

# Communications Strategy – My Zero Carbon

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## Background

**My Zero Carbon** is a project initiated by Dr Ingo Schüder, Director of the environmental consultancy [Brillianto](#) in April 2021. Ingo initiated the project out of a deep personal motivation and commitment to take action on Climate Change and to encourage others to take personal action to reduce their 'carbon footprint' towards 'zero carbon'.

## Context

Climate Change is the long-term change in the Earth's climate and weather patterns. Scientists agree that Climate Change is already happening. It is man-made by our pattern of consumption, emitting large amounts of gases such as carbon dioxide, but also methane and nitrous oxide. Unless drastic action is taken in the near future, the negative impact of Climate Change will accelerate and become more harmful to people and nature. Negative impacts include a global warming of our atmosphere with more extreme weather causing severe drought, flooding and stronger storms and more wild fires. Knock-on effects include the melting of the polar ice regions, sea level rises and the extinction of many types of wildlife, as well as water and food shortages, more pests and diseases, political unrest, conflicts and wars.

### Political

The [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (UNFCCC) is an international environmental treaty addressing Climate Change. 154 Countries signed it at the 'Earth Summit' in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

The United Nations '[Conference of the Parties](#)' (COP) is the decision-making body of the Convention. Governments meet annually to explore and agree actions to mitigate the effect of Climate Change.

Meetings included Kyoto (1997 – Kyoto Protocol), Paris (2015 – Paris Agreement), Glasgow in 2021 (an in-principle commitment to keep global warming within 1.5C), Egypt (COP27; focus on 'Loss and Damage') and COP28 in the UEA in Nov 2023.

In the UK, the [Climate Change Committee](#) (CCC) is an independent, statutory body established under the Climate Change Act 2008.

Over the last few years many local and national governments (and also businesses and other organisations) have pledged become net zero carbon by 2030, 2040 or 2050.

Many national and local governments have also declared a 'climate emergency' and developed Climate Change Action Plans.

### Economic

All economic activities cause the emission of greenhouse gases, i.e., gases that make Climate Change worse. This is either directly or indirectly. Economic development is based on steady economic growth, a growth in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a country.

In his ground-breaking report, [The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review](#), Nicolas Stern, laid out the effect of Climate Change on our future economy. He concluded that "There is still time to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, if we take strong action now." He stated that unless we invest 1% of global GDP 'in the next 10-20 years, "the overall costs and risks of climate change will be equivalent to losing at least 5% of global GDP each year, now and forever." That was in 2006.

The economic downturn caused by the Covid pandemic is likely to lead to economic incentives to stimulate the economy. This is already predicted to see the largest annual increase in Climate Change emissions in the history of mankind.

### Social

We also live in a time of Social Crises. Increasingly people are affected by poor wellbeing. Over the last few years racial tensions have come back to the surface, highlighted by the 'Black Lives Matter' movement. There is global injustice and injustice within nations. There is also a new campaign for 'Climate Justice'. This term expresses a desire to express Climate Change as an ethical and political issue, rather than one that is purely environmental or physical in nature.

We have known about specific gases contributing to a warming of the atmosphere for at least 150 years. The early 1980s saw a sharp increase in global temperatures. 1988 was the hottest year on record at the time.

Yet, among the general population Climate Change has not featured as a major issue or concern until very recently. In 2018, the Swedish teenager and climate activist Greta Thunberg started her school strike. Within a few short years, this has become an international movement ('Fridays for Future'). Many people are now aware of Climate Change and want to take action. We are social beings. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century this has taken new forms via social media. Social media has enabled anyone to be a 'citizen journalist', to share great ideas with the world or to attract a mass following. [Greta Thunberg](#) has nearly 6 million followers on Twitter. But there is a difference between talking about Climate Change and wanting to take action and actually taking action.

## Technological

Engineers have developed new technologies to help us use energy more efficient and to produce energy from 'renewable' sources. Renewable energy includes, wind, solar, hydropower, biomass and wave power. The proportion of energy generated from renewable sources is accelerating globally.

More technology is under development. This includes ground source heat pumps, technical carbon storage and carbon capture. But the former technology is not affordable for all but the wealthiest and the latter are not advanced enough to make a difference to global carbon emissions.

