

TOMORROW'S CLIMATE
Today's Challenge

CLIMATE CHANGE HÖT, COLD
FLOODS, WINDS, FEAR, *my backyard*
UNDERSTANDING, GREENHOUSE GASES,
US, CO₂, LOCAL, SOLUTIONS NOW.



TOGETHER, THIS GENERATION
WILL **TACKLE** **CLIMATE CHANGE** ⇨⇨⇨

CLIMATE CHANGE HÖT, COLD
FLOODS, WINDS, FEAR, *my backyard*
UNDERSTANDING, GREENHOUSE GASES,
US, CO₂, LOCAL, SOLUTIONS NOW.



TOGETHER, THIS GENERATION
WILL **TACKLE** **CLIMATE CHANGE** ⇨⇨⇨

The climate change communications initiative is led by Defra in partnership with the Energy Saving Trust, the Carbon Trust, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Environment Agency, the UK Climate Impacts Programme and the Department for Transport.

Crown Copyright 2006 Issued April 2006



Your guide
to communicating
climate change

IT'S TIME TO GET STARTED 

- 01–11 What is climate change and why do we need to communicate it?
- 12–19 Advice to help you communicate climate change
- 20 Find out more

Acknowledgements:

Educationphotos.co.uk/Walmsley
Oxford Scientific
Natural Visions/Alamy
Photofusion/Alamy
Rosemary Greenwood/Eduscene
Angela Hampton/Eduscene
BBC Worldwide
Stefano Cagnoni/Reportdigital.co.uk

This booklet is a guide to climate change, and how to communicate about it to other people. It is part of the Government's commitment to improving people's understanding of climate change. You can use this booklet to spread the message, and encourage other people to think about climate change.

We want as many people as possible to tell the climate change story at a local level, and we need your help to do this. You can explain why it's happening, what it means and what needs to be done.

Use this booklet as an overall guide to communicating about climate change, and the accompanying website www.climatechallenge.gov.uk as a source of specific tools and ideas. There is also a special fund to help with the cost of creating climate change awareness activities, which you can apply to.

What exactly is climate change?

The blanket of gases that keeps the surface of the earth warm and able to sustain life is getting thicker, trapping in more heat. This is caused by the release of greenhouse gases as we burn fossil fuels for energy and cut down forests. The vast majority of scientists now agree that to avoid radical changes in temperature in the future, action is urgently needed now.

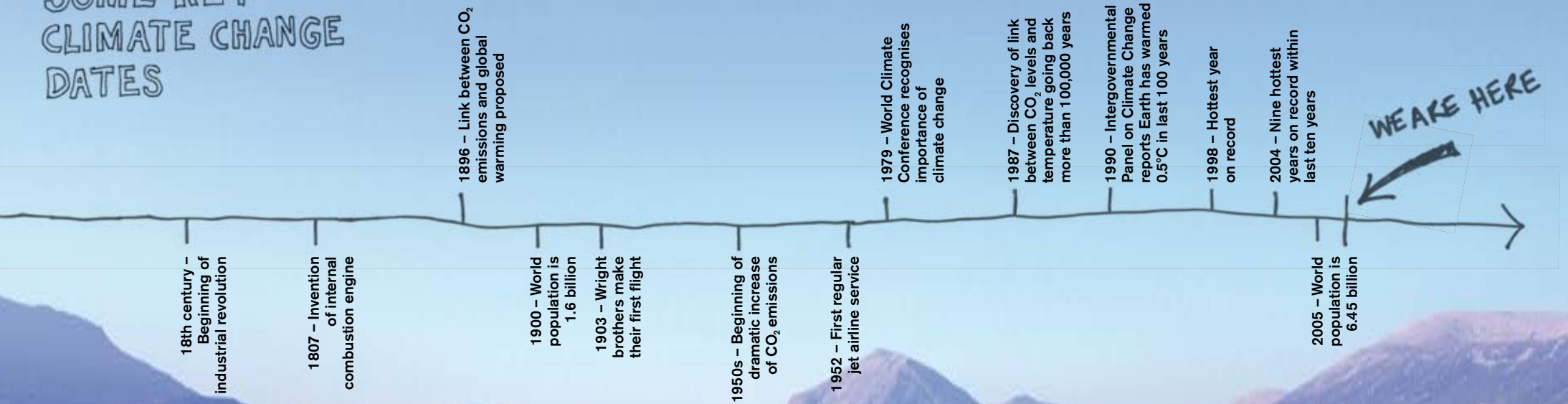
Tomorrow's climate is today's challenge.

