

LOBBYING TECHNIQUES

Lobbying is any contact with those in power that is designed to influence their actions in some way. The word 'lobbying' comes from the days of hanging about the lobby at Westminster, hoping to grab the attention of an MP as they went by. It sometimes has been given shady connotations by past scandals concerning people using money to buy influence in government, but in modern politics, lobbying is a positive activity, and politicians are generally keen to hear from community representatives, and people representing specific voluntary sector interests. Whatever your lobbying technique, to get the most from your action you must make sure that you have done your research and are fully prepared. It is essential that you know the following before making contact with any of your representatives:

- What political party do they belong to?
- What position do they hold?
- Are they members of a parliamentary or council committee?
- Are they involved in any relevant cross-party group?
- Have they been in the press recently, and what for?
- What other campaigns have they been involved in?

Personal Meetings

Face-to-face contact can be a very effective way of getting your point across.

It might be useful to take somebody else along to a meeting, for example another campaign member. You should have a clear objective before the meeting (what do you want to get out of it? What are you going to ask your representative to do for you?), and discuss beforehand what you are both going to say at the meeting. Try to anticipate the arguments against your case so that you are prepared to argue your corner (politely!). Make sure one of you takes notes whilst you are there. You should expect your representative to listen and respond to your requests.

You can attend one of your representative's surgeries or arrange an appointment in advance, however you may have to persuade a senior politician or council member that they should meet with you by explaining what it is you can do for them. If you have arranged the meeting in advance then it would be useful to find out how much time you will have with them and also agree an agenda beforehand so that everybody can be prepared. If you are going to meet again, or have asked that the representative do something specific for you, then clarify this at the end of the meeting. After the meeting write and thank them for their time. Also supply any information that they may have asked for and confirm any action points that were agreed at the meeting (i.e. who agreed to do what and by when).

Telephone Conversations

They are immediate and direct like a face-to-face meeting, and take less effort to arrange, but they are less manageable and formal (i.e. it is not always possible to have more than a two-way conversation) and misunderstandings are more likely. You may also find it difficult to speak directly to the person you require. Telephone conversations should still be purposeful and callers should prepare in advance in the same ways as described previously. If you are not dealing with an urgent matter then you are advised to write to the representative instead.



Writing

This can include faxing and e-mail, but posted letters are still assumed to be more formal and effective.

Individual letters from constituents can be very effective if there are enough of them; the campaign group should all write individual letters, describing their views or experience, and encourage supporters to do the same.

Tips for writing a lobbying letter:-

- It is important that letters are formal and concise
- Keep your letter as short as possible
- Send the letter with supporting information and any evidence
- Always ask for a response
- It is best to ask your representative to do something for you – that way they have to write back

There is a sample letter included here. It is useful to use a model if you are not a confident letter writer, but never simply duplicate and sign somebody else's letter; make sure each letter is individual otherwise the receiver may not believe that the issue is of importance to several people.

Dear [enter name: Use their official title, i.e. 'Councillor', or Mr/Ms and their surname]

Re. [Enter subject of letter here]

Your first paragraph should say why you are writing: who you are and what your concerns are.

In your next paragraph/s give examples and facts that support your campaign.

Connect your request to their interests: if they are on a committee of relevance to your issue, state this and explain how your request relates to the committee's responsibilities. If you can, relate the letter to something they have said recently or perhaps something that they, if they are a councillor or Minister, have promised to address.

***Yours sincerely** [this is how you end a formal letter when you have the name of the person to whom you are writing]*

***Sign your letter here** with your normal signature*

Followed by your name in type.

Petitions

Any individual, group or organisation can submit a petition, with any number of signatures, to either the Scottish parliament or UK Parliament. Petitions are generally used as a way of raising an issue of large-scale public concern with the parliament and asking them to consider the need for change.



The petitions system in the Scottish Parliament is very different to that of Westminster. The Public Petitions Committee of the Scottish Parliament is a mandatory committee (ie it is written into the Standing Orders of the parliament that there will always be such a committee) and public petitions are an important gateway into the parliamentary processes.

Why petition the Scottish Parliament?

Over the past few years there have been considerable successes through petitioning; Committee inquiries have been informed by and even initiated by petitions. Issues have been picked up in the media. Petitions have resulted in parliamentary debates and Executive reviews. A few have even brought about changes to legislation. So petitioning the Scottish Parliament can be an effective lobbying tool. However, a petition might run for a long time, as communications about the issues go back and forth between committees and between the parliament and the Scottish Government and the petitioners. And of course not all petitions will result in significant action. However, it is guaranteed that each one will be looked at by the Public Petitions Committee at least. Some voluntary organisations have found petitioning useful as one part of their campaign, rather than as the sole or main focus of their lobbying activity, and others have found it useful for addressing a very specific concern.

What can the petition be about?

Basically a petition can be about any matter of public interest or concern, and will make a request for the parliament to act, – eg debate an issue, hold an inquiry, set up a new procedure, or urge the Scottish Government to act – eg review its guidance, introduce legislation etc. If the petition is to initiate legislation, this must be on a devolved area.

A petition cannot be used to appeal against a local decision, but it may urge a review of guidance, laws, procedures or rules that would influence such a decision. If the Public Petitions Committee does not consider your petition to be valid, the clerk will contact you and may suggest changes.

What goes into the petition?

Read the guidance on petitions on the Scottish Parliament website, and take a look at the template for petitions published there.

www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/petitions/furtherInfo.htm

As well as the text of the petition itself you will need to give a one-line title, background information to the reasons behind the petition, and details of who has already been approached to resolve the issue, with copies of letters and replies, and contact details of the main petitioner. If the matter concerns a local body, such as a local authority or health board, you will need to show how you have tried to resolve the issue with the relevant body first.



