

# How to guide: Plan your own environmental protest or demonstration

Written by Emma Greenwood, Young Changemaker

Whilst the thought of organising a demonstration or protest can often be very overwhelming and intimidating (don't get me wrong, it's a big task) like a lot of forms of changemaking, when taken on as part of a team it can be a very doable and effective form of action. If you want to know more about how to find or form collectives, head to the 'community organisation' part of the toolkit. When you first get a group together and start thinking about organising a protest, I've often found it helpful to start by considering the five W's:

## Who

Who do you want to attend the protest? This can help you to decide how to best get the word out to them to attend e.g. social media for young people or community notice boards for people who might not use social media as much.

## What

A protest can take many different forms such as static (where you stay in one place) vs. active (where you may go on a set route march). You can also decide if you want to do chants or would like a stage and microphone for people to get up to speed.

## Where

Where are you going to hold the event? Ensure it is either a public space or if it's private property that you have the landowner's permission. It can often help to ensure that it's a central point that's easily accessible by public transport and can also be seen by a lot of passers-by.

## When

Make sure it's accessible to as many people as you want to attend as possible. Trying to organise it over a lunch break so there's less of an economic barrier or on the weekend if you want a lot of families and young people to attend.

## Why

Have a clear reason why you're getting people to come together and protest. What is the explicit and clear change you want to see happen off of the back of it?

When you've got this established, you can start thinking about the roles you need covered ahead of and on the day of the protest. Some of the usual roles you'll need when organising a demonstration are:

- 🌿 **Coordinators** - They are responsible for organising any equipment you may need such as speakers, stage and possibly a march route.
- 🌿 **Stewards** - These are usually volunteers in high-viz who make sure everyone is safe, for example stopping traffic on active marches and making sure people don't block tram tracks on static protests.
- 🌿 **Facilitators** - These can be people who can keep the atmosphere going with chants, music and make sure people can get up to speak if they would like.
- 🌿 **Outreach** - This is often done in the build-up to a demonstration to see if you can help get any local prominent individuals to come along and speak. This can both offer validity to your demonstration and even get you some media coverage.
- 🌿 **Media liason** - You can do a press release for your demonstration letting people know when and where your demonstration will be so that they might come and cover it.
- 🌿 **Police liason/legal support** - It's important to be aware of the legal side of things, especially if you want to do a march. Several law firms volunteer their services to activists if you search online. It can also often be valuable to share your plans with the local police force in advance to make sure they can support in keeping everyone safe.

Of course, this isn't an exhaustive list and the good thing about demonstrations/protests is that there aren't really any rules. It's all about creating something that works for the group you're trying to bring together and the cause you're campaigning towards. Just make sure to keep yourself and others safe and don't be afraid to ask for support where you need it. Reaching out to groups that have done protests in your local area before can be a great way to learn and gain support.

**Emma Greenwood** is a 20-year-old youth voice and climate champion. She started getting involved in change making when she was 16 and became the Young Member of Parliament for Bury, as well as helping to co-found the Manchester branch of the global Youth Strike 4 Climate Movement. Since then, she's helped to work on a number of campaigns and has even got to appear on the One Show, BBC News and speak at COP26. She now works with a few different organisations to implement intergenerational collaboration and push for climate action.

