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Environment Agency

UK Climate Impacts Programme

The Rules of the Game

Principles of Climate Change Communications

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Prepared for: Climate Change Communications Working Group
Date: February 2005

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Introduction to The Rules of the Game

Why were the principles created?

The game is communicating climate change; the rules will help us win it.

These principles of climate change communication were created as part of the UK Climate Change Communications Strategy, an evidence-based strategy aiming to change attitudes towards climate change in the UK. The strategy was produced by FUTERRA for the Climate Change Communications Working Group.

Because the strategy will lead to a practical implementation phase, it is imperative that it be based on robust evidence. There is a lot of evidence relating to attitudes towards and behaviour on climate change, general environmental behaviour change and the whole issue of sustainable development communication. We have judiciously reviewed this material and used it as the basis for our recommendations on a Climate Change Communications Strategy for the UK. The Rules of the Game ensures that our recommendations for a climate change communications strategy are based upon the best evidence available.

Evidence for the principles

There are quite a lot of principles in this document: twenty, to be exact. We would have preferred fewer but the evidence wouldn't allow us to consolidate to that level, and we were not prepared to sacrifice accuracy for brevity. The principles inter-relate and are co-dependent, so this is not a 'pick and mix' set of ideas.

As we reviewed the research for these principles, one 'über-principle' emerged:

> **Changing attitudes towards climate change is not like selling a particular brand of soap – it's like convincing someone to use soap in the first place**

Our choice of sources has reflected this über-principle. There is a lot we can learn about changing attitudes from traditional marketing, but since we are selling an idea rather than a product, we cannot rely on marketing theory alone to communicate climate change. There are a few key sources that form the bedrock of the principles, notably *The Impact of Sustainable Development on Public Behaviour* (Andrew Darnton), Motivati*ng Sustainable Consumption* (Tim Jackson) and *Personal Responsibility and Changing Behaviour* (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit).

These reports have already drawn together the majority of the evidence base on behaviour change and the communication of sustainable development issues. Rather than duplicate the effort and insight of these experts, we have stood upon their shoulders to create this applicable set of principles for changing attitudes towards climate change. If you want to go back to the original sources on behaviour change and environmental issues, we recommend the three sources above as your first port of call.

Several very recent attitude surveys on climate change have also heavily influenced our principles and, where possible, we have added examples from real campaigns and direct learning from experience in the field.

How to use this document

The Rules of the Game is presented in a 'workmanlike' rather than 'academic' format so that the principles can be used immediately. The FUTERRA research team has approached the evidence base by searching for concrete applicable principles, not just interesting or comprehensive analysis. We have been able to take this approach by building on the learning and analysis of many other researchers, practitioners and thinkers in this field.

Please don't flick to the back of this document to find the conclusions; the principles themselves are the only outcome of this research, and they can be found towards the beginning of the document. If you are of an inquisitive nature, or if you will be making decisions with a financial implication based on these principles, then we recommend that you 'drill down' through the evidence, and even return to the sources if you need to.

We have built this report so that it can be interrogated on a number of levels, depending upon how much evidence you want to see; there is therefore a fair amount of repetition. We apologise, and hope you understand the necessity of this approach.

A brave new world?

Taken together, the principles tell a story that is quite different to that which the sustainable development community has told itself recently. At first glance, some of the principles may seem counter-intuitive to those who have been working on sustainable development or climate change communications for many years. Some confront dearly cherished beliefs about what works; a few even seem to attack the values or principles of sustainable development itself.

We at FUTERRA are recognised practitioners in communicating sustainable development issues; even so, the evidence for these principles has taught us new ways of looking at communication. Interpreting the evidence has

ignited and fuelled an intense debate within FUTERRA, and we anticipate that it will initiate a similar conversation within the wider sustainable development community.

However, the evidence is clear – quite pointedly so in places. In general, most people prefer to ignore evidence that contradicts their assumed or received attitudes. We do not want the principles to be too uncomfortable to read, but we must also ensure they are not dismissed because they might come into conflict with anecdotal or personal experience.

These principles are a first step to using sophisticated behaviour change modelling and comprehensive evidence from around the world to change attitudes towards climate change. We need to think radically, and the Rules of the Game are a sign that future campaigns will not be ‘business as usual’. This is a truly exciting moment.

The Themes of the Principles

There are six themes under which the principles are grouped. These tell the story of the evidence.

1 Blowing Away Myths

Many of the oft-repeated communications methods and messages of sustainable development have been dismissed by mainstream communicators, behaviour change experts and psychologists.

Before we go into what works, our principles make a ‘clean sweep’ of what doesn’t.

2 A New Way of Thinking

Once we’ve eliminated the myths, there is room for some new ideas. These principles relate to some of the key ideas emerging from the behaviour change modelling for sustainable development.

The majority of these principles are primarily based upon the excellent work of Tim Jackson in collating the major behaviour change theories of sustainable consumption, and the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit on the policy implications of behaviour change. The deep analysis on sustainable development communication and target groups reaction to climate change messages from Andrew Darnton has helped to consider these models in a targeted way.

3 Linking Policy and Communications

These principles clearly deserved a separate section. All the evidence was clear – sometimes aggressively so – that ‘communications in the absence of policy’ would precipitate the failure of any climate change communications campaign right from the start.

4 Audience Principles

In contrast to the myths, this section suggests some principles that *do* work. These principles are likely to lead directly to a set of general messages, although each poses a significant challenge in implementation.

5 Style Principles

More work must be done on the detail of style for the climate change communications strategy. However, these principles lend some guidance on the evidence of stylistic themes that have a high chance of success.

6 Effective Management

These principles are drawn primarily from the experience of others, both in their successes and in the problems they faced.

The Principles of Climate Change Communication

Section 1: Blowing Away Myths

1. Challenging habits of climate change communication

Don't rely on concern about children's future or human survival instincts

Recent surveys show that people without children may care more about climate change than those with children. "Fight or flight" human survival instincts have a time limit measured in minutes – they are little use for a change in climate measured in years.

Don't create fear without agency

Fear can create apathy if individuals have no 'agency' to act upon the threat. Use fear with great caution.

Don't attack or criticise home or family

It is unproductive to attack that which people hold dear.

2. Forget the climate change detractors

Those who deny climate change science are irritating, but unimportant. The argument is not about *if* we should deal with climate change, but *how* we should deal with climate change.

3. There is no 'rational man'

The evidence discredits the 'rational man' theory – we rarely weigh objectively the value of different decisions and then take the clear self-interested choice.

4. Information can't work alone

Providing information is not wrong; relying on information alone to change attitudes *is* wrong. Remember also that money messages are important, but not *that* important.

Section Two: A New Way of Thinking

5. Climate change must be 'front of mind' before persuasion works

Currently, telling the public to take notice of climate change is as successful as selling Tampax to men. People don't realise (or remember) that climate change relates to them.

6. Use both peripheral and central processing

Attracting attention to an issue can change attitudes, but peripheral messages can be just as effective: a tabloid snapshot of Gwyneth Paltrow at a bus stop can help change attitudes to public transport.

7. Link climate change mitigation to positive desires/aspirations

Traditional marketing links products to the aspirations of their target audience. Linking climate change mitigation to home improvement, self-improvement, green spaces or national pride are all worth investigating.

8. Use transmitters and social learning

People learn through social interaction, and some people are better teachers and trendsetters than others. Targeting these people will ensure that messages are transmitted effectively.

9. Beware the impacts of cognitive dissonance

Confronting someone with the difference between their attitude and their actions on climate change will make them more likely to change their *attitude* than their *actions*.

Section Three: Linking Policy and Communications

10. Everyone must use a clear and consistent explanation of climate change

The public knows that climate change is important, but is less clear on exactly what it is and how it works.

11. Government policy and communications on climate change must be consistent

Don't 'build in' inconsistency and failure from the start.

