Net Zero communications, marketing and public engagement

Why we need it, and what we can learn from past case studies

September 2024

The Behavioural Insights Team

Toby Park, Jake Reynolds, Freddy Parker, Ambika Bhura

THE BEHAVIORAL INSIGHTS TEAM

smart energy GB
Join the energy revolution

Forewords

The delivery of Net Zero is a unique challenge for Government and civil society, requiring significant intervention into consumers' lives. Over the next decade, consumers will need to buy electric cars and install heat pumps. These one-off decisions will need to be combined with changes to ongoing habits, from reducing peak energy consumption to eating less meat. As well as making different purchasing decisions, citizens will need to be prepared to accept a huge expansion of electricity capacity and grid infrastructure.

Maintaining support for the net zero transition requires thoughtful and creative ways of engaging citizens. We need to design new products and services that are simple, intuitive and appealing. Policies too, need to be designed in a way that draws on an understanding of human behaviour. And we need to test ways of improving the public acceptability of policies, from mass campaigns that bring together broad coalitions of stakeholders to deliberative forums.

Examples of governments doing this at scale are extremely rare. This is why we've been so pleased to work with Smart Energy GB on this report. The smart meter roll-out aims to get green technology into almost every home in the country; to combat myths and scepticism; to overcome hassle, ingrained habits, and apathy; and in turn to drive energy-saving choices in the home. Smart Energy GB is a unique organisation which we believe reflects what will equally be necessary for Net Zero: one that is independent, credible, and trusted, but also widely recognised, deeply connected and capable of coordinating a web of stakeholders.

The benefits of Net Zero are there for all of us to grasp, but will only be realised if the public recognise them, want them, and act. We must bring them along on this critical journey.

Ravi Gurumurthy
Group Chief Executive Officer
Behavioural Insights Team, Nesta

The world is striving to get to net zero and halt climate change and Britain is at the forefront of this ambitious and challenging mission. Most of what we need to do to get there will involve us – the public – doing things in new and different ways. It will be one of the biggest phases of behaviour change we have ever seen and will undoubtedly need much policy, regulatory and commercial innovation. It will also need one of the biggest consumer engagement campaigns we have ever seen - to inform and persuade people to make the changes we need to cure the climate crisis.

The smart meter rollout is an advance party for the type of net zero change we need to see. It's a complex, national infrastructure project that involves the public, government, industry and the third sector working in partnership to persuade us to let an engineer into our home or business to change our meters. Each smart meter installed makes a difference to that household, and millions of meters together make a huge difference to the smart, flexible and, above all, clean energy system that is at the very heart of achieving the net zero mission.

Smart Energy GB is the national consumer engagement for the smart meter rollout and has over 10 years' experience developing and delivering mass market consumer engagement campaigns to support this. We know that our activities are responsible for over 50% of all smart meter installations and we have seen how critical a central, coordinated, independent campaign is when persuading millions of consumers and businesses to choose a new product in a low interest category.

As a not-for-profit organisation that exists for the public good, there is much expertise and learning we have built up that could be of great value to the challenge ahead, and ensure the net zero transition is as successful and cost efficient as possible.

This is why we are working with the Behavioural Insights Team to produce this report. It makes a compelling case for the need for net zero consumer engagement, and how to go about it successfully.

Dan Brooke
Chief Executive Officer
Smart Energy GB

Contents

Executive Summary

Net Zero is a communications, marketing and public engagement challenge.

62% of the necessary emissions cuts required to reach Net Zero rely directly on changes in behaviour.[1] The great majority of this, 53%, depends on consumer adoption of new technologies, including heat pumps, electric vehicles, and smart home energy technology. Recognising that the government cannot subsidise these technologies for everyone, this is a significant act of investment within households, for which the public must understand and value the benefits. A further 9% depends on lifestyle changes in the way we travel, eat, and waste. The other 38%, so-called 'supply-side' decarbonisation, includes significant expansion of green infrastructure, investment, and changes in the labour market.

All of this puts a lot of onus on the public to buy new products, adopt new behaviours, and be accepting of bold Net Zero policies which create the necessary incentives, nudges and mandates. This represents a major challenge in public engagement on two fronts: both to encourage individual action and to maintain public support.

In this report, we argue that this can only be done with an ambitious and coordinated effort in communications, marketing and public engagement. We identify 10 functions of such activity, all of which we believe to be necessary, summarised in our **'4As' model** below. In each case we justify our arguments by presenting evidence from a new survey of British consumers; as well as expert engagement from across the climate, energy and communications sector; a study of existing literature; many past BIT projects exploring Net Zero behaviours, attitudes and beliefs; and a wide range of case studies of past government-led behaviour change and communications efforts.

[1]Climate Change Committee. Progress in reducing emissions - 2022 Report to Parliament. https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Progress-in-reducing-emissions-2022-Report-to-Parliament.pdf

To raise Awareness, we must:

1. **Inform people of what to do**. Many people misdirect their efforts because they overemphasise small actions like turning off lights and recycling, and fail to realise the greater impact of bigger steps relating to how we heat our home, what car we drive, what we eat and how much we fly. This knowledge is often worse than random guessing, with our data showing a negative correlation between perceived and real climate impacts of a wide range of green choices.

2. **Show people how to do it**. Many of the behaviours we require of people involve complex, multi-staged adoption journeys, and even if we realise what we should do, we often lack the 'how to' ('procedural') knowledge. For example, only 45% would be confident in taking steps to install solar, and 35% would feel confident in taking steps to install a heat pump.

To build Acceptance (and better yet, Agreement or even Advocacy), for new technologies and for Net Zero policy, we must:

3. **Persuade people of the benefits of Net Zero technologies.** Acceptance of new technologies, particularly those that require substantial household investment, requires consumers to better understand the benefits those technologies can bring to their lives. This persuasion effort must be ongoing to build and maintain trust, interest, confidence, and enthusiasm. The flipside of this effort is that we must **demystify these products and overcome misinformation**. Negativity and myths surrounding heat pumps, EVs, and solar are commonplace. Mainstream and social media exacerbate these concerns which are often false, non-representative, or greatly exaggerated. For example, three-quarters believe heat pumps only work in well-insulated homes, nearly half think they don't work in cold weather, and three-quarters believe EV batteries need replacing every few years.

4. **Secure greater public support for Net Zero policy by understanding public needs and concerns**. Having climate solutions is not enough – those solutions must be *politically* deliverable. Public engagement for effective policymaking is a two-way process involving a lot of listening, to understand concerns and, in turn, develop policies which are (and which are communicated to be) fairer, more effective, and deliver benefits to all.

5. **Build trust in Net Zero institutions and the wider narrative**. International research shows that social capital and trust are linked to a government's ability to deliver climate policy. While support for Net Zero is high in the UK, data also shows a significant minority of the public believe it will economically harm them and society. We must show that the Government, businesses and key institutions are leading by example, are credible and fair, and are offering a vision of the future which is compelling and attractive, highlighting benefits to the economy, health, well-being and communities.

To improve Access to low-carbon choices, we need wide-ranging policies to reduce costs, consumer risk, and hassle. But communications, marketing and public engagement must support this:

6. **Signpost financial support and aid sound financial decision-making**. Only 43% are aware that the Government offers financial support for heat pumps, and only 67% realise EVs are cheaper to charge per mile than fuelling a combustion vehicle. Financial support is only as effective as it is known about, and few will invest in more costly technologies if they don't believe in the return on that investment. Better marketing of government schemes, and tailored cost-comparison tools or guidance on savings can help sound decision making.

7. **Make green choices easier with tailored tools, guidance and support**. Beyond costs, there are many frictions and hassles to making greener choices. For example, around a fifth of people say they wouldn't know where to find an installer for a heat pump, how to get a good price, how to make the right retrofit choice that doesn't risk damage to the property, or how to understand if their home was suitable for green technology. These are all barriers and frictions which discourage action, but tailored communications tools and advice can help.

8. **Signal low-carbon choices in the real world**. Even with good awareness and intent, it can be hard for consumers to make low-carbon choices in the real world if those choices are not adequately signposted. Carbon labels and green standards help consumers make those choices, and also pressure businesses to green their offerings, rather than greenwash. Where possible, campaigns should work synergistically (through common branding, public recognition) with labels and other signals at the point of purchase.

To accelerate Adoption, we must:

9. **Inspire, motivate and normalise to create demand for novel products**. The government can't foot the bill for everyone, and mandates are politically difficult if the thing being mandated is not broadly wanted. The path ahead for green technology adoption will in most cases involve significant voluntary adoption followed by a ban on legacy technologies to shift the late adopters (e.g. a future ban on new sale of combustion vehicles and gas boilers). For both stages of this journey, consumer demand for the greener options must be much higher than present. The need for many homes to make sometimes significant investments also sets the challenge apart from most Government-led behaviour change initiatives (e.g. on public health, crime, personal savings) requiring a more commercial mindset with a strong focus on marketing and category advertising.

10. **Provide calls to action at timely moments**. Many of our behaviours are habitual or subject to defaults: how we commute to work, how we use our thermostat, or our tendency to replace a broken gas boiler with another gas boiler under a

time-pressured ‘distress purchase’. Many of these behaviours therefore have a narrow window of opportunity to influence, particularly where ‘moments of change’ disrupt the status quo and a decision moment is forced upon us. These include a home move, new job, home improvement or a boiler breakdown. Communications and marketing delivered at these moments can have far more bang for their buck: for example, previous BIT research found that leaflets delivered to home-movers were four times as effective at motivating Portland residents to use a cycle share scheme, compared to their neighbours.

The public also want it.

In addition to the ten points above, there is a simpler argument: the public is asking for more communications and more guidance on green choices. 82% would be in favour of a national campaign, and 84% think it would make them more willing and able to make greener choices. When we ask what support people need, ‘better information’ ranks extremely highly, as high as ‘reduced costs’ for many low-carbon behaviours. When exploring specific actions such as heat pump, EV and retrofit adoption, many of the top-voted solutions related to communications and information provision of one sort or another: guidance, tips, support understanding the financial impacts of choices, and so on. While there can be some hesitation around being ‘told what to do’ (and certainly there are good and bad ways to do this), the case in this instance is clear: the public would overwhelmingly welcome more information and engagement on a topic which a majority of us are concerned about, and want to act on, but which causes confusion, uncertainty and some difficult trade-offs.

But the voice of public engagement matters. The public highly rates the importance of credibility, trustworthiness, and impartiality with no commercial interests. Consumer awareness and advice bodies, and not-for-profit organisations, are rated significantly higher than government departments, climate activist organisations, or businesses.

Taking all of this into consideration, we believe the evidence points to a strong case for a long-term, ambitious and widespread Net Zero public engagement campaign. This may involve a chorus of voices, leveraging a variety of messengers for a variety of consumer segments, needs and attitudes: but we believe this should also include a central and coordinating voice from an independent body. This should provide strong branding, public recognition and credibility, and act as the public face of the consumer aspects of the Net Zero transition.

This organisation must have the skills to deliver effective campaigns on a large scale. They must also be able to apply an evidence-based ‘behavioural lens’ to operate strategically in taking a diverse public through the adoption and behaviour change journey potted with many barriers and challenges. Beyond this, a commercial marketing lens is equally vital, to move from technology apathy and scepticism to real, positive demand for new, still unfamiliar, costly and sometimes distrusted products. Successful delivery will depend on the ability to engage the public and run research to understand their needs and beliefs, and the ability to

coordinate campaign and public engagement activity across a complex range of stakeholders including suppliers, manufacturers, retailers, regulators, other consumer bodies, communities and more.

Net Zero delivery is a challenge for so many reasons: we must at least ensure a coherent, fair, strategic approach to bringing the public along on this 25-year journey.

PART A: Making the case for Net Zero communications, marketing and public engagement

1. Setting the scene

Net Zero is a behaviour-change, and therefore a public engagement, challenge

The transition to a decarbonised UK economy depends on nationwide uptake of low-carbon technologies and lifestyles. We will need to change the way we heat, eat, travel, spend and consume. This is an engineering challenge and an economic challenge - but interwoven throughout, it is also behavioural.

The prevailing social contract in the UK is that we do not force people to do things, particularly things which require substantial investment from households. Instead, we support them to make constructive choices. For the most part, consumers must willingly adopt the green technologies of the future, and make adjustments to their daily lives. In the absence of mandation, therefore, the importance of informing, supporting, guiding, inspiring, prompting, assisting and persuading is all the more fundamental. This is what effective communications, public engagement and marketing can do.

This won't be enough on its own, of course. 'Hard' policy initiatives which help reduce consumer costs, hassle and risk will be equally critical. Even mandates (such as future bans on new combustion vehicles and boilers) will still have their critical role to play, but should ideally mop-up later adopters who are already warmed-up to the changes. And in any case, those policies, alongside government nudges, incentives and disincentives, investment decisions and changes to planning and infrastructure, are themselves a challenge of public engagement and communications, since they depend on a sufficient public mandate and support for Net Zero.

> ***"The reality is that behaviour change is a part of reaching net zero. It is unarguable".***
> Sir Patrick Vallance, Science Minister; previous UK Government Chief Scientific Adviser.[2]

The importance of consumer behaviour is laid out in the Climate Change Committee's 'balanced pathway' to Net Zero, summarised in Figure 1 below.[3] 62% of the emissions cuts required to decarbonise the UK by 2050 relate to behaviour. 53% require 'technology adoption behaviours': heat pumps; electric vehicles; and home energy systems that take us towards a smart, flexible grid. The other 9% relate to 'lifestyle changes', including consuming less meat and dairy; driving less in favour of active and public transport in towns and cities; constraining the expected growth in aviation demand; and reducing wasteful consumption. This leaves 38% of 'supply side' emissions cuts, not requiring direct action by citizens, but

[2] House of Lords Environment and Climate Change Committee. (2023). In our hands: behaviour change for climate and environmental goals. https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5803/ldselect/ldenvcl/64/64.pdf
[3] Climate Change Committee. (2019). Net Zero – The UK's contribution to stopping global warming. https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/net-zero-the-uks-contribution-to-stopping-global-warming/

not free from the constraints of public opinion and citizen engagement. Expanding green energy infrastructure, for example, is a huge public engagement challenge.

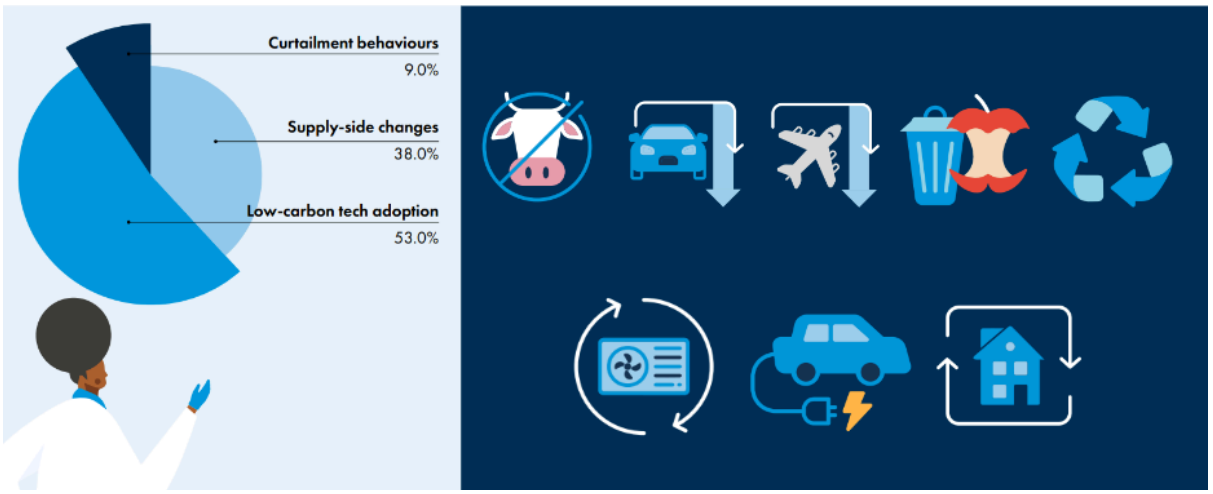


Figure 1. *The Climate Change Committee's 'balanced pathway' to Net Zero, showing the different types of changes required.*[4]

Public support for the agenda exists, but the road ahead is not easy

The latest DESNZ public attitudes tracker (Spring 2024) shows that 80% in the UK are 'fairly' or 'very concerned' about climate change, and new BIT survey data (2024) show that 54% support the government's agenda for Net Zero by 2050, with just 19% opposing. Moreover, past BIT surveys have shown that around 9 in 10 '*would like to make more sustainable choices in their lives*'.[5]

So there is widespread underlying support for the Net Zero transition, including acceptance of some change to our lives, but this support is not necessarily what we would consider 'deep', or robust in the face of real consumer trade-offs or difficult political decisions. Deeper analysis shows there are many challenges still to be addressed. For example, while data shows a high desire to be sustainable, willingness to actually take the difficult steps to modify our homes and our lives, is very mixed (see section 2, page 18). Likewise, we want and expect strong government leadership, but don't always like specific policies that push lifestyle changes onto us (see section 2, page 26). We explore these and many other obstacles to delivery in Chapter 2, outlining how effective communications, marketing and public engagement can help address them.

[4] Climate Change Committee. (2019). Net Zero – The UK's contribution to stopping global warming. https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/net-zero-the-uks-contribution-to-stopping-global-warming/
[5] The Behavioural Insights Team. (2023). How to build a Net Zero society. https://www.bi.team/publications/how-to-build-a-net-zero-society/

Uniquely, this is mostly about purchasing behaviours (for costly and unfamiliar products)

Of the many behaviours we need to contend with, there are a few that stand out. The largest abatement requirements come from surface transport (115 $MtCO_2e$), within which:

- 70 $MtCO_2$ of emission reductions will come from people adopting electric cars
- A further 25 $MtCO_2$ from electric vans.
- A significant but relatively more modest 25 $MtCO_2$ comes from reduced demand for vehicle use.

We see a similar story with the second largest abatement, energy use in buildings: of the 90 $MtCO_2e$ reduction needed, approximately:

- 50 $MtCO_2$ of abatement will come the adoption of low-carbon heating (e.g. heat pumps)
- A further 7 $MtCO_2$ from the installation of energy efficiency retrofits.
- Only 2 $MtCO_2$ will come from people using energy more efficiently around the home.

This is quite unique as a government-led behaviour change challenge. Unlike efforts to promote healthy eating, smoking cessation, seatbelt wearing, responsible drinking, mask-wearing, crime reduction, or organ donation, we are in this instance asking the country to make significant purchases, in addition to many lifestyle changes. For many, these will be among the most costly investments they ever make beyond the home itself. And yet, the products are largely unfamiliar, and for many, currently unwanted.

As such, there are some familiar requirements to meet the challenge: raising awareness and knowledge. But this isn't close to being enough. Assuming the state can't foot the bill for everybody, and we can't have a resistant population forced into product mandates overnight, we require significant and increasing voluntary adoption over the coming years for critical technologies including heat pumps, electric vehicles, and smart home energy technology. So, this isn't just about good policy, but equally about marketing, branding, selling, and stimulating demand to support new markets. Consider that the gas boiler industry alone is worth £1.8bn per year in the UK.[6] Shifting that level of consumer expenditure to a wholly novel category of product, and expecting close to 100% market penetration in a decade, is a major undertaking that stands apart from most government-led behaviour change initiatives.

