Consumer Power

How the public thinks lower-carbon behaviour could be made mainstream

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Acknowledgements

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Executive summary

Changing the public's use of energy at home and on the move is critical for reducing the UK's overall emissions contributing to climate change. However, beyond the environmentally inclined, there is a very substantial group of people who are doing very little in response to communications and policies designed to promote behaviours and choices that will reduce emissions. This report presents the findings of an investigation into why this has been the case, and into how behaviour that produces fewer emissions – which we refer to as 'lower-carbon behaviour' – can be stimulated among some members of this group.

Target audience

The people we have targeted in our research – and who we urge others to target with communications, product development and policies – are called the 'Now People'. The Now People form a subgroup in the Values Modes segmentation model, which categorises people according to their different psychological motivations, drawing on Abraham Maslow's theory of needs.

Now People seek psychological rewards in status, fashion, success, and the esteem and recognition of others. They tend to have a high level of motivation to consume, and their prominent position within social circles makes them a driver of fashions and trends, meaning that they are a particularly powerful subsection of the population when it comes to determining consumption-related behaviours. For this reason, they are often the target of marketing campaigns.

However, when it comes to climate change, related communications, products and policies have not been designed with Now People in mind, and so have failed to provide them with the clues or opportunities to satisfy their needs, leaving them unengaged or 'switched off' from the issues. This has acted as a brake on the adoption of lower-carbon behaviour across society.

Aims and methods

ippr conducted six deliberative workshops with Now People in London, York and just outside Bristol, in late 2008 and early 2009, to find out what might motivate this group to act. In these workshops, we gauged perceptions of climate change and lower-carbon behaviour in general, as well as in relation to six specific lower-carbon consumer choices:

- Energy monitors
- Heating controls
- Solar panels
- Energy-efficient vehicles
- UK holidays
- Holiday travel by train.

However, we aimed to explore participants' attitudes to lower-carbon lifestyle options without imposing an 'environmental' framework on them. As such, the workshops focused on the theme of shopping rather than climate change and carbon. This enabled us to explore the more general processes that participants adopt when making consumer decisions, rather than focusing solely on why they do not choose the lower-carbon option. The topic of climate change was not introduced as a theme for discussion until the very end of each event.

The workshop findings were complemented by observations of home energy assessments in the homes of 10 Now People, followed by in-depth interviews to gauge their reactions to energy advice tailored to their own homes.

We believe that the findings, which we summarise below, will be of value to anyone interested in designing communications, products, services and policies aimed at increasing the uptake of lower-carbon behaviour – from energy utilities to car manufacturers, train operators and the UK tourist trade, as well as government and environmental campaigners.

Perceptions of climate change and lower-carbon behaviour

Inhibiting attitudes

Many participants expressed a weariness and fatigue about the subject of climate change. Many of the workshops became notably less animated following the introduction of climate change as a topic for discussion. Some found the issue very boring. Others dismissed it as 'faddy' and 'trendy'.

There was a general acceptance that climate change is happening, and that it is probably due at least in part to humans, but that humans are unlikely to be wholly responsible. Some confused climate change with ozone layer depletion, and linked climate change to recycling, remarking that by recycling they thought they were already 'doing their bit' and did not necessarily feel they had to do any more.

There was a general cynicism about the motivations of the Government in pushing for action on climate change. Several participants suggested that the Government could be using the issue as a means of increasing taxation. Others highlighted inconsistencies and hypocrisy on the part of government and corporations, such as the decision to grant permission for the building of the third runway at Heathrow.

Many discussions also centred on the ineffectiveness of adopting small lower-carbon behaviours when others were still emitting elsewhere. This was a very common perception. The most regular 'free-riders' referred to were other countries, companies, and 'other people who won't ever change'.

Many of the participants felt that previous requests for them to do more for the environment, or for climate change, had made them feel guilty about their lifestyles, and some were resentful of this. Many also saw people who engage in environmentally-friendly behaviours as 'self-righteous' and 'smug'.

An overriding perception was that when making a purchase, cost is a more important consideration than environmental impact. Participants said that the recession had made cost increasingly important, pushing environmental purchases further into second place.

Encouraging attitudes

Those who had already made energy-reducing changes had done so because of cost and the high prices of bills. Some were keen to find any way possible of saving money, referring to the recession and high fuel bills as major motivators. Others also expressed a desire for greater control and autonomy with regards to their energy supply, against a backdrop of high energy prices.

It is worth noting that during discussions about cost savings that might be achieved by adopting lower-carbon behaviours, participants often saw the benefits as the ability to spend the money saved on potentially carbon-intensive behaviours.

In terms of climate change itself, participants had a good awareness of the issue and its different facets, including melting ice caps, polar bears and carbon footprints. There were also frequent references to changes to weather patterns in the UK. Some referred to the importance of everyone 'doing their bit' for the environment, and how doing this gave you a positive feeling. Several participants also expressed a strong dislike of waste and pollution in general.

Being a parent appeared to play a large part in participants' awareness of climate change and the extent to which they engaged in lower-carbon behaviours. This was also an important factor in how the participants thought about the future and the consequences of actions taken today.

Perceptions of specific lower-carbon consumer choices

Energy monitors

A significant minority of the participants were not interested in the idea of an energy monitor (a device that shows how much electricity is being used in the home at any given moment) because they believed it would be annoying and would stop them relaxing. However, most of the participants received the idea positively because of the money they saw that it could save them, often related to the credit crunch or high energy prices.

Ideas for marketing the energy monitor included emphasising that it was low cost and that it could easily save you money. The benefit to the environment was mentioned, but only as a minor point. One group attempted to increase the appeal of saving money by emphasising the pleasure that could be gained by spending this money elsewhere. Others suggested using 'ordinary people who happen to be famous', such as the television presenters Tess Daly and Vernon Kay, to gain mainstream appeal for the product.

Heating controls

The overriding reaction to this product was general confusion about what it did. The controls offer additional functionality to what is provided by existing domestic heating controls but participants did not see many benefits to this. The resultant confusion translated into a general lack of interest in the product and of desire to purchase one. Where the participants were positive about the product, it was in its ability to save them money, as well as being easy to install, and modern.

Marketing suggestions focused on the financial benefits of the product, emphasising the way that heating in the home was directly linked to spending money. One group achieved this by depicting a house with no heating controls, with pound signs escaping from the property like heat, accompanied by the slogan 'Your costs controlling you?? Keep control of your costs!!'. Another used a celebrity couple, Louise and Jamie Redknapp, to sell the heating controls, drawing on the couple's image as being down to earth and family oriented.

Solar panels

Some participants felt that domestic solar panels were unattractive, and questioned whether there was enough sunshine in the UK for them to be able to work well. However, the main disincentive was the large upfront cost. However, participants were positive about the purchase in general, and many would have been interested in buying the product had it cost less. Several suggested ways in which the Government could regulate to make solar panels more accessible. Suggestions included putting panels on all new buildings, offering 0 per cent loans, and providing discounted stamp duty for homes with panels installed.

In discussions about marketing the product, environmental impact was cited as a secondary or minor benefit. More prominent reasons for buying the product included being able to save money, being able to insulate oneself from fluctuating energy prices, and using the panel as an investment to add value to one's property. One group put a strong emphasis on normalising the product, using an image of an ordinary row of houses with solar panels being fitted to make it seem accessible to average households, and not just the preserve of the rich.

Activities to reduce emissions from domestic energy use were also discussed as part of the 10 home energy assessments we observed and the in-depth interviews we conducted (see Perceptions of home energy assessments, p.7).

Energy-efficient vehicles

Concerns about the environmental impact of cars had not played a significant role in any of the participants' previous purchasing decisions. Where this consideration had played a part in their decision, this was secondary to reduced running costs due to increased fuel efficiency or lower road tax for cars (especially company ones) with high emissions. Most placed a strong emphasis on good 'value for money', as well as on quality and reliability. For parents, safety was particularly significant. The colour and aesthetic of the cars were also very important factors.

In reaction to information and images of different models of car, SUVs (sports utility vehicles) stood out as having a particularly negative image. They were seen as impractical in cities and unsafe for other road users and pedestrians, and their drivers often described as 'selfish'. Meanwhile, of the two cars we presented with high fuel efficiency, the Honda Civic was by far the best received, due to perceptions that Honda was a reliable brand and that the look of the car was 'modern' and 'stylish'. The car's fuel efficiency was also important, and the environmental benefit this offered was welcomed, but these considerations were secondary. In contrast, the majority were very negative about the Smart Car, largely due to its aesthetics. It was described as a 'trainer on wheels', 'hideous', 'ugly', a 'disabled car', a 'rollerskate', 'smug' and 'self-righteous'.

UK holidays

Participants overwhelmingly preferred to take holidays abroad than at home – above all, because of the lack of sunshine and amount of rain in the UK. Participants considered having good, hot weather and a swimming pool to be key ingredients for a holiday, and did not perceive this type of weather as guaranteed in the UK. Another inhibiting factor was the cost of taking holidays in the UK compared with the cheap flights available to go to countries with lower living costs.

Very few discussions suggested that participants could be persuaded to stop taking holidays abroad. However, participants were positive about taking trips in the UK if these were in addition to rather than instead of a 'proper holiday'. Many spoke positively about different parts of the country, such as Cornwall.

Holiday travel by train

Many of the participants said they tended to take holidays abroad, often to medium and long-haul locations, where flying was often perceived to be the only transport option available. Flying was also seen as a very cheap travel option. Several commented that being at an airport was exciting. This aspect was seldom frequently mentioned in relation to other transport options, except with the Eurostar train link.

Travelling by train was seen to involve less bother than flying and as more relaxing, although travelling around Britain by train was said to be very expensive and reaching places outside of major towns by train difficult. Except for taking the Eurostar to Paris, travelling to European destinations by train was not seen as an alternative to flying. Some also wanted the flexibility offered by travelling by car to their holiday destination and having a car once on holiday.

Perceptions of home energy assessments

Our observation of 10 Now People receiving a home energy assessment highlighted the value of providing professional, independent, face-to-face information relating to energy use that is individually tailored, using engaging graphics and thermal imagery, and assessors who make people feel comfortable.

However, we found that Now People were reluctant to pay £100–200 for home energy assessments themselves, and had mixed views about commissioning a concierge company to arrange quotes for them for home improvement work. Commitment to undertake the measures recommended also came up against the barriers discussed in the first three consumer choices discussed above, from high upfront costs to ugly aesthetics.

General guidance for climate-change communications

Our research has identified 10 key aspects of Now People attitudes that should be taken into account when designing climate-change communications, as follows:

1. **Don't focus on climate change** – The starting point of any communications efforts to encourage Now People to adopt lower-carbon behaviours should be a recognition that a lack of awareness of climate change is not the problem. Most Now People are aware, but that awareness is simply not motivating enough. Other motivations need to be drawn on. Our research suggests this can be achieved in a number of ways.

2. **Focus on saving money now** – The research clearly suggests that communications that emphasise the money-saving potential of adopting lower-carbon behaviours will be much more effective with Now People than urging them to take action on the basis that it will prevent climate change – particularly in the present economic climate. But saving money itself could be made more appealing – for example, by emphasising the pleasurable things that the money saved can be spent on.

3. **Prevent the rebound effect** – Take care to prevent a 'rebound effect' in which people spend the money they have saved on other, potentially high-carbon, purchases, such as flying. To prevent this effect, it may be necessary to ensure that communications refer to the need to reduce 'carbon pollution' rather than 'emissions' or use humour to satirise high-carbon behaviours, while making lower-carbon choices desirable (these ideas are explained in points 4–6 below).

4. Talk about carbon pollution, not CO$_2$ emissions – The choice of language is important. Referring to (dirty) 'pollution' is likely to have more impact than referring to (invisible) 'emissions'. Similarly, 'carbon', widely perceived as black and dirty, may also be more effective terminology to use than invisible 'carbon dioxide'.

5. Satirise high-carbon behaviours – Now People could be discouraged from continuing particular high-carbon behaviours through humour and the use of gentle mockery, sarcasm and satire – associating higher-carbon choices with unattractive personalities. This can help make these choices undesirable and make available a range of alternative (lower-carbon) behaviours from which Now People can choose for themselves, leaving them with the sense that they still have room for self-expression, which they prize. Comedy programmes can be particularly influential in this regard. Now People's main drive is to look cool to others, and they tend to note anything that detracts from their image and act upon it quickly, to maintain or change the perceptions of others.

6. Make it desirable – Another way to overcome the rebound effect is through the continuous re-creation of sustainable products and behaviours into 'objects of desire' – the very thing that turned the polluting car into something that Now People 'had to have'. In these difficult economic times, these could perhaps be depicted as the technologies and behaviours of 'fashionable austerity'.

7. Remember that being in control matters – Now People are experiencing anxiety about high and fluctuating energy prices (including the role of energy companies within this situation), and insecurity and a desire for control, due to turbulence within the economy and financial system. This offers the potential for effective communications on lower-carbon behaviours. Now People may respond well to communications emphasising how energy-saving measures can offer 'control' over energy costs and independence from energy companies.

8. Make it fun – Communications that are fun and humorous are far more likely to capture and sustain the attention of Now People than communications that are overly serious.

9. Avoid guilt and the 'environmental' label – Communications that promote feelings of guilt should be avoided, as these drive Now People to disengage. Communications should avoid saying 'You are not doing enough' or 'You are not taking responsibility', but should acknowledge and praise the actions that Now People are already undertaking, and build on those. As Now People tend to describe people who engage in lower-carbon behaviour as being 'smug' and different to them, communications must also promote lower-carbon behaviours as being 'normal' for Now People, while still offering them something at which they can excel.

10. Use messengers that 'keep it real' – Participants put a clear emphasis on using celebrities who Now People trust and associate with as peers, rather than higher-ranking celebrities, such as pop or film stars. This supports the notion of needing to normalise behaviours for Now People. It is also notable that none of the participants suggested environmental organisations sell lower-carbon products. The brand image of these groups is not, nor should be, for Now People as purveyors of objects of desire: this is a step too far for them.

Proposals for encouraging specific lower-carbon behaviours

The communications and policies needed to increase the uptake of specific lower-carbon behaviours by Now People should support each other. It is critical that government ensures consistency between the messages and policies that it adopts. Due to the mistrust of government that exists, changes also need to be introduced transparently, and any revenues raised from taxing high-carbon activities should be used to make lower-carbon options cheaper. Now People will instinctively reject stealth taxes. Policy frameworks are also needed to ensure innovation in the design of lower-carbon products and services to attract Now People, given how, all too frequently, aesthetics act as a barrier to adoption.

Energy monitors

As smart meters – which remotely record customers' electricity use and let them know how much they are using, as energy monitors do – are rolled out nationwide, government should set minimum standards to ensure that the meter incorporates a permanent, visible in-home display designed to

engage users, and a support package preparing householders for the meter's arrival and enabling them to act on its feedback. Communications should emphasise that the smart meter is a modern gadget that can save the user money, provide more control (given fluctuating energy bills) and offer enjoyment, by enabling the user to spend the money they save on something pleasurable.

