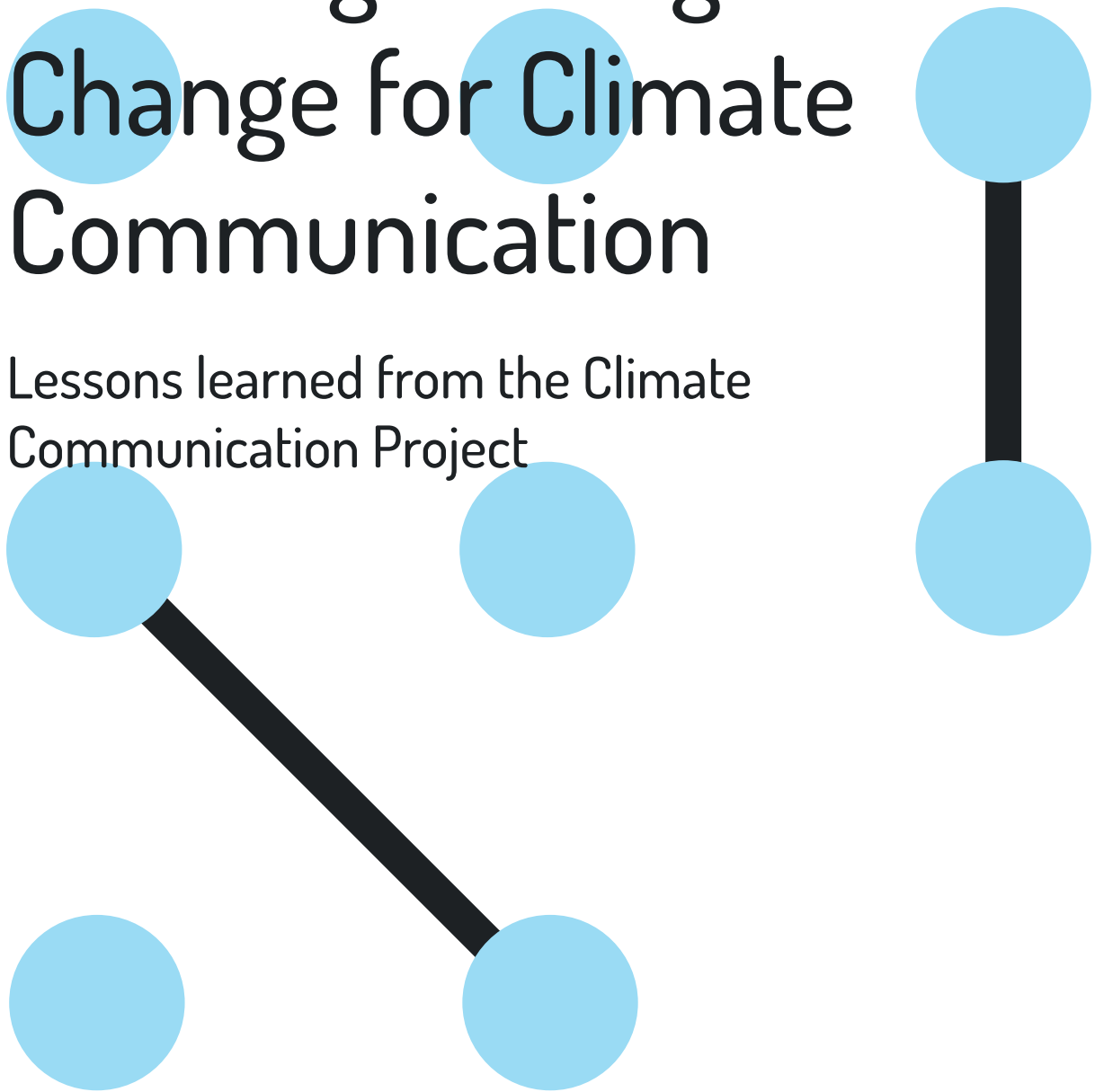


Creating Lasting Change for Climate Communication

Lessons learned from the Climate
Communication Project



The Climate Communication Project



The overall aim of the Climate Communication Project was to put in place the 'infrastructure' to deliver high impact public engagement on climate change at a national scale. The Climate Communication Project was able to meet this aim through three landmark achievements. We produced a report that, for the first time, canvassed public engagement and communication practitioners on their views about climate communication (through a survey and expert elicitation workshop) and identified areas of agreement and disagreement. We successfully conducted three co-production community workshops with three diverse community groups, providing a better understanding of their 'need' and preferences around climate change communication (findings published in an open access journal). And, we produced a series of summary blogs, published on the Climate Communication Project website, which capture key conclusions on important public engagement themes.

Our model of building capacity within climate change communication has provided the

groundwork for further engagement activities and we believe it could be equally well applied to other areas of science communication.

