

General election toolkit for groups and activists



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Introduction

The upcoming general election is a great opportunity to raise global justice issues to potential MPs. Political parties are desperate to win votes and they need to know that their response to global poverty and injustice will be vital for getting elected.

This toolkit will help you to lobby your parliamentary candidates and get them to listen to your concerns. There are sections on how to write to your candidates, organise hustings and tips on writing to your local newspaper. There are templates for press releases and letters in this toolkit and they are also available for you to download from our website www.wdm.org.uk

Key election questions

To help you engage with your candidates on key global justice issues we have provided you with the following three questions which you can focus on. These are based on WDM campaigns and you can use these questions whenever you are in contact with a candidate, whether you are writing a letter, at a meeting or at a hustings event.

WDM's election questions

Cleaning up the banks

The Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) is 84 per cent publicly owned yet it continues to invest in projects that exacerbate poverty and damage the environment. If elected, what will you do to ensure that RBS phases out its destructive investments and instead becomes a 'Royal Bank of Sustainability' to finance low carbon projects?

Climate debt

Over two thirds of the UK's money for tackling climate change in developing countries is in the form of loans which will increase unjust financial debts. If elected, will you ensure that UK climate change money is given as grants not loans?

Financial transaction tax

A financial transaction tax would limit the worst excesses of the financial system, whilst raising money for aid and tackling climate change. If elected, will you ensure that Britain actively pursues an international tax on financial transactions at the G20?

On pages 10-13 there are frequently asked questions on each of these subject areas. This will provide you with the background information to help you meet with parliamentary candidates or ask them follow up questions.

There is also a summary of where the main political parties stand on these key issues in appendix 1 which will also be useful when preparing to meet candidates.

Campaigning with others

Campaigning activity is naturally heightened in the run up to the general election because of the unique opportunities for meeting and talking to candidates. There are a couple of other campaigning initiatives which may also be happening in your local area:

Ask the climate question (ACQ)

WDM has joined the ACQ coalition that is targeting 51 marginal (closely contested) constituencies in the UK. The main political parties will be concentrating their efforts on winning in the marginals and they will be especially keen to engage with voters in these constituencies. This is a key opportunity to get the message out that you care about climate injustice and its impacts on the world's poor.

If you live in one of the 51 marginal constituencies, we would like to encourage you to join in the main ACQ hustings (public debate) event in your area (see appendix 2 for full list). At the ACQ hustings, you will be able to ask any of WDM's three main questions as they can all be linked to the broad theme of climate justice. By joining up with ACQ in your area you will be able to magnify the strength of public opinion on these issues in your constituency and let the political parties know that climate is an important election issue.

If you do not live in one of the marginal constituencies then please feel free to organise your own WDM hustings event.

Wherever you live, you can write to your local paper, post a blog on a local online media site or meet your parliamentary candidates. This toolkit will provide you with all the guidance and templates that you will need.

Vote Global

Vote Global is a development manifesto that WDM and over 100 other development organisations have signed up to. The manifesto covers five areas:

1. More and better aid and debt relief
2. Tackling climate change
3. Making the global economy work for the poor
4. Good governance and addressing corruption
5. Responding to conflict situations

Copies of this manifesto can be obtained through BOND:
www.bond.org.uk/pages/uk-general-election.html

You may be asked about this manifesto by your parliamentary candidates or by other local campaigning groups. This is a broad platform that we have signed up to but when engaging with candidates we have decided to focus specifically on WDM's three key questions (on page 1).

Activists

If you are not a member of a local group but would like to join up with a local WDM group to undertake any general election campaigning, then please get in touch with us (details on the next page) and we can give you contact details of your nearest group.

Contact us

After you have met with your candidates, written a letter or organised a hustings event, please get in touch with us and let us know how it went. Please let us know:

- What you did e.g. wrote letter, set up meeting, hustings etc.
- Which candidate you met with or wrote to and your constituency
- Date of meeting or letter
- How they responded to your questions (in brief)
- If candidates say anything substantially different to their party line; this is potentially very useful information for us.
- Did your event get local press coverage? Did your letter or blog post get published?

If you have any questions on this toolkit or you want to give us any feedback on your campaigning, then contact us:

England and Wales

Email: sarah.reader@wdm.org.uk
Phone: Please call Sarah on 020 7820 4900
Post: Sarah Reader, WDM, 66 Offley Road,
London, SW9 0LS.

Scotland

Email: jane@wdmscotland.org.uk
Phone: Please call Jane on 0131 243 2730
Post: Jane Herbstritt, WDM Scotland, Thorn
House, 5 Rose Street, Edinburgh, EH2 2PR

Find your candidates

- To find out which constituency you live in, go to www.theyworkforyou.com. Type in your postcode. This will tell you your constituency and your current MP.
- Find out the parliamentary candidates in your constituency at <http://ukpollingreport.co.uk/guide>. Go to 'seats a-z' and click on your constituency. You will see a description of your constituency, including your current MP and the parliamentary candidates for all parties.