So far, uptake of these green choices remains low

In this work, we have focussed on the most impactful behaviours, though our lessons could apply to others. Focussing on electric vehicle uptake, heat pump adoption, and home energy efficiency, we are in all cases at the very beginning of the adoption journey.

- **Electric vehicle uptake:** Of the 41.3 million registered vehicles on UK roads, there

[6]IBIS world. (2024). Radiator & Boiler Manufacturing - Market Size. https://www.ibisworld.com/united-kingdom/market-size/radiator-boiler-manufacturing/#:~:text=What%20was%20the%20market%20size,%C2%A31.8bn%20in%202023.

are now 1.15 million fully electric cars and a further 670,000 plug-in hybrids. [7] Net Zero pathways call for all new car and van sales to be pure battery electric by 2035, ideally 2030, but last year, only 16% of all new car registrations were electric.[8]

- **Heat pump uptake:** Government commitments call for a minimum of 600,000 heat pump installations per year by 2028. [9] [10] Only 27,000 were installed in 2019, rising to around 61,000 in 2023 (just 0.2% of the ~28 million total dwellings, or around 3% of the 1.8m heating systems installed per year). [11] [12]
- **Home energy efficiency retrofitting:** 44% of homes in England have an EPC rating of 'C' or above (38% in Wales).[13] Widespread adoption of 'deep' retrofits (cavity wall, underfloor and solid wall insulation) is called for.

This is a systems challenge, requiring action at multiple levels

A 'whole of society' transition needs to happen, at pace, delivering new technologies, lifestyles and norms in a way which is fair, democratic, and sustaining. In our report *'How to Build a Net Zero Society'*[14] we explain how this is a systems challenge. Individual behaviours (choices) are nested within a context (a choice environment), in turn within a socio-economic system. We explain this system by way of an analogy, of a swimmer in a stream, summarised below in Figure 2.

---

[7] ZapMap. (2024). EV market stats 2024. https://www.zap-map.com/ev-stats/ev-market#:~:text=With%20increasing%20consumer%20demand%20and,further%20670%2C000%20plug%2Din%20hybrids.

[8] UK Government. (2024). Vehicle licensing statistics: 2023. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/vehicle-licensing-statistics-2023/vehicle-licensing-statistics-2023

[9] Heatpumps. (2024). The Latest Heat Pump Statistics (updated July 2024) https://www.heatpumps.london/blog/everything-you-need-to-know-about-heat-pumps#:~:text=UK%20Heat%20Pump%20Statistics&text=The%20UK%20currently%20has%20just,than%20the%20UK%20in%202022.

[10] https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/The-Sixth-Carbon-Budget-The-UKs-path-to-Net-Zero.pdf

[11] Edie. (2024). Heat pump installations soar across UK, buoyed by Government grants. https://www.edie.net/heat-pump-installations-soar-across-uk-buoyed-by-government-grants/

[12] Energy Saving Trust. (2024). The future of heating in the UK: heat pumps or hydrogen? https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/energy-at-home/heating-your-home/heat-pumps/#:~:text=So%20as%20the%20UK's%20electricity,net%20zero%20heating%20by%202050. (Accessed 2024)

[13] Office for National Statistics. (2024). Energy efficiency of Housing, England and Wales, country and region. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/energyefficiencyofhousingenglandandwalescountryandregion

[14] The Behavioural Insights Team. (2023). How to build a Net Zero society. https://www.bi.team/publications/how-to-build-a-net-zero-society/

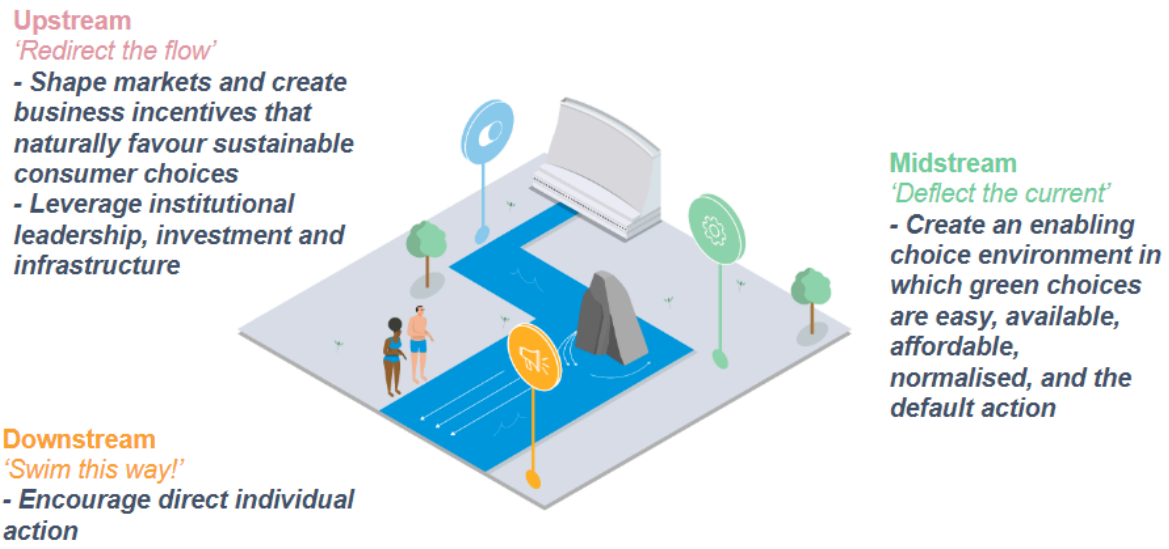


Figure 2. *The Upstream-Downstream model of behaviour change highlighting the systems challenge.*[15]

Downstream intervention: Individuals have agency, and are free to make choices based on their beliefs, attitudes, motivations, habits and biases. By analogy, we are free to swim in one direction or another, just as we are free to choose to turn our heating up or down; and to buy the A-rated or C-rated washing machine. As such, governments, businesses, educators and influencers may encourage, instruct, or inform individuals to 'swim this way!'

Midstream intervention: Our choices are not truly unfettered or independent, because they happen in context, within a 'choice environment'. This environment is characterised by the cost, availability, convenience, and social value of different options. That is, the stream has features, currents, and whirlpools, meaning it may be harder or easier to make the green choice. Those who are the 'choice architects' of our world, particularly businesses, governments and local authorities, can change the choice environment to make the green options easier, more affordable, or even the default choice. They can deflect the current.

Upstream Intervention: There's only so much water we can deflect before we must ask why the river is flowing in such an unhelpful direction to begin with. This is why we also look at the role of institutional leadership, the functioning and regulation of markets, and the incentives faced by businesses. It would be a lot easier to decarbonise our lifestyles if institutions worked in line with low-carbon outcomes, and if firms' profit motives naturally favoured low-carbon consumption. Achieving this would mean consumers could simply 'go with the flow' with minimal burden of effort, or even any noticeable 'behaviour change'.

As we explain in the next chapter, communications, marketing and public engagement can help to unlock change across all three levels of the system.

[15] The Behavioural Insights Team. (2023). How to build a Net Zero society. https://www.bi.team/publications/how-to-build-a-net-zero-society/

2. Ten reasons why public engagement, marketing and communications are critical

> ***Public engagement... should include a public communications plan to inform key audiences about the important changes required to deliver Net Zero and adapt to climate change, building understanding of the associated timelines, benefits (including co-benefits) and costs, and impacts on fairness and accessibility. Communications should be designed with the UK's diverse communities in mind.***
> ***Quote from UK Climate Change Committee 2023 progress report to Parliament*** [16]

Downstream: encouraging direct individual action.

Downstream action is about informing, inspiring, and encouraging consumers to make greener choices themselves.

Communications, marketing and public engagement must:

Increase public knowledge of what steps to take. Too many of us are still unaware of which choices we should be prioritising. BIT data collected over multiple research projects in the last 2 years shows, for example, that a significant proportion of people believe:

- Turning off lights is more impactful than turning down heating;
- Driving a little less is more impactful than switching to an EV;
- 'Eating sustainably' is all about plastic packaging and food miles, rather than what you eat; and
- Recycling is the most important thing of all.[17]

Indeed we find that public knowledge is worse than random guessing: we observe a negative correlation between the perceived and real climate impact of a wide range of green choices.

Even during the 2022/23 energy crisis with record-high bills and significant government subsidies, the administration at the time was deeply nervous about 'telling people what to do'. This needs to change, as the public is hungry for advice and information. Without it, a considerable amount of public goodwill is being wasted, as people direct their efforts towards the wrong steps.

---

[16] Climate Change Committee. (2023). Progress in reducing emissions 2023 Report to Parliament. https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Progress-in-reducing-UK-emissions-2023-Report-to-Parliament-1.pdf

[17] In terms of emissions cuts, all four of these beliefs are incorrect.

Create demand for new products, which unlike most behaviour change initiatives, require customers to make significant purchases. Many of the required behaviours require significant investment from households. This stands Net Zero apart from the great majority of government-led behaviour change initiatives, and means Net Zero is very much a marketing and communications challenge. Consumer engagement should apply best commercial marketing principles, to drive demand by making major investments in category advertising, brand-building, and PR. Such investment would define a compelling 'brand' for the new product (e.g. heat pumps), by communicating a motivating proposition, and targeted benefits most relevant to different groups of customers.

"Smart meter consumer engagement utilises the 'best of both worlds': The best practices of behaviour change, utilised alongside the best practices of commercial marketing and PR. Whilst smart meters are cost-free at the point of 'purchase', we know the exact number of 'sales' (installations) by week, and so with industry can accurately model the direct contribution of SEGB consumer engagement, versus other factors in the market, just like any commercial business. Thus we can know that over 50% of all installations in the smart meter roll out can be attributed to SEGB activity. These 'sales' come from consumer engagement that builds smart meters as a brand, persuades different groups of the benefits most relevant to them, and so allows suppliers to convert more customers from this pool of higher consideration."

Chris Taggart, Director of Marketing, Smart Energy GB

We still have a long way to go to motivate voluntary purchases at the scale necessary. Our new survey data shows that between 20-30% of people rate *'I'm not interested'* as one of the *main* reasons they are unlikely to engage with a range of Net Zero actions. We also see from multiple previous BIT research projects between 2021 and 2023 that the majority of people are only willing to take the easier and low-cost steps. For example, 90% say they are willing to recycle, and 80% are willing to wear their clothes until worn out, and 86% are willing to use energy efficiently around the home.

However, these actions are often cost-saving, and quite vaguely stated (more specific actions tend to receive lower levels of interest). In contrast, only 32% would be willing to hire professionals to make the building more efficient; just 23% are willing to install a heat pump; and 34% willing to switch to an electric car.

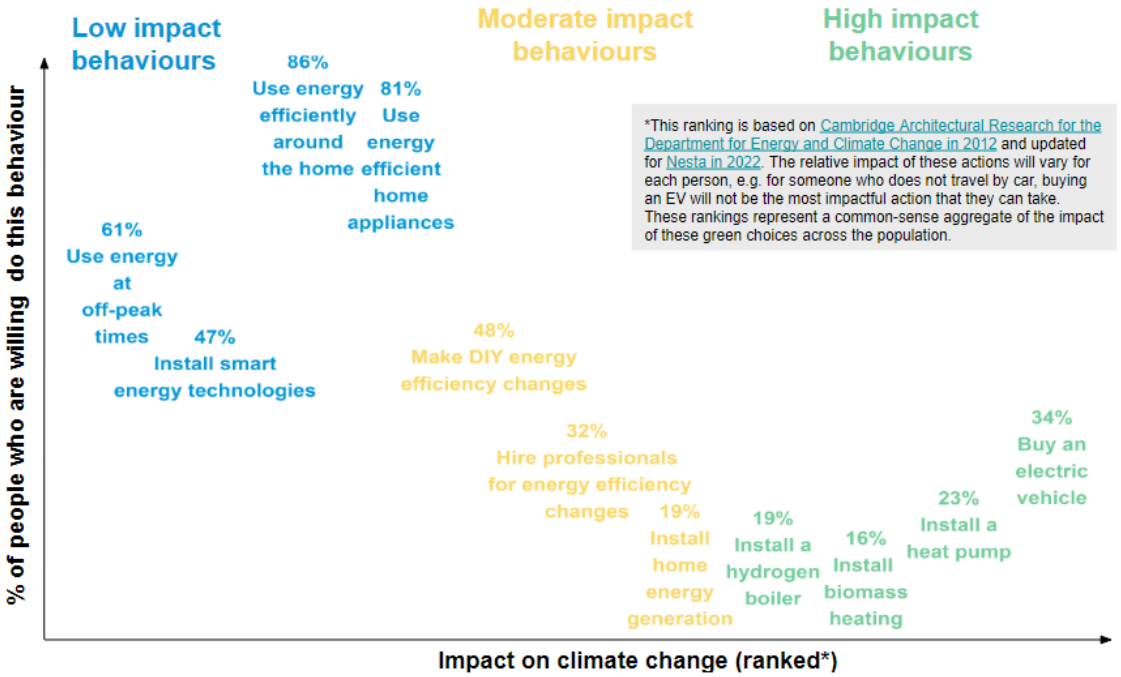


Figure 4. *% of people willing to do the behaviour mapped against the impact of behaviour on climate change mitigation. (Internal BIT data.)*

De-mystify new technologies, and counter misinformation. The counterpoint to building positive demand for new products is to address the negative perceptions and myths which are currently commonplace. Many of the key technologies we need to adopt, including electric vehicles, heat pumps, other low-carbon heating solutions, solar, and smart home energy systems, are still far from familiar to many people. Moreover, what little information people do come across can be negative, particularly if they are casual consumers of media content on these topics, which can present an increasingly polarising account.[18] [19] Priori analysis undertaken by Nesta (our parent company) has shown that negative sentiment outweighs positive in mainstream and social media content on heat pumps, for example.

Our new survey data reveal the extent of poor knowledge, negative sentiment and inaccurate beliefs on these key technologies. For example:

- 73% of people say they don't understand what a heat pump is
- 76% believe they only work in well-insulated homes
- 50% think they are noisy and cause disturbance
- 45% think they won't work in cold weather
- 36% think hydrogen heating systems are unsafe

[18] Carbon brief. Analysis: How UK newspapers changed their minds about climate change. https://interactive.carbonbrief.org/how-uk-newspapers-changed-minds-climate-change/?utm_source=subdomain&utm_medium=interactive&utm_campaign=ClimateEditorials

[19] City University of London. (2022). Researchers point to increased polarization around climate change on social media. https://www.city.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/2022/11/researchers-point-to-increased-polarization-around-climate-change-on-social-media

- Only 23% know what vehicle-to-grid charging is
- 60% know what an electric vehicle is
- 41% think electric vehicles are less safe than combustion vehicles
- 74% believe that EVs cannot travel long distances (>250 miles) on a single charge
- 73% believe public charging stations are rare and inconvenient to use
- 62% believe EVs have a shorter lifespan than combustion vehicles
- 45% believe EVs don't work well in cold weather

- 81% believe solar panels are too expensive for the average homeowner
- 42% believe modern solar panels can only generate electricity on a sunny day

- 65% believe home insulation is always expensive
- 57% believe home insulation often doesn't work well in older homes
- 35% believe more insulation makes your home too warm in the summer

In all cases, it is not necessarily wise to directly 'myth-bust' and thereby give credence and attention to the negative belief. However, it is important to create a countervailing positive narrative and to ensure the media ecosystem has plenty of reliable information crowding out the occasional horror-stories which currently dominate.

"One key lesson we learnt early on is the importance of providing a clear, central narrative about smart meters. The voice of an independent organisation, articulating the facts and the benefits of smart meters helps counter the confusion, myths, and conflicting perspectives that need addressing. We think this will be equally necessary across many of the Net Zero technologies like heat pumps and EVs."
Imogen Landy, Deputy Director of Marketing, Smart Energy GB

Address poor procedural ('how to') knowledge. Good intent is not enough if we don't know how to do something. For example, our survey reveals that:

- Only 45% of people would be confident in knowing what steps to take to install solar
- Only 35% would be confident in knowing what steps to take to install a heat pump
- 38% believe that most home insulation requires planning permission
- More positively, 76% claimed they were confident of the steps needed to hire professionals to insulate their home, and 48% for doing it DIY

Our wider questions on barriers to action also highlighted a number of key issues related to procedural knowledge or confidence, summarised below in Figure 3. Outside of cost, these were some of the highest-reported barriers, particularly to more 'involved' actions such as DIY retrofits, and engaging new technologies such as demand flexibility, hydrogen or biomass heating.

Percentage of respondents that selected each barrier when asked: *Why are you unlikely to do this action? Select all that apply.*	Use energy at off-peak times	Install smart energy tech	Use energy efficiently at home	Choose energy efficient appliances	Make DIY home retrofits	Profess -ional home retrofits	Home energy generation (e.g solar)	Install a hydroge n ready boiler	Install biomass heating system	Install a heat pump	Buy an electric vehicle
I don't know how I would do it	17	13	15	18	28	9	11	22	25	14	4
It would be too difficult	17	9	11	9	24	9	17	18	20	17	7

Notes: *Values in the table correspond to the % of participants that selected each barrier. Sample recruited during 20th December 2023-9th Jan 2024. Total sample size was 3,006 and ~1,159 people were asked about each behaviour (people were asked to select all the barriers that would make them unlikely to do the green action).*

Figure 3. *Percentage of respondents that selected barriers related to procedural knowledge or confidence for a range of Net Zero behaviours.*

The success of the 'money-saving boiler challenge'[20] (see case study 3) which walked people step-by-step through adjusting the flow temperature of gas boilers to save energy, shows the value of an approach which is highly pragmatic and offers simple instruction for an important action. This is not a common approach for government communications, but they can and should aim to signpost, guide and support people through more of these complex actions and technology-adoption journeys.

Midstream: Creating an enabling environment

Midstream action is about creating a 'choice environment' in which green choices are easier to make, more available and accessible, affordable, perceived as normal and ideally the default choice. Much of this will require 'hard' policy intervention and improvements in technologies to reduce real costs and real hassle. However, there is still much that communications, marketing and public engagement can do.

Communications, marketing and public engagement must:

Signpost financial support, and aid financially sound decisions. Our survey data in Figure 5 below summarises the financial barriers to action across the breadth of home energy behaviours. A wide range of other barriers were also cited including poor knowledge, hassle, and lack of authority to make the changes, but these cost barriers were commonly the most highly cited, particularly for the larger purchase actions. This is mirrored by almost 9 in 10 saying they would like to see communications initiatives that give financial advice about green grants and subsidies across all green actions (87%).