Section Four: Audience Principles

12. Create 'agency' for combating climate change

Agency is created when people know what to do, decide for themselves to do it, have access to the infrastructure in which to act, and understand that their contribution is important.

13. Make climate change a 'home' not 'away' issue

Climate change is global issue, but we will feel its impact at home – and we can act on it at home.

14. Raise the status of climate change mitigation behaviours

Research shows that energy efficiency behaviours can make you seem poor and unattractive. We must work to overcome these emotional assumptions.

15. Target specific groups

A classic marketing rule, and one not always followed by climate change communications from government and other sources.

Section Five: Style Principles

16. Create a trusted, credible, recognised voice on climate change

We need trusted organisations and individuals that the media call upon to explain the implications of climate change to the average citizen.

17. Use emotions and visuals

Another classic marketing rule: changing behaviour by disseminating information doesn't always work, but emotions and visuals usually do.

Section Six: Effective Management

18. The context affects everything

The prioritisation of these principles must be subject to ongoing assessments of the UK situation on climate change.

19. The communications must be sustained over time

All the most successful public awareness campaigns have been sustained consistently over many years.

20. Partnered delivery of messages will be more successful

Experience shows that partnered delivery is often a key component for
projects that are large, complex and have many stakeholders.

The Evidence for the Principles

Section One: Blowing Away Myths

PRINCIPLE ONE: Challenging habits of climate change communication

a) Don't rely on concern about children's future or human survival instincts

Concern about children's future

Two recent public attitudes surveys have made a surprising claim: some parents seem to care no more about environmental and climate change issues than non-parents. Consumer research by the Welsh Consumer Council/Friends of the Earth Cymru indicates that a respondent having dependent children does not necessarily lead to an increased concern for the effects of climate change on the lives of future generations. Indeed, the *Day After Tomorrow* survey indicates that having children may negatively affect attitudes to climate change (66% of those *without* children consider climate change the most important environmental issue, compared to 59% of those *with* children).

"Recent surveys show that people without children may care more about climate change than many parents."

The review by Stewart Barr conducted among the families participating in the Global Action Plan programme found no higher understanding of environmental issues among the participants compared to the general public, indicating that concerns for the future of the children could not have been a significant motivating factor. Other qualitative work on the scheme by Kersty Hobson supports this conclusion, with the primary motivators for the families' involvement being the competitive element and the opportunity for debate within and between families.

Friends of the Earth's recent research into climate change communications concluded that the issue needs to be 'tethered' to the bundle of concerns that make up people's day-to-day priorities. Arguably, parents have more pressing short-term concerns and than non-parents, making the importance of 'tethering' greater for them than for those with fewer commitments and higher levels of leisure time and disposable income.

"'Fight or flight' human survival instincts have a time limit measured in minutes, not years."

The National Families and Parenting Institute recently commissioned research to understand where parents turn for information and advice on raising their children. Preliminary results are telling:

> "When it comes to help, advice or support for bringing up their children, parents… are most likely to have turned to their family or friends. Around half of

> parents have also gone to the GP…or child's school for help or advice… findings indicate that making links with these sources, …could be an effective way of reaching a wide range of parents."

A logical conclusion to draw from these findings is that one key reason for parents' apparent lack of interest in the consequences of climate change could be down to the messages, values and information imparted by their support networks. Until families, friends, schools and health service providers identify action on climate change as part and parcel of being 'a good' parent', parents are unlikely to think start adopting this attitude either.

The evidence base indicates, therefore, that relying on an automatic sense of intergenerational equity is unlikely to succeed.

Human survival instincts

A closely linked issue is the much-vaunted 'survival instinct' of humanity. Unfortunately, the evidence suggests that, although strong, the human instinct for self-preservation only works in the immediate short term, and rarely works collectively. Messages of long-term 'enlightened self-interest' may be less persuasive then anticipated. As the eminent behavioural scientist Richard Dawkins stated in a lecture on sustainability:

> "From a Darwinian point of view, the problem with sustainability is this: sustainability is all about long-term benefits of the world, or of the ecosystem, at the expense of short-term benefits. Darwinism encourages precisely the opposite values. Short-term genetic benefit is all that matters in a Darwinian world. Superficially, the values that will have been built into us will have been short-term values not long-term ones…if it were left to Darwinism alone, there would be no hope. Short-term greed is bound to win."

Whether or not one subscribes to Dawkins' theory (and for the sake of focus and brevity we won't attempt a critique in this report), examples abound of human behaviour which sacrifices long-term benefits for short-term gains. On an organisational level, corporations' need for regular profits in the short-term often damages their ability to invest in long-term research and development programmes, and their ability to mitigate their environmental impacts.

On an individual level, many smokers choose to continue smoking despite being well aware of the dire consequences of their habit. In *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell draws on observations of a group of smokers who were asked to guess how many years of life, on average, smoking from the age of 21 would cost them.

> "They guessed nine years, but the real answer is more like six or seven. Smokers aren't smokers because they underestimate the risks of smoking. They smoke even though they overestimate the risk of smoking."

In extreme situations, it would seem that the human survival instinct can run directly contra to long-termist view of survival. Following the Australian bush-fires of 2003, many people called for increase levels of bush clearing and logging despite the fact that the fires weren't directly caused by the number of trees or the density of the bush. This kind of short-term 'survival' strategy arguably contributes to deteriorating chances of survival for the human race in the long term.

Evidence sources:

- Becher, H. (May 2004) *Parenting in multi-faith Britain; Family practices and parenting support across faith groups, a survey of parents' and children's views*. National Families and Parenting Institute. http://www.nfpi.org.uk/data/research/research.htm
- Darnton, A. (May 2004), *The Impact of Sustainable Development on Public Behaviour, Report 1 of Desk Research commissioned by COI on behalf of Defra*, Internet: http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/taking-it-on/background.htm
- Dawkins, Prof. R. (November 2001), *Sustainability doesn't come naturally: A Darwinian perspective on values*, Internet: http://www.environmentfoundation.net/events-and-publications.htm
- Friends of the Earth UK (November 2004), Climate Change Communications Research
- Gladwell, M. (2000), *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, London: Abacus
- Leaman, J. and Norton, A. (2004), *The Day After Tomorrow - are the British too cool on Climate Change?,* London: MORI Social Research Unit
- Welsh Consumer Council and Friends of the Earth Cymru (2004), *Climate Concern Cymru*, as yet unpublished

PRINCIPLE ONE: Challenging habits of climate change communication

b) Don't create fear without agency

It has long been a truism that fear can create apathy. Several of the behaviour change models that we studied relate to this problem. In a situation where a sense of 'agency', or ability to act, is low, there are particular barriers to attitude change.

Evidence missing that climate change fear creates apathy. If the behaviour change models are evidence based, we need to say so

"Fear can create apathy if individuals have no 'agency' to act upon that fear."

The evidence shows that campaigns utilising fear should be used with great caution. If the generation of fear is contemporaneous with the creation of agency and specific important actions that can be taken, then the fear may be of use. However, as our other Principles state, huge effort is needed to create a sense of agency on climate change in the first place. The majority of the evidence has clearly shown a problem of agency on climate change in the UK, where only 9% of people believe that climate change would be best tackled by individual households.

Other recent reports, such as that produced by the NCC, show that this lack of agency is even more pronounced amongst disadvantaged communities. Shipworth, referring to Eagly & Kulesa, states that "fear messages in these circumstances can leave people feeling powerless, and creating fear is unlikely to persuade."

"Use fear with great caution."

