



The
countryside
charity

The Time is Now: a virtual lobby for a healthy, green and fair recovery

A guide for participants

We are at a turning point.

Our political leaders are beginning to make choices about how to support society in our recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. These decisions will shape our countryside and wider society for decades to come.

We want to seize this chance to build back better for our countryside. On Tuesday 30 June we'll be taking part in *The Time is Now* virtual lobby – inviting you and thousands of others to talk to your MP online about the need for a green and fair recovery.

As we build back from this health crisis, we have a once in a generation chance to create a more resilient countryside *and* a stronger economy that benefits everyone. We can tackle the climate emergency and decline of nature while creating jobs and protecting the most vulnerable. Or we can let the moment for change pass us by, go back to our old ways and wait for another inevitable crisis to hit.

We'll be asking MPs to commit to a healthy, green and fair recovery; to promise to advocate and vote for policies that regenerate nature, put people and communities in poverty first, and that invest in low-carbon transport, energy efficient homes and renewable energy.

A recovery based on these three principles recognises the entwined futures of climate, nature and all of us – and takes action to safeguard that future in its entirety.

Using our voices to call for action is more important than ever. A thriving, beautiful countryside for everyone can't be achieved without a green and fair recovery. *The Time is Now* for us to come together and demand nothing less from those who represent us.

Acknowledgements

This guide was adapted from The Climate Coalition's [Virtual Mass Lobby Supporter Guide](#), which in turn was informed and inspired by the great MP lobby guides provided by [We Own It \(toolkit here\)](#) and [Hope for the Future \(virtual lobbying guide here\)](#).

About the day

What's a virtual lobby?

On 30 June 2020, we're inviting thousands of people across the country to meet their MPs online to talk about how the UK's recovery from coronavirus can, and must, help to tackle climate change and nature's decline, creating jobs and protecting the most vulnerable in the UK and around the world.

And the best part? This year the lobby is virtual (online), so everyone can join direct from their homes without needing to travel to Westminster.

Find out how to set up your meeting and make sure it's impactful on pages 3 to 6.

Who's organising this event?

The Time is Now virtual lobby is being coordinated by [The Climate Coalition](#), which we at CPRE are a part of. It represents millions of people who care about our environment. Loads of different organisations are getting involved, and we're all calling on our supporters to take part.

Why are CPRE getting involved?

The links between climate change and the countryside are starkly clear: the climate emergency is the biggest threat facing our rural areas, from the increased risk of flooding to the loss of cropland and wildlife. CPRE has a unique role to play in tackling climate change head on.

We don't have to choose between a thriving countryside, assertive action for post-coronavirus healing and tackling the climate emergency. Now more than perhaps at any other point, the UK can lead the world in accelerating the fight against climate change while creating a better future for people and nature, and the countryside must play a central role.

How will the MP meetings be set up?

When you sign up to the lobby (which hopefully you've done already), we'll ask you to email your MP to let them know you are attending. They'll then send through the meeting details to you. The Climate Coalition have already contacted all MPs to let them know that *The Time is Now* virtual lobby is happening and asked them to fix a time on the 30 June to meet constituents, so MPs will be ready to set up online calls.

Will there be other people on my call?

Yes, these are being set up as group meetings. This means it is likely that the meeting with your MP will include other people who live in your constituency. The Climate Coalition are looking at different ways to connect people up with others who live in the same area prior to the meeting – see details on pages 7-8.

What should we talk about?

We want MPs to hear from you about why, as their constituent, you care about a green and fair economic recovery, but exactly what you say is up to you. We'd like you to ask your MP to show their support for a healthier, greener, fairer economic recovery from coronavirus. And don't worry – you won't be planning what to say alone. We'll provide you with a briefing that you're welcome to use if you like, to help go into a deeper conversation with your MP on these important issues.

I've not used Zoom, or other online tools before – how does it work?

Don't worry – we will send you a 'how to' guide ahead of the meeting to ensure you know exactly how it all works.

What else is happening?

On the day, The Climate Coalition will be running some exciting webinars online that you can join. They'll feature inspirational speakers, engaging talks and Q&As. This will be a place where you'll be able to check in with others who are about to meet or have already met their MP. Read more on page 7.

