Engage Politically
How to make change happen

Many initiatives began with one or two people thinking “what if...?” In most cases the vision grew into something else as more people joined the initiative with the relevant skills. In every case, one person dreamed a dream, someone else caught the vision, and others had the skills to bring the vision to reality.

1.Idenity local issues

Identify where change is needed in your own locality. Concentrate on issues which both have an impact on people locally and which can be addressed by local action. Talk to as wide a range of people as possible, both individuals and organisations.

2.Do some research

Don’t assume you are the first to notice the issue. Your concern might have a history, so ask around, and if so investigate what they did so you can build on their successes. If no-one has ever addressed your concern, can you establish why not?

3.Build a team

A team is much stronger than one person on their own, however committed. And a team of people from diverse backgrounds with a range of skills is much stronger than a group of like-minded people.

4.Build alliances

A community of organisations working in unity has greater ability to be heard than one working on its own: aim to work with others, even those who do not share all your beliefs or whose vision only touches your vision.

5.Marshall your arguments

Ensure there is clarity as to what you are seeking to achieve. Be clear as to priorities and make sure the aims are shared and supported.

6.Keep the vision clear

Ensure there is clear leadership. Who will be the ‘go to’ person to coordinate the campaign? If wider than a benefice, have you got the right people in place at the relevant levels to ensure you maximise influence?

7.Manage the media

e clear at what stage media involvement would be helpful. Press statements on new initiatives supported by our churches can highlight what has been achieved and what is needed. If there is a need to bring pressure on local decision makers, then any press campaign needs carefully handling. You are not in charge of how that is reported and what responses are made by others.

8.Keep everyone informed

Havie a regular update email/leaflet to those involved is essential particularly if further action is required.

9.Know the movers and shakers

Get to know your local politicians, both local and national MPs survive or fall by their ability to bring about change for the common good

10.Expect opposition

Don’t expect everyone to share your enthusiasm for change. People in your local congregations may be your greatest critics. Seek to prove them wrong by your professional arguments.

11.Be realistic

Be realistic about time scale and celebrate small victories. All change takes time.

12. Allow others to take the vision forward

You might find others with more relevant skills than yours need to be trusted to take your vision forward. You may have to wait for other things to happen. Your timing might have to be adjusted. Keep in touch with your vision whatever happens, and never lose heart. Pray constantly.