Percentage of respondents that selected each barrier when asked: *Why are you unlikely to do this action? Select all that apply.*	Use energy at off-peak times	Install smart energy tech	Use energy efficiently at home	Choose energy efficient appliances	Make DIY home retrofits	Profess -ional home retrofits	Home energy generation (e.g solar)	Install a hydroge n ready boiler	Install biomass heating system	Install a heat pump	Buy an electric vehicle
Lack of immediate financial benefit	17	17	22	20	11	12	15	12	9	18	15
The long-term financial benefits aren't worth it for me	17	16	24	15	14	13	20	15	11	20	19
It would be too expensive	7	22	10	34	29	49	51	43	43	51	60

[20] Nesta. (2024). Lowering boiler flow temperature to reduce emissions. https://www.nesta.org.uk/project/lowering-boiler-flow-temperature-reduce-emissions/

Notes: ***Values in the table correspond to the % of participants that selected each barrier. Sample recruited during 20th December 2023-9th Jan 2024. Total sample size was 3,006 and ~1,159 people were asked about each behaviour (people were asked to select all the barriers that would make them unlikely to do the green action).***

Figure 5. *Percentage of respondents that selected finance-related barriers for a range of Net Zero behaviours. (Internal BIT data.)*

Other questions in our same survey similarly showed that '*too expensive*' was a top-3 reason to not adopt EVs, heat pumps or solar panels: for example, 41% feel that heat pumps cost too much to buy and maintain. However, there are also some ***perceptions*** of cost that deserve scrutiny, including:

- Only 43% believe the government offers significant financial support for heat pumps[21]
- Only 67% realise that charging an EV is significantly cheaper per mile than fuelling a combustion car
- 75% believe EV batteries need to be replaced every few years
- 66% believe that EVs are more expensive than combustion vehicles over their lifetime
- 68% believe it would take at least 10 years to recoup the costs of solar
- 48% believe there are no available home insulation grants[22]

Whether or not some of these statements are true for an individual will depend on circumstance - for example, EVs will often be cheaper over their lifetime than combustion vehicles unless the mileage driven is very low, and depending on access to private charging. In other cases, these statements are unequivocally wrong for everyone, e.g. £7,500 subsidies are currently available for heat pumps. This is not trivial: financial support will not boost adoption at all for someone who doesn't know about it, and people cannot make sound decisions on these investments if their beliefs about running costs are far from the mark. Effective marketing of schemes therefore has a key role to play: a House of Lords Enquiry into the Boiler Upgrade Scheme blamed, in part, initial low uptake of the scheme on poor advertising.[23]

Beyond better advertising of available support, we also consider 'public engagement and communications' to include personalised cost calculators, and clearer signalling of lifetime vs. upfront costs, for example in better-designed product labels, or accurate and credible advertising of how much money a given investment (e.g. a retrofit) is likely to save you. Recent BIT work for DESNZ, for example, has shown that redesigned appliance labels which show the lifetime running cost in £, rather than the energy consumption in kWh, significantly increased the proportion of people choosing to buy more efficient appliances (lighting, fridge-freezers, space heaters etc.) despite having higher upfront costs.[24]

---

[21] £7,500 BUS grant available at the time of research
[22] ECO and other schemes are available to many homeowners
[23] Electrify Heat. (2023). Not under the BUS: Industry hits back over claims the heat pump scheme is tanking. https://electrifyheat.uk/article/not-under-the-bus-industry-hits-back-over-claims-the-heat-pump-scheme-is-tanking/
[24] The Behavioural Insights Team. (2023). Exploring the effect of energy labels on consumer shopping decisions.

Make green choices easier with tailored advice, guidance, decision-aids and tools.

Point 5 above highlights the importance of signposting financial help and supporting financially sound decisions. But this same principle can be extended beyond financial support, to a wider range of guidance, tools, and decision-aids. In their own way, these can help address the wider range of barriers that our survey data and wider evidence reveal: hassle, perceived risk and uncertainty, and specific knowledge gaps relating to steps in the adoption journey, such as finding a reliable installer or choosing the right product. For instance, relevant data points from our survey include the following inclusions in people's 'top 3' barriers:

- 23% say the heat pump adoption process is too much hassle
- 15% say they don't know where or how to find qualified heat pump installers and suppliers
- 13% wouldn't feel confident getting a good price for home insulation or failing to find a quality installer, and 11% worry they'd make a poor choice that results in dampness or other problems for the home
- 10% don't know where to find solar installers and aren't confident in the efficiency of the technology, while 13% say they don't think their home would be suitable

These are all points which better guidance from a trusted source can help address. This might be tailored advice from an individual expert, AI, a basic web hub, or an interactive tool: in all cases helping homeowners make the right decision for their circumstance, and 'de-risk' the decision to take action, thus giving them confidence. Our respondents are directly asking for this: the top-voted 'solutions' across several of our behaviours include suggestions such as 'tailored expert guidance', 'information on where to find charging points', 'assistance with the installation process', and 'clear info about the upfront costs and future savings'.

Tailoring this guidance

Different groups, populations and demographics vary in their attitudes, perceptions, and ability to access different green technologies. Just one example: our survey shows that 31% fewer young people (those under 25 years old) understand what home insulation is, compared to older people (over 55 years old). This stat no doubt reflects home ownership, but given the importance of timely moments (point 7 below), it would be valuable to elevate the knowledge of first-time buyers before they move in. It's also an issue that affects renters, as a market of uninformed tenants who are not prioritising energy costs when choosing somewhere to live exerts no pressure on landlords to insulate their properties.

The broader point is that we are all at a different point on the pathway to Net Zero, and while one household might be ready to splurge on the latest EV, another household might even be affronted by government communications telling them to do so, particularly if they lack the means, or the local charging infrastructure is inadequate. Communications, guidance and support will therefore need to be tailored or interactive to ensure we meet people's individual needs.

---

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/648b1522103ca6000c039f71/effect-of-energy-labels-on-consumer-shopping-decisions.pdf

An important part of this will be protecting and supporting disadvantaged groups or regions. Conventional characteristics of vulnerability such as income, fuel poverty and age will be important,[25] but so will determinants like property type (e.g. lacking off-street parking for EV charging), or region (e.g. having poor access to public transport or EV charging,[26] or limited heat pump installers.)[27]

Case study: Smart Energy GB's market segmentation
Smart Energy GB's segmentation is based on attitudinal measures (about technology, the environment, etc.), media consumption, age, and location, and helps identify at what stage of the adoption journey an individual is likely to be (from 'adopter' to 'sceptic'). But furthermore, beyond attitudinal differences, the analysis of the model utilises pragmatic characteristics (renter vs. owner; prepayment meter, financial means, region, etc). This is important because it allows messaging, guidance and tools to be tailored not just to the audience's beliefs and sentiments, but to their practical circumstance, which matter for many Net Zero behaviours: can they afford it, do they have geographic access to it, do they have the means to charge it, what is the installation capacity like in their region, does it suit their property types, etc. Tailored information is not only more useful but also more credible because it shows consideration of specific circumstances. A key part of this will also be developing tailored solutions for vulnerable customers or those with unique needs, which we explore in Case Study 8.

"In recent years, there has been a more proactive approach in understanding target audiences, driven by necessity. Now, the focus is on identifying who hasn't yet acquired a smart meter, particularly within the private renting sector, to understand the barriers they face. For example, younger people in private renting areas are more interested in getting smart meters but often don't have them (which likely arises from the ambiguity as to whether the tenant or landlord is the decision-maker), whereas older individuals in the suburbs are more likely to have them because the process is easier for them."
Colin Griffiths Policy Manager in Smart Metering, Smart Homes & Digital, Citizens Advice

Prompt people to make green choices, at the right moments. We all live busy lives, and many of our behaviours have become automated and habituated. Evidence shows we are therefore much more likely to adopt new behaviours at a timely 'moment of change', when the old habit is disrupted and we have a window of opportunity in which new routines have not yet settled.[28] For example, our commuting habits are temporarily disrupted when we

[25]Nuffield Foundation. (2021). Family and community - vulnerabilities in the transition to net zero. https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Family-and-community-vulnerabilities-in-the-transition-to-net-zero-Morrison.pdf
[26]Rac. (2021). Official figures reveal "uneven geographical distribution" of electric vehicle charge points. https://www.rac.co.uk/drive/news/electric-vehicles-news/official-figures-reveal-uneven-geographical-distribution-of-electric-vehicl/#:~:text=There%20is%20an%20average%20of,nation%20the%20disparity%20is%20huge.&text=In%20Scotland%2C%20there%20are%2040,only%2017%20in%20Northern%20Ireland.
[27] EnergyREV. (2021). Heat pump installations in the UK – where and why? https://www.energyrev.org.uk/news-events/blogs/heat-pump-installations-in-the-uk-where-and-why/
[28]Thompson, S., Michaelson, J., Abdallah, S., Johnson, V., Morris, D., Riley, K., & Simms, A. (2011). 'Moments of Change as opportunities for influencing behaviour.

move home, job, or face travel disruption.[29] There may also be certain moments during which barriers to action are temporarily absent: for instance, the hassle of insulating our home may be less when we have just moved house, or are undergoing other renovation or extension works, and you may feel more motivated to get a smart meter when you switch energy supplier: Smart Energy GB's econometrics analysis shows that switching energy suppliers accounts for 12% of the drivers of installations. The example in Figure 6 below shows how we can therefore get greater bang-for-buck if we target information and prompts at timely moments.

Using communications at 'moments of change'. We found that a promotional leaflet for a cycle share scheme in Portland, USA was nearly 4-times more effective when we targeted home-movers, compared to existing residents with a new station nearby.

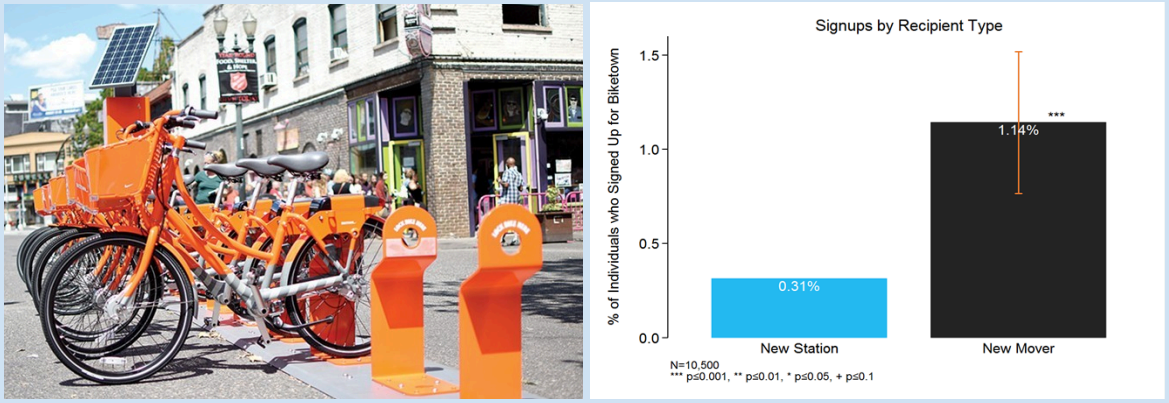


Figure 6. *The Portland cycle share scheme bikes (left) and bar chart showing increased effectiveness of targeting home-movers compared to existing residents with a new station nearby (right). (Internal BIT data.)*

Upstream: the influence of institutions, and shaping and leveraging markets

Upstream intervention is about understanding the dynamics of the system, and adjusting its rules so that consumers, making choices downstream, are less required to make effortful 'behaviour change' per se, and more able to 'go with the flow'. Just as with midstream intervention, this will partly require bold policy to regulate markets more effectively, or establish better commercial incentives such as through carbon taxation. But again, more effective communications, marketing and public engagement can also have important system-level effects which impact both policy-making, and consumer markets.

Communications, marketing and public engagement must:

Build trust in, and attention on, the Net Zero narrative and Net Zero institutions.

[29]Verplanken, B., Roy, D., & Whitmarsh, L. (2018). Cracks in the wall: Habit discontinuities as vehicles for behaviour change. The psychology of habit: Theory, mechanisms, change, and contexts, 189-205.

"Strategic public communications must be used consistently to inform key audiences about the critical changes required to deliver Net Zero, and to build understanding of the associated timelines, benefits and costs."
Quote from the UK Climate Change Committee 2022 Progress Report to Parliament [30]

According to our survey data, 87% '*wish leadership from government and business was stronger*', including '*doing more to help me make more sustainable choices (e.g. by providing better information)*'[31]. And yet, in recent years, public trust in public institutions is at a historic low.[32] This matters, because research has shown a link between public trust (social capital), and effective delivery of climate policy.[33] Furthermore, public support for Net Zero as a whole cannot be taken for granted: a sizable minority believe Net Zero will harm the UK economy, and a significant majority believe it will harm their individual household finances, both in the short-term and the long-term.[34]

Communications and public engagement must therefore i) show that governments and businesses are leading by example, to restore credibility in leadership and signal the importance of the issue; ii) build trust in Net Zero by communicating a compelling narrative which emphasises the benefits to the country *and* to individuals; and iii) show competence, fairness, and realisation of positive outcomes during delivery to ensure this trust and support is maintained.

What is the right institution to lead on Net Zero communications and public engagement?
Any national effort to communicate and engage the public on something as complex and long-term as Net Zero will require a broad coalition of stakeholders, across government, industry, and civil society. But it is also important that a coherent message and a coherent brand emerge, and as such there is value in having a lead campaign organisation with not only the skills and expertise but the right public reputation in terms of public trust, credibility, perceived independence and authority. But which of these and other characteristics are most important to people? And which kinds of organisations would they be most comfortable receiving information from? The data in Figure 7 below answers these two questions.

---

[30] Climate Change Committee. 2022 progress report to parliament. https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/2022-progress-report-to-parliament/
[31] The Behavioural Insights Team. (2023). How to build a Net Zero society. https://www.bi.team/publications/how-to-build-a-net-zero-society/
[32] National Centre for Social Research. (2024). Five years of unprecedented challenges - The impact of the 2019-2024 Parliament on public opinion. https://natcen.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-06/BSA%2041%20Five%20years%20of%20unprecedented%20challenges.pdf
[33] Javaid, A., Khanna, T., Franza, M., & Creutzig, F. (2022). Behavioural interventions change individual transport choices but have a limited impact on transport mode split. Evidence from a systematic review.
[34] DESNZ. (2023). DESNZ Public Attitudes Tracker: Summer 2023. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/desnz-public-attitudes-tracker-summer-2023

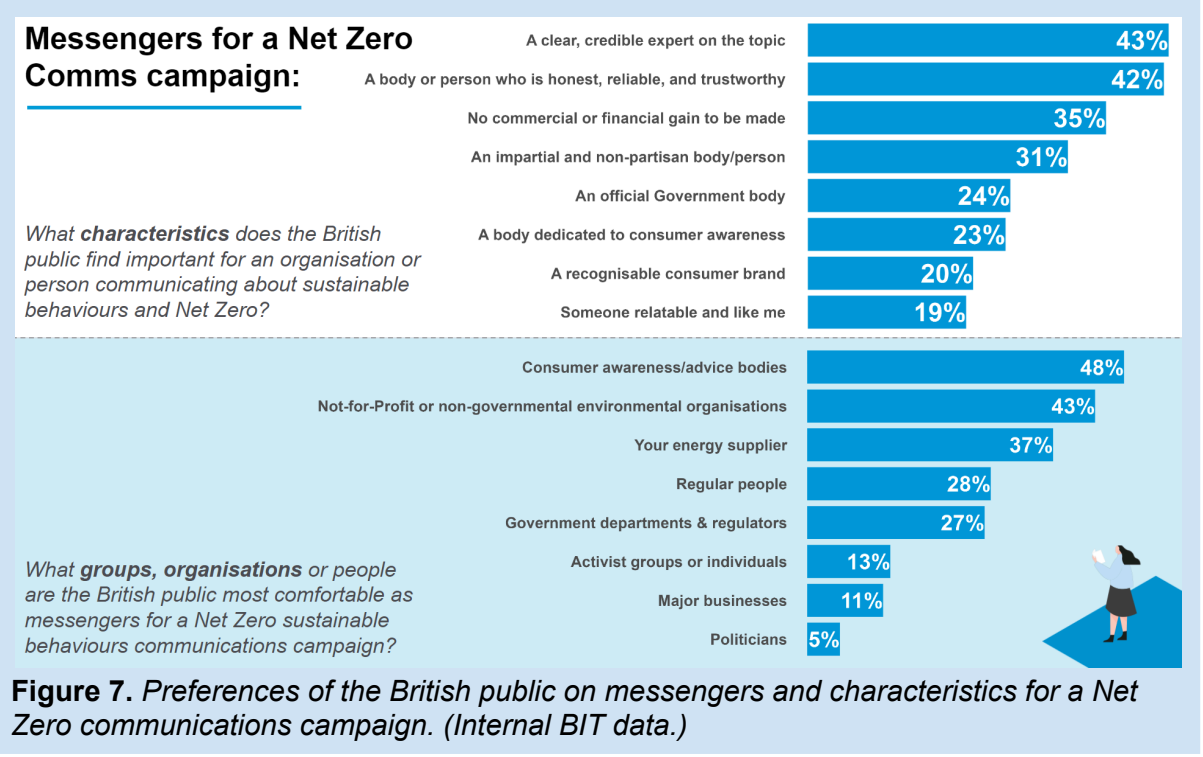


Figure 7. *Preferences of the British public on messengers and characteristics for a Net Zero communications campaign. (Internal BIT data.)*

Maintain a mandate for Net Zero policies. We will not reach Net Zero through voluntary action alone within the current policy landscape: the demand is not currently there and the barriers to action are too high for many people. A range of policies will therefore be needed to mandate, incentivise or nudge key green choices where information alone is inadequate, and harder still, to disincentivise or ban some incumbent polluting choices we've become accustomed to. It is therefore imperative that we understand how to design policies which attract public support, and how to communicate those policies to maintain that support. Evidence from BIT research and wider evidence from IPSOS and CAST shows that support for policies such as a frequent flyer levy, taxes on high-carbon food, or the planned phase-outs of gas boilers and combustion vehicles, all attract mixed levels of support, some higher than one might expect, but in all cases bringing a level of contention that represents a real challenge to policy-makers. Concern about these policies is considerable, and often legitimate, and can be easily stirred up further by media narratives.

BIT has recently been undertaking further research to understand why people may support or oppose specific Net Zero policies. Full findings are yet to be published, but some headline insights stand out:

- The acceptability of policy is very strongly correlated with the perceived fairness, effectiveness, and feasibility of that policy. Wider evidence also highlights the importance of salient benefits to the individual and to society.
- Individuals may be in opposition to the *goal or intended outcome* of a policy (e.g. "I don't want to eat less meat or have an electric car") and/or dislike the *means* (e.g. "I'm not averse to a heat pump per se, but I don't like the idea of the government taxing gas boilers to force me into a technology which is currently more expensive").

- There are many reasons why people might dislike the policy outcomes (e.g. I don't want to drive an EV because charging infrastructure isn't adequate) or the means (e.g. it i's coercive or unfair). Our research shows it is possible to understand these public concerns and design policy in ways which alleviate those concerns. For example, a 2035 ban on the sale of new combustion vehicles is a relatively uncontentious policy, albeit with some opposition: but it can be made more popular by i) pairing it with a cast-iron guarantee that the government will meet ambitious public charging infrastructure commitments before the ban is allowed to take place, or ii) regulating public charging to be the same cost as at-home charging.

These issues are partly about effective public engagement and communications, for two reasons. First, public engagement is not a one-way process but should include a great deal of listening and authentic public involvement, through citizen assemblies and dialogues as well as research with the public, to inform policy design. This has the potential to not only increase the *mandate* for policy created 'with' rather than done 'to' citizens, but can also lead to more *effective* policy due to a better understanding of consumer needs and constraints, and more *deliverable* policy due to the opportunity to address major objections upfront. Second, successful policy delivery involves successful communication about that policy. Policy support depends on people's knowledge, beliefs and perceptions of that policy. These attributes include perceptions of fairness, fear of bad outcomes, how necessary the policy is seen to be, and awareness of the policy's benefits to communities. These beliefs and perceptions are all dependent on communication from ministers and others, and subsequent narratives which emerge in the media.

