

Finding Common Ground

How to find the collaborative route to political action



Common Ground

It can be really difficult to get through to an MSP sometimes. Between other local groups, the rest of their political party, and the big issues in the news every night, MSPs are constantly pulled in lots of different directions.

Even though we all know why rewilding is a pressing concern for the country, and should be a priority for the Scottish Government, getting all our MSPs to see it this way is the tricky part.

In this guide, we'll walk through the Hope for the Future Common Ground approach, how to relate rewilding to the issues your MSPs cares about and transform this into a route to truly collaborative and meaningful action.

Why do you care about rewilding?

Before trying to convince your MSPs to take action on rewilding its worth taking a step back and thinking about why it is an issue that is important to you.

People often deprioritise the personal when talking to politicians. It can be tempting to view how an issue affects you as less important than talking about the bigger picture, but emphasising the personal is a vital part of building a connection with a politician and convincing them to take action.

Have a think about why you are passionate about rewilding, perhaps it is the decline in biodiversity you've seen in your lifetime or your fears about the world you'll leave to you're children. Does this relate to your community, your work or your wider interests? Thinking about this will give a good grounding to start thinking about how to get your politicians on side.

What does your politician care about?

Why did your MSP get into politics? What do they do with their spare time? What change do they want to see in Scotland and the world? If you can work this out, you can not only understand the topics they want to help their community on, but also what makes them tick.

The topics your MSP cares most about shows us the lens through which they see politics, if you can work this out you have a ready made approach that's more likely to get their attention and 100% of their effort.

What do they focus on in politics?

You can find a list of everything your MSP has ever said through the Scottish Parliament website in the Official Report, showing what they spend most of their time talking about.

If you could only look up one speech, find their first speech (often called maiden speech). This speech is usually a way for a new MSP to set out their stall, broadcasting to other politicians and the country what kind of MSP they are.

What do they post about?

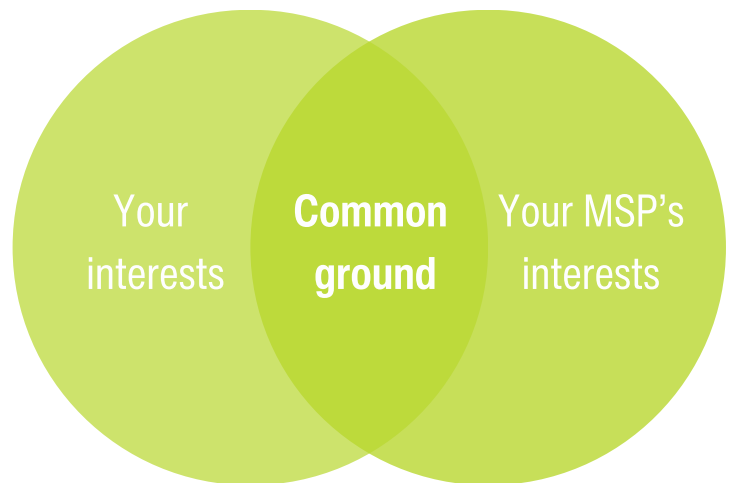
MSPs are human beings too (mostly)! They will likely have a website or even a Facebook page where they put out photos or blogs about events they've gone to and other topics they care about. This can give you a great insight into what they want to talk about when they're not in front of the national media, or even just some of what they like to do in their spare time.

Whether your MSP is a keen cyclist or a passionate supporter of the local club, this info could either present a great route for engagement or a simple icebreaker for starting a meeting on the right foot.

Finding the collaborative route

If you want to have a truly collaborative conversation with your MSP, one where you can work together for effective action on rewilding, you have to meet them where they are. Not only will this allow you to work with them on topics that matter to them, making them more likely to take firm action, but shows them that you want to work together - not just make demands.

There are lots of different types of common ground. Sometimes your MSP will already be engaged with issues related to rewilding. In other cases, you might need to frame your ideas in terms of how it will affect the topics your MSP has more of a track record of engaging with.



For instance If your MSP cares about the NHS, you could talk to them about how access to nature drastically improves mental and physical health, reducing costs for the NHS.

If your MSP cares about agriculture, you could talk to them about how rewilding can work alongside farming and how a thriving natural world is essential for thriving farmland.

Even something as simple as emphasising that you are both trying to improve the lives of people in the constituency can be a great way of building a connection.

We've helped communities, charities, and individuals collaborate with their politicians to create change, some of those never would have made progress if they hadn't related their concerns to an issue their MSP was already engaged with. It really helps to be creative, to figure out how to speak your MSP's language.