Remember you are petitioning the Scottish Parliament, so if you want the Scottish Government to act, you will ask the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to act. It can be useful to take a look at how other petitions are worded, and to consult the Petitions Committee clerk.

www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/petitions/open/index50.htm

You can draw up, publish and gather support for your petition online through the Scottish Parliament petitioner service. You can submit signatures collected in hard copy, online, or both, provided that these are not duplications. (Signatures are checked for repeat signing) The petitioner pages of the Scottish Parliament website tell you everything you need to know about using the electronic system <http://epetitions.scottish.parliament.uk/>

How many signatures are needed?

Only one. The number of signatures will make no difference to whether or how the petition is considered. If it is valid it will be looked at by at least the Public Petitions Committee. However a good number of signatures does show support for the points you are making and will be needed if you are planning to generate media interest in the issue.

How to submit your petition

Petitions may be sent to the Scottish Parliament by freepost, if you hand it into a Post Office clearly marked *Petition to the Scottish Parliament*. Or to hand in the petition in person, contact the Public Petitions Committee Clerk. Talk to the clerk in advance if you would like to hand the petition over formally with a press reception. Electronic petitions will need to be submitted by following the instructions on the petitioner pages.

What happens next?

The Public Petitions Committee will consider your petition and may:

- agree to take no further action
- forward it to another committee (or the Parliamentary Bureau, the Presiding Officer etc.) in the Scottish Parliament.
- forward it to another body, e.g. the Scottish Government, a health board or local government
- recommend the petition for debate
- invite the petitioners into a committee meeting to talk about their petition.

A lot of petitions are forwarded to subject committees for further consideration. The clerk will keep you informed about what is happening with your petition. The Public Petitions Committee Clerk will also be a helpful source of information, if you have any queries regarding the process and getting started.

FROM: www.scvo.org.uk/policy/lobbying/how-to-petition-the-scottish-parliament/



LOBBYING MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

For good lobbying you not only need to know who has the power to do what, but also what you can ask the decision-maker you are lobbying to do.

Ask a Parliamentary Question

Oral questions are tabled two weeks in advance to a government department and are drawn by ballot. There is only time for 10 - 15 questions to be answered, but they are asked at Question Time (and therefore may get media attention). MPs get the chance to ask one supplementary question that Ministers do not know in advance.

In addition MPs can ask an **unlimited number of written questions** on your behalf, usually to get information from a government department.

Benefits

- ☺ **get publicity** (although this can be limited);
- ☺ bring **issues to the attention of Ministers** (they have to answer supplementary questions, which they'll need to prepare for);
- ☺ **gathering information**.

All written and oral questions have the answers published in [Hansard](#).

Table or sign an Early Day Motion

This is a kind of **parliamentary petition**. You can find out if there is an existing EDM on the issue and who has signed it by going to the following website: edm.ais.co.uk

Benefits

- ☺ **moves issues** up the political agenda (if they have lots of signatures);
- ☺ generates a **public list of supporters** for an issue;
- ☺ **provides a commitment** to which MPs can be held in the future.

Raise the issue in an Adjournment Debate

Adjournment Debates are short debates (30 or 90 mins) initiated by backbenchers. The MP speaks, and the Minister responds. This is an opportunity to **get a Minister to speak on a particular issue** and to **get publicity**, especially for local issues.

Introduce a Private Members' Bill (PMB)

- ☺ can **achieve a change in the law**;
- ☺ can get a **show of support** for a change in the law;
- ☺ **gets publicity**.



But not many PMBs make it. There's a Ballot system to decide which MPs can introduce bills, as there is limited time to debate them.

PUBLIC PROTESTS

A protest, or demonstration, is a way of showing the volume of support for a campaign. A march can attract a wider audience than a protest that stays in one place and they work well if they have a focus at the end, such as the handing over of a petition.

Events of this nature take a lot of organising and should be planned well in advance so that you can advertise it. You may also need to notify authorities depending on the nature of your protest: the police should be notified if you are planning a march and, although you do not need permission, they might impose certain conditions, such as police presence.

Choose the timing of your protest carefully for maximum impact: avoid a clash with another public event but choose a day when the right people are likely to be present (i.e. public protests work better on weekends or holidays than on work days).

You should plan for your protest to take place in a significant, visible and easily accessed location. If you are organising a march you should think carefully about the route in order to avoid problems of access - contact your local council about this.

Use the media to advertise your protest widely and make a press release beforehand giving all the details. You should also advertise through posters, leaflets and local newsletters. Always include contact details in case people want to find out more.

Remember that you want to communicate your message as widely as possible: make placards and banners; design a logo for your campaign; write a motto, slogan or chant to draw people's attention during the demonstration.

Below is a list of Common Purpose's (an organisation that promotes socially responsible leadership) pros and cons of protests.

Benefits

- Protests are a good opportunity to hand out leaflets and engage new support
- Protest events can bring media coverage of your campaign
- A sizeable march demonstrates strength of feeling
- Large numbers are not needed to make stunts and vigils effective
- A vigil can be held anywhere, including outside the door of your target

Risks

- You might attract unwanted troublemakers seeking a forum
- If the weather is bad, people may not turn up
- If you are picketing an organisation's headquarters there may be strong opposition

- If you have poor turnout, you may demonstrate that you only have limited support for your aims
- You may need police permission and they might not oblige
- If you organise a noisy demonstration, you may alienate more 'moderate' supporters

