



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

REPORT, DOCUMENT

# The actions asked of the Welsh public in the Net Zero Wales plan: summary of research

Research to help understand the attitudes, barriers and motivations to action on climate change from the Net Zero Wales Plan.

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# Introduction

The **Net Zero Wales plan** (Wales' second carbon emissions reduction plan) highlights that achieving net zero is a social as well as a technical challenge, and alongside actions from the public sector, Welsh businesses and industry and UK Government, it includes a number of actions asked of the Welsh public. It draws on advice from the Climate Change Committee which states that the majority (~62%) of emission reductions will require some form of societal behaviour change.

The plan committed to a **consultation on a new public engagement strategy** setting out how the Welsh Government will support the people of Wales through the transition to a more sustainable way of living. This consultation took place between October - December 2022, and a summary of the responses has been published.

The aim of this **new public engagement strategy** is to set out a framework and guiding principles on how the Welsh Government will:

- Engage people in decision-making (including policy-making) about how to tackle climate change; and
- Engage people in action necessary to tackle climate change.

This summary outlines research undertaken to help understand the attitudes, barriers and motivations to action on climate change, and specifically around the actions ('asks') detailed in the Net Zero Wales plan.

## Research aims and methodology

This research aimed to:

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- explore the Welsh public's views, attitudes and barriers to making green choices;
- explore what support might be needed from Welsh Government, and other organisations to help overcome barriers to making green choices;
- identify effective communications methods on green choices;
- explore how to engage people in action necessary to tackle climate change.

The Welsh Government commissioned the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) and Beaufort Research to help develop an evidence-based behaviour change communications strategy to support the new public engagement strategy. The research included three main methods: an evidence review, focus groups and a survey. The Welsh specific insights about people's climate choices included:

- Quantitative data about barriers to key climate choices;
- Qualitative insights about barriers;
- Example communication solutions.

Insights were provided around four key themes: home energy choices, travel choices, food choices and consumption choices with Welsh specific data about sub-behaviours within them. These themes were chosen as they aligned with the 'asks' of the Welsh public in the Net Zero Wales plan and which are now detailed within the new public engagement strategy.

The fieldwork was undertaken in autumn 2022.

## Evidence Review

The Behavioural Insights Team conducted an Evidence Review to identify the key principles for successful climate communication. This involved reviewing more than 110 papers and case studies, and synthesising learnings across BIT's easy, attractive, social and timely (EAST) framework. It was not a systematic

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review but an evidence scan.

## Survey

The survey was developed by BIT and Beaufort Research. It was conducted with a quota sample of 1,000 adults across Wales and reflects the population in terms of key demographic characteristics.

The survey was subject to interlocking demographic quota controls [1] of age within gender. A further separate quota control was set on social grade [2] and interviews were undertaken with residents of every local authority in Wales. At the analysis stage, the data was weighted by age group, gender, local authority grouping and social grade. This ensures that the sample reflects 2011 Census figures and the particular characteristics of the Wales population.

Draft questions for the survey and focus group discussions were supplied by the Welsh Government. These were finalised following discussions with BIT and Beaufort (see Annex A for the survey questions).

All questions asked in the survey were closed questions, that is participants were given response options to choose from.

Demographic questions were included as standard in the survey. The survey was available in English and Welsh and could be taken in the participants preferred language.

Fieldwork for the survey took place between 7-27 November 2022. A total of 1,000 interviews were completed and analysed.

## Focus groups

Beaufort Research facilitated 6 focus groups with 42 participants covering a range of characteristics including age, socio-economic group, rural/urban,

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attitude to climate change and Welsh language. The focus groups took place during November 2022.

The focus groups explored the findings from the survey in greater detail. Topics included:

- current climate behaviours
- willingness to act now and in the future on green choices
- openness to change on key green behaviours
- barriers and enablers on green behaviours
- exploring feedback on communication solution ideas from the evidence review

Quota controls are target numbers of interviews set for specific demographic groups within the population, to help achieve a representative sample for the survey. Interlocking demographic quota controls means that the target incorporates two variables: age group within gender.

Social grade is a classification system based on occupation developed for use on the National Readership Survey (NRS). Social grades are defined as follows:

- AB: Higher and intermediate managerial, administrative and professional occupations
- C1: Supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, administrative and professional occupations
- C2: Skilled manual workers
- DE: Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, state pensioners, casual and lowest grade workers, unemployed with state benefits only.

