



# Scottish election 2026

## Guidance on approaching Scottish election candidates

This guidance is intended to help Quakers approach candidates standing in the 2026 Scottish parliament election in a way that is thoughtful, effective and consistent with Quaker values. It offers practical advice on when to make contact, how to prepare, and how to communicate respectfully while remaining nonpartisan.

The aim is not to persuade candidates to adopt a particular position, but to encourage careful listening, honest dialogue and long-term relationship building.

You can find out which candidates are standing in your constituency on the Scottish political party websites. Contact details for individual candidates may be found online or you can contact the relevant party to ask for them.

**Promoted by Adwoa Burnley on behalf of Quakers in Scotland**

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## Some overarching principles to keep in mind

It can be helpful to think about the tone and the way that you will approach engaging with candidates. For example, by thinking about:

- **Truthfulness and integrity:** speaking carefully, accurately and without exaggeration.
- **Respect and equality:** recognising the humanity and dignity of every candidate, regardless of party or views.
- **Peaceful engagement:** avoiding adversarial language, seek to build relationship and understanding.
- **Listening as well as speaking:** being open to what candidates say, not only to what we wish to convey.

### 1. Choosing the right timing

During the election campaign

- **Early contact is best.** Candidates' schedules become increasingly busy as polling day approaches. Contacting them early in the campaign increases the likelihood of a response.
- **Be realistic about capacity.** Candidates may not be able to meet immediately or respond in detail. Short, clear emails are more likely to be read.

After the election

- **Follow up with newly elected MSPs.** This can be an excellent time to introduce your meeting, congratulate them, and set the groundwork for an ongoing relationship.

- **Allow time for settling in.** Newly elected MSPs may take several weeks to establish offices and staff, so may not respond quickly to emails.

## 2. Researching the candidate

A small amount of preparation can make contact more meaningful. Finding out a bit about the candidate can help you phrase your email or letter in a way that will grab their attention and encourage them to respond positively.

Before writing or requesting a meeting, consider:

- **Their current or previous roles** for example, councillor, campaigner, professional background.
- **Stated interests or policy priorities**, as set out in campaign materials, websites or social media.
- **Voting record, committee work or spokesperson roles** (for incumbents)
  - At [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com) you can find MSPs' voting records and view their recent appearances in Parliament to see the issues they tend to speak about
- **Local connections** to your area.

## 3. Who should make contact

- A message sent on behalf of a local Quaker meeting often carries more weight than an individual message.
- It can be helpful to name a contact person to avoid confusion.

## 4. Writing an effective first email

When contacting a candidate by email:

- **Keep it concise.** Aim for clarity rather than completeness. It is generally better to include a short list of concerns rather than a long explanation.
- **Be explicit about who you are.** Name your meeting and its location. Talk about who Quakers are and what our values are.
- **Explain why you are writing.** For example, to share concerns, or to request a conversation. It tends to be better to invite dialogue rather than demand commitments.
- **Use accessible language.** Avoid technical terms and acronyms unless necessary.

## 5. Requesting a meeting

When asking for a meeting:

- Be **clear but flexible** about what you are proposing including:
  - How many might attend.
  - How long the meeting would be
  - What you hope to cover: Be clear that the purpose is listening and dialogue, not endorsement or campaigning.
  - It can be helpful to offer options for the meeting, for example online or in person.

## 6. During a meeting or conversation

If a meeting takes place, agree in advance who will cover which points.

- Begin by briefly introducing Quakers and your local meeting.
- Share concerns calmly and concretely, linking them to real experiences where appropriate.
- Allow time for the candidate to speak and ask questions.
- Avoid arguing or trying to “win” the conversation.
- It is important to strike the right tone.

It's easy to appear to accidentally make assumptions about a candidate's view, or to appear to be asserting your own view without considering their experience. A deliberately careful and measured tone can often work better.

## 7. Staying non-partisan and within the rules

Between January and May 2026 we are in the regulated period before the Scottish election and so there are restrictions on campaigning activity. Quakers cannot be seen to support particular political parties or candidates. To remain within charity law:

- Contact candidates from multiple parties, where possible.
- Avoid language that could be read as endorsement or opposition.
- Do not comment on voting intentions.
- Keep records of correspondence if acting on behalf of a meeting or recognised Quaker body.

- For more information see our *2026 Elections: Guidance for Quaker communities* found in the document section here: [quakerscotland.org/election](https://quakerscotland.org/election).

## 8. Following up and building relationships

After contact or a meeting:

- Send a brief thank-you message.
- Share any agreed next steps or clarifications.
- Consider whether the conversation suggests future engagement on particular issues.
- Sustained, respectful relationships over time often have more impact than one-off communications.

## Other applications of this guide

The principles in this guide will also work well if you engage with candidates on your doorstep. Further advice on hosting a hustings can be found in the hustings guide developed by the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office, of which Quakers in Scotland is a member. This can be found in the document section of [quakerscotland.org/election](https://quakerscotland.org/election).

## Conclusion

Engaging with candidates can feel daunting, but Quakers bring a distinctive and valued voice to public life, one grounded in careful thought and respect for others. Thoughtful preparation and gentle perseverance can make these conversations fruitful for candidates and Friends alike.

## Scottish elections 2026: Engaging candidates

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This guide forms part of the Scottish election resources produced by Quakers in Scotland for the 2026 Scottish election. Visit the document section of [quakerscotland.org/election](https://quakerscotland.org/election) to see all the materials available.

For advice and support on Scottish public affairs and advocacy or to receive the bi-weekly email on Scottish parliamentary engagement opportunities and events in Scotland, please contact:

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