Six steps to talking to your MP

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Step 1: Invite your MP: now

You may have done this already when signing up to take part in the virtual lobby, but if not you can [email your MP](#) asking them to set up a meeting for you as part of the lobby using our easy online tool. You can edit the text in the email you'll be sending to your MP to personalise it if you wish.

Step 2: Invite others to join you: now

Again, you may have already done this when you signed up to the lobby. If not, or if you'd like to promote the event on your social media channels again, you can click the buttons below:

[Share on Twitter](#)

[Share on Facebook](#)

Alternatively, [here's a link](#) to the sign up page, which you can share directly with people you know. By inviting others to sign up and join the lobby you can show your MP that they will get support locally if they take action on climate change and nature's decline.

You could invite:

- Friends or family
- Your neighbours: have you, like many, become more connected to your neighbours since lockdown? Invite them to join you in talking to your MP about the sort of green and fair recovery you want to see.
- Local networks you're part of: are you part of a community group that might want to join you? Or are there others in your school that might be interested?

Of course, you can also invite friends and family to join the lobby even if they're in a different constituency.

Step 3: Follow up with a phone call to your MP: two days after emailing

MPs are very busy so if you don't hear back from them do follow up with their office by giving them a call (details at www.parliament.uk). It's their job to meet with constituents like you, and they won't mind being nudged.

When you call your MP's office, you'll speak to a member of their staff.

You could say:

I emailed a few days ago about setting up a virtual meeting on 30 June. Could we arrange a time now? I appreciate your and [MP]'s time - I know it's very busy.

Once you've arranged a time with your MP, please let us know the time and we'll put it on the main *The Time is Now* virtual lobby website so other people in your area can find out the details and join on the day. Email us at campaigns@cpre.org.uk

You might also want to publicise the time of your meeting to other people and groups you know locally, but please don't share the meeting link on any public forums. Since lockdown, there's been a rise in online calls being hacked and controversial or offensive material being shared. To make sure that everyone joining the meeting is able to do so in a safe manner, please share the link only with people you know and trust.

Step 4: Prepare: five days before your meeting

How will you meet your MP?

Check your MP has sent you a Zoom (or other online conferencing) link for the meeting. We'll be sending you a guide to help you with any technical problems in the coming days. If you'd like further guidance on taking part in an online meeting after having read the tips below and the forthcoming guide, please get in touch with campaigns@cpre.org.uk.

Some tips on online meeting etiquette

- Have your video on when you join a meeting if it's possible and you feel comfortable. It's always nice if everyone can see each other and makes it more personal. If it's not on already, this can be done by clicking on the 'start video' button. If using Zoom, this will be on the bottom left of the screen when you scroll over it.
- If your meeting is with lots of people, put yourself on 'mute'. If you don't mute yourself, it can disturb the meeting as everyone will be able to hear you – and your background noises! - all the time, making it difficult for others to hear the speaker.
- If you've been invited to speak, make sure to 'unmute' yourself first (the 'unmute' button is in the same place the 'mute' button was) so that everyone can hear you. Don't forget to mute yourself again once you've finished speaking.
- When someone else is speaking, be sure to let them finish. If you want to respond immediately, you can use the chat function if it's available. The chat is a good place to write thoughts, ask questions and show agreement.
- Use the chat box for small points or agreement. If there are a lot of people and little time, you can make points related to what people are saying, 'raise a hand' or support what others are saying in the chat.

Your set-up

Think about the best place for you to join your call. Try to find somewhere quiet and comfortable where you're unlikely to be disturbed and there's good lighting so others can see your face clearly, and make sure your device is plugged in or well charged.

Planning your meeting

How will you get your MP on board? You don't need to be an expert on the green recovery to meet your MP, but a well thought out approach can make all the difference in turning them into a champion for climate and nature issues. You and your MP may not see eye to eye on everything, but it's better to focus on finding common ground rather than starting with the areas you disagree on.

What's your MP interested in? Google them to find out if they've been active in or spoken about any particular issues related to climate or nature. If your area could benefit from investment as part of a green and fair recovery, then mention this, too.