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# Findings

## Evidence review

The conclusions of the evidence review provided the basis for recommendations on how to design communications around green choices and are set out below:

1. Focus on concrete behaviours, with calls-to-action where appropriate and 'warm ups' message elsewhere. 'Warm ups' in this context means where the audiences face barriers, or the necessary policy support is lacking, or public support/willingness is low around a specific behaviour.
2. Cement actions that are easy for most people to do (fewer barriers), whilst starting to promote actions that can be easier for some or few.
3. Focus on reflecting and addressing the barriers people face.
4. Draw on **BIT's 11 behavioural principles of climate communications** that span how to make climate choices easy, attractive, social and timely (EAST framework).
5. Use BIT's longlist of 60+ communications solution ideas.
6. Tailor messages, making sure to take into account differing circumstances and attitudes.
7. Conduct further research on the barriers and enablers of specific climate behaviours, seeking expert input and user test messages, as well as rigorously evaluate.
8. Be mindful of the limitations of communications and seek bigger policy changes to encourage behaviour change.

The recommendations from the evidence review also included short-term objectives of the communications campaign around what behavioural asks to focus on. The evidence review suggested that green choices could be presented in two main ways:

- a) Asks: a call to reasonable action

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These are communications that directly ask and encourage the Welsh public to make green choices that are already possible for most people to adopt or well supported by policy measures, enough of the public are ready for, can meaningfully cut emissions, and a campaign can meaningfully impact if delivered effectively. There is an opportunity to 'ask' people to undertake smaller, immediate choices that pave the way to bigger changes.

b) Warm ups: an engaging message to build stepping stones

These are communications that aim to build trust, legitimacy, knowledge, and norms around less commonly supported action, rather than asking for direct action. The aim is to warm up to choices that may: require the Welsh Government to demonstrate legitimacy, funding, leadership or future policy efforts, require greater trust and familiarity, not have high levels of public support yet, or face knowledge/awareness gaps. There is an opportunity to 'warm up' the Welsh public by encouraging smaller intermediate actions that might prepare them for bigger actions.

## Survey and focus group findings

As part of the survey and focus groups, communications methods and topics were tested. These were developed based on the results of the evidence review. The areas of focus were that the Welsh Government should:

1. Help people identify more sustainable products and services.
2. Explain what other organisations are doing to help tackle climate change (e.g. local government, local businesses).
3. Communicate what they are doing to help tackle climate change (e.g. how we are reducing energy use in government buildings).
4. Encourage people to take action.
5. Outline a plan for how Wales will help tackle climate change.
6. Provide information about how people can prepare for new technologies and



other changes (e.g. electric cars, heat pumps).

7. Provide information about impactful actions people can take immediately to help tackle climate change (e.g. energy saving, reducing food waste).

All seven suggested aspects of a communication campaign were supported by a majority of survey respondents (between 82 and 87 per cent support for each aspect). Of the survey respondents, a lower proportion of men and those from lower socioeconomic groups thought the communication topics were important.

The survey and focus groups also explored specific topics where green choices detailed within the **Net Zero Wales plan** could be made, and also those identified from the evidence review. They further explored whether the public would like to hear from the Welsh Government on these topics. Topics included shopping sustainably, only buying what you need to reduce waste, repairing and reusing items (instead of buying new), recycling and reducing food waste. A majority of respondents reported that they would like to hear from the Welsh Government on most of the key sustainable topics. However, support was lower for the transport topic and mixed around the topic of green food choices. In particular, respondents were strongly supportive of food waste being included in a campaign, but inclusion of dietary shift had the lowest support of all the areas.

The research also focused on barriers to actions across key green choice topic areas. The main findings reported here focus on the survey results, however these were reinforced in the qualitative discussions within the focus groups.

- The three main barriers to energy savings were: a lack of energy literacy, thermal comfort within the home (a preference for a warm home) and inability to save more energy than they already did. 2 in 3 say they already save as much energy as possible.
- The main barrier, selected by the majority of respondents, to uptake of home adaptations such as loft insulation, solar panels to make homes more energy efficient, was the high upfront cost. However, almost 1 in 5 cited a lack of knowledge on what to do and how to make their home more energy efficient.

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- The main barriers to greater use of active travel were: that their typical journey are too long for walking or cycling (selected by 1 in 3), others suggested that it was not convenient or they did not own a bike.
- The survey identified a range of barriers to greater use of public transport including: a lack of infrastructure, such as a lack of good public transport near them, as the main barrier (reported by 1 in 3), followed by comparatively lower cost of driving compared with taking public transport (reported by 1 in 5). 1 in 10 would welcome more information on their local options for taking public transport.
- By far the biggest barriers to electric vehicle (EV) uptake as reported by survey respondents, was the high upfront cost, cited by 1 in 2. In addition, almost 1 in 5 respondents stated that they didn't know enough about EV's or would need convincing.
- The majority of respondents identified no barriers to reducing food waste (6 in 10). However, of the other respondents, 1 in 5 found it hard to reduce their food waste. 1 in 10 were keen for more information on what to do and how.
- The survey did not identify any barriers to eating less meat and dairy. Only 1 in 3 reported that they are opposed to eating less meat and dairy.

