

The Daily Telegraph

People Power

How to run a campaign and make
a difference in your community



Local campaigners
unite to fight



Planning
Application
Rejected

Community saves
local school

Local Shop
Success



Corporate Giant Backdown

Jon Robins
with Paul Stookes

This is an excerpt from Lawpack's book *People Power*.

To find out more about how you can successfully campaign for local issues, [click here](#).

People Power
by Jon Robins with Paul Stookes

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CHAPTER 1

Starting off

'Most campaigns tend to follow an initial spark of enthusiasm. There is an almost spontaneous need for change. To begin with the desire to remedy the problem is usually the campaign's driving force. After the initial response, it soon becomes clear that getting organised as quickly as possible is vital if you intend to maintain and pursue your campaign.'

David Whiting, chief executive of the Environmental Law Foundation

Where to start? Your first instinct when embarking upon a campaign might well be to seek out like-minded people by, for example, holding a meeting. That instinct is a good one. Of course, there is strength in numbers but there are other compelling reasons for testing how others feel about an issue. If you are leading local action, then you need to be able to demonstrate your legitimacy to speak on behalf of others. Do you really represent the interests of the community you are holding yourself out to? Never assume that everyone feels as strongly as you do. Test the waters.

The theme of much of this chapter is striking a balance between keeping your group informal and the imposing structures which might improve the ability of the group to do its job but which inevitably detract from its main aims. Issues to do with group

democracy (e.g. how you make decisions) and delegation of work within a group (e.g. who does what) cause problems unless you have clear structures in place from the start.

If you choose to keep your group simple in structure, then there are very few formal rules when it comes to setting up and running an effective campaign. You can run your campaign as a one-man band from your bedroom via the Internet, or alternatively you could become a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. The degree of formality is a matter for you.

For any group starting up, once you join with others to fight a common cause you should ensure that everyone is clear about the aims of the campaign and what is required of each member of the group. Working as a group provides a source of mutual support and ideas, as well as bringing in resources and sharing the campaign workload. It also demonstrates collective and united action, but big campaigns need greater organisation with group structures and decision-making procedures which must be well-defined and understood by the whole group.

When you are starting off you need to think about what form your group should take. How are you going to arrive at key decisions? A consistent theme from campaigners that took part in the *People Power* questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was the benefits delivered by simplicity.

You need to ask yourself the following basic questions:

Big or small...what do you want to be?

‘We aren’t a charity; we aren’t even “an organisation” with a memorandum or articles of association. We’re just a small project that doesn’t need any money. In fact, it’s just me, the website with some video clips, and an email list. That’s all you need,’ says Paul Blanchard, a Labour councillor in York who runs the Ban Foie Gras campaign. His ‘group’ is very much a one-man band, but in the space of three months in 2007 it generated a huge amount of press coverage.

Some groups that responded to the *People Power* questionnaire were backed by thousands of paying supporters, raised considerable amounts of money through events and merchandise, and adopted formal business structures. ‘We started off as a local campaign in 1990 with the aim of cleaning up two beaches – St Agnes and Porthtowan,’ explains Andy Cummins, campaigns officer at Surfers Against Sewage. ‘We now have in the region of 8,000 paying members. We are a limited company, but a non-profit-making one. We have a board of directors, but they are all volunteers, they don’t take a wage and so all the money goes straight into the campaign.’ How does the group perceive itself – as a business, or as an environmental campaigning group? ‘The campaigning comes first,’ he replies. ‘Everything – all the profits go back into the organisation and the campaign is the most important thing.’

How do you make decisions?

‘We have a steering group of 12 to 15 members,’ explains Jackie Schneider, who set up Merton Parents for Better Food in April 2005 to improve the quality of school food. ‘But to be honest – and I know this sounds a bit Stalinist – I admit I have an undue influence. I worked in a school, know how the system works and had done tons of research. Together with Chris (a school governor who chaired the first meeting), we make the decisions.’

Being united behind a cause doesn’t mean the campaigning will be without headaches, clashing egos and internal bickering. One veteran campaigner notes wearily, ‘too much talking, not enough doing – that’s probably the best way to summarise the last five years of our intermittent fighting. Our little group succeeded as a social and talking club, but did it make a difference?’

