



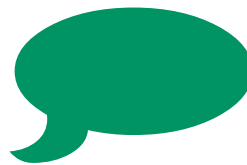
**Friends of  
the Earth**

# How to: lobby your elected representative

You've been working on a campaign and now you need your elected representative's support – so exactly how do you get it? Well it's so simple says Parliamentary Campaigner, Tricia Phelan, you'll wonder why you haven't done it before...

Lobbying your elected representative (ER) is one of the most effective ways to achieve your campaign goals and is a useful tactic across a wide range of issues. Whether your ER is a member of the UK Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, the Northern Ireland Assembly, your local council or the European Parliament, this guide will help you determine the best plan for your campaign.

Traditionally, Friends of the Earth has concentrated its lobbying on Members of the UK Parliament (MPs) – and we have achieved a string of successes including seeing the South Downs becoming a national park and bringing in the Road Traffic Reduction Bill. But the techniques employed there are transferable to the whole spectrum of elected representatives.



## What is lobbying?

Lobbying is an adult form of pester power. However, it's not right to use the same tactics you used when you were eight – now you must communicate in a constructive, assertive and polite manner. Because your representative is democratically elected to represent the views of constituents, your job is to ensure your ER:

- ▶ Is informed about the issue
- ▶ Understands your position
- ▶ Becomes convinced that your position is the one they should adopt.

# Which ER does what?

## 1

### Councillors

Except in Northern Ireland where local councils have very few powers, local Government is responsible for governing your local environment and implementing national legislation on a local level; it also makes the decision on how to spend Government funding within your area.

## 2

### Representatives of the devolved nations

Since Labour came to power in 1997, it has fulfilled its longstanding policy of devolving powers to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Government is also considering ERs for the English regions (see page 9). The set-up in each of the devolved nations is slightly different, with the Scottish Parliament having the greatest powers, and the National Assembly of Wales the fewest. Things are further complicated by the current suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly due to difficulties in the peace process.

In general, the Scottish Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly can determine all policy – including making new laws on issues affecting only Scotland and Northern Ireland such as education, housing, planning etc. In Wales, the Assembly can only pass secondary legislation determining the detailed way in which a law made in Westminster or Europe is delivered. The Assemblies have control over a large budget. Issues affecting the whole of the UK (defence, foreign policy etc) remain the responsibility of the MPs at Westminster.









## 3

### MEPs

The European Union sets around 80 per cent of the environmental laws for each of the member states – and the European Parliament is a key element in the decision-making process. Decisions, targets and directives agreed within the European Parliament go on to be made law in the UK. As a result MEPs are crucially important to the protection of the UK's environment and the environmental agenda of the UK Government.

## What are the different methods for lobbying?

There are many different ways to lobby your ER – here's how to escalate the action:

-  Write a letter
-  Send an email
-  Send a fax
-  Give them a call
-  Visit their surgery (call their office for times)
-  If they are supportive of the issue, invite them to take part in an action and advise local media (we can help with the press release)
-  Get a letter published in the local paper explaining the issue and your ER's inaction
-  Organise a public meeting on the issue and invite your ER – and if they are "unable to attend", request they send someone else to speak on their behalf or submit a written statement stating their position. Invite local media to the event.

## Which method do I use first?

Start your lobby with a simple action, such as sending a letter. The more your ER evades answering your questions or committing their support, the more you up the ante – for example get local school children to write letters or involve local media.



Most MPs are more concerned about their local media coverage than about the national press. Never underestimate the influence of local papers.



Always close your letter with the line "I look forward to your reply", or your ER may not reply.

## SUCCESS 1 Two for the bin



The Friends of the Earth-initiated Household Waste Recycling Bill, sponsored by Joan Ruddock MP, will bring doorstep recycling for a minimum of two recyclables (eg paper, tins) to every home in England and Wales. It has a very strong chance of becoming law by the end of October.

But how did we get it this far? Firstly, we gained the support of 450 MPs – a phenomenal achievement which was due to the hard work of all our supporters and local groups. Once cross-party support was achieved, we had to convince the Government to back the Bill. Our actions included:

- ▶ Supporters sending thousands of letters to MPs
- ▶ Local groups inviting their MPs to separate a week's waste, to show the majority was recyclable – several stories were printed in local newspapers, showing MPs with their rubbish
- ▶ "Send Blair a Bottle" Campaign which saw us sending plastic bottles in the post to our PM, to show him the massive support for doorstep recycling.

## SUCCESS 2 Rubbish shoot

Cardiff Friends of the Earth persuaded their local MP to save a week's worth of rubbish, then have it separated by Friends of the Earth and photographed by the media.

The story ran in local papers and also *Recycling World*. "Julie Morgan MP, whose husband is also the Leader of the Welsh National Assembly, was very willing and instead of 10 minutes she spared us almost an hour. She asked me to send her some more information on waste issues. On the whole she was very supportive of our ideas," said Cardiff's Christian Baars. Julie later served on the Parliamentary Committee scrutinising the Bill. Morgan's support was a great asset throughout this process – something she was happy to provide due to the informed lobbying she received from her local constituents in Cardiff Friends of the Earth.