Another consideration is inclusivity. It is both unfair and unproductive to seek to generate fear in disadvantaged groups who lack the agency and/or infrastructure to enable them to act to resolve this fear:

> "There are particular difficulties for low-income consumers who have fewer household recycling facilities, rely on landlords for housing repairs and, in some areas, have infrequent, unsafe public transport"
> (*Green Choice: What Choice?*)

Furthermore, American ethicist Arthur Dobrin contends that fear hampers people's moral development (that is; the development of their ability to perceive and then do the right thing). According to Dobrin's research, high levels of self-esteem are linked to high levels of ethical agency, a contention which goes against the mechanism of using fear and guilt, which:

> "…attack and tear down a person's self-esteem, promoting a 'constricted' personality that shuns risks and controversy… Those people who have been exposed to high levels of fear, guilt and

> shame in their development tend to be people who get stuck in lower levels of moral reasoning"

A dissertation from the Eindhoven University of Technology on a study using controlled conditions found that it is difficult to predict human reaction to fear, and whether or not it will allow people to better process the information that is being presented to them. "Fear arousal may activate a 'positive' heuristic, for example 'fear should be fought', resulting in a positive attitude towards the recommended coping responses, or it may activate a 'negative' heuristic, for example 'fear is a bad counsellor', resulting in a negative attitude" (Meijnders). Simply put, the use of fear should be avoided unless its effect on the audience is known and tested.

A section from the unpublished Welsh Consumer Council/Friends of the Earth Cymru research states:

> "The difficulty is that, as climate change becomes more current in the media, the problem may end up seeming so enormous that people will retreat into apathy, concluding that there is little point in them doing anything about it, especially at the household level when individual actions can seem so insignificant."

Evidence sources:

- BBC/ICM poll on Climate Change (July 2002), Internet: http://news.bbc.co.uk/nol/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/28_07_04_climatepoll.pdf
- Dobrin, A (1998), *Ethical People and How They Get To Be That Way,* Ethica Press, New York
- Meijnders, A. (1998), Climate change and changing attitudes - Effect of negative emotion on information processing, Dissertation, p.117. Eindhoven: Eindhoven University of Technology, Faculty of Technology Management, Internet: http://alexandria.tue.nl/extra3/proefschrift/boeken/9803363.pdf
- Shipworth, M. (2000), *Motivating Home Energy Action - A Handbook of What Works*, Australian Greenhouse Office, Internet: http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/coolcommunities/motivating/index.html
- Stevenson, G., (ed. 2003), *Green choice: what choice?*, London: NCC

PRINCIPLE ONE: Challenging habits of climate change communication

c) Don't attack or criticise home or family

Most people are familiar with the saying, "An Englishman's home is his castle". It seems that this tradition has rather important cultural and social implications for behaviour change. The sources listed below found that middle-class North Americans focus much of their emotional life on home and family, linking this closely with their houses: therefore, "[a]n attack on the integrity of the house is easily translated emotionally into an oblique and indirect attack on the solidarity of the family".

"It is unproductive to attack the things which people hold dear."

The Handbook also found that a energy conservation campaign in Victoria, Australia called *101 Ways to Keep Vic Fit* emphasised negative emotions such as guilt without giving a clear indication of required actions to alleviate those emotions. For instance, one advert had an animated house bemoaning its occupants:

> "It's a pity they aren't more 'earth proud' as well. While they look after me [the house] they could do a lot more to care for the world around them. It's just in small unthinking ways...It would help if they showed a little more imagination."

This message tends to have a similar negative impact as when using fear without creating a sense of agency.

Human emotional attachment to the home are particularly important when planning programmes that invite individuals into people's homes. Energy efficiency work carried out by Groundwork/Enprove using the Intermediary Labour Market model necessitates a high level of quality supervision and support to maintain customer confidence and satisfaction.

Humans are social creatures who hold cultural and social values that it can be unproductive to attack, however tempting this may seem to climate change converts.

Evidence sources:

- Groundwork/Enprove (2004), information provided on Intermediary Labour Market, as yet unpublished
- Shipworth, M. (2000), *Motivating Home Energy Action - A Handbook of What Works*, Australian Greenhouse Office, Internet: http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/coolcommunities/motivating/index.html

PRINCIPLE TWO: Forget the climate change detractors

While those in the sustainable development movement find media coverage of climate change detractors both irresponsible and potentially dangerous, it appears, in fact, that these questioners are at worst a nuisance. Recent evidence shows the UK public to consider climate change as a real threat, and demonstrate an understanding that it is due to human activities:

"The detractors are irritating but unimportant. "

> "90% of Britons think that the UK climate will be affected by global warming, with just under half of respondents (47%) thinking it will be affected 'a lot'."
> (BBC/ICM, July 2004)

> "7 out of 10 respondents thought climate change is due to human activities. Only 13 per cent of people thought that climate change was not due to human activities. A further 16 per cent either did not know or were unable to answer."
> (Defra, 2001)

"The UK public accept that climate change is happening and that it is due to human activity."

> "A considerable majority of 17 out of 20 (85%) think that our weather patterns are proof of a changing climate."
> (Welsh Consumer Council/Friends of the Earth Cymru – unpublished)

> In response to the question, "I think the present high temperatures we are experiencing are caused by climate change", the following responses were given:
> Agree strongly 21%
> Tend to agree 39%
> Tend to disagree 21%
> Disagree strongly 8%
> Don't know 11%"
> (YouGov online poll, 2004)

> "Most people were at least fairly convinced that climate change is happening. …Forty-three per cent of respondents said they were very convinced that the earth's climate and long-term weather patterns were changing. A further 42 per cent were fairly convinced. There was little variation in the extent to which different age groups were at least fairly convinced."
> (Defra, 2001)

The battle for the public's acceptance of climate change has been won. Continuing to focus our efforts on detractors, however noisy or annoying they may be, is a red herring.

If one links these findings to a later rule, "Beware the impacts of cognitive dissonance", it would seem that the barrier to behavioural change lies not so much in persuading the UK

public that climate change is alive and kicking, but rather in translating attitude into behaviour change.

Evidence sources:

- BBC/ICM (July 2004). Poll on Climate Change, Internet http://news.bbc.co.uk/nol/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/28_07_04_climatepoll.pdf
- Defra (2001), *Survey of Public Attitudes to Quality of Life and to the Environment: 2001*, Chapter 3, Internet, http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/statistics/pubatt/ch3h09.htm
- Welsh Consumer Council and Friends of the Earth Cymru (2004), *Climate Concern Cymru*, as yet unpublished
- YouGov (2004), Online Poll, Internet: http://www.yougov.com/yougov_website/asp_besPollContent/bes_polResults.asp?rId=702&sID=4&wId=0&UID=

PRINCIPLE THREE: There is no 'rational man'

> "In the centre of the mainstream or standard (neoclassical) economic model of decision-making resides the anonymous rational man who performs omniscient probability calculations with unlimited cognitive resources, and maximizes expected utility in the face of scarce resources."

In his critique of the 'rational man' paradigm, XT Wang sets the scene thus, going on to show that it has a variety of fundamental deficiencies which prevent it from being seen as a complete model of human behaviour. Wang goes on to argue that:

> "Evolution did not shape the mind to be context-free and rational in general, but rather to be well adapted to its environment. This view stands in sharp contrast to the mainstream economic vision of unbounded rationality, which often assumes generalized all-purpose mechanisms based on the laws of logic and probability."

"We rarely objectively weigh the value of different decisions and then takes the clear self-interested choice."

Further refutation of this outdated theory shown below is taken from the Cabinet Office report, although any number of recent research sources could have been used to illustrate similar points, including *Carrots, Sticks and Sermons* (Demos/Green Alliance), and the work by Andrew Darnton and Tim Jackson.

> "The traditional textbook model of the rational man is subject to three key problems:
> First, its assumptions are rarely fully met. Often there are large gaps in the information available to individuals – as well as the state. For example, how should a definite cost or benefit be weighted against an uncertain cost or benefit? Such complications have led economists to focus upon 'bounded rationality' – people are rational within the boundaries of their knowledge and abilities. Second, its assumptions can often be wrong, particularly about human cognition and motivation. A large body of research has sought to map empirically the actual pattern of human cognition, and the empirical facts about people's wishes and aspirations. These turn out to be different to the claims of the rationalist model. Third, the textbook rational man model tends to neglect the wider social 'ecology' in which people live. For example, peer pressure can be a hugely important determinant of behaviour."

