

Staffordshire's Sustainability Board

Draft County-wide Communications Plan

1. Introduction

Effective communications will help Staffordshire successfully reduce its carbon emission output to reach net zero.

In the Staffordshire Sustainability Board's 'Vision and Council Commitments 2022-2023' statement, we agreed that all councils will work together to contribute towards a countywide communications group, to deliver and manage a countywide communications plan, working together to drive our collective carbon reduction goals forward.

Communicating well is the responsibility of every member of Staffordshire's Sustainability Board and their respective organisations. It will be important for communication to be integrated at all levels.

This plan will rely on collective responsibility and a distributed model of communication.

In the spirit of co-production all members of the board and their communications team counterparts will work together to keep themselves updated on activities and to amplify the agreed communications.

This communications plan follows the OASIS framework (Objective, Audience, Strategy, Implementation, Scoring), which is a structured way of tackling a communications issue to achieve objectives.

2. The case for a county wide communications strategy to tackle climate change:

2.1. Staffordshire as a whole county emits approximately 5.8million tonnes of carbon a year. Staffordshire's collective local authorities contribute less than 2% of these carbon emissions.

2.2. Each local authority has a strategy to tackle their individual emissions. However, it is documented that collectively, councils could use their influence to impact a significant proportion of the total emissions. We want to use this influence to enable and facilitate change, where possible, throughout the whole of Staffordshire.

2.3. The main carbon emissions in Staffordshire come from Transport (40%), Industry (24%), Residential Homes (23%), Commercial (6%), Agriculture (4%), Public sector (2%), Other (1%).

- 2.4. Over the last four years, the population in Staffordshire has increased by 6%. The number of new homes has increased by 6% and there is a 13% increase in car use nationally.
- 2.5. The Staffordshire Leaders and Chief Executives Group has committed to work collaboratively to successfully achieve net carbon zero to reach net zero, we need to encourage residents to do their bit and help them to understand how they can reduce their carbon footprint.

3. Objective of communications activity

- 3.1. The objectives of our communication
 - 3.1.1. Engage with residents to increase understanding of climate change issues.
 - 3.1.2. Motivate residents to take practical steps to reduce their carbon emissions.

4. Audience

4.1. The Staffordshire Landscape

- 4.1.1. Staffordshire has a resident population of 867,100 and covers a large geographical area of over 1,010 square miles.
- 4.1.2. Like many other County areas, a major characteristic of Staffordshire is its growing, ageing population.
- 4.1.3. Tamworth and East Staffordshire are the only districts in Staffordshire that have a significantly younger population than the national average.
- 4.1.4. Around a quarter of residents live in rural areas. South Staffordshire (40%), Stafford (33%), Staffordshire Moorlands (31%) and Lichfield (31%) are particularly rural whilst Tamworth's population is classified as entirely urban.
- 4.1.5. Staffordshire is a relatively affluent area but has notable pockets of high deprivation in some urban areas.
- 4.1.6. Staffordshire has two well-renowned universities educating around 20,000 higher education students. Keele University is currently Global Sustainability Institution of the Year (International Green Gown Awards, 2021)
- 4.1.7. We have a number of active climate change groups across the county including Climate Matters, The Globe Foundation, Staffordshire Moorlands Climate Action Group, Zero Carbon Rugeley, Sustainability Matters and No Planet B.

4.2. Social Attitudes to Climate Change – Audience Insight

- 4.2.1. Research from the National Centre for Social Research 'British Social Attitudes' report has found that overall, Britain is relatively relaxed about climate change, and not strongly divided over it. There are more worried than there are sceptical individuals, but the majority in Britain appears to have middling attitudes towards climate change. They know about it, and acknowledge a human component, but are overall relatively indifferent and apathetic about climate change.
- 4.2.2. Differences by age and education are reasonably strong and consistent when it comes to beliefs and concerns about climate change and what the government should do about it. Other socio-demographic variables, such as sex, ethnicity, and income, are typically weak and sporadic.
- 4.2.3. On average, people in Britain are only “somewhat worried” about climate change, and do not feel a strong sense of personal responsibility to try to reduce it. Those who think climate change is mainly or entirely caused by humans feel more personally responsible for trying to mitigate it. However, most people do not think that climate change is mainly caused by humans or that the consequences will be very bad.
- 4.2.4. As well as differing in how worried they are about climate change, people may also feel different levels of personal responsibility to try to reduce climate change. Residents were asked on a scale of personal responsibility for helping with climate change, where 0 means no responsibility and 10 means feeling a great deal of responsibility. Responses were quite spread out across the scale, with scores from 5 to 8 being the most popular, showing that the majority feel a moderate personal responsibility to help reduce climate change. The 35 - 64 year-old age group felt the highest level of personal responsibility.