Our tip is to plan ahead.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW:

- Testing the waters
- Building alliances
- Group structure
- Who does what
- Decision-making
- Rallying the troops

Testing the waters

If you are just starting out and your fledgling campaign comprises you plus a couple of kindred spirits, then you might want to test the strength of feeling in your community and beyond. Before proceeding too far, check to see whether there are any other local or national groups campaigning for or concerned about the same issues as your group. If there are, you should contact them and, if appropriate, join forces.

The question on your lips at this stage is most likely to be, ‘Does anybody out there feel like we do?’ There is one sure-fire way to find out and that is to arrange an informal meeting at either someone’s home, the local village hall or local pub. Set a date, contact your neighbours and ask them to come along. Consider printing a small, A5-size flyer to deliver through doors (see the example on page 6). You may want to telephone or email people as a further reminder. Set out your concerns concisely and make sure all basic information (e.g. date, time and venue) is included. Also, ask people to reply to let you know whether they are attending. If someone can’t make a meeting, you should nevertheless see whether they are interested in working with the group and ask whether it is OK for you to keep them informed.

It’s essential to ensure that you have the names and contact details of everyone interested in joining the group. Jackie Schneider kick-started her influential school dinners campaign, Merton Parents for Better Food, by writing to every head teacher in the borough and

asking them to send the letter to all their governors. It followed shortly after TV chef Jamie Oliver had raised the nation's awareness about the poor quality of food in schools, not to mention the horror of turkey twizzlers. 'About 150 people turned up at our first meeting,' she says. 'I had prepared a slip of paper so they could put their name on it, the school they were involved with, their role and contact number and what their concern was. Those slips of paper were crucial and without them it would have just been a wonderful meeting – that would have been it.'

Circulate a contacts sheet for people to complete (see page 7). At the end of your initial meeting, explain what your next steps are. For the 100 New Homes example (below), this could be to arrange a meeting at your local council's planning department to discuss the proposal with planning officers. You should also arrange a further group meeting for those members of the community who are happy to help out. It might be useful to propose that, even at this early stage, it is likely that the campaign will be based upon a working group with a small committee that carries out specific functions but that everyone else is welcome to join as members. In this way, it will be possible to carry on manageable group meetings that can be held in someone's home and so avoid the need for organising venues, etc. This is discussed in the following section.

You need to consider how you want to use your support. For example, Merton Parents for Better Food formed a steering group of 15 members from those who attended the first meeting; although Jackie Schneider points out that she, together with a school governor, Chris Larkham, who chaired that first meeting, makes the day-to-day decisions. Members may be limited to those with a designated task or elected as the officers of the management committee. Alternatively, you could have a large number that generally support the campaign but are not otherwise actively involved. You will see that the example constitution at Appendix 2 regards members as anyone interested in helping the group to achieve its purpose or objectives, willing to abide by the rules of the group and willing to pay a subscription agreed by the management committee. That is one model of running a group but, clearly, not

**100 NEW HOMES ON
THE VILLAGE GREEN**

Redbrick builders have applied to build 100 executive homes on the village green.

There is a meeting for local residents to discuss this on:

**Tuesday 18th April
at 7.30 pm**

Venue: The Village Hall

ALL WELCOME!

(please let me know whether or not you are able to attend).

For more information please call Joe Bloggs on 01234 567 890 or e-mail j.bloggs@group-mail.com

appropriate for many small-scale groups. Many groups prefer to keep it simple. The simplest way to know who your members and supporters are is to keep updated a membership database. This may be done on a spreadsheet which can hold all contact details, information on subscription fees and any donations, or, for example, whether they have any expertise that may assist the group (see below).

Remember that any information held on a group database is confidential and should not be disclosed. The Data Protection Act 1998 requires all organisations to protect personal information against unauthorised use and accidental loss. Ensure that someone in your campaign group is responsible for managing any personal database. This could be the campaign secretary (see later). Whoever you nominate to look after personal databases, ensure that they fully understand the group's obligations in protecting personal information. The Information Commissioner's Office provides helpful information on holding and obtaining personal information. In November 2007 it published a *Data Protection Good*

Model Contacts Sheet

NAME	ADDRESS	TEL	EMAIL	DO YOU WANT TO JOIN WORKING GROUP?	ANY PARTICULAR EXPERIENCE/ EXPERTISE?	WILLING TO PROVIDE GENERAL SUPPORT?