"The evidence discredits the 'rational man' theory."

Any communications strategy which assumes that well-formed rational arguments will result in attitude or behaviour change is likely to be unsuccessful.

Evidence sources:

- Halpern, D. and Bates, C. (February 2004). *Personal Responsibility and Changing Behaviour: the state of knowledge and its implications for public policy.* London: Prime Minister's Strategy Unit.
- Wang, XT *Bounded Rationality of Economic Man: New Frontiers in Evolutionary Psychology and Bioeconomics,* Journal of Bioeconomics 3: 83-89; 2001

PRINCIPLE FOUR: Information can't work alone

"Providing information is not wrong; relying on information alone is wrong."

Providing information is not wrong; relying on information alone is. As the Demos/Green Alliance report states, it is tempting to assume that providing information will act as a 'billiard ball', knocking into attitude and setting it rolling into behaviour change in a nice linear process. Unfortunately, this is a patent untruth. One of the seven principles for successful influencing identified in the Demos/Green Alliance report is: "don't assume that information leads to awareness – or awareness to action". This is not a new conclusion, as the example below (drawn from a paper published in 1980) shows:

> "In the US, information programs were at the forefront of efforts following the first energy crisis of the 1970s. These programs aimed to educate consumers using energy audits and printed materials. Alone, education resulted in negligible energy savings. Even in combination with loan schemes, it was still ineffective. By 1980, already over 90 separate studies had been conducted testing the impact of information programs on consumers' home energy use. Research indicates that pamphlets, videos and other information services result in very little savings - possibly in the region of 0-2%."

As many studies have shown, people tend to rationalise their own actions. Everyone is prone to emphasising the positive aspects of their current actions and the negative aspects of alternatives that they could have chosen, and people tend to ignore information that does not fit easily with their existing ideas.

Doug McKenzie, a social marketer, finds that most programmes that aim to foster sustainable behaviours have, to date, been information-intensive.

> "[Information provision] assumes that by enhancing knowledge of an issue, such as climate change, and encouraging the development of activities that are supportive of an activity, such as using mass transit, behaviour will change. Unfortunately, a variety of studies have established that enhancing knowledge and creating supportive attitudes often has little or no impact upon behaviour."

A one-way flow of information out to the public, relying on conventional methods such as television adverts, leaflets and posters, is not enough to stimulate people to act in a different way. The research from the Welsh Consumer Council/Friends of the Earth Cymru finds that "[t]hey will not

provide the two-way process which is necessary to embed new values so deeply that they affect consumer decision-making, nor will they provide the vital social context." The journey of information campaigns for sustainable behaviours is paved with a number of high-profile failures – indeed, Jackson gives an extreme example of where a California utility spent more money advertising the benefits of home insulation than it would have cost to install the insulation itself in the targeted homes.

The House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee released a report in 2003 on public understanding of sustainability issues. Evidence submitted to them on the 'Are You Doing Your Bit?' information and behaviour campaign included an evaluation, published by DETR in November 2000, which found that while the campaign's brand recognition among its target audience was strong, "there had only been small changes in consumer attitudes or behaviour". The Committee concluded that "Defra's… major awareness-raising campaigns relating to sustainability to date have been less than half-hearted and ill-focused."

The research into the information sources of Global Action Plan participants found that they used no further information sources than do the general public, and demonstrated no deeper environmental knowledge. Their behaviour, therefore, was affected by factors other than information.

Linked to the myth that information will result in behaviour change is the perception that humans are primarily influenced by economic motives over all else. It has, however, proved extremely difficult to predict if the public will act in its own economic self-interest.

The Australian Handbook listed in sources finds that:

"Also remember that money is important, but not that important."

> "Price is very far from the sole determinant of whether a household undertakes an energy action, even when the action is expensive. Whether or not a householder invests in an expensive energy efficiency measure has a great deal to do with whether their friends and associates have invested in that measure. Home energy efficiency improvements, along with other home improvements, are not just investments. Home improvements may enhance pleasure, convenience or status – features often associated with consumer items."

This is not to say that financial messages will not work; just that, as in the case of information, the 'money motive' is unlikely to be effective at changing attitudes if used alone.

Evidence sources:

- Collins, J., Thomas, G., Willis, R. and Wilsdon, J., Demos/Green Alliance (December 2003). C*arrots, sticks and sermons: influencing public behaviour for environmental goals.* London: Demos/Green Alliance
- Darnton, A. (May 2004), *The Impact of Sustainable Development on Public Behaviour, Report 1 of Desk Research commissioned by COI on behalf of Defra*, Internet: http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/taking-it-on/background.htm
- Jackson, Prof. T. (August 2004). *Motivating Sustainable Consumption, a review of evidence on consumer behaviour and behavioural change*. Guildford:University of Surrey
- McKenzie-Mohr, D. (2000). *Promoting Sustainable Behaviour: An Introduction to Community Based Social Marketing.* Journal of Social Issues, Fall 2000. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers
- Welsh Consumer Council and Friends of the Earth Cymru (2004), *Climate Concern Cymru*, as yet unpublished

Section Two: A New Way of Thinking

PRINCIPLE FIVE: Climate change must be 'front of mind' before persuasion works

Sustainable development and climate change communicators expend huge amounts of effort finding persuasive arguments to convince the public to change their behaviour or attitudes. The most expert use mainstream success strategies such as social networking, emotions and viral messages.

"Currently, telling the public to take notice of climate change is like trying to sell Tampax to men."

However, and all of the excellent messages and innovative channels used to convey climate change messages may still not reach people, simply because they don't realise they should be paying attention. It's not that people dismiss the arguments for public transport when they choose to get into a car; they have forgotten that they have a choice.

There are several psychological and behaviour modelling theories that help explain why climate change, and climate change mitigation behaviours, never reach the 'intentional choice' part of a particular person's brain. As Tim Jackson puts it:

> "Consumer choices are influenced by moral, normative, emotional, social factors, facilitating conditions and the sheer force of habit…in many cases people will be locked into behaviours and behavioural patterns that seem to be resistant to change."

"People don't realise (or remember) that climate change relates to them."

A good analogy is that of the advertising of sanitary products to women. Most men have sat through Tampax advertisements, seen packages on the shelves, or been in the vicinity when other, more complex and viral, messages are being used. But very few would really notice the messages, and even fewer would change their behaviour as a result. When it comes communicating climate change, one might as well be advertising Tampax to men – even clever messages will not work unless people realise they have a decision they need to make. Of course, very few men have to make a decision about Tampax, but it's a good example of how we can ignore pervasive marketing if we choose to.

This also helps explain the '30:3 rule' – that 30% of people state they would purchase 'ethically', but only 3% do. It's not that the 27% are lying; it's just that when you asked them the question, they had the issue brought 'front of mind', but when they are cruising the supermarket shelves the issue has fallen out of the 'intentional behaviours' category.

We recognise that this principle, as well as many of the others in this section, is closer to behaviour rather than simply attitude change mechanisms. We feel that they are

nevertheless essential for climate change communications strategies, and must be kept in mind from the outset.

Evidence sources:

> Jackson, Prof. T. (August 2004). *Motivating Sustainable Consumption, a review of evidence on consumer behaviour and behavioural change*. Guildford: University of Surrey

"A tabloid snapshot of Gwyneth Paltrow at a bus stop can 'peripherally' change attitudes to public transport."

PRINCIPLE SIX: Use both peripheral and central processing

One of the most influential recent theories on persuasion is called the Elaboration Likelihood Model. This states that two distinct psychological processes are involved in attitude change: central and peripheral processing.

Central processing works when a person is 'paying attention' to a message, considering it and fitting it into his or her attitudes (like in a 'one to one' discussion with someone he or she respects). This is most likely to occur when the issue is already 'front of mind'.

