

Ask the Climate Question



Supporter Toolkit

Thank you for your interest in the *Ask the Climate Question* campaign

Climate change remains one of the biggest challenges humanity faces. Tackling the problem offers the opportunity not only to protect the poorest in developing countries and safeguard wildlife at risk from a warming world, but also to create a green economy in the UK. It could mean thousands of new green jobs from areas such as renewable energy, energy efficiency and public transport.

The general election offers us an opportunity to bring the climate change issue to the forefront, and a coalition of organisations are working together to encourage you to do just that. We are concentrating on the marginal constituencies which will be the most closely fought, and where political parties will take a much greater interest in the views of voters.

If you live in a marginal constituency, you could be very influential in drawing attention to climate change issues to the political parties. We'd like you to get the message across that climate change is an issue you feel strongly about. The more questions you ask, the more the political parties will listen and the more likely that you will influence them at UK level.

In Scotland, the campaign is being led by Christian Aid, Friends of the Earth Scotland, Oxfam, RSPB, World Development Movement and WWF, with support from Stop Climate Chaos Scotland. You can take action in anywhere in Scotland, but we are focusing efforts in the following constituencies:

- Edinburgh North and Leith
- Edinburgh East
- Dumfries and Galloway
- Glasgow Central

There will also be some additional activity in Perth and Linlithgow, led by Oxfam.

You can find out if you live in one of these constituencies by visiting our website at www.acqscotland.org.uk

This toolkit guides you on what you can do to influence your candidates – no matter how much or little time you have to spare. If you would like to get more involved, there are also training sessions available in some areas but if there is anything else you would like to know please contact us – you'll find our contact details on the back page. You can also visit our website at www.acqscotland.org.uk.



How to get involved

Even if you have only a little spare time, you can use your influence to help our campaign. Training and support is provided – just contact one of the organisations on the back page for more information.



You can:

1. Ask the Climate Question

You can raise a variety of issues with your parliamentary candidates depending on what's important to you. It doesn't matter which particular issue you raise – as long as your candidates know that climate change is important to you and that you want their party to do something about it.

There are different ways to Ask the Climate Question:

Do the doorstep challenge	3
Attend a Question Time event	3
Meet your parliamentary candidates face to face	3
Write to, email, phone or tweet your parliamentary candidates	4
Respond to action alerts	4

2. Spread the word in your area

You can help make our campaign more effective by getting others in your constituency involved. For example, you can:

Promote Question Time events	5
Write a letter to the paper	5
Help promote the campaign	5
Questions you could ask	6
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1) Ask the Climate Question



i Do the doorstep challenge

If you live in a marginal constituency, you are very likely to be canvassed by the local candidates of the political parties on your doorstep. The candidates want to know what's important to you – and they want to convince you that their party is the one to vote for.

So make sure that by the time your candidate leaves, they know that climate change is an issue you feel strongly about. You're not expected to know all the answers – what you need to do is get across that you care about the issue, and you want to know what their party will do about it.

Ask any question that is important to you about climate change – see pgs 6 - 7 for background information and possible questions you could ask.

ii Attend a Question Time event

There will be at least one Question Time event in each of our target constituencies. At these, the candidates from the main parties will form a panel and answer questions in turn from the audience. This is a great way to hear directly what the parties are saying, and to ask questions about the things that concern you.

Details of the Question Time events are available on our website – www.acqscotland.org.uk. However, if you would like information in the meantime, please get in touch with the relevant organiser of each event (you'll find our contact details on the back page).

- Edinburgh North and Leith – Christian Aid
- Edinburgh East - WWF Scotland
- Dumfries and Galloway – RSPB Scotland
- Glasgow Central -Oxfam

Everyone is welcome to these events – regardless as to whether you are a supporter of the organising group. We need everyone we can get – a full house will show that climate change is a real issue to the voters in these constituencies.

iii Meet your parliamentary candidates face to face

Face-to-face meetings make a real impact on politicians. It may seem daunting to visit your candidates face to face – but they really want to know what your concerns are and will welcome a meeting. Here are some tips to help you:

Step 1: Book an appointment: Details of the parliamentary candidates of our target constituencies are available on our website www.acqscotland.org or from the lead organisation for that constituency (see back page). Use these to contact your candidates and arrange an appointment to see them.

Step 2: Prepare for the meeting: Have in your mind some key points you wish to raise – have a look at pgs 6 - 7 for ideas. Make sure that it is understood that you are visiting in your capacity as a concerned constituent.