The main barriers to shopping sustainably, such as mainly buying organic, seasonal food or buying items with less packaging was cost. The majority, 1 in 3, said sustainable options were too expensive. A minority of respondents found it difficult to identify more sustainable shopping items (1 in 10).

- The main barriers reported to repairing and reusing items such as electrical equipment or tools were the difficulty in doing so (1 in 5), and lack of knowledge about how to go about it (1 in 10). The biggest barrier reported was that repairing and reusing is hard to do (for 1 in 5).

## Conclusion

The findings and recommendations are helping the Welsh Government better

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understand the public's behaviour around the actions in the [Net Zero Wales plan](#) that require a shift in the choices the public are making. They were also used to inform the new public engagement strategy and Climate Action Wales campaign and website.

## Contact details

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.

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## Annex A: survey questions

### Willingness to act

#### QBC1

We would like to get your opinion on actions that people may take to help fight climate change. How willing are you to do the following in the next year?  
[Randomise order of behaviours]

- Shop sustainably (e.g. local, organic, in-season, less packaging, sustainable production etc.)
- Only buy what you need to reduce waste

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- Repair or reuse things instead of buying new
- Recycle more
- Minimise your food waste (e.g. eating leftovers later rather than throwing them away)
- Minimise your home energy use (e.g. using appliances on eco mode, turn your thermostat down)
- Switch to a green energy tariff
- Drive less and walk or cycle more often
- Drive less and use public transport more often

[No, definitely not / No, probably not / Not sure / Yes, probably / Yes, definitely / I do this already] [Invert scale between participants, but with 'I do this already' always at the end]

## QBC2

How willing are you to do the following in the next five years? [Randomise order of behaviours]

- Adapt your house to make it more energy efficient (e.g. loft, wall or floor insulation)
- Switch to renewable home energy (e.g. solar panels, heat pumps)
- Switch to a lower emissions vehicle (e.g. hybrid or electric)
- Choose to fly less
- Change your diet to eat less meat & dairy and more veg

[No, definitely not / No, probably not / Not sure / Yes, probably / Yes, definitely / I do this already] [Invert scale between participants, but with 'I do this already' always at the end]

## QBC3

There may be some preparation needed for some of these longer-term actions. How willing are you to do the following now, to prepare for changes in the next 5 years? [Randomise order of behaviours]

- Test drive an electric vehicle
- Swap one journey type to cycling/walking (e.g. the commute, the school run, grocery shopping)
- Reduce your boiler flow temperature (the temperature your boiler heats up the water to before sending it off to your radiators)
- Install a smart meter (a self-reading gas and electricity meter with an in-home display that shows how much energy you're using in pounds and pence)
- Check your home's energy performance certificate (EPC) online and what energy efficiency measures are recommended
- Research Government grants for energy efficiency and renewable energy measures (e.g. financial aid for heat pumps, solar panels and insulation)
- Research recipes for healthy and sustainable diets which contain less meat and more veg/plant-protein
- Research alternatives to flying when travelling abroad

[No, definitely not / No, probably not / Not sure / Yes, probably / Yes, definitely / I've done this already] [Invert scale between participants, but with "I've done this already" always at the end]

## Barriers to behaviours

[Single response answers - randomise order but keep "Nothing stops me", "I don't know" and "Other" at the end]

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## QBC4a

What, if anything, is the biggest reason preventing you from minimising your home energy use?

- I'm unsure what changes I need to make or which reduce energy the most
- I'm already cutting down as much as I can
- I prefer to have a warm home
- Nothing stops me
- I don't know
- Other [free text box]

## QBC4b

What, if anything, is the biggest reason preventing you from adapting your home to make it more energy efficient (e.g. solar panels, heat pump, or loft, wall or floor insulation)?

- It's expensive
- It's inconvenient (e.g. disruptive, time-consuming)
- I need more information about what exactly to do and how
- I'm not convinced it's necessary for my home
- Nothing stops me
- I don't know
- Other [free text box]

## QBC4c

What, if anything, is the biggest reason preventing you from minimising your food waste?

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- It's hard to do (e.g. plan shopping, cook only as much as needed, freeze and reuse)
- I don't like the thought of eating leftovers
- I need more information about what exactly to do and how
- Nothing stops me
- I don't know
- Other [free text box]

## QBC4d

What, if anything, is the biggest reason preventing you from eating less meat & dairy and more veg?

