



Organising a site visit with your MP

Getting your MP to visit your site will give you that first introduction you need and hopefully leave them with a strong impression of the benefits of community energy. If you haven't done this before, it might seem daunting! Here are some things to think about when you're arranging your visit.

Requesting a visit

You'll need to start by contacting your MP. Check out our handy [guide](#) and template [letter](#) first as inspiration for your correspondence, but make it your own! Each of your projects is different and unique, so there's no one right way to do this. Don't be combative, you need them on your side. Try to sell the visit as much as you can! This might mean mentioning photo ops, who they'll meet, or the possibility of a short film.

Tour of facilities

This will be the backbone of any visit from your MP and it's what they'll mostly be interested in. If your project is spread over multiple sites, have a think about which one is the most impressive or accessible.

Prepare your piece

Your MP might be keen to know details about the running, the economics and the benefits of your project, so make sure you have these prepared. They will be impressed by this, and it's a great opportunity for you to show off.

What do you want out of the meeting?

Have a think about what you want from your MP. This does not have to be one particular ask, but it helps to have focus. You might want support on one particular local issue, you might want them to raise awareness, you might want them to campaign in parliament, or talk to a relevant minister on your behalf. Talk about this beforehand as it helps to have this in mind before meeting them. As a minimum we want them to be enthused, convinced, proud champions of community energy and your project in Parliament so keep it positive.

Use the visit to convert them to community energy, and the rest can come later. If you're not feeling that confident on the policy stuff, you can give them the [CEE short Parliamentary Briefing](#).

Meeting volunteers

This is a great opportunity for the MP to see the energy of the sector, and for your volunteers to meet their MP, so get a lot of people along if you can. But be careful they're not swamped, make it clear in advance who will be doing most of the talking, greeting etc. Who's got the most inspiring

story to tell? Remember to showcase the diversity of your projects as much as possible - we want to show them that community energy is for everyone!

Meeting beneficiaries

The main impact of community energy lies in the impact it has on people. Maybe your MP could meet people who have benefitted from the project, for example by receiving energy efficiency advice. Are there any social projects in the constituency that you've been able to give support to? Bring them along! You want to show the MP everything that makes your project amazing, and the social benefit is a huge part of what makes community energy what it is.

Photo op

This is a great opportunity to get some content for your website, press and social media so don't waste it! Get a dedicated, good photographer on the job with a good camera who can give you the shots quickly and easily. Have a think about what would make the best shot - try to get as many people in shot as possible, perhaps with hi-vis and hard hats, with some infrastructure in shot as well - make sure it's obvious that it's community energy! A recognisable local landmark is always good too.

Such are the times, it's also important to think about things like social distancing - an MP won't share something if they're breaking the rules!



Film

Video footage is a great resource to have for your socials and website, and this will be the best opportunity you get to record something really memorable. This would be a great opportunity to film a guided tour or key moments talking to the MP about your project. An example you might want to check out is this video from Osney Lock Hydro. Find the best camera you can, and try to find someone who can edit video well! Don't have anyone with the skills in your group? This might be a great opportunity to get local film students or enthusiasts involved in your project! In terms of length, we would ideally be looking for something around the 3-4 minute mark. Any longer and it could put off viewers on social media.

Follow up

This visit should just be the start of your relationship with your MP. Make sure to organise a follow-up meeting with them where you can talk in more depth about the support your project, and community energy in general, needs to maintain and enhance its impact. Follow up with an email expressing your thanks, and detailing any press or social media work you have done following the event.

Social media

Make sure to put your visit on social media! Share the photos, videos and make sure to tag your MP and CEE. Need a bit of help figuring out social media? Check out our guide here.

Press

Get in touch with the local press before the visit, as they may be able to send a reporter or photographer. If not, then arrange to send over a press release about the event. Make sure it's got photos and a bit about the day, including a quote from the MP. Your MP will be grateful for the press - it's cynical but it's a big part of the motivation for them so they will be more likely to return!

Remember, journalists receive a large number of press releases and requests, so make sure yours stands out. For example, use the name of the MP in the subject line as a way to cut through. Also, bear in mind that the whole press release might not be used, so make sure to consider how it might break down into shorter sections that the journalist can pick and choose from.

There are example media resources [on our website](#). Please do [send us](#) any press releases and articles for us to share in our newsletter and on our [website](#).

Any questions? Please contact Henry at h.bettley@communityenergyengland.org - we'd love to hear from you!