

LOCAL GROUPS

A SHORT GUIDE TO
GETTING STARTED

COMMON WEAL



GET IN TOUCH TO FIND OUT ABOUT COMMON WEAL AND WORK WITH US

For any advice on Local Group activities and national campaigns email our Networks Coordinator at hello@common.scot

Find us on Social media:

Twitter: [@Common_Weal](https://twitter.com/Common_Weal)

Facebook: [The Common Weal - a vision for a better Scotland](https://www.facebook.com/TheCommonWeal)

Instagram: [@common_weal](https://www.instagram.com/common_weal)

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WHAT IS COMMON WEAL?

Common Weal is a Scottish ‘think and do tank’ which promotes thinking, practice and campaigning on social and economic equality, participative democracy, environmental sustainability, wellbeing, quality of life, peace, justice and cooperation on the left of the political spectrum.

Common Weal supports Scottish independence, It is not affiliated to any political party. We develop policies which seek to influence decision makers and change wider public narratives on key issues. That is why Common Weal works to build networks who can promote ideas and campaign for change locally.

Common Weal is wholly funded by small, regular donations from members of the public. We only achieve so much, because of the incredible support across Scotland and beyond.

WHAT IS A COMMON WEAL LOCAL GROUP?

Common Weal has always encouraged our supporters to take action locally. When people get together for this purpose we call these Local Groups.

Local Groups are often initiated by existing supporters. The central aim of these is to allow people to share ideas and meet up. For that reason, the groups are specific to a place or geographic area and each develops its own identity over time.

They provide a space for supporters to take our ideas and campaigns into their communities. Sometimes groups will form to campaign for and demand change at a local level. What you might discover during this process is incredibly important; Issues that are widely felt in the community or opportunities for local solutions through the community or via necessary policy change.

This knowledge and local perspective can in turn, help shape

Common Weal's programme of policy work. We are not interested in taking credit for victories you achieve locally. We want to keep an open dialogue about how you think Common Weal can help shape the future of Scotland. A bottom-up, participative society is the one we want to create and the one we want to encourage along the way.

Common Weal is an idea that belongs to us all. Each initiative is entirely autonomous, no group is affiliated to any political party. We only emphasise that those who join will back Common Weal's overall vision for change.

This guide is intended to be a short introduction. We have lots of ideas to inspire you. Please get in touch with us read the final page of the guide to find out how.

WHAT KINDS OF THINGS DO LOCAL GROUPS DO?

Every Local Group is different, each chooses its own priorities. Here are some ideas:

Networking - Bringing new people together to discuss and organise
Reading - Sharing ideas and publications related to policy change in Scotland.

Discussing - Hosting discussions on local issues and political change.

Community listening - Speaking to local people about their concerns and issues in the area.

Community mapping - Collecting information on initiatives, businesses, civic organisations and online campaign groups.
Research what community leaders are up to locally.

Setting up research and action groups on specific topics: Develop the knowledge and expertise of the group on specific themes.

Single issue campaigns - If there is a local problem emerging: campaign to build support for that change.

job losses at the local community centre? or preventing the building of a waste incinerator?

Supporting National Campaigns - Common Weal always have campaigns running and plenty of ways to get involved.

Organising and writing together - Submit mass petitions, craft public letters, write newspaper articles or complete public consultations as a group.

Organise public events - talks, music events, film screenings or training for new supporters. These can be almost anything and Common Weal can help promote your events.

Make decisions together: (Don't be afraid to develop strategies.) Whether that be a local reading group, setting up a charity to develop a nature reserve, campaigning on basic housing issues or to tackle the cost of living crisis. Taking decisions together is always the first step to making a difference in people's lives.

The Common Weal team is here to help and support, not instruct. What we can do is provide infrastructure to help your group get established but it is up to you to do Common Weal activity in your area. We can provide training, policy and campaign materials, publications, public speakers, help you identify volunteers or organise live events.

WHAT DOES CHANGE FEEL LIKE?

We live in the beginning of a changing world. Things must change because for too long we have been living in a 'Me-First' world. We all know what this feels like: It is the feeling that we have in-fact come in second. Second to monopolies and centralised power. Common Weal's message is that we have a duty to build an All of Us First

society.

SOME WAYS WE MIGHT MEASURE CHANGE :

Building relationships. Friendships are good, as are expanding networks. Even better, are groups which can mobilise the skills of their members and provide the group with strength.

Discussing ideas and making plans. Ideas are the bread and butter of Common Weal but real activity comes from putting those ideas to work. You can't start without a plan and a plan is no good unless it is acted and reflected upon, on a running basis.

Winning real improvement in peoples lives. When a local community can sense and see their lives improving, that is a win. It is always best to begin to scope out an issue, by outlining that issue in detail. Do so with a wide group of people who will commit to campaigning for that win. From this point on, decide on short-term, achievable steps toward achieving that improvement is the surest way to measure progress.

Altering the relations of power. This is the significant challenge for any campaign group. Many local community groups find that if they remain committed to the goals they can achieve this.

Altering the relations of power is first and foremost grasped by giving people a sense of their own power. People feel united when they learn how real life action progresses whilst working together. Does your public meeting on local transport issues welcome more attendees than the elected party's consultation on the issue? Did your group get the local authority to agree to staff the community centre five nights a week? Did the waste incineration company withdraw their application to develop on green belt land? Did all this occur after you applied pressure during the campaign?

Often the re-balancing of power arrives by challenging the centralisation of decision making in your area. Most importantly, by showing that a community can lead this challenge.

Altering the relations of power is not simply an end goal. It is a process. Strong, functioning groups bake this process into every action they take. From welcoming new members effectively, putting their skills to use, being visible and known in the community and building collective reach.

When we live in a nation with the opportunities Scotland has, it is a duty to make the most of them. Organising together can be challenging, but it is also fun and rewarding. When people see local change shaping their futures, they will join a local group.

WAYS TO GET STARTED

With so much going on we recommend getting in touch with our Networks Coordinator at [Hello@common.scot](mailto>Hello@common.scot)

We can give you an idea of what else is happening nearby to you and may be able to put you into contact with local supporters. This is by far the best way to begin.

Remember that Local Groups are autonomous so the work starts with yourselves. However, the most important aspect to starting a group is to try and ensure a diverse set of people before launching your group. Reach out to friends and get them to reach out to their networks. If you intend to hold a session where you will decide the aims and structure of your group or to identify local issues, then this should be done with a solid-sized group. It should be done early-on in the timescale of a campaign. It is worth taking the time to build for this. This will of course depend who is available locally to join as every area is totally different.

We have some positive ideas for how you can get started. We can advise when to gauge that you are ready to launch and we can suggest what would fit with your interests and location. It is just a case of getting in touch to discuss what support we can give.

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES

Join Campaign Centre:

Campaign Centre is an online platform designed for Common Weal supporters to share resources, events, and opportunities. This site gives you the chance to interact with a range of likeminded people, to discuss current and future Scottish policy. It is a great place to meet others who may become part of your group.

Also on Campaign Centre is a free video course called 'How to Campaign' which is produced by the Common Weal team, written and narrated by Robin McAlpine.

To join simply go to the platform itself [here](#) or find details through the Common Weal website

Join our Mailing List:

Receive our weekly news; our top picks of free articles and updates in your inbox each week. You'll also receive an invite to our National Zoom meetings featuring guest speakers each month. To join add your details to this form.

Join our Volunteer Mailing List:

This is for supporters interested in receiving occasional updates about volunteering opportunities. To join add your details to this form.

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