



Resources for communicating climate change

There are dozens of resources available online that provide either general advice about communicating climate change, specific advice about influencing particular sustainable behaviours, or focus on the challenges of getting climate science across clearly. Here is an alphabeticised list of all the key resources, with a brief description to allow the most useful and relevant information to be identified.

The **American Psychological Association (APA)** has produced a lengthy report on the 'interface between psychology and global climate change'. It is written for an audience who are familiar with psychological research and the way it is reported. Published in 2009, it covers a wide range of ways in which the discipline of Psychology can contribute to responding to climate change, including information on perceptions of climate change, psychological barriers to engaging with climate change, and ways of influencing behaviour.

The **Behavioural Insights Team** in the UK Government Cabinet Office has produced a report on behaviour change and energy use. It applies insights from behavioural economics and applies them to the challenges faced by the UK Government in developing effective policies for decarbonisation. It is primarily designed to show how the government are incorporating behavioural economics into their policies for decreasing household energy use and increasing uptake of low-carbon technologies/household improvements. Although its scope is limited to behavioural economics (only one part of the puzzle in terms of promoting sustainable behaviour), it contains some interesting practical applications of theory and research to national policy problems. Closely related is the Institute of Government's MINDSPACE report. With a focus on policy-making, it also sets out how behavioural economics can be applied to public policy.

CamelClimate is resource for educators to enable them to effectively teach about climate change and allowing them to create and share educational resources.

Campaign Strategy. Chris Rose runs the organization Campaign Strategy and has been publishing free newsletters on campaigning and behaviour change since 2005. Not all of them are about sustainable behavior, but many are.

Carbon Brief, the climate change media organisation, has a very readable guide to what is known and what is not known about climate change science, and provides a regular 'fact checking' service of climate change media reports. Their website also contains excellent profiles of key actors in the climate change debate – from scientists to sceptics – as well as many other useful resources.

The **Centre for Research on Environmental Decisions (CRED)** at Columbia University published a guide to the psychology of climate change communication in 2009 that they describe as being written for scientists, journalists, political aides and the interested public. It is clear and well-written, and translates complex topics into simple messages. It talks about several different aspects of cli-

mate change communication – from scientific uncertainty, to the importance of engaging people in groups to have the most impact on behaviour.

Climate Access is a very useful collection of resources for a broad range of climate change communication activities. It launched in 2011 in the US, and it takes a similar approach to Talking Climate in that it seeks to round-up and share good examples of climate change communication resources. It offers a Resource Hub where existing reports can be accessed, a Campaign Gallery featuring examples of campaigns related to climate change and sustainability, a 'members only' section where practitioners and researchers can discuss the latest research in a secure forum, and 'tip sheets' on different aspects of climate change communication.

Climate Bites focuses on the more informal side of communication – metaphors and soundbites, humour and stories – to develop a 'toolkit' for communicators to use. It contains lots of examples of ways of phrasing arguments about climate change that appeal to more than just the usual suspects.

Climate Central is a climate science communications resource written by scientists and communicators containing articles, videos, animations and interactive graphics.

The George Mason **Centre for Climate Change Communication** is the home of the public attitudes polling series 'Six Americas', which uses segmentation analyses to pull out trends in US public opinion towards climate change.

Climate Communication is a recently launched US initiative to publicise climate change science, assist journalists and support scientists. It has some nice interactive tools on different aspects of climate change science.

Climate Crossroads is a guide – unusually based on actual research, rather than a summary of others' research – that aims to apply what is known about effective 'framing' techniques to messages about global warming. It contains some valuable insights about the sort of language and terminology that is likely to make or break a campaign, although is oriented quite strongly towards a US audience.

The **Climate Outreach and Information Network (COIN)** has a series of 'practitioner guides' on the psychology of promoting sustainable behaviour by Dr Adam Corner from Cardiff University. Some of the resources have been incorporated into this website, but others are only available from the COIN site. They include academic references, but are written with practical outcomes in mind, and so are of interest to campaigners, organizations interested in targeting individual sustainable behaviours, and community groups.

Climate Science Explained. Green Alliance has recently produced a short '3 page' briefing on climate science, again aimed primarily at politicians. It is a concise and well-referenced overview of the state of knowledge about climate science, easier to digest (but less detailed) than the Royal Society summary of the latest climate science.

Climate Science Rapid Response Team is a service for journalists and policymakers that provides access to expert scientists.

Climate Wisconsin is an innovative approach to communicating climate change. It is an educational multimedia project featuring stories about climate change, told through videos of ordinary people who are being affected by climate change across the state of Wisconsin in the US.

Common Cause. On behalf of a coalition of NGOs, Tom Crompton published a report last year called 'Common Cause: the case for working with our cultural values'. This argues that social marketing techniques which focus on changing one particular behaviour at a time will not produce sufficiently radical change, suggesting that instead we need to shift the values and 'deep frames' governing society.

Community Based Social Marketing. The website for the Community Based Social Marketing programme in the US is run by Doug McKenzie Mohr, who has produced a lot of work on applying social marketing strategies at the community (rather than individual) level. It contains archives of lots of studies and practical examples applying social marketing techniques, but is strangely difficult to navigate, and many of the papers are not directly accessible from the website. Despite this, there is a great deal of information available there, so it is still worth a look (although his book on the same topic is in some ways a better option).

ecoAmerica published the results of audience research they conducted in the US trialling different ways of presenting climate change and energy messages. The report is short and easy to understand, and contains important pointers for developing language and messages that don't make people 'switch off'. It is especially useful for spoken communication – the research involved playing people recordings of actors reading our different messages, which the audience then rated in 'real time'. This methodology may offer a particularly promising way of improving climate change communication, but has not yet been used widely.