Peripheral processing happens when the issue is not 'front of mind', and the individual in question hasn't noticed it, or is looking for something else. Spotting a magazine photo of an attractive celebrity using public transport (as Gwyneth Paltrow was recently shown doing in London), the 'peripheral cues' associate the behaviour with potential rewards or desires ("I could be like Gwyneth Paltrow"). In this type of processing, an individual never really engages in the underlying message ("use public transport"), but only the set of emotions and desires associated with it.

Central processing is more robust and enduring, but there is significant potential with peripheral processing for those audiences which are difficult to reach directly.

Evidence sources:

> Jackson, Prof. T. (August 2004). *Motivating Sustainable Consumption, a review of evidence on consumer behaviour and behavioural change*. Guildford: University of Surrey

PRINCIPLE SEVEN: Link climate change mitigation to a positive desire/aspiration

The association of climate change with a 'positive' desire or issue is a challenge, but a potentially very fruitful avenue if it can be achieved. The 'very positive message' at the heart of the persuasion theory outlined by Tim Jackson can be seen in almost every advertisement one cares to mention; perhaps the most immediately familiar is sex being used to sell cars.

Traditional marketing theory emphasises the need to make the product or service one is trying to 'sell' relevant to the target audience, and capable of meeting a very specific need. Relevance and benefits cannot be promoted in the same way to different types of people. Although it is easy to assign stereotypes, since we all have different needs, face different problems and espouse different values, our desires and aspirations will vary significantly from person to person.

One could argue that the reason sex sells cars is because an enhanced sex life is the particular aspiration common to the largest percentage of the car-buying public. One of the problems with promoting action on climate change is the undeniable lack of specificity about the proposition. Climate change solutions aren't tailored products or services created to improve a specific element of one's life; their basic aim is to tackle a global phenomenon.

Friends of the Earth's 2004 research shows that respondents were aware that "we all have to do something, but this awareness was expressed with a certain amount of negativity rather than a positive "we can all pull together" sentiment. No-one has yet managed to make climate change seem like something that means something specific to everyone according to their different perspectives and values. The challenge will be to persuade the public that getting involved in climate change action will deliver specific personal benefits.

We will investigate the potential to link climate change mitigation to desires for home improvement, self improvement, green spaces or national pride.

Evidence sources:

> Friends of the Earth UK (November 2004), Climate Change Communications Research

> Jackson, Prof. T. (August 2004), *Motivating Sustainable Consumption, a review of evidence on consumer behaviour and behavioural change*. Guildford: University of Surrey

PRINCIPLE EIGHT: Use transmitters and social learning

"People learn through social interaction."

Much of the Demos/Green Alliance report, and a significant theme of the Tim Jackson report, is the huge potential of using social networking – and specifically 'transmitters' – to generate attitude and behaviour change.

As the unpublished Welsh Consumer Council/Friends of the Earth Cymru report also states:

> "The process of behavioural change is fundamentally a social one: humans are influenced by the behaviour of others around them, often to a greater extent than is at first apparent. Change cannot take place in a vacuum, but only in the context of a cultural shift where other people are also trying to make changes."

Several of the specific behaviour change models we have investigated relate directly to social learning and networks (see the extended section on behaviour change modelling below). *The Economist* magazine recognises the importance of this process:

> ""viral" marketing… means trying to spread the message by word of mouth – still considered the most powerful form of advertising"

Social learning theory states that people learn from each other all the time, by modelling the behaviour around them and by using individual human contact and communication to set their behaviour and attitudes. This is why it is so difficult to change an individual's attitude without taking into account the attitudes of his or her family, friends, colleagues and community. Watch a yawn spread from face to face to see how easily people copy each other. Richard Dawkins created the concept of 'memes' to help explain this social and cultural phenomenon:

"Some people are better teachers and trendsetters than others."

> "Examples of memes are tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches. Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperms or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation."

Within this social learning environment, 'transmitters' are the gateways to change. They are also called 'sneezers', 'trendsetters', 'opinion formers', 'influentials', 'early adopters', 'network hubs' and "the new persuaders" in the various research studies. Websites such as www.trendsetters.com have been created to cater to self-aware transmitters.

Transmitters are key to the conversion of general public attitudes, as the quote below from The Economist demonstrates:

> "Getting trendsetters to buy (or be given) new products in order to influence a broader market is hardly a new idea. So-called "early adopters" are a similar group, much sought after by consumer-electronics companies in order to give their new products a good start. But there is a wider group which marketers sometimes call "prosumers"; short for proactive consumers".

NOP (amongst multiple other organisations who specialise in targeting this group) explains further, "one consumer in 10 tells the other nine how to vote, where to eat and what to buy".

Engaging this typology is not a simple matter, and trendsetters who lead our taste in shoes or electronics may not be the same individuals who influence our attitudes to macro issues. Nevertheless, exploring the potential to target cultural trendsetters will be a fundamental element of any communications strategy on climate change.

Evidence sources:

- Collins, J., Thomas, G., Willis, R. and Wilsdon, J., Demos/Green Alliance (December 2003). *Carrots, sticks and sermons: influencing public behaviour for environmental goals.* London: Demos/Green Alliance
- Gladwell, M. (2000). *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference.* London: Abacus.
- Jackson, Prof. T. (August 2004). *Motivating Sustainable Consumption, a review of evidence on consumer behaviour and behavioural change.* Guildford: University of Surrey
- Opinion Leader Research (2003). *The New Persuaders: the changing nature of influence.* London: Opinion Leader Research.
- *The Harder Hard Sell*, Jun 24th 2004, From The Economist print edition
- Welsh Consumer Council and Friends of the Earth Cymru (2004), *Climate Concern Cymru*, as yet unpublished

PRINCIPLE NINE: Beware the impact of cognitive dissonance

Leon Festinger's *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* was published in 1957, and has become one of the most influential theories in social psychology. This theory proposes that when individuals behave contrary to their attitudes and beliefs, they become anxious, and are motivated to change their *attitudes* to conform to their *actions*.

The majority of the UK public consider climate change and other environmental issues to be in some way important, and know some things they can do about the problems (even if that is as basic as not dropping litter). But this awareness is significantly higher than the amount of action seen in the market.

"If you confront me with the difference between my attitude of caring about climate change and my unsustainable actions, I will be more likely to change my attitude."

When people do realise that their actions are inconsistent with their attitudes, they become uncomfortable – the feeling psychologists have dubbed 'cognitive dissonance'. To feel comfortable again, there is a choice to be made between two options:

- change actions to be consistent with attitudes; or
- change attitudes to be consistent with actions.

The shocking conclusion from the bulk of the evidence over half a century is that, when in a situation of cognitive dissonance, people will change their attitudes and *not* their actions. In other words, most of us justify our actions by forming new attitudes, or adapting the attitudes we previously held.

Cognitive dissonance can also be caused when people become aware of the conflict between two attitudes. In both cases individuals will struggle to bring the dissonance into line.

Forcing people to confront the gulf between their attitudes towards climate change and their unsustainable behaviour may be tempting, but any communications strategy must take care that any such messages lead to changes in behaviour, not a shift away from the attitudes we are trying to protect and enhance.

Evidence sources:

- Shipworth, M. (2000), *Motivating Home Energy Action - A Handbook of What Works,* Australian Greenhouse Office, Internet http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/coolcommunities/motivating/attitudes.html
- Welsh Consumer Council and Friends of the Earth Cymru (2004), *Climate Concern Cymru*, as yet unpublished

Section Three: Linking Policy and Communications

PRINCIPLE TEN: Everyone must use a clear and consistent explanation of climate change

"The public knows that climate change is important, but not what it is."

While the evidence listed above on climate change detractors shows a high level of awareness around climate change among the UK public, it is still vitally important to build on this with a clear factual explanation. The Welsh Consumer Council/Friends of the Earth Cymru find that:

> "Without the foundation of basic scientific understanding, people will not even be aware that there is a need for change."