Note: Your MP will not necessarily be the parliamentary candidate for that party, as nearly half of current MPs will be stepping down at the next election. If they are stepping down, the key opposition candidate is probably the one who came second in the 2005 elections – look at '2005 result' (or 'Actual 2005 result') to find out who this is.

- Find out their contact details – you should be able to do this if you 'Google' their name. If you have any difficulties doing this please get in touch.

A number of constituency boundaries have changed and this may affect which constituency you are in for the next election. To check if this applies to your constituency, go to a party website (e.g. www.labour.org.uk) and put your post code into the box under 'Labour in your area' in the right hand panel (all parties have a similar facility). This will tell you both your current constituency and constituency for the next general election. You need to refer to your new constituency to find your candidates.

If you do not have access to the internet please call Sarah on 020 7820 4900. We will follow the steps above and give you all the information you need.

Write to your candidates

As you may know from previous experience, the most effective way to lobby your MP and candidates is face to face; whether at a small meeting that you arrange at their office, or at a larger public hustings event. However this is not always possible and writing a letter can also be an effective way to present your concerns to candidates.

Remember to write from the perspective of a constituent rather than as a WDM supporter as this carries more weight with the candidates.

You can choose one or all of the three of the WDM election questions to focus on in your letter. We have written a letter template for you to use and it can also be downloaded from our website www.wdm.org.uk

Dear

I am writing as a voter in your constituency to express my concern about global poverty and climate justice. My vote at the upcoming general election will be based on which parliamentary candidate and political party will do the most to effectively address these issues. In particular my concerns are:

Repaying our climate debt

Our past and present carbon emissions mean the UK owes people in developing countries a climate debt. The UK has to pay compensation to those already suffering from climate change, whilst funding low carbon development in developing countries.

I would like your party to support climate change funding that is: (i) Additional to existing aid (ii) Given as grants not loans (iii) Not channelled through the World Bank.

Making the economy work for the world's poor

The recent financial crisis arose largely from overly deregulated and footloose capital markets, which encouraged reckless speculation and trading.

I would like your party to support strong domestic and international measures to re-regulate capital markets, including the creation of a Financial Transaction Tax.

Cleaning up the banks

As a result of the financial crisis, UK taxpayers now own substantial stakes in several major commercial banks, including the Royal Bank of Scotland, which has investments in companies and projects linked to climate change and human rights abuses.

I would like your party to take an active role in preventing publicly-owned banks from investing in projects that exacerbate poverty and damage the environment, and in turning RBS into a Royal Bank of Sustainability that invests in a low-carbon economy.

Over 100 development organisations are calling on the major political parties to back a development manifesto during the election called 'Vote Global'. Please take a look on www.bond.org.uk

I hope that the concerns I have expressed will be addressed by your party and that you will be a champion of these issues.

Yours sincerely

Meet your candidates

Arranging a meeting

The incumbent MP is likely to hold regular surgeries for people in the constituency to meet them about their concerns. In most cases, you'll need to phone the office of the MP to book a slot. If you are not able to attend a surgery, then you can arrange a separate meeting.

The main opposition candidates are unlikely to hold regular surgeries, but it will be possible for you to arrange a meeting with them by calling their office.

Preparing for a meeting

We have provided information on our campaign issues on pages 10-13 and an overview of where the main parties stand on these issues on page 14 that will help you to prepare. You can also check our website for the latest campaign news and updates www.wdm.org.uk

You may want to decide beforehand whether you want to focus on just one or all of these issues.

At the meeting

Please remember to speak as a constituent rather than a WDM group member or activist. Although there is no harm in telling them you are a member of WDM, it will carry much more weight with the candidate if you speak as a member of the constituency.

Stick to the main points and feel free to take your notes in with you. You won't be expected to be an expert (and they are unlikely to be). If you are asked a question you can not answer, offer to get back to them with the information.

If the politician tries to change the subject, politely but firmly bring them back to the topic in hand by saying something like, "I know your time is very valuable; we really only came here to discuss how you can help on this issue."

It may be useful to take notes and if you can, finish with an action point for them to take forward.

After the meeting

After a visit, it is important to write to the candidate to thank them for their time and to remind them of what was discussed and any actions that were agreed.

Tell people

When you have met with the main candidates, consider writing a letter to the local paper or contact the local radio station and tell them how the meetings went. If you are part of a network, for example a green group or a group on a social networking site, you can write a short piece to share your experiences with them.

Hustings

Another way to meet face to face with your candidates is to attend a local hustings event. 'Hustings' is the term traditionally given to any event, such as a debate or speech during an election campaign where one or more of the candidates are present. This is an ideal forum to get candidates debating development issues and to enable the electorate to be able to compare and contrast the different positions taken by the political parties.

