Influencing the UK Parliament
Influencing the UK Parliament

The IES is committed to promoting the crucial role of environmental science in society and an evidence-based approach to decision and policy making. One of the most effective ways this can be achieved is through influencing Parliament. It can however be time-consuming and difficult to navigate the parliament website. The IES has therefore put together this information pack to inform members of the various routes to influencing the UK Parliament over issues, policies or legislation.

There are a variety of ways in which an individual or organisation can influence the UK Parliament. The first point of call is to identify and contact your constituency MP. Although some MPs may have UK-wide responsibilities, their primary job is to represent their constituents.

Find and contact your MP
You can find your MP online simply by providing your postcode on the Parliament website. You can also use this website to see their career history, where their interests lie, and which committees, groups or departments they work within or for which they are responsible.

By contacting your MP and notifying them about the issue you are concerned about, you immediately access Parliament. You may meet with your MP and discuss the matter and any further steps. You may ask them to send a letter to the relevant department or official responsible. They may provide you with information on how to contact any relevant All-Party Groups or Select Committees where you can voice your concerns further.

Find and contact a relevant Lord
Unlike MPs who can only represent individuals within their constituency, you can request any Lord (Peer) to ask a question or raise a debate on your behalf. It is important to identify and contact a Lord who has a particular interest in your issue. You can request information on different Lords’ interests or advice on who to contact through the House of Lords Information Office (HLIO). Alternatively, you may research individual Lords in the House of Lords Hansard, which is the record of everything spoken in the House to identify where their interests lie. Not all Lords have publicly-available contact information.

Next steps
Once you have established dialogue with your MP, another relevant MP or Lord, there are several ways they may help you influence Parliament.

Questions to Ministers - Parliamentary Questions (PQs) are used by MPs to seek information or to press for action. They oblige Government Ministers to explain and defend the work, policy, decisions and actions of their Departments.

There are different types of PQs: oral, written and urgent. Oral questions are where an MP meets a Minister face to face during parliamentary question time. Although lacking sufficient time for depth or debate, they do promote the issue to the House of Commons, media and wider public. Written questions are used by MPs to attempt to extract more detailed information from the Government than would be available from an oral question or to press for action. Large numbers of written questions are submitted daily by MPs on behalf of their constituents or organisations.

Adjournment/Westminster Hall debates – Adjournment debates allow the Commons to have a general debate on a subject or policy without requiring the House to vote. There are several different types of adjournment debates: some are general debates about a subject or Government policy, while others allow backbenchers to raise constituency issues which bear some relevance to Government policy and to obtain a response from a Minister.

Early Day Motions – Early Day Motions (EDMs) are formal motions submitted for debate in the Commons. However, only a few are ever debated. Rather, they are primarily used to publicise the views of individual MPs and to raise awareness of a specific event, campaign, or policy. They gauge parliamentary support for the motion’s cause, though they do not carry any direct legislative weight.

10-minute Rule Bill/Private Members’ Bills – 10-minute Rule Bills are where a backbench MP is given ten minutes in the House of Commons to propose new Bills. However, they are mostly used by MPs to voice their opinions on a subject or aspect of existing legislation and to stimulate publicity for a cause. Private Members’ Bills, such as those brought before Parliament under the 10-minute Rule, are introduced by MPs and Lords who are not Government Ministers. They rarely become law but influence Government legislation, although there have been some notable exceptions (e.g. Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Act 2006).

You can support or oppose a Private Member’s Bill through your MP or a Lord, by writing to the Government department responsible for the Bill, or by lobbying through All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs).

Select Committees - Select Committees are cross-party groups responsible for the scrutiny of a wide variety of areas from specialist topics to Government departments. Several committees in both the House of Commons and House of Lords have relevance to environmental matters (Appendix 1).

Most Commons Select Committees are responsible for the scrutiny of Government departments. Their role is to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the relevant Government department and its associated public bodies. Lords Select Committees are concerned with specialist subjects such as education, science, or economic affairs.

An individual may take part in a Select Committee inquiry by submitting evidence or information. These inquiries are often highly influential and can be a very powerful way of influencing Parliament.

There are also Public Bill Committees responsible for scrutinising the content of Public Bills. They have a formal role in discussing individual pieces of legislation and debating possible amendments. These Committees may also receive evidence.

All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) - These are cross-party interest groups, incorporating members of both Houses. However, unlike Select Committees they are informal, having no official status within Parliament. There are many APPGs that are concerned with the environment (Appendix 1), and are mostly run by backbenchers. Despite being informal, they are able to raise awareness for a particular issue and coordinate with other individuals and organisations outside of Parliament. APPGs are often a good place to start influencing parliament, being less formal and more broadly targeted than Select Committees.

