**Engaging your MSP: Economic Justice briefing (January 2022)**

**Summary**

While the current economic system has provided humanity with many material benefits, those benefits have been unequally shared and many of them have been brought about through the over-exploitation of the Earth's natural resources

Although recent years have seen a slight reduction in global income inequality, the gap in income and opportunities between countries is still vast. Moreover, within the same period, income inequality within countries has grown, while since the financial crisis the number of billionaires has nearly doubled. In 2018, the [26 richest people](https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620599/bp-public-good-or-private-wealth-210119-summ-en.pdf) in the world held as much wealth as half of the global population (the 3.8 billion poorest people), down from 43 people the year before[[1]](#footnote-1). Within Scotland a recent JRF report states that a million people, including a quarter of a million children are trapped in poverty. And poverty in Scotland is predicted to rise in the coming years if action is not taken.

**Where do Quakers stand?**

As Quakers we wish to see an economic system that values human wellbeing, fairness and sustainability above profits.

**Key messages**

* The purpose of the economy should be the enhancement of all life, human and non-human.
* Indicators of human well-being, strength of relationships and the health of the natural world should be used to judge whether our economy is successful, rather than purely financial measures.
* Our responsibility for the benefit of future generations and for all life on earth takes precedence over economic growth. In particular, we live low-carbon lives individually and collectively having agreed to leave fossil fuels in the ground.
* Payment of taxes is a matter of justice to support those things that contribute to human flourishing such as health care and education whilst discouraging harmful activities such as arms production and those causing pollution, ill health or ecosystem destruction. Richer people should pay a greater proportion of their income.

**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**

[QPSW work on a new economy](https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/climate-economic-justice/new-economy)

[Wellbeing Alliance work on a wellbeing economy](https://weall.org/)

[Scottish Poverty and Inequality Commission](https://povertyinequality.scot/poverty-scotland/)

[Scottish government tackling child poverty plan](https://www.gov.scot/publications/child-chance-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2018-22/)

[Joseph Rowntree Foundation report on Poverty in Scotland](https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/poverty-scotland-2021?gclid=CjwKCAjwn8SLBhAyEiwAHNTJbatJfO2Gkm4oRaOwIrX5hEdoCakIwDre63TWQwARjd1kY5JR2081_RoCitgQAvD_BwE)

[The Poverty Alliance](https://www.povertyalliance.org/)

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1. <https://www.un.org/en/un75/inequality-bridging-divide> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)