Step 3: At the meeting itself:

- **Keep it short and on track:** You may only have 10 – 15 minutes for your meeting, so state your concerns clearly, stick to the issue and try not to get diverted into general debate.
- **Take notes:** By taking notes, you can follow up any important points. If you are asked a difficult question, offer to find out more and come back with a response.
- **Be courteous:** How you put your message across is as important as what you say. Be confident and assertive but stay calm and polite.

Step 4: Follow up

- **Let us know how you got on!** Please contact us.
- **Write to the candidate:** After a visit, it is important to write to the candidate to thank them for their time and to remind them of what was discussed and any actions that were agreed.
- **Spread the word:** Consider sharing your experience by contacting your local media (see page 5) or writing a short piece for your local group or social networking site.

iv Write to, email, phone or tweet your candidates.

If you are unable to meet in person, there are plenty of other ways to get in touch with them. Find their contact details on our website at www.acqscotland.org.uk or from the lead organisation (see back page) and decide on your key points using pgs 6 - 7 as a guide.

If writing a letter or email - here are a few tips:

- In your letter, start by saying which constituency you are from and why you are concerned about climate change.
- Use the briefing on pages 6 - 7 to guide you on what points to raise – however, it's best to keep your letter short and succinct – focusing on just one or two issues.
- Be polite and courteous.
- Finish by asking what your candidate's position is on the issue, and what their party's policies for tackling climate change are more broadly.

If phoning your candidate, follow the advice above.

If using Twitter – we'll be encouraging your candidates to set up a Twitter account so you will be able to follow them and make comments on their tweets.

Let us know how you got on! Please contact us – see the back page for our contact details.

v Respond to action alerts

Add your name to our action alert email list so we can send you out opportunities for rapid-response campaigning in your constituency. This would include:

- Newspaper stories that you can respond to in the letters page
- Upcoming radio phone-ins or opportunities to be studio audiences for political discussion shows
- Question Time or other public events in the constituency where candidates could be asked the climate question.

2. Spread the word in your area

i Promote Question Time events

We need as many people as possible to come to our Question Time events – a packed house will show how important climate change is to constituents.



Please use our leaflets and posters to encourage people in your area to follow your lead. Just contact us and we'll send some out to you, or download them from our website at www.acqscotland.org.uk. You can also spread the word electronically – by email, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, online forums or other websites.

Join our Facebook group at <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=372818222131>

ii Write to your local paper

Candidates read the local papers to keep up with the issues that concern their constituents. A great way to get something into a paper is through the letters page

You could reference a recent article about climate change and write about your concerns, write about the experiences you have had when talking with your candidates on this issue, or simply suggest to the readers to Ask the Climate Question.

Remember to:

- Address the letter as 'Dear Editor
- If you are responding to an article that has appeared in the paper give the article title and date – i.e. "In response to your article, *Climate Change and Scotland, 5 April...*".
- Try to keep letter to around 200 words.
- Put your name and address at bottom of letter.

iii Help promote the campaign

Help us promote the campaign by approaching people living in your area to ask them to Ask the Climate Question too. We can help you team up with other people to target a particular area in your constituency.

A full briefing about how you can go about this will be provided in our training sessions – or contact us for advice.

Questions you could ask

Q1. If elected, what will your party do in its first year on the issue of climate change?

This is a great question to start with when you meet your parliamentary candidate – which could lead on to more specific issues. You should raise the issues that are most important to you – you could use some of the examples below.

Q2. Do you think that the UK Climate Change Act should be more ambitious?

The UK Parliament has agreed to commit to cuts in carbon dioxide emissions by 80%. However, scientists are recommending all industrialised countries should make at least 40% cuts by 2020 if we are to avoid catastrophic climate change – the UK's interim target lags behind at only 34%.

Q3. If elected, will you ensure that finance given to developing countries to help them cope with climate change is in the form of grants, not loans?

Whilst rich countries are responsible for most of the emissions pumped into the atmosphere, it is the poorest, most marginalised communities in the world that are being hit the hardest by climate change. We owe a huge climate debt to the poorest – but two thirds of the finance the UK provides for developing countries is in the form of loans, pushing many countries further into debt.

Q4. ...and will you make sure that any finance given is in addition to existing funds?

Poor countries need financial help to minimise the ongoing impacts of climate change which should be over and above existing funds provided by the Overseas Development Agency. In addition, rich countries have a moral obligation to build strong economies by sharing clean, low carbon technologies with them.