Heating controls

Communications about heating controls need to convey clearly what they do and the marked differences in control, financial gain and comfort they offer. They should also portray this item as the newest, best, latest, most modern piece of kit. Government and manufacturers should also engage with installers to ensure that they are aware of heating controls and the money-saving benefits they offer.

Solar panels

To overcome resistance to high upfront costs, further financial assistance will be needed, such as more upfront subsidies, discounts on stamp duty, low- or zero-interest loans, or on-bill repayment. Solar panels also need to be made more visible, to increase awareness and acceptability. Hence all new houses should have them fitted, with demonstration homes with panels installed in each locality. Communications need to emphasise strongly the control and self-sufficiency that panels can offer. They must also dispel doubts that panels do not work in the UK, positioning them as attractive 'modern gadgets' that are normal for Now People, while helping make Now People look special.

Energy-efficient vehicles

Government should continue to increase tax for cars with higher emissions and should deliver on its commitment to provide subsidies for the most fuel-efficient cars. Regulation and incentives are also needed to ensure that trusted brands incorporate lower-carbon technology into their models and design them to be aesthetically attractive. Communications should highlight the 'modern' technologies that these cars include, and their ability to control fuel bills, and portray them as 'special but normal', to cater for Now People's constant anxiety about wanting to be leading edge but not 'too' leading edge – cool, but not so cool that they are laughed at.

UK holidays

A sustained campaign is needed to encourage local breaks and holidays in the UK as a fun way of getting away from work. UK destinations need to offer better levels of comfort, at reasonable prices, and to position themselves as modern holiday options. A package of incentives should be provided to help improve the facilities offered, to bring a new generation of families back to places that have become 'old fashioned'. Policy should also focus on increasing the cost of air travel, generating revenues to improve the alternatives, while communications could use humour to gently mock people who take too many flights.

Holiday travel by train

Government and train operators need to find ways of reducing the cost of train travel so that it becomes attractively priced compared with car travel and flying. Train operators should do more to communicate the cheaper rates that are already available if tickets are booked in advance and offer more discounts. Ensuring that services are available at times when people want to travel on breaks is also vital, requiring a rethink of maintenance and upgrading schedules.

Communications could help by playing up the hassle and stress of flying while creating a buzz about train travel and mainline stations. This will require a strategy to upgrade existing facilities, with government support if necessary.

Final thoughts

Ultimately, our research suggests that success will lie in our collective ability to persuade mainstream consumers that in adopting lower-carbon lifestyles they can save money and have fun, they can have control in a chaotic world, they can do the right thing and look good without being an environmentalist, and they can still be themselves. If we can achieve that, while putting the policies in place to ensure that lower-carbon options are affordable, attractive and visible, we will have come a long way towards mobilising the power of consumers in the battle against climate change.

1. Introduction

In the UK, the energy that individuals use in their homes and for personal transport is responsible for 44 per cent of the country's carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions. Almost 60 per cent of the emissions by an average UK citizen come from using energy in the home, while 40 per cent comes from transport, including flying (Retallack *et al* 2007). Changing the public's domestic use of energy and transport choices is therefore critical for reducing the country's overall contribution to climate change.

A key challenge is that a significant proportion of the population, while accepting that climate change is happening and that humans are contributing to it, has not shown a willingness to make behavioural change (ibid). Beyond those who take above-average interest in and action on environmental issues – 'the environmentally inclined', and early adopters of lower-carbon behaviours, there is a very substantial group of people who by and large have either not been the target of efforts to change, or have not responded to climate-change communications and policies.

This report presents the findings of an investigation into how lower-carbon behaviour can be stimulated among some of this group. Having engaged with consumers from different parts of the UK through deliberative workshops, we have developed practical recommendations on how to incentivise individuals from this group to reduce their contribution to climate change, based on understanding their barriers to action and the most effective ways with which to overcome them.

Aims and objectives

The findings of this report are based on ippr's Consumer Power project – a piece of work designed to identify the communications approaches and policies needed to facilitate a change in behaviour among mainstream consumers – those who have yet to make significant changes to reduce their carbon footprint.

The aim of the project was to develop a practical set of answers that could be used by a range of different companies, from energy utilities to car manufacturers, train operators and the UK tourist trade, as well as by government, the agencies that it funds (such as the Energy Saving Trust), and environmental non-governmental organisations.

To fulfil the project's aims, several sub-questions were formulated. These included:

- How do people not very interested in or motivated by environmental issues (the 'non-environmentally-inclined') perceive climate change and lower-carbon behaviour in general?

- What does this mean for communications and policies aiming to increase the uptake of lower-carbon behaviour in general?

- What factors influence non-environmentally-inclined people's perceptions of specific lower-carbon behaviours?

- How can these factors inhibit or encourage the uptake of specific lower-carbon behaviours?

The target audience

The history of commercial marketing shows that knowing and segmenting one's audiences is a pre-condition of success. As different groups of people have different capacities and motivations, and face different barriers, they need to be targeted differently, using messages, messengers, communications channels and policies that are appropriate for them. Hence, understanding the differences between subgroups of the population is essential. In particular, audiences need to be known sufficiently well to understand what will motivate them to make changes, so that interventions can be targeted appropriately.

For this reason, we identified, engaged with and sought to understand a specific segment of the population using a psychographic segmentation tool known as the Values Modes model.

The Values Modes model, developed by Cultural Dynamics Strategy and Marketing Ltd, draws on Maslow's theory of psychological needs, and can segment any sample of the population into three

broad 'motivational groups' and 12 further, more finely tuned, groups. The segmentation is based on more than 35 years' research of the British population through Cultural Dyamics' British Values Survey. The latest round of national research gathered responses to more than 1,000 questions from 10,000 nationally representative adults aged between 15 and 80.

This segmentation enables anyone seeking to change behaviours to improve the way that approaches are crafted on the basis of a psychological understanding of what motivates different people to behave in different ways. This complements our understanding of the practical issues and barriers that influence people. Users of this approach have included large corporations and public institutions, from Unilever and Shell to the BBC and political parties, in more than 40 countries.

The Values Modes model divides the population most broadly into:

- **Pioneers** (40 per cent of the UK population). They have 'inner directed' needs: they seek an ethical basis for life, self-exploration and discovery, they are society's natural activists, and they value quality and aesthetics more than status.

- **Prospectors** (30 per cent of the UK population). They have esteem or 'outer directed' needs: they live for today, and seek psychological rewards in status, fashion, success and recognition by others. They underpin consumer society.

- **Settlers** (30 per cent of the UK population). They have sustenance-driven needs: they need to protect what they have, dislike threats to identity, belonging, security or safety, tend to have a strong comfort focus on their homes, and prioritise financial security and spend their money more cautiously.

People who have worked for environmental organisations have traditionally tended to be Pioneers, and consequently have often used the language and approach of Pioneers in reaching out to the public, which is unlikely to be effective for the two-thirds of the population who are not Pioneers. Agencies that have used socioeconomic and lifestyle segmentation models have tended to target a similar group of people: those whose socioeconomic situation makes them environmentally inclined or more likely to be early adopters of lower-carbon behaviours (as is the case with the Energy Saving Trust's campaigns).

Why Prospectors and Now People?

Government and others have not considered the Prospectors to be 'early adopters': they have often been seen as part of the problem rather than the solution, and so have largely been ignored. We adopted a new approach by attempting to shift the focus beyond the environmentally inclined, so we chose the Prospectors as the target segment of the population.

The Prospectors are divided into four further subsections, one of which is the Now People (See Appendix 1). The motto for these people could be 'We want the world, and we want it now!' Now People have a hunger for life, and want to devour it. Life is a party to be enjoyed, and they want to be at the centre of it. They have a large need for the approval of others, and so have great empathetic social skills. They attract others to them. They look for the flash and intensity in situations.

Because of their high level of motivation to consume, and their prominent position within social circles, Now People are drivers of fashions and trends, meaning that they are a particularly powerful subsection of the population when it comes to determining consumption-related behaviours. For this reason they are often the target of companies' marketing campaigns.

The selection of the Now People as a target for understanding in this report is based in particular on the critical position they occupy on innovation curves in the adoption of new ideas and behaviours. The Pioneers have been found to be classic innovators in the creation and adoption of new ideas and behaviours. However, without the Now People's enthusiastic uptake of those new ideas and behaviours, the other three Prospector groups (and, subsequently, the Settlers) are unlikely to mimic the new behaviours.

This dynamic of change has been identified as one of the reasons for the lack of wide-scale behaviour change in relation to environmental issues in the UK. In short, the Pioneers have discovered and

adopted attitudes and behaviours that lead them to be seen as more environmentally-friendly than other groups, but the Prospectors have not adopted these behaviours to nearly the same extent, and thus have acted as a brake on widespread changes in lifestyles.

As this report shows, one reason for this is that the emotional triggers activated by current climate-change communications and campaigns are not those most valued by the Prospectors. This report probes and discovers the emotions that these communications do succeed in triggering – primarily negative ones – and offers some insights about the type of triggers that are needed in future communications, to change the behaviours of this crucial group.

Readers of this report should keep in mind one of the oldest and most used formulas in analysing and creating great communications – the 'AIDA' formula. The four letters stand for Attention, Interest, Desire, Action. Each of these factors helps communicators understand the root of any ongoing issue in order to frame the best way forward.

In the research, Now People seem to be saying that in relation to climate change, they have two of these factors: attention and interest. But the desire element of current communications and alternative behaviours is either missing, or is not sufficiently motivating to take them on to action. This means that simply providing more facts and policies will not be the key to behaviour change.

At present, communications, policies and behavioural offers fail to provide Now People with the necessary clues or opportunities to be able to satisfy their needs for the esteem of others, through the identifying, acquiring and displaying symbols of value. It is this purpose that drives their lives – and when satisfied, it gives them pleasure. So, Now People are currently performing behaviours that they know are causing environmental harm, but they are not sufficiently moved by the positioning of current alternatives to change this behaviour – even though their lack of action causes anxiety.

This project is designed to understand what kinds of methods, contexts, messengers, triggers and channels will create desire and, ultimately, motivation to action, for this group of people. Our approach was to work with the values that this group holds, and to focus directly on changing their behaviours in order to deliver tangible reductions in greenhouse gas emissions – regardless of the motivational basis on which those reductions are achieved. There has been considerable debate about this type of approach (Crompton 2008). By choosing it for this project, we do not seek to reject other approaches based on attempting to achieve a fundamental shift in values across society away from consumerism.

Highlighted behaviours

In order to generate practical recommendations for communications and policies promoting behaviour change, we focused on several specific behaviours, determined by considering a number of factors (see Box 1.1 on the next page for more details):

- Impact – carbon-saving potential from behaviour change
- Appeal – likely interest, visibility and acceptability to the target group
- Feasibility – capacity of the target group to adopt the behaviour (financial capability)
- Frequency – how often the behaviour is likely to occur (habitual v purchasing).

This resulted in the selection of the following six lower-carbon consumer choices:

- Energy monitors
- Heating controls
- Solar panels
- Energy-efficient vehicles
- UK holidays
- Holiday travel by train.

Box 1.1. Identifying consumer choices to test

In determining which specific carbon-related consumer choices to test attitudes towards in the deliberative workshops, we considered a number of factors. These included impact in terms of carbon-saving potential from behaviour change, appeal to the target group, feasibility of the target group adopting the behaviour and frequency – how often the behaviour is likely to occur. In the tables below we show how different choices and behaviours compare in relation to these four criteria.

In the home

Behaviour	Impact*	Appeal	Feasibility	Frequency
Insulation (cavity wall and loft)	H	L	H	L
Solid wall insulation	H	L	L	L
Condensing boilers / heating controls	H	M	M	L
Wood pellet boilers	H	M	L	L
Solar water heating	M	M	M	L
Ground Source Heat Pump	H	L	L	L
Micro-wind	H	H	L	L
PV panels	H	H	L	L
Glazing (A-C)	M	M	M	L
More efficient appliances	L	H	H	M
Compact Fluorescent Lightbulbs	L	L	H	M
Switch off – lights / standby	L	L	H	H
Real-time displays / bye-bye standby	L	H	H	H

On the move

Behaviour	Impact*	Appeal	Feasibility	Frequency
Eco-driving	M	L	H	H
Purchase more efficient vehicle	H	M-H	M	L-M
Modal shift	M	L	M	H
Car-sharing	M	L	H	H
No short trips (< 3 miles)	M	L	H	H
Cycling	M	M	H	H

On holiday

Behaviour	Impact*	Appeal	Feasibility	Frequency
UK holidays	H	L	H	M
Train holidays	H	M	M	M
Offsetting	L	L	M	M

* Impact based on CO_2 savings per behaviour per year. H = >350kg CO_2/year, M = 100kg CO_2/year - 349kg CO_2/year, L = <100kg CO_2/year.

H = high; M = Medium; L = Low.

Research methodology

To investigate the communications approaches and policies that would be effective for Now People, we adopted a qualitative approach. Deliberative workshops were used to explore the processes by which people make consumer choices. This generated evidence of the attitudes and beliefs that underpin consumer behaviour, and the contradictions and complexities inherent in them. Participant observations and in-depth interviews also provided evidence of these decision-making processes in the context of people's everyday lives.

Deliberative workshops

We conducted six deliberative workshops in order to explore the way that Now People think about lower-carbon purchases. Deliberative workshops are held over a longer period of time than traditional focus groups, providing greater opportunity for participants to express their views fully, and for discussion and debate within the group. The workshops used projective techniques and exercises that allowed us to explore how participants' views changed when presented with information and how views evolved during group discussions.

The use of deliberative techniques enabled us to explore the shared norms that influence participants' consumer decisions, including the processes by which these norms are negotiated and interpreted.

This research started from an awareness that traditional environmental communications approaches have not been effective within this target audience. We therefore aimed to explore participants' attitudes and opinions to lower-carbon lifestyle options without imposing an 'environmental' framework on them. As such, the workshops focused on the theme of shopping rather than climate change and carbon. This enabled us to explore the more general processes that participants adopt when making consumer decisions, rather than focusing solely on why they do not choose the lower-carbon option.

First, participants were given a series of exercises that explored their consumer preferences in relation to vehicle purchases, holidays in the UK and travelling by train. These included a range of higher- and lower-carbon options. Reasons for preferences were explored in small group discussions.

Next, in small groups, participants were asked to design an advertisement for one of the three domestic products identified: energy monitors, heating controls or solar panels. They were instructed to design an advertisement that would appeal to them, and to choose an organisation or individual that they thought would be best placed to sell the item. This allowed us to explore which features of the products most appealed to the participants, what kind of narratives and values they would draw on to sell them to other Now People, and what kind of messengers they would prefer. Each of the advertisements was presented and then discussed by the group.