Green Living Blog. Green Alliance has a regularly updated blog that is dedicated to 'green living'. The blog hosts original posts from experts on sustainable behaviour and climate change communication in general, as well as providing updates about new developments in the field.

The **Guardian** newspaper has an excellent section on its website dedicated to providing clear and concise answers to the most frequently asked questions about climate science.

From **Hot Air to Happy Endings** . Green Alliance published a report in 2010 called From Hot Air to Happy Endings – How to inspire public support for low carbon policies. The report features contributions from a wide range of experts on inspiring public support for tackling climate change. It is aimed at politicians, but is well written and edited so also appeals to a wider audience. It is not really a practical guide – more of a space for new thinking.

Review of sustainable behaviour. Professor Tim Jackson produced a very comprehensive and detailed (but highly readable) review of the evidence on 'sustainable consumption' for the Sustainable Development Research Network. The scope of the review is actually much broader than the title suggests, and covers behaviour change theory, habits, norms, and more social and structural ways of understanding human behaviour.

New Scientist magazine has a guide to what is known and unknown about climate change science.

Nudge, Think or Shove? The public engagement specialists Involve and the Development Education Association have published a report that compares and contrasts three broad classes of behaviour change approach – Nudge (behavioural economics), Think (more far-reaching, and socially embedded approaches) & Shove (legislation & policy). It is a useful counter-perspective to the heavy reliance on 'nudge' approaches found in many behaviour change reports.

The **Public Interest Research Centre** hosts an advisory paper that was prepared for the British Government (Department of Energy & Climate Change) in 2010, on the topic of communicating climate change to mass public audiences. The paper is authored by a range of academics and climate change communication practitioners, and it describes nine principles for effective communication. It is aimed at policy makers, but is also of interest to NGOs and other campaigners.

Realclimate is written by climate scientists, and deals with scientific topics and issues currently reported by the mainstream media. It is a popular website, but fairly technical.

The British **Royal Society** published a summary of the latest climate science in 2010. It is designed to distinguish the areas over which there is very little uncertainty from the areas where a great deal remains to be understood. It is less complex than the IPCC Assessment reports, but still quite technical, and designed as a reference document rather than a communication aid.

Scottish Government review of behaviour change strategies. The Scottish government recently produced a review of research on low carbon behaviours, which they are now using to shape their policies on promoting sustainable behaviours. It goes further than the UK government has in delving deeper into behaviour change strategies than simply behavioural economics and social marketing.

Selling Sustainability. Although it is now a few years old, the Selling Sustainability report by NESTA is still a good summary of the social marketing approach to behaviour change, building its arguments on the much more extensive literature on social marketing for health behaviour initiatives.

Sell the Sizzle. Futerra are communications consultants who focus on corporate responsibility and sustainability, but who have also done a lot of work with the UK government. They have produced a number of reports that apply insights from social marketing to corporate and government sustainability communication challenges, including the short, snappy **Rules of the Game** and the more recent **Sell the Sizzle**. The biggest advantage of Futerra reports are that they are well written and very easy to read, but they typically don't contain references, and are more aimed at a corporate audience than NGOs or community groups.

Skeptical Science. Dozens of well-constructed arguments and counter-arguments to common sceptical positions are contained in Skeptical Science, run by the Australian John Cook. One of Skeptical Science's most popular publications is a downloadable '**debunking handbook**' taking on some of the most common sceptical arguments.

Spence & Pidgeon – The Psychology of Sustainable Behaviour. In the journal *Environment*, Dr Alexa Spence & Professor Nick Pidgeon published a very readable overview of the psychology of sustainable behaviour. Describing social and individual barriers to public engagement, as well as providing lots of useful references to further reading, it is much more easily digestible than the American Psychological Association **report** on the same subject.

Warm Words. The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) published two excellent reports (**Warm Words** and **Warm Words II**) looking at the way climate change is reported in the media, identifying 'narratives' about climate change that have emerged, and identifying ways that the 'climate story' can be told more effectively. The reports are now a few years old, but they are still highly relevant today. They are especially useful for people communicating climate change through the media (e.g. press officers).

WWF reports. Through its programme Strategies for Change, the WWF (and Change Strategist Tom Crompton in particular) has released a series of important and influential reports that have helped to redefine communication about climate change and the environment more generally. The first report, **Weathercocks & Signposts: The Environment Movement at a Crossroads**, provided a powerful critique of the 'social marketing' approach to behaviour change, and introduced the idea that campaigns should instead be based on values. The next report, **Simple & painless? The limitations of Spillover in Environmental Campaigning**, examines the evidence that 'small steps' will lead to positive 'spillover' into more substantial sustainable behaviour. Finally, a downloadable **book** on the role of human identity in meeting environmental challenges contains a number of important insights about how to go beyond focusing on specific behaviours and think more in terms of people's identities and lifestyles. They are all excellent resources – although more in terms of progressive thinking than practical guidance.

The Yale Project on Climate Communication is a good resource for a range of climate change communication challenges. It includes useful information on climate change in the media, examples of 'outreach' projects in the US and selected academic publications on climate change communication.