Connect with others who are meeting your MP too! It's likely that there will be at least a few of you meeting your MP, but to make sure, you could invite a friend or family member to join you. For a group meeting to go smoothly, it's best to allocate roles beforehand. If there are a number of people who don't want to say more than their name, that's fine - they'll be showing the MP that they care just by showing up.

You'll be able to connect with others in your constituency:

- Through your regional Facebook groups (see page 8)
- Through the virtual rally on the day (see page 7)
- Through the organisers - where large numbers of people are signed up in a constituency, The Climate Coalition are planning to arrange a pre-meeting. We'll let you know if there's one for your area.

For more tips from the experts on talking to MPs about climate change from home, check out Hope for the Future's [virtual lobbying guide](#).

Step 5: Meet your MP: 30 June

The day itself! Be ready to join the call at least five minutes beforehand as it can take some time to connect. Perhaps have a glass of water to hand and wear something you feel comfortable in – there's no need to dress up.

Top tips for speaking with your MP:

- Make it personal and speak authentically. Tell them your personal story. What led you to feel passionately about this and why are you here today? Did lockdown change how you feel about nature or climate change?
- Be confident! You don't need to be an expert but make sure you are clear that you care about these issues and demand action.
- Talk about the real world and not abstract ideas. Use meaningful and emotive words. Make it local and emphasise how you have noticed the environment change in your own lifetime or during lockdown.
- Encourage others! Remember there will be a group of you chatting to your MP so facilitate others to speak and make sure everyone's views are heard. If you agree with things others are saying, show your support!
- Don't forget to give the MP time to respond to your requests. But be clear what you are asking them to commit to. Everyone likes to have a good conversation but ultimately we're here to ask our MPs to take action, so urge them for some solid commitments.
- Ask them to commit to championing a green and fair recovery from coronavirus. This could include joining debates, asking questions at Prime Minister's Questions, or writing articles in local or Westminster press.

You can read more in the [Climate Outreach guide: Communicating Climate Change during the COVID-19 crisis](#).

What if my MP can't meet on 30 June?

That's not a problem - the main thing is that your MP is hearing that their constituents care. Just agree an alternative meeting date and let us know when your meeting is planned for - and do let us know how it went after! You're still welcome to join The Climate Coalition's virtual rally on Zoom on the 30 June to hear from others who have met their MP.

Step 6: Follow up: after your meeting

MPs need to consistently hear from constituents to ensure they are taking your concerns seriously and acting on them. Ask them on the day for commitments and deadlines – but that's not all. To show you care and haven't forgotten the commitments made on 30 June, contact them afterwards to follow up on these.

After the lobby you could:

- Arrange a follow up online meeting
- Send them a follow up email
- Call their office to ask for a progress update
- Tweet to thank them for joining you on the day and a reminder to take action.

Feedback

It would be helpful if you can share your feedback on how your MP responded. Please take a note of the topics you covered, how your MP reacted and any commitments they made. We will send you a feedback questionnaire to complete after the event (look out for this in an email from us after the 30 June).

What else is happening?

As mentioned above, on 30 June, there will also be some exciting online events hosted by The Climate Coalition that you'll be able to join. Think of these as the meeting place, a village square for example, for all of us who are going in and out of meetings with our MPs.

There will be live webinars with speakers, Q&As and interactive sessions. We'll share the schedule ahead of the day and you can take part when it suits you.

We'll keep a running tally on the number of MPs that have been met as part of the lobby, and you'll have a chance to find out how other meetings have gone, get tips from others that have already had their meeting and you'll share your own experiences.

This will be a way to connect with others in your area ahead of or after your MP meeting. We'll provide more information on how this will work ahead of the day. Check out The Climate Coalition's [The Time is Now virtual lobby page](#) to see the line-up, and watch out for emails from us on how to join.

Facebook groups

The Climate Coalition have also set up regional Facebook groups to help you connect and share plans with others in your area, including people in your constituency who will join your meeting. If you have Facebook, click the links below to join:

[East of England](#)

[East Midlands](#)

[London](#)

[North East](#)

[North West](#)

[South East](#)

[South West](#)

[West Midlands](#)

[Yorkshire and the Humber](#)

[Scotland](#)

[Wales](#)

[Northern Ireland](#)