"Many commentators stress that the success of green choice approaches depends on public engagement of citizens and businesses. 'Hard' policy mechanisms that leave the green choice as the only option (such as infrastructure change or regulation) also require public engagement to ensure consumer awareness of the consequences of decisions to gain acceptance."
Quote from the UK Parliamentary POST note (2024) on green choices.[35]

Create meaningful market signals (e.g. labels) which 'join up' communications and awareness-raising campaigns with real-world purchases and choices. Imagine trying to buy a more efficient washing machine if the ubiquitous A-G ratings did not exist: it would be a difficult task. We cannot expect consumers to make more sustainable choices if the information on which to make that choice is not available. And yet that is the position we are in for many purchases and choices we make daily, including our diets, the products we buy, our electricity tariff, our investments, our travel choices, and more.

Labels, rating systems, and other consumer guides are therefore an important part of the public engagement and communications puzzle. They must work in synergy with wider efforts to raise awareness and knowledge: raised consumer awareness means people will

[35] UK Parliament. (2024). Enabling green choices for net zero. https://post.parliament.uk/research-briefings/post-pn-0714/

pay more attention to labels, and salient labels further raise awareness. This is particularly important where consumers can't rely on product category definitions (e.g. *any* choice of solar panels is a good choice for the planet), but instead need to distinguish between good and bad options of the same category (e.g. which pension investment, ready meal, or hotel booking is the greenest one?).

We consider eco-labels to be both a simple 'downstream' intervention (helping consumers make greener choices if they wish) and also an 'upstream' intervention with system-level impacts. As argued in BIT's recent report on the 'shrouded economy',[36] when consumers can't tell the difference between good and bad, or green and less green options, the effects on the economy run deep: firms have no incentive to make their products greener. In the absence of clear and reliable information, consumers will instead rely on their instincts, and fall prey to greenwash, which, unfortunately, consumers do reliably fall for.[37] Labels and ratings are therefore a method of soft 'regulation by reputation' or 'regulation through consumer empowerment' that have the potential to influence producers as much as consumers.

Developing clear eco-labels and rating systems is therefore a form of communications that tie together conventional campaign efforts with real-world purchase decisions. If a campaign exists on TV persuading me to buy a more efficient washing machine, I'm more likely to remember that campaign, and find it easier to act on, if it is echoed on the Currys website as I'm choosing a product.

BIT has run many projects and experiments testing the impact of labels, and the design details really matter. In Figure 8 and 9 below below we show the results of making a small change to existing A-G energy efficiency labels for electrical appliances. By simply changing the metric from kWh to lifetime running cots in £, consumers were better able to understand the benefits of paying a little more upfront in order to save in the long-term. This had the effect of shifting purchase intent towards the more efficient option for all four product categories we tested.

[36] Behavioural Insights Team. (2024). The Shrouded Economy. https://www.bi.team/publications/the-shrouded-economy/
[37] Behavioural Insights Team. (2022). Protecting consumers from greenwashing. https://www.bi.team/blogs/there-is-a-growing-epidemic-of-climate-anxiety/

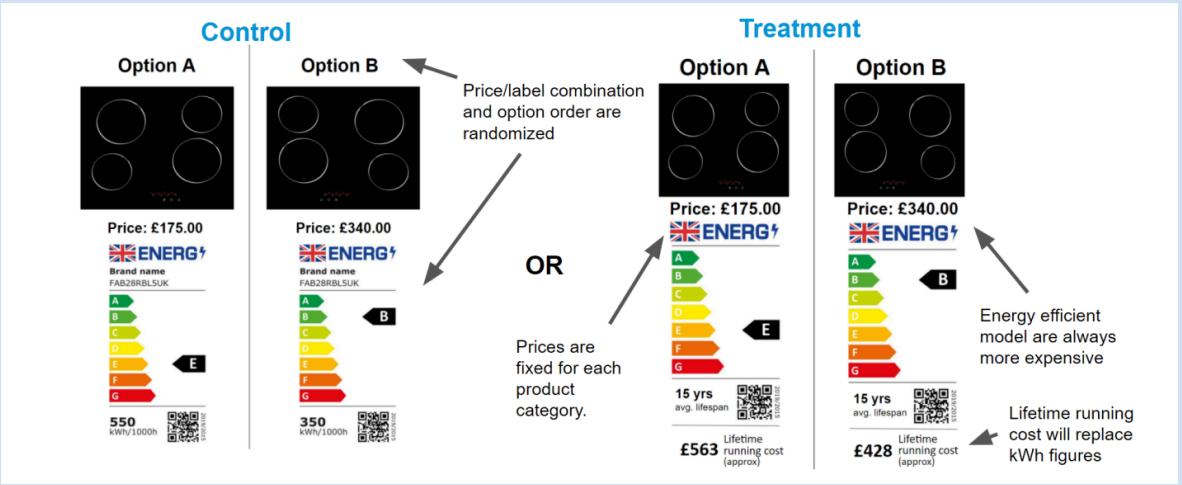
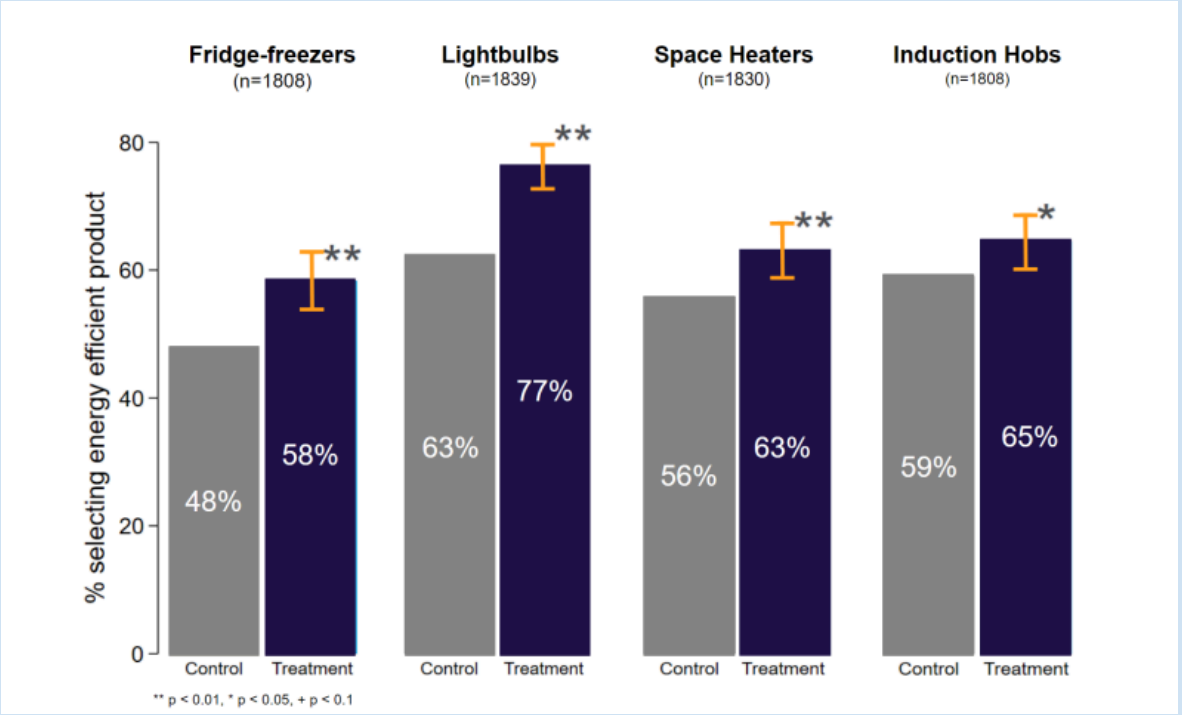


Figure 8. Example of the labels tested. The existing label (left) contrasted to one in which kWh is replaced with lifetime running costs (right)



Note: *Primary analysis. N = 3,044 (for each appliance tested). ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, + p < 0.1. Data collected by the BIT from 27 to 30 September 2023.*

Figure 9. *Results of redesigned carbon labels on appliance purchase intent.*

3. The public unambiguously wants more leadership and communication on Net Zero

We believe the 10 arguments laid out in the previous chapter make for a compelling case. But there is also a far simpler case to be made: the public overwhelmingly wants it. They want more support, more information, more guidance and are strongly in favour of national campaigns. Specifically, in our survey, we found that:

Of the British public….

82% **are in favour of a national information campaign to encourage the public to adopt more sustainable behaviours**

84% **would be more willing to make sustainable choices if they were given clear information about green actions**

81% **would be more likely to support Net Zero policy changes if they had more information about how changes would benefit them personally**

N = 3006 participants between 20th December 2023 - 9th Jan 2024

When we look at some of the specific home energy and transport behaviours more closely, we also observe that:

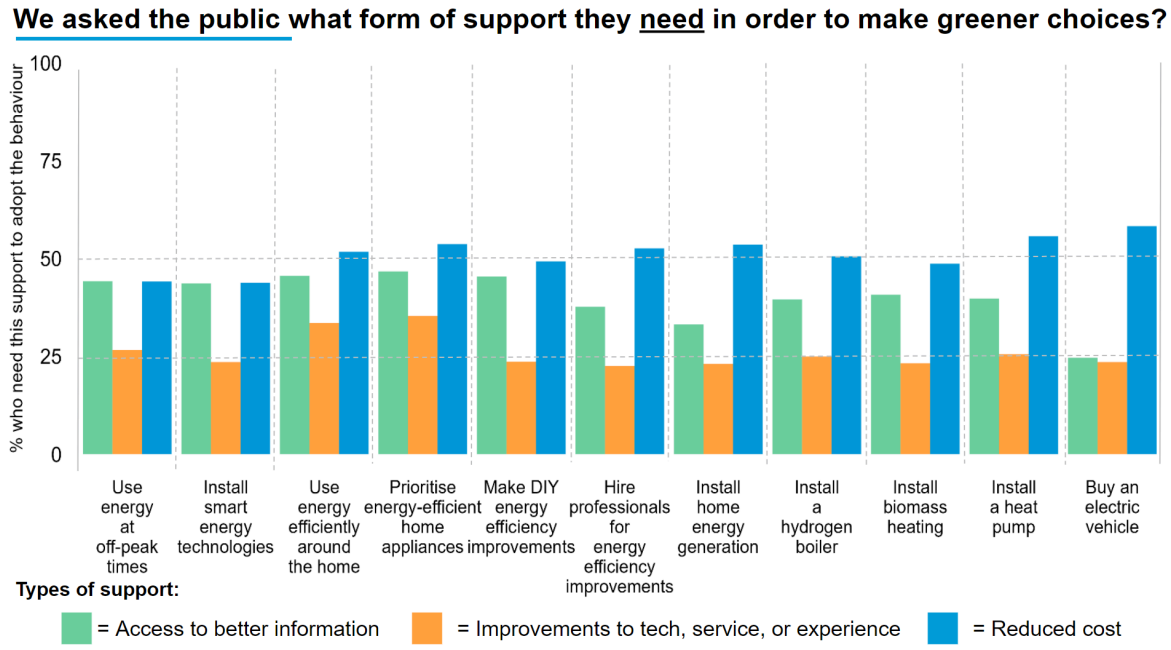
- 66% would support a public information campaign on heat pumps
- 72% would support a public information campaign on retrofits and insulation
- 71% would support a public information campaign on solar and home generation
- 63% would support a public information campaign on electric vehicles

We also asked the public to rate their preferred ‘solutions’ when asking about a wide range of barriers to the adoption of these climate choices and behaviours. Among the top-5 rated solutions within each key behaviour, are:

- Better information about public charge points
- Clearer information about upfront vs. running costs of EVs
- Clearer information about the environmental benefits of EVs
- Information to help households understand the long-term financial savings of solar, and likewise for retrofits
- Tailored guidance on how to make the right choices around solar, as well as retrofits, including information about how to do it
- Tailored expert guidance on heat pumps, and the long-term cost implications

Finally, we moved away from what people *want*, to what they *need*. When framing this question strongly in terms of the absolutely essential level of support people would need

before feeling able to make a range of green choices, we see (Figure 10 below), that reduced costs emerge at the top for most actions, and material improvements to the choices available is also important. But access to better information is also extremely high, and in many cases almost as important as cost reductions.



Note: *Sample recruited during 20th December 2023-9th Jan 2024. The total sample size was 3,006 and ~1,159 people were asked about each behaviour (people were only asked about the type of support they needed if they did not already do the behaviour or said they did the behaviour but could do more of it).*

Figure 10. *What support does the public say that they need in order to make greener choices?*

PART B: The ‘4As’ strategy - through case studies

4. The ‘4As framework’

In Part A, we made the case for why communications, marketing and public engagement are essential to achieving Net Zero, presenting 10 arguments which show the role of these strategies both downstream on consumers, midstream on the choice environment, and upstream on the systems and institutions of policy-making and business practice.

Now, in Part 2, we aim to get more practical.

To that end, we introduce a simpler framework: the '4As': Awareness, Acceptance, Access, and Adoption. Note that this is the exact same list of 10 arguments in Part A, reorganised into 4 parts of a simple strategy.

The 4As model - Awareness, Acceptance, Access, and Adoption - provides a framework for engaging people in Net Zero behaviours.

Awareness

Raising awareness is the foundational stage. It involves informing the public about Net Zero goals, and the urgency of climate action. More importantly still for our purposes: raising awareness of the specific behaviours and technology transitions required of people, and how to make those changes. By doing this, we set the stage for a well-informed public ready to engage in the transition.

Acceptance (Agreement, Advocacy)

Public acceptance is the necessary backdrop to all ambitious government action on Net Zero. **Acceptance** (implying a degree of passivity or indifference) is the minimum for policy delivery and technology or infrastructure upgrades. Wherever possible we should strive for active **Agreement** among the public, and even widespread **Advocacy** to spread this proactive support. Achieving this requires two-way public engagement, not just informing (e.g., of the key benefits) but also listening. Decision-makers must truly understand public concerns and involve communities in decision-making and policy development (e.g. public dialogues, and community engagement) to ensure we maintain trust and a strong mandate

for specific policies and the wider Net Zero agenda. Meanwhile, we should also put a lot of emphasis on the acceptance of new green technologies which will deliver so much of the required carbon abatement, yet remain unfamiliar or negatively viewed by many.

Access

Access focuses on making green options more available, affordable, and attainable. While much of this will need substantive 'hard' policy to reduce costs, improve infrastructure, reduce hassle, and drive upstream improvements in technologies, there is also a critical role for communications, marketing and public engagement. This should signpost financial and other support; aid sound decision-making; make green choices easier by providing tailored advice, tools, and support; and signal the green choices within real markets so that public communications and awareness efforts are truly 'joined up' to real-world consumer choices.

Adoption

Driving the adoption of green technologies and choices is the ultimate goal, ensuring lasting shifts in consumer behaviour. With awareness raised, and access to green choices improved, we must now build consumer motivation. This means dispelling apathy and replacing it with real demand for new and still unfamiliar products, and inspiring citizens to consider low-carbon lifestyles. This requires efforts to normalise, inspire, and prompt action at key timely moments such as home moves and boiler breakdowns.

--

Smart Energy GB

Throughout this section, we draw on case study examples to bring to life the strategies and concepts discussed, with a particular focus on the work of Smart Energy GB. Smart Energy GB is the national campaign for the rollout of smart meters across Great Britain, and they serve as a pivotal example of effective public engagement driving the widespread acceptance and adoption of a critical Net Zero technology in the home. It's not the perfect example: smart meters are 'free' at the point of acceptance (though ultimately funded through bills). However, many similarities are valuable, including the need for consumers to accept some hassle and disruption, to become familiar with and accepting of a novel technology, to become increasingly energy literate, and to be accepting of a policy which introduces change into our homes.

Moreover, the organisation of Smart Energy GB are themselves a useful exemplar: an independent organisation, given the remit of being the lead voice in the smart meter campaign, while coordinating a complex network of stakeholders including suppliers, manufacturers, and regulators. This has had to be done while maintaining a strong public presence that is both recognisable and trusted. Their work in raising awareness, encouraging acceptance, ensuring access, and driving the adoption of smart meters therefore offers valuable insights into how a similar approach could be applied to broader Net Zero goals. Although smart meters differ from other green technologies in terms of cost, complexity, and adoption challenges, Smart Energy GB's holistic approach to public engagement provides a model for how to inspire and support the widespread behavioural change necessary for a successful transition to a low-carbon economy.

5. Awareness

Recap from Part A:

- Public knowledge of which green actions to prioritise is very poor. We commonly over-state small-impact steps like recycling or turning off lights compared to far more impactful choices such as EV and heat pump adoption, aviation and diets.
- ‘Procedural’ knowledge is low: most of us are now confident in what steps to take to move to solar, heat pump, or make DIY home energy efficiency improvement.
- Knowledge of critical green technology is low, e.g. 73% lack basic knowledge of what a heat pump is, and this is underscored by myriad false or exaggerated beliefs which skew towards the negative (e.g. they don’t work in cold weather or older homes).

Case study 1: Gaz and Leccy

"Nobody knew what smart meters were when we started."
Colin Griffiths Policy Manager in Smart Metering, Smart Homes & Digital, Citizens Advice

Ten years ago, smart meters were a novel concept to the UK public. Insight work conducted by Smart Energy GB revealed low awareness and understanding of smart meters, along with confusion about energy consumption and bills, which left many people feeling out of control when managing their energy use. To address this, Smart Energy GB launched the "Gaz & Leccy" campaign, running from 2014 to 2018. The campaign aimed to capture attention and raise awareness about how smart meters could help people take control of their energy usage. By using the playful characters Gaz and Leccy as the brand vehicle, the campaign delivered this message with humour and relatability.

As one Smart Energy GB stakeholder noted, "*with Gaz and Leccy, the whole point about using a dry advert is about incorporating humour or likeness for engagement as an emotional lever*". These were the early days of the campaign and so the focus was on raising awareness and demystifying smart meters, and in order to do this, the basics needed to be communicated in a way which overcame the very first hurdles: capturing public attention, and achieving memorability. By creating memorable characters and engaging narratives (see Figure 11), and through the simple volume of ad-time (the 'mere exposure effect' drives awareness and familiarity, but also a positive effect) the campaign significantly increased the mental availability of smart meters among the public (see Figure 12). This is measured as the proportion of people who mention a smart meter first when asked about products or services which help them to manage household energy consumption, which increased by over 25%, reaching 46% of the UK population within the first two years of its televised communications. It transformed an abstract and technical product into something relatable and easy to understand.

