

# Writing a letter to the editor of your local paper

The letters to the editor section is one of the most widely read sections of any newspaper. This means that if what you write is published, it will be read by a large number of people with a variety of perspectives; including neighbours, MPs, and councillors. This offers folks like us a chance to reach a broad audience and provide readers with information and insights on issues we care about in a way that inspires readers to take action.

Some air pollution-related examples of a *Letter to the Editor* might be:

- To express your concern about the latest air pollution event in your community and the government's failure to control air pollution;
- To let people know about the latest National Pollutant Inventory results, what it means for your community, and why we need power stations to install pollution control;
- To advocate for and raise awareness for a clean air strategy and why that is important to you and your community;
- To inform public opinion surrounding the upcoming review of national air pollution standards;
- To influence policy-makers and local MPs who regularly read the section for insight into the issues concerning their constituents

## Tips for sending an effective letter to the editor of your local or regional newspaper

### 1. Be professional and identify yourself

Letters should follow the submission rules of the particular publication. Language should be polite, but persuasive. Be sure to include any information that highlights your expertise or experience on the issue.

### 2. Keep it brief and get to the point

Keep it short, to the point and concise. Most published letters are about the length of a tweet (approx. 240 characters) and take a strong position on a topic recently covered in the publication.

- Start with a compelling introductory sentence of why the issue is important.
- Follow up with short, key points
- Provide evidence (eg. NPI data)
- State your opinion about what should be done/possible remedies to the issue

### 3. Relate it to home

Newspaper readers care about how an issue will affect them or their families locally. Including local facts or references in your article increases the chances it will be published and will draw the readers' interest.

### 4. End with a call to action

Ask readers to follow up. For example, urge them to join you in calling on policymakers to address the issue.

Sign off with your name and contact details (these won't be published, but the paper may use this for follow up or verification)

### **Letter to the editor template**

<Date>

<Name of media outlet or publication>

Attention: <editor's first name and last name\* or Editor>

<Address 1>

<Address 2>

<City, State, Postal Code>

Dear <editor's first name and last name\* or Editor >:

### **Introduction**

State your reason for writing here. If you are responding to a previous articles or editorial, use the first sentence to reference the title of the article, author's name and date when it appeared. If not, introduce your argument clearly, and go from there.

### **Case**

State your case here. Include one or two bits of evidence to support your argument.

### **Call to action**

Ask readers to follow up with some activity, such as calling on policymakers to address the issue.

### **Conclusion**

End with a strong, positive statement in support of your case.

Sincerely,

<Your signature>

<Your name>

<Your contact information>

\*Find the editor's name on the masthead of the publication.