



HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

FOR
CONSTITUENTS

COP 26 GUIDE

JOURNEYING
WITH YOUR
MP TO
COP26...

- BACKGROUND TO COP26.
- HOLDING A CLIMATE WRITE-IN.
- MEETING YOUR MP.

2020 VISION

Our government is in a unique position. **This cohort of MPs is part of the Parliament which will be presiding at the time of the annual UN climate talks – COP26 – when they are hosted by the UK in 2021.**

These international climate negotiations are hugely important. They are the deadline for countries to update their climate plans and determine their Nationally Determined Contributions in line with the 2015 Paris Agreement, where 195 countries agreed to limit global warming to 2°C and pursue limiting warming to 1.5°C.

Back in October 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a landmark special report on the impact of these scenarios and recommended that cuts to emissions needed **to limit global warming to 1.5°C**. It said that to do this, **global emissions must be cut by 7.6% every year for the next 10 years**. Currently, emissions are increasing by 1.5% a year (UN Emissions Gap Report 2019).

This highlights the scale of the challenge ahead. For the Paris Agreement to be adhered to, countries will need to commit to stringent policies at COP26 next November – policies which will forge the way for the unprecedented global decarbonisation necessary to prevent the likely global average temperature increase of 3 to 4 degrees °C.

The stance and commitment of the hosting government is essential for these talks – it's one of the reasons that the Copenhagen summit in 2009 has been thought to have failed, but it's also one of the reasons that Paris made progress in 2015.

However, it is likely that the majority of MPs will be unaware about what they can do to increase the likelihood of success at COP26, and how they can support these talks at a constituency level. This is where you come in!

CAN YOU JOURNEY WITH YOUR MP IN 2020?

The postponement of COP26 gives the UK a second chance to ensure success. There is huge potential for real change if the UK government uses this time to lay out a substantive and ambitious plan for the UK to reach the Net Zero target it set for itself in June 2019, and if MPs advocate on a cross-party basis for further climate action.

This will only happen if every MP is hearing from supportive constituents who are communicating this potential and are committed to working collaboratively with their MP at their local level. This is a great chance for you to make a difference, by calling on your MP to respond and act on the opportunity COP26 provides for climate action.

We want all 650 MPs to hear from people in their constituencies, voicing their support for the UK government to act to make COP26 a success, and offering to support their MP taking the corresponding actions within Parliament.

Please read through the rest of this guide, and then email [**info@hftf.org.uk**](mailto:info@hftf.org.uk) to let us know if you plan to contact your MP.

We know it can be a daunting process, which is why **we are here to help**. We're creating a map of every constituency in the UK to show which MPs have been contacted and would love your help to colour in your local constituency.

HOLDING A CLIMATE WRITE-IN

A climate write-in is a really easy way to engage in a tangible action, both individually and in a group. It can easily be tailored to your own context. Bring a group together to write individual letters or sign a joint letter, personalised to your context.

Step 1 – *Arrange a date for your climate write-in.*

Ask your local community group or find a group of friends with whom you could organise a climate write-in. Depending on your context, you might need to organise a venue and to decide whether you make it a stand-alone event or incorporate the write-in into an existing meeting.

Step 2 – *Prepare the resources you need.*

If you are writing a joint letter, draft this (see our template below) and make sure everyone is happy with how it is worded. Look up your MP by entering your postcode into www.theyworkforyou.com

People in your group may span several constituencies, in which case you may like to prepare several letters and encourage people to sign the relevant one.

You may like to encourage people to write their own letters, in which case, think about providing some draft examples and some supplementary information for people to be able to draw-on.

Think about how you are going to present your letters – you could post them, or have a couple of people present it in person to the MP at a meeting (more information about why this is a good choice in the next section). Think about how you can involve your whole group or community – can you find a good way to involve the children and young people?

Step 3 – *Hold your climate write-in.*

You're ready to go! Don't forget to email us so we can help, and add you to our constituency map. We would also love to see your photos and hear your ideas for adapting this to different contexts.

If you would like help planning your write-in or you would like a speaker for an event where you are holding your climate write-in, please get in touch.

TIPS

DO - *Encourage people to add in their postcode when they sign a joint letter.* MPs like to know that it is their own constituents contacting them.

DO - *Have a laptop or mobile phone available.* People may be unsure about who their MP is, having a device which people can use to look this information using theyworkforyou.com often proves worthwhile.

DO - *Be creative.* The more you can tailor your approach, and the more thought you can put into it, the greater the impact on the MP (it may help to put yourself in the shoes of your MP, what would impress you?)

