoyable and satisfying thing to do. Let's get active.

Resources

All current resources for The Big Ask climate change campaign are on the Community website at <http://community.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/>.

Contact Alex Phillips on 020 7566 1673 alex@foe.co.uk if you want copies to be sent to you.

Other *How to* guides are also available from Community http://community.foe.co.uk/resource/how_tos/index.html , such as

How to... cut our emissions,

How to... tackle climate change,

How to... use the media,

How to... reach target audiences.

If you don't have access to the internet, contact Naomi Hunt and ask her to send print-outs, on 020 7566 1677 or localgroups@foe.co.uk