Practice Note: Security of personal information for small and medium sized organizations outlining the security measures groups should have in place to protect the personal information they hold (www.ico.gov.uk).

For more information on holding meetings, see chapter 4.

Building alliances

At the outset of the chapter it was recommended that one of the first things that a new group should do is seek out like-minded groups and allies. Campaigning works most effectively through coalitions, alliances and networks. You can learn from the experiences of others, share resources plus build momentum for your own cause through working with others. Tescopoly (www.tescopoly.org), an alliance of different groups which highlights the environmental and social impact of the supermarket giant, is a good example of this.

The Tescopoly Alliance includes a diverse range of groups from Banana Link (a UK group working towards a fair and sustainable banana trade), Friends of the Earth, GMB London, the Small and Family Farms Alliance, through to anti-poverty groups such as War on Want. It also includes details of a large number of local campaign groups on its site plus resources for would-be campaigners. Tescopoly is not an organisation in its own right. 'It works around a coalition of organisations that links people in the UK such as those who are fighting to protect their high street or small farmers who are having extravagant demands placed upon them by the likes of Tesco to, for example, overseas suppliers in the wine industry in South Africa or the conditions of fruit pickers,' explains Owen Espley, corporate power campaigner at Friends of the Earth. 'In that sense, you build a coalition which takes head-on the company in all its different activities. For the smaller groups, I find that it helps create a platform or a way in to amplify their issues by linking themselves to a wider campaign.'

When seeking out alliances don't just think of other local groups;

Model Membership Database Form

A	B	C	D	E		F	G	H	I
				MEMBERS' DATABASE					
NAME	SURNAME	YOUR CAMPAIGN ADDRESS	POST CODE	TEL	EMAIL	SUBSCRIPTIONS	DONATIONS	EXPERTISE	
Chris	Smith	145 The Street Any Town	AT45 2LP	01234 567890	csmith@email.co.uk	£10	£0	-	
Peter	Johnson	13 The Street Anytown	AT14 9KL	01234 567890	peterj@email.co.uk	£10	£10	surveyor	
						£10	£0		
						£10	£0		
						£10	£0		
						£10	£0		
						£10	£0		
						£10	£0		

also consider approaching other organisations, from trade unions to consumer groups and professional bodies.

There are practical issues to consider about joint campaigning. There are clear advantages to be had from improved economies of scale such as a greater skills-base and increased resources and audience. However, the structures discussed throughout the chapter need to be applied to the larger group.

You need to be clear about what is expected from your partner campaign groups. Do you want to share information? At the very least, you should be mindful of their campaign timetable and events. Perhaps you might want to go further and sign up to joint aims and objectives.

Group structure

Getting organised and working as a group need not be overwhelming or overly complex, but you do need to be clear about how your campaign will be managed.

Where to start? ‘Running a group is very much a team effort – you can’t do it alone! It isn’t only about the amount of work that you have to do, it is also about shared responsibility,’ says Peter Dyer at Community Links, Bromley, a local group that supports campaigners. ‘To begin with you should just bring together people who share similar interests and concerns. Work out what your main aims are and how you think you will achieve them. In our experience, groups usually begin with about three or four people who soon realise that setting up a group involves a great deal of work and that things will probably be made easier if you can bring in others to assist.’

You will need to think, quite early on, about how your group will be structured and managed. You will need to sort out practical things such as the level of commitment you might expect from members, how often you need to meet and where. You will also need to be clear

as to who does what, why and when. Do you expect to be handling money? What if you expect to receive donations? These financial considerations are dealt with in chapter 3.

As for the basics, Peter Dyer says, ‘two fundamental things that all groups should have in place from the very start are a management committee and a set of rules which the group complies with.’ These rules are also known as the constitution.