Attend hustings

You can go to a hustings event in your constituency and raise questions from the floor to find out where candidates stand on key issues. To find information about local hustings events you can check your local newspaper, community boards and voluntary groups in the area. A new website is being launched in March which will be a good source of information on local hustings, www.voteGlobal.org.uk. If you live in one of the 51 marginal constituencies listed in appendix 2, you can also go along to the 'Ask the climate question' hustings in the area.

Check out the WDM website where we will list all the hustings events that we know of.

Or if you don't have internet access give us a ring on one of the numbers given on page 3 and we can help you find out if an event is scheduled near you.

Organise your own hustings event

If you live in one of the marginal constituencies (please see appendix 2), we encourage you to get in touch with the local contact and get involved with other campaigning groups to organise an 'Ask the climate question' hustings in your area. WDM's three key election questions can all be linked back to the climate justice theme and joining up with local campaigners will magnify the strength of public opinion on these issues to candidates.

If you do not live in a marginal constituency, you can still organise your own hustings event in your area. Below are some guidelines:

Working with others

- If you can, collaborate with other like-minded groups in your constituency to organise the event. If you need any help to find local campaigning groups, please contact us (details on page 3).

Who to invite?

- Invite local candidates from all the main political parties: Conservative, Green, Labour and Liberal Democrat to participate. It is important that WDM is non-partisan.
- You do not need to have all the parties represented to go ahead with the event. If one of the parties does not put forward a candidate, you can still go ahead. You should make it clear that the party was invited to participate and declined to do so.
- Do **not** invite the British National Party to attend or participate. It is WDM's view that we should not provide a platform for this party and their abhorrent views. If they turn up and ask a question from the floor, try to ensure that they are not able to dominate proceedings further, especially if they have already expressed their view.
- You may want to invite a key local figure to chair your event (e.g. academic, journalist) which may attract people to attend. However make sure that they are sympathetic to WDM views and understand your objectives for the hustings. Alternatively you could chair the meeting yourselves.

Promotion

- If you think the word 'hustings' is confusing, you can use other names for example : 'Meet the candidates,' 'Election debate,' 'Development question time'

- Make posters and put them up in key community locations such as libraries, town hall, community halls etc.
- Promote your event online using Facebook and your group website. The BOND website www.voteGLOBAL.org.uk will also be live in late March and you can post the details of your event there too. We are also planning on listing all groups hustings events on our website. **Please send details of your event to us as soon as possible and we will ensure that your event is listed on the main WDM website.**
- We have produced a template press release, which you can send to your local newspapers to promote the event and is also available for download on our website:

MP candidates in [TOWN] to be quizzed by local anti-poverty campaigners

Anti-poverty campaigners from [TOWN] have thrown down the gauntlet to individuals aspiring to be the next MP for [CONSTITUENCY]. They are being invited to answer tough questions on the future of the Royal Bank of Scotland, climate change and the new idea of a Robin Hood tax on large financial transactions in front of a packed room at [WHERE, AND WHEN].

The World Development Movement is campaigning on a range of issues that affect the poorest people in the world. And the local campaigners will be demanding answers to their questions of the future MP.

[YOUR GROUP SPOKESPERSON] from the World Development Movement [YOUR GROUP] said:

"We'll be asking the candidates questions about critical election issues, like what they're going to do to make sure RBS stops investing our money in companies with terrible human rights records, and whether they support a tax on big bank deals. It's absolutely vital that local voters know where the candidates stand on these issues that are so important for the economy, for the poorest people in the world and for all of our futures."

[If your group is joining with other groups then mention this here.]

ENDS

At the hustings

- Make sure that as far as possible, the candidates are treated fairly and equally i.e. that they are given the same amount of time to speak.
- Ensure that WDM has a clear voice at the meeting, so that you can make sure that the event focuses on our three key issues. You might decide to chair the meeting yourself so that this can happen.
- A 'question time' format might work well for hustings which allows for the audience to ask questions on global justice issues.
- Invite the local press to cover the event and take photos, or even joint host the event
- Think about how you can record the event – this may be using a camcorder, audio recorder or even just assign someone to take notes. This will be useful if any of the candidates says something that is particularly interesting or contradictory to their party line. These quotes can be used either during the election period to create news stories or blog items or after the election to hold MPs to account.
- If any of the candidates give positive views on the three key issues, it might be worth asking them for a photograph at the end of the event with members of your group. You can use this to hold candidates to account if they are elected – send them a copy of the photo with a reminder of their promises!

After the event

- Please let us know (contact details on page 3) what happened at the event and also if any of the candidates said anything interesting.

- If you have a blog or facebook account, you can write about the event.
- You could write a letter or press release for publication to the regional media about the event afterwards which fairly reflects the outcomes of the meeting. There is a template letter you can use overleaf.

Dear Sir,

Too often on TV or the radio, you see MPs dodging questions and you don't always get a straight answer, even when they turn up on your door step asking you to vote for them.