- It's hard to do (e.g. learn and try new recipes, overcome habits)
- Alternatives are more expensive
- I need more information about what exactly to do and how
- I'm not convinced it is good for my health
- I'm not aware of how meat and dairy impacts climate change
- I enjoy eating meat and dairy and don't want to eat less
- Nothing stops me
- I don't know
- Other [free text box]

## QBC4e

What, if anything, is the biggest reason preventing you from driving less and walking or cycling more?

- It's less convenient due to a lack of good walking and cycling routes in my area
- Most of my journeys are too far to walk or cycle

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- I don't own a bike
- I enjoy driving and don't want to walk or cycle instead
- I need more information about walking and cycling routes in my area
- I'm not convinced it's the right thing to do
- I don't feel safe walking and cycling
- Nothing stops me
- I don't know
- Other [free text box]

### **QBC42f**

What, if anything, is the biggest reason preventing you from driving less and using public transport more?

- It's less convenient due to a lack good public transport near me
- It's cheaper to drive than use public transport
- I enjoy driving and don't want to take public transport instead
- I need more information about public transport routes and options in my area
- I don't feel safe using public transport
- I'm not convinced it's the right thing to do
- Nothing stops me
- I don't know
- Other [free text box]

### **QBC4g**

What, if anything, is the biggest reason preventing you from switching to a lower emissions vehicle (e.g. hybrid or electric)?

- It's expensive

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- I'm not convinced it's the right thing to do
- I don't know enough about it
- I like my current car and haven't found an EV I prefer
- It's hard to do (e.g. lack of public chargers, can't get a charger myself)
- Nothing stops me
- I don't know
- Other [free text box]

## QBC4h

What, if anything, is the biggest reason preventing you from flying less?

- It's expensive to travel using alternatives (e.g. trains, ferries)
- It's less convenient to travel using alternatives (e.g. it is slower, harder to arrange, involves more changes)
- I'm not convinced it's the right thing to do
- I don't know enough about alternative ways of travelling
- I enjoy flying
- Nothing stops me
- I don't know
- Other [free text box]

## QBC4i

What, if anything, is the biggest reason preventing you from buying more sustainable products (e.g. local, organic, in-season, less packaging, sustainable production etc.)?

- It's expensive
- It's hard to find sustainable products in my local area
- I'm not convinced it's the right thing to do

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- It's hard to know which products are truly sustainable
- I like the brands I currently buy and do not want to change
- Nothing stops me
- I don't know
- Other [free text box]

## QBC4j

What, if anything, is the biggest reason preventing you from repairing and reusing things instead of buying new?

- It's cheaper to buy new
- It's hard to do (i.e. requires time, skill or equipment/tools)
- I'm not convinced it's the right thing to do
- I don't know enough about it
- I enjoy shopping for new items
- Nothing stops me
- I don't know
- Other [free text box]

## Welsh Government communications campaign

The Welsh Government will be launching a new communications campaign soon on climate change.

## QBC5

How important is it that the new campaign does the following? [Randomise order of behaviours]

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- Provides information about impactful actions people can take immediately to help tackle climate change (e.g. energy saving, reducing food waste)
- Provides information about how people can prepare for new technologies and other changes (e.g. electric cars, heat pumps)
- Encourages people to take action
- Outlines Welsh Government's plan for how Wales will help tackle climate change
- Explains what the Welsh Government is doing itself to help tackle climate change (e.g. how it is reducing energy use in government buildings)
- Explains what other organisations are doing to help tackle climate change (e.g. local government, local businesses)
- Helps people identify more sustainable products and services

[Very important / Fairly important / Not very important / Not at all important / Don't know]

## QBC6

Here are some topics that the Welsh Government could include in their communications campaign to inform and encourage people in Wales to take action. Please tell us whether you think each should or should not be included. [Randomise order of topics]

- Shopping sustainably (e.g. local, organic, in-season, less packaging, sustainable production etc.)
- Only buying what you need to reduce waste
- Repairing and reusing items (instead of buying new)
- Recycling
- Reducing food waste
- Eating less meat & dairy and more veg
- Minimising home energy use
- Switching to a green energy tariff

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- Adapting your home to make it more energy efficient (e.g. loft, wall or floor insulation)
- Switching to renewable home energy (e.g. solar panels, heat pumps)
- Driving less and walking or cycling more often
- Driving less and using public transport more often
- Switching to a lower emissions vehicle (e.g. hybrid or electric)
- Flying less

Yes – should be included / No – should not be included / Don't know

## QBC7

Which of the following benefits would you support the Welsh Government using in their communications campaign to encourage people to take actions to help fight climate change? Please select all that apply. [Randomise order of behaviours]

- How changes can make people healthier
- How changes can save people money
- How changes can benefit the environment
- How changes can be convenient
- How changes are being made by many other people (e.g. people you know, celebrities)

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