Further evidence is provided by the Canadian One Tonne Challenge:

> "Interviewees commented on the absence of a common core of repeated climate change messages among the nearly 200 projects."

A recent response to the UK Sustainable Development Review (from the Scottish Sustainable Development Forum) found that, in the context of sustainable development, "the Government needs to…send out consistent messages to all sectors at all times". With a wide range of departments and bodies communicating on climate change, the co-ordination of a central message can be hard to execute. This is, however, of vital importance, since our research has shown that truly effective communications for climate change are ones which "provide simple, consistent and personal messages over time" (Environment Canada).

Evidence sources:

- Environment Canada (Feb 2004), *Annex A: Public Education and Outreach on Climate Change: Lessons learned and Recommendations*
- Leaman, J. and Norton, A. (2004), *The Day After Tomorrow - are the British too cool on Climate Change?,* London: MORI Social Research Unit
- Welsh Consumer Council and Friends of the Earth Cymru (2004), *Climate Concern Cymru*, as yet unpublished
- UK Government (2004), *Taking it on: developing UK sustainable development strategy together*, Internet: http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/taking-it-on/ssdf/11.htm

PRINCIPLE ELEVEN: Government policy and communications on climate change must be consistent

This principle is an amalgamation of two recommendations: that communications on climate change are supported by appropriate infrastructure, and that government is seen to act in a similar manner to its citizens in changing behaviour to mitigate climate change.

Supporting communications with policy

"Don't 'build in' inconsistency and failure from the start."

Let us present the evidence for the former recommendation first.

> "Time and again, the evidence suggests that external situational factors are a key influence on the uptake of pro-environmental behaviours. Such conditions include the provision of recycling facilities, access to energy efficient lights and appliances, the availability of public transport services and so on. The adequacy of such facilities and services, equality of access to them, and consistency in their standards of operations are all vital ingredients in encouraging pro-environmental choice. Inadequate or unequal access, insufficient information, incompatibilities between different services: all these factors are known to reduce the effectiveness and uptake of pro-environmental behaviours."

Canadian research from the highly successful One Tonne Challenge finds that "public education and public policy should be consistent and support each other. Outreach will not have a significant impact without a supportive policy context". Where communications campaigns for pro-environmental behaviours have had little impact, the evidence points to the isolation of the campaign from wider government goals or policies. The Demos/Green Alliance research suggests that "the failure of the UK's 'Are You Doing Your Bit?' campaign to change behaviour may stem from the lack of linkages to other policies".

These findings support Recommendation 3 from the Phillis Report on government communication:

> "Each department's communications activity must clearly contribute to the department's overall policy aims and objectives."

Leading by example

For the second aspect of this rule, behaviour change models which look at social influence and interpersonal communication can highlight some useful concepts: authority, reciprocity and mutuality.

People will readily comply with authority that they consider legitimate and expert:

> "Evidence suggests a clear role for government in leading by example. Clear environmental management initiatives and strong procurement programmes in both the public sector and within public private partnerships can have a robust influence on sustainable consumption." (Jackson)

In practice, recommendations from the Welsh Consumer Council/Friends of the Earth Cymru report included a call for the Welsh Assembly Government to make its own activity carbon-neutral as far as possible to send a clear message to consumers.

Friends of the Earth's findings on climate change communications act as a reminder of many people's low levels of trust towards the government. Respondents felt that government bodies "don't respond to concerns" or "listen to us". Going to the heart of the matter, it was felt that the government was "doing one thing and saying another". It will be crucial for the public sector to practice what it preaches on climate change.

Evidence sources:

- Environment Canada (Feb 2004), *Annex A: Public Education and Outreach on Climate Change: Lessons learned and Recommendations.*
- Collins, J., Thomas, G., Willis, R. and Wilsdon, J., Demos/Green Alliance (December 2003), *Carrots, sticks and sermons: influencing public behaviour for environmental goals.* London: Demos/Green Alliance
- Friends of the Earth UK (November 2004), Climate Change Communications Research
- Halpern, D. and Bates, C. (February 2004), *Personal Responsibility and Changing Behaviour: the state of knowledge and its implications for public policy.* London: Prime Minister's Strategy Unit
- Jackson, Prof. T. (August 2004). *Motivating Sustainable Consumption, a review of evidence on consumer behaviour and behavioural change*. Guildford: University of Surrey
- Welsh Consumer Council and Friends of the Earth Cymru (2004), *Climate Concern Cymru*, as yet unpublished
- Phillis, B. (January 2004), *An Independent Review of Government Communications,* Internet: http://www.gcreview.gov.uk/news/FinalReport.pdf

Section Four: Audience Principles

PRINCIPLE TWELVE: Create agency for combating climate change

"We have 'agency' when we know what to do, think our contribution is important, decide for ourselves and have access to the infrastructure to act."

The creation of 'agency' amongst the public is a key factor running through much recent public policy. This is perhaps even more relevant for the issue of climate change. The enactment of agency can be described as "the translation of personal norms into behaviour [that] depends on awareness of consequences (of inaction or action) and the ascription of responsibility for those consequences" – that is, feeling able to do what you believe in.

Although the creation of agency is dependent upon a host of factors – of which communications is one of the least important – the communications strategy for climate change must be aware of the environment of agency it is working within and, where possible, seek to improve it.

Shipworth states: "A person is more likely to take environmental actions if they believe that they can bring about change through their own actions. Psychologists call this concept 'locus of control':

- People who believe that their actions can have no impact are considered to have an 'external locus of control' – they believe that actions of powerful others (e.g. God, government) create change. These people are less likely to take environmental actions.
- People who believe that their actions can have an impact are considered to have an 'internal locus of control' – they are more likely to take environmental actions.

Energy action programs need to underline the positive impact that each person's actions have."

Findings from research into participation in a Cotswold District Council recycling scheme reinforce this. Davies, Foxall and Pallister conclude that "having the requisite knowledge and ability to recycle does not mean that an individual will recycle". This in itself does not create agency, and the authors posit that this could be tackled by linking action with big picture results: "Individuals need to know that their recycling efforts are effective in minimizing the amount of waste generated."

In *Brand Green*, Wendy Gordon describes this effect as the 'circle of concern' and 'circle of influence'. If something falls into an individual's circle of concern without also entering his or her perceived circle of influence, the lack of agency to act can lead to apathy or even cognitive dissonance.

From the evidence there are a huge number of potential solutions to this problem, including:

- valuing people's role;
- making climate change personally relevant;

- giving people a sense of control (even if they don't exercise it);
- value 'self-motivated' change above all else; and
- linking to things people CAN and WANT TO do something about (e.g. home improvement).

An influential paper on this subject by Kaplan gives a very useful evolutionary insight to be borne in mind whilst searching for solutions to a lack of agency:

"People are motivated:

- to know and understand what is going on: they hate being disorientated or confused;
- to learn, discover and explore: they prefer acquiring information at their own pace and answering their own questions;
- to participate and play a role in what is going on around them: they hate feeling incompetent or helpless."

This 'reasonable person' model of human motivation seems a far more fruitful avenue for communications on climate change than the 'rational man' model of old.

Evidence sources:

- Benn, S. *et al.* (2004), *Evaluating Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability: Perspectives on the Reflexive Consumer* ; published as part of the Academy of Management Conference, Dunedin, New Zealand 8-11 December 2004
- Davies, J., Foxall, G.R. and Pallister, J. (2002); *'Beyond the behaviour-intention mythology; an integrated model of recycling';* Marketing Theory 2 (1), 29-113
- Gordon, W. (May 2002), *Brand Green: mainstream or forever niche?* London: Green Alliance
- Kaplan, S. (2000), *Human Nature and Environmentally Responsible Behaviour*. Journal of Social Issues, Fall 2000. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Shipworth, M. (2000), *Motivating Home Energy Action - A Handbook of What Works,* Australian Greenhouse Office, Internet http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/coolcommunities/motivating/attitudes.html
- Welsh Consumer Council and Friends of the Earth Cymru (2004), *Climate Concern Cymru*, as yet unpublished.