Your campaign may well start out (and, indeed, run quite happily) as an informal group of just two or three people. It could also evolve into a larger, more formal organisation. There is no optimum size for a campaign group. As said earlier, it doesn’t follow that ‘bigger is better’. It might be that your objectives are more easily achieved as a small campaign with a lot of supporters rather than being a bigger campaign including a lot of members with, inevitably, differing levels of commitment and different views on what your objectives are. For instance, the UK Pesticides Campaign (www.pesticidescampaign.co.uk), which highlights the high level of pesticide exposure for people living in agricultural areas, is largely run by one prominent campaigner, Georgina Downs. She has put the issue on the national agenda and taken legal action against the government over its absence of any risk assessment relating to crop-spraying. Compare this with, say, the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), which has over 60,000 members and 200 district groups and runs a number of campaigns on matters as diverse as hedgerows, tranquillity and light pollution. Each organisation runs effective campaigns but is different in terms of scale, number of members and resources.

‘Our campaign has many thousands of supporters from not only here in the UK, but also from around the world and provides a voice for millions of people who live close to fields that are regularly sprayed with pesticides as a result of the intensification of agricultural production methods and dependence on pesticide use,’ explains Georgina Downs of the UK Pesticides Campaign. ‘However, it suits us to have an informal group structure that can be flexible,

and allows us to say what needs to be said without having to compromise the campaign's position [which might happen] if there is a large organisational structure in place.' She adds, 'We feel strongly in our campaign and think it's important to be able to say what we want, when we want, in order to achieve the necessary changes to give rural residents and others the high level of protection from pesticides that they have the right to expect.'

You have options as to the type of group you wish to form. In fact, one paper (*Governance and Organisational Structures, Governance Hub/Co-operatives UK*, 2007) lists ten different types. By far the most common structure for grass roots local campaigns is the 'unincorporated association'. Limited companies and charities might be appropriate for the bigger and more established groups.

One type of group model is not necessarily 'better' than the other. You must decide what is right for you at the present time. If you want to adopt a different structure at a later stage, then this is always possible as part of your general review of the campaign.

If you and your fellow campaigners have already embarked upon a common enterprise with a basic understanding of your mutual obligations and how money will be dealt with, then you are in an 'unincorporated association', whether you are aware of that or not.

Most residents' associations, community groups and local action groups will be unincorporated associations. You do not have to register or obtain any licence to operate. An unincorporated association does not have a separate legal identity, which means that any liability for the group's actions rests with you, the members. Further, as an unincorporated association, your group is unable to enter into any formal legal contracts in its own name. On the other hand, an incorporated group, such as a limited company, does have a legal identity and there is protection from personal liability.

This arrangement might suit you fine. You might not consider anything more than the most informal structure. The absence of bureaucracy means you can get on with the job in hand – which is

running a campaign. You aren't required to formally register or seek regulatory approval for a change in your corporate objectives as is necessary for a limited company.

Paul Blanchard of Ban Foie Gras sees discussions of group structures as irrelevant. 'You don't need anything more than yourself,' he says. 'You don't need money and you don't need staff for our kind of guerrilla campaigning. It's different now – we are campaigning in the age of the Internet.'

Many activists do not think in organisational terms at first. However, as your campaign evolves, there will be issues that have to be dealt with. 'When we first started it was all about me and my ability to campaign knowing that I had the national dyslexia charities behind me,' says Kate Griggs, who set up Xtraordinary People to raise awareness and funding to support dyslexia training in schools. In two years, this one-woman campaign has turned into a charitable initiative which at the end of 2007 received a government pump-priming grant of nearly £1 million for a two-year period to kick-start a particular initiative with a commitment to match that pound for pound. 'And that is very daunting,' she adds.

Before you begin your campaign you should check if there are any other groups that might share your concerns, such as:

- **Residents' associations and community groups.** In other words, other locals might already be involved in an unincorporated group, which they use, for example, to hold an annual community festival or to co-ordinate a neighbourhood watch scheme. If a different concern arises locally, it may well be that your residents' association is a good forum to air it and the association may agree to pursue the campaign and then rely on the existing association as a ready-made group to put the campaign into action. It is therefore important for you to check at the outset whether your local residents' association wishes to campaign on the same issue. If so, the group is ready-made. If not, then at least you know that you will not be unnecessarily duplicating any work being carried on by others.

