

Introduction to campaigning in conservation and environmental issues

Campaigning is a powerful way to drive change and protect the environment. It involves rallying people, raising awareness and pushing for action on important issues like climate change, pollution and wildlife conservation. For young people, campaigning offers a chance to make a real impact on the world. This guide introduces you to the concept of campaigning, with examples from both history and today to show how you can get involved.

What is campaigning?

Campaigning - a planned set of activities that a group of people carry out over a period of time to bring about social or political change.

Campaigning is about organising and mobilising people to support a cause or push for change. In the context of environmental issues, campaigns can involve a variety of activities, including:

- 🌿 **Raising awareness:** Educating people about environmental problems and solutions.
- 🌿 **Advocating for policy change:** Pushing governments and organisations (lobbying) to adopt better environmental practices and laws.
- 🌿 **Building support:** Gathering petitions, organising events and engaging the community to back your cause.

Here at Chester Zoo we've ran various conservation campaigns to raise awareness and support people to change behaviours and life style choices in order to help wildlife. This might be around shopping choices, creating wildlife habitats or by raising awareness of a particular issue such as illegal wildlife trade.

Effective campaigns bring together different people and different forms of education and persuasion to affect change within society.

Check out some Chester Zoo campaigns for conservation to find out more

**Sustainable Palm Oil
campaign**

**Illegal Wildlife Trade
campaign**

**UK wildlife
campaign**

Historical example of environmental protests

The Save the Whales Campaign (1970s-1980s)

- **What happened:** In the 1970s, Greenpeace started a big campaign to stop people from hunting whales. They took bold actions, like blocking whaling ships and worked hard to let the world know how much whales were suffering.
- **Impact:** The campaign worked! In 1986, the International Whaling Commission (IWC) stopped commercial whaling around the world. This campaign also helped people care more about protecting the ocean and its creatures.
- **Why it matters:** This campaign showed how taking strong action and speaking out can help save endangered animals and protect the environment.

Contemporary examples of environmental protests

The Plastic Pollution Campaigns (2010s-Present)

- **What happened:** Various groups, like the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) with their #BeatPlasticPollution campaign and organisations like Ocean Conservancy, have worked to cut down on plastic waste, especially in the oceans.
- **Impact:** These campaigns have led to big changes, such as bans on single-use plastics (like plastic bags and straws) in many countries, promises from companies to use less plastic, and more people understanding how plastic pollution harms ocean animals.
- **Why it matters:** These campaigns show that when people come together to speak up, they can help solve big problems like plastic pollution.

The Amazon Rainforest Campaigns (2019-Present)

- **What happened:** As deforestation in the Amazon rainforest have increased, many campaigns have popped up. People around the world signed petitions, raised money and spread awareness to protect the Amazon. These campaigns also highlight how the rainforest is important for controlling climate and supporting wildlife.
- **Impact:** The campaigns have brought attention to the issue globally, pushed governments and companies to stop illegal deforestation and raised money to help with conservation projects.
- **Why it matters:** These campaigns show how global efforts can help protect places as important as the Amazon, which is vital for the planet's health and biodiversity.

How can you get involved in campaigning?

1. **Start or join a campaign:** Research ongoing environmental campaigns and see how you can participate or start your own campaign on a local issue you care about.
2. **Use social media:** Spread awareness about environmental issues and campaigns through social media platforms. Create and share content to engage others.
3. **Petitions and advocacy:** Sign and share online petitions, write to your representatives and advocate for environmental policies in your community.
4. **Educational outreach:** Organise workshops or events to educate others about environmental issues and the importance of taking action.

Campaigning is a really important part of driving environmental change. By understanding how historical and contemporary campaigns have succeeded, you can see how your efforts can make a real difference. Whether through organising events, using social media, or participating in global movements, your voice and actions are crucial in advocating for a healthier planet.

Campaigning – from a Young Changemakers perspective

**Written by Emma Greenwood,
Young Changemaker**

Campaigning is all about using the power we have as individuals to come together and bring about change. Often when we feel scared and powerless against issues as massive as the climate crisis, taking action can be the very thing to help us regain our agency and remind us that there is still hope.



When people hear campaigning they often think of protests, petitions and debates but it's all of that and so much more. Campaigning is about finding ways to take action that feels accessible and sustainable to you. Here are some examples of ways to campaign:

- 🌿 **Digital/Online**
- 🌿 **Community organisation**
- 🌿 **Boycotts**
- 🌿 **Craftivism**
- 🌿 **Demonstrations/Protests**

You may not know what all, or any of these are, but I've put together some useful information to all of the above throughout the toolkit.

There is one main thing I want you to remember, there is no one 'way' to do campaigning and the form of campaigning you choose to do can change with time and grow with you.