The topic of climate change was not introduced as a theme for discussion until the very end of the event. Each workshop lasted up to three hours.

Six workshops were held in total. Two occurred in each of three locations across the country: London, York and just outside Bristol, in Yate.

Each workshop was attended by seven participants; the small number meant that everyone was able to participate fully in the discussion. Workshops were segmented by gender, with four all-female groups and two all-male groups, reflecting the fact that more Now People are female than male. The groups were also divided between people with children and those without, as both gender and family circumstance are significant in understanding differences between participants' attitudes and values (see Table 1.1 below). The socioeconomic status of participants did not form part of the recruitment criteria.

The groups were recruited by a reputable market recruitment company that uses recruiters at the community level, to access participants via social networks and door-to-door canvassing. Participants were given £60 as an incentive for taking part.

The discussions were recorded and transcribed, with the participants' permission. The transcriptions were scanned to identify overarching themes. These themes then formed the overall structure for a

Table 1.1: Sampling for the deliberative workshops

Workshop location	Gender	Children
London A	Female	Without
London B	Female	With
Bristol A	Male	With
Bristol B	Female	Without
York A	Female	With
York B	Male	Without

content analysis that was carried out manually, using spreadsheets. These initial themes were adapted iteratively as the analysis progressed. This system allowed for a clear breakdown of the content of each group's discussion, including differences between participants and through time, and facilitated clear comparison between the groups.

In-home observations and in-depth interviews

The second stage of the research for this project involved conducting home energy assessments in the homes of 10 Now People. The aim of this stage of the research was to gauge the reactions of Now People to energy advice and specific measures when conducted in their homes.

The assessments were conducted by the lifestyle management company Ten, adapted from the green concierge service that it offers to the general public. After the home energy assessments were conducted, the participants were briefed on the results. The briefing included seeing an Energy Performance Certificate for the property, as well as a more detailed breakdown of energy use within the home. This provided details of the specifics of home energy use, such as heating, lighting and draft proofing, showing running costs and CO_2 contributions for each item. Various measures that could be installed to reduce CO_2 emissions were discussed with the participants. The briefing was observed by a researcher and recorded.

The assessment and briefing lasted up to two hours, after which an in-depth interview was conducted with the participants to discuss their experiences of the assessment and briefing, and to access their wider perceptions of climate change and lower-carbon behaviour more generally. The interview lasted approximately half an hour.

The Ten observations were held exclusively in London. As with the workshops the observations were segmented by gender and family circumstance, taking into consideration that more Now People are female than male. The socioeconomic status of participants was not a part of the recruitment criteria (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2: Sampling for the in-home observations and in-depth interviews

Observation location	Gender	Children	No. of interviews
London	Female	Yes	3
London	Female	No	3
London	Male	Yes	2
London	Male	No	2

Participants were recruited using the same market research company as was used for the workshops. Participants were given £50 as an incentive for taking part, and the home energy assessment was given for free.

It is worth noting that the research for this project took place between October 2008 and January 2009 – a period of major turbulence within the global financial system that saw bailouts of high street banks and growing expectations of a major recession to follow. Also, just before this period, fuel bills reached very high levels, although they fell during the time of the research. These factors have had a significant impact on the findings from this research.

2. Perceptions of climate change and lower-carbon behaviour

This is the first of two chapters presenting our findings. This chapter seeks to identify how Now People perceive climate change and lower-carbon behaviour in general. It offers several reasons why communications centred directly upon acting on climate change have not been successful, and highlights certain areas in which these messages have had some success.

Climate fatigue

Many of the participants expressed a weariness and fatigue about the subject of climate change, having been exposed to extensive messages and information about this and wider environmental issues. This fatigue was evident in the dynamics of many of the workshops, which became notably less animated following the introduction of climate change as a topic for discussion. Some found the issue very boring. Others used terms such as 'faddy' and 'trendy', suggesting a belief that the attention given to these issues is temporary and will pass, and also that the issues may somehow be lacking in substance:

> 'I think it is a gimmick, a lot of it, and that puts me off.' (Female, Bristol, without children)

> 'I work for a big company, and we're getting the green thing rammed down our throat all the time – and it's just getting really boring.' (Female, London, with children)

> 'It's one of those things you think about for a few minutes, get depressed, and move on to the next.' (Male, Bristol, with children)

> 'A lot of restaurants and suchlike are now concentrating more on food miles and things like that… To me, it actually feels like it's one of these things that's a bit faddy: that that's the "in thing" to do just now.' (Male, York, without children)

> 'I'm not sure if some people are perhaps jumping on a bandwagon.' (Male, London, without children)

Uncertainty about the science

Beyond these initial reactions, a significant number of participants held doubts about the scientific basis for climate change. Some participants displayed strong scepticism about the scientific validity of man-made climate change. More commonly, however, there was a general acceptance that climate change is happening and that it is probably due at least in part to humans, but that we are unlikely to be wholly responsible. In support of this, participants would often refer to 'natural cycles', and many said that they did not know what to believe:

> 'Whilst I appreciate we influence things… how much is it just that the planet is going through its own cycles and what would have happened anyway?' (Male, Bristol, with children)

> 'There's so many arguments as to what is down to us and climate change and carbon footprint, and what is just to do with the Earth itself, that it's difficult to tell.' (Male, York, without children)

Cynicism towards government and companies

Often mixed with this scepticism about the science was a more general cynicism about the motivations of the Government in pushing for action on climate change. Several participants suggested that governments could be using climate change as a means of increasing taxation. Comments were made highlighting inconsistencies and hypocrisy on the part of government and corporations, such as the Government decision to grant permission for the building of the third runway at Heathrow. These conflicting messages appeared to reinforce the doubts that some participants held about the scientific basis of man-made climate change:

> 'It's a form of stealth tax to some extent. I do think people feel genuinely as if it's another excuse to tax us.' (Female, London, with children)

'If they're really serious about doing stuff, why don't they just tax the green-issue things?' (Male, Bristol, with children)

'It's "Do as I say", isn't it – not "Do as I do".' (Female, London, with children)

'I find it all a bit schizophrenic when they open new airport terminals for everyone and drive us mad about what we're doing to the environment when we're flying off every day.' (Female, London, without children)

Confusion about the causes of climate change

A small yet significant number of participants, while acknowledging that human actions are causing the planet to warm up, displayed confusion about what exactly climate change is and what constitute the emissions that cause it. Participants frequently linked climate change directly to the hole in the ozone layer, and for some participants the two issues seemed to be interchangeable. They also regularly associated 'emissions' with, in particular, visible sources of air pollution. For example, it was suggested that a car with no visible smoke coming out of the exhaust gave off fewer emissions than one where smoke was visible, and also that a smoking pipe may give off emissions.

When asked by the workshop facilitator 'What does the term climate change mean to you?', respondents replied as follows:

'The ozone layer is getting screwed, basically, and it's leading to all sorts of world change – and maybe the amount of electricity, gas, fuel we use is contributing to it getting worse.' (Female, London, without children)

'Am I putting emissions out into the world because I'm using my boiler, so you see all the smoke going out?' (Female, London, with children)

'Is my body heat giving off emissions?' (Male, London, with children)

Confusion about solutions

A common tendency among the participants was to group issues relating to climate change together with other sustainability issues – particularly recycling, and ethical behaviour more broadly. This is important because the participants' attitudes towards, and experiences of, engaging in these related issues affected how they perceived reducing their energy use.

A significant number remarked that by engaging in recycling they thought they were already 'doing their bit' and didn't necessarily feel they had to do any more:

'I think everybody feels like they're doing a little bit and that's enough… I wouldn't say I'm fantastic at recycling and all that. I do my best.' (Male, Bristol, with children)

'I think it's good to do your bit… but I think doing your bit can be enough.' (Female, London, without children)

Moreover, many recounted stories about recycling containers being shipped to China, or being contaminated easily by the wrong or dirty material, adding weight to uncertainty about how much 'doing your bit' could achieve.

Concerns about effectiveness

Many discussions also centred on the ineffectiveness of adopting small lower-carbon behaviours when others were still emitting elsewhere. This was a very common perception. The 'free-riders' that participants referred to most regularly included other countries, as well as companies, shopping centres that leave their lights on all night, and 'other people who won't ever change':

'You wonder how much impact it has, don't you, if everybody else isn't doing it.' (Female, York, with children)

'You hear that one state in America produces more than all of Europe, and you think "Does it actually make a difference?"' (Male, Bristol, with children)

'Whilst the Chinese population is increasing by 9 per cent or 10 per cent a year, if everybody in England stopped using cars and any electricity we would make 1 per cent difference to the whole world. The Chinese population is increasing by 9 per cent a year – so what's the point?' (Male, York, without children)

'You talk to me about saving energy in my own house: drive up the A40 and see all these offices at 5 o'clock in the morning with all their lights on. Ask me that, and I think "Shit!" Do you know what I mean? You've got all these offices with all their lights on, and they're talking about saving electricity.' (Male, London, with children)

Resentment about feeling guilty

Another important influence on Now People's perception of climate-related behaviour change is the legacy of previous communications, and how they have been received. Many of the participants felt that requests for them to do more for the environment, or for climate change, made them feel guilty about their lifestyles – and some were resentful of this. Several participants in the home observations revealed that they had expected to be 'judged' by the domestic energy assessor, and one in particular found that the whole process of taking part in the assessment induced within her very strong feelings of guilt:

'(I) don't want to be made to feel guilty for my choices. I have a dishwasher and I love it… and we live in a house probably too big for us. It's warm because we heat it. We both work very hard, and we buy really nice things for our home… I like it, and I don't want to be made to feel guilty about that, because I'm living the life I want to live.' (Female, London, without children)

'I'm feeling extremely guilty … because I know I should be more aware of these things but I'm not – and I think it's a bit ignorant, but there you go.' (Female, London, with children)

Negative perceptions of environmentally-friendly people

On a related theme, many also made negative comments about people who engage in environmentally-friendly behaviours. These tended to focus on negative personality characteristics, with terms used such as 'over-virtuous', 'self-righteous' or 'smug'. This language may indicate that the participants in question feel that they are being judged by their more environmentally-friendly peers.

Some participants also recounted stories of people who purport to be environmentally-friendly but then engage in a behaviour that is not – in particular, by flying. Sometimes these stories were about people that the participant knew, while others were about celebrities who had travelled by aeroplane to play at the Live Earth climate change concert. These stories serve to undermine and reduce the credibility of those engaged in environmental behaviour.

The negative stereotypes highlighted, and the focus on locating flaws in the behaviour of those engaged in lower-carbon behaviours, are important perceptions to consider:

'I just feel it's a lot of middle-class people [and it] makes them feel good that they're doing something.' (Female, London, with children)

'I've got a really extreme neighbour… and he's actually a camera man for the Blue Planet and stuff like that… Because he's always up at the North Pole he's always harping on about it's all shrinking and all that. I did point out to him… he does about 85,000 miles in his plane every year to go and film it.' (Male, Bristol, with children)

'They did that gig, didn't they? The celebrities did a gig about climate change… about how we've got to reduce everything, and they were all being flown in in their private jets.' (Female, Bristol, without children)

'My family that live down in Lewes, they think they're all, like, green – perfect, and all the rest of it – but yet they go on four or five holidays a year. And I'm, like, "You're not really, are you?"' (Female, London, without children)

Cost as a barrier

An overriding perception among participants was that when making a purchase, cost is a more important consideration than environmental impact. This was stated explicitly, and was further evidenced by the far higher prominence that workshop participants gave to discussions about money compared to environmental issues. In particular, the credit crunch was referred to as having made the cost of things increasingly important. Some participants suggested that this factor would result in environmental purchases being pushed even further into second place:

> 'I think everyone wants to do their part for the environment but… if A is £5 and it's made in China, and the exact same product is £10 but it's made over here… you're going to go for [the former] without any guilt really.' (Male, York, without children)

> 'Forget that you're having any impact on the environment. It's about how much you save in your back pocket.' (Male, York, without children)

> 'Much as I'd like to be good to the environment, my wallet is more important… I mean, I am conscious of the environment but, you know, people's pockets are more important to them.' (Female, London, without children)

> 'Money against environment, obviously, is a bit more of a balance now than it was 18 months ago, when people felt a bit more confident and had a bit more money to spend.' (Male, London, with children)

Meanwhile, when participants discussed cost savings that might be achieved by adopting lower-carbon behaviours, they often saw the benefits as being able to spend the money elsewhere – on potentially high-carbon behaviours:

> 'If I was to build a house tomorrow, it would have anything energy saving that I could possibly ram in it to make it as energy efficient as I could – and then I could have my Audi TT.' (Female, York, with children)

Cost as a motivator

Where participants had already made energy-reducing changes, this was overwhelmingly related to cost and the high prices of bills, rather than solely or mainly in reaction to concerns about the environment. Some participants were keen to find any way possible of saving money, citing the credit crunch, the recession and high fuel bills as major motivators. Several of the participants also linked high fuel bills to depleting fuel resources:

> 'The reason we are so mindful of energy at the moment is not through real environmental reasons – that's not the mitigating factor. It's cost… It's the cost issues first and foremost, and then, probably, the environment comes into it.' (Female, London, without children)

> 'I'm infuriating everyone in our house at the moment, because I'm on maternity leave at the moment, and with the credit crunch I'm on a real drive to save money, and I'm going around the house turning the lights off after people.' (Female, York, with children)

> 'With the credit crunch… Britain is going to be in a recession now for 18 months. It's all about what you're saving. That's how you're going to sell things – on what you're actually going to save.' (Female, London, with children)

> 'Obviously, the way things are going at the moment with electricity and the gas suppliers putting your bills up, you want to do what you can to bring your bills down.' (Female, London, with children)

Importantly, the influence of such drivers means that uncertainty about the scientific basis and cynicism about official motivations for action are not necessarily barriers to behaviour change.

Two participants who expressed strong opinions of this nature had previously considered purchasing solar panels. They explained that this was because of a desire for greater control and autonomy with regards to their energy supply, against a backdrop of high and fluctuating energy prices.

Another participant in the observations who was quite sceptical about the science of climate change was highly motivated to reduce his energy use because of an awareness of pressure on resources:

> 'I don't think man's CO_2 emissions are necessarily leading to this thing called "climate change"… I quite like the idea of people using less energy and being more careful with things like that and being less polluting etc. I think they might be doing it for the wrong reasons so I don't necessarily want the debate opened up, [but] I'm quite glad they're doing a lot of these things… The right reason to do it is to not pollute the world and use resources more judiciously.' (Male, London, without children)

A strong emphasis on saving money was a persistent and recurrent theme across the research, and presents significant opportunities. However, financial factors were not always the highest priority. For some, being overly concerned by saving small amounts of money was 'boring' and too much of a 'hassle', and something that 'old biddies' or 'a dad' might be interested in.