This proved [TRUE/ OR NOT TRUE] last night at an event that we organised where we asked the candidates questions about the really important issues of today, like what are they going to do to make sure RBS stops investing our money in companies with terrible human rights records, on the threat of climate change, and on the idea of a Robin Hood tax on large financial transactions.

I would encourage everyone who meets a candidate to ask them these questions so that we can elect a Member of Parliament who will stand up and be counted on issues that are so important for our economy, for the poorest people in the world and for all of our futures.

Yours,

Election spending rules

By not inviting the BNP to attend hustings events we are selectively inviting parties. Therefore those parties that do attend will, under the rules, be effectively receiving a 'non cash donation' from you, ie. they will be benefiting from participating in your event. Such notional donations to parties over a certain limit are regulated and need to be declared by the recipients. It is the responsibility of candidates and parties to understand the law and to comply with it. It remains the case that you do not have to register anything yourself.

If you are organising a hustings event please contact Katharine on 020 7820 4900 or katharine@wdm.org.uk for full guidance on election spending rules.

Write to your local newspaper

The letters pages of local newspapers are keenly read by all of the candidates so it is another way of getting your concerns to your candidates.

It is best if you can 'hook' your letter to something covered in the newspaper already (for example a local resident doing something for the environment or for charity). Here are some templates you can use:

On the Royal Bank of Scotland

[x person] has said [something about the bankers bonuses/regulations of the banks], but the real scandal is how banks bailed out by the British public are spending our money. The government has done nothing to stop the Royal Bank of Scotland, which is 84% owned by the taxpayer, from investing billions of pounds in companies and projects linked to climate change and human rights abuses around the world.

At the next election, politicians must convince a cynical public that they will hold banks accountable for their actions. What better place to start than by promising to ensure that the banks we own don't contribute to suffering amongst the world's poorest people?

On a financial transaction tax

[x politician] has spoken of the need to cut spending because of the economic crisis.

Yet if even a small tax was imposed on the thousands of large financial deals happening daily it could raise billions that could be spent on socially useful projects in the UK, as well as on combating poverty and climate change around the world. This would also make casino-style speculation on food and oil markets less appealing to banks and hedge funds and would increase financial stability.

UK politicians must throw their weight behind plans for a global 'Robin Hood' tax on bank transactions that could help people out of poverty in rich and poor countries alike.

On climate justice

It is good to see that [whatever environmental story is being reported in paper].

Climate change is killing 300, 000 people a year, mostly in poor countries. They did not cause the problem, but are being hit the hardest. This is a huge injustice.

To make this right, the UK needs to pay its climate debt as compensation for the damage that we have created through our pollution. This money is being called for by developing countries to pay for adaptation that is needed to help people cope with the effects of climate change, and to pay for developing countries to kick start a green energy revolution.

The next government will need to grapple quickly with the issue of climate justice. Politicians in this election will need to convince voters that they have an answer to how the UK will pay its climate debt.

Frequently asked questions

Cleaning up the banks

Why should the government intervene in a commercially run bank?

Following the government bail-out of the banks in 2008 and 2009, RBS is now 84% publicly owned. The government is ultimately accountable for ensuring public funds invested in financial institutions do not undermine human rights and climate justice. Government rules say that they have to consider these issues as part of a 'Green Book' assessment of any such large decisions. However the Treasury has refused to place any environmental or human rights criteria on how public money can be spent by RBS.

The government has argued that any restriction on RBS lending based on human rights and environmental criteria would be harmful to the 'financial stability' of the bank and that it would be inappropriate for the Treasury to impose wider government policy. However recent government actions have contradicted this stance - in November 2009, RBS received a government cash injection conditional on bonus restrictions and increasing lending to businesses and home owners, clearly intervening in the management of RBS.

The government should intervene and they have demonstrated that they can, now we need to continue to press the Treasury to use taxpayers money invested in RBS to help transition to a low carbon economy.

Wouldn't the imposition of environmental and human rights criteria on RBS investments threaten 'value for money' for taxpayers?

Government intervention in RBS' investment portfolio would not threaten but indeed deliver genuine value for money. By taking an 'active ownership' approach of RBS, the government would be acting in a way that is consistent with current institutional shareholder good practice and the government's own guidance, policies and views.

Companies such as pension funds that have taken environmental and social considerations into their investment plans have found that it is not detrimental to financial performance but instead is key to long-term performance.

Furthermore RBS' fossil fuel rich portfolio of loans and investments carries its own risks to the long term value of the company that could potentially impact taxpayers/ shareholders. Prior to recapitalisation, the financing of fossil fuels was a profitable investment because the risks of climate change were not being borne by RBS. Now that RBS is publicly owned, the costs of adapting to climate change will be felt by the taxpayer and the government needs to step in to manage these risks and protect the taxpayer/ shareholder by reducing its exposure to such investments.

