

Climate Heritage Network

Communicating Climate Action

A Guide for Climate Heritage Advocates



Fishermen on Inle Lake, Myanmar (Burma) by Mega Caesaria on Unsplash



Climate Heritage
NETWORK

Table of Contents

Introduction	01
The Advocacy Cycle	03
Preparing to be an Advocate	05
Audience	07
Key Message + Proof Point	08
Your Advocacy Ask	10
Measuring Success	11
Key Words and Phrases	12
How to Handle Negative Remarks	14
Conclusion	16

Introduction

Anyone can be an advocate.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for professionals, volunteers, and students of all levels. It is for those who are passionate about working together across sectors to address the urgent challenges of climate change. It is for all those who want to **take action**.

Use the tips in this guide to strengthen your advocacy on the role of culture in climate action to workplace peers and leaders, friends and family, and policymakers.

Why should you be an advocate?

- Cultural heritage can't advocate for itself
- You are an expert in your field
- Our audiences may not recognise the value of cultural heritage, the threats it faces, and the solutions it can provide
- Our voices can be the clearest and most specific about the values of cultural heritage
- You care about climate change and you want to make a positive difference



Planners
Managers
Interpreters
Volunteers (board and front-line)
Students
Staff Members
Researchers
and many others!

Introduction

Where can you advocate?

On social media

Raise awareness & invite further conversation

At work

Initiate informal conversations with colleagues

During networking events

Get the conversation started with professionals in your sector and beyond

In volunteer positions

Raise awareness within your volunteer roles at the national and international level

To managers

Pitch related projects, ask for support, suggest joining the Climate Heritage Network

To decision and policymakers

Make a case to include culture and heritage in local climate action plans, amplify local heritage projects, and suggest they join the Climate Heritage Network

The Advocacy Cycle



Adapted from Open Society Foundations: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org>

The Advocacy Cycle

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to advocacy. However, by asking yourself the following questions, you will be able to determine what success might look like, and the steps that can take you there.

Step 1: Identify and analyse the issue

- What problem do you want to address?

Step 2: Set your goal

- What do you want to achieve?

Step 3: Identify audience and decision makers

- Who do you want to influence?

Step 4: Define your key message, proof points, and "ask"

- What is the focus of your advocacy?
- What action do you want your audience to take after your conversation?

Step 5: Set your timeline

- When should you do it?
- Are there key dates, events, or engagement opportunities to keep in mind?

Step 6: Assess resources, choose tactics & implement

- How will you do it?
- What information do you need to collect to build a successful advocacy argument?

Step 7: Monitor, evaluate, and share

- How will you measure success?

Preparing to be an Advocate

Find your "why"

Advocacy can be a difficult and slow process. Starting with your “why” - the foundation behind your action - will help remind you why you started and keep you motivated.

Your “why” should be simple and clear. Such as:

Because cultural heritage has powerful solutions that are not well-addressed by current approaches.

Because cultural heritage is full of empowering examples of how humans have thrived in the past while being good stewards of the environment.

Determine Your Goal and Objectives

What do you want to achieve through your advocacy? Your goal is your ultimate mission - what is the big change you want to make?

Objectives can be more specific, such as smaller changes which take steps towards your goal.

Examples:

Goal: integrate a cultural heritage element in my city's climate action plan.

Objectives: convince other local cultural heritage sites and institutions to get active in climate action, get support from leadership at my site/institution to work on climate issues, and secure a meeting with local government leaders to discuss cultural heritage's role in climate action on the local level.

Preparing to be an Advocate

Come equipped with tools

Real-world examples are more persuasive than blanket statements. These tools can be statistics, case-studies, articles by reputable sources, or your own research. Having these ready will help strengthen your advocacy argument and "ask".

Observe others and note the style and approach you prefer

Is there a policy advisor, reporter, politician, or advocate whose style resonates with you? Spend some time watching their videos to understand how they field questions, organise their thoughts, and structure their statements.

Practise

When someone else initiates a conversation or asks a question, it can take a moment to organise your thoughts and respond. By practising statements, and knowing when each statement is most appropriate, you are prepared to respond more confidently.

Collect your favorite go-to statements that keep a discussion moving in a positive direction. For example, if a challenger disagrees with you, replying with language such as “that has not been my experience” or “the examples we’ve found...” avoids confrontation and shifts the discussion to real-world examples.

Be ready to try again

Advocacy is made up of many small steps. Be prepared to disagree respectfully. Being assertive, asking questions, and staying respectful of differing opinions are ways to keep the door open for future conversations.

Audience

Audience matters! Your advocacy approach might vary depending on who you are speaking with. Prepare to be an advocate by identifying likely scenarios where you can advocate for cultural heritage in climate action.

Ask: does my advocacy approach fit my potential audience's values and interests? How can I adapt it to connect more effectively?