Awareness of climate change

Despite the confusion and scepticism referred to above, awareness of climate change was fairly high among participants. Some referred to the fact that awareness of these issues has grown. The participants themselves had a good awareness of different facets of climate change, including melting ice caps, threat to polar bears, carbon footprints and changes to the weather. More specifically there were frequent references to noticeable changes that were perceived to have occurred to weather patterns in the UK.

> 'Poor polar bears – it's all melting and they're not surviving.' (Female, London, without children)

> 'I think it comes up when the weather is strange, more so than anything – freaky weather. When you have storms, people start to think about it all: "All this is to do with climate change."' (Male, Bristol, with children)

> 'I think we're very aware of the way the weather is changing. I do think that's to do with our emissions, and things like that.' (Female, London, without children)

> 'The first thing that comes into mind is the weather – the fact that the seasons are all blurring and are all one. I mean, it clearly isn't – but the winters are getting colder and the summers are getting hotter.' (Female, London, with children)

> 'I think there's… normal people now thinking about the environment… I think about it more now than I ever did, and probably more because I've got children and because of the last two lousy summers we've had. You just think "Oh gosh, is it really starting to make a difference?"' (Female, York, with children)

'Doing your bit' and a dislike of waste

There were some positive discussions about people engaging in behaviour change, and some participants suggested that positive attitudes towards being environmentally-friendly have become more widespread in recent years. Some referred to the importance of everyone 'doing their bit' for the environment and the resulting positive feeling:

> 'It would be nice to think [that] my house is really efficient and [that] I've done everything I can do for my house to be as efficient as possible. That would be a nice feeling.' (Female, London, without children)

> 'I think it makes people feel good if they can do it.' (Male, London, with children)

Several took pride in doing their recycling and reducing their waste – for example, by trying to buy products with less packaging. Environmental factors sometimes played a part in their reasons for this,

but they were also strongly motivated by a general dislike of waste and pollution, and a sense of 'good housekeeping'.

> 'I think the whole idea of cutting down on fuel emissions is good, regardless, because of the pollution.' (Female, London, without children)

> 'I'm quite disciplined. I don't have all the lights on and everything plugged on when I'm not here, so from that sense I make an effort… [It's] good practice – housekeeping – and also because it's a waste, it's a waste of resources, isn't it? It's just good discipline. I thought everyone did that.' (Female, London, without children)

Another environmental issue that emerged, although less regularly than recycling, and only by the female groups, was the use of non-plastic shopping bags. This behaviour is different to recycling in that it is not mandated by regulation and is purely voluntary. It was interesting, therefore, that some participants talked about engaging in this behaviour even though they found it a hassle having to remember to take out and use reusable bags. There were also some positive discussions about using non-plastic bags relating to being able to choose good-looking or specific designer alternatives:

> 'People are actively, sort of, signing up for it … It's been quite a quick cultural change.' (Female, York, with children)

The impact of parenthood

Being a parent appeared to play a major part in participants' awareness of climate change and their engagement in lower-carbon behaviours. Several discussed how their awareness had been raised because of what their children had learned at school. Participants' children often reminded them to turn things off, such as lights and taps in order to save electricity and water, and this often played an important role in raising their awareness:

> 'My children will come along and turn the television off from being on standby, and all that kind of stuff, because it's drummed into them. That's their age: they're taught it at school, whereas we weren't.' (Female, London, with children)

> 'My daughter's an Eco-leader at school and she's quite into it – "Save our planet". If I've got the bath running she'll say "Mum, that's enough water in there," and I'm, like, "What?". She's quite up with it.' (Female, London, with children)

In other situations, parents took on the role of reminding their children to be more energy aware.

In general, the parents appeared to be the most engaged in lower-carbon behaviours of all the participants, through activities such as turning off lights, not leaving televisions on standby, and not over-filling kettles. However, this awareness may be related to the extra costs involved with having children:

> 'I'm more conscious now. Laptops – mine are terrible for just leaving laptops plugged in. I'm always switching them off, PlayStations and stuff. We've just had a massive reduction from our energy supplier so I'm not really that bothered any more.' (Female, York, with children)

Having children was also an important factor in how the participants thought about the future, and the consequences of actions taken today:

> 'It's eco-friendly isn't it? Thinking about our children – you know.' (Female, York, with children)

> 'Do you want to go green and do your bit to make your children proud of you? I'm sure you do.' (Female, London, with children)

> 'Obviously, I think about my grandchildren in years to come. I don't want them suffering, and things like that.' (Female, London, with children)

3. Perceptions of specific lower-carbon choices

This chapter sets out Now People's attitudes towards specific lower-carbon consumer choices. We identify the factors that they take into account when making consumer choices in certain areas, and the factors that may work to inhibit or encourage greater uptake of the desired lower-carbon option.

First, we look at the findings from workshop activities centred on six specific lower-carbon consumer choices:

- Energy monitors
- Heating controls
- Solar panels
- Energy-efficient vehicles
- UK holidays
- Holiday travel by train.

The first three choices (energy monitors, heating controls and solar panels) were explored through a standardised workshop format. The participants were divided into groups, each of which was allocated one of the three products to discuss, and was given a factsheet about that product. The groups were asked to design an advertisement for their product that would appeal to them, and to propose the person, organisation or other body best placed to sell it. Each group presented their advertisement, and the presentation was then followed by a whole-group discussion. The findings are presented below in terms of 'inhibiting factors', 'encouraging factors' and 'marketing ideas'.

For the following two choices (energy-efficient vehicles and UK holidays) participants were given stimulus materials to provoke more general discussion around the choices they make and reasons for those choices. For the final choice (holiday travel by train), discussion flowed on naturally from the previous conversation about UK holidays.

After examining these six specific consumer choices, we look at the feedback from observed home energy assessments and in-depth interviews, carried out in the homes of 10 individuals.

Energy monitors

Energy monitors are devices that show how much electricity is being used in the home at any one particular moment.

Inhibiting factors

A significant minority of the participants were not interested in the energy monitor because they believed it would be annoying and would stop them relaxing. Others said the product was boring because they would be thinking about the money they was spending all the time, and they were not interested in the small amounts of money that they perceived it might save them. Some participants expressed concerns that the monitor could be detrimental to the lives of older people by encouraging them to turn off their electricity too much.

> 'Talk about wind you up, though – you'd sit indoors going: "Turn it down, turn that light off: it's just cost us 50p!" It would be a nightmare… That would really annoy me, knowing how much it's costing me every day.' (Female, London, without children)

> 'There's nothing joyous or happy – it's just going to make you watch your money disappear, and then you'll get to a point and you'll have in your mind how much you are prepared to spend in a month and… you'll be so boring.' (Female, London, without children)

> 'It's very boring, whatever it is. I'm not attracted to it. I can't eat it. I can't wear it – why would I want it?… If that was bought as a present for me, I'd be disappointed.' (Female, London, with children)

'I just don't see the benefit of it, to be honest. I wouldn't worry that much how much a light bulb was costing me because I wouldn't bother living in the house, then, if that was the case.' (Male, York, without children)

Two male participants in different workshops compared the energy monitor to the miles per gallon (mpg) gauge in cars. They explained how seeing the petrol that they were using was annoying because it did have an effect on the way that they drove. So while they were not necessarily positive about the energy monitor, they were acknowledging that being presented with this kind of information might affect their behaviour:

'It's like the MPG thing in your car, isn't it? Once you realise: "Oh my God!" It does work, doesn't it, when you see the monitors.' (Male, Bristol, with children)

'Not a good idea because it's taking BMW's way of "miles per gallon" thing. As you're driving along, it's underneath your fuel, so you drive accordingly and you're like "Oh God, no."' (Male, York, without children)

Encouraging factors

Few of the participants displayed the kind of negativity expressed above – rather, mainly, they received it positively because of the money they saw it could save them. They often related this motivation to the credit crunch, or to high energy prices and bills. Several saw its potential to help them with their current efforts to reduce energy around the house:

'It depends how much it is costing when you break it down. We pay our bills monthly, and they're going through the roof – but then, if you broke it down and it really was costing you a lot for an hour to have all those appliances, then yeah, I would buy it.' (Female, London, with children)

'If you're in that mindset of actually wanting to save around the home, it's really good... It would probably sell itself in this day and age.' (Female, York, with children)

Marketing ideas

The advertisements for the energy monitor primarily emphasised that it was low cost and that it could easily save you money, with some referring to the very quick resulting pay-back time. The benefit to the environment was mentioned by two of the groups, but only as a minor point alongside the priority of saving money.

Different groups communicated the benefits of saving money in different ways. Some used images of the monitor at work within a home setting – for example, measuring the energy use of appliances as they were switched on and off, and relating this visually to the money that could be saved by using the monitor. One attempted to increase the appeal of saving money by emphasising the pleasure that could be gained by spending this money elsewhere:

'You've got the pounds clicking in the corner as well, so you can actually see a direct correlation between lights going on and how much that's costing.' (Male, Bristol, with children)

'We think it's minimum cost for maximum pleasure. Without the monitor and the electricity and the cost of your home to you right now, your next holiday could be in the rain on a campsite. Should you buy this, for £29.95, the saving you make over the year you can take your most favourite man to Paris with you, a bit of champers, a bit of pleasure. Instead of a holiday in Pontefract, you could holiday in Paris.' (Female, York, with children)

Two groups described scenes drawing on aspects of culture that are associated with money saving – namely, austerity in the post-war 1950s, and David Dickinson, celebrity presenter of an antique-dealing television show. These advertisements drew on humour and irony to increase the appeal of the product.

'There was that kind of mentality then, anyway, wasn't there?' (Male, York, without children)'

> 'Back in the post-war, and during the war, everyone was geared towards conserving energy and putting a limit on their consumption – what they were using – with rations, so there was all these little examples of how you can save on this, and if you save this amount and that, and do this, then that would be cost effective.' (London, female, without children)

Other groups used celebrities in their advertisements too. In one, a well-known celebrity couple, television presenters Tess Daly and Vernon Kay, were used to gain mainstream appeal for the product. The couple's image of being family centred and down to earth may also have been important:

> 'They're very mainstream, and most people would have heard of them.' (Female, York, with children)

Another advertisement used well-known figure Bill Oddie because of his association with the environment.

It was repeatedly suggested that energy companies or government energy departments should sell the product. However, several participants suggested that there was a lack of trust towards these types of organisations. The point was also raised that an energy company selling a product that would reduce its customers' energy use was a confusing message:

> 'Well, we don't know if you'd trust an energy company giving it to you, because they're doing themselves out of money that you're saving… The likes of BT give you the equipment [so that you] use [their service] more, don't they, so… it's almost the opposite. Would you trust an energy company giving it to you?' (Male, Bristol, with children)

Several of the groups suggested that the product could be given away when purchasing a higher-value product.

Heating controls

Heating controls allow you to choose when the heating is on, how warm it is, and where you want the warmth in your house. They will also make sure that the boiler is only turned on when it needs to be.

Inhibiting factors

The overriding reaction to this product was a general confusion about what it did. In particular, the participants did not see many benefits to the small increase in functionality that it offered above and beyond the heating controls they already had, such as room thermostats and thermostatic radiator valves. Overall, this confusion translated into a general disinterest in the product and no desire to purchase one. However, this may have been partly a result of what information was presented to the participants in the workshops.

> 'It's reinventing the wheel, isn't it?' (Female, London, with children)

Encouraging factors

Where the participants were positive about the product, this related to its ability to save them money – although they questioned how much it would save above and beyond their existing standard heating controls. The one group that was unusual in being overtly positive about the product emphasised how it was easy to install and also that it was modern and a gimmick:

> 'We also think it's new and modern, and a new approach, [and] we think people are into new things rather than old-fashioned things. That's what we thought was the best thing about it… People like getting a gimmick.' (Female, Bristol, without children)

Marketing ideas

In general, the participants did not engage well with the heating control. They were unsure of the benefits the product offered and so, correspondingly, the advertisements they created were not very developed. In general, they resorted to reciting the information that had been given to them, displaying images of the controls being installed, and explaining the various features it comprised.

The one group that was most positive about the product emphasised primarily the potential it offered to save money, but also emphasised the environmental benefits:

> 'We think that's quite a positive and green thing… you're not wasting heat, you're not wasting energy, so that will do the green side. We think it will actually appeal to everybody, because everybody wants to save money on their heating bills and sometimes [thinks]… "I don't know how to change my heating".' (Female, Bristol, with children)

One other group devised an advertisement with a strong message, focusing purely on the financial benefits of the product. Its aim was to emphasise the way that heating in the home was directly linked to spending money. This was achieved by depicting a house with no heating control, with pound signs escaping from the property like heat, and a house with heating controls with the pound signs staying in the property. To further emphasise this benefit, and to play to concerns that the audience may have about the costs of heating, the images were accompanied by the slogan 'Your costs controlling you?? Keep control of your costs!!'.

Like the group that used Tess Daly and Vernon Kay to sell the energy monitor, one group used a celebrity couple, Louise and Jamie Redknapp, to sell the heating control. The group indicated that this was to draw on the couple's image as being down to earth and family oriented. Another group used television presenter Michael Parkinson, because they believed he was perceived as trustworthy.

Solar panels

'Solar panel' is a common term for 'photovoltaic module', which can be used in a larger photovoltaic system to create electricity. There are two main forms: solar electricity and solar hot water panels. It is possible for a household to run completely off photovoltaic electricity from the use of solar panels, yet this is unlikely in most cases.

Inhibiting factors

There were frequent discussions among participants about the poor aesthetic values of the solar panel model, and of solar panels more generally. Several participants were unconvinced about the model's claim to fit flush on to the roof:

> 'But that's what your roof would look like? I just don't think for an aesthetic point of view it would look very pleasant. I mean, I've had a completely brand new roof, and I wouldn't want that stuck on my house.' (Bristol, Male, with children)

> 'I have a friend that has got solar panels – they look hideous on her roof, though.' (Female, London, with children)

However, while important, generally this was not considered a very significant factor, and other participants were ambivalent about what their roof looked like.

> 'They're actually not as unsightly as they used to be. Years ago you used to see them randomly on odd houses in the countryside, didn't you – they used to be quite big things. Actually they're not that bad, are they?' (Female, York, with children)

A main factor that inhibited participants from wanting to buy the product was a general lack of knowledge about solar panels. They were given a factsheet about model solar panels, but all groups indicated that they needed more information. Questions were asked about whether there was enough sunshine in the UK for the panels to work well.

> 'I don't know how efficient it is in this country.' (Female, London, without children)

> 'How much real sun do you need to power these? I don't know that – I wouldn't know.' (Female, London, with children)

Many wanted to know the payback time and how much of a household's energy the product would actually produce. Some fairly extravagant estimates were made about this figure, with the presumption being that the panel could produce far more electricity than they actually can.