Figure 11. *Gaz & Leccy social media image*[38]

[38]Cosy Kingdom. (2017). Gaz & Leccy social media image. https://www.cosykingdom.org.uk/understanding-smart-meters/gaz-leccy-social-media-image/

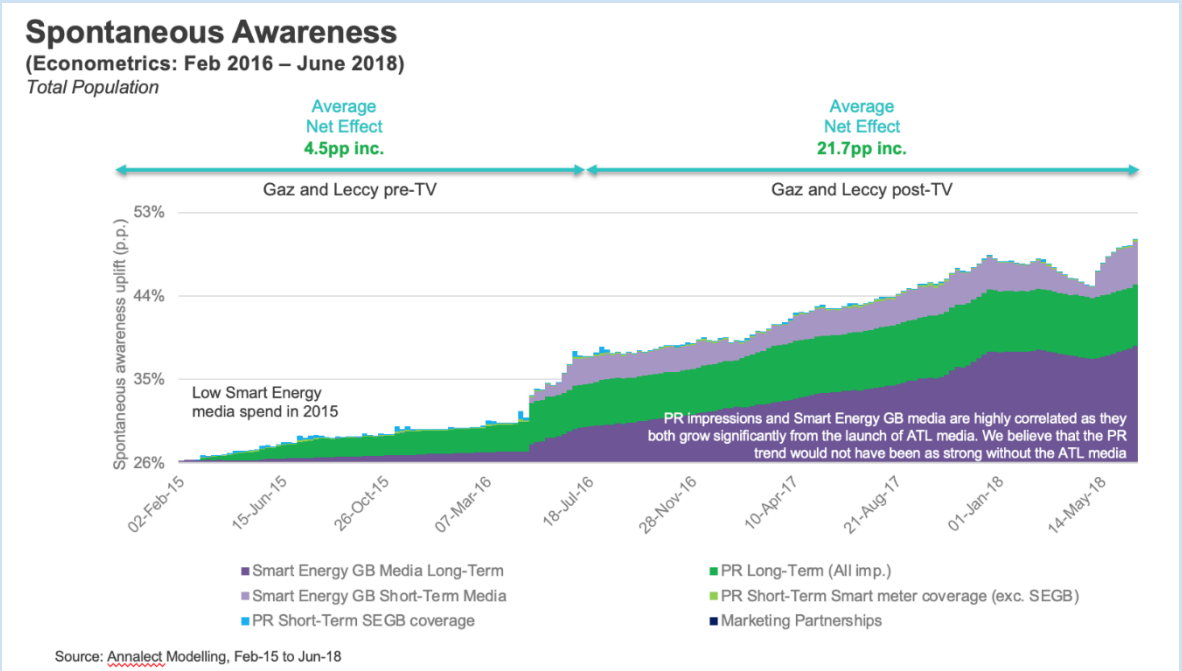


Figure 12. *The change in spontaneous awareness of smart meters (mental availability) over time. (Internal Smart Energy GB data.)*

Case study 2: Simple action-oriented advice during the energy crisis

The Energy crisis of 2022/23 triggered a heightened desire to save energy in the home. However, our research at the time showed that public knowledge of which steps to prioritise was very poor, even several months into the crisis entering the second affected winter (see Figure 13 below). For example, most people were prioritising turning off lights over some far more impactful and equally costless actions such as adjusting their boiler flow temperature or making better use of radiator valves in empty rooms.

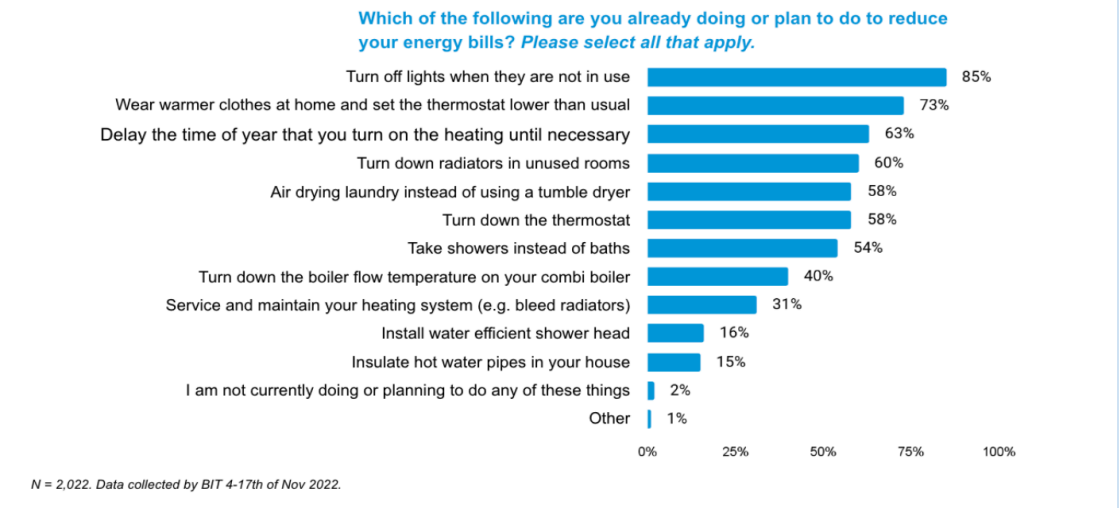


Figure 13. *The British public's energy conservation strategies to reduce energy bills.*

A number of organisations at the time responded by putting out simple advice which focussed on the concrete actions people can take, and the savings associated with them, to help steer genuine effort towards the most effective outcomes. This approach might in some respects seem obvious, but in fact stands apart from many environmental campaign efforts which focus solely on the problem (e.g. the plight of nature or the risks of climate change), or latch onto values (e.g. pro-environmentalism), rather than simply telling people what they can or should do. One example from DESNZ is shown below.

Figure 14. *Department for Energy Security and Net Zero - Help for Households campaign.*[39]

Case study 3: Money-Saving Boiler Challenge

The Nesta-led Money Saving Boiler Challenge provides a practical example of effectively addressing 'procedural knowledge' gaps, alongside awareness. This campaign was built on research which highlighted not only low awareness of the significant savings potential of lowering a boiler's flow temperature but also low understanding and low confidence of how to interact with and make adjustments to the boiler. The campaign was novel in the extent to which it went into the details of 'how' - it provided people with an online step-by-step guide, shown in Figure 15 below. The campaign successfully demystified the process and encouraged widespread participation, with 54% of the public saying that they had or would take action in response to the campaign[40] (see Figure 15 for further campaign impacts).

[39]UK Government. (2024). Make summer savings. https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/energy-conservation/

[40] Nesta. (2024). Lowering boiler flow temperature to reduce emissions. https://www.nesta.org.uk/project/lowering-boiler-flow-temperature-reduce-emissions/

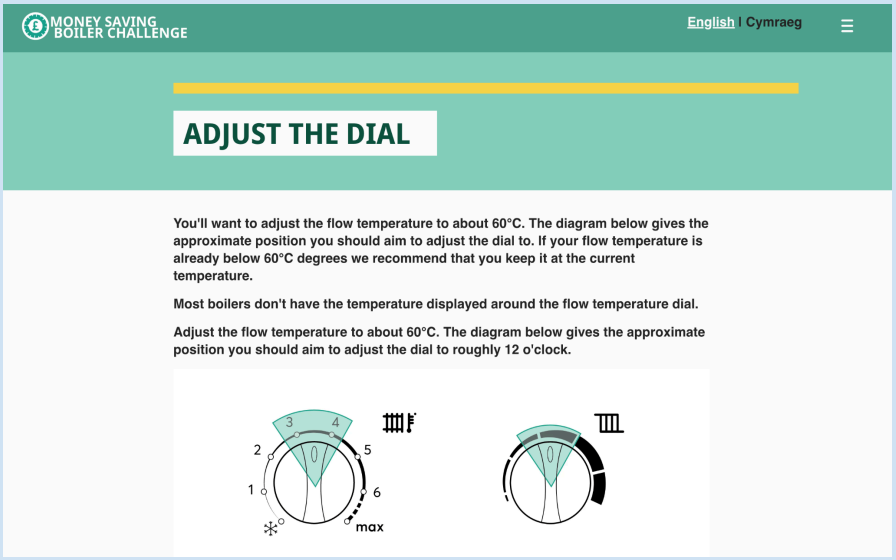


Figure 15. *Excerpt from the Money Saving Boiler Challenge step-by-step guide.*[41]

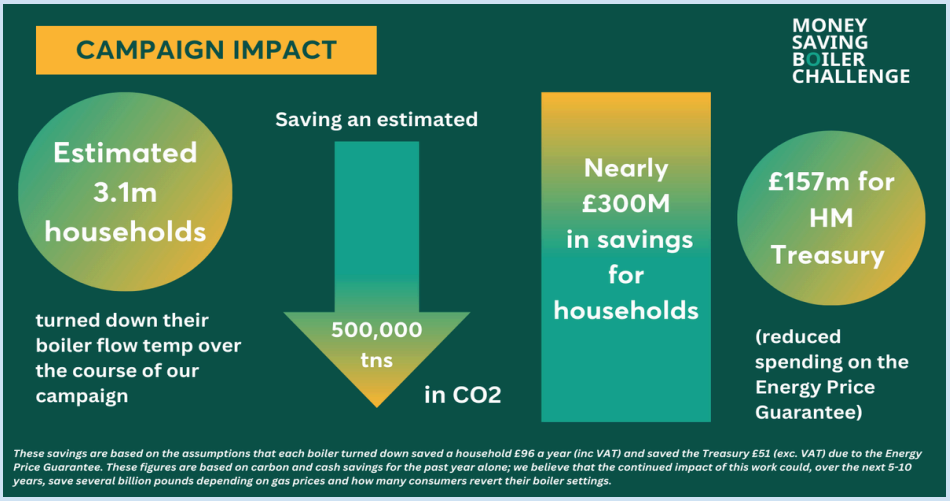


Figure 16. *Money Saving Boiler Challenge campaign impact.*[42]

A number of academic studies have also shown that action-oriented, 'how-to' information (and directly demonstrating actions) can be effective. [43] For instance, procedural information campaigns (e.g. 'how-to', step-by-step guides) outperform fact-based information campaigns in promoting green diets,[44] and television campaigns that actively demonstrate how to do a target behaviour have been associated with huge shifts in

[41]Nesta. (2024). Money Saving Boiler Challenge walkthrough. https://moneysavingboilerchallenge.com/walkthrough/
[42] Nesta. (2024). *Lowering boiler flow temperature to reduce emissions.* https://www.nesta.org.uk/project/lowering-boiler-flow-temperature-reduce-emissions/
[43]Kotcher, J., Feldman, L., Luong, K. T., Wyatt, J., & Maibach, E. (2021). Advocacy messages about climate and health are more effective when they include information about risks, solutions, and a normative appeal: evidence from a conjoint experiment. The Journal of Climate Change and Health, 3, 100030.
[44]Morren, M., Mol, J. M., Blasch, J. E., & Malek, Ž. (2021). Changing diets-Testing the impact of knowledge and information nudges on sustainable dietary choices. Journal of Environmental Psychology, 75, 101610.

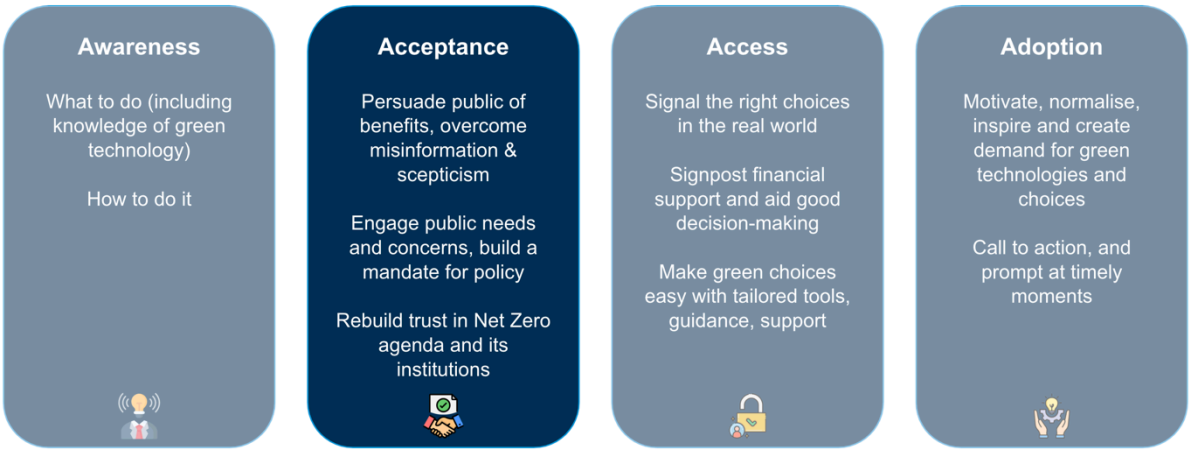
viewers actions (one campaign targeting sustainable agricultural practices fostered a 31% drop in insecticide usage amongst local farmers).[45] [46] [47]

[45] Reinermann, J. L., Lubjuhn, S., Bouman, M., & Singhal, A. (2014). Entertainment-education: storytelling for the greater, greener good. International Journal of Sustainable Development, 17(2), 176-191.

[46] Reinermann, J. L., Lubjuhn, S., Bouman, M., & Singhal, A. (2014). Entertainment-education: storytelling for the greater, greener good. International Journal of Sustainable Development, 17(2), 176-191.

[47] Singhal, A., Cody, M. J., Rogers, E. M., & Sabido, M. (Eds.). (2003). *Entertainment-education and social change: History, research, and practice.* Routledge.

6. Acceptance (Agreement, Advocacy)



Recap from Part A:

- We must move beyond awareness of green tech, to acceptance of it: promoting the key benefits to build real demand, and in turn overcoming negative sentiment, uncertainty and risk, which are often exacerbated by common media coverage.
- We must also build acceptance of Net Zero policies, and the wider Net Zero agenda. This requires two-way public engagement to listen to the public, understand their concerns, and in turn create better, more widely supported policy and delivery.
- Acceptance, implying passivity or indifference, is the bare minimum. Active agreement and even advocacy will aid policy delivery more.

Case study 4: Promoting the benefits of smart meters with the Einstein campaign

The Einstein campaign is Smart Energy GB's latest campaign, aimed at promoting positive attitudes toward smart meters and translating this into increased uptake. It seeks to communicate the advantages of smart meters, emphasising both personal and national benefits. The campaign presents a variety of messages, from personal energy management to enhancing national energy security, all represented by the iconically 'smart' Albert Einstein (see Figure 17). By incorporating humour and emotional connections, the campaign seeks to provide rational arguments in a way which also resonates and connects.

The campaign, which launched in April 2021, has demonstrated a strong impact in terms of consumer recall, emotional response and intentions to get a smart meter. Over time, the campaign's recall rates have significantly increased, indicating that the consistent, long-term approach is effective in building awareness: recall rates rose from 35% at launch and peaked in December 2023, showing two-thirds of non-smart meter consumers remembering the campaign. Emotional responses have also been positive overall, with an increase in positive feelings towards the campaign throughout 2023 and a decrease in negative emotions. Additionally, the campaign has influenced consumer attitudes, with

nearly 4 in 10 reconsidering their views and wanting to find out more about smart meters, as well as saying they plan to arrange a smart meter installation after having seen the campaign. These findings suggest that the Einstein campaign has successfully engaged consumers, balancing emotional provocation with informative messaging to drive interest and consideration for smart meters, and underscores the critical role of communication campaigns in persuading consumers to adopt novel green technologies.

Figure 17. *Excerpt from Smart Energy GB's televised Einstein campaign*

Case study 5: Tackling misinformation and negative sentiment with the smart meter rollout

A wealth of research shows that negative beliefs and scepticism are and will continue to be a challenge for the rollout of heat pumps, EVs and other home energy technology. For heat pumps, there is evidence of common concerns about the air quality, safety, heat quality and comfort, convenience, ease of use,[48] hassle, noise and disruption, and lack of adequate support during installation.[49] Solar panels are seen as difficult to purchase,

[48] Ahmad, S. (2023). Motivations and Barriers Associated with Adopting Domestic Heat Pumps in the UK.

[49] Snape, J. R., Boait, P. J., & Rylatt, R. M. (2015). Will domestic consumers take up the renewable heat incentive? An analysis of the barriers to heat pump adoption using agent-based modelling. Energy Policy, 85, 32-38.

install and maintain,[50] unattractive and noisy, [51] [52] and many are sceptical of the returns on investment.[53] [54] Beliefs about EVs include that they cost more over their lifetime, [55] [56] face inadequate charging infrastructure and have too limited a battery range. [57] [58] [59] Further barriers include uncertainty about resale value, [60] and fears about loss of autonomy, safety, reliability and durability of the battery.[61] Altogether, these represent a mass of negative sentiments and - sometimes - myths and misinformation that need to be clarified through communications.

The smart meter rollout therefore serves as a valuable case study for understanding the role of communications and public engagement in addressing false narratives, misinformation, and scepticism about new Net Zero technologies. Since the rollout began, several myths have emerged in the UK, including concerns about health risks from radio waves, privacy and data security issues.

"There were a bunch of stories about smart meters catching fire! There was a lot of general scepticism to manage."

Colin Griffiths Policy Manager in Smart Metering, Smart Homes & Digital, Citizens Advice

Smart Energy GB has tracked and analysed the prevalence and impact of these myths among the British public, revealing that narratives around personal data risks and smart meter inaccuracies drive rejections more than myths about health risks from radiation. By taking this insight and prioritising myths based on both prevalence and impact, Smart Energy GB has been able to address the most harmful misconceptions.

---

[50] Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, & Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. (2021). Adoption of rooftop solar photovoltaic panels in the UK. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adoption-of-rooftop-solar-photovoltaic-panels-in-the-uk.

[51] Faiers, A., & Neame, C. (2006). Consumer attitudes towards domestic solar power systems. *Energy policy,* 34(14), 1797-1806.

[52] Peacock, A. D., Jenkins, D., Ahadzi, M., Berry, A., & Turan, S. (2008). Micro wind turbines in the UK domestic sector. *Energy and buildings,* 40(7), 1324-1333.

[53] Palm, J. (2018). Household installation of solar panels–Motives and barriers in a 10-year perspective. *Energy Policy*, 113, 1-8.

[54] Collier, S. H., House, J. I., Connor, P. M., & Harris, R. (2023). Distributed local energy: Assessing the determinants of domestic-scale solar photovoltaic uptake at the local level across England and Wales. *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, 171, 113036.

[55] Gulf Oil Blog. (2023). The cost of running an electric vehicle vs petrol car in 33 countries. https://www.gulfoilltd.com/exploring-ev-and-petrol-running-costs-across-nations

[56] World Economic Forum. (2023). Owning an electric vehicle in Europe could be cheaper than you think, new research shows. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/02/electric-vehicles-cheaper-than-petrol-europe/

[57] Egbue, O., & Long, S. (2012). Barriers to widespread adoption of electric vehicles: An analysis of consumer attitudes and perceptions. *Energy policy,* 48, 717-729.

[58] Berkeley, N., Jarvis, D., & Jones, A. (2018). Analysing the take up of battery electric vehicles: An investigation of barriers amongst drivers in the UK. *Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment,* 63, 466-481.

[59] Krishna, G. (2021). Understanding and identifying barriers to electric vehicle adoption through thematic analysis. *Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives,* 10, 100364.

[60] Egbue, O., & Long, S. (2012). Barriers to widespread adoption of electric vehicles: An analysis of consumer attitudes and perceptions. *Energy policy,* 48, 717-729.

[61] Krishna, G. (2021). Understanding and identifying barriers to electric vehicle adoption through thematic analysis. *Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives,* 10, 100364.