In this summative report, we will start by outlining our main outputs and outcomes. We will then explore the key learning points, challenges and achievements for each of our three work objectives:

- Carry out an audit of public engagement capacity and capability, among the existing diverse pool of expertise within the UK
- Use co-production methods to work with diverse representatives of UK publics to establish opportunities for impactful public engagement
- Synthesise existing literature and best practice on public engagement and share with public engagement practitioners and environmental science researchers.

Building capacity



We created a survey tool to collate information about public engagement with climate change from people, organisations and projects across the UK.

178

We developed a register of expertise with 178 experts, organisations and projects listed, capturing the current capacity of UK public engagement with climate change and laying foundations for further capacity-building in this field.

“I found the [Climate Communication Project] report very interesting to learn about the current practice in communicating climate science” Till Kuhlbrodt, Science Theme Leader at the National Centre for Atmospheric Science

We published the report *Climate Communication in Practice* outlining the current capacity of UK public engagement with climate change, and key recommendations for engaging publics with climate change from UK experts.

3

We ran three co-production workshops with community groups in Stockport, Manchester and Bristol exploring barriers to climate change communication. Our findings were published in the open-access journal *Communicating GeoScience*.

3,000+

We created online resources promoting best available evidence on engaging publics with climate change. We reached 9,000 website views from over 3,000 visitors and over 900 twitter engagements.

“[The report] is a really useful and interesting report with some clear key messages. Hopefully we can put these into practice!” Science & Innovation for Climate & Energy Team, Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

Our resources were widely praised by climate researchers and communication practitioners, and will change the way that people think and develop climate change communication.



“I LOVE THIS. Well done to all at #theclimatcommsproject @ClimateOutreach I'll be citing this loads.” University of Reading PhD Student, Lydia Messling

We shared our findings at NCCPE Engage Conference 2018 through a specially-developed climate communication workshop.



We hosted an official discussion panel at the United Nations COP24 in relation to climate change communication.

Carry out an **audit of public engagement** capacity and capability, among the existing diverse pool of expertise within the UK

What we did

To collect information about the state of climate communication in the UK, the Climate Communication Project developed a rapid-response survey targeted at researchers and engagement practitioners - we received 178 responses. The Climate Communication Project used this information to benchmark the state of UK public engagement with climate change.

We found there is some broad consensus when it comes to good practice and communicating climate change, but there is still room for improvement to ensure effective and appropriate engagement is taking place everywhere.

What we learned

We found that creating a single report for public-facing and academic audiences increased the reach of our results.

By linking our benchmarking and expert elicitation activities into a single report, we created a single comprehensive publication which could be shared widely and with more emphasis than multiple different papers.

We tested our community survey on a wide range of partners, who helped us to make sure that terminology and questions were widely accessible.

There was a high level of enthusiasm for taking part in our survey and workshops.

What we found challenging

It was difficult to find a diverse and representative panel of experts. In particular, we struggled to engage with policymakers, journalists and artists.

There are different understandings of what constitutes public engagement and what successful public engagement looks like.

Our survey was distributed via academic and science community mailing lists, social media, personal contacts, and on the Climate Communication Project website.

- Our sample included a mixture of relevant specialisms, from science communicators (21%) to climate scientists (19%) and social scientists (13%), but artists (7%), campaigners (3%) and journalists (2%) were poorly represented. In future, we hope to better assess the views of these groups, who sit outside academia.

What we achieved

We created a tool for collating information about the current state of public engagement in the UK. We received 178 survey responses from public engagement practitioners across the UK.

We developed a register of expertise with 178 experts, organisations and projects listed, capturing the current capacity of UK public engagement with climate change and laying foundations for further capacity building in this field.

Use **co-production methods** to work with diverse representatives of UK publics to establish opportunities for impactful public engagement

What we did

Dr Sam Illingworth led a series of climate poetry workshops with established community groups based in Manchester, Stockport and Bristol to develop a safe space for discussion around climate change. We worked with Manchester Faith Groups, Disability Stockport, and Avonmouth Community Centre.

Our creative method of co-production stands in contrast to the traditional model of climate communication, which is based on one-way sharing of knowledge from 'experts' to a broad 'non-expert' audience, and emphasises the need to explore the identities of different groups in society.

We found that a community-level approach is an essential counterpart to any larger scale plans to communicate climate change at a national level. A one-size-fits-all solution will not work.

What we learned

By analysing the discussions and poetry that arose out of our community workshops, we showed how this community-level approach which 'recognises the importance of the individual' is essential when communicating about climate change.

- Our work with community groups formed the basis for a journal article in *Geoscience Communication*, and fed into our *Climate Communication in Practice* report.

- Diverse and at-time underserved communities offer opportunities as well as challenges for communication.

What we found challenging

The biggest challenge we faced was ensuring that workshops were well-attended. This was difficult, as not everyone wants to give up their time to talk about climate change.

What we achieved

We published a journal paper in open-access *Geoscience Communication*.