The main disincentive to buying the panel was the high upfront cost. In the observations, where participants had access to more detailed information about solar panels than in the groups, none saw this as a realistic option, due to the low levels of energy output and correspondingly long payback times. For some workshop participants, the fact that they did not plan to live in their current homes for a long period of time was a contributing factor to their response. Several commented that due to the high costs, installing solar panels was more about 'doing your bit' than a realistic purchase option:

> 'It's a very expensive outlay, and it's not our "forever" house.' (Female, London, without children)

> 'It's a lot of money to not save you much… That's more about doing your bit, isn't it?' (Female, London, with children)

> 'Who lives in a property for 20 years now? That's the downside, isn't it?' (Male, York, without children)

> 'Obviously we all want to save money, but to have to spend out £10,000 for, say, £35 a year, unless you're intending to stay in your property – who knows what's going to happen? So I don't want to look that far ahead.' (Female, London, without children)

Encouraging factors

There was a significant potential for encouraging the uptake of solar panels by the target group. In general, the participants were positive about the purchase, and many would have been interested in buying this product had it cost less.

Several suggested ways in which the Government could regulate to make solar panels more accessible: a common suggestion was installing them on all new buildings or council houses. Another was a 0 per cent loan for the cost of the product, payable back over five years. Another was for the Government to offset the cost of installing one against one's stamp duty:

> 'I will do what I can to… do my part in fighting climate change. I, like most people, [am] limited financially [as to] what I can do. I would love the idea of having solar panels, for example, but the cost is entirely prohibitive.' (Male, London, without children)

> 'I think it's really appealing – it's just the cost really that put me off. I'd have that tomorrow if it wasn't so expensive.' (Female, York, with children)

> 'I've always thought that the roof is such a wasted space, and what they should probably do is stick these on a new build and say, "Right, everyone's house prices are nine or 10 grand more", and you'd automatically have them. There's no reason why no roof should have those at all.' (Male, Bristol, with children)

A common theme that emerged was that having a solar panel enabled the user to be self-sufficient and therefore insulated from changing or rising energy prices. It was for this reason that two of the participants had previously considered buying solar panels, even though they displayed high levels of cynicism about the motivations of government around action on climate change:

> 'It's also because it makes you self-sufficient. You're not necessarily at the mercy of any other companies that charge you their rates. If you have your own solar energy, or something along those lines, in your home then you're not having to bend over to whatever company and pay whatever bills when they decide to hike their prices up… So it does make a lot more sense now.' (Female, London, with children)

Marketing ideas

The environmental benefits figured more strongly in the advertisements for the solar panel than in those for the energy monitor. However, for some this was related to a perception of solar panels as a product that would only be purchased by environmentally inclined people.

In other cases the environmental benefit was mentioned as a secondary or minor benefit, alongside other reasons for buying the product. These included being able to save money, being able to insulate

oneself from fluctuating energy prices, and adding value to one's property. One of the advertisements used images to explain these benefits, such as a piggy bank for saving money, and an oilrig to make the link to resource use:

> 'Benefits: reduces dependency on fluctuating energy prices, so it doesn't matter if they go up or down – you're still quids in.' (Male, Bristol, with children)

> 'Do you want to add value to your house? Oh yes, ladies and gentlemen, with the credit crunch I'm sure that you do. Do you want to invest your money wisely under credit cruncher Gordon Brown? Oh yes, I'm sure you do. Do you want to go green and do your bit to make your children proud of you? I'm sure you do. And do you want to save on your bills? Of course you do! … Ladies and gentlemen, it's an investment for the future: speculate to accumulate.' (Female, London, with children)

> 'There's oil drums, that's an oilrig just to show the cost of natural gas and oil going up in the future, because it's obviously quite high now, and the pollution – the dark clouds at the top.' (Male, York, without children)

Two of the advertisements depicted contrasting ideas about how to sell the solar panel. One, created by a female group, put a strong emphasis on normalising the product using an image of an ordinary row of houses, with a solar panel being fitted. They explained that they thought it was important to make it seem accessible for average families and not just the preserve of the rich, although they commented that the price meant that this was really the case.

> 'We wanted an average Joe Bloggs family so that you could understand that: "Oh yeah, actually our family is like that – that's how we could benefit…" We didn't want to put a celebrity on it because then that makes it look as though only people with money can afford it or would benefit from it.' (Female, York, with children)

In contrast, one of the male groups chose a Hollywood film star, Samuel L Jackson, to sell the product. They chose to draw on this celebrity's image and high profile to make the product seem attractive:

> 'So we thought we'd get Samuel Jackson because he is cool! That guy could sell sand and you'd be interested, wouldn't you? So we've put him on the telly on his own, saying "Look at this!"' (Male, Bristol, with children)

One other group suggested using the well-known naturalist David Attenborough, because of his strong association with the environment.

Energy-efficient vehicles

The participants were presented with images of nine cars. The cars chosen included some renowned for being more or less environmentally-friendly, and other popular models. Each image was accompanied by the make and model of the car, and other information such as features included in the interior, the time it took to go from 0 to 60 miles per hour (mph), the miles per gallon (mpg), the fuel type, and whether the vehicle was new or second hand.

The cars and their characteristics were selected to stimulate a broad discussion about the key factors that influence participants' choices about buying cars. The participants were asked to select the car they would most and least want to buy. The group then discussed these choices and the reasons for them.

General factors influencing vehicle-purchasing decisions

The discussions within the groups demonstrated that a broad variety of factors influence car-purchasing decisions. Concerns about the environmental impact of cars were not identified as a significant factor behind any of the participants' purchasing decisions. Where participants did comment that environmental performance played a part in their decision, this was secondary to reductions in cost due to fuel efficiency or lower road tax. It is therefore essential to consider all factors that affect car purchases because it is on these criteria that all cars (whether environmentally-friendly or not) were judged and compared. These factors are discussed briefly below.

Participants had strong preconceptions about the cars that would and would not be affordable for them. Most placed a strong emphasis on ensuring that the chosen car provided good 'value for money':

> 'Obviously, price dictates what you buy.' (Female, London, with children)

Practical considerations such as who the car would be used by, and what it would be used for, were major factors. For example, if the car were to be used for commuting long distances, its fuel efficiency would be particularly important, and if the car was for a family then a larger model would be required:

> 'If you are going to do long journeys, it defines what car you get, doesn't it? If you're not going very far and you live… in the country, maybe a Range Rover, and then there's the Smart Car for the city. If you've got family, you get the people carrier.' (Male, Bristol, without children)

The quality and reliability of the car were also considered very important. Here, the brand and reputation of the car manufacturer played a big role in shaping participants' perceptions. Many participants shared strongly held perceptions of the quality of certain makes of car. For example, German cars were often referred to as being well made, while there was a feeling that French cars were not. Some participants explained that they had a very strong loyalty to particular brands, having had positive experiences with them in the past. Among the parents in the groups, the safety level of the car was also particularly important:

> 'I have had four Audis before and I absolutely love Audis… It's always the brand that we've gone for, so we've stuck with it.' (Female, York, with children)

> 'Especially even more with the children now, I want something that's going to hold its own in an accident.' (Female, York, with children)

The colour and aesthetic of the cars were also very important factors. Several of the female participants' stated this as the most important:

> 'I'd pick the colour over the engine. Sorry, it's a really girly thing to say, but it's true.' (Female, London, with children)

Participants also perceived the image of the car to be very important. Although linked to its aesthetics of the car, participants tended to refer to certain image-related characteristics they associated with the car. For example, some cars were generally assumed to be for a particular gender, with the Audi TT often described as a 'girls' car'. Other cars were heavily associated with particular jobs, with the Mondeo commonly associated with sales representatives.

It is difficult to draw widely applicable conclusions about perceptions of the image of certain cars, as these varied from participant to participant. Often participants would base their judgements of a car's image against the context of their perception of current trends and fashions. For example, the Beetle and Mini were regularly referred to as being 'character' or 'statement' cars. Some participants found these qualities very attractive, understanding them to complement the way the drivers saw themselves, while others found these characteristics and the cars' popularity off-putting.

> [Referring to the Beetle] 'It's my personality. It's fast, its sporty, it's slick. That's what I would choose. That's what I like.' (Female, London, without children)

> 'My least favourite is the Mini, only because I know everyone thinks they are trendy.' (Female, London, without children)

> 'Beetle is an image isn't it – just like Mini? It's not an everyday car, the Beetle. You either like Beetles or you don't.' (Male, Bristol, with children)

One type of car that stood out as having a particularly negative image was the SUV (sports utility vehicle or 4-wheel drive), although this was by no means a consensus view across the participants – many chose the Land Rover Freelander as their favourite purchase among the stimulus material. Those with a strong dislike for SUVs asserted that they are not practical for use in cities and are not safe for

other road users and pedestrians. A lot of criticism was directed at the drivers of this type of car, who were often described as being 'selfish', and the cars were billed as status symbols for the upper classes:

> 'I think its something to do with the people that drive [them]… I just find them really selfish people… I don't understand people that have them in the city, because they pollute and take up so much space – and they have the arrogance when they're driving.' (Female, London, without children)

> 'I'm not mad on 4x4s… They drive like they own the roads and don't mind if they hit you – but it's my favourite car out of all the cars here.' (Female, London, with children)

> 'There's far too many [SUVs] in Richmond and Ham, and it's a very small town. It's not the Serengeti – it's only Richmond Park.' (Female, London, with children)

Fuel efficiency and road tax were the only factors identified that affected participants' purchasing decisions that were of direct relevance to a model's emissions. Of the information presented to the participants, miles per gallon and fuel consumption were the most discussed characteristics. Many participants described how recent high petrol bills had been hard to manage, and some revealed that these high prices had impacted on their previous purchasing decisions. For example, one participant had had to give up driving an SUV because they could not afford to run it any more.

Some participants linked high petrol bills to diminishing fuel resources:

> '[Miles per gallon] has got more important for me over the last few years. Years ago, when it was just me and I wasn't bothered, I wouldn't care: I always had big flashy cars and things like that [that] I could afford… I had no commitments. Now, it makes a difference.' (Female, London, with children)

> 'I've got to the stage now – especially when the petrol was nearly £1.20 a litre – I was thinking "I'm a bit of a mug here, because I'm always driving".' (Female, London, without children)

> 'Personally, I wouldn't buy any car, really, at the minute, because of the current credit crunch situation. But if I was, I would probably buy that one [the Honda Civic Hybrid], because it does 61.4mpg. …. I do a bit of mileage, so [it] will be quite economical.' (Male, York, without children)

Several participants cited avoiding high road tax for cars with high emissions as a determining factor behind previous purchasing decisions. This had commonly occurred when purchasing a company car, because of restrictions that had been placed by the company upon the purchase. These taxes had had a significant impact on participants' awareness of carbon emissions. However, they have resulted in behaviour change because of the cost implications, rather than due to the participants' desire to behave in a way that was more environmentally-friendly.

> 'To be honest, I got a company car not that long ago, and I looked at [the Honda Civic] because of the low emissions, because I didn't want to get stung on tax.' (Male, Bristol, with children)

> 'I think one thing that would be a factor now for me, which isn't something that I've ever thought about before, is to flag emissions and that sort of thing – because obviously you've got to weigh that up for your tax.' (Female, York, with children)

Attitudes towards energy-efficient vehicles

The stimulus material for the groups included two cars with high fuel efficiency: a Honda Civic Hybrid and a Smart Car. The two cars produced very different reactions from the participants. These differences were explained both by participants' perceived views of the two cars in relation to the factors described above, and by their perceptions of people who engage in environmentally-friendly behaviours.

The Honda Civic was by far the best received of the two cars. Although only a small minority of the participants identified it as their favourite purchase, it was generally regarded positively and provoked little criticism. Positive comments arose from participants' perceptions that Honda was a reliable brand and that the look of the car was 'modern' and 'stylish'. They referred to its high mpg as an important factor, and some also welcomed the environmental benefit offered by this fuel efficiency, as a secondary benefit. Others, however, thought the car was very expensive and found its appearance too plain:

> 'Because it's a good size car, it's modern and like a family car. You've got your four doors, which I think is quite a good thing to have if you've got a family, and it looks quite trendyish, doesn't it?' (Female, York, with children)

> 'I know it's a hybrid, yes, you'll save money in petrol, but 17 grand? Surely they should make it more affordable if they are trying to sell it as an environmental car.' (Male, Bristol, without children)

> 'With the Honda Civic. The fact that it's a hybrid … it has more of an appeal now because that does make me think about things…' (Female, London, without children)

The Smart Car was far less well received. A very small minority were interested in buying this car because of the ease it offered for getting around in urban areas. However, the majority of participants were very negative. This negativity focused largely on the aesthetics of the car. It was also described using similar language to that directed towards people who engage in environmentally-friendly behaviour – specifically 'smug' and 'self-righteous'.

As with the SUV, criticisms were also directed at the people who drive Smart Cars rather than at the car itself. Some participants suggested that drivers of Smart Cars attempt to attract attention by having a car that looks so different to others, and this idea contributed to the feelings of negativity towards them:

> 'I wouldn't be seen dead in one… It looks like a big trainer on wheels. They're just unattractive.' (Female, London, without children)

> 'I think they look like disabled cars.' (Female, London, with children)

> 'I just hate the way people park them. I just hate the smugness of them.' (Male, Bristol, with children)

Two participants directly compared the Honda Civic with the Smart Car, as two environmentally-friendly cars, in terms of their perceived 'smugness' and 'self-righteousness'. Both felt that the Honda was less likely to be described in this way than the Smart Car. It seems that the unconventional aesthetics of the Smart Car and its high environmental performance serve to reinforce negative stereotypes of people who take up environmental behaviour. The Honda's more conventional aesthetics and the strength of the Honda brand help it to overcome these barriers:

> 'That Honda Civic… I don't know if it's as good for the environment, or less or more… neither of them you have to pay the Congestion Charge with. But at least the Honda Civic is a proper car. That [the Smart Car] is just vile.' (Female, London, without children)

> 'There's somewhat of a smugness of [Smart Cars], whereas the Honda Civic – it doesn't seem so smug. It's more environmental and practical. But [the Smart Car is] more of a: "I'm being environmental and practical, and look at me because I have this titchy witchy car and I am so amazingly environmental".' (Female, London, without children)

UK holidays

The workshop participants were presented with information about 11 holidays in the UK. Participants were given an image of the holiday, with information about the type of holiday, the location, the length of stay, the number of people included, the cost of the break, and what was included in the price. Different holidays were selected, to stimulate a broad discussion about the key factors determining the choices participants made when selecting a holiday.

The participants were asked to choose the holiday they would most want to take, and the holiday they would least like to take. The group then discussed these choices and their reasons. Particular focus was given to exploring attitudes towards holidaying in the UK as opposed to going abroad. Included within this was a discussion about the participants' attitudes towards different modes of transport for travelling on holiday.