PRINCIPLE THIRTEEN: Make climate change a 'home' not 'away' issue

"This is a global issue, but we will feel it at home, and we can act on it at home."

Research suggests that most of the British public consider climate change to be a global rather than local issue:

> "60% of Britons think that global warming would best be tackled at a global level. Only 5% think it would be best tackled by Europe; this is interesting as Europe currently sets our environmental laws and is setting up the only continent-wide emissions trading scheme in the world. Just under one tenth of people (9%) think it would be best tackled by individual households."
> (BBC/ICM poll)

> "Most people in Britain accept that it is at the global level that global warming is best tackled, rather than European, national and local levels. Furthermore, around half (52%) agree that it is a waste of time trying to tackle global warming in Britain without international agreement, whilst 41% disagree."
> (MORI, *The Day After Tomorrow*)

This disconnect with the local aspect of climate change must be faced in tandem with the work on agency. The communications strategy must bring climate change 'home', while instilling a sense that local action will have a real difference.

A recent Australian study of attitudes towards corporate responsibility by Sue Benn *et al.*, together with other studies already referenced above, underlines the extent to which attitudes and behaviours are influenced by "personal contacts…[and] localised networks of understanding which are relied upon for expert advice as well as social relationships." By their very nature, personal contacts and localised networks focus overwhelmingly on issues that are understood to have local relevance. Unless climate change is seen as one of these issues, then such networks will remain relatively unchanged (and untapped) by climate change communications.

Evidence sources:

- BBC/ICM (July 2004). Poll on Climate Change, Internet http://news.bbc.co.uk/nol/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/28_07_04_climatepoll.pdf
- Benn, S. *et al.* (2004), *Evaluating Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability: Perspectives on the Reflexive Consumer* ; published as part of the Academy of Management Conference, Dunedin, New Zealand 8-11 December 2004
- Leaman, J. and Norton, A. (2004), *The Day After Tomorrow - are the British too cool on Climate Change?,* London: MORI Social Research Unit

PRINCIPLE FOURTEEN: Raise the social status of climate change mitigation behaviours

"Research shows that energy efficiency behaviours can make you seem poor and unattractive. The opposite must be made true."

Taking energy-saving actions can be socially risky. Our research could find no totally successful example of a campaign that had convinced the public that environmentally friendly actions are sexy, desirable and high-status rather than being associated with poverty or 'worthiness'.

A very telling survey cited by Shipworth highlights the problems rather starkly:

> "A study of undergraduate students in the southwest of the United States found that students felt that individuals using clotheslines to dry clothes were lower in status and poorer than individuals using clothes dryers. They viewed men using clotheslines as less sexually attractive and more homosexual than men using clothes dryers. No campaigns had advocated using clotheslines to save energy, so the students were unlikely to think of clothesline use in environmental terms. On the other hand, campaigns had advocated using public transport to save energy. Nonetheless, students felt that individuals using a bus were lower in social status and less sexually attractive than individuals driving a car."

The climate change communications strategy will integrate methods to raise the status of climate change mitigation behaviours, and make it "cool to care".

Evidence sources:

> Shipworth, M. (2000), *Motivating Home Energy Action - A Handbook of What Works,* Australian Greenhouse Office, Internet http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/coolcommunities/motivating/attitudes.html

PRINCIPLE FIFTEEN: Target specific groups

"A classic marketing rule, not always followed by government."

The vast majorty of the evidence we have gathered mentions the critical need for a targeted campaign, and later in this report we outline some of our learning to date on the attitudes and motivating factors with some demographic groups.

The Demos/Green Alliance report provides the clearest argument for a targeted approach:

> "Commercial marketing campaigns always start out with a very specific demographic in mind. They understand that different sorts of people will respond to different messages, and target their campaigns accordingly. Government influencing, by contrast, often attempts to reach a wider group of people and downplays the need to tailor messages to particular audiences."

Friends of the Earth's 2004 climate change communications research detailed what it termed "a move towards individualisation". It defines this as an increasing sense of disengagement with the notion of being part of society. Despite FOE's sample group belonging to the 'light to mid green' category (i.e. people with higher than average understanding of and commitment to environmental issues), the research reports that "very few" respondents were active in their communities or as campaigners. Instead, respondents were "preoccupied with day to day living; careers/kids/housing". This lack of cohesion and cooperation suggests that the number of different types of audience will be growing as people mix less and have fewer opportunities to exchange views and attitudes. Rather than on relying on simple geographical or demographic categories, evidence that people are spending less time in the community and more in their immediate circle of family and friends implies a need for targeting strategies that are sophisticated enough to deal with such social fragmentation.

Evidence sources: (a few examples from many for this rule)

- Collins, J., Thomas, G., Willis, R. and Wilsdon, J., Demos/Green Alliance (December 2003), *Carrots, sticks and sermons: influencing public behaviour for environmental goals.* London: Demos/Green Alliance
- Environment Canada (Feb 2004), *Annex A: Public Education and Outreach on Climate Change: Lessons learned and Recommendations*
- Friends of the Earth UK (November 2004), Climate Change Communications Research
- Halpern, D. and Bates, C. (February 2004), *Personal Responsibility and Changing Behaviour: the state of knowledge and its implications for public policy.* London: Prime Minister's Strategy Unit
- Jackson, Prof. T. (August 2004). *Motivating Sustainable Consumption, a review of evidence on consumer behaviour and behavioural change.* Guildford: University of Surrey

Section Five: Style Principles

PRINCIPLE SIXTEEN: Create a trusted, credible, recognised voice on climate change

"We need trusted organisations to be called upon by the media to explain the implications of climate change to the average citizen."

One of the key learning outcomes of the One Tonne Challenge in Canada has been the need for "credible spokespersons to deliver clear, consistent messages".

Anecdotally, most of us are aware that in the case of house price rises, for example, the Halifax bank are called upon as a trusted and recognised 'expert voice' to explain the implications for the average householder. Communicators must build a similarly recognised and credible voice to explain the implications of climate change.

Social Influence Theory proposes that "people will readily comply with authority they consider legitimate". The basis of that authoritative voice in a relationship may be categorised in six ways:

- Expert
- Legitimate
- Coercive
- Rewarding
- Persuasive
- Empathetic

We suggest that building 'credible voices' for climate change should use most, if not all six, of these categories.

Evidence sources:

- Environment Canada (Feb 2004), *Annex A: Public Education and Outreach on Climate Change: Lessons learned and Recommendations.*
- The behaviour change modelling section in this report.

"If information doesn't always work, emotions and visuals usually do."

Put some pictures in!

PRINCIPLE SEVENTEEN: Use emotions and visuals

In *Brand Green*, Wendy Gordon explains the need for emotions and visuals:

> "...all brands communicate in code. There is the surface message ('what they say') and the hidden message ('how they say it'). The hidden message is often more heartfelt than the surface message because it uses sensory and emotional cues (colours, symbols, shapes, textures, images) rather than purely rational ones. The hidden messages play a very important role in how people make decisions at point of choice… the challenge for products and services with environmental and ethical credentials is to find the way to connect with people through the heart and senses rather than the mind or logic."

There is a crucial link between this and the point made in principle seven: specificity. When one is trying to tap into the one particular aspiration or desire of a vast number of different people, a visual cue will work far better than the written word. To use the 'sex sells cars' motif once more, a picture of a beautiful woman wearing a skimpy outfit will symbolise different emotions and 'decode' differently to different people.

Evidence sources:

> Gordon, W. (May 2002), *Brand Green: mainstream or forever niche?* London: Green Alliance

Section Six: Effective Management

PRINCIPLE EIGHTEEN: The context affects everything

"The prioritisation of these principles will be subject to an assessment of the UK situation."

