**Engaging your MSP: Climate and ecological emergencies briefing (January 2022)**

**Summary of the issue**

The Climate and ecological emergency is the biggest challenge of our time. Billions of tons of CO2 are released into the atmosphere every year as a result of coal, oil, and gas production. Human activity is producing greenhouse gas emissions at [a record high](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/30797/EGR2019.pdf), with no signs of slowing down. Rising temperatures are fuelling environmental degradation, natural disasters, weather extremes, food and water insecurity, economic disruption, conflict, and terrorism. Sea levels are rising, the Arctic is melting, coral reefs are dying, oceans are acidifying, and forests are burning. It is clear that business as usual is not good enough.

**Where do Quakers stand?**

Quaker concern for the Earth and the wellbeing of all who live in it is deeply rooted in our faith. Early Quakers knew that to damage the earth just for human 'outward greatness' would be an injustice on future generations. Quakers reaffirmed our commitment to act as a faith community in 2011 with the ['Canterbury Commitment'](https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/minute-36-leaflet-2011). This called on Quakers to act in new ways – individually, as local communities, as a corporate body of faith, and politically.

The Canterbury Commitment recognised that the environmental crisis is enmeshed with global economic injustice and that tackling inequality is central to taking action on the climate emergency. It made clear that this is a spiritual task. Climate breakdown is also a concern of Quakers around the world. International gatherings of Quakers in 2012 and 2015 concluded with strong calls for climate action across the globe

**Key messages**

* Climate and ecological breakdown is a result of our economic systems. Rich countries build their wealth through exploiting people and ecosystems.
* Rich nations are responsible for tackling this crisis because they have done the most to cause it and they have the resource to address it. This includes providing financial assistance to developing countries for the loss and damage that they are experiencing as a result of climate change.
* Cutting greenhouse gas emissions is not enough: we must build more just and sustainable economies.
* Scotland has set some [ambitious targets](https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/climate-change-emissions-reduction-target-scotland-bill) but has consistently [fallen short](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-57482228) of achieving these. It has also been criticised for not providing a [detailed plan](https://www.holyrood.com/inside-politics/view,in-context-climate-change-plan-update-16800) about how it will achieve these targets.

**How to engage your MSP on this issue**

Within the Scottish Parliament you will be represented by one constituency MSP and seven regional MSPS. You can find out who your MSPs are [here](https://www.parliament.scot/msps)

Do your research

Find out your MSP’s background, views and interests before you contact them. This will help you phrase your email or letter in a way that will grab their attention and encourage them to respond positively. At www.theyworkforyou.com you can find MSPs’ voting records and view their recent appearances in Parliament to see the issues they tend to speak about. Their website and Twitter feed will also give you clues about their views and interests.

Make it timely

Try to choose a time when the MSP will be thinking about the issue you’re writing about. For example, if there is a debate coming up in Parliament about your issue, write about a week before the debate providing points and facts they could raise.

Be clear and concise

Your MSP is more likely to take action as a result of your email or letter if you make your point clearly and concisely. And if you have a request, include it near the start.

Strike the right tone It’s easy to appear to accidentally make assumptions about an MSP’s view, or to appear to be asserting your own view without considering their experience. A deliberately careful and measured tone can often work better.

Add a personal touch

Tell your MSP why you care about the issue. If you can, briefly share a personal story or a case study of someone else’s experience (with their permission). If your MSP is a person of faith, they may respond positively to you saying how your Quaker faith leads you to act. Generic campaign emails can be a useful way of showing an MSP that a large number of their constituents care about a particular issue. But if you want a tailored response, take the time to write a tailored email.

**Some practicalities**

* Include your address in your email or letter so that your MSP knows you live in their constituency. They can only help you if you’re a constituent or if you’re contacting them on behalf of a national organisation.
* The vast majority of correspondence to an MSP is read by their staff. By making your email or letter personal, with a clear request, you will increase the chances of it actually reaching your MSP.

**Further reading**

[Quakers and Climate Justice](https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/climate-economic-justice/climate-justice-4#heading-1)

[Stop Climate Chaos Scotland: Delivering Climate Justice at COP26](https://www.stopclimatechaos.scot/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Delivering-climate-justice-at-COP26.pdf)

[Scotland’s Just Transition Commission’s report](https://www.gov.scot/publications/transition-commission-national-mission-fairer-greener-scotland/)

[Scotland’s Climate Assembly report](https://www.climateassembly.scot/full-report)

**Andrew Tomlinson, Parliamentary Engagement Officer for Quakers in Scotland**