



Politicians for the planet

Advocacy is the act of engaging with people in order to bring about change. It is also about championing the interests of others. Restoration Forth engaged local politicians on the need for nature restoration, and for policies that help create an enabling environment for change.

Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) can champion local projects at the national level and bring them to the attention of other politicians and Government. We want Government ministers to see Restoration Forth as a model for other environmental projects.

One aim is to provide a positive, practical example of a nature restoration project rooted in community involvement. Another is to campaign for the removal of barriers to restoration such as complex and costly licencing and permits, to benefit prospective projects in Scotland.

As part of Restoration Forth, a series of 'Advocacy Workshops' for members of the community were delivered, providing advice on how to campaign for the local environment and engage politicians on issues in the community. These workshops were delivered by the advocacy team at WWF, who shared their knowledge and experience of engagement with the Scottish political process.

Why should we engage with politicians?

All politicians work to represent and help their constituents – that means you! They are public servants who want to learn about and support local community projects. They will be open to any well-thought-through initiative that will make their local area a better place to live.

Our proportional electoral system means you have one MSP representing your local constituency and you also have seven 'regional' MSPs that represent the wider area, which is made up of several constituencies. So, if you wish, you are entitled to ask eight MSPs to visit your project and help you.

How can you engage MSPs?

Invite MSPs to project events such as opening ceremonies, volunteering sessions or annual celebrations. Meeting the community and staff who are making the project happen is the best way to learn about what you're doing.

MSPs are keen to get stuck in and involved in community initiatives in their constituency. It's what their job is all about and it also makes them look good!



What did we ask our politicians?

We identified one major obstacle that could improve the prospects of restoration projects in Scotland: the complex planning process for getting approval. We feel this needs to be simplified for communities to take on restoration projects themselves as we need to act at scale.

Our initial request was for local MSPs to visit the project to learn more about our ambitious aims themselves. We wanted MSPs to meet the community involved who are making the project a reality. We also wanted them to find out what policy support and funding the project will need in the future as we expand the scope of our activities.

We asked our local MSPs to mention Restoration Forth wherever possible to spread the word. Some MSPs recognised the project's significance and were willing to champion it more widely. We asked these MSPs to mention Restoration Forth in parliamentary debates, write questions to Government Ministers, and host events in Parliament to showcase our work.

Key Messages

- **Nature Restoration:** Emphasise the importance of nature restoration projects for biodiversity and climate resilience.
- **Community Engagement:** Highlight the role of local communities in supporting, taking part in, leading and benefiting from your project.
- **Policy Support:** Advocate policies that support long-term funding and legislative backing for nature restoration initiatives.

Advocacy Strategies

- **Personalised Engagement:** Tailor your messages to the interests of individual MSPs and target MSPs who are open to your message.
- **Showcase Success Stories:** Use past events and similar successful projects as case studies. Demonstrate the feasibility and potential impact of your project.
- **Collaborate with Stakeholders:** Partner with local organisations, community groups, and other stakeholders to build a broad support base.
- **Leverage Media:** Use media coverage to raise awareness and generate public support for your nature restoration project whenever possible.
- **Develop Engaging Events:** Showcase project work and community involvement, through events that are relevant and meaningful according to an MSPs interests.

