



Your guide to...

HOSTING A PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION

View the full toolkit at kit.riveractionuk.com

This guide aims to provide an overview of public demonstrations as a campaigning strategy, and signpost to useful resources.

ORGANISE A PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION

Demonstrations are a powerful tool to draw attention to the state of our rivers and mobilise support. They're also a good way of attracting people to join your campaign and take other actions such as signing a [petition](#) or [letter writing](#).

Whether it's a peaceful protest, a march, or a symbolic gathering, a demonstration physically and visually showcases the support behind your campaign and pressures decision-makers to take a stance. They have a strong public impact, can get good media coverage, and are a great way to raise the profile of an issue and energise a campaign.

However, it's important to consider the legal matters of organising a demonstration and to check the law. Friends of The Earth provide useful guidance for environmental activists on your rights, responsibilities, and key laws [here](#). You should make sure you check the [government regulations](#).

3 KEY STEPS TO PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL DEMONSTRATION

A successful demonstration will depend upon having a clearly defined purpose, getting people to attend, effectively communicating your campaign message, and leaving a lasting impression amongst your target audience, the public, and the media.

1. Build a team of organisers

It's a good idea to get a team together and organise planning meetings. Consider allocating roles and responsibilities such as: health and safety, fundraising, communications, logistics, and speakers. Things to consider in meetings might include:

- Equipment (speakerphones, audio systems, microphones)
- Banners , flags, placards
- Toilets
- Accessibility and inclusivity
- Speakers
- Logistics
- Permissions/notifications

Involve and reach out to members of the community and other organisations, which can provide opportunities for collaboration, useful insights, and boost the reach of your demonstration. Getting other organisations to endorse the demonstration's message also amplifies its impact. Check our community map to see where other organisations already have events planned, or post details of your own.

2. Define your strategy

Your demonstration should be underpinned by a clear and concise set of objectives, as well as clearly outlining who the demonstration is targeted at. Having a clear message and strategy is key to an impactful demonstration for several reasons:

➤ **Purpose**

It ensures that the purpose and goals of your demonstration are understood easily by participants, bystanders, and the media allowing people to get behind the issue.

➤ **Unity and Focus**

It unites participants around a common cause, fostering a sense of solidarity. It helps maintain focus and cohesion, preventing confusion or dilution of the campaign's objectives.

➤ **Visibility and Recognition**

A clear message makes the demonstration more memorable to the public and the media, increasing the likelihood of publicity.

You should also consider when and where to organise your action to make the most impact. Choosing a relevant and visible location adds symbolic significance to the demonstration and increases its chances of attracting participants, media attention, and the notice of decision-makers. Timing the demonstration to align with key events, like legislative sessions or international awareness days, enhances its impact and strategically increases pressure on decision-makers to act.

3. Promotion and outreach

The more people that come to a demonstration, the more impact it will have. Promoting your event is key if you want people to attend. You can promote your event and spread the word via local & social media channels, pamphlets & fliers, mailings lists etc. See our [media interest](#) section of the River Rescue Kit for more guidance. This community toolbox also provides useful info sheets on [communications to promote interest](#).

It's worth noting, however, that small demonstrations can be just as impactful with good planning - particularly if you get a good angle for the media!

Useful resources:

- [UK Protest Rights](#)
- [How to organise a more accessible protest](#)
- [Making signs & placards](#)