For users online who actively search for smart meter myths, the Smart Facts campaign positively shares the truth in a 'did you know' format, reassuring the viewer that their concern is unfounded. The campaign uses specific targeting in digital audiences to ensure that the audience is aware of the 'myth' or concern already. This avoids perpetuating the myth amongst those that are not concerned with them, which is why Smart Energy GB does not run 'myth busting' campaigns on broadcast channels.

The Smart Facts campaign uses specific targeting in digital audiences to ensure that the audience is aware of the 'myth' or concern already, but testing suggests that the campaign may be effective in driving reassurance in audiences unaware of smart meter myths. Recent creative testing (NST Continuous April KPI report – Yonder, April 2024) found that the audience found the campaign believable (75%) and informative (82%), and that encouraged users to think about smart meters in a new way (64%) and go on to find out more about smart meters (61%).

This evidence-based approach has been critical to targeting the most meaningful myths and swells of misinformation. And the public wants more of this: our 2024 survey data shows that over 80% of the British public support communication efforts like this to combat myths in future Net Zero initiatives. However, as also shown by Smart Energy GB's approach to myths, caution is required. Actively engaging with rare or conspiratorial beliefs can give them increased credibility or simply raise the idea in other people's minds, and thus become a bigger barrier to adoption. What we want is a broadly accurate and positive information environment around new technologies like heat pumps, EVs, and smart home energy tech. This does not mean running ads that aim to persuade people that EV batteries only very rarely explode, or only a small fraction of heat pump installations leave customers cold in the winter: such efforts would likely backfire amongst the majority who didn't hold these beliefs to begin with.

"For a challenge as complex as Net Zero and in a sector with multiple different stakeholders (from energy suppliers to the Government to consumer advice bodies), different voices can be valuable, but maintaining a consistent, unified and credible message can be crucial for myth-busting and managing public perceptions around Net Zero technologies."

Claire Baines, Deputy Director of Strategy and Insight, Smart Energy GB

Case study 6: UK Climate Change Citizens' Assembly

For the public to agree with Net Zero actions, policies must be perceived as fair, credible, effective.[62, 63] A great deal of research has shown that climate communications that speak to people's existing and established values can be very effective. Public approval and agreement with a green policy or behaviour is increased if it is framed around common values of fairness,[64] morality,[65] impact on community and safety,[66] inter-generational duty,[67] avoiding waste,[68] cost saving/frugalness,[69] economic progress,[70] and energy security.[71, 72]

One way to achieve fairness in particular is by listening to the concerns of diverse publics and ensuring policy minimises the risk of bad outcomes for certain groups or avoids unfairly advantaging those already in a position of privilege. For example, ULEZ schemes are regressive because they are more punitive to those who can't afford a newer car and can't afford the daily charge; as are EV grants which only benefit the 18% of people who ever buy new cars[73] (let alone an even more costly new EV). This helps to explain why both policies are relatively unpopular to many.

The UK Climate Change Citizens' Assembly is an example of using citizen dialogue to inform policy. By involving citizens in discussions about climate policies, considering multiple perspectives and potential impacts on different social groups, the Assembly promoted a sense of ownership and fairness, which is crucial for gaining widespread acceptance and support for Net Zero initiatives.[74] The Assembly itself rated fairness, including for the most vulnerable (affordability, jobs, UK regions, incentives and rewards)

---

[32]Climate Assembly UK. (2020). The path to net zero. https://www.climateassembly.uk/report/read/executive-summary.html#executive-summary

[33]Poortinga, W., Whitmarsh, L., Steentjes, K., Gray, E., Thompson, S., & Brisley, R. (2023). Factors and framing effects in support for net zero policies in the United Kingdom. Frontiers in Psychology, 14, 1287188.

[34]Owen, A., & Barrett, J. (2020). Reducing inequality resulting from UK low-carbon policy. Climate Policy, 20(10), 1193-1208.

[35]Li, N., & Su, L. Y. F. (2018). Message framing and climate change communication: A meta-analytical review. Journal of Applied Communications, 102(3), 4.

[66]Steentjes, K., Demski, C., Seabrook, A., Corner, A., & Pidgeon, N. (2020). British public perceptions of climate risk, adaptation options and resilience (RESiL RISK): topline findings of a GB survey conducted in October 2019.

[67]Steentjes, K., Demski, C., Seabrook, A., Corner, A., & Pidgeon, N. (2020). British public perceptions of climate risk, adaptation options and resilience (RESiL RISK): topline findings of a GB survey conducted in October 2019.

[68]Nisa, C. F., Belanger, J., & Schumpe, B. M. (2020). Evidence-based messaging to decrease food waste at the consumer level.

[69]Aschemann-Witzel, J., Asioli, D., Banovic, M., Perito, M. A., & Peschel, A. O. (2022). Communicating upcycled foods: Frugality framing supports acceptance of sustainable product innovations. Food Quality and Preference, 100, 104596.

[70]Li, N., & Su, L. Y. F. (2018). Message framing and climate change communication: A meta-analytical review. Journal of Applied Communications, 102(3), 4.

[71]Feldman, L., & Hart, P. S. (2018). Climate change as a polarizing cue: Framing effects on public support for low-carbon energy policies. Global Environmental Change, 51, 54-66.

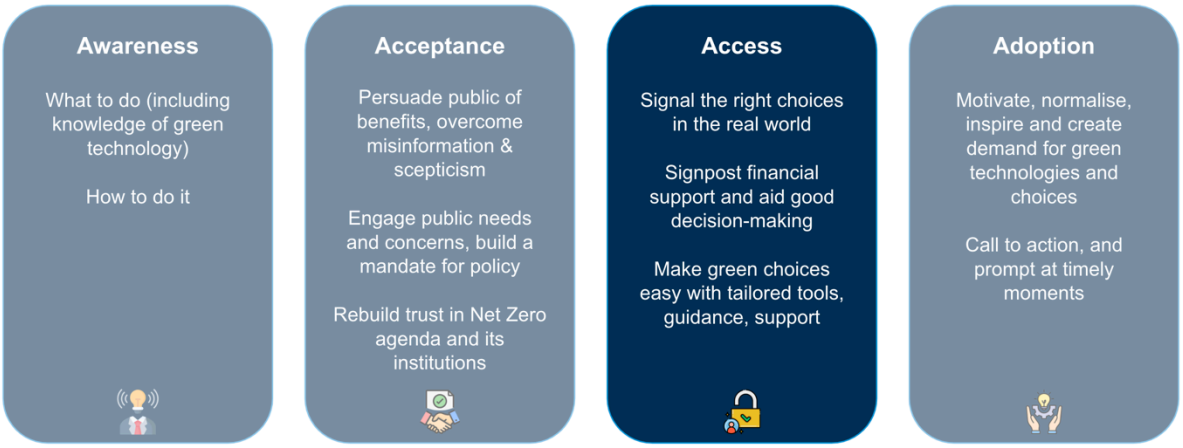
[72]Ferguson, M., & Ashworth, P. (2021). Message framing, environmental behaviour and support for carbon capture and storage in Australia. Energy Research & Social Science, 73, 101931.

[73] Statista. (2022). New and used car sales in the United Kingdom between 2004 and 2021. https://www.statista.com/statistics/299841/market-volumes-of-new-and-used-cars-in-the-united-kingdom/

[74]Climate Assembly UK. (2020). The path to net zero. https://www.climateassembly.uk/report/read/executive-summary.html#executive-summary

the second most important principle for the path to Net Zero out of a total of 25 principles.[75] Above all, a successful communications strategy for Net Zero initiatives must proactively identify aspects that could be perceived as unfair by the public, and then explicitly address these issues, clearly explaining how the initiatives will equitably distribute benefits and burdens.

7. Access



Recap from Part A:

- We must make green choices more affordable and easier. This will require substantial 'hard' policy, but communications can also make green choices easier, provide tailored guidance, tools and decision-aids,
- Perceptions matter as much as reality. Green actions can seem hard if we lack specific knowledge or lack confidence in our choices, and costs can be discouraging if we lack an understanding of upfront vs. lifetime costs, or lack awareness of available financial support (e.g. most people in our survey didn't realise significant heat pumps grants existed).

Case study 7: Signposting financial support and aiding financial decision-making

Valuable lessons can be drawn from past and present Government grants. The Green Homes Grant Scheme, which aimed to support home energy retrofits, had a number of delivery challenges including inadequate communication about the scheme. The House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts cited low public engagement and inconsistent messaging with home retrofit installers, ultimately leading to extremely low uptake and poor access to the scheme (due to low numbers of installers) even among households

[75]Climate Assembly UK. (2020). The path to net zero. https://www.climateassembly.uk/report/read/executive-summary.html#executive-summary

which might have been keen.[76] [77] [78] It seems the lessons were not fully learnt in the delivery of the more recent Boiler Upgrade Scheme, for which another House of Lords Enquiry blamed, in part, initial low uptake of the scheme on poor advertising.[79]

Case study 8: Tailored advice, tools and guidance for disadvantaged groups

To ensure equitable access to green choices, communications must be tailored to acknowledge the unique context of disadvantaged groups. For instance, Smart Energy GB have conducted in-depth analysis and segmentation to understand which groups might face barriers to smart meter access and how vulnerability influences uptake.

"Mapping barriers along the entire journey - and how vulnerability affects various steps of the journey - defines our role in what different support, information and tailored communications we provide for different vulnerable groups. Communications plays a critical role in this"

Phillippa Brown, Deputy Director of Specialist Audiences, Smart Energy GB

Smart Energy GB campaigns have focused on developing educational materials for carers supporting vulnerable individuals (see Figure 18) and people who are blind or partially sighted (Figure 19).[80] [81]. For example, as a result of a PR campaign launched in partnership with Carers UK, the proportion of unpaid carers who agreed that a smart meter would make it easier to manage their household finances rose from 55% before the campaign to 63% afterwards.[82] These examples show how communications can play a critical role in equalising access to the benefits of Net Zero technologies, ensuring that all segments of society can participate in and benefit from the transition to a sustainable future.

---

[76]Public Accounts Comittee. (2021). PAC report: Green Homes Grant scheme "underperformed badly". https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/127/public-accounts-committee/news/159264/pac-report-green-homes-grant-scheme-underperformed-badly

[77]The Guardian. (2021). England green homes scheme was 'slam dunk fail', says public accounts committee. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/dec/01/uk-green-homes-scheme-was-slam-dunk-fail-says-public-accounts-committee

[78]House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts. Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme. https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/8007/documents/82623/default/

[79]Electrify Heat. (2023). Not under the BUS: Industry hits back over claims the heat pump scheme is tanking. https://electrifyheat.uk/article/not-under-the-bus-industry-hits-back-over-claims-the-heat-pump-scheme-is-tanking/

[80] Smart Energy GB. (2024). HOW SMART METERS COULD HELP WITH CARING. https://www.smartenergygb.org/smart-meter-benefits/benefits-for-you/smart-meters-and-carers

[81] Smart Energy GB. (2024). The accessible in-home display. https://www.smartenergygb.org/about-smart-meters/the-accessible-in-home-display

[82]Smart Energy GB. (2023). Annual report and accounts. https://www.smartenergygb.org/media/djwhgq34/small-annual-report-2023-signed-audited-final-segb-account.pdf

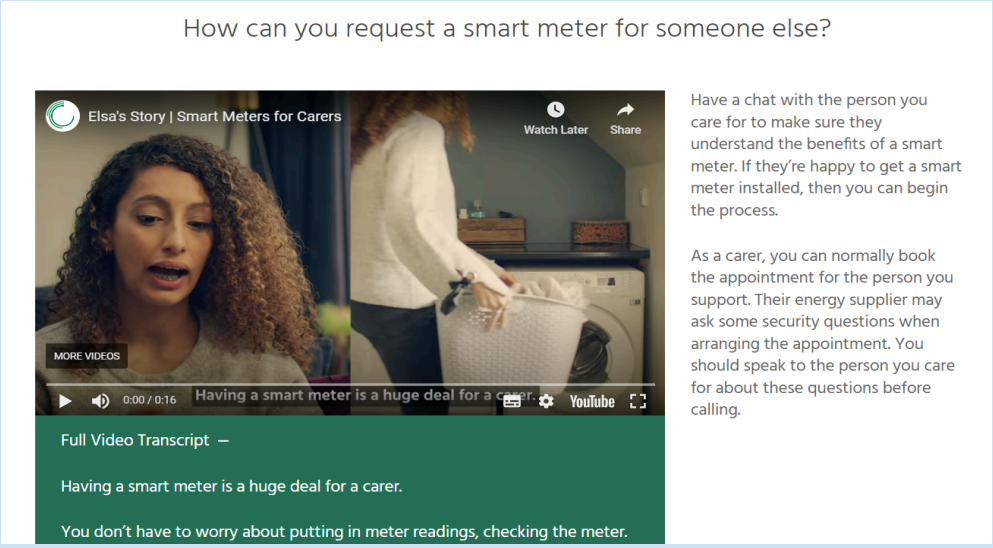


Figure 18. *Excerpt from Smart Energy GB carers campaign.*[83]

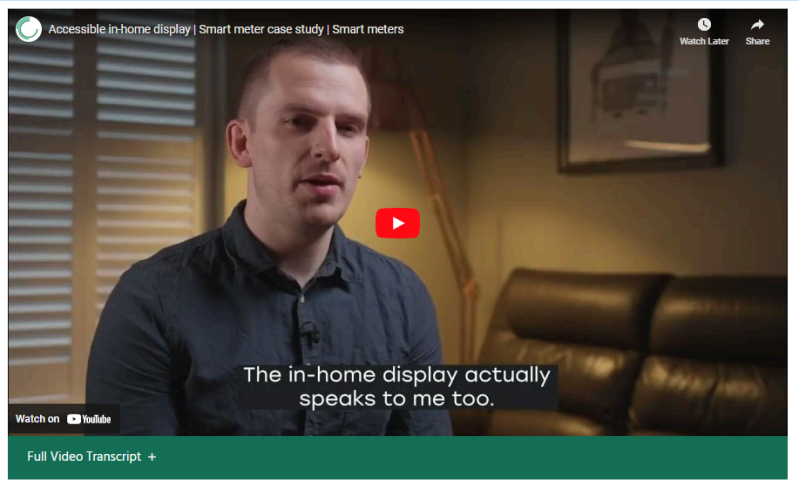
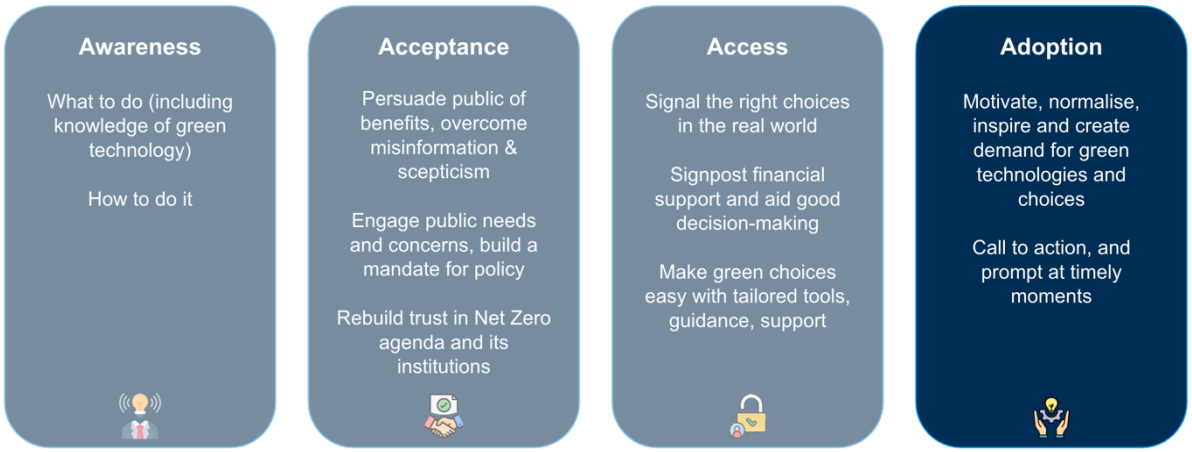


Figure 19. *Excerpt from Smart Energy GB's accessible in-home displays campaign.*[84]

[83]Smart Energy GB. (2024). How carers could prepare for higher energy bills. https://www.smartenergygb.org/smart-meter-benefits/benefits-for-you/how-carers-could-prepare-for-higher-energy-bills

[84]Smart Energy GB. (2024). The accessible in-home display. https://www.smartenergygb.org/about-smart-meters/the-accessible-in-home-display

8. Adoption



Recap from Part A:

- We must not only dispel apathy (or worse yet, suspicion and distrust), but stimulate real demand for green technologies that will often require individuals to outlay significant financial costs
- Simple calls to action are a good approach, often outperforming more abstract approaches to raising awareness or knowledge.
- A wide range of campaign activities can inspire, normalise and motivate action
- We can get an even greater impact by targeting these 'timely moments' e.g. moments of change in people's lives when existing routines are disrupted

Case study 9: Calls to action during Covid-19

Becoming the most well-known slogan of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK, the tagline *"Hands. Face. Space"*[85] [86] contained within it is all you need to remember to significantly reduce your exposure risk through handwashing, mask-wearing and keeping your distance (see Figure 20 below). This is in contrast to the subsequent 'stay alert' messaging which is ambiguous and depends upon significant background knowledge and contextual judgement to follow. The Office for National Statistics found high rates of compliance with these actions in an April 2021 study across all demographics (age, income, location), [87] and later research indicates that more than 8 in 10 UK adults saw "hands, face, space" as

[85] The UK Government. (2020). New campaign to prevent spread of coronavirus indoors this winter. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-campaign-to-prevent-spread-of-coronavirus-indoors-this-winter

[86] Udoudom, U., Igiri, A., George, K., & Aruku, K. J. (2024). Promoting Health Education through Effective Communication for Development. ALSYSTECH Journal of Education Technology, 2(1), 68-88.

[87] Office for National Statistics. (2021). Coronavirus and compliance with government guidance, UK: April 2021 https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/coronavirusandcompliancewithgovernmentguidanceuk/april2021

important in slowing the spread of COVID-19.[88] Net Zero communicators should not ignore spelling out to the public what actions they can actually take to be green.

Figure 20. *The Government's* "Hands Face Space" *communications material.*[89]

Case study 10: Taking a commercial marketing mindset to stimulate demand for green technologies

The Net Zero challenge is unusual in its emphasis on significant consumer purchases (heat pumps, EVs, solar, smart home energy technology). This makes it a marketing and branding initiative as much as a public information effort. The smart meter rollout is a rare case study, in which Smart Energy GB needed to stimulate demand for a wholly new and unfamiliar category of technology, though even here the analogy is not perfect: we do require households to 'want' smart meters (given the hassle involved in installation, the easy default of continuing with existing technology, and the brief disruption to the home), but they don't come with a price tag at the point of installation.

"One of the key barriers is people actually wanting a smart meter. So the comms side is trying to maintain that interest."
Daisy Cross, Head of Future Retail Markets, Energy UK

We are more likely to take individual action (e.g. 'get a smart meter') or spend our money if we are aware of the benefits it will bring to us. And we are more likely to support policy or public investment (e.g. 'the smart meter rollout') if we are aware of the benefits it will bring to us, and/or to society more widely.[90] Public benefits can include economic growth and jobs, cleaner air, quieter streets, or reduced climate change. Private benefits can include reduced bills, increased convenience, or personal health.