Would it not be preferable for the government to establish a permanent Green Investment Bank to finance Britain's transition to a low carbon economy, instead of interfering in the business of a commercial bank?

A government-owned Green Investment Bank is vital to ensuring that sufficient public funds are channelled into making Britain's housing, transport and energy infrastructure more sustainable. There are two big factors that favour this rising from the ashes of a bailed-out RBS, rather than creating a new institution. The first is that public money is already supporting investments that directly exacerbate climate change and contribute to human rights abuses.

The second is that, despite this track record, RBS also has considerable experience in financing renewable energy schemes. Harnessing this 'business know-how', while ensuring that public money already pumped into the bank is used on entirely green initiatives, represents the greatest 'win-win' solution for the government and the taxpayer by ensuring a Royal Bank of Sustainability.

What has RBS invested in that is so bad?

Here are some examples of RBS investments which are fuelling climate change and human rights abuses:

Bangladesh - open cast coal mine

RBS subsidiary, ABN Amro Bank NV has a 4.75% share of GCM Resources, the UK company pushing for an open cast mine in Bangladesh. There has been fervent local opposition in Bangladesh as it would displace approximately 40,000 people and impact on access to clean water for approximately 100,000 people.

Wales - open cast coal mine

RBS has taken part in lending £115m to the coal operator, Hargreaves Services. Hargreaves has plans to extract 7m tonnes of coal by developing one of the largest open-cast coal mines in the country at Tower Colliery, near the coal-mine-cum-protest-site Ffos-y-fran in Merthyr Tydfil, south Wales. This type of mining has been likened to a financial hit-and-run, bringing a few jobs for a couple of years and potentially affecting the local environment and public health (including widespread asthma) in the community for years to come.

India - Vedanta mining

RBS was the lead financial adviser to Sterlite, which is 60% owned by Vedanta, in a recent takeover bid. The bank and its ABN Amro subsidiary gave letters of credit worth \$100m (£60m) to Sterlite, which is India's biggest copper producer. Vedanta has an appalling record on human rights.

Canada - tar sands

Research from the Rainforest Action Network indicates that since 13 October 2008 - when HM Treasury announced its recapitalisation of the Royal Bank of Scotland Group - RBS has extended at least \$2.7 billion in debt/equity issuance underwritings to companies that own and/or are actively building tar sands extraction infrastructure and/or tar sands oil pipelines in Alberta, Canada. Tar sands extraction in Alberta has led to the destruction of ancient boreal forest, widespread contamination of food and water with toxins and threatening the way of life for indigenous communities.

Uganda/ Democratic Republic of Congo - oil exploration

In March 2009, RBS was part of a consortium of 14 banks that lent \$1,890 million to the Irish company Tullow Oil. RBS provided in the region of \$100 million itself. The bank had already helped raise £402 million by placing shares for Tullow in January 2009. In early 2009, the company announced a major discovery of 400-1000 million barrels by Lake Albert in Uganda, just on the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Tullow also holds oil exploration rights across the border in North Kivu in the DRC, which continues to be torn by conflict after more than a decade of resource-driven civil war. The border area has seen fierce fighting as rival armies and militias have struggled for control. An additional 30,000 refugees were displaced in North Kivu during two weeks of fighting in March, adding to the existing 1.4 million internally displaced people in the region.

Financial transaction tax

I've heard something like this before called the 'Tobin tax'. Are they the same thing?

Yes and no! The idea of a financial transaction tax is to place a small levy (i.e. 0.05%) on a wide range of financial transactions, including stocks, bonds, commodities futures and currency markets. The 'Tobin Tax' proposal is a type of financial transaction tax specifically targeted to currency transactions on foreign exchange markets. This idea, which was first put forward in the 1970s, has evolved to match the technical requirements of the 21st century and is now often referred to simply as a Currency Transaction Levy (or CTL).

What would it do?

The purpose of a financial transaction tax (FTT) would be twofold. Firstly, it would increase financial stability and reduce the likelihood of future asset bubbles due to the increased transaction costs of speculative activity. Secondly, it would raise a large amount of public revenue in countries with large financial markets. If applied globally across financial markets, an FTT has the potential to raise an estimated US\$600-700 billion per annum – enough to build climate adaptation defences and develop renewable energy supplies for every developing country. While there is of course debate about how this revenue should be distributed (eg. to bolster domestic public spending and create an insurance scheme against future bank failures), WDM is calling for a large portion to be earmarked for global funds to fight poverty and climate change.

Could Britain introduce a financial transaction tax itself? Would other countries need to do the same for it to work?

A currency transaction levy could be introduced unilaterally by any country that has its currency traded on international foreign exchange markets. In the UK context, the proposal is for a currency transaction levy on sterling currency transactions to be implemented through a 'Sterling Stamp Duty', which would apply to all currency transactions involving Sterling, wherever in the world they took place.