Despite the refutation of the 'rational man' model, people are obviously capable of being reasonable, in the sense that they may actually behave as one might logically expect. However, it is also abundantly clear that people have the capacity to behave completely unreasonably as well, or to be reasonable in one instance and wholly unreasonable the next. Stephen Kaplan suggests that circumstances or context have a central role in moderating or affecting behaviour.

In light of this, it is essential to establish a deep understanding of how the UK circumstances may affect the development, design, delivery and – most importantly – the receptivity of the audience to the messages of this communications strategy. In order to do this, ongoing market analysis of the UK situation in regard to climate change must be maintained.

This contextual picture of the UK will be critical in ensuring that the resulting targeted communications, messages and channels are appropriate for each audience, by firmly placing the communications strategy in a realistic setting that reflects the current UK situation.

Evidence sources:

> Kaplan, S. (2000), *Human Nature and Environmentally Responsible Behaviour.* Journal of Social Issues. Oxford: Blackwell.

"All the most successful public awareness campaigns have been sustained consistently over many years."

PRINCIPLE NINETEEN: The communications must be sustained over time

To avoid the 'firework' effect of public communications, whereby a campaign may light up the sky briefly then disappear, it is essential that the Strategy be maintained over time. As Benn *et al.* note in the context of attitudes towards corporate responsibility; "consumers do not undertake high involvement decisions in one step but move in defined and often gradual stages towards such perspectives". All the most successful public awareness campaigns have been sustained consistently over many years, such as the drink-driving and anti-smoking campaigns. The Environmental Audit Committee report strongly advises that "any new initiative should be…protected from resource leakage".

One of the most successful campaigns of recent times is the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children's (NSPCC) Full Stop campaign. It was launched in March 1999 with the aim of ending cruelty to children through building awareness and fundraising. Thanks to sustained activity over the last five years, the Full Stop campaign has already raised more than £100m, and has broken new ground in its sector, revolutionised the NSPCC's fundraising capacity, and had far-reaching consequences for its mission to end cruelty to children

The case for sustained communications point is also made emphatically in the Demos/Green Alliance report:

> "Public influencing is only effective if it is sustained over time. It needs ongoing commitment from government. Strategies should be planned, measured and refined over years or even decades…Given the complexity of environmental issues, there is a need for strong, consistent messages over a long timescale, reinforced with government policy and the actions of other parties."

The reverse is also true; short-term campaigns consistently fail to have a sustained and lasting impact on public awareness due to the sporadic nature of their appearance.

Evidence sources:

- Benn, S. *et al.* (2004) *Evaluating Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability: Perspectives on the Reflexive Consumer* ; published as part of the Academy of Management Conference, Dunedin, New Zealand 8-11 December 2004
- Climate Change Communications Project (May 2004). *A proposal for a new campaign to engage the public in the development of a low carbon future for the UK.* Beyond Green, Save the Planet.
- Collins, J., Thomas, G., Willis, R. and Wilsdon, J., Demos/Green Alliance (December 2003), *Carrots, sticks and sermons: influencing public behaviour for environmental goals*. London: Demos/Green Alliance

> www.nspcc.org.uk

PRINCIPLE TWENTY: Partnered delivery of messages will be more successful

"Experience shows that "partnered delivery is often a key component for projects that were complex, large or had a multitude of partners".

In order to overcome issues of government mistrust, as well as misconceptions of motivation or self-interest, a partnership with a body external to government can dramatically enhance the way a campaign is perceived by the public. As Andrew Darnton notes, this may be especially true in the field of environmental and sustainable development communications:

> "The government is especially unable to get messages across to the public about the environment and behaviour change: the role of NGOs in delivering behaviour change campaigns in partnership with government should be extended."

Partnering with reputable NGOs, community or campaigning organisations can bring additional credibility and strength to a communications strategy. The value of this approach was also acknowledged in Canada in the development of their climate change communications work:

> "Partnered delivery is often a key component for projects that were complex, large or had a multitude of partners. Establishing a multi-stakeholder steering committee was seen to be important."

Not only is public trust in the integrity of the campaign improved, but there are also great economies of scale and maximisation of impact to be achieved by combining forces and mutually reinforcing messages. This notion is promoted by both the work of the Our World Foundation and the Climate Change Communications Project.

> "The overriding point is that climate change is so serious an issue, and therefore the solutions so important, that the proposed campaign should look to stimulate and harness widespread support of key individuals and organisations that can contribute to the campaign to maximise its impacts"
> (Our World Foundation)

> "Working with businesses, NGOs and the media to negotiate partnerships and 'in kind' contributions that will add value to the campaign"
> (Climate Change Communications Project)

Evidence sources:

- Climate Change Communications Project (May 2004). *A proposal for a new campaign to engage the public in the development of a low carbon future for the UK.* Beyond Green, Save the Planet
- Darnton, A. (2004), *The Impact of Sustainable Development on Public Behaviour – Report 1*, London: Andrew Darnton Research & Analysis
- Environment Canada (Feb 2004), *Annex A: Public Education and Outreach on Climate Change: Lessons learned and Recommendations.*

> Our World Foundation, *Climate Change Communications Programme*

Methodology

This report aims to establish a usable set of parameters, or criteria, for the messages and channels involved in communications on climate change.

The principles combine theories of behaviour change with historical examples and other evidence. To establish an effective set of principles, it was essential for us to understand current thinking about the origins of behaviour and how to change it, and the extent to which past campaigns have been successful (or unsuccessful) in changing the behaviour of different groups on climate change. We also reviewed the research relating to current attitudes of the British population towards climate change.

- First, we explored the implications of current relevant **theories of behaviour and behaviour change** for communications about climate change.

- Second, we conducted an assessment of **previous communications** that aimed to further sustainable development in the UK.

- Third, we reviewed reports on the effectiveness of different approaches to behaviour and attitude change from **outside the UK**.

- Fourth, we undertook a study of the **attitudes and awareness** of the public towards the issue of climate change.

The principles were the product of the interplay between academic models of behaviour change and concrete examples of where communications have contributed to a change in public behaviour on the environment. To provide a realistic context for this, the study of public attitudes towards climate change was used to indicate where the principles can be most effectively applied.

The principles were discussed in exhaustive detail within FUTERRA, in particular where several recommendations drawn from the evidence might be consolidated into a single principle. Once a potential principle had been suggested, we reviewed our evidence to identify any material that could qualify or contradict it. It was also important that each principle should refer back to at least one, but ideally several, pieces of evidence. This process ensured that the principles did not stray from the evidence, and that they were not based on exceptional circumstances.

This report has been peer reviewed by Andrew Darnton.

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About FUTERRA

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Promoting sustainable development is our core business

FUTERRA is a new type of business: a campaigning consultancy. We founded FUTERRA to address the need for high quality, effective communications to promote sustainable development, and we are one of the only specialist consultancies to focus solely in this area.

Built around a core team of highly trained professionals with considerable experience in a diverse range of communications and campaigning back-grounds, our personal values are what motivate us in our work. We aim to bring a strong sense of integrity and ethics to the work that we create, and are selective about our choice of clients because of this. We will only work with companies and organisations that we consider to either have a role in creating, or who are prepared to change in order to deliver, a more sustainable future.

Cutting edge communication

We have a unique approach based on '10 Rules of Sustainable Communication' (see graphic), a model created after wide-ranging consultation with sustainable development practitioners, advertisers and change managers. This model has been widely applied and published by both the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)[1] and the European Association of Communications Agencies (EACA)[2]. We specialise in innovative, unconventional and inspirational communications that work to inform, change perceptions, dispel myths, and promote action and behavioural change.

Please visit **www.futerra.org** to find out more about us, or get in contact.

[1] *Good News & Bad: The Media, Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development*
[2] *Opportunity Space: A global guide for communications agencies on how to promote sustainable development*