"Co-benefits provide a way to reach the non-usual suspects. Many people are already concerned about climate change and have changed their diets for that reason, but it is not an argument that will sway everybody. You can see that the co-benefits, of health for example, or reducing air pollution are arguments that are accepted much more widely, so if you want to get to the non-usual suspects in behaviour change, citing the co-benefits

[88] Office for National Statistics. (2021). Eight in ten adults think social distancing is important – but four in ten actually do it. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/articles/eightintenadultsthinksocialdistancingisimportantbutfourintenactuallydoit/2021-10-22

[89] The UK Government. (2020). New campaign to prevent spread of coronavirus indoors this winter. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-campaign-to-prevent-spread-of-coronavirus-indoors-this-winter

[90] Li, N., & Su, L. Y. F. (2018). Message framing and climate change communication: A meta-analytical review. *Journal of Applied Communications*, *102*(3), 4.

may be effective."

Professor Poortinga, Cardiff University and Director of CAST, reporting to UK House of Lords [91]

Smart Energy GB explored these individual benefits (reduced bills, greater financial control) and public benefits (savings on public finances, smarter infrastructure, climate mitigation) which most commonly underpin positive attitudes towards getting a smart meter. This insight contributed to Smart Energy GB's development of the 'I Want' campaign, which highlighted both 'Me' and 'We' benefits.[92] [93] In Figure 21 we show the findings of the research, and below that in Figure 22, an excerpt from the campaign.

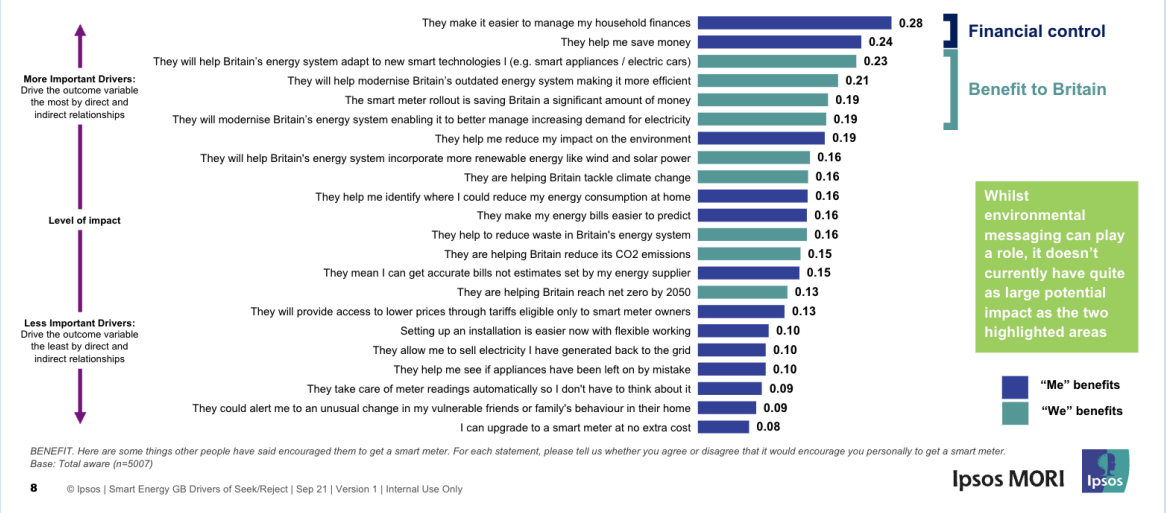


Figure 21. *The drivers of positive attitudes towards getting smart meters. (Internal Smart Energy GB data.)*

[91] House of Lords Environment and Climate Change Committee. (2023). In our hands: behaviour change for climate and environmental goals. https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5803/ldselect/ldenvcl/64/64.pdf

[92] Campaign. (2019). Smart Energy GB "I want" by AMV BBDO. https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/smart-energy-gb-i-want-amv-bbdo/1582032

[93] Marketing Communication News. (2019). Smart Energy GB shifts strategy to focus on the environment in 'I Want' campaign by AMV BBDO. https://marcommnews.com/smart-energy-gb-shifts-strategy-to-focus-on-the-environment-in-i-want-campaign-by-amv-bbdo/

Figure 22. *'I Want' Smart Energy GB campaign material.*[94]

A range of other examples exist, and the common theme is that non-environmental benefits that benefit the individual are often more convincing than the environmental argument. Cost-savings are a particularly strong motivator, but not the only option.

- **Comfort:** The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland's 'Discover a New World of Comfort' campaign highlighted the comfort benefits of energy-efficient homes.[95] BIT's work testing messages to promote heat pumps also found that a 'heating that works' comfort framing (making a feature of the 'always on' albeit heating of a heat pump) was relatively effective.
- **Cost saving:** The UK Government's DESNZ Help For Households 'Save Energy Save Money' campaign focused on the financial advantages of energy-saving measures.[96] Similarly, the UK Government's "It All Adds Up" campaign, aimed at promoting the financial benefits of saving energy at home, through which up to £120 million is estimated to have been saved by households across 2022.[97] Studies have also shown that the prospect of savings on energy bills increases the likelihood of choosing heat pumps.[98] A study on solar panel installations revealed that focusing on personal financial savings was the most persuasive strategy, leading to a 40% increase in commitment levels over the baseline.[99]
- **Improving energy management at home:** The Super Smart Home Hacks PR campaign explored household behaviours relating to energy use when cooking, washing and heating at home. Three phases of activity delivered 1,500 media

[94]Marketing Communication News. (2019). Smart Energy GB shifts strategy to focus on the environment in 'I Want' campaign by AMV BBDO. https://marcommnews.com/smart-energy-gb-shifts-strategy-to-focus-on-the-environment-in-i-want-campaign-by-amv-bbdo/
[95] Adworld. (2021). TBWA\Dublin & SEAI join forces to 'Discover A New World of Comfort'. https://www.adworld.ie/2021/09/17/tbwadublin-seai-join-forces-to-discover-a-new-world-of-comfort/
[96] UK Government. (2024). How to save energy and lower your bills. https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/energy-saving-advice/
[97]Gareth Bacon. (2023). It All Adds Up. https://www.garethbacon.com/post/it-all-adds-up
[98]Hafner, R., Elmes, D., Read, D., & White, M. P. (2019). Exploring the role of normative, financial and environmental information in promoting uptake of energy efficient technologies. Journal of Environmental Psychology, 63, 26-35.
[99]Bär, D., Feuerriegel, S., Li, T., & Weinmann, M. (2023). Message framing to promote solar panels. Nature Communications, 14(1), 7187.

articles (including 31 national titles) and 1 million impressions across influencer content. Utilising Smart Energy GB's range of channels helped increase the reach and impact of the PR campaign. The work also achieved 10 out of 17 positive attitudes associated with smart meter seeking behaviour for those who were exposed to the campaign and resulted in an increase in interest in getting a smart meter of 7% points.

- **Property value**: BIT research has shown that framing heat pumps in terms of 'increased property value' significantly boosted purchase intentions (more than pro-environmental messaging).

Figure 23. *Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland: Discover a new world of comfort.*[100]

Figure 24. *It all Adds Up - Save Money - DESNZ campaign.*[101]

Figure 25, 26. *Smart Energy GB's Super Smart Home Hacks*

Case study 11: Making green actions feel normal

We are social creatures and often take our cues from what other people do. Studies have shown, for example, that solar panels are contagious: if we live in a street with lots of solar on rooftops, we're 44% more likely to adopt them ourselves, particularly if other homes have them in more visible places (e.g. the front of the property).[102] This was the logic of

[100]Adworld. (2021). TBWA\Dublin & SEAI join forces to 'Discover A New World of Comfort'. https://www.adworld.ie/2021/09/17/tbwadublin-seai-join-forces-to-discover-a-new-world-of-comfort/

[101]UK Government. (2024). How to save energy and lower your bills. https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/energy-saving-advice/

[102]Graziano, M., & Gillingham, K. (2015). Spatial patterns of solar photovoltaic system adoption: the influence of neighbors and the built environment. Journal of Economic Geography, 15(4), 815-839.

the UK's green number plate scheme for EVs, in an effort to make them more noticeable and normalised to non-EV drivers.

This is a technique which can very simply (but effectively) be used in communications and is one of the most well-evidenced nudge techniques. For example, as shown in Figure 27 below, telling people how their energy use compares to their neighbours can reliably reduce consumption by 2-3.5%, and these savings appear to be sustained over the long term.[103]

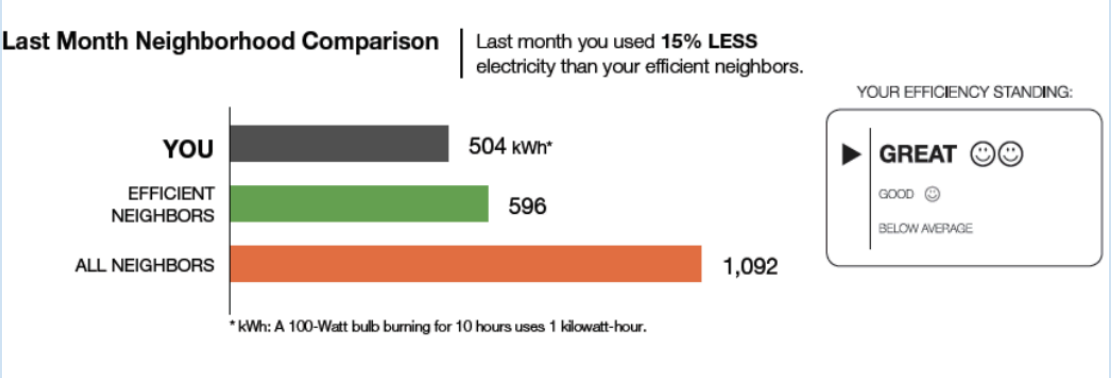


Figure 27. *Home energy report intervention material, comparing homeowners' energy use with their neighbours'.*[104]

Simply telling people that 'most other people are doing X' or 'more and more people are doing X' (where X is the desirable green choice) has an impact, for multiple reasons. In part, we use our social environment to infer what is the right, appropriate, sensible or potentially savvy choice. But it also helps overcome the excuse that 'I'm doing my bit' or beliefs that 'no one else is doing anything for the environment'. A now-classic study by the famous social psychologist Robert Cialdini showed that telling hotel residents that 'most previous guests in this room re-use their towel' was significantly more effective than a conventional environmental message. These social norm effects have been replicated in studies on the adoption of solar panels,[105] home loft insulation, [106] and heat pumps.[107] One study found that a social norm messaging intervention delivered via social media was 20% more effective at eliciting user clicks to learn more about DIY home loft insulation, compared to messaging interventions using monetary appeals and loss aversion.[108]

[103]Allcott, H., & Rogers, T. (2014). The short-run and long-run effects of behavioral interventions: Experimental evidence from energy conservation. American Economic Review, 104(10), 3003-3037.
[104]Allcott, H., & Rogers, T. (2014). The short-run and long-run effects of behavioral interventions: Experimental evidence from energy conservation. American Economic Review, 104(10), 3003-3037.
[105]Curtius, H. C., Hille, S. L., Berger, C., Hahnel, U. J. J., & Wüstenhagen, R. (2018). Shotgun or snowball approach? Accelerating the diffusion of rooftop solar photovoltaics through peer effects and social norms. Energy policy, 118, 596-602.
[106]Local Government Association. (2023). Using behavioural insights to encourage energy efficiency. https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/using-behavioural-insights-encourage-energy-efficiency
[107]Hafner, R., Elmes, D., Read, D., & White, M. P. (2019). Exploring the role of normative, financial and environmental information in promoting uptake of energy efficient technologies. Journal of Environmental Psychology, 63, 26-35.
[108]Local Government Association. (2023). Using behavioural insights to encourage energy efficiency. https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/using-behavioural-insights-encourage-energy-efficiency

Case study 12: Choosing the right messengers

The contagion effect described above depends in part on who is influencing us, and so the identity of the messenger, and the extent to which they are trusted and credible, matters.[109] [110] When it comes to pro-environmental messaging, there is evidence that people prefer messengers who are **experts** and who represent **impartial, third-party organisations with a non-commercial interest** in the issue.[111] [112] A good example is the widespread uptake of heat pumps in Finland, which was led by an independent body (The Finnish Heat Pump Association (SULPU)).[113] This is an independent body tasked with the mission of supporting widespread heat pump adoption in Finland, not dissimilar in their role to Smart Energy GB's function for smart meters in Great Britain. SULPU leverages education and training as a key tool for raising heat pump awareness in Finland (see Figure 28 below), in collaboration with heat pump designers, contractors, customers, sellers and other stakeholders. SULPU also regularly partners with the European Heat Pump Association (EHPA).[114] The SULPU holds many of the characteristics of a strong messenger for Net Zero: it is an independent body with no commercial interest in the sale of heat pumps and is a trusted, unified source of information for the public. Importantly, the SULPU works to push forward the heat pump rollout in Finland with great success: [115] currently, over 20% of Finland's heating comes through heat pumps,[116] and efforts from SULPU have contributed to continued growth in recent years (growth increased by over 50% in 2022)[117]

[109]Yale Program on Climate Change Communication. (2021). Radio stories increase conservatives' beliefs that Republicans are worried about climate change. https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/radio-stories-increase-conservatives-beliefs-that-republicans-are-worried-about-climate-change/

[110]Hafner, R., Elmes, D., & Read, D. (2019). Exploring the role of messenger effects and feedback frames in promoting uptake of energy-efficient technologies. *Current Psychology*, *38*, 1601-1612.

[111] Hafner, R., Elmes, D., & Read, D. (2019). Exploring the role of messenger effects and feedback frames in promoting uptake of energy-efficient technologies. *Current Psychology*, *38*, 1601-1612.

[112] Goodarzi, S., Masini, A., Aflaki, S., & Fahimnia, B. (2021). Right information at the right time: Reevaluating the attitude–behavior gap in environmental technology adoption. *International Journal of Production Economics*, *242*, 108278.

[113] Finnish Heat Pump Association SULPU. (2024). Homepage. https://www.sulpu.fi/english/

[114] Ehpa. (2024). Homepage. https://www.ehpa.org/

[115]Rapid Transition Alliance. (2021). Share The jump to pumps: how Finland found an answer to heating homes. https://rapidtransition.org/stories/peer-to-peer-support-and-rapid-transitions-how-finland-found-an-answer-to-heating-homes/

[116]SULPU. (2024). Onnistunut Lämpöpumppupäivä 2024. SULPU kiittää. Esitykset käytettävissä. https://www.sulpu.fi/lampopumppualan-huipputapahtuma-15-2-2024-klo-9-15-heurekassa-ilmoittautuminen-avattu/

[117] Ehpa. (2022). In Finland heat pumps sales increased 50% in 2022. https://www.ehpa.org/news-and-resources/news/in-finland-heat-pumps-sales-increased-50-in-2021/

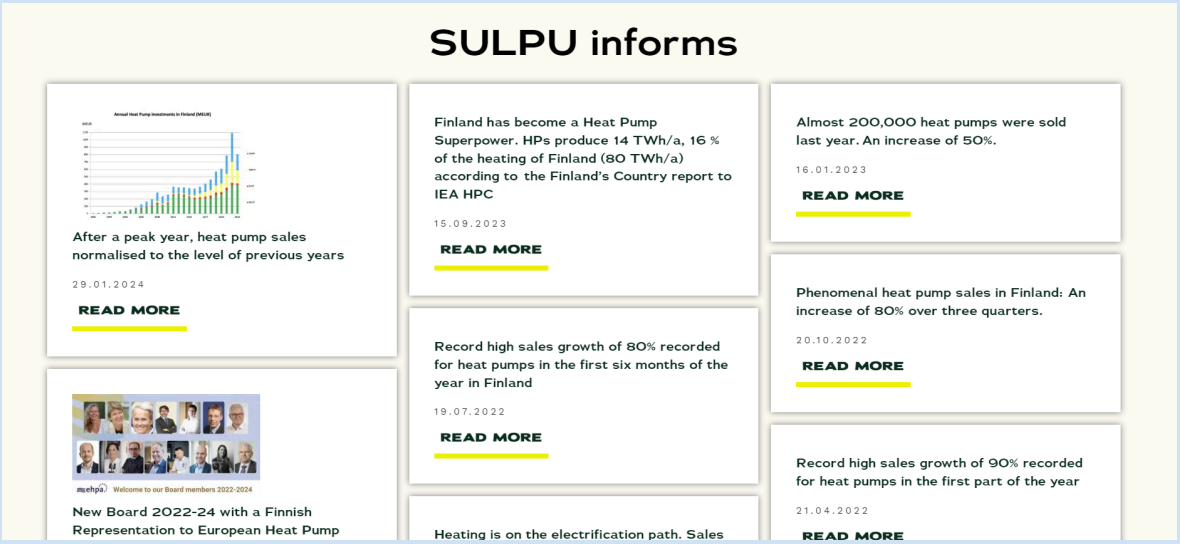


Figure 28. *The Finnish Heat Pump Association website with articles from the heat pump industry.*[118]

A more modest effort but with equal attention paid to the identity of the messengers, the UK Government's 'One Step Greener' campaign used a diverse set of 26 messengers to reach various demographics across the UK, from youth activists to NHS staff, thereby making sustainability relatable and mainstream (see Figure 29).[119]

Figure 29. *The UK's One Step Greener Ambassadors webpage banner.*[120]

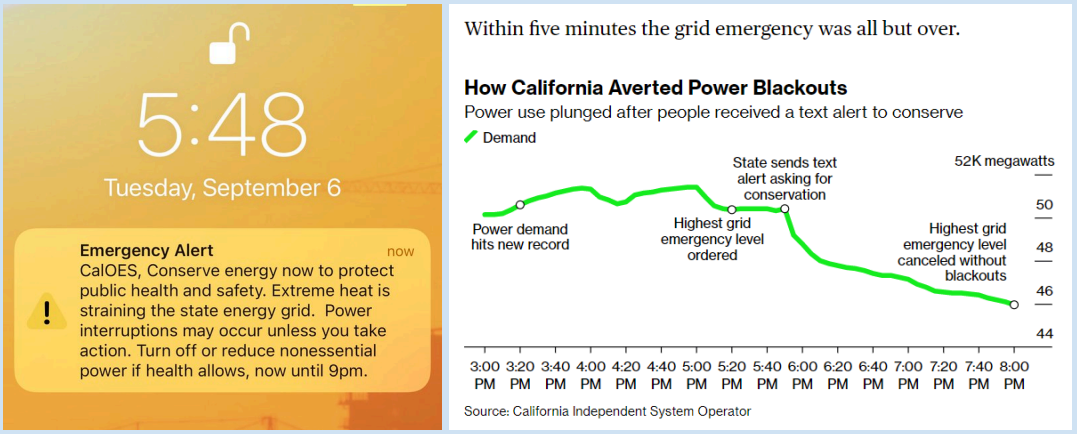
[118] Finnish Heat Pump Association SULPU. (2024). Homepage. https://www.sulpu.fi/english/
[119] UN Climate Change Conference (2021). One Step Greener Ambassadors. https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20230312075614/https://together-for-our-planet.ukcop26.org/onestepgreener-ambassadors/
[120]UN Climate Change Conference (2021). One Step Greener Ambassadors. https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20230312075614/https://together-for-our-planet.ukcop26.org/onestepgreener-ambassadors/