- **Amenity or civic societies.** An amenity or civic society group will often be more formal and perhaps larger than a residents' association or community group. They have a general role in the locality promoting high standards of planning, conservation and regeneration in their local community. Again, it is always worth checking with the local civic or amenity society for their views on your campaign. According to the Civic Trust (the national umbrella body for 850 local groups) civic societies are voluntary local organisations which undertake practical projects, including restoring old buildings, improving the quality of public places and finding solutions to traffic problems. The Civic Trust website, www.civictrust.org.uk, notes that civic societies have a formal role as community watchdogs commenting on planning applications for new buildings and developments and guarding against unsympathetic changes to conservation areas and historic buildings.

Limited company

Running your group as a limited company can have advantages. Non-profit-making companies tend to be run as a company limited by guarantee; this is broadly the same as a conventional limited company but without shareholders or shares. Instead, it will have trustees or guarantors who guarantee to pay an agreed sum (often just £1) if the company is wound up. A limited company is a legal entity, or 'person', in its own right which can then enter into contracts or make public comment or statements – in other words, in the company's name rather than in the names of the individuals that run it. As a result, any financial risk will be limited to the extent of the guaranteed amount provided by the guarantors, for example £1 per trustee. Moreover, any legal liability that could arise – for example, by making a libellous statement – would be the company's liability rather than the members of your campaign group.

Andy Cummins is one of six permanent staff at Surfers Against Sewage, which has 6,000 to 8,000 supporters. He describes the group as 'hard hitting' and 'operating outside of the doors of power and not

afraid of naming and shaming people.’ He says that one reason for being a limited company is that ‘if somebody decided to take us to court it would be pretty unfair on the six of us, considering all the extra work we put in, to then be fined for the actions of one of our supporters’.

One extreme illustration of the risk to campaigners is what befell the two defendants in the infamous *McLibel* trial, in which two members of London Greenpeace were sued for libel in their own names by McDonald’s for publishing and distributing concerns about the food group’s operations. The ensuing legal action between the food giant and two self-styled anarchists became the longest legal action in the British courts lasting two-and-a-half years. It generated 18,000 pages of court transcripts and 40,000 pages of documents. In fact, it turned out to be a spectacular own goal for McDonald’s because it generated acres of negative press giving the issues more prominence than the campaigners could have had hoped, plus McDonald’s was cast as an overbearing Goliath to the campaigner’s fearless David. The legacy of *McLibel* appears to be that pressure groups tend not to get sued for libel because of the reputational risk.

Another advantage of being a limited company is that you can limit your personal exposure to legal costs if you consider pursuing a legal action. For example, if your campaign group as a company sued a government department and ultimately lost your case, the government’s legal costs would have to be paid by the company rather than your individual group members (this is discussed in chapter 8).

The downside of limited companies is that valuable time will have to be spent on paperwork as well as precious money diverted in compliance costs. There are various statutory duties that a company has under the Companies Act. You are required to file accounts and company returns (basic updated information about the company) within ten months of the accounting year under Companies House rules and you will have to file changes of directors and secretary with Companies House. Companies also have to comply with formal

rules about holding meetings and consulting with shareholders if appropriate. Directors who are responsible for the management of a company have certain formal obligations. It is likely that one or more key members of your campaign group will also be company officers; for example, your group chair could also be the company managing director, the group secretary could be the company secretary and so on. Having said that, it is not difficult to set up a limited company (not least if you can draw on the skills of a lawyer or accountant who supports the group), but the benefits of limiting your liability must outweigh the time and effort involved in the administration. You could set up your company through a company formation agent for as little as £50. On top of that the annual return filing fee is £30 – check out the Companies House website, www.companieshouse.gov.uk.

Charitable trusts

Groups that provide a general public benefit can often register themselves as a charity. There are some, mainly financial, advantages in being a charity.

The Charities Act 2006 requires a charity to have one or more purposes which fall within a list of 13 descriptions including:

- the prevention or relief of poverty;
- the advancement of education;
- the advancement of religion;
- the advancement of health or the saving of lives;
- the advancement of citizenship or community development;
- the advancement of the arts, culture, heritage or science;
- the advancement of amateur sport;
- the advancement of human rights, conflict resolution or reconciliation or the promotion of religious or racial harmony or equality and diversity;
- the advancement of environmental protection or improvement;

- the relief of those in need, by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage;
- the advancement of animal welfare;
- the promotion of the efficiency of the armed forces of the Crown or of the police, fire and rescue services or ambulance services; or
- other purposes currently recognised as charitable and any new charitable purposes which are similar to another charitable purpose.

