

Lobbying your local council

When trying to protect the environment, your local politicians and councillors can be useful allies. Find out how to get your message across to them. Some of the suggestions are simple to do by yourself; others would be more suited to a group of interested people. Talk to other people in your area and find like-minded individuals so that you can work together.

Influencing your local council

Your local council has a key role in maintaining the quality of your local environment. They must draw up various plans and strategies to help do this, such as the Community Strategy, Local Plan and Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

Councils also have a responsibility to involve local communities. Councillors are voted in at elections and effectively volunteer part-time, while council officers hold full-time paid positions, as council employees.

In England, there are different types of council, ranging from town councils to unitary authorities. The Government website [Welcome to GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk) has more information about local government in your area, and who your local councillors are. If you do not have access to the internet, you can find out who your local councillors are by visiting your local library, or telephoning your local council's Electoral Services department. You'll also be able to find out any details of committees that are relevant to your concerns.

How to gain the support of your local councillor, and what they can do for you

To secure the help of your councillor, you can write to them or visit them at their local surgery. When doing this, provide them with as much information as you can to support your arguments.

Find out from a councillor, or council officers, what issues are likely to be discussed at the next relevant committee and go along. Arrange to meet the officer who will write the report for the council committee so that you can discuss with them your concerns.

It is the role of councillors to develop links with the community and represent that community's interests in the council. They may also be able to represent the interests of other organisations, such as businesses.

Involving your MP

Your MP is your representative in the House of Commons. Contacting them, by writing a letter or visiting their advice surgery, to gain their support for an issue can be very useful. They can help provide pressure for action, influence decisions and gain publicity for an issue.

Your MP might have a blog or a column in your local newspaper. Securing your MP's support may lead to their giving your issue local coverage. They can:

- write to Government Ministers to raise your concerns
- sign an Early Day Motion
- raise issues during debates
- table parliamentary questions.

You can find out who your MP is by visiting the Find your MP website [Find your MP - MPs and Lords - UK Parliament](#) All MPs can also be reached in writing at House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA.

Tips on making your letter effective

- Keep it short, as very long letters are less likely to be read.
- Be polite. The response you get is likely to be more positive and helpful if your approach is a constructive one. If you have time, thank your MP for their reply as this will help to build a better relationship with them.
- Use your own words. You are more likely to make an impact on your MP if you express the points in your own words. If possible, give an example from your local area supporting the points you have made. If you do not know of an example, do not worry – your letter will still have an impact.
- If you are writing about a specific site, you may wish to offer them the opportunity to visit it.

Take campaigning a step further

The Wildlife Trusts are often involved in campaigns that target MPs and others on a wide-range of issues. By getting involved in these campaigns and using a mixture of social media, signing petitions, writing letters and emails, as well as meeting with decision makers directly, you can make a huge difference.