

Mass Lobby Wednesday 3 Feb 2010

Why:

Calling for the statutory regulation of Herbal Practitioners

Where:

Opposite Old Palace Yard, immediately to the west of the Houses of Parliament (aka the Palace of Westminster)

When:

From 12 noon onwards (until 4pm) - with the lobby of MPs commencing at 2.30.

Do please make every effort to join the rally – wrap up warmly!

Please let us know by emailing gail.breeze@ehpa.eu if you are coming. We need to give the police accurate numbers.

What to do before attending the mass lobby

1. Arrange to meet your MP on the day

You can turn up at Westminster any time that the House of Commons is sitting and request a meeting with your MP. However, you should do everything you can in advance to arrange a meeting with your MP. This will also involve less queuing for you. The lobby starts at 2.30pm. The security requirements for entering Parliament take some time (airport type scanners) and some queuing.

The best way to contact your MP is to write to him or her at the House of Commons, Westminster, London, SW1A 0AA. Most MPs also use email, and should treat emails in the same manner as a letter. You can find out your MP's email address at the following website: <http://www.parliament.uk/directories/hciolists/alms.cfm>. Remember to give your home address even in an email, as MPs have a strict rule about dealing only with their own constituents.

What to do on the day of the mass lobby

1. Take with you any correspondence from your MP confirming you have a meeting.

This may shorten the amount of time you have to queue.

2. Enter through the St Stephen's entrance

Go in through St Stephen's entrance. You will be stopped in the Cromwell Green search area. Proceed as directed until you reach Central Lobby - the central point in the Palace between the House of Lords and House of Commons.

3a. What to do if you have a meeting arranged

There is a limit of 100 lobbyists at any one time in the Central Lobby.

Before you queue for the security check, inform a police officer or steward that you have a meeting arranged with your MP and show them any correspondence your MP has sent to you. This should allow you to go straight into the security checking area without queuing with the general public for tours of Parliament. Your MP or his/her staff will usually come to meet you in Central Lobby. You need to go to the desk in Central Lobby and ask the attendants to telephone your MP's office.

3b. What to do if you do not have a meeting arranged

If your MP has agreed to meet you, but not given you any details of where and when, or if you have not already arranged a meeting with your MP, you will need to queue outside St Stephen's entrance. Start at 2pm for this as it can take half an hour or so..

The police will only allow 100 people, including lobbyists and other visitors, into Central Lobby at any one time. Pass through the security check and proceed to Central Lobby. Once there, go to the desk and ask for "a green card". This is a request for your MP to come and meet you and should be filled in and returned as directed. It is important that you make clear statement your reason for visiting on the card.

Filling the card is important because, if you do not manage to meet with your MP, the card will then be sent on to him or her. Your MP should then respond directly to you and the more he or she knows about why you were at Westminster, the better.

The desk staff will take the card and officials will be asked to look for your MP and let him or her know that you are asking to meet with them. You should wait around for a while, but don't forget that your colleague lobbyists with firm appointments to meet their MP will also be waiting, so you should be prepared to give up waiting after 20 minutes or so in order to let them in.

4. Tight Security

You will have to go through 'airport type' security to gain access to Parliament - on a busy day this can take at least 15 minutes - and you may need to queue until there is space. You do NOT need any identification documents. Check that you do not have anything that could be construed as an offensive weapon on or with you (e.g. penknife) and do not wear slogans on clothing; for some reason they don't allow it.

5. Disabled Access

If you are disabled, please telephone the Serjeant-at-Arms' office at the House of Commons, who will advise you of procedures for entering the building. (Phone 0207 219 3000 and ask the switchboard to put you through to the Serjeant's office). The Serjeant's office do allow some parking where required by disabled people, but individuals will need to verify this with the office. It is usual for one of your MPs' staff to accompany you once you enter the building. You will need to arrange this with your MP in advance. Please let us know if you have any special ambulatory needs or require any assistance.

6. Meeting your MP

Use a meeting with your MP to try to:

- Give them the information they need about the Herbal Medicine issue, - see the letter to MPs put out for you to use by the EHTPA – available from the EHTPA website - <http://www.ehpa.eu/>.

- Influence their views with your own knowledge and concerns for both the public's protection and the profession's safety record.
- Explain to them that many of their constituents, some of whom are your patients, want herbalists to be Statutorily Regulated. That the delay in deciding to go ahead with statutory regulation will mean loss of public choice in herbal medicines (many not available) and loss of many jobs in small businesses run by herbalists and their suppliers.
- Ask them to raise your concerns with any relevant Ministers by meeting them and by writing to them.
- Ask them to take appropriate action to show that they support your view.

It is best to be as brief, clear and courteous as possible. If they send their researcher instead, treat them in the same way. However, they may send their researcher on ahead of them if they are in the middle of something, and come to you a bit later.

You should thank your MP for taking the time to see you, establish how much time they have, make two or three key points and - most importantly - ask them to follow up the meeting. Briefing notes are useful but make sure you point out how the issues directly affect you, your business, your patients and your family.

Do not be surprised if your MP only has a small amount of time to spare you.

We look forward to seeing you on the day!