A wider financial transaction tax covering stock, bond and commodity futures markets would, however, require international coordination, particularly between the US and key European countries. The FTT proposal has received backing from Germany and France, as well as the UK, but currently lacks support from the US administration. Campaigners on both sides of the Atlantic are therefore applying pressure on their governments to get an FTT agreement in place.

Wouldn't a financial transaction tax have a disastrous impact on the banking sector at a time when the economy is still fragile?

The beauty of a financial transaction tax is that the level at which any given single transaction would be 'skimmed' would be very small; just a fraction of one per cent. Its power lies in amassing huge public revenues through the sheer volume of transactions to which the tax would be applied; without creating a burden to any single bank or financial institution.

Climate debt

Why does the UK owe a climate debt?

The UK has become rich by taking a development path that has left the world on the brink of climate catastrophe. Rich countries hold the historical responsibility for 70 percent of carbon emissions, even though they have less than 20 per cent of the world's population. This represents an unjust over-consumption of the world's resources by the rich world. The UK continues to emit as much carbon dioxide in a year as Bangladesh has in its entire history.

Though climate change has been caused by rich industrialised countries, it is the lives of the world's poorest people, who often live most closely to the land, whose lives have been devastated by its impacts. Already things like crop failures, the loss of water supplies and weather related disasters which are becoming increasingly frequent and are disproportionately affecting the world's poorest people.

On top of this, developed countries have used more than their fair share of the planet's ability to absorb carbon emissions, meaning there is little remaining space for developing countries to access their share of energy that is important for overcoming poverty. This is the second part of the climate debt that is owed to the world's poorest countries.

We must stop building up our climate debt by drastically and immediately reducing our emissions, whilst at the same time start repaying the debt by providing substantial 'climate finance' as compensation to the world's poorest people through fair, transparent and democratic means.

If the debt was repaid, what would climate finance be used for?

There are two main things that climate finance is needed for:

Firstly, adaptation funding is needed to help developing countries cope with the impacts of climate change that are already happening and will worsen even if there are immediate emission cuts. It has been calculated that already 300,000 people are dying every year because of climate change, a number that is only set to increase. Money will be used to help people adapt to climate change. For example, by relocating to safer areas and developing new ways of ensuring sustainable livelihoods in a climate change world.

Secondly, mitigation funding is needed to help developing countries move towards low-carbon development. Developing countries now need to receive both the finance and technology to move towards a new way of living. This money would be used for developing renewable energy projects and energy efficiency projects.

I've heard that the UK and other rich countries are putting forward billions of pounds as climate finance, isn't this true?

Over the past few months, some impressive sounding figures have been mentioned in speeches made by politicians from countries like the US and the UK, such as Obama's statement in Copenhagen about \$100 billion being needed for the developing world. Unfortunately, in reality, these figures have not been backed up by actual money, but have just been empty statements of the recognition that money is needed. The proposed plans for how this money will be dispersed are also at odds with what developing countries want.

What's more, the money that the UK has put on the table has not only been taken from the aid budget, but much of it is being given through the undemocratic World Bank that is controlled by rich countries, and is being given as loans not grants, further locking countries into unfair debt that people have campaigned against for years. You can not repay a debt with a loan. It's critical that the climate crisis, caused by the rich world, isn't used as a way to reinforce current systems of inequality by locking developing countries into poverty and further debt.

What are you asking for?

WDM is calling for a fund for climate finance to be set up within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as it is the most democratic multilateral institution we currently have. Projects need to be set up in conjunction with, and accountable to, local communities. WDM is also calling for the UK's climate debt to be paid entirely as grants, not loans.

The money provided should also be 'new' money – meaning it should not just be reallocated from the aid budget. WDM recently revealed that all the climate finance that the UK government has announced has simply been diverted from the aid budget – money that could be used towards vitally needed programs for things like health, education and clean water supplies. New money could be created through various ways. For example, through a tax on currency transactions or on aviation, things that in themselves could have other benefits in terms of both tackling climate change and inequality.

Appendix 1

Overview of where the main political parties stand on key global poverty issues

Trade justice

For the past thirty years imposition of free trade across much of the developing world has hindered economic growth and increased poverty and inequality. In contrast, those countries which have been most able to resist have managed to cut poverty and increase employment.

Since 1997, the Labour government has supported the EU, WTO, IMF and World Bank pushing freer and less fair trade on developing countries. The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats also support freer trade and the current unfair round of world trade negotiations. The Greens are distinct in calling for “fair trade not free trade” and for committing to push for reform of aggressive EU trade policies, whilst Plaid Cymru also recognise the injustices of current international trade.

More and better aid

Labour, the Conservatives, Liberal Democrats, SNP, the Greens and Plaid Cymru all support spending 0.7 per cent of UK income on aid by 2013, with the Greens saying they would spend 1 per cent within ten years. However, saying and doing are different things. The UK government first committed to the 0.7 per cent target in 1970, but the closest it ever got was under Labour in 1979. After falling throughout the 1980s and 1990s, UK aid has been rising under Labour in recent years.