Alongside three community groups, we co-produced poems about climate change from the perspective of those communities.

Synthesise existing literature and best practice on public engagement and share with public engagement practitioners and environmental science researchers.

What we did

The Climate Communication Project synthesised the best available evidence on engaging the public with climate change into two primary resources. Firstly, our series of blog-posts summarising the current research on different climate engagement topics, and secondly, our summative report *Climate Communication in Practice* containing the results of our rapid-response survey and our expert elicitation process.

We found the public engagement landscape to be undefined, and in need of structural development.

What we learned

We found that by benchmarking the state of public engagement in the UK, we could provide better resources for the community, which directly responded to the challenges and points of interest raised by other communication practitioners.

Using a process of expert elicitation modelled on the International Panel for Climate Change, the Climate Communication Project asked 15 climate communication specialists to explore the level of agreement behind what works, and what doesn't work for climate change engagement. The process was effective.

Our resources distilled academic research into informal blogs, accessible online for anyone

looking to engage people with climate change.

- Both of these resources are hosted on our website, which has received 9,367 visits between 1st January 2018 and 1st January 2019. There were 3,487 unique visitors over this timeframe.

Sharing graphics and recommendations helped to amplify our reach on social media.

- Our hashtag #thecommunicationproject was mentioned in 80 tweets by 36 different users. Tweets containing #thecommunicationproject received 486 likes, 437 retweets and 28 replies.
- We worked with a design agency to produce eye-catching illustrations and infographics summarising our results.
- Our hashtag was shared by several high-profile twitter accounts including NERC, Grantham Imperial, Centre for Understanding Sustainable Prosperity, and the National Centre for Coordinating Public Engagement (NCCPE).

We looked for established professional and social networks to help amplify our findings.

- To improve our reach on social media platforms we linked up with YouTuber ClimateAdam for Green Great Britain Week to produce a short video sketch titled How (not) to talk about climate change. This video was cross-posted by partners receiving 11,615 views on facebook, 4,997 views on Climate Adam's YouTube and 238 views on University of Leeds YouTube.

- To reach UK public engagement practitioners, our team delivered an interactive workshop for 20 practitioners, hosted a storytelling table and presented a poster, at Engage 2018 - a conference for engagement practitioners run by the NCCPE.
- On an international level, team members proposed, and had accepted, an official event at the United Nations COP24 conference in December in relation to climate change communication. This event discussed the findings of the project's research, and we hosted a discussion with co-panelists and around 80 audience members including policy-makers, communicators and scientists. The panel at COP24 was itself a flexible response to an opportunity that emerged.
- Personalised letters and reports were mailed to over 250 members of the combined project team network.

Our resources were well-received by a variety of audiences, giving us confidence that our blog-style format and literature summaries were accessible to audiences outside academia including artists and government.

- We received 19 website enquiries including encouraging comments from a theatre production company, a digital media artist and a spoken word poet.
- “ More and more, I become convinced that communication is crucial in garnering the necessary understanding and support for action required in the face of climate change. In my case, this insight is based on years of communicating on issues ranging from humanitarian crisis to sustainable development in a UN environment. It is also based on my belief as a writer that storytelling is a vital tool. I am inspired by your efforts and wanted to reach out, first of all, to be kept informed and to engage in any exchanges on communication and climate change.” *Online comment.*

Our report will support researchers and existing partnerships, supporting infrastructure.

- “ Great to discover this, thanks for sharing. Will be useful insight to support @Permaculture_UK 52 Climate Actions partnership.” *Tweet.*

We received enquiries from communication practitioners who shared a like-minded approach to communications and wanted to become involved in the climate communication process, suggesting an appetite for a network of climate communication practitioners to share their experiences and knowledge.

- “ The Climate Media Net have been working to get non-news media to develop more creative and engaging content touching on climate change in some way. We should be glad to contribute to the Climate Communication Project.” *Online Comment.*
- “ As an aspiring climate communicator, I found my conversation with Dr. Corner to be inspiring and resourceful. He demonstrated his expertise, gave me advice on how to break into and navigate the field, and shared ways for me to get involved. I am looking to build a climate communications organization based in the U.S., and initiating a relationship with the Climate Communication Project was an important first step in reaching that lofty goal. Thanks again for connecting me with Adam.” *Online comment.*

What we found challenging

It was at times difficult to ascertain what was and what was not best practice, as the public engagement landscape in this area is quite diverse, ever-evolving and in places, undefined.

What we achieved

We produced 20 evidence synthesis blog posts

We earned 9,367 website views between 1st January 2018 and 1st January 2019

Our video *How (not) to talk about climate change* achieved 16,850 views

On twitter, there were 1031 interactions with *#thecommsproject*

We presented our results at Engage Conference 2018 and the United Nations COP24

The *Climate Communication in Practice* report received 1,748 page views on our website, and 1100 page views on the Climate Outreach website