Carbon dioxide is the main greenhouse gas, which causes climate change. Every tonne emitted in to the atmosphere commits the world to more warming. We can do something about it – every tonne of emissions avoided reduces the threat of climate change. This is why we need to address this issue now, wherever we can. Everyone can do something to help.

The climate has already started to change – we must do everything we can to stop further changes, and adapt to the new situation we find ourselves in.

CLIMATE CHANGE ? HOT, COLD
FLOODS, GASES, WINDS, GLOBAL ↓
UNDERSTANDING, FEAR, GREENHOUSE,
US, CO₂, NOW, TOGETHER,
SOLUTIONS.

SOME KEY CLIMATE CHANGE DATES



The climate change story

The climate change story is ongoing. While we can't stop the effects of what we've done in the past, we can influence the future. Tackling climate change starts with understanding why we need to.

Many solutions already exist and can bring other positive benefits such as economic growth, new jobs and improved local environments.

Acting together



We need to help people understand that climate change is a serious challenge, but one that we can do something about. We want to communicate a positive vision of what we are collectively trying to achieve. Our goal is that **together this generation will tackle climate change.**

Initially we need to focus on making climate change easily understood and a 'here and now', 'front of mind' issue. We also want people to have an increased awareness of what needs to be done to tackle it. We want to avoid giving the impression that it is solely the responsibility of individuals to take action. Everyone in society – government and its agencies, business, industry and the public – needs to tackle climate change together.

What do people think about climate change?



Research shows that among the general public, few people understand what is actually causing climate change.

Barely half of the population think they will be directly affected. Climate change was ranked bottom of a list of key challenges facing the UK in a recent survey.

The first and most important thing is to change the way people think about climate change. Then we can try to change their behaviour.