Thanks to WDM campaigns, under the Labour government since 1997 UK aid has been untied from being spent on UK companies, should not have economic conditions attached to it, and no longer pushes water privatisation. Worryingly, the Conservatives emphasise that they want increased involvement of the private sector in public services in developing countries.

Making the economy work for poor people

In WDM's *Out of time* report in 2006, major reforms of the global financial system we proposed a number of steps to democratise its governance, and to reconfigure the policies being pushed by the World Bank and IMF which have fuelled mounting debt and periodic financial crises across the world. In the wake of the global financial crisis, these measures are needed now more than ever.

The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats have stayed largely quite on the issue of reforming the so-called ‘Bretton Woods’ international financial institutions, while the Green party has declared the need for major reforms of the IMF, World Bank and World Trade Organisation. Gordon Brown has been a key player within the IMF for over ten years, and has recognised the need for change, but has not pushed for significant reform.

The Labour leader has, however, begun to champion a tax on financial transactions which could help limit some of the worst excesses of financial trading – including damaging speculation on food – whilst raising vital money for cutting poverty and tackling climate change. The Greens and Plaid Cymru also support a tax on financial transactions, and the Greens call on the IMF to be reformed so that it prevents excessive debt and unbalanced trade.

Whilst being strong advocates for reform of the banking system in the UK, the Liberal Democrats have not proposed other changes internationally. Rather than questioning the IMF's role in creating financial crises, the Conservatives want the international institution to expand its power.

One result of the financial crisis is that UK taxpayers now own substantial stakes in many banks. WDM has been calling on the government to 'clean up the banks' by preventing them from investing in projects which hinder development and human rights.

So far the Labour government has refused to set any guidelines for what nationalised banks should and should not invest in. In contrast, the Liberal Democrats have said that they would prevent any public money going into projects such as tar sands, and the Greens have supported transforming RBS into a 'Royal Bank of Sustainability'. The Conservatives' main focus is selling the shares in banks as quickly as possible, without elaborating on what they intend to do with the banks in the meantime.

Repaying our climate debt

Since Labour was elected in 1997, the UK's climate changing emissions have fallen by just 6 per cent. This is well short of the rate needed to prevent catastrophic climate impacts on poor people across the world.

Key to cutting emissions in the UK is stopping coal power. Campaigning by WDM has led to the Labour government putting limits on the building of new dirty coal power stations, although it has not ruled them out completely. The SNP has introduced the same policy in Scotland. Conservative policy is similar to Labour, although with even greater faith in untested carbon capture technology. The Liberal Democrats and Greens would prevent new dirty coal power stations from being built. Plaid Cymru say they would set a limit on emissions from new power stations but do not say if this would be done at a strong enough level to prevent dirty coal power stations from being built.

Our past and present emissions mean the UK owes people in developing countries a climate debt. The UK should pay compensation to those already suffering from climate change, whilst funding low carbon development in developing countries.

The Labour government has said money for climate change should be additional to aid after 2013, but all of the money it is currently giving has been diverted from the aid budget. Most of this is being spent through the World Bank and given as loans, increasing the unjust debts of developing countries.

Under the Conservatives, money for climate change in developing countries would continue to be diverted from the aid budget, and directed through the World Bank. The Liberal Democrats say climate change money should be additional to aid although they do not specify when from. The Liberal Democrats say it should go through the World Bank rather than the UN.

A full report on the policies of UK political parties and what these mean for poor people across the world will be available ahead of the general election at www.wdm.org.uk or by calling 020 7820 4900.

Appendix 2

Ask the climate question

WDM has joined the 'Ask the climate question' coalition of UK development and environment NGOs who want to make sure that the theme of climate change becomes a key election issue in the 51 marginal constituencies in the UK.

In each of 51 marginal constituencies there will be an 'Ask the climate question' hustings event. If you live in one of these 51 marginal constituencies, we would encourage you to get in touch with your local 'Ask the climate question' contact and get involved.

WDM's three key issues can all be considered under the broad theme of climate justice and getting involved in 'Ask the climate question' will enable you to ask these questions and broaden out the climate debate but also ensure that the strength of public opinion on these issues are magnified through joining forces with other campaigning groups in your area.

Please see the list below of the 51 marginal seats and the local 'Ask the climate question' contact person.

