

# LET COMMUNITIES DECIDE

## GUIDE TO ENGAGING MPS AND COUNCILLORS

Engaging, informing and enrolling our MPs and councillors in the campaign against the government's proposal on permitted development is crucial to winning. We need MPs and councillors to apply pressure on the government to drop the proposal, and to speak out publicly on the issue.

**Like anything else, lobbying elected representatives is a skill, and there are ways to go about it which will give the best chance of getting the result you're after.**

Elected representatives want to hear from people like you – their constituents – for a number of reasons. They want to be kept informed, know how good a job they're doing, and what's troubling you – not least 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 your campaign on board.

**This guide covers some of the different ways to work with, or lobby, your local elected representatives.**

### Members of Parliament (MPs)

Ministers who are looking to push ahead with this proposal need to feel pressure from other MPs if they're going to consider abandoning these controversial plans. This is where your local MP (and you!) come in.

#### How to make contact:

A **meeting** with your MP will be the most effective way to bring them on board. MPs have a responsibility to represent the interests and concerns of their constituents, and you should be able to make an appointment to see them in person. This could happen at one of their regular **constituency surgeries** set up to allow constituents to raise matters with their MP, or you can request a **separate meeting** if there is no surgery or appointment available.

You can find your MP, their contact details, personal website address and constituency office details [here](#). The dates for your MP's constituency surgeries

should be listed on their personal website, or contact their constituency office for this or meeting requests. Book your appointment as far in advance as you can.

Remember to **focus on your own MP**. If you don't live in their constituency, an MP is not obligated to engage with you or take on your concerns.

### Three approaches to an MP meeting:

- A **personal appointment**; meeting your MP as an individual constituent.
- Even more effective if you have the time:
  - Put together a **delegation of concerned constituents** to meet your MP. This shows other people care and will be especially impactful if your group represents a cross section of the community. This will help impress on your MP that you are not a lone voice and that figures from across their constituency share the concern.
  - Bring together a **cross-party group** of local councillors to go and meet with your MP.
- Get creative! It can be really effective to find interesting ways to bring the issue home to your MP. E.g. could you take them on a short guided walk in a beautiful area of their constituency that is licensed for fracking and therefore under threat? Do you have an event or stunt coming up that you could invite them to which shows the breadth of local opposition?

### Top tips on making meeting your MP as effective as possible

- **Prepare well**

Before meeting with an MP, try and get a sense of who they are, **what issues they care about** and how they view fracking, localism, and local democracy. Their personal website and social media are good sources of information for this, while [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com) gives information on their voting record.

- **Find common ground**

How can you make this cause resonate with their values and feel consistent with the work of your MP and their party?

- **Prepare your arguments**

Try using roleplay to practice getting your case across concisely and effectively. We've prepared a [briefing for you to give to your MP](#) which explains the issue.

- **Keep a tight focus**

Focus on the **issue of permitted development**, the **rights of local communities** to decide, and the **threat to local democracy**. Trying to persuade your MP with a

technical anti-fracking argument is much less likely to succeed, unless they are onside already - in which case there's no need in any case!

- **Persist!**

Don't get disheartened if you don't initially get what you hoped for, it can take multiple interactions with an MP before they are persuaded.

- **Start a dialogue**

If it doesn't look like your MP cares about the issue you are campaigning on, **why not first invite him/her to introduce an outreach event** or film screening and begin a constructive dialogue with them.

### Things to remember

- Generally speaking, MPs are people who care passionately about serving their constituents and wider society, whether or not they share your political views
- **MPs are human beings** and not just a means to a campaign end!
- Being an MP is hard-work! **They are under enormous pressure**, spend a lot of time away from family and face huge levels of public and media scrutiny.

### On the day

- Dress smartly and **be punctual**. **Thank your MP** for seeing you.
- Explain **why this is important** to you and the local community.
- **Be specific** about what exactly you are asking the MP to do. (See below). Leave the briefing with them to read afterwards.

