

Lobbying your MP

Thank you for offering to come to Westminster to support this important campaign. You will have an opportunity to meet your local MP in person and discuss your concerns about the lack of protection for our seas and the wildlife that depends on them.

We recognise that visiting a politician is different to writing a letter, so we want you to feel as fully briefed and as comfortable as possible beforehand. We also realise that a briefing sheet is not a substitute for support from staff on the day. Plenty of experienced staff will be on hand to assist you and answer your questions at the rally and both inside and outside the Houses of Parliament.

Before the lobby

Please write a letter or email to your MP before the day of the lobby to let them know that you will be there and to find out whether they will be in Parliament that day. Please give them your name and address when you send it. All MPs can be reached by writing to the House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA.

Alternatively, you can telephone your MP by calling the House of Commons Switchboard on 020 7219 3000 and asking for his or her office.

You can find out who your MP is by telephoning the House of Commons Public Information Office on 020 7219 4272. If you have access to the Internet, you can find out who your MP is by visiting: www.locata.co.uk/commons.

The lobby queue

When we reach the Houses of Parliament we will make our way to the main pedestrian entrance, known as St. Stephen's entrance, and join the lobby queue on the right hand side.

Due to space limitations in the Commons, not all lobbyists will be allowed in at the same time, and you may have to wait for a while outside as the police let in small groups. Warm clothes, waterproofs and comfortable shoes may therefore be necessary. You will have to go through an airport style security check before entering Parliament, so it will speed the process if you keep bags etc to a minimum. Photography is not allowed inside the building and mobile phones will need to be switched off.

Inside Central Lobby

Once inside you proceed to Central Lobby. Inside Central Lobby, on the left, is a reception desk where you will need to ask for the 'green card' used to request a meeting with an MP. Please complete the card, with your home address and reason why you wish to see your MP, and hand it back to the reception desk.

Then follows another wait, while Parliamentary staff tries to locate your MP – who may be in the main Commons chamber, a committee or his or her office. The political timetable is often unpredictable and last minute changes could mean you have to wait a little while to meet your MP. In rare cases, it could mean that your MP is no longer available to meet you and a member of their staff may come to see you instead. If your MP is unavailable please make yourself known to a member of staff with the lobby and they will try to team you up with another lobbyist visiting their MP.

When your MP comes to meet you in Central Lobby, staff on the reception desk will announce your name and your MP's name over a public address system. You can then meet your MP at the reception desk. They may simply talk to you in Central Lobby, or they may take you to an office, meeting room or perhaps for a cup of tea in the Commons tearoom.

Tips on making the best use of your meeting

In the meeting listen to your MP and respond diplomatically and tactfully. It is important that you build a relationship with your MP rather than going on the offensive.

Try to keep to the key issues. Your MP may not be familiar with the arguments for comprehensive legislation to protect our marine environment. Try not to be sidetracked by questions that do not relate specifically to this issue, but use your enthusiasm to explain the significance of securing new legislation as soon as possible. Do not worry if you are asked a question you cannot answer.

After your meeting

Please leave Central Lobby promptly after your meeting to make room for other lobbyists.

We would be interested to know how your meeting went, and any comments your MP made. You can provide initial feedback to any of the staff on hand, but we would appreciate it if you can feed back by emailing marinelobby@wwf.org.uk.

After the day, it would be useful if you could write and thank your MP for meeting you. You can also take this opportunity to follow up on any issues that may have slipped your mind in the meeting, or arose out of discussion, and to remind your MP of any actions they agreed to take.

Thank you for your support. If you have any questions before the day please contact marinelobby@wwf.org.uk.