A charity also has to ensure that the charitable purpose will benefit the public and this will depend on the circumstances of the nature of the purpose itself. It is the Charity Commission that will assess whether the charitable purposes set by the organisation will benefit the public. The public benefit requirement and the provisions on charitable purposes are due to come into force on 1 April 2008.

However, a charity cannot have some charitable purposes and some that are not. It may be that part of your campaign's work could be defined as having a charitable purpose. If so, you could set up a separate charitable trust alongside the main campaign group and any charitable work carried out could benefit from its charitable trust status.

The advantages and disadvantages of being a charity are set out below. If you want to register as a charity, your group must fall within the list of 13 descriptions above, be for the public benefit and have an income of over £5,000 per annum. There are then a number of options:

- **Unincorporated charitable trust.** You would set the organisation up under a trust deed. Provided that you were accepted as being a charity, you would be regulated by the Charity Commission and group members would be trustees and subject to the requirements of the Charity Act 1993. This is the simplest form of charity structure but it doesn't offer any protection as regards personal liability (see below). You are

individual trustees and potentially liable for, among other things, any of the unincorporated charity's debts or legal actions.

- **Charity as a company limited by guarantee.** You are creating a company and then registering it with the Charity Commission. You immediately have the protection of limited liability.
- **Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).** This type of organisation was introduced under the Charities Act 2006 and will be available from 2008 onwards. The idea behind the CIO is to have something that will be recognised as a separate legal entity like a company but without the same burdensome regulation. CIOs will be regulated by the Charity Commission, avoiding the dual regulation of charitable companies, which report to both Companies House and the Charity Commission. They will have limited liability.

Should you register as a charity?

Advantages of being a charity:

- you don't normally have to pay Income/Corporation Tax, Capital Gains Tax, or Stamp Duty, and gifts to charities are free of Inheritance Tax;
- tax relief is available to those who give to charity, which is a powerful incentive for businesses and individuals alike to donate to your cause;
- you pay no more than 20% of normal business rates on the charity's buildings;
- you can get special VAT treatment in some circumstances;
- you are often able to raise funds from the public, grant-making trusts and local government more easily than non-charitable bodies;
- you can formally represent and help to meet the needs of the community; and

- you can give the public greater reassurance that the organisation is regulated because it is monitored by the Charity Commission.

Disadvantages of being a charity:

- you must have ‘exclusively’ charitable purposes. Some organisations may have a range of activities, some charitable, some not. To become a charity an organisation would have to stop its non-charitable activities (see over);
- you will have limits on the extent of political campaigning activity you can carry on;
- strict rules apply to trading carried out by charities;
- trustees are not allowed to receive financial benefits (e.g. salaries, or business contracts to a trustee’s own business) from the charity unless specifically authorised by the governing document (e.g. constitution); and
- charity law imposes certain financial reporting obligations. These vary with the size of the charity.

There is an uneasy relationship between the narrow constraints of charity law and the desire on the part of groups to campaign and many groups would like to see a more liberal regime. The traditional line is vehemently opposed to the idea of charities being too political – as said above, a disadvantage of being a charity is you cannot be political; however, increasingly charities and campaigning groups have found the law overly restrictive. This latter view has come into recent focus with the advisory group on campaigning and the voluntary sector, chaired by Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, which made the case for a relaxation of the restriction on the amount of political campaigning charities can do. At the time of going to press, the government has promised to review the Charity Commission guidance, CC9 – Political Activities and Campaigning by Charities. Key to this debate is an interpretation of the law that says political activity must not become the ‘dominant’ means by which a charity carries out its purposes and must remain ‘ancillary’. Campaigning groups are worried that the rule disadvantages small charities. The government appears to favour relaxing the rules and

said in the review that ‘it is surely possible, in a well-run charity, for political activity to be “dominant” within a charity and yet still enable it to further its charitable purposes.’

