



Lobby your MP

This is a writing activity aimed at upper primary school children. They can work individually or in small groups to research their chosen topic and then write a letter. Each group can present their topic to the rest of the class and then all the letters can be sent directly to the House of Commons with an explanatory letter from the teacher.

Lobbying will let your decision makers know what causes you believe are important and you can ask them to prioritise this issue. One MP is elected to the House of Commons by each of the UK's 600+ constituencies and their duties in Parliament include participating in debates and voting on legislation and other matters. If you are in their constituency, even if you are below voting age, you can tell them what you want: *you* are the voice of tomorrow.


There are a number of things that your MP could do for you: they can write to senior civil servants; they can raise public awareness by asking questions, making speeches in Parliament, hosting events and participating in debates; and they can make a personal appointment with the fisheries minister to discuss the issue further.

Every MP can be contacted by writing to them at the House of Commons. The postal address is

First name Surname MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Activity

1. Find out who your school's local MP is online. www.theyworkforyou.com lets you find out what your MP is doing for you and their topics of interest. MPs also usually have their own website which you may find by Googling their name.

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2. Write a short letter to your MP. To have an effective outcome you should give an instruction or request to the MP, such as asking them to write to the fisheries minister on your behalf. Don't just state your point of view.

Here are some further tips:

- a. MPs are very busy. Keep it short (one side of A4 at most) and stick to one issue per letter
- b. If you hand-write the letter, ensure it is legible. If you type the letter, make sure you sign it personally
- c. Write it in your own words and say why this issue matters to you – show the politician you are a real person! Be polite and include supporting facts to back up your case
- d. Include your full name and address. MPs will only respond to letters from their constituents
- e. Be clear in what you are asking the MP and ask for a reply from them

Some suggestions are:

- Write about pollution at your nearest beach or in local creeks and rivers that lead down to the sea. Tell your MP that you want to see clean beaches and rivers with more wildlife. Ask for more bins, including recycling bins, on the streets so that rubbish doesn't get thrown into the waterways.
- Plastic bags and bottles. Lobby against the overuse of plastic in your local community. Try always using reusable canvas bags and ask your MP to do the same and show support for alternatives to plastic.
- Sustainable fish. Tell your MP why you want to only eat sustainable fish and what you have done about it at home or at school. Ask the MP to make sure all fisheries in the UK are sustainable and to ban discards (throwing dead fish back to sea so they can catch more popular fish).
- Local marine protected areas – tell your MP you want to have a marine protected area near you where the animals will be safe from fishermen and other bad human activities. Tell them why you think it's important to have healthy seas.