As with the discussion on car purchases, participants identified some general factors that influenced all holiday purchases. These included the cost, who was going on the break, and, for parents, the specific needs of their children. Many participants indicated they would normally take several different types of holiday per year, in varying locations, and with different people. This means that their decisions about which holiday to go on were made in the context of other holidays they had taken recently or were planning to take.

Factors influencing decisions to holiday in the UK

In general, the participants were surprised by the contents of the stimulus materials. Because we had indicated that the activity would be focusing on holidays, many had expected to see holidays abroad. While the materials showed a number of different types of holiday in different locations in the UK, a significant amount of the discussion focussed on taking holidays abroad. As a result, some very clear themes emerged about why participants preferred to go overseas.

The most prominent of these was the lack of sunshine and amount of rain in the UK. Participants considered having good, hot weather and a swimming pool to be key ingredients for any holiday, and this type of weather was not perceived to be guaranteed in the UK. Participants from all groups recounted anecdotes about holidays in the UK that had been spoiled because of bad weather. The only participant who mentioned having made a choice influenced by environmental considerations went on to recount how having chosen to holiday in Cornwall it had rained all the time. She now felt that she had been cheated out of a holiday, and intended to go abroad next time.

> 'We normally go abroad, but we were trying to be quite ethical this year and they all had the right type of clothes… I had on a pair of trainers and a kagool, and I thought it was thoroughly miserable.' (Female, London, with children)

> 'At least if you go abroad, you know you're going to get warm weather and a swimming pool.' (York, male, without children)

Another factor that inhibited participants from taking holidays in the UK was the cost involved. They felt this was particularly high when compared with the option of taking cheap flights to go abroad to a country with lower living costs. Some participants also commented on the increasing costs of going on holiday in Europe, and how this encouraged them to look further afield:

> 'I would rather spend those prices going away somewhere abroad where you actually feel like you're getting value for money.' (Female, London, without children)

> 'My next holiday, I want to go to, say, Egypt [or] India, or I want to go to Thailand. A ticket to those places is very, very expensive but the cost of being there is cheaper.' (Female, London, without children)

Many of the participants suggested that a true 'holiday' required sun and a swimming pool, and felt that the stimulus material showed trips that were more like 'breaks' than 'holidays'. For many, a holiday needed to involve a feeling of 'getting away'. For different participants, this involved factors such as different types of shops, people speaking different languages, and being away from their mobile phone and UK newspapers. Also important for many participants was having new experiences, and this included being in a foreign country and experiencing different cultures:

> 'I didn't think any of them were particularly "holidays"… I guess I would probably class them as "breaks from work" rather than "holidays".' (Male, York, without children)

> 'When you're in England on a weekend break you have your phone on and stuff still, and you don't relax, so you definitely have to go abroad.' (Female, Bristol, without children)

> 'When you want a holiday you want a break. You want to completely… get out – like I said, experience a different culture, maybe have a bit of sun, bit of beach. Even if it's a city, it's somewhere different. To me – I don't know – Great Britain doesn't offer enough variation of things that I want to do.' (Female, London, without children)

> 'We've taken the littlies on holiday quite a few times last year, abroad, and just the different cultures and experiences that they gather being out of this country, I think it's just invaluable really.' (Female, York, with children)

In all the groups, the perceptions and attitudes that discouraged participants from choosing holidays in the UK were very strongly held and pervasive. There were very few discussions that suggested that participants could be persuaded to stop taking holidays abroad.

However, participants were positive about taking trips around the UK if these were in addition to, rather than instead of, a 'proper holiday'. Many spoke positively about certain areas of the country, such as Cornwall. Some areas were described as having very beautiful scenery, and some cities were also described positively. The majority of the participants said they would be interested in taking one of the breaks featured in the stimulus material.

In particular, many parents were very positive about taking trips to the CenterParcs holiday villages, and other participants were interested in taking a very short spa break. Caravanning provoked a mixed response, with some participants referring back to negative childhood memories of caravan holidays, while others felt they would enjoy such a break. Some were enthusiastic about the featured city breaks. There was a feeling among some participants that the UK weather was manageable if one prepared for it:

> 'If you get the weather, if you go down to Cornwall and you get the weather, then it's fabulous.' (Female, London, without children)

> 'I think a lot of places you go abroad, to beautiful islands and mountains and stuff… a lot of it is on your doorstep. I went to Snowdonia only for a couple of days a couple of months ago [and] that's amazing – really beautiful. But people go to New Zealand for that sort of thing. I mean, New Zealand is beautiful too but there's similar stuff in England, and the Highlands as well.' (Male, York, with children)

> 'We've stayed in a cottage in Northumberland as well – obviously not for seven nights… it was for a long weekend – but even though the weather wasn't particularly brilliant, I think in this country you sort of expect it not to be brilliant so you get geared up for it and you just go out anyway and regardless. You just think "Oh well, we'll just put the kagools on or the waterproofs, and we'll go out and have a walk".' (Female, York, with children)

Holiday travel by train

With the final lower-carbon choice discussed, participants were simply asked for their thoughts about taking the train to go on holiday. Many of the participants said they tended to take holidays abroad, often in medium-haul and long-haul locations. Because of this, flying was often perceived to be the only transport option available. It was also perceived as a very cheap travel option.

Several participants commented that being at an airport was exciting and signalled to them that the holiday had begun:

> 'The holiday starts at the airport.' (Female, London, without children)

> 'I like flying – it's exciting. I think also, nowadays, it's quite reasonable [pricewise] to fly so no reasons not to – unless you're scared of flying.' (Female, Bristol, without children)

> 'I get excited going to the airport… That's still a hassle, isn't it, getting to the airport and all that, but I get really excited because I'm going away.' (Female, London, with children)

This sense of excitement was seldom mentioned in relation to other transport options, although some commented that the experience of taking the Eurostar was comparable.

Several discussions focused on the 'hassle' involved in flying, such as taking flights during the night or early morning, being flown into airports located far from the ultimate destination, and having to arrive early. However, the predominant view was that the downsides were outweighed by the benefits – although some said they would pay more for flights in order to avoid some of these inconveniences.

Some participants had travelled by train to holiday destinations in the UK, and by Eurostar to Paris. Travelling by train was viewed as involving less hassle than flying, and as more relaxing. However, participants argued that travelling around the UK by train is very expensive, and that reaching places outside of major towns by train is difficult. Other than taking the Eurostar to Paris, participants did not perceive travelling to European destinations by train as a viable alternative to flying:

> 'I'm going to Paris in a couple of weeks and it was a choice between train or flying. It's been more expensive to go on a train but it's so much easier. So much more relaxing.' (Male, York, without children)

> 'It's quite relaxing – it's less stressful. You sit on the train, and you can read or just relax, and it just saves that stress of driving that distance – especially if you're on your own. Then if you're going any further, like Scotland, I'd fly.' (Female, Bristol, without children)

> 'The journey thing is just not me. I'm like "Just get me there as quickly as possible", and if I'm on a train I sleep and listen to my music. I'm not a good traveller at all.' (Female, London, with children)

Some participants felt it was important to have the flexibility offered by travelling by car to their holiday destination and having a car once on holiday:

> 'I would consider the Eurotunnel because you've still got that luxury of the car when you get there. I don't like the idea of being somewhere… too far away without a car.' (Female, Bristol, without children)

Home energy assessments

Having explored the responses to the six specific lower-carbon consumer choices, we now go on to consider the results of the home energy assessments and in-depth interviews.

As part of our study, we commissioned the lifestyle management company Ten to provide an adaptation of its green concierge service to 10 Now People, in the form of a home energy assessment. A professional domestic energy assessor visited each person and conducted a detailed energy assessment of their home. This involved measuring aspects of energy use, such as heating, insulation and lighting, and identifying potential areas for improvement. The assessor then briefed the participant on the results. An ippr researcher observed this briefing and then conducted a short in-depth interview with the participant. Findings from the observations are included throughout the report, but we summarise here participants' attitudes towards and responses to the home energy assessments.

Participants' attitudes to the assessments

Most participants were positive about having a professional energy assessment carried out on their home, and were interested in hearing the findings. They were happy to receive reliable information to complement or contrast with what they already believed about their energy use:

> 'It's fascinating… It gives you context to your worries, so it answers you – if you have got worries about your house, someone coming and actually [saying] "No, that's fine", or "Yes, you do have a problem".' (Male, London, with children)

Attitudes towards Ten's follow-up service (for example, obtaining quotes for undertaking home improvements recommended by the assessment) were mixed. While some saw the benefits of being

able to access reliable contractors, others were keen to have only the initial assessment and then arrange quotes and the carrying out of any work themselves. For many, it was important that the information received was from an independent source and, in particular, that it was not linked to efforts to sell any of the energy-saving measures.

> 'It's awareness he's giving you, which I think is a good point… I think if someone came in and was dressed like a builder and he said "Get in touch with these people, these people and these people"… I'd think, "Hang on for a minute, thanks for the advice and awareness, I'll go away… I don't want nothing else".' (Male, London, with children)

> 'She wasn't doing a sales pitch or anything like that so no, it was good.' (Female, London, without children)

> 'Rather than getting in a salesman… independent advice is good, definitely.' (Male, London, with children)

Some participants referred to the benefits of receiving information about energy use, which they had previously heard only when described in general terms, applied directly to their particular situation:

> 'To be able to see the percentage of how much you can save by implementing things – that's the useful thing – to actually be able to see it. Rather than saying "You should do this, you should do that, you should do the other"… to see, if you did do it, the result.' (Female, London, with children)

For many participants the visual components, such as graphs of their energy use and the examination of their home with a thermal imaging camera, were particularly engaging:

> 'To actually see it in a graph… like that, set out quite clearly, it makes it really interesting – really easy for me to read, being that sort of person.' (Female, London, with children)

> 'The heat sensor thing is fantastic because it brings it to life.' (Male, London, with children)

In addition, the assessors played an important role in making the participants feel comfortable with the assessment, and in relaying the results in an interesting manner:

> 'To have some person come walking around my house, he made me feel very comfortable – very personable man…. When we were talking about driving to the gym and things like that, he said he could relate to lots of things I was saying. That was nice: he was putting his personal experiences… rather than giving me facts, figures.' (Female, London, with children)

Participants correctly estimated that the service would be worth approximately £100–£200, but generally were not keen on purchasing it themselves – particularly given the current economic circumstances.

Reactions to the findings

The results of the home energy assessments varied widely between participants depending on their housing type and size, and on the level of energy-efficiency measures already installed.

Some participants were surprised at how well their home performed overall, and others were happy to be above the average result for the area.

Reactions to proposed measures

Different measures were discussed with different participants, depending on their property and circumstance. While participants' reactions to the proposed measures varied, there were consistent identifiable patterns.

Some participants were surprised at how energy inefficient their boiler was despite only being a few years old. Most participants indicated, however, that they would not install a new boiler until their

current one broke down – mainly because of the high costs involved and a perceived need to get the full use out of their current one:

> 'I wouldn't replace it now unless it broke down because that would be a huge waste of whatever else, wouldn't it? You can't just suddenly replace something – you're not going to be saving money in the long run, are you, because you haven't got the use out of the thing, in my view.' (Female, London, with children)

None of the participants were familiar with the chimney balloon – a device that is inflated up a chimney to reduce heat loss and reduce draughts. However, its low cost, the notable effect it had on reducing emissions, producing significant cost savings, and its ease of installation made this a popular recommendation among participants.

Participants tended to hold negative attitudes towards energy-efficient light bulbs, perceiving them as ugly and unable to produce a good quality of light. Some had installed some previously, and others had been sent some by energy companies but had not installed any. The domestic energy assessors had some success with encouraging some participants to start installing them, by suggesting that they just try one in the first instance, and by highlighting the amount of money that could be saved by switching to the energy-efficient option:

> 'My electricity supplier actually sent me a load of energy-saving light bulbs, which was quite nice – not very practical, though, because I don't use them.' (Female, London, without children)

> 'I find those light bulbs really horrible and ugly, and I just think when you put a light on I want there to be light: I don't want to wait, because it takes five or 10 minutes for them to go like that, so really… [but] it's being silly, really, because if I can save myself £34…' (Female, London, with children)

> 'They want to steer you towards energy-saving lamps, which is the way to go, but they're so ugly and the light is not as good. He was saying "Some of them [are] getting better – why not get one? Just get on with it, then you're improving it yourself slightly, and you get used to it, and eventually move forward like that, and it's something you can try as a trial"… I thought that was a good point, rather than just change the whole lot.' (Male, London, with children)

None of the participants saw renewable energy measures as a realistic option due to their high installation costs and very long payback times.

Similarly, participants did not see installing solid wall insulation as a viable option because of the high cost of doing this, as well as aesthetic considerations and the reduction in living space it would produce:

> 'It might save you some energy – I don't quite know what it would do for the aesthetics of the building.' (Male, London, without children)

Some of the participants had installed measures such as loft insulation and cavity wall insulation. Some participants also referred to the environmental benefits of such measures, but the primary reasons were to increase the warmth and comfort of the building, and to reduce bills:

> 'That's because I like to have a warm house, not because of massive carbon output.' (Female, London, without kids)

Some participants suggested that the process of making their home more energy efficient was a gradual one. Others mentioned that because the changes that needed to be made to do this were not always visible, they tended to be low on their list of priorities for improving their home:

> 'As light bulbs have expired – candescent ones – I have put in energy-saving ones. The boiler was changed about a year ago, but that was only because the old boiler had packed up. I changed it for a more efficient one because it was much newer – more modern. That's the process, basically: if something needs doing then I'll get it done using more energy-efficient things, so a gradual process.' (Male, London, without children)

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Our research identifies key aspects of Now People's attitudes that should be taken into account when designing climate-change communications. It also highlights barriers to the uptake of certain lower-carbon behaviours that are insurmountable by communications alone, such as the perceived high costs involved in adopting them. To successfully engage Now People in changing their behaviour, a range of policy interventions is required, to work alongside effective communications.

Guidance for climate-change communications

It is clear from our research that new approaches to climate-change communications are required if Now People are to be successfully encouraged to adopt lower-carbon behaviours. The starting point for such efforts should be a recognition that a lack of awareness of the issues is not the problem.

In general, we found that Now People's perceptions are dominated by issues that are immediate and tangible at the individual level (both functionally and emotionally). Climate change is a distant, large-scale, long-term issue, and hence does not feature as a major concern to this group. That is not to say that Now People do not hold some positive perceptions of lower-carbon behaviour: they do see the benefits, for example, that come from having a healthy environment for their children, and of feeling good about 'doing your bit'. However, these are only secondary considerations.

One of the biggest challenges in instigating behaviour change within this group is that Now People have frequently been communicated to about environmental issues in terms that do not relate to their world view. In fact, our research shows that the opposite has often been the case – they have been made to feel guilty, wrong and possibly stupid for not changing their behaviours. This is ineffective and counter-productive. Clearly, other ways need to be found with which to communicate effectively to Now People about lower-carbon behaviours. Our research suggests that this can be achieved in a number of ways, as summarised in the box below.