This is a guide for Members on ways to seek influence on Parliamentary debate and Government policy. If you want any more information about influencing policy, or have insights which you think would be valuable to share with peers, please do get in touch.

An organisational map of the decision-making process in UK Government is provided in Figure 1. A list of the relevant cross-party groups and individuals, and a list of the full links used in this document appears in the appendix.

![Diagram](image_url)
Appendix

Appendix 1: List of most commonly relevant bodies for decision-making

Parliament Select Committees
This is a list of the most commonly relevant parliamentary committees as of 1st January 2021. For a full list of Select Committees and their work, see: https://committees.parliament.uk

Commons
Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee
Committee on the Future Relationship with the European Union
Education Committee
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee
Environmental Audit Committee
Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee
International Development Committee
International Trade Committee
Public Accounts Committee
Science and Technology Committee
Transport Committee

Lords
EU Environment Sub-Committee
EU Goods Sub-Committee
EU International Agreements Sub-Committee
EU Services Sub-Committee
Food, Poverty, Health and Environment Committee
Science and Technology Committee (Lords)

All-Party Parliamentary Groups
A publicly-available register of All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) and their members is updated every six weeks.

Cabinet
The Cabinet is the team of the most senior ministers in the Government who are chosen by the Prime Minister to lead on specific policy areas. Their appointment is periodical, subject to political processes, and an updated list of Cabinet members can be found at https://members.parliament.uk/Government/Cabinet
As of 1st January 2021, some of the most commonly relevant Cabinet Ministers are:
Prime Minister - Boris Johnson
Chancellor of the Exchequer – Rishi Sunak
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy - Alok Sharma
Secretary of State for Education - Gavin Williamson
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs - George Eustice
Foreign Secretary and First Secretary of State – Dominic Raab
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government - Robert Jenrick
Secretary of State for International Trade - Liz Truss
Secretary of State for Transport - Grant Shapps

Shadow Cabinet
The Shadow Cabinet is the team of the most senior spokespeople chosen by the Leader of the Opposition to lead on specific policy areas and to scrutinise their Cabinet counterparts. As with the Cabinet, their appointment is periodical and subject to change. An updated list of Shadow Cabinet members can be found at https://members.parliament.uk/Opposition/Cabinet
As of 1st January 2021, some of the most commonly relevant Shadow Cabinet Spokespeople are:
Leader of Her Majesty’s Official Opposition - Keir Starmer
Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer – Anneliese Dodds
Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government – Steve Reed
Shadow Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy - Ed Miliband
Shadow Secretary of State for Education - Kate Green
Shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs - Luke Pollard
Shadow Foreign Secretary – Lisa Nandy
Shadow Secretary of State for International Development – Preet Kaur Gill
Shadow Secretary of State for Housing – Thangam Debbonaire
Shadow Secretary of State for International Trade – Emily Thornberry
Shadow Secretary of State for Transport - Jim McMahon

Appendix 2: List of sources

Find and contact your MP
Parliament website
members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP

Check an MPs’ voting records
Theyworkforyou.com
www.theyworkforyou.com

Find and contact a relevant Lord
House of Lords Information Office

Members of the House of Lords
www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/lords

Hansard of Commons and Lords
hansard.parliament.uk

Next steps
Parliamentary Questions
questions-statements.parliament.uk
Adjournment Debates
www.parliament.uk/about/how/business/adjournment
Early Day Motions
www.parliament.uk/edm
Select Committees
www.parliament.uk/about/how/committees/select
All-Party Parliamentary Groups
Private Members’ Bills
www.parliament.uk/about/how/laws/bills/private-members
Author: Gillon Dobie was a research intern at the Institution of Environmental Sciences in 2011. He holds a Masters in Geophysical Hazards from University College London and a BSc in Environmental Science from Sheffield University.

About the Institution of Environmental Sciences (IES)
The IES is a visionary organisation leading debate, dissemination, and promotion of environmental science and sustainability. We promote an evidence-based approach to decision and policy making.

We are devoted to championing the crucial role of environmental science in ensuring the well-being of humanity now and in the future.

Registered charity no. 277611

Copyright statement: Copyright of the published materials is held by the Institution of Environmental Sciences. We encourage the use of the materials but request that acknowledgement of the source is explicitly stated.

Publication Date: November 2011, Updated: January 2021