## Myth busters

### 1 My ER doesn't care what I think

This could not be further from the truth! The number one rule to remember when contacting them is – without your vote, they are out of a job. Even more in your favour, ERs want to hear from their constituents. They want to be kept informed, know how good a job they are doing, and what is troubling you because they need your vote in the next election. Theoretically, your troubles are their troubles – although it may take a little pressure for them to take on board your campaign.

And if that's not enough – remember your power is that your representative is obliged to respond to your requests, and listen to your concerns.

### 2 Lobbying is for trained professionals

Without the lobbying that the local groups' network undertake, Friends of the Earth Parliamentary Unit simply would not achieve its campaign objectives. That's because ERs care about what you think because they have to represent their constituents – that makes them answerable to you. You may think "it's just one letter", but when all supporters of Friends of the Earth participate in the lobby, thousands of letters are sent pushing for change.

### 3 Why should I lobby my ER?

People are often more wary of their ERs than they are with dealing with a store after purchasing a faulty product. But a store is in business to profit from you, whereas a politician is elected by you, as your representative. Your ER owes you their opinion; their reasoning; and their time in listening to our alternative positions.

### 4 I feel like I'm nagging

Trying to obtain an appropriate response from your ER is lobbying. Whatever your ER says and however they say it you have a right to know their position on an issue. Don't let them give you an evasive response.



Politicians are ingenious at saying a lot, but not actually committing to anything. "Many people have supported this issue, and I have taken it up with the Minister" is a prime example – this means absolutely nothing. Responses such as this should be viewed as encouragement for you to keep on writing, asking for their specific view point; and if that doesn't work, escalate your lobby (see Box: What are the different methods for lobbying).

# Ready to lobby? Here are the next big campaigns

**CORE Bill** The Corporate Responsibility Bill highlights the need for more transparency in company reporting, in terms of economic, environmental and social impacts, and the need for directors to be accountable to a wider group of affected individuals. Corporate responsibility is one of the key issues Friends of the Earth will be tackling over the coming year.

Check your MP has signed the Corporate Responsibility Bill (EDM 113) by going to [www.corporate-responsibility.org](http://www.corporate-responsibility.org)

**WTO meeting in Cancun, Mexico** We need to convince Tony Blair to back our interests at the WTO meeting – not those of big business.

Help us lobby with the PocketPM – get yours in this issue or at [www.pocketPM.co.uk](http://www.pocketPM.co.uk)



Ministers and PPSs do not sign EDMs due to protocol. But if your MP is a Minister/PPS, this does not stop you from writing to them in relation to EDMs. Instead of asking them to sign the EDM, ask them if they support the principles of the EDM and to communicate this to you in writing.

## Jargon buster

**Bill** – A Bill is a proposed law. It must pass several stages before becoming a law, whereupon it becomes an Act.

**Private Member's Bill** – These are Bills introduced by a single MP rather than by Government. The most successful are Ballot Bills.

**Ballot Bills** – 20 MPs are drawn each year, and they have the opportunity to introduce a Bill.

**PPS** – A Parliamentary Private Secretary is an unpaid assistant to a Minister.

**Early Day Motion (UK Parliament)** – EDMs are House of Commons resolutions to which MPs can add their names to demonstrate support for the sentiments of a particular issue. Friends of the Earth regularly use EDMs in our lobbying – many of the letters sent to MPs for the doorstep recycling campaign were asking them to sign EDM 333.

**No Day Named Motion (Northern Ireland Assembly)** – These are similar to EDMs, however they involve only a petitioner and a seconder, so are not as effective for lobbying purposes.

**Statement of Opinion (National Assembly of Wales)** – Welsh Assembly equivalent of the EDM.

## Useful web pages


 **Houses of Parliament**  
[www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)


Directory of MPs with links to their websites plus Lords and Commons Hansard (transcript of debates) and Bills.

 **The National Assembly for Wales**  
[www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)

 **Northern Ireland Assembly**  
[www.ni-assembly.gov.uk](http://www.ni-assembly.gov.uk)

 **European Parliament**  
[www.europarl.eu.int](http://www.europarl.eu.int)


 **[www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)**  
All you ever wanted to know about the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

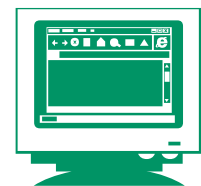
 **Early Day Motions**  
<http://edm.ais.co.uk/>

Lists EDM number beside MP names – so you can look up your MPs name and see exactly what they have been supporting. You can also see whether they have signed the EDM you have been lobbying them about.

 **[www.faxyourmp.com](http://www.faxyourmp.com)**

Here you can fax your MP direct just by completing the form on the website. It's a fantastic volunteer-run service that doesn't cost you a penny.

 **[www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)**  
Covers local government, planning, housing and the regions.



**Get the lobbying bug:** If your group wants to join Friends of the Earth's parliamentary campaigns, the Parliamentary Unit would like to hear from you. Tell us who is the named contact for your group and we'll add you to the database for future calls to action. Email [martyrwn@foe.co.uk](mailto:martyrwn@foe.co.uk) or write to the Parliamentary Unit at Underwood Street (address on page 24).