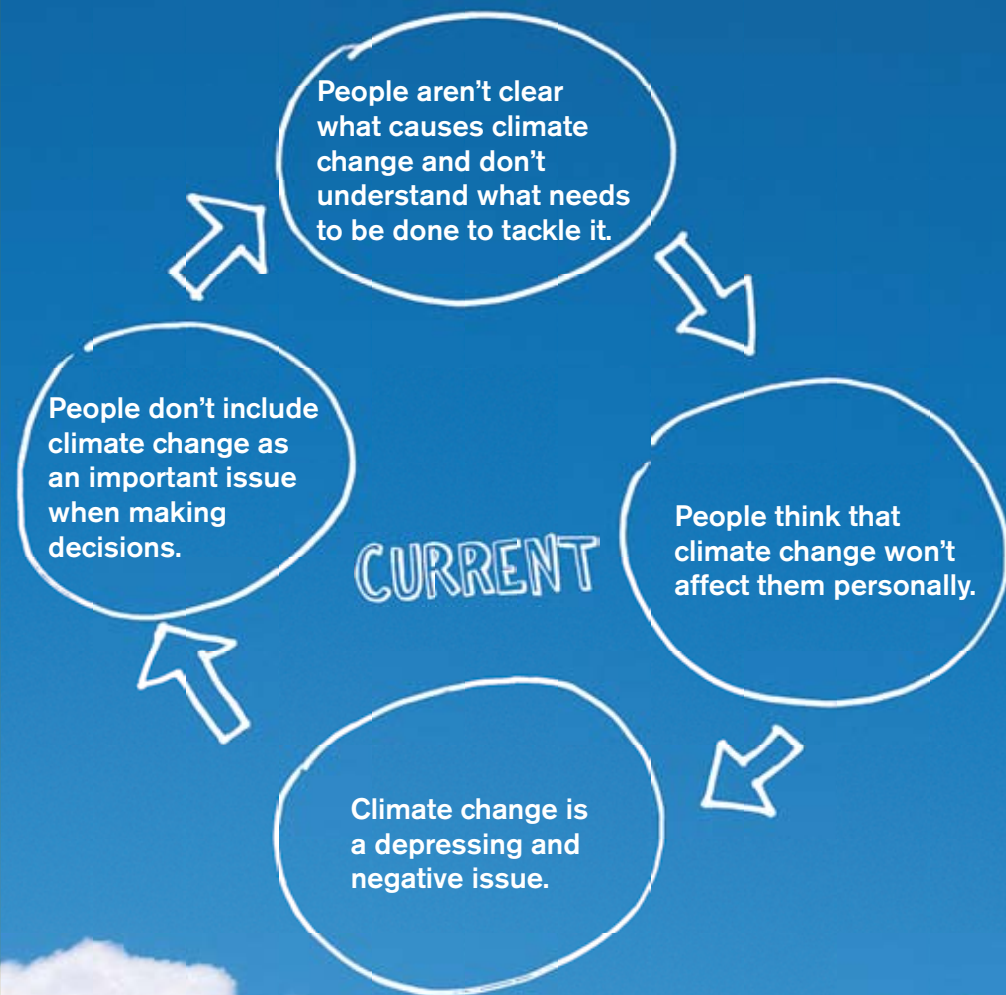
Most people in the UK think that climate change:

- is confusing – they can't see how it relates to them;
- won't affect them personally;
- is a problem for the future, not now; and
- can't be affected by their individual actions, because the problem is so big.

These are the challenges we need to face, but something can be done. Firstly, we need to change these attitudes.

Current attitudes

We are trying to change the way people think about climate change. Here is a summary of some of the most important attitudes that we need to address.



Ideal attitudes



MOST OF THE
TOOLS TO TACKLE
CLIMATE CHANGE
ALREADY EXIST.

Our goal

When you're communicating about climate change, there is a phrase that explains very clearly what we want to achieve. It's a useful tool for summing up what climate change communication is about:

We want people to know that there is a co-ordinated effort under way to tackle climate change. Everyone needs to be involved in rising to the challenge. To find out more, please visit: www.climatechallenge.gov.uk

**Together this
generation will tackle
climate change.**

We also have a brand that has been created for use on government climate change communications:

TOMORROW'S CLIMATE
Today's Challenge

Together this generation will tackle climate change

IT'S TIME FOR A

PLAN

Some advice for new communicators

What do you want your
communications to achieve?

All good communications should make their intended audience think, feel or do something differently as a result.

We're asking people to think differently about climate change, and it requires specific techniques. The clearer you can be about what you want your audience to do, the better.

For example, you might want your audience to:

- understand that climate change is happening now;
- understand why it is happening;
- understand that it affects the UK and the region where they live;
- see the connection between everyday life and climate change; or
- be aware of the need for immediate action.

Know who you are talking to?