Digital/Online Campaigning

Digital campaigning - The use of technology to create change through online platforms and campaigns

As young people who have grown up in the 21st century, we have one very unique power - we KNOW social media. In a matter of seconds, you can reach national and international audiences through stories on Instagram or videos on TikTok. We are no longer confined to mainstream media to tell stories and raise awareness of issues, but rather we can become the journalists.

One of my favourite examples of modern-day digital activism is the RSPB TikTok account (if you haven't checked it out already, you definitely should!). They manage to take trends online to make educational conservation content fun and accessible. My personal favourite is the 'Bird of the Week' segment where they tell you all about a bird species in the UK with some fun facts, before linking it to a campaign the RSPB is running around conservation. It shows that campaigning can embrace Gen Z culture, rather than trying to work against it.

That is just one example of the MANY ways you can use the online world to campaign for change. The online world is your oyster with this and the only bounds are your imagination, but to get you started here are some ways digital activism can look like:

- 🦋 **Shouting about events** - Creating an 'event' on Facebook or putting posters/images up online can be a good way to get people to come to events such as litter picks, tree planting or community meetings.
- 🦋 **Telling your story** - Sharing the conservation work you're doing and why it's important to you can help inspire others to get involved, and make it feel a little less scary! It can help you find a community too, that makes your campaigning more healthy and sustainable.
- 🦋 **Educational content** - Education is a massive first step in mobilising people in campaigns and this can look anything like the RSPB videos, infographics or even your own podcast (be sure to check out the 'How to create a conservation podcast' section if this interests you).
- 🦋 **Getting people to take action** - So much of the political process now happens online, whether it is getting someone to sign a petition, register to vote or email their MP, there are lots of ways people can take action directly from your online posts.

Don't forget, online campaigning doesn't have to be done on your own, many organisations such as Chester Zoo have conservation campaigns you can get involved with and amplify. Just resharing someone else's post or link to an existing online campaign is you taking action.

Community organisation

Community organisation - work of bringing people together to take action around their common concerns and overcome social injustice

This lies at the heart of a lot of campaigning because change can rarely, if ever, be brought about alone. It can be incredibly powerful and effective, particularly within sustainability and conservation, because it is all about developing a community's capacity to look after its own needs and respond to its own problems. In essence, this means that you're building a group of people who can respond to problems as and when they come up.

If you're new to change making, community organisation can also be one of the best places to start (and where I started) because it's mostly building on the existing networks of people from school, work, family and friends, that you've spent your whole life creating.

If you want some inspiration from a community organisation success story, look no further than St. Raphael's Edible Garden in North-West London.



Emerging from a campaign led by local residents, the garden now has a pond, fruit orchard, yurt and pizza oven! What started as a garden is now the hub of education, connection and wellbeing for the community. All because residents decided they needed and deserved better and came together to make it happen.

Community organisation can appear in many different ways, in the end, it's down to whatever works best for your community and what you're trying to achieve.

If this is something you'd be interested in trying, check out Emma's 'How to guide: Step by step guide to creating a community organisation'

Boycotts

Boycotts - To refuse to buy a product or take part in an activity as a way of expressing strong disapproval

One of the biggest powers we hold as individuals is consumer power, or rather what we spend our money on. Companies only produce what is in demand and profitable, so if on a mass scale, people suddenly decide to stop purchasing something because of its supply chain or contents, it leaves companies with no option but to change if they want to remain profitable. This is where boycotts come in.

Craftivism

Craftivism/Artivism - The activity of using crafts to try to achieve social or political change

Arguably one of the coolest forms of activism, this one is all about using art and creative means to support in campaigning. Craftivism can be a great entryway into campaigning if you don't know where to start but love to be creative.

One of my favourite examples of craftivism and a group I got involved with at the start of my change making journey is the 'Canary Craftivists' - they help to raise awareness on the importance of taking climate action. Most notably, during COP26 which was held in Glasgow in 2021, they crocheted yellow canaries on the Emmeline Pankhurst statue in Manchester to send to MPs as a gentle reminder to take climate action. As the founder of Canary Craftivists, Sarah P Corbett, told 'Smiley News'.

"There's time for loud and large activism and there's also a place for quiet, intimate activism too".



Protesting/Demonstrating

Demonstration - An occasion when a group of people march or stand together to show that they disagree with or support something or someone

Protest - The expression of disapproval or objection to something

When we hear 'change making' this is what a lot of us will think of. Whether it's the historic protests against fossil fuels or the more recent mass youth protests pushing for climate action, demonstrations have long been a popular way to come together and push for change. For me, protesting was a great way to use my voice when I wasn't legally old enough to vote. It was a way for me to take my future back into my own hands.

Find out more in Emma's How to guide: [Plan your own environmental protest or demonstration](#)