> **Top 10 tips for communicating to Now People about lower-carbon behaviours**
>
> 1. Don't focus on climate change
>
> 2. Focus on saving money *now*
>
> 3. Prevent the rebound effect
>
> 4. Talk about carbon pollution, not CO_2 emissions
>
> 5. Satirise high-carbon living
>
> 6. Make it desirable
>
> 7. Remember that being in control matters
>
> 8. Make it fun
>
> 9. Avoid guilt and the 'environmental' label
>
> 10. Use messengers that 'keep it real'

Each of these tips is described in more detail below.

1. Don't focus on climate change

All participants exhibited a high level of awareness of climate change as an issue. Striking visual images of melting glaciers, and in particular, of polar bears, have been important in developing this awareness. Perceptions of changes to UK weather patterns have also been important. In addition, although the concept of 'natural cycles' was prominent in participants' responses, they overwhelmingly accepted the fact that human actions are having an effect on the climate. The argument about the scientific basis has, to a large extent, been won.

This is important. It underlines that if Now People are not changing their behaviour, it is not because they are not aware of the problem and its causes. They are aware – but that awareness is simply not motivating enough. In fact, the introduction of climate change as a topic of discussion in the workshops provoked a weariness among many of the participants.

2. Focus on saving money now

The research clearly suggests that communications that emphasise the money-saving potential of adopting lower-carbon behaviours will be much more effective with Now People than messages that urge them to take action on the basis of preventing climate change – particularly in the present economic climate.

We had not anticipated that Now People would be particularly interested in saving money. This unexpected outcome is likely to be explained largely by the turbulent economic environment that formed the backdrop to our research. However, as the situation affecting the global and national economy evolves, the emphasis given to economic factors by this group is also likely to alter. If the current economic situation improves, the efficacy of communications focused on saving money is likely to lessen. But if the current shift towards greater austerity lasts in the medium-to-long term, then it could create opportunities for behaviour change that could be capitalised on.

Even so, emphasising money-saving benefits alone is unlikely to be sufficient. There are large differences among Now People in their attitudes towards saving money, with some being keen to save money wherever possible, while others view being overly interested in saving money as 'boring'. These differences may in part be due to the different socioeconomic circumstances of participants. Therefore, the very idea of saving money itself needs to be made appealing. This could be achieved by emphasising the 'exciting' things that money saved can be spent on – although it is important to be aware of the potential for the rebound effect – see below.

3. Prevent the rebound effect

Communications that focus solely upon financial reasons for behaviour change could be undermined by a 'rebound effect' whereby people will spend the money they have saved on other, potentially high carbon, purchases, such as flying (Crompton 2008). To prevent this effect, it may be necessary to ensure that communications refer to the need to reduce 'carbon pollution' or use humour to satirise high-carbon behaviours, while making lower-carbon choices desirable (these options are explained in points 4–6 below).

4. Talk about carbon pollution, not CO_2 emissions

The choice of language is important. Communications that purposefully play on Now People's perception of emissions as being a 'dirty' form of 'pollution' are likely to have more impact than those that refer to invisible emissions. Similarly, 'carbon', widely perceived as black and dirty, may also be more effective terminology to use than invisible 'carbon dioxide' or CO_2. Negative attitudes to 'waste' were also widely held. 'Waste' may therefore also offer powerful terminology for communications to use.

It could consequently be argued that it is important to develop a coordinated campaign, not just a set of separate communications approaches targeting discrete behaviour changes, emphasising or at least referencing the need for deep reductions in carbon pollution.

5. Satirise high-carbon behaviours

An alternative to explicitly encouraging Now People to adopt a lower-carbon lifestyle is to focus on discouraging them from continuing particular high-carbon behaviours, but without recourse to appeals to duty or responsibility or the use of guilt. An effective, and very British, way of doing this could be through humour, including gentle mockery, sarcasm and satire – associating high-carbon behaviours with unattractive personalities.

Defining high-carbon behaviours in this way makes them appear undesirable. A range of alternative (lower-carbon) behaviours then become available for Now People to choose for themselves. The ideal would be for lower-carbon behaviours to become the positive default option, while leaving Now People with the sense that they still have room for self-expression – that they are not being told how to behave.

Comedy programmes aimed at the under-thirties, in particular, can have a significant and immediate impact on perceptions of specific behaviours among Now People, whose main drive is to look 'cool' to others. They note anything that detracts from their desired image immediately, and act on it quickly, to maintain or change other people's perceptions of them.

Our research findings indicate that high-carbon behaviours should be portrayed using language, and drawing on qualities, other than those typically associated with environmental issues. This is likely to have been a key factor in the change in attitudes towards SUVs, which Now People widely associate with negative perceptions, largely due to their belief that the drivers are selfish (and the cars dangerous).

6. Make it desirable

Another way to overcome the rebound effect is through the continuous re-creation of sustainable products and behaviours into 'objects of desire' – the very thing that turned the polluting car into something that Now People 'had to have'. In these difficult economic times, these could perhaps be depicted as the technologies and behaviours of 'fashionable austerity'.

7. Remember that being in control matters

The research also highlights anxiety about high and fluctuating energy prices (including the role of energy companies in relation to this) driven by the turbulence within the financial system and the poorly performing economy. When combined with the insecurity and a desire for 'control' commonly felt by Now People, this offers the potential for effective communications on lower-carbon behaviours.

The issue of control appears to be central to many of the anxieties of Now People in times of economic uncertainty. Now People will respond more quickly than other groups to communications that provide keys to gaining control in situations perceived as 'out of control' – such as rising energy prices or stealth taxation (private communication with Cultural Dynamics Strategy and Marketing Ltd).

Consequently, some Now People may respond well to communications emphasising how energy-efficiency measures can offer 'control' over energy costs and independence from energy companies.

This insight is particularly relevant for those consumer choices in which the cost of energy is clearly evident to Now People. This includes household gas and electricity use, where energy costs are made tangible in the form of bills, and in relation to cars, where levels of petrol consumption are highly visible.

A related point is that the combined forces of the economic situation and the cost of energy are likely to have shaken Now People's sense of self-efficacy and their confidence that what they do can achieve desired outcomes. Success is so important to members of this group that if they don't believe that they can make a difference, they won't even try. Hence, communications are also needed that reinforce their sense of agency and belief that they can make a difference.

8. Make it fun

The deliberative workshops were characterised by an atmosphere of humour and fun. This noticeably changed when the topic of climate change was introduced. Some Now People see climate change as being 'boring' and 'depressing', and prefer not to hear about it. Communications that are fun and humorous are far more likely to capture and sustain the attention of Now People than those that are overly serious.

9. Avoid guilt and the 'environmental' label

It is important that communications do not promote feelings of guilt among those who are not engaging in lower-carbon behaviour. It may appear obvious that communicators should avoid saying 'You should be ashamed to take a plane to go on holiday or to drive a car'. However, this sort of statement is sometimes heard from the lips of some climate-change campaigners – and it is unhelpful, as it drives Now People to disengage from the message completely.

It is also significant that some Now People feel they are already 'doing their bit' for the environment, by recycling. This finding is supported by recent Ipsos MORI research that found that 40 per cent of

people believe that recycling domestic waste is the most important thing they can do to prevent climate change. The authors of the research concluded that 'individuals use recycling as a means of discharging their responsibility to undertake wider changes in lifestyle' (Downing and Ballantyne 2007).

While this may be the case, communications that emphasise a message such as 'You are not doing enough' or 'You are not taking responsibility' will not be effective. Rather, communications should acknowledge the actions that Now People are already undertaking and build upon these. They need to be told how well they are doing – not how badly they are doing. Now People need to be acknowledged and praised (private communication with Cultural Dynamics Strategy and Marketing Ltd).

Messages that promote feelings of guilt, or that imply a moral or ethical superiority on behalf of the carrier of the message, contribute to the negative perceptions of environmentalists held by some Now People.

Now People tend to describe people who engage in environmentally-friendly behaviour as being different to them. Furthermore, Now People project that environmentally-inclined people adopt environmental behaviour because they want to stand out from others and convey their 'righteousness' – in other words, because of the way this makes them appear to other people, rather than for other less self-interested motives, such as reducing their impact on the environment.

This is an important reason why communications should detach lower-carbon behaviours from the notion of being an 'environmentally-friendly person'. Self-determination – particularly over things such as image – is very important for Now People. If becoming 'environmentally-friendly' implies the adoption of one lifestyle at the expense of others, it limits, rather than opens up, options for self-determination.

Communications must therefore promote lower-carbon behaviours as being 'normal' – at least, for Now People – while still offering individuals something which they can excel at, or can have that is '-er' or '-est' (in other words, better or best).

10. Using messengers that 'keep it real'

The channels via which communications are delivered (see box below), and the messengers used for sending them, play a key role in how those communications are received. Our research found that for promoting the domestic products, participants chose to use celebrities who Now People trust and associate with as peers, rather than higher-ranking celebrities such as pop or film stars. Hence, participants wanted to see advertisements with celebrities such as Tess Daly and Vernon Kay, rather than international superstars such as Madonna.

This again supports the imperative to normalise lower-carbon behaviours for Now People. Energy companies were often referred to as likely promoters of lower-carbon behaviours. However, many noted the confusion in notion of energy companies, who are already mistrusted, encouraging people to reduce their energy use. This is an issue that the energy companies will need to confront before attempting to target communications at Now People – particularly as suppliers' role as delivery agents for household CO_2 savings will continue.

Reaching Now People: Top 10 things they most like to read about

- Lifestyles of the rich and famous
- Beauty and personal appearance
- Fashion and clothes
- Future trends
- Scandals in high places

- Property
- Celebrity writers and columnists
- Private lives of royalty
- Homes and interiors
- Health and fitness

Source: Cultural Dynamics Strategy and Marketing Ltd (unpublished)

It is also notable that when asked who should sell lower-carbon products, none of the participants referred to environmental organisations (although some did mention some famous naturalists, such as David Attenborough). If the products were sold by environmental groups, there would be immediate dissonance in the minds of Now People. The 'brand image' of these groups is not, nor should be, for Now People, who are purveyors of objects of desire – this is a step too far for them. Armani – or even Primark – 'Green' yes, WWF, Greenpeace, or Friends of the Earth 'fashionista' no!

In times of economic distress and dislocation, Now People may tend to gravitate towards 'easy versions' of the aspirational models used to define visible success and achievement. So, where previously there was never 'too much bling', in today's economic context the focus may be on getting the 'right' amount of it. Aspirations do not cease, they may simply be downgraded.

As Now People appear to lose some of their self confidence to achieve success in their own way, they may be looking for role models that have done it in 'their own way', regardless of whether it is glitzy or not. The Now People version of authenticity may come into play. They may not want to think about the motives and dynamics of the messenger (for example that they might be paid to say what they say) but prefer to believe that the message and messenger are one and the same (Cultural Dynamics Strategy and Marketing Ltd). Hence the appeal of Tess Daly and Vernon Kay, and Louise and Jamie Redknapp: ordinary people that just happen to be famous.

The recent outpouring of support for contestant Susan Boyle on the television show 'Britain's got talent' reflects this changed perception – ordinary, authentic and yet something special. Campaigns that use and facilitate this will gain Now People's attention and their commitment to sustainably changing their behaviours. *Warm Words* – an ippr report on how communications on climate change could be improved (Ereaut and Segnit 2006) – coined the term 'ordinary heroes'. That's what Now People need to feel they are.

Proposals for promoting specific lower-carbon behaviours

This research project aimed to identify opportunities for increasing the uptake of six specific lower-carbon consumer choices: energy monitors, heating controls, solar panels, energy-efficient vehicles, UK holidays and holiday travel by train.

It also drew observations from home energy assessments carried out by lifestyle management company Ten in the homes of 10 individuals, followed by in-depth interviews.

We found that Now People attach widely differing value and levels of importance to each of these products and services, significantly influencing the decisions that they make.

Given these differences, and the wide-ranging barriers to communications aimed at encouraging reductions in carbon and energy use in general, communications need to target behaviours individually. But the findings discussed above should form the foundation for any product-specific communications.

We have also identified barriers to the uptake of the six lower-carbon choices that are not surmountable with communications alone. These barriers require different policy interventions. In the remainder of this section we briefly discuss the sorts of communication and policy approach that are likely to be effective in promoting each of the six products and services described here.

However, it is first worth noting that in each case there is a need to ensure that communications support policy, and for policy to support communications – not least, to ensure consistency between rhetoric and practice (see box, next page). There is also a clear need for the appropriate policy frameworks to be in place to ensure innovation in the design of lower-carbon products and services to attract Now People, given that often aesthetics act as a barrier to adoption.

In the energy sector, this might come about by adopting a policy framework that incentivises energy service companies that would be under greater pressure to make technologies and behaviours that reduce energy use more appealing because that would be how they would make their money. Equally compelling incentives are needed for car and train companies.

Getting policy right – the need for consistency and transparency

Now People display high levels of cynicism and mistrust in relation to government, and this has important implications for policymaking. This cynicism is driven in part by Now People's perception that they have been urged to take action on climate change in the face of seemingly contradictory policies from the Government itself, such as the decision to build a third runway at Heathrow Airport. The effect of this cynicism may be to limit the space available to government to take action. It is therefore critical that government seeks to portray a consistent message about climate change that is evidenced by the policies it adopts.

Some of the research participants indicated that they would be more convinced that climate change is a serious issue for government if more policies aimed at tackling it had been introduced. There is therefore a key role that government needs to play in driving changes in Now People's attitudes.

It is also worth noting that participants displayed a high degree of cynicism towards sustainable products – primarily because they were always seen as the most expensive option and a means of increasing profits. Ensuring that the right fiscal incentive framework is in place, and that it is transparent and well communicated, is vital for increasing consumer confidence in lower-carbon products and behaviour change.

One step that government could take is to use the taxation system much more effectively as a means of encouraging lower-carbon behaviour. The Treasury should enforce its 2002 Statement on Environmental Taxation, which fundamentally endorses the concept of making the more sustainable option financially attractive – encouraging the 'goods' and taxing the 'bads'.

However, due to the mistrust that exists, particularly around the issue of 'stealth taxes', changes should be introduced transparently, with strong consideration given to hypothecating the revenues raised to make lower-carbon options cheaper. Any hint that a policy is a stealth tax will be instinctively rejected by the highly individualist Now People and will provide a platform for anti-environmental protest.

If taxation is transparent and the revenues used to help address the problem, then greater public support is likely. Hypothecation establishes trust – something that governments have often lacked in recent years. It presents an opportunity for any political party to gain a real edge – by being seen to be clear on environmental issues and money.

