

Top tips for lobbying candidates for the 2017 council elections

Why lobby?

Local elections take place across Scotland on 4 May 2017, so what better time to lobby our prospective councillors to support a transformation away from fossil fuels in our local communities? Local councils can act now to help realise low-carbon transport, renewable energy and climate-friendly investment.

By lobbying councillors and candidates we can get their support individually, gain interest and support from political parties, and raise the level of knowledge and interest from councillors in issues we're concerned about. Ultimately, we can get real on-the-ground changes which will help fight climate change and promote more environmentally just futures.

Campaign success: During the London Mayoral elections, Sadiq Khan stood on a pledge to tackle London's Air Pollution crisis, and since being elected has promised to increase London's Low Emission Zone area a year ahead of schedule, to introduce a "toxicity charge" on all vehicles.

Who to target?

- Your current councillors: You can find out who they are and how to write to them at www.writetothem.com.
- Candidates who don't currently sit on the council: We won't know all the candidates who are standing for the until about April so you may need to focus on current councillors who are restanding.
- MSPs: Although they sit in the Scottish Parliament and not in your local council, they could help create a buzz about by asking questions in parliament, participating in debates, and raising issues in relevant committees.

What to say?

Be polite, clear, and have specific asks.

Request that they personally commit to supporting the list of asks, and/or enquire if they can ensure their party includes the asks in their local manifestos.

Here are some examples of what you might ask for on two key fossil free campaigns:

Friends of the Earth Scotland is asking prospective Councillors and their parties to commit to:

- In urban areas, support the **introduction of a Low Emission Zone** which bans the most polluting vehicles from the most polluted areas in order to protect the public from air pollution.
- Provide sustained, long-term **investment in both cycling and walking**, reaching 10% of the transport budget.
(This 'ask' is also being promoted by active travel coalition We Walk, We Cycle, We Vote.)

Friends of the Earth Scotland, Common Weal and UNISON Scotland is asking Councillors and their parties to commit to:

- Publicly commit to **divestment from fossil fuels**.
- Increase **council pension investment in renewable energy and social housing**.

Councils like Waltham Forest in London have made a commitment to divest from fossil fuels and reinvest in the local community. Find out how much your local council invests in fossil fuels through their pension fund at www.reinvest.scot/local.

How to target them?

Councillors are there to represent you and stand up for their constituents, so you have a right to speak to them. You can:

- Write to them
- Arrange for a phone call
- Talk to them on social media (Twitter/Facebook) to give them a chance to publicise their support
- Arrange to meet them or attend their local surgeries:

In Glasgow: <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=16154>

In Edinburgh: <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/councillors/search>

For other locations try searching for 'surgery' and the name of your local council.

How will you know if you are having impact?

Local party manifestos: local political parties will be creating their manifestos in early 2017.

Personal pledges: Council candidates might publish their personal stances on Twitter, Facebook or via an email.

Taking things a step further

Why not arrange an event for your prospective Councillors to attend? You could:

- Take them on a cycle ride or walk around a polluted street or near a children's school during rush hour.
- Organise a visit to a local renewable energy installation that the council pensions have helped fund.
- Host a hustings event where candidates debate how best to support a fossil-free council (the best time to do this would be in the April).

It's in prospective councillors interest to to learn about these issues and show their support so events like this should be popular.

For more help email:

- Air Pollution campaigner Emilia Hanna: ehanna@foe-scotland.org.uk
- Divestment campaigner Ric Lander: rlander@foe-scotland.org.uk