Which leaders are making decisions relevant to my work? How can I approach them?

Determine audience-specific values:

- Colleagues may want to know that they're not sacrificing historic integrity or professional practice in their work
- Friends and family may want to know how these issues connect to their lives
- Managers may want to be sure this work supports their overall mission and is cost-effective
- Policymakers may want to know if other policymakers have supported these issues and what their experience was

Identify decision makers who could make a difference

Approaching decision and policy makers with a strong advocacy argument and "ask" can help inspire positive change. Think about leaders making decisions relevant to your area of work at...

The local level

- local government representatives, community leaders

The national level

- civil society, private sector partners, politicians and representatives

The international level

- UN Agencies, international NGOs and networks

Key Message + Proof Point

A strong **Key Message** is the backbone of your advocacy argument. It will help you approach conversations on climate change with confidence. This is the bottom line. Your key message should be concise and assertive.

Support your Key Message with a **Proof Point**. This should expand on the statement you make in your Key Message, supporting its importance and validity. Use these examples, then find your own in your area of expertise.

Examples

Key Message: Investing in Cultural Heritage can regenerate landscapes and ecosystems.

Proof Point: Reestablishing cultural heritage areas with open spaces and waterways creates healthy ecosystems that promote biodiversity, capture carbon, cool warming areas, and absorb impacts of storm events without dangerous debris or pollution.

Key Message: Access to Cultural Heritage provides examples of alternatives with lower environmental and climate costs, as well as positive social and cultural benefits.

Proof Point: Structures built to function without power have natural heating and cooling abilities that we can learn from. Using these techniques mean we can use less dirty energy to make our buildings comfortable.

Museums, archives, and libraries are places and platforms for learning and cultural exchange. They hold knowledge on traditional practices and ways of life from communities past and present. This can help inform local and regional adaptation planning, promote traditional low-carbon land-use patterns and resource management, and guide the siting of renewable energy. It can also champion traditional knowledge for just governance in the use of forests and oceans.

Key Message + Proof Point

Examples

Key Message: Cultural Heritage practitioners can be leaders in finding sustainable solutions in their practices, and in promoting adoption of sustainable solutions within their communities.

Proof Point: Carbon mitigation at heritage sites and in conservation practices, including reducing the carbon footprint of the historic built environment and promoting a culture of reuse to conserve embodied energy, are examples of actions that have an impact across sectors. This also demonstrates how heritage sites can model greening practices and act as powerful examples of responsible stewardship.

Audience Check

Phrase each **Key Message** in a ways that addresses your audience's values.

- Does a family or friend live near a historic site that could benefit from additional green space?
- Could a colleague's project be improved by accessing traditional knowledge or by consulting with a local community?
- Could you share examples of widespread support to ensure a policymaker they will not encounter too much negative feedback?

Note: When speaking with policymakers, data on public support, solid evidence of cost savings, and clear understanding of how manageable any publicly-perceived negatives might be are all values you could address.

If a policymaker is risk-averse, then examples of peers doing this work can create confidence.

Advocacy Ask

Your advocacy "ask" is the action you want your audience to take following your conversation. This is an important part of advocacy, because it can lead to measurable results.

Your advocacy "ask" will depend on your audience. Whether your objective is policy change or general awareness-raising, formulating a clear "ask" will help your advocacy make an impact.

Decision and Policy Makers

- Make a clear, tailored request or recommendation to address an issue
- Create simple briefing packs with your key message and data
- Clearly state the change in policy or practice that you wish to see
- Address your proposal to suit different decision makers, target the policies and practices that they have influence over

Example: ask for a one-on-one meeting, or that relevant heritage stakeholders are included in an upcoming meeting or discussion related to climate action.

Colleagues & Managers

- Define how your request or recommendation can help achieve existing goals
- Focus on collaboration - how everyone can contribute their strengths and expertise
- Ensure your request or recommendation is results-oriented and cost-effective

Example: propose a project that integrates a climate element into your current area of work

Family & Friends

- Highlight heritage sites, traditions, or practices that they are already familiar with and are meaningful to them
- Focus on raising general awareness and building confidence

Example: suggest that they consider donating to a heritage site, institution, or community that is active in climate action, or attend an upcoming event.

Measuring Success

Advocacy is difficult to monitor and evaluate. However, it is important to know if you have achieved the goals and objectives you set for yourself.

Evaluating your own advocacy experience can also be a helpful way to improve your strategy and share lessons-learned with others.

Start by determining what might indicate positive progress, and what approaches had the greatest impact.

Progress may look like...

- Increased dialogue on relevant issues, policies, and practices amongst practitioners, policy makers, and the general public
- Increased media coverage
- Greater awareness and changed opinions
- An increase in other people's knowledge, skills, and capacity to mobilise and advocate on their own
- Invitations to future consultations, meetings, and advocacy opportunities

Evaluating your approach

- To what extent did you achieve your objectives?
- What factors contributed to a successful advocacy experience?
- Which specific actions worked, which did not, and why?
- Were there any unintended outcomes?
- What would you change next time?