Energy monitors

The Government is now committed to a nationwide rollout of smart meters, which remotely record customers' electricity use and let them know how much they are using, as energy monitors do, by 2020. Ideally, this should happen sooner. Whenever it does, government should set minimum standards to ensure that the product includes a permanent, visible in-home display designed to engage its users, and a support package that prepares householders for the arrival of their new meter and enables them to take action as a result of the information it provides.

It will clearly be important to accompany the rollout of smart meters with appropriate communications – not least to assuage any fears people may have emerging from a lack of trust. One of the best ways to do this is through the use of emotional triggers to understand what it will feels like for a Now Person, as a figure of trust to their children and their contemporaries, to identify, acquire and display the smart meter. This should be combined with a focus on the benefits involved.

Communications should emphasise that smart meters can easily save the user money and give them more control. Contextualising this with experiences of fluctuating energy bills is also likely to be effective, together with the appeal of not wasting energy. Highlighting the enjoyment that could be gained by spending the money saved on something pleasurable will also help. The environmental benefits could be included, but not as the main focus.

Another aspect of the product that could be emphasised is its role as a modern gadget. In focus groups among Now People that look beyond immediate environmental issues, it is regularly found

that gadgets, rather than ideologies, are big drivers of behavioural change. This is as true for female Now People as it is for their male counterparts, who are typically thought of as showing more interest in gadgets as 'boy toys' (Cultural Dynamics Strategy and Marketing Ltd).

Heating controls

The main challenge to efforts to increase the uptake of heating control products is to communicate what they do, and what benefits they can offer. As with energy monitors, it is important to emphasise the benefits of heating controls in terms of their ability to save money, increase consumer 'control' and reduce waste, over their environmental benefits, as well as highlighting the greater comfort and the emotional benefits gained from using them.

Given the level of control over domestic heating that heating controls offer, we were surprised that the Now People who participated in our research did not respond better to this product. In particular, participants had doubts about the level of functionality offered. Hence communications about heating controls need to convey clearly the marked differences in control and financial gain that they offer in comparison to existing controls. But they should also portray them as the newest, best, latest, most modern piece of kit (with preset programmes for different rooms and remote control), 'as seen in Heat magazine' (for example).

As with other energy-efficiency and renewable-energy technologies, greater cooperation with the supply chain for these products is also necessary in order to ensure clear, consistent information and greater deployment. Many energy-efficiency measures are not generally purchased directly by consumers but are made on the recommendation of installers, such as plumbers and heating engineers. Government and manufacturers of measures such as improved heating controls should be engaging with installers, to ensure that they are aware of newer products and their money- and energy-saving benefits.

Solar panels

There is significant potential for increasing the uptake of solar panels by Now People, but only if the resistance to the high upfront cost can be overcome. To achieve this, policy interventions are essential. The Government's commitment to introduce feed-in tariffs in April 2010 – offering 'cash paybacks' for the return of any unused electricity generated from micro-renewables back to the National Grid – will help, as long as tariffs are set at generous levels and if their introduction is accompanied by communications setting out their benefits (see below).

However, a significant increase in uptake is likely to require further financial support because even with existing grants and likely feed-in tariff income, the payback period of solar panels could be as much as 15 years (according to ippr calculations). Hence, it may be necessary to put in place an expanded programme of direct subsidies, discounts on stamp duty or low- or zero-interest loans (underwritten by government). Alternatively, on-bill repayment could be offered if solar panels are installed by energy companies.

Government also has a role to play in providing incentives for manufacturers to design in-home meters for solar panels, with engaging visual displays and attractive graphics – perhaps even with internet connectivity, so that owners can see in real time how much electricity they are making, using and selling.

As these or comparable policies are introduced, communications should – as always – emphasise the benefits. With solar panels, communications should place a strong emphasis on the 'control' and 'self-sufficiency' that solar panels can offer, within the context of an unsettled world with fluctuating energy prices.

Consumers also need basic information about solar panels – not least, to dispel some of the doubts expressed that they would work in the UK. Efforts should also be made to communicate the physical appeal of solar panels, as there was some scepticism about them among our research participants. Positioning the panels as attractive 'modern gadgets' would help.

Now People also need to feel that solar panels are normal and authentic for 'people like them', while at the same time – critically – helping make them look special. This should be a crucial dimension of

any government campaign to develop sustainable behaviour among Now People. The house they live in is a symbol of their identity. If a solar panel or any other energy-saving technology helps make their home 'special' then they won't necessarily see the product as 'environmental' or something pushed on them by 'do-gooders', and are therefore less likely to react against it.

The increasing visibility of solar panels (and of other microgeneration and community-scale lower-carbon heat and electricity technologies) will help not only to increase awareness, but also to make them more acceptable and desirable.

There was considerable support among participants for ensuring that all new homes were used to mainstream technologies that were not yet cost effective, such as solar panels. So, the increased tightening of building regulations proposed by the Government and its target to ensure all new homes are zero-carbon by 2016 should be maintained, and new houses used to mainstream newer technologies at the household and community scale.

This should also be supported through demonstration homes, coordinated and funded by government. Each locality should have a 'normal' home retro-fitted with solar or other micro-scale renewables, as well as a range of energy-efficiency measures, that is periodically open to the public so they can experience an existing lower-carbon home for themselves. It is important that the home is realistic, in order to make the measures seem relevant and achievable, and care must be taken for it not to look too 'worthy' or 'austere', which would be an immediate turn-off to Now People. The design ideas that went into the '100 Ideas House' run by councils in the West of England, specifically targeted at Now People, would form a good starting point (see www.100ideashouse.com).

Energy-efficient vehicles

Increases in vehicle excise duty (VED) for cars with higher carbon emissions (combined with higher petrol prices) has had some impact on Now People, who are now increasingly choosing not to buy high-polluting cars such as SUVs. Similar policies relating to company cars have also been important. This approach to car tax should be extended, with increased VED band price differential – particularly for A- and B-rated vehicles – as should the Government's commitment to provide subsidies for the purchase of the most fuel-efficient cars.

However, while providing the right price stimuli is important, relying solely on this measure will be insufficient, as it does not take into account the other attributes of cars. Now People will judge an environmentally-friendly car on many attributes – notably brand, aesthetic and image (especially colour), as well as fuel efficiency, cost and other practical issues – before considering its environmental performance.

Clearly, image is particularly important for Now People. Of the two lower-emission models discussed, we found that participants were far more receptive to the Honda Civic Hybrid, with its more conventional and stylish look, and manufactured by a 'reliable' brand, than the Smart Car, with its strikingly different aesthetic, which they said looked 'environmental' and 'smug'.

This highlights one of the main insights into Now People – their constant anxiety about wanting to be leading edge but not 'too' leading edge: being cool, but no so cool they are laughed at. As 'modern' fuel-efficient car technology becomes the new 'normal' and 'special', greater uptake can be expected.

Consequently, a successful approach must involve regulation, to make sure that well-recognised and established brands of car incorporate lower-carbon technology in their models, and to provide incentives for them to design these cars to be aesthetically attractive. Communications can help by highlighting attractions such as their 'modern' technologies, and their ability to control fuel bills.

UK holidays

Our research shows that in the short term there are few prospects for encouraging Now People to regularly take their main holiday in the UK. The fundamental barrier to this is a perception of poor and unpredictable weather in the UK – factors that are insurmountable by any communications campaign or policy (although, paradoxically, over time this perception may change with a run of warm, dry summers that may occur because of global warming). The comparative high cost of taking holidays in the UK was also seen as important.

However, there is significant potential for increasing the number of short breaks that Now People choose to take in the UK, rather than abroad – particularly in the current economic climate (Bachelor 2009). Now People were very positive about some areas of the UK, such as Cornwall, and the range of holiday types available. To maximise their attractiveness to Now People, UK destinations will need to offer good levels of comfort, at reasonable prices, and to position themselves as 'modern' and 'fun' holiday options.

Government should consider a package of incentives for UK tourism, including for improving the facilities offered. This could also have benefits for economic development – particularly in regional areas. One of the main obstacles to UK breaks is the perceived poor standards of accommodation and service. Now People aged 30–45, with families, form a large part of the young family group – and they are often ill-served by traditional UK accommodation and facilities. Ensuring good experiences for their family is likely to be more important than climate change to Now People.

This will be needed to bring a new generation of families back to places that have become 'old fashioned' in their minds. The way forward for UK hosts and their trade-marketing message is to build on Now People's need for the 'authentic and special, but ordinary' (for example, by stating 'the Redknapps were here a couple of weeks ago'). A sustained campaign is needed (of which there is already some evidence), involving key tourism organisations such as Visit Britain, to promote UK breaks and holidays as a positive way of getting away from work and day-to-day life.

At the same time, policy should focus on increasing the cost of air travel – not least, to generate revenues to improve the alternatives – increasing the provision of competitively priced and exciting alternative modes of transport (see 'Holiday travel by train', below). However, given the relatively low price elasticity of demand for air travel, additional fiscal measures will have a limited impact on behaviour change unless they are set at a significantly higher level – and this may be too unpopular to do (Gillen *et al* 2003).

Hence, alongside this, communications could be used to create a stigma around taking too many flights. It is important that this is not done in a malicious or overly negative way, as Now People are currently very far from holding negative sentiments about flying. However, humour could be used to gently mock people who take too many flights. This message should be accompanied by positive and engaging communications displaying the diversity of options for holidays in the UK.

The 'fun' and 'feel-good factor' of being in 'the right' could hold the emotional key to Now People embracing this message. It isn't about not doing something – it is the buzz of doing 'something else', and being seen to be doing it.

Holiday travel by train

The two main barriers to Now People's increased use of trains are the perceived high costs involved and their lack of flexibility compared to cars and planes. If government wants people to use trains more, it needs to make a concerted effort to find ways of reducing the cost of train travel so that it becomes attractively priced when compared with car travel and flying. One option is to offer more discounts – such as allowing children to travel for free during school holidays.

Equally, train operators should do more to communicate the cheaper rates that are already available if tickets are booked in advance – encouraging passengers to make more advanced bookings just as they would for a journey by plane.

Train travel also needs to be made more accessible, not only by making it more cost competitive with car travel but also by ensuring that services are available when people want to travel on breaks, which is generally at the weekend. This requires a complete rethink of maintenance and upgrading work so that it is coordinated to avoid holiday periods – essential to making this option attractive to Now People.

Communications, meanwhile, could help to shift perceptions by creating a buzz about train travel while playing up the bother and stress of flying. Eurostar has been particularly successful in positioning train travel as an exciting alternative to flying. This model can be extended so that train

travel becomes even more 'special' (while also comfortable and relaxing). The next stage in this process may be to create a buzz around mainline stations (such as London's King's Cross St. Pancras). This will need a strategy to upgrade existing facilities – with government incentives and support if necessary. Recreating the buzz of the airport could play a key role in helping win the competition for Now People's travel arrangements.

Lessons from the home energy assessments

Our observation of 10 Now People receiving a home energy assessment by Ten's green concierge service highlighted the value of providing homeowners with professional, face-to-face information and support about the most appropriate lower-carbon options for their homes.

Our observations showed clear value in providing information relating to energy use that is personalised, tailored to individual homes, and from an independent source – unconnected to the energy companies or efforts to sell anything. Providing visual representations of this information – with graphs and thermal imagery of their homes – is also a particularly effective way of engaging Now People. It is also clearly important that the energy assessors have the skills to make people feel comfortable: their manner counts.

On the flipside, from our observations, Now People may be reluctant to pay for home energy assessments themselves, and would not all be comfortable with having a concierge company arrange quotes for them for home improvement work. Now People's commitment to undertake the measures recommended by home-energy assessors will also come up against all the barriers discussed elsewhere in this report – from off-putting high upfront costs (boilers and micro-renewable energy) to unsatisfactory aesthetics (energy-efficient light bulbs and solid wall insulation). All of these will need to be addressed for significant uptake to be achieved.

Final thoughts

Our research suggests that it is possible to engage far more people than the environmental pioneers in adopting lower-carbon behaviours if this is done properly. The time is ripe to take this message beyond the 'usual suspects', and Now People, as key drivers of fashions and trends, are the best group to focus on to encourage lower-carbon lifestyles to be widely adopted by consumers nationwide.

Our research suggests that success will lie in our collective ability to persuade consumers that in adopting lower-carbon lifestyles they can save money and have fun, they can have control in a chaotic world, they can do the right thing and look good without being an environmentalist, and they can be themselves. If we can achieve that, while putting the policies in place to ensure that lower-carbon options are affordable, attractive and visible, we will have gone a long way towards mobilising the power of consumers in the battle against climate change.

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Appendix 1: The Now People

The Now People are perhaps the epitome of the Prospector group in the Values Mode segmentation model. They have more energy and a greater need to use it to gain the approval of others. They have a much greater need to use all their social skills to build and maintain a 'network' of supporters and greater need to identify, acquire and display symbols of value than any other Values Mode. They need the support of the 'the group' to define their own identities.

Now People will attempt to become the centre of attention. They are more extroverted than most people. They are natural networkers – wanting to know everything and letting everyone know they are in the know. Now People can easily make an emotional connection with others.

Their 'life is a party' hedonistic approach to life can be confusing to others, who can accept the fun and intensity the Now People bring to many everyday or work situations, but will step back from some of the more overt 'party hard' aspects of the Now People at play. Over the last several years the perceived ability to financially support this aspect of their lives has come under scrutiny and their rising uncertainty is reflected in the deliberative workshops.

Now People know they often push the boundaries of acceptable thought and behaviour 'just because they can', then they think about it, and usually get on with 'it', accepting any consequence, good or bad, that stems from the behaviour. Today they still want to 'go for it', but they are more uncertain as to what 'it' is.

Their high needs for energy is balanced by their desire for a healthy lifestyle and they will try to eat and exercise more regularly than most. This orientation is not about 'health' *per se*, it is more about the right 'body shape', and making the best impression they can on others through body shape.

This 'go for it' group 'knows' they will finish any project they put their mind to. Any numerical goal or target is a great way to generate the success they love. Give them a target and they will attempt to exceed it. This is Now People Heaven. Now People Hell is full of amorphous, changing targets, no recognition for achievements, waffling and questioning instead of statements and results. All of these things prevent them going for it and winning, looking good and being recognised – gaining the esteem from others that is so important to them.

This is one of the aspects of behaviour change communications that can be leveraged to provide them with specific, measurable and achievable targets and not just more information or the latest research that seems to 'change the target'. Give them clear goals and rewards and they will use their natural energy to achieve and better the targets. It is all about winning and being seen to be good at what they choose to do.

This approach to life runs through everything they do – this is the way they see and interact with the world around them – their friends, relationships, families, at home, leisure, work. To make connections with them, others – people and organisations – need to acknowledge their energy and enthusiasm and provide ways for them to achieve their needs for esteem from others.

Source: Cultural Dynamics Strategy and Marketing Ltd