Tesla started assembly line production of its electric cars in 2008. As of April 2021, there are 245,000 pure-electric cars on UK roads. That is 0.7% of all cars on the road. In the UK, there will be a ban on the sale of new cars and vans powered wholly by petrol and diesel from 2030 onwards.

## Environmental

As the same time as the Climate crisis threatens to unfold, we are also face with other environmental crises:

- Biodiversity Crisis
- Plastic waste and micro-plastics
- Soil degradation
- Air Pollution
- Noise Pollution
- Mental health crisis – made worse by noise, pollution and a lack of accessible green spaces
- Global pandemics (Covid and according to experts more pandemics like it to follow)

The good news is that all these crises are symptoms of the same cause:

Unsustainable economic patterns translating into unsustainable patterns of individual behaviour and consumption.

Over the last two decades concept such as 'Natural Capital', 'Green Infrastructure' and 'Nature Based Solutions' have entered the policy arena. All these concepts have in common that they treat the natural environment as an asset that can generate social and economic benefits for us. These assets need to be treated sustainably and can then contribute a solution to the problems and challenges we are facing.

So, by addressing the Climate Crisis and creating a better, more sustainable future for all, we will also address these other crises at the same time.

## Legislative

The political context section above covers international treaties.

Key Legislation in the UK is the [Climate Change Act 2008](#). This commits the UK to bring all GHG emissions to net zero by 2050.

On 20 April 2021, the UK Government [enshrined a new target in law](#) to slash emissions by 78% by 2035 (compared to 1990 levels).

## Scientific

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change ([IPCC](#)) is the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change. Founded in 1988, the objective of the IPCC is to provide governments at all levels with scientific information that they can use to develop climate policies.

In recent years, the IPCC has published a number of highly important reports, summarizing the science community's knowledge, understanding and consensus on Climate Change. The last three reports were:

- [Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability](#) (Feb 2022) - The report details the increasing risks and severe consequences of climate change, including extreme weather events, sea level rise, biodiversity loss, and food and water insecurity. It emphasizes the urgent need for immediate action to adapt to the current and future impacts of climate change, especially for vulnerable communities and ecosystems.
- [Mitigation of Climate Change](#) (April 2022) - The report details the current state of global warming and outlines potential solutions for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The report emphasizes the urgent need for immediate action to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and avoid catastrophic climate change.
- [AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change](#) (March 2023) - There is a rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all (very high confidence).

## Organisations promoting personal action on Climate Change

Governments, and most businesses, charities and public sector organisations talk about Climate Change. There is plenty of helpful information, but also a lot of noise. Many organisations are targeting their communication at businesses, governments and other decision makers.

The following list just gives a few examples of organisations promoting personal actions to reduce your carbon footprint with advice on specific actions.

- UNEP: e.g., [10 ways you can help fight the climate crisis](#) (May 2022)
- WWF, e.g., [10 things you can do to help save our planet](#)
- [Energy Saving Trust](#) (focussing on home insulation and energy efficiency)

There are many national & international organisations facilitating governments, business or individuals to take climate action or providing resources. This includes

- [350.org](#)
- [C40 cities](#)
- [Climate Alliance](#)
- [Climate Action Network International](#)
- [Climate Group](#)
- [Inside Climate News](#)

Some organisations are more of a campaigning nature and focus on encouraging people to lobby their government or businesses to take action, like [Greenpeace](#), [Extinction Rebellion](#), [Friends of the Earth](#). [Fridays for Future](#)

Local Authorities and Public Media, e.g. the [BBC](#), [Sky News](#), [The Guardian](#), [Huffington Post](#) and [The Independent](#) also play a great role in promoting personal action, as well as many national, regional and local groups and charities.

Some communicating in the 'Climate arena' don't go into a great level of detail on how to take climate action or deal with objections or personal, technological or financial barriers to take action.

## My Zero Carbon USP/ The Story

Follow one person's journey to reduce their personal carbon footprint to Zero carbon. Find inspiration, encouragement and helpful information how you too can take Climate Actions

## Objectives

1. Produce video material to counter disinformation and myths on Climate Change, to inform and motivate to take Climate Action.
2. Focus on personal actions people can take to reduce their carbon footprint.
3. Using own and third-party content, share content via a broad range of social media. This includes website/blog, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok. The objective is to reach people with positive climate messages that give hope, inform, challenge and provoke thinking and encourage and facilitate debate and actions on Climate Change.
4. Grow the number of people 'following' and engaging with the My Zero Carbon social media accounts.