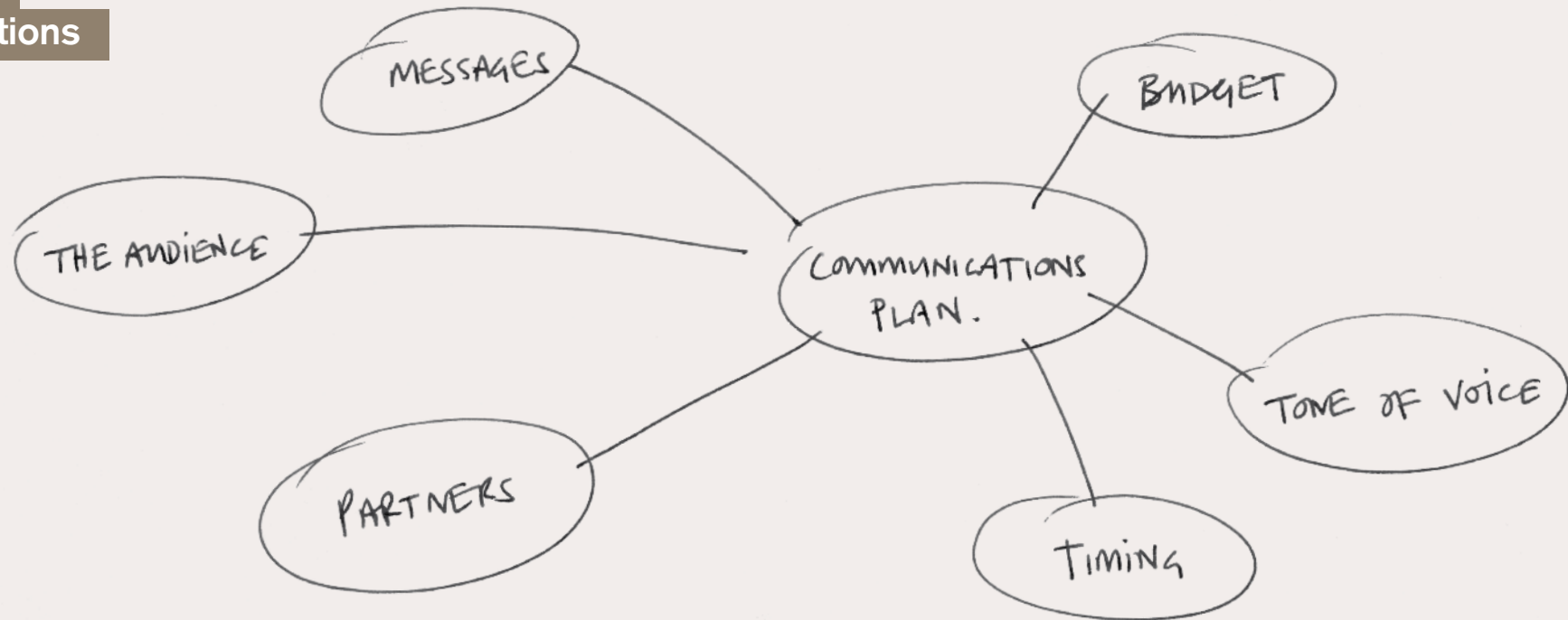
It is important to be as specific as possible about who you want to communicate with and how you're going to do it. Understand as much as you can about who your audience is, what they value, which media they read/watch/listen to and whose opinions they trust.

Once you know your audience, then you can ask questions about their attitude to climate change.

- How do they feel about climate change now?
- What do they say about it?
- How willing are they to take action?
- What would it take to change their thinking?
- Have others tried to talk to them about it in the past, and were they successful?
- Have you got the time and money to communicate effectively with them?
- Is there something they care passionately about that can be linked to the issue of climate change?



Creating a communications plan



Effective communication doesn't have to be big or expensive. Getting your message across might simply be a matter of sending a letter or an email, speaking at an event, or making a phone call.

You know your audiences best – what are they most likely to respond to?

Consider the following ideas when planning your communications:

Messages

Create some simple messages and try them out in different ways. Would they work better in a press release, a report or on a website?

Tone of voice

Different audiences respond to different tones. If you're speaking in public, you need to use one style of language; if you're writing a press release for newspaper editors, you need another. Take time to consider which is right for your audience.

Partners

Time and money are always a consideration. Climate change is a big issue that touches many different areas – if you can link it to another issue with its own campaign, you might be able to share resources. For example, if the IT department in your office wants to reduce the number of printer cartridges it has to buy, ask them if you can add a message to their communications about recycling old ones and the benefits to the climate.