Constituency	Lead organisation	Local contact	Email	Phone
Aberconwy	RSPB	Ruth Lovell	ruth.lovell@rspb.org.uk	02920 353006
Birmingham Edgbaston	RSPB	Louise Pedersen	louise.pedersen@rspb.org.uk	0121 616 6857
Brighton Kemptown	WWF	Anthony Field	DavidAndAnthony@wwf.org.uk	01483 412379
Bristol North West	Greenpeace	John Mound	nohiggsboson@hotmail.co.uk	
Broxtowe	Christian Aid	Laura Trevelyan	ltrevelyan@christian-aid.org	0207 523 2271
Burton*				
Bury North	Oxfam	Chris Worrall	cworrall@oxfam.org.uk	0161 234 2792
Carmarthen West & Pembrokeshire South	RSPB	Ruth Lovell	ruth.lovell@rspb.org.uk	02920 353006
Carshalton & Wallington	Christian Aid	Laura Trevelyan	ltrevelyan@christian-aid.org	0207 523 2271
Cheltenham	Oxfam	Roger James	rjames@oxfam.org.uk	0117 9166473
Chippenham	WWF	David Taylor	DavidAndAnthony@wwf.org.uk	01483 412496
Corby*				
Derbyshire South*				
Devon Central/ Torrington and West Devon	RSPB	Mark Robins	mark.robins@rspb.org.uk	01392 453759
Dorset South	Christian Aid	Laura Trevelyan	ltrevelyan@christian-aid.org	0207 523 2271
Dorset West	Greenpeace			0207 8658193
Dumfries & Galloway	RSPB	Julia Harrison	julia.harrison@rspb.org.uk	0131 311 6500
Eastbourne	Tearfund	Jack Palmer	jack.palmer@tearfund.org	020 8943 7949
Eastleigh	Christian Aid	Natalie Williams	birmvol5@christian-aid.org	07878 005743
Edinburgh East	WWF	Julie Stoneman	jstoneman@wwfscotland.org.uk	01350 728200
Edinburgh North & Leith	Christian Aid	Diane Green	dgreen@christian-aid.org	0141241 6136

Glasgow Central	Oxfam	Sarah Watson	sawatson@oxfam.org.uk	0141 2858850
Guildford	WWF	Anthony Field	DavidAndAnthony@wwf.org.uk	01483 412379
Hampstead & Kilburn (Hampstead & Highgate)	Greenpeace	Neil Jones	wenjones@me.com	07549 924765
Hereford and Herefordshire South (Hereford)	Oxfam	Maya Segas	msegas@oxfam.org.uk	0121 6343611
High Peak	Tearfund	Jack Palmer	jack.palmer@tearfund.org	020 8943 7949
Islington South & Finsbury	Greenpeace	Fritha Saunders	frithalucy@hotmail.com	07903 357311
Loughborough	Tearfund	Jack Palmer	jack.palmer@tearfund.org	020 8943 7949
Ludlow*				
Manchester Withington	RSPB	Andy Bunten	andy.bunten@rspb.org.uk	0191 233 4300
Meon Valley	RSPB	Paul Outhwaite	paul.outhwaite@rspb.org.uk	01273 763607
Norwich South	RSPB	Steve Rowland	steve.rowland@rspb.org.uk	01603 6600066
Oxford East	Greenpeace	Julia Spragg	jspragg@nildram.co.uk	01865 715159
Pendle	RSPB	Andy Bunten	andy.bunten@rspb.org.uk	0191 233 4300
Redditch	CAFOD	Rachael Varney	rvarney@cafod.org.uk	
Romsey & Southampton North (Romsey)	WWF	David Taylor	DavidAndAnthony@wwf.org.uk	01483 412496
Rugby (Rugby & Kenilworth)	Tearfund	Jack Palmer	jack.palmer@tearfund.org	020 8943 7949
Solihull	Oxfam	Maya Segas	msegas@oxfam.org.uk	0121 6343611
Somerton & Frome	Christian Aid	Elizabeth Perry	eperry65@googlemail.com	0798 147 7992
South Ribble (Ribble South)	Oxfam	Chris Worrall	cworrall@oxfam.org.uk	0161 234 2792
Stafford	RSPB	Louise Pedersen	louise.pedersen@rspb.org.uk	0121 616 6857
Swindon South	WWF	David Taylor	DavidAndAnthony@wwf.org.uk	01483 412496
Taunton Deane (Taunton)	Oxfam	Roger James	rjames@oxfam.org.uk	0117 916 6473
Tynemouth	Christian Aid	Laura Trevelyan	ltrevelyan@christian-aid.org	0207 523 2271
Vale of Glamorgan	Christian Aid	Laura Trevelyan	ltrevelyan@christian-aid.org	0207 523 2271
Watford	Tearfund	Jack Palmer	jack.palmer@tearfund.org	020 8943 7949
Westmorland & Lonsdale	Christian Aid	Laura Trevelyan	ltrevelyan@christian-aid.org	0207 523 2271
Weston-Super-Mare	RSPB	Mark Robins	mark.robins@rspb.org.uk	01392 453759
Wolverhampton South West	Christian Aid	Laura Trevelyan	ltrevelyan@christian-aid.org	0207 523 2271
York Outer	CAFOD	David Cross	dcross@cafod.org.uk	

* There are currently no lead organisations nominated for these constituencies. If you would like to get involved in ACQ in these constituencies, please contact us (details on page 3).