The Charity Commission, responding to concerns that charities were being overly cautious, published advice on how (as they put it) they can ‘follow the example of successful campaigns like the Make Poverty History coalition and the RSPCA’s controversial campaign on fox-hunting and use their unique position in society to fight for change’. Its advice came out in April 2007. Andrew Hind, Chief Executive of the Charity Commission, said, ‘Campaigning, advocacy and political activities can all be legitimate and valuable activities for charities to undertake. In fact the strong links charities have in their local communities, the high levels of public trust and confidence they command, and the diversity of causes they represent, mean that charities are often uniquely placed to campaign and advocate on behalf of their beneficiaries.’

Many smaller groups, particularly local groups, don’t tend to seriously consider becoming a charity. Many are deterred by the perceived bureaucracy. Xtraordinary People operates as ‘a restricted fund’ of the British Dyslexia Association, as Kate Griggs explains: ‘In other words, we don’t have our own charity name and number. We use that of the parent charity, the British Dyslexia Association. But any money that we raise goes into a restricted pot and that is governed by the national charity. It gives us the freedom of being able to raise money as a charity without the bureaucracy of the charity. Of course, that element is governed by the Charity Commission, which is as it should be.’

Surfers Against Sewage is also contemplating taking charitable status in light of the new Charities Act 2006. ‘Until recently there have been so many restrictions on what charities can say and how they can campaign,’ says Andy Cummins. ‘We haven’t wanted to compromise our ability to campaign for the price of getting more grants. But the laws are changing whereby environmental non-governmental organisations can obtain charitable status, so we would be able to apply for a lot more grants, and that would be fantastic.’

National organisations such as the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), the Governance Hub (www.governancehub.org.uk) and VolResource (www.volresource.org.uk) provide information, advice and support for people setting up and working in the voluntary sector.

For more information on registering a charity, see the Charity Commission website, www.charity-commission.gov.uk.

Constitution

It is advisable for a campaign group, whatever structure you choose to adopt, to have a written document that sets out the aims and objectives. You will find an example of a model constitution at Appendix 2.

A limited company must adopt its own ‘memorandum of association’, which is a document recording the objects and powers of a company in its dealings with outsiders. A limited company must also have articles of association, which are, effectively, the by-laws of your group which cover its internal rules. A charity must have a constitution that sets out its charitable objectives. There is, by way of contrast, no legal requirement for an unincorporated association to adopt a formal set of rules or constitution, although it is wise to have one. It is a valuable discipline to articulate what you and your supporters want to achieve.

At the very least, you should make sure that your constitution sets out:

- the name of your group;
- your aims;
- the committee members;
- membership details; and
- rules regarding subscriptions, the holding of money and property, etc.

On occasions, it may well be necessary for the committee, or one of its officers, to take decisions on behalf of the group through executive powers. The model constitution at Appendix 2 does not provide for any delegated decision-making. It might be appropriate to insert a clause for delegated authority before the constitution is adopted (or it might be voted on and approved by the group at the AGM or a special meeting). A typical delegated authority clause is set out in the model constitution at clause 14 of Appendix 2.

Who does what

Right from the start you need to allocate tasks according to your members' strengths. We have just talked about the importance of having a set of rules (or constitution) to govern a group and which should define roles within the group. The type of work required by a campaign will vary. We have summarised the main tasks and cross-referenced to other chapters that deal with the topic in more detail.

Make use of your own talent. Take any cross-section of society and there might be a fair share of accountants or financially competent people who are well-placed to be a treasurer; IT specialists who can take charge of the website; and journalists who can become your press officers. Your group might have the support of business professionals – accountants, financial advisers and lawyers – who will be able to advise on particular issues. Their input will be very useful. Also be mindful that their natural instinct might be risk-averse and they might want to formalise arrangements and introduce legal structures. If there is a pressing need for work to be carried out but no experience in the group, then finding a willing new member/committee officer becomes a campaign priority.