Q5. Do you support the building of new runways?

Under current levels of growth, aviation levels will triple by 2030, which means that to meet the targets to reduce CO2 emissions in the UK Climate Change Act, we'd need to shut down every other sector in the economy.

Q6. Do you think that the banks that have been bailed out by the government should be allowed to invest in projects that are damaging to the environment and human rights?

The Royal Bank of Scotland, which is 84% publicly owned, is using billions to finance projects that drive climate change and human rights abuses around the world – including Canadian tar sands and Ugandan oil fields.

Q7. Do you think Scotland should be expanding its renewable energy industry?

The Power of Scotland Renewed report published in 2009 by Friends of the Earth, RSPB, WDM and WWF showed that energy from renewable sources such as wind, wave and tides could make us more than self-sufficient in Scotland by 2030, given adequate investment, ending our dependence on large-scale fossil fuel power stations.

Q8. What will your government do to make all homes low carbon?

Homes are responsible for a third of all greenhouse gas emissions, so reducing emissions from this sector – by making sure that homes are properly insulated and helping communities to develop renewable energy projects – is one of the easiest steps to meeting the targets in the Climate Change Act.

Q9. What will you do to ensure that the UK plays its part in stopping tropical deforestation?

The loss of tropical forests is not only a direct threat to much of the world's biodiversity, they represent vital stores of carbon. Every year, forest destruction causes almost one fifth of the world's greenhouse gas emissions.

Q10. What action would you and your party take to ensure that future generations inherit a countryside brimming with wildlife?

The response of our political leaders to recent financial turmoil will have long-lasting implications for the state of our natural environment – on halting biodiversity loss and meeting targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Political leaders must commit to investing in a healthy environment and a healthy economy.

Recent debate over climate change

Recent news coverage has challenged the science behind the link between human activity and global warming. There Q&As will help you explain to people in your constituency that climate change is still real - more information can be found here:

<http://www.stopclimatechaos.org/10/feb/10-reasons-why-climate-sceptics-are-wrong>

1. Scotland has experienced its coldest winter in 50 years – so this proves that the scientists have got it wrong about global warming.

While we have experienced a severely cold winter in this part of the world – that's not the case for other areas. As Olympic athletes have experienced in Vancouver, the west coast of North America has experienced its warmest winter in a hundred years. This is highlighted by the fact that globally January 2010 was the warmest since satellite records began 32 years ago. This is why we talk about climate change rather than global warming.

2. In light of recent media coverage challenging climate science, should we now doubt climate change?

Definitely not - the overwhelming majority of scientists from all relevant fields continue to stand by the basic conclusion that climate change is being driven by human activity. The incidents reported in the press are isolated incidents have no bearing on the overwhelming mass of findings on the reality and causes of climate change – and reports continue to be published confirming this – e.g. see the report the Met Office report published on 5 March 2010 linking climate change with human activity: <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/corporate/pressoffice/2010/pr20100305.html>.

3. Are the scientists failing us?

No, on the contrary - the shortcomings in forecasts of Himalayan glacier melting were pointed out by other climate scientists – an example of the on-going peer review process working. Many critics interpret such disagreement as evidence of uncertainty rather than a normal part of the progression of scientific understanding. Looking at the areas of active contention in climate science overall, there is little serious questioning of the basic facts and causes of climate change. Indeed, there is more and more credible agreement with the view that climate impacts could in fact be worse than the current consensus view (itself the product of a process which includes governments as well as scientists).

4. Don't recent revelations show climate change is exaggerated?

No – studies of climate change and impacts over two decades have emerged with successively more severe estimates of the degree and impact of climate change, which is based on data that is generally several years out of date. Final reports are the product of considerable government involvement in overseeing the scientific process and are published in a form acceptable to governments. There is very little tendency to exaggeration in such a process.

Our contact details

This campaign is being led by five organisations. Four of these are leading each of the constituencies we are focusing on in Scotland, but you can contact any organisation for further information.

Organisation

Main contact

Christian Aid

(lead in Edinburgh North and Leith)

Diane Green

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Friends of the Earth Scotland

(Supporting all constituencies)

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Oxfam

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RSPB Scotland

(Lead in Dumfries and Galloway)

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World Development Movement

(Supporting all constituencies)

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WWF Scotland

(Lead in Edinburgh East)

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Ask the Climate Question in Scotland is supported by of Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS), a growing coalition of organisations campaigning on climate change. For more information visit www.stopclimatechaos.org./scotland