DO - *Be resourceful.* Is there a way you can turn this action into something more? If you can make your joint letter visual (for example, children could decorate the letter or produce some art to present to the MP), or make it part of an event the MP is invited to, it can become something the MP can share on social media or issue a press release about. This will make your engagement more memorable and impactful.

LETTER TEMPLATE

This template letter should help you with Step 2 of the climate write-in. The more tailored and more specific you can be the better. Please email infoehfff.org.uk if you would like support researching your MP and deciding what you would like to ask your MP to do.

Your Address

Dear [Name],

Begin by introducing yourself or your group. Introduce the topic of climate change and COP26 and explain why you are interested or involved. Mention in this opening paragraph what you are asking for your MP to do in response to this letter. If you are unsure what this is, explain that you are keen to meet with your MP to discuss how they can support the success of COP26 from within Parliament (see the section on meeting your MP in this booklet). Some MPs won't know what COP26 is, so ensure this is clear.

E.g. We are writing to you from the Parents Association of Park Hill School, concerned about the effects of climate change within our own constituency and further afield. As a group we are working to assess our own environmental impact and reduce our carbon emissions. We know that the UK is hosting the annual UN climate talks - COP26 - early next year and we would like to meet with you to discuss how we can help you to support the success of COP26 from within your role in Parliament.

E.g. We are writing to you from the Sheffield Sustainability Campaign about our community's concern about the effects of climate change in our own area and globally. We would be delighted to meet with you to discuss how we can support your work in Parliament as the government works to lead the way internationally when it hosts the UN climate talks - COP26 - in 2021.

It's good to **start off your letter on a positive note** by telling your MP you appreciate their work. Make this as specific as possible. Finding this hard? Email info@hfff.org.uk

E.g. We are delighted that you are representing us in Parliament, and are working hard on behalf of [constituency name]. We are really pleased that you are part of the Conservative Environment Network which has been so influential in passing the Net Zero legislation last June.

E.g. Thank you for your work in this area already. We know the Conservative party have been a crucial part of work the UK has done so far in tackling climate change - especially in the work to transform the mix of the UK power sector, and in passing the ambitious Net Zero legislation last June.

E.g. We know you are working hard on our behalf and we were pleased to watch you speak in Parliament about the importance of renewable energy. We also really appreciate Labour's recent focus on climate change and its innovative approach to policy in this area. Thank you for the way you championed this issue in your election campaign.

Talk about your specific context here. This could be about issues that particularly affect the local area, or personal details about your group's context.

For example, why have you chosen to get involved, and what action has your group taken on the issue? Is there any action being taken on a broader level in the area by local campaign groups or your Local Council? You could quote from climate and environment NGOs (eg. research from Green Alliance or 'The Commitment' by Caplor Horizons). You could talk about ways in which you feel climate change affects your community directly, and quote the concerns of people within the group.

E.g. Members of our community are experiencing the affects of climate change locally - the increasing incidence of flooding in the area as a result of warmer and wetter winters is making it increasingly difficult to get house insurance. Feeling the impact of climate change so close to home has made us keen to ensure the success of the COP26 talks, which the UK is hosting in Glasgow, and this is why we have decided to contact you.

E.g. The UK was the first major economy to commit to phase out coal power and set climate targets in legislation, so with the world watching at COP26 it is vital that the UK maintains its international leadership on climate change. Yet, according to Green Alliance, the UK is currently not on track to meet its 4th and 5th carbon budgets, which set reduction targets for the period 2023 to 2032. The decisions made at COP26 will be key in enabling the UK to meet those targets, as part of an international consensus on potentially transformative climate action, and therefore we wanted to offer our support to you as we approach these talks early next year.

Finish off with your main ask. For example, you could finish the letter by highlighting the importance of climate change to you and requesting to meet your MP to discuss these matters:

E.g. As we are sure you are fully aware, the climate negotiations in 2021 will be hugely significant, and we would be delighted if you were able to meet with a small group of us to discuss how we can work with you to increase their chance of success.

Yours sincerely,

[Signatures of the group, with postcodes!]

MEETING YOUR MP

We know many people are unsure about how worthwhile contacting their MP will be, and many people feel very daunted by the prospect of doing so. That's why Hope for the Future exists - **we can support you through the entire process**, and use our experience of previous meetings to make your engagement as meaningful as possible.

Although people are often apprehensive about meeting their MP initially, people are universally enthusiastic about the experience afterwards. Ultimately, MPs are just people tasked with serving the areas they represent. Meeting constituents who are passionate about a particular area, and who are clear on how the MP can help, is a real highlight of an MP's job!