## Outcomes

1. People thinking about Climate Change in a different way, being better informed and better equipped to take meaningful and impactful actions
2. More people discussing Climate Change and the need to take Climate Action.
3. More people being more motivated to take Climate Action.
4. More people taking meaningful and impactful Climate Actions.

## Key Performance Indicators

- Number of followers across all social media platform
- Number of videos produced (including in different formats)
- Number of 'Likes' of videos (YouTube, Instagram & TikTok)
- Views of videos (YouTube, twitter, Instagram, TikTok)
- Website visitors

## Key messages

1. Experts agree climate change is real, it's us, it's bad, but there's hope. We have the solutions to combat Climate Change.
2. More and more people are changing their behaviour to address #ClimateChange. So am I. So can you.
3. I am responsible for my carbon footprint. You are responsible for your carbon footprint. Responsibility means the need to take action to reduce your personal GHG emissions.
4. We need all three: government, business and individual action to combat Climate Change.
5. Taking Climate Action can save you money and will have many other benefits for you, other people and nature, e.g., better Air Quality, better physical health, less noise, more wildlife, better quality and enhanced food security, reduced risk of extreme weather events, safer roads, a more just society, nationally and globally.

My Zero Carbon will aim to add appropriate 'proof points' to each of these messages when creating content.

## Target audiences

1. Everybody in the English-speaking world (with access to the internet)
2. Everybody else with a satisfactory English language skills.

## Target segmentation and tailoring messages

There are now a number of publications and guidelines on Climate Change communication and how to communicate effectively to different audiences.

This spans general content on the web, peer-reviewed science articles and longer more detailed reports on the topic. General resources include:

- [Britain Talks Climate](#) (Climate Outreach)
- [Yale Program on Climate Change Communication](#)
- [Centre for Climate Change Communication](#)

Specific articles and reports include:

- [Field interventions for climate change mitigation behaviors: A second-order meta-analysis](#) (Bergquist et al, PNAS, March 2023)
- [Climate change: Why we struggle to process the doom](#) (Sky news, March 2023)
- [Communicating on Climate Change](#) (United Nations, September 2022)
- [How to talk to your family and friends about the new IPCC report – five tips from climate change communication research](#) (The Conversation UK, March 2022)
- [Climate Change's Four Irelands: An Audience Segmentation Analysis](#) (Ireland Environmental Protection Agency/Yale Program on Climate Change communication, November 2021)
- [8 principles for impactful visual communication of climate change](#) (medium/ UX Collective, August 2020)
- [12 tools for communicating climate change more effectively](#) (Guardian, July 2015)
- [15 ways to powerfully communicate climate change solutions](#) (Guardian May 2015)

For the My Zero Carbon Communication Strategy, we are using an extended version of the EPA 2021 segmentation (see report above).

1. The Hopeless
2. The Alarmed
3. The Concerned
4. The Cautious
5. The Doubtful

And for the purpose of the My Zero Carbon Communication Strategy, we describe the segments as:

### 1. The Hopeless

Most likely former members of segment 2, but possibly from all other segments.

Likely to have the highest level of Climate Anxiety.

Due to ongoing alarming news, about to give up or have given up. Falling into negativity, sarcasm, depression, resignation, hopelessness or indifference.

Will agree to messages such as: 'It's too late' or 'There is nothing I can do.' or 'We are doomed.'

➔ Need messages of hope, encouragement and solutions.



## 2. The Alarmed

Strongly believe that climate change due to human activity is a real and immediate threat. They strongly support climate mitigation and adaptation policies, and are willing to take direct action through political and economic activity.

- ➔ Need encouragement, tools, role models, example projects and information to take Climate Actions that make a real difference.
- ➔ Need encouragement to encourage others and to take political/campaigning actions.

## 3. The Concerned

Are convinced that climate change is a serious issue, but less worried about it and view it as a less immediate threat. They support policies addressing climate change and adaptation, but are less willing to take direct action themselves. They may prioritise their energy, time and resources in a balanced way, where Climate Change is just one of many considerations.