The main roles in any campaign group are:

- **Chair.** Every group should have a leader who is prepared to take executive decisions or have a casting vote. There will be occasions when they will need to take decisions in a delegated capacity; for example, instructing a transport consultant to

carry out an independent traffic assessment. The chair will also represent your group at meetings and will be the public voice (these tasks are identified in the example constitution). It could be that a new chair is elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) as, again, outlined in the constitution. These are issues to be considered from the start. It would be entirely appropriate to re-elect the same chair. However, it will be important to ensure that the opportunity for change is in place (e.g. by annual elections).

- **Treasurer.** Having a campaign treasurer is essential. It is likely that someone in the group will have some experience of dealing with finances or money. If so, they should feel comfortable about managing the campaign funds, at least in the early stages. However, you must be clear about the treasurer's role, and how much control or power they have over the group's finances. Their basic duties are set out in the constitution. It may also be helpful to draft a brief job description or terms of appointment for the treasurer. See chapter 3.
- **Administrator/committee secretary.** Good administration is essential in bigger groups. Important administrative tasks include ensuring that meetings (public and private) are well-organised and take place according to plan. This may include booking rooms, finalising speakers, and arranging for any equipment (including tables and chairs) to be available. Other important matters will include ensuring that meeting agendas, reports and minutes are available when appropriate (see below).
- **Campaign-specific tasks.** You are likely to have a number of tasks that will be specific to your campaign; for example, preventing the demolition of an historic building might need input from a dedicated conservation officer. A proposal to build a new road is likely to require evidence of traffic assessment on existing roads. It may well be that as part of your campaign you will have to instruct expert consultants to support it. Even so, you will still need a group member/officer to gather, analyse and refine the group's concerns in order to properly instruct your chosen expert.

You might also consider the following office-holders:

- Press officer: see chapter 4
- Government liaison officer: see chapter 5
- Website/IT officer: see chapter 6
- Information and research officer: see chapter 7

Decision-making

‘There was some strife at the start over decision-making. I do recall voting on how to vote. When you get to that point you do realise that you have to streamline and – to put it politely – one or two people dropped out,’ recalls Tom Holder, of Pro-Test, the Oxford-based campaign group in favour of animal testing and in support of scientific research.

It is important for you to sort out an approach to decision-making at an early stage. The model constitution in Appendix 2 provides for the group to be managed or administered by a management committee with a certain number of individuals elected at the group’s AGM. This makes sense, even if your group only includes two or three members at present. A management committee can take decisions on behalf of the group and members of that committee can be elected to their posts.

Your group’s management committee should have at least three officers: a chair, treasurer and a secretary (see above). A management committee of anything between three and nine officers is sensible.

All members of your group that are not officers of the management committee should nevertheless be entitled to vote for any matters that arise at the group’s AGM or any special meeting that is arranged by the committee. However, the types of matters voted for at an AGM will be limited to important matters (e.g. electing officers of the committee).

Rallying the troops

Campaigning is time-consuming and requires stamina. It is essential to build and maintain an enthusiastic and committed team. Many campaign tasks could easily keep a full-time employee busy, but you won't have that luxury. If you are taking on an opponent such as a developer or government department, they will have the financial resources and staff to try to undermine your campaign. Of course, they won't have your commitment, nor will they have – as one campaigner puts it – ‘our bloody-minded belief that we're right and they're rubbish’.

As your campaign grows it is vital to ensure that all members are kept fully informed and that their interest and enthusiasm remains alive. Publishing a regular newsletter, distributed by email, is one of the most efficient means of circulating information.

Another way to keep the momentum going with your campaign is to hold regular meetings to which all members are invited. See chapter 4.

So what does keep campaigning going? Denholme Residents' Action Group (DRAG) was set up in January 1999 to represent the people of Denholme, near Bradford, who were fighting a planning application to use a local quarry for a landfill site. Residents were concerned about air pollution, smell and noise. They did not want to live next to a rubbish dump for the next generation or two.

For nine years DRAG has represented residents at a planning inquiry and supported two High Court legal challenges, including one that went to the Court of Appeal. ‘One major source of motivation has been the continuing suspect manoeuvres by the operators. This has angered us and anger is a very good motivator,’ says Sharon Makinson, campaign secretary. ‘At times, however, the campaign has gone at a very fast pace, such as when we needed to issue legal proceedings in the High Court within a short space of time. Many times it has been the adrenalin that has kept us going (and coffee!).’