Meeting your MP is highly effective. The email inboxes of MPs often get swamped by batches of campaign emails saying similar things. While this can helpfully indicate to an MP a rough strength of feeling about a particular issue, they usually don't have time to be able to respond meaningfully.

Meeting your MP allows you to have a dialogue rather than just a one-way exchange. It is a much more 'human' interaction and is therefore a much more meaningful way to engage politically.

Meeting an MP as representatives of a group also helps your meeting to be effective, as you are a group of constituents who are embedded within the local area and community. Within your group there may be different ages and political persuasions so this provides an MP with a broader representation of their constituents.

Feeling ready? A step-by-step guide of the process is just a page away!

MEETING YOUR MP

Step 1 – *Find a friend or gather a group!*

We find a group of 2-4 people is best. It allows you to split the different things you would like to discuss with an MP. Having at least two people means one of you can lead while the other records notes. Having said this, we have had much larger groups go to visit their MP and hold very successful meetings (including so big that the MP has had to find a different room!), so don't limit yourself, though always let your MP's office know how many people are attending in advance of the meeting. You may like to think about who you are representing. Who are the different people within your group and who do they represent (age, economic background, line of work etc.). Thinking about this helps you shows how a greater number of people within a constituency can be represented.

Step 2 – *Secure a meeting.*

You may use the climate write-in letter itself to do this, or you may like to send a different letter to arrange the meeting. We are on hand to help – just email info@hfff.org.uk and we'll help you put this together.

Step 3 – *Prepare.*

There are a range of things to think about at this point.

Prepare and practice a one-minute opener which explains who you are representing, why you are meeting, and what you are asking of your MP.

Think about how you can make the meeting memorable – previous groups have framed poetry for the MP to take with them, or read an exchange from the Parliamentary chamber which they felt was important.

Think about possible photo opportunities, how you will publicise your meeting on social media or do a write-up of your meeting for your bulletin or community magazine (in which case, you need to ask if this is okay and perhaps ask the MP to provide a quote).

Think about framing. What makes COP26 of interest to your MP? Some MPs will be motivated by the diplomacy aspect, and the UK being able to exhibit 'soft power' and lead the way with the technological and scientific expertise which the climate crisis requires. Other MPs will be motivated by the concept of working towards a 'just transition', and pursuing policies of 'climate justice'. Framing your subject matter can be difficult, and again we are on hand to research your MP and suggest the best ways to frame what you want to talk about – do drop an email to info@hfff.org.uk.

MEETING YOUR MP

Step 4 – *Set your ‘asks’.*

You need to prepare what you are asking of your MP. What you ask needs to be realistic and it also needs to take into account the starting point of your MP. An MP with little previous demonstrable interest or expertise should be presented with asks that are different from an MP who is a dedicated campaigner in this area. We advise that you **get in touch** at info@hftf.org.uk for advice on what asks to **make** of your MP.

Some example asks may be to –

- o **Pass on a letter to a Minister.** When a letter is passed on by an MP, as opposed to being sent directly, the Minister – rather than a civil servant – will provide the response. Possible topics could include:
 1. Writing to the Foreign Secretary (currently Dominic Raab) about the UK’s Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), the inclusion of climate change within the upcoming foreign policy review, ending the UK Export Finance’s support for fossil fuels, or the inclusion of climate change on the agenda of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting (CHOGM).
 2. Writing to the Chancellor of the Exchequer (currently Rishi Sunak) about support for the net zero carbon target in the Comprehensive Spending Review.
- o **Submit written questions** about COP26.
- o **Speak in the chamber** at the oral questions of a department.
- o **Attend a community event** or schools workshop about environmental issues.
- o **Suggest a campaign area** for your MP to get involved with. This may be championing a particular campaign, or joining a relevant APPG.
- o **Apply for a backbench business debate.**

Step 5 – *Follow-up.*

We find the best way to effect change is multiple engagements. Once you’ve met with your MP, follow-up! Send an email to thank them, and recap what was agreed at the meeting. Attach photos if you’ve taken any. Get in touch with us to discuss ways to take your future engagement forward.

CONGRATULATIONS

You're all set!

We're looking forward to hearing from you.

More useful resources are available on our website including those tailored for schools, faith groups, local councils and more.

For more support and any queries please contact
info@hfff.org.uk

Our work is heavily dependent on individual donations. To support us to help more people please consider donating at:
www.hfff.org.uk/donate.

**HOPE FOR
THE FUTURE** 