



8. POLITICAL LOBBYING

Introduction

The aim of this short briefing is to provide a guide to lobbying politicians.

Why should you lobby politicians?

Lobbying is the process of trying to influence policy by contacting politicians to highlight an issue of concern to you.

Politicians will tend to give more attention to a letter from a constituent than from an organisation - even those they support. They are sensitive to the opinion of their electorate. Few politicians have such large majorities that they can take voters for granted, and most want a reputation as a good MP/ MSP/ Councillor.

Your letter could make all the difference voters in influencing what issues your MP, MSP or councillor decides to focus on.

Who to contact?

In order to lobby politicians, it is of course necessary to identify who are your local politicians. This can be done in a number of ways. Local libraries will have lists of all local councillors in their areas, as well as details of local MPs and MSPs.

This information is also available online via websites such as www.upmystreet.com. Further information on the Regional MSPs within your area is available from www.scottish.parliament.uk. There are also some online resources available to check how MP's and MSP's have voted on certain issues. For MSP's you would have to search the Scottish Parliament website but for MP's there is www.publicwhip.org.uk and www.theyworkforyou.com.

Similar information is available in Hansard (House of Commons) or in the Official Document (Scottish Parliament) and should be available from main libraries.

Contacting Politicians

Politicians can be contacted in a number of ways including telephone calls, a visit to their surgeries or even by letter, fax or email.

However, there are some key points to remember:

- Identify yourself as a constituent
- Be polite and concise
- If writing, keep the letter brief but do also enclose any relevant reports
- Ensure the information you provide is factually accurate
- Stick to one issue to avoid over burdening or confusing the receiver
- Be clear about what you are asking them to do
- Request a reply
- Make sure that you include your name, address and telephone number in any correspondence
- Write in your own individual style, as personalised communications have more impact than standardised responses.