

## Organising a site visit with your MP or election candidate

Getting your MP or candidate 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

Check out our handy [guide to writing to MPs or candidates](#) which includes links as to how to find them. You may want to use our letter template for writing to MPs about current community energy issues which can be found via [bit.ly/Write-MP](https://bit.ly/Write-MP) but make it your own and keep it shortish! 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 and social media post opportunities, or the possibility of a short film. Give them a taster: what they'll see, who they'll meet, some of the benefits of CE. It must be advantageous to them - good contact with positive local news, good pics for their social media...

### When?

Obviously 'at your convenience' is good but puts the onus on you to rally around the date you're given. A notable event or 'ribbon cutting' at which the guest will play a role, is even more likely to get them along for the attendant publicity. MPs are usually in their constituency on Fridays and weekends and during [parliamentary recesses](#) or holidays.

### Tour of facilities

This will be the backbone of any visit from your MP/candidate 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/photogenic or accessible. Do risk assessments as rooftops can make great photo opps but also be difficult and dangerous to access. Have dedicated stewards in high vis. if there is any risk.

### Prepare your piece

Your MP/candidate 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. But keep it bullety and beware of a blizzard of numbers. Human stories are best.

### What do you want out of the meeting?

Have a think about what you want from your MP/candidate. As a minimum we want them to be enthused, convinced, proud champions of community energy and your project in their campaign and in Parliament so keep it positive. If you can get a picture on their social media (even their facebook cover photo) they are on the way to being champions! If you can get a statement of support and a supportive mention in any election leaflet even better. If you can get a very short film made of the visit you and they can use it again and again.

It is important to have an 'ask' of them. Even if it is just to make community energy part of their campaign and support it and your project if elected. Follow up to make sure they do it.

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/candidate to see the energy of the sector, and for your volunteers to meet them, so get a lot of people along if you can. They like meeting constituents - 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? Who can talk powerfully about how they have benefitted/been empowered by the project? 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/candidate 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/candidate 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. Ideally s/he will be able to direct participants to get the best shot. 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.



This picture shows the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, Ed Davey, with the Energy Minister, Greg Barker, with the Environment Director and a cabinet member from Lambeth Council on the roof of Brixton Energy Solar 3 (the reason for the 3 finger salutes), shortly after the launch in 2013. This sort of visit is really

important and the picture shows political support. Get some sort of gesture if possible. See more pictures below.

### **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/candidate about your project. An example you might want to check out is this [visit by Felicity Buchan MP](#) to a North Kensington Community Energy rooftop in her constituency and this [visit by Coop Party candidate Helena Dollimore](#) to Energise Sussex Coast.

Recent advice from key allies who want to use these films is 1 minute is best, ideally with comment from an ordinary person who has benefited from your project, perhaps a phrase from a member of your organisation rounded off by a supportive comment from the MP/candidate.

It is possible to do really low tech, selfie films on a phone which can be really authentic and watchable: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fAXeQt5p\\_p0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fAXeQt5p_p0)

Find the best camera you can, and try to find someone who can edit video well and quickly! Though nowadays a phone is often perfectly good. 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! Or engage young people expert in Tiktok (your children/grandchildren?). 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. The limit for embedded video on Twitter/X is 140 seconds, Facebook 60 seconds, Instagram 90 seconds or 15 minutes. So shorter is obviously better. See this [document](#) for other social media video specs.

### **Follow up**

This visit should just be the start of your relationship with your MP/candidate. 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 and sharing video and pictures. And restating any ask you made of them.

### **Social media**

Make sure to put your visit on social media! Share the photos, videos and make sure to tag your MP/candidate and CEE @Comm1nrg. 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 immediately afterwards. Make sure it's got photos and a bit about the day, including a quote from the MP/candidate and one from your organisation. Your MP/candidate 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/candidate 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. Write it in the form of the article you'd like to see published.

See our [Policy and Advocacy](#) pages for more resources. Please do send us any press releases and articles for us to share in our newsletter and on our [website](#).

*Any questions? Please contact Josh at [j.barnes@communityenergyengland.org](mailto:j.barnes@communityenergyengland.org) - we'd love to hear from you about your plans and any successful meetings or visits! These help inspire and inform others too.*

