

The Time is Now

On June 26th I – and around 14000 like-minded others from across the UK – travelled to London to speak to my MP about climate change. Over 220 MPs were spoken to by their constituents in a long line stretching through Victoria Tower Gardens – the park next to the Houses of Parliament – across Lambeth Bridge and down the other side of the River Thames. Some MPs were “delivered” to their constituents in pedal-powered rickshaws!



Yorkshire MPs talking to constituents in Victoria Tower Gardens

Why did so many people make this journey to London? Anya Ramamurthy, a representative of the Quakers and the Student Climate Network, captured the motivation in a speech given at an interfaith event held at Church House prior to the mass lobbying of MPs. She explained that “our climate crisis is rooted in inequality” and reminded us that it’s those living in developing countries, who have themselves contributed almost nothing to climate breakdown, that are forced to bear the brunt of its effects. This is an injustice, and one largely caused by those of us in the well-off, developed nations of the West, along with our corporations and governments. It therefore lies with us to take the lead in addressing this injustice and, as Ramamurthy said, “we do not have time for baby steps” but need thorough systemic change. That is why I, and many others, went to speak to our MPs: to ask for urgent, significant action on climate change.

Around twenty people had come from the constituency I live in (Leeds North West) to meet with our MP, Mr. Alex Sobel. Mr Sobel is a member of the Parliamentary Environmental Audit Committee, and told us that climate change is his “number one issue”, an issue he’s been actively working on for years. This did not mean there was nothing to talk about, however! I expressed my thanks for all he is doing on the issue, and Mr Sobel then described the current state of Leeds’ proposed Clean Air Zone, before outlining some of



Mr Alex Sobel MP talking to constituents at #TheTimeIsNow Mass Lobby June 26th

his other hopes for Leeds and the surrounding region. We then talked a bit about what we as his constituents could do to further environmental causes in our area. It was a useful time of building relationships and learning what we can do together to tackle the climate emergency. And while some of the conversations about climate change going on around Westminster yesterday afternoon might not have been quite so amicable, we must as a society continue to discuss how best to respond to the crisis, while also getting stuck in to acting on those conversations.