Timing

It's important to plan your timing. Your message might be effective, but if your email gets delivered when everyone's at the Christmas party, it won't be read. Printers, advertisers, newspapers and websites all need advance notice if you want their help. Keep a clear schedule for your campaign and try to remain flexible, so you can make the most of any opportunities to reach your intended audience.

Budget

You'll need a clear idea of how much money you've got to work with, and what it will buy. Budget planning minimises the risk of missing opportunities when you need them most. For example, will

your message work in a press release or an article instead of an ad? They're both ways of getting information into newspapers and magazines for free.

Ask the audience what they think

Did it work for them? Did they understand what you were trying to say? Did it make a difference? All this information is valuable for your next campaign.

Using different channels

There are thousands of different ways to communicate your message, but it's important to use those that will be most effective. Here are some examples of different communication channels that could carry a message about climate change:

Traditional media

Newspapers, radio stations, TV stations, magazines

Traditional media like these have large audiences and are trusted. However, they can require you to plan a long time in advance, they can be expensive and you might not get the same level of response as from other, more targeted communications.

Events

Speeches, conferences, forums

You can communicate with people personally, address their individual concerns and deliver your message with feeling.

New media

Websites, email, text messages

These are an excellent way of sending

targeted messages to specific audiences. However, beware of sending people junk emails that they will ignore.

Partnership marketing

Promotions, sponsorship, loyalty/coupons, special offers

These allow you to harness the marketing power of other, larger organisations cheaply.

Internal communications

Reports, brochures, newsletters

These allow you to communicate with a specific, captive audience.

Direct marketing

Direct mail, cold calling

These marketing methods have the advantage of communicating with individuals in a very targeted way – you can know exactly who has read/heard your message and how they responded.

For more communications information, please visit:

www.climatechallenge.gov.uk

Communicating differently when you're communicating climate change

Research has shown that there are some important issues you should consider when you communicate climate change:

- People are rarely motivated to act by threats to their long-term survival
 - think about how many people still smoke despite the known risks. In fact, when it comes to climate change, people are not even normally motivated by concern for their children's future.
- Don't create fear about climate change without showing what people can do about it. If people can simply avoid frightening issues, or put them to the back of their minds, they will.
- It's often unhelpful to criticise behaviour that people consider normal in their home or family. Instead, make behaviour that reduces the threat of climate change seem positive and desirable.

- Don't rely solely on logic, facts or even money-saving incentives – people need to be inspired and provoked.
- Encourage discussion between individuals in your audiences
 - debate raises awareness.
- Associate climate change with people your audience admire or respect, or with things they care about, like home improvement or local green spaces.
- Be consistent in your use of language and your explanation of climate change – this will help it stick in people's minds. See the 'Our goal' pages in this booklet.



Other resources available online



As well as the guidance in this booklet, you can get more help communicating climate change at our website: www.climatechallenge.gov.uk

The website has a range of resources including:

- the truth behind many myths about climate change;
- useful facts and the science that will help you explain what climate change is and why it is so important;

– case studies of real life examples of how individuals and groups have made a difference;

– a short film you can download which explains how climate change is happening; and

– surveys of people's attitudes to climate change.

More and more information will be added to the website over the coming months to help you understand and communicate climate change.

Communications checklist

✓ Use this checklist as a quick reference guide for the progress of your campaigns.

- ☐ 1. Decide who you want your communications to target.
- ☐ 2. Find out what they currently think about climate change.
- ☐ 3. Decide how you want your audience to change their attitude.
- ☐ 4. Define the reason they should change.
- ☐ 5. Relate it to an aspect of their lives they understand and care about.
- ☐ 6. Decide the voice your communication will use.
- ☐ 7. Decide the channel your communication will appear on.
- ☐ 8. Check the timing and budget needed for your message.