### Afterwards

- **Email your MP as soon as you can after the meeting** to thank them, summarise the meeting and fulfil any action points e.g. sending over any research or key links.
- If they don't get back to you, **chase them up after a couple of weeks** via email and by calling the MP's office.

## A few final dos and don'ts

| Do:   | Don't  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Research your MP and their views. Tailor your arguments.</li><li>● Focus on the local impact of the issue.</li><li>● Prepare and practice your argument. Be clear in what you ask.</li><li>● Be polite, friendly and seek a constructive relationship.</li><li>● Be positive! Celebrate your MP on local and social media if they respond positively to your asks</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Attack your MP and don't be aggressive, condescending or cynical.</li><li>● Deliberately expose knowledge gaps.</li><li>● Engage in heated arguments.</li><li>● Aim to control the entire conversation – also listen to their view.</li><li>● Give up if you don't achieve your goal immediately! Progress can be incremental...</li></ul> |

## What do you want your MP to do?

**This is the crucial part. Always make sure to ask your MP to do something concrete.**

We have produced a series of asks for your MP. But there is one main thing we want all MPs to do above all others, so please at least ask them to do this:

**Ask them to write to the following ministers, raising their concerns and asking for the proposal on changes to permitted development to be withdrawn:**

- Claire Perry, Minister of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
- James Brokenshire, Secretary of State, Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

**There are a number of additional actions you can ask your MP to take:**

- Sign the [open letter to the Government](#) which we'll publish and deliver at the end of the consultation (to Claire Perry, Greg Clark, Kit Malthouse and James Brokenshire)
- Ask Parliamentary Questions on the issue at the Ministers' departmental Question Time and/or Prime Ministers Questions
- Send a submission to the Government's [consultation](#), which is live from now until 25<sup>th</sup> October
- Promote the [consultation](#) to constituents and ask them to make a submission

- Raise the issue in local media
- Tweet opposing the changes to permitted development.

If you simply don't have the time to arrange a visit to your MP, you can still write to them. Find your MP and their email and postal addresses [here](#).

**Keep your letters polite, succinct and to the point, but personal too.**

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## Councillors

We recommend seeing your MP in person about this issue if possible, and this is also a very effective approach to adopt with your local councillors. There is nothing like an in-person chat to bring someone on board. Writing or phoning councillors may also have some additional impact here.

**The most important councillors to reach are those on councils which currently have decision-making powers on fracking developments.** These are county councils, unitary authorities, and metropolitan boroughs. However, councillors from district, town or parish councils may also be able to exert pressure on the issue.

**You can find the phone numbers and emails of your local councillor on your council's website.**

## What do you want your councillor to do?

**The primary ask for your local councillors is:**

- Sign the [open letter to the Government](#) which we'll deliver and publish at the end of the consultation (to ministers Claire Perry, James Brokenshire, Kit Malthouse and Greg Clark).

**Additional actions you can ask your councillor to take:**

- Ask them to write to the following ministers, raising their concerns and asking for the proposals to change permitted development to be withdrawn:
  - Claire Perry, Minister of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
  - James Brokenshire, Secretary of State, Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government
- Send a submission to the Government's [consultation](#), which is live from now until 25<sup>th</sup> October
- Raise the issue in local media by, for example, sending a press release.
- Send a tweet, opposing the changes to permitted development.

- Propose a motion for debate at a council meeting calling for decision making to stay with local councils. See motion 2 on this recent [example from Lancashire County Council](#).
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**Let us know how you get on, and what kind of response you get.**

Contact us at [sebastian.kelly@350.org](mailto:sebastian.kelly@350.org) or [fracking@foe.co.uk](mailto:fracking@foe.co.uk) and feel free to also email us if you'd like any more support or information.

Every contact you make with your MP or councillors could make a crucial difference, so go for it and good luck!