Don't forget to celebrate success! Acknowledge when you have made positive progress, and share your experiences and lessons-learned with others.

Key Words and Phrases

Being familiar with the key words and phrases used in discussions on climate action can help build your confidence and help you address your audience's values in a shared language.

For policy- and decision-makers:

- **Build Back Better:** first officially used in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. This concept urges policymakers to turn potential ill-effects of climate change into opportunities to create more resilient societies.
- **Net Zero:** a state achieved by balancing emissions of carbon dioxide with its removal or by eliminating carbon dioxide emissions from society
- **Carbon Mitigation:** efforts to mitigate greenhouse-gas emissions and achieve a net zero carbon future. Contributing to a healthy carbon offset market offers the opportunity to have a positive environmental impact - and good PR.
- **Co-benefits:** with multiple crises occurring simultaneously, these are solutions that solve multiple problems at once.
- **Thrive:** people enjoying justice, health, happiness, and economic security.

For Colleagues:

- **Anthropogenic:** resulting from human activity. As climate change is a human-caused problem, we need human solutions. This is where culture, heritage, and the arts can have an impact.
- **Climate Empowerment:** engaging all members of society in climate action, achieved through education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information, and international cooperation.

Key Words and Phrases

For Friends and Family

- **Circular Economy:** a lifestyle and economic system driven by the continual use of resources, decoupling activities from finite resources.
- **The Right to Culture:** Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.”
- **Traditional Knowledge:** skills, practices, and worldviews based on shared practices within a cultural group over generations. As solutions, they are often low-tech and informed by local ecosystems. Solutions based in traditional knowledge can be effective and affordable, addressing gaps that other sciences may have overlooked.

How to Handle Negative Remarks

In every conversation, you might encounter negative feedback, be it general disagreement or arguments over details. It may come from a lack of awareness or understanding, retention of mistaken or misleading information, or simply from ideological differences.

Cognitive holes are the blank spaces in our understanding that we allow to be filled with the most convenient available information. Our goal is to make sure we identify and address these by sharing correct information. By handling negative feedback skillfully, we can open the door to future conversations and stop misinformation from spreading.

Examples

"Climate change isn't human caused / real"

You can say: the fossil fuels we collect and burn for power and transport produce more CO₂ than the climate system can manage. This excess keeps building up in the atmosphere like a blanket, warming the earth and the ocean.

This stress has disrupted natural systems. Warmer water takes up more space; warmer air melts glaciers. Together these add to sea level rise. That same warmth means the air holds more water so, when storms come, they're bigger and wetter.

Combined with higher seas, those storms reach farther inland and cause flooding and erosion that threatens our homes, businesses, and way of life. This includes our culture and heritage. By reducing fossil fuel use, which causes this warming, we can help the system begin to recover.

How to Handle Negative Remarks

Examples

"Culture has no role in climate action. This is a problem for science and technology to solve."

We cannot solve a human-caused problem with technology alone. Traditional knowledge and heritage values hold contemporary uses as locally-adapted climate capacities and technology.

Heritage sites are valuable observatories of climate processes while heritage sciences tell us how climate has changed and how to use this information to establish and understand shifting baselines and past adaptation efforts.

Making ambitious change works best when its culturally informed and appropriate. Our societies have struggled with crises in the past, but have identified causes, changed practices, and overcame them. These stories provide hope. We can do it again.

"This would be too expensive / would lack return on investment."

The science, technology, and know-how has advanced so much in the last few years alone, that we know that isn't the case.

Edinburgh Castle, as a charity, was able to reduce its energy use by 40%. If a large, historic stone building can do this, we know that today's solutions aren't just affordable, they offer a great return on investment.

Cultural heritage solutions showcase responsible stewardship.

These are simply a few examples that you may encounter. As you have more conversations, note the common negative feedback you receive. Think of how it can be positively addressed in future conversations.

Conclusion

This guide is intended to build your confidence - inspiring and equipping you to communicate effectively about your climate heritage work.

This guide provides a foundation to help you translate your expertise into powerful advocacy conversations. **The content of these conversations is up to you.**

The next step is to use this guide to build your own advocacy plan. Define your objectives and advocacy "ask", identify key messages and proof points in your area of expertise, and use this guide to translate them into meaningful conversations with a variety of audiences.

With these tools and your expertise, we can help integrate culture, heritage, and the arts into climate action at all levels and inspire ambitious change.

Heritage drives climate ambition and action. Heritage anchors us with a sense of place — and every place has a climate story. We can help tell these stories.

About

This guide was created by the Climate Heritage Network Working Group on Communicating the Role of Cultural Heritage in Climate Action.

www.climateheritage.org