- ➔ Need to understand the urgency of taking Climate Action; what is at stake (intellectually and emotionally)
- ➔ Need encouragement to talk with others about Climate Change
- ➔ Need to understand that we need more than 'token gestures', but real, deep and meaningful action on Climate Change (without turning them into 'Hopeless' or dismissing their existing small actions)
- ➔ Need to be convinced of their personal responsibility to take Climate Action
- ➔ Need to understand connections between their current action and GHG emissions (e.g., meat, flying, fast fashion)
- ➔ Need to understand, what actions are likely to take the least effort/resource and/or have the greatest positive benefit in reducing GHG emissions
- ➔ Need to realise the benefits of taking Climate Actions (personally and globally)

## 4. The Cautious

Believe climate change is happening but are less sure of the causes and are less likely to think it will personally affect them. They (may or may not) support climate-related policies, but few are willing to take direct actions themselves.

- ➔ Need common myths busted.
- ➔ Need more factual information (on cause and effect) in easily digestible format.
- ➔ Even more than 'The Concerned', they need motivating by showing a connection between what they are already care for or are concerned about and Climate Change. For Example, water or air quality, future of their (grand)children, energy security, cost of living, food security, animal welfare and other topics.

## 5. The Doubtful

Half of these believe climate change is happening, but with less certainty than other audiences, while smaller proportions say climate change is not happening or say that they don't know. The Doubtful are overwhelmingly not worried about.

My Zero Carbon will focus on engaging with Segment 1-3. The communication will not pro-actively engage with 'climate sceptics' or 'climate deniers'.



## Communication strategies & principles

1. Act with integrity. Seek best available facts and information.
2. Focus on the positives and solutions.
3. Make use of powerful images and video to get messages across.
4. Use different genre and styles (but excluding sarcasm/ irony/negativity/ bad news)
5. Engage with different age segments via different social media
6. Make references and create relevant links (and use appropriate hashtags) to engage with people primarily caring about/ concerned about other topics, e.g., vegan/ vegetarian food; cost of living crisis, saving money, health, air quality, water quality, children/ family, (gender/ climate/ race) justice, opposition to current government (UK) or current opposition (USA)
7. Actively ask (Twitter) accounts with a lot of followers to tweet/ retweet the My Zero Carbon generated video content.
8. Do not actively engage with trolls, nor accounts being negative or misleading or using foul language.
9. Seek collaboration with other organisations/ social media accounts creating similar content.
10. Pursue an active growth strategy and have a regular schedule of activity for all social media accounts.
11. Consider a regular schedule of blog posts on the website.
12. Keep the website up-to-date.



## Work plan for 2023/24

The work plan needs to be realistic, considering that My Zero Carbon is unfunded and that the Project Officer spends about 7-10/week on Communication work.

### Dissemination channels

- Web <https://myzerocarbon.org/>
- Twitter: [@MyZeroCarbon](https://twitter.com/MyZeroCarbon)
- Facebook: [@MyZeroCarbon](https://www.facebook.com/MyZeroCarbon)
- TikTok [@MyZeroCarbon](https://www.tiktok.com/@MyZeroCarbon)
- YouTube: [@MyZeroCarbon](https://www.youtube.com/MyZeroCarbon)
- Instagram [MyZeroCarbon](https://www.instagram.com/MyZeroCarbon)

### Communication opportunities:

There will be specific communication opportunities, e.g., Earth Day, future IPCC report release dates & COP 28 (Nov 2023).

### Actions and work areas

Continue as in 2022/23

1. Posting content on Twitter and Facebook
2. Follower growth strategy on Twitter
3. Regular updates to the website
4. Monitoring & Evaluation of KPI

New or revised actions:

5. Consider how much to extend the use of 3<sup>rd</sup> party video material (e.g., WEF)
6. Consider developing a regular schedule of blogs for the website.
7. Develop a regular schedule of posting videos on TikTok
8. Develop a regular schedule of posting images and videos on Instagram
9. Develop a follower growth strategy for TikTok and Instagram
10. Develop further video material, possible topics
  - How to calculate your carbon footprint (how & why?)
  - Carbon off-setting (how & why?)
  - Climate Actions that save you money
  - Climate actions that save you time
  - The most cost-effective Climate Actions to reduce your GHG emissions
  - The most time-effective Climate Actions to reduce your GHG emissions
11. Relaunch video material on home insulation in September 2023
12. Attend the training [Communicating Climate Change for Effective Climate Action](#) on Future Learn (12 hours over 4 weeks)
13. Do one work placement for a pupil/student to learn about Climate Change communication