Case study 13: Timely prompts and moments of change

People are also more likely to change their habits and choices during transitions that interrupt their typical patterns of behaviour and provide a unique window for a re-set. Therefore, communicating with people when they are moving house, or when a car breaks down, or a boiler malfunctions, could have a significantly greater impact than communicating at random moments in people's lives. Many examples exist:

- Participants who recently relocated and received a behavioural intervention reported more significant positive changes in environmental household behaviours, such as water and energy consumption.[121]
- The window of opportunity is short for using prompts to encourage new electric car owners to switch to a greener energy supplier. Email opening rates of the prompt declined from over 70% immediately after purchase to 40% for recipients owning their EV for over three months.[122]
- Studies have shown that even strike action on public transport acts as a timely event that has the power to shift commuter behaviours in the long-term.[123]

But timely moments are not just about moments of change. It also pays to prompt people at the moment of decision. For example, ongoing healthy-eating campaigns are less effective than prompts during the moment of purchase or food selection. The same is true for energy-use behaviours. One case study suggests that hundreds of thousands of Californians may have been prevented from being plunged into darkness in the middle of a heat wave, through the use of real-time SMS prompts (see Figure 30 below). Estimates suggest that this nudge helped to reduce energy demand, from its peak at 47,357 megawatts, by 1.2 gigawatts in the moments following the text.[124]



[121]Verplanken, B., & Roy, D. (2016). Empowering interventions to promote sustainable lifestyles: Testing the habit discontinuity hypothesis in a field experiment. Journal of environmental psychology, 45, 127-134.
[122]Nicolson, M., Huebner, G. M., Shipworth, D., & Elam, S. (2017). Tailored emails prompt electric vehicle owners to engage with tariff switching information. Nature Energy, 2(6), 1-6.
[123]Van Exel, N. J. A., & Rietveld, P. (2001). Public transport strikes and traveller behaviour. Transport Policy, 8(4), 237-246.
[124]Bloomberg Law. (2022). A Text Alert May Have Saved California From Power Blackouts. https://news.bloomberglaw.com/environment-and-energy/a-text-alert-may-have-saved-california-from-power-blackouts

Figure 30. *Timely text from the State of California to reduce energy use (left) and recorded power use over time as texts were sent out (right).*[125]

Figure 31 below demonstrates a campaign focused on driving adoption by encouraging timely and immediate action at a time of need, specifically when households are seeking ways to reduce energy costs. The Smart Energy GB's Energy Saving Tips campaign used practical advice as an entry point, such as lowering boiler flow temperature or turning off appliances on standby, showing potential savings in clear, relatable terms. However, the fundamental goal of the campaign remained to drive smart meter adoption. The smart meter was positioned as a key tool, enabling individuals to monitor the energy savings they achieved by following the tips. By highlighting the smart meter's role in tracking energy consumption, the campaign successfully linked immediate energy-saving actions with the broader objective of installing smart meters in households, making it both timely and actionable.

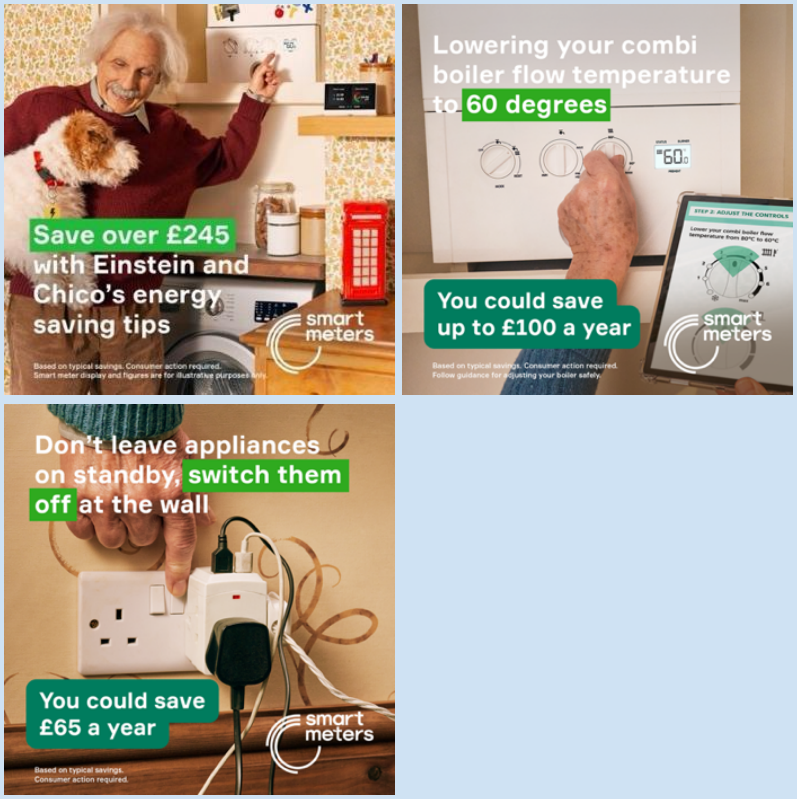


Figure 31. *Smart Energy GB's Energy Saving Tips campaign, which was delivered through marketing, communications and political channels to increase message impact.*

As a further example, Smart Energy GB's contextual campaign targets people in an 'admin' mindset, searching online to complete household tasks such as sorting their pensions or preparing their home for winter weather. These placements delivered an 80% increase in traffic to the Smart Energy GB website and a 76% increase in conversion (click out to energy supplier sites) for the disengaged audience that was targeted.

[125]Bloomberg Law. (2022). A Text Alert May Have Saved California From Power Blackouts. https://news.bloomberglaw.com/environment-and-energy/a-text-alert-may-have-saved-california-from-power-blackouts

Figure 32. *Smart Energy GB's contextual campaign*

9. Governance: coordinating across government, industry, and civil society

Past communication and policy efforts for Net Zero can also teach us a lot about the challenges of managing initiatives aimed at decarbonising the economy on a large scale. In the Net Zero context, organisations leading the public engagement and communications efforts may also be best placed to coordinate and collaborate with a diverse network of government bodies, regulatory agencies, energy suppliers, product and technology manufacturers, environmental and consumer bodies, and, critically, consumers themselves.

In this section, we look at two case studies through the lens of collaboration and governance.

"For all of the home energy and transport sectors, there are commercial interests, there are consumer interests because there is consumer choice in all of those parts, and they are all within the public policy goals so immediately you can see a context of complex stakeholder networks and communities within those fields (maybe even more complex, when you consider manufacturers and wider industry stakeholders). This requires delicate governance and navigation, a skill that Smart Energy GB has developed over the course of the smart meter rollout"
Alistair Gibbons, Director of Finance and Operations, Smart Energy GB

Partnerships between communicators, policymakers, industry leaders, and consumers are essential to the effective delivery of ambitious marketing, communications and public engagement, and therefore essential to the delivery of Net Zero. By fostering collaboration across these groups, communicators help to align goals and create a unified front that accelerates the adoption of sustainable practices by helping to bring consensus, coherence of messaging, the 'Net Zero brand', information and advice, and address misinformation early. Collaboration can also leverage economies of scale and the best talents and resources available.

Industry partners contribute their technical expertise and practical insights, while policymakers can offer regulatory support and incentives that facilitate wider acceptance and integration. Importantly, engaging consumers directly ensures that their needs and concerns are addressed, increasing public buy-in and participation. This collective endeavour can function more impactfully with a coordination body at its centre, and it makes some sense that this would be the organisation that 'owns' the public-facing brand and gains the public's trust and credibility.

In Part A section 2, on page 24, we presented our survey data on the types of organisations that consumers trust and want to see lead such a campaign.

Below, we highlight two case studies.

Case study 14: Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) 'Go Ultra Low Campaign'

The 'Go Ultra Low' campaign, a collaboration between the UK government and leading automotive manufacturers, was launched with the primary aim of promoting the adoption of ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEVs) in the UK. Spearheaded by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT), this initiative sought to raise awareness about the benefits, capabilities, and practicality of ULEVs for personal, business, and fleet use, as well as to educate the public and help to overcome misconceptions about EVs.[126] [127]

The Go Ultra Low campaign was a notable example of a successful partnership between the government and the automotive industry. This collaboration involved (i) joint funding (the initiative was jointly funded by the government and major automotive brands, pooling resources to maximise the campaign's reach and impact), (ii) unified messaging (by working together, the government and industry ensured that the campaign's messages were consistent, accurate, and credible), and (iii) resource sharing (leading automotive manufacturers, including BMW, Nissan, Renault, Toyota, and Vauxhall, collaborated to share resources and expertise). This collaboration allowed for a more comprehensive and effective campaign, which the public trusted.

Collaboration also enabled more engaging and ambitious initiatives to run through the Go Ultra Low campaign. For instance, partnerships with vehicle manufacturers as part of the campaign led to the Electric Vehicle Experience Centre, which allowed consumers to test drive vehicles from various brands without any pressure to purchase.[128] [129]

Mike Hawes, then Chief Executive of SMMT said: ***"Some of the country's leading automotive brands are pooling resources with government to encourage more car buyers to consider going ultra-low. We want the 'Go Ultra Low' campaign to help the public understand how these new cars work, their benefits and capabilities, and how they could be a perfect fit for their personal, business or fleet needs."*** [130]

In a report to parliament, the SMMT said that the Go Ultra Low campaign "***supports the interests of the UK automotive industry at home and abroad, promoting a united position to Government, stakeholders and the media***",[131] and "***this partnership between government and vehicle manufacturers helped to provide consumers with the knowledge they require to support them when making a decision to purchase a***

[126] Iea. (2017). Go Ultra Low partnership between government and OEMs. https://www.iea.org/policies/3001-go-ultra-low-partnership-between-government-and-oems
[127] SMMT. (2014). Car buyers urged to Go Ultra Low in new campaign. https://www.smmt.co.uk/2014/01/car-buyers-urged-go-ultra-low-new-marketing-campaign/
[128] Renault. (2019). Electric Vehicle Experience Centre. https://www.renault.co.uk/partnerships/evec.html
[129] SMMT. (n.d.). Written evidence from Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (ELV0117). https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/125593/pdf/
[130] SMMT. (2014). Car buyers urged to Go Ultra Low in new campaign. https://www.smmt.co.uk/2014/01/car-buyers-urged-go-ultra-low-new-marketing-campaign/
[131] SMMT. (n.d.). Written evidence from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (ELV0050)https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/79867/pdf/

plug-in vehicle". [132]

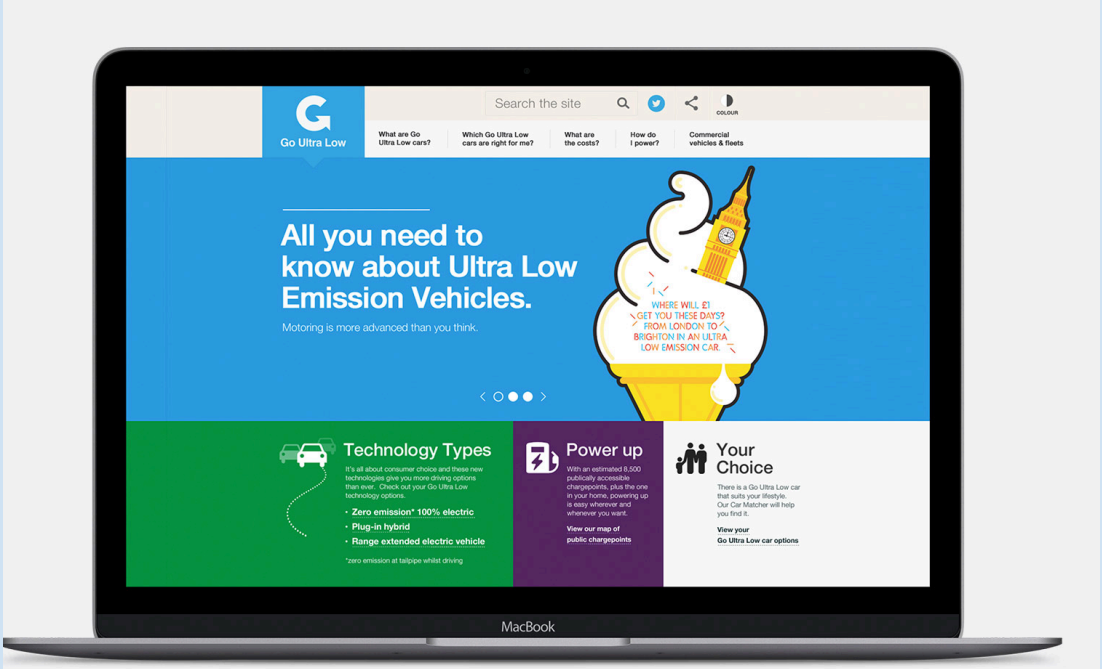


Figure 33. *Go Ultra Low campaign website.* [133]

Case study 15: Partnerships and stakeholder engagement during the smart meter rollout

One major lesson from the smart meter rollout is that having an organisation that sits between Government and industry, that is responsible for driving the consumer uptake aspects of the roll-out, is pivotal: this organisation can work to balance and liaise with these diverse parties and ensure coordination and collaboration.[134] [135] During the smart meter rollout, Smart Energy GB played this role, by coordinating between Government stakeholders, energy industry stakeholders and regulators. A range of strategic initiatives were crucial to their success:

Representing stakeholders on the board: A central learning from Smart Energy GB's work is the importance of representing the diverse perspectives of stakeholders on the board and integrating them within governance at all levels, which is made up of energy suppliers, consumer groups, and heavily shaped by Government bodies, network operators and independent perspectives across the energy industry.[136] This supports efficient stakeholder collaboration for the smart meter rollout, with a variety of

[132] SMMT. (n.d.). Written evidence from Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (ELV0117). https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/125593/pdf/
[133] Go Ultra Low. (n.d.). Go Ultra Low. https://scott-thomsen.webflow.io/go-ultra-low
[134] Gimeno Rivera, L. (2023). Can the public-private partnership solution achieve decarbonisation of healthcare infrastructures?
[135]Lee, W. J., Juskenaite, I., & Mwebaza, R. (2021). Public–private partnerships for climate technology transfer and innovation: lessons from the climate technology centre and network. *Sustainability*, *13*(6), 3185.
[136] Smart Energy GB. (2024). The board. https://www.smartenergygb.org/about-us/the-board

organisational benefits, knowledge efficiencies, and a cohesive stakeholder consensus and endorsement.

Developing an Industry Relations team: One unique facet of Smart Energy GB is its Industry Relations team. This team functions as a central hub for all communication between industry and Smart Energy GB's work, adding value through coordination, facilitating collaboration, mapping, and communicating the challenges, tensions and strategies across all stakeholders in the smart meter rollout.

"Over time we developed our Industry Relations team to act as a conduit between different key stakeholders. This team means we can be more efficient, address supplier needs, and provide feedback more appropriately. From my understanding, a team like this is unique. It is certainly a lesson for wider Net Zero communications efforts: organisations need to have a dedicated focus on understanding changes in the market and liaising with suppliers and industry in a timely manner."

Sara Higham, Director of Corporate Affairs, Smart Energy GB

Working directly with suppliers and authorities on implementation: Smart Energy GB has collaborated with a wide variety of partners to promote the smart meter rollout. For instance, partnerships with Citizens Advice involving close on-the-ground community-level engagement have been noted as an effective strategy.

"Partnerships with Citizens Advice have been very useful - it serves as a great example of engaging at the community level with a credible voice. SEGB's local trials especially. By operating at this level, SEGB were a bit more nitty gritty, on the ground, dealing with real people, which is very important… It is about collaboration, from my experience it's clear that when frontline issues arise, SEGB can refer to Citizens Advice for help."

Colin Griffiths Policy Manager in Smart Metering, Smart Homes & Digital, Citizens Advice

Different partners and messengers: Partnerships between communicators and practitioners can also function to support behaviour change in particular population segments too. Different segments face different challenges (see point 6 of section 2) and respond to different messengers, so partnerships can function to leverage and foster change in the most helpful and impactful ways for different groups.

For example, Smart Energy GB's partnership with Poundland was designed to improve reach amongst low-income demographics and those living in fuel poverty among Poundland's 13 million customers. The partnership campaign involved providing people with clear information and direct advice in-store and online about smart meters and home energy. The partnership was shown to have an impact on the mental availability of smart meters (i.e. top of mind awareness), was rated to be easy to understand (76%) and informative (68%), and it generated smart meter reappraisal. Partnerships like these between communicators and practitioners will be critical across different sectors for Net Zero.

10. Conclusions

Achieving Net Zero is a complex, multifaceted challenge that requires concerted efforts across multiple domains. The race for technological advancement, the need for substantial investment, huge policy and bureaucratic challenges relating to planning and infrastructure, issues of security and international geopolitics, to name a few. One thing we must surely get right, entirely within our power to do so, is public engagement. If we don't bring the public along on this 25-year journey, all of those other challenges will be exacerbated or overwhelmed by a lack of trust in institutions, a failure of narrative for a Net Zero future, inadequate support for critical policies, low consumer willingness to adapt, or low consumer demand to adopt.

In this report, we've made ten clear arguments that lay out the need for stronger communications, marketing and public engagement for Net Zero. We've also shown that the public really wants it, and we've provided evidence on the kind of organisation that might be best placed to deliver it.

We've articulated these arguments twice over: once through our 'upstream-downstream' model to show how these efforts fit into a broader behavioural, economic and socio-political understanding of 'how society changes'; and then summarised in a more practitioner-oriented 4As strategy. This simple strategy highlights the importance of raising *Awareness*, ensuring public *Acceptance* (/agreement /advocacy), improving *Access* to green choices, and ultimately driving *Adoption* at scale. And we've brought together a wide range of case studies which help bring elements of the task ahead to life.

We've been pleased to work with Smart Energy GB on this as partners in thought leadership because while smart meters are far from the perfect analogy (e.g. they don't come with a direct price tag like solar, don't present complex consumer choices like EVs, and don't have effortful, confusing adoption journeys like heat pumps), the smart meter rollout is nonetheless probably the best case study we have. It's the best case study for getting green technology into nearly every home in the country. It's also the best case study in terms of the wide range of public engagement and campaign elements delivered by Smart Energy GB. And it's the best case study in terms of the type of organisation we need: one that is independent, yet deeply connected and capable of coordinating a web of relevant voices and stakeholders. One whose messaging is recognisable to the public, but also credible and trusted.

Taking all of this evidence into consideration, we believe there is a compelling case for a similar organisation, with an even bigger remit. Accepting the need for a chorus of voices spreading a common message, we nonetheless see the value of a central and coordinating organisation. The primary face of the Net Zero transition from a consumer engagement and behaviour change perspective. Strong branding, public recognition, and credibility. The skills to deliver effective campaigns on a large scale. Behavioural expertise to be able to strategically support a diverse public through an

adoption and behaviour change journey potted with barriers and challenges. Commercial marketing savvy to move consumers from technology apathy to real demand for new products. The ability to run research to understand the public's needs and beliefs. A remit to coordinate campaign and public engagement activity across a complex range of stakeholders including suppliers, manufacturers, retailers, regulators, other consumer bodies, communities and more.

Net Zero delivery is a challenge for so many reasons. We must not make the job even harder by failing to bring the public along on this 25-year journey.