4.3. Audience conclusion

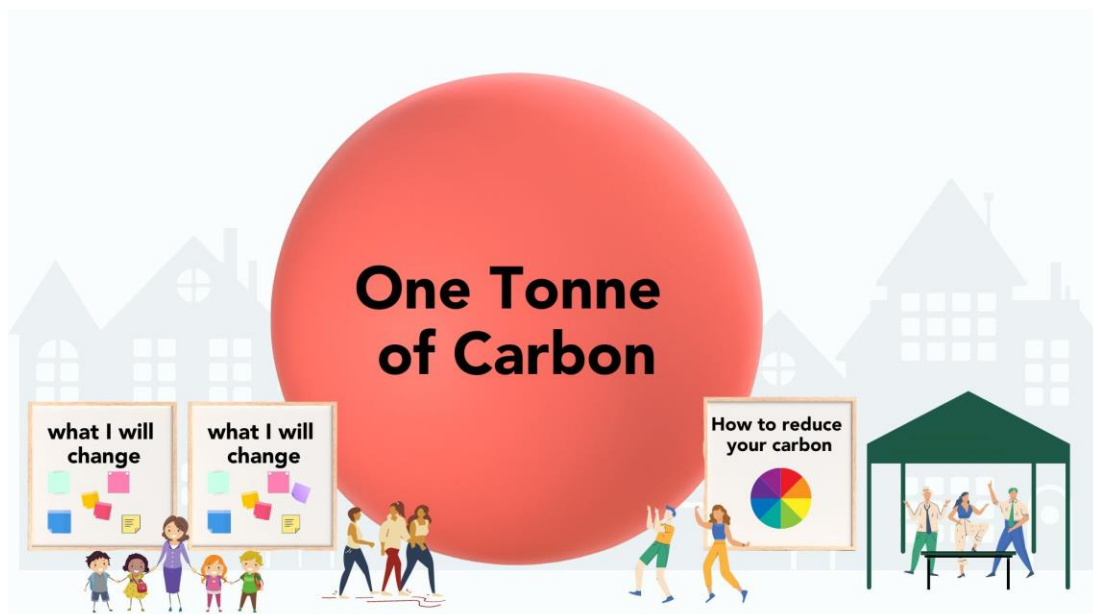
- 4.3.1. Given the objectives we want to achieve with our communication, and the above audience insight, keeping our audience group as wide as possible will help us to get the most reach and engagement.
- 4.3.2. A future communications plan would benefit greatly from more Staffordshire specific audience research about climate change and sustainability.
- 4.3.3. We will utilise our local advocates and influencers through our universities and climate action groups to share our messages.

5. Strategy

This section looks at what will do throughout the year to reach our objectives.

5.1. Carbon Bubble Roadshow

- 5.1.1. To increase resident engagement, throughout Spring/ Summer 2023 we will run a Carbon Bubble Roadshow. The 10m x10m orange inflatable bubble with the words 'One Tonne of Carbon' has been used nationwide by PWC as a successful climate change engagement tool and was trailed by Staffordshire County Council in 2022. The trial that took place on 'Earth Day' saw engagement both face to face in the town centre and on social media, as well as making regional news. Lessons learnt from the trial and feedback have allowed us to develop a clear plan for how we would run a road show of the bubble across the county to engage with as many residents as possible.
- 5.1.2. Most of the events will be held mid-week on a Wednesday during the working day. At the event we will have staff members from the district and borough councils educating people about their carbon footprint and what they can do to be greener.
- 5.1.3. We will collectively promote the events and invite along local schools and education settings.
- 5.1.4. We will ask residents to make a pledge on a community pledge board to say what they will do to reduce their carbon footprint. This information will then be saved and displayed in the local library.
- 5.1.5. On the stand we will help people to understand their carbon footprint by working them through a simple 'calculator' and give them a score between 'small footprint', 'medium footprint', 'large footprint. We will then give them tips on how they can reduce their personal footprint.



5.1.6. The below timetable sets out when and where the bubble roadshow will take place:

| Local Authority Area | Location | Date |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| East Staffordshire | Burton Town Centre | Wednesday 3 rd May 2023 |
| Newcastle | Market Square | Wednesday 17 th May 2023 |
| Cannock | Cannock Chase Marquis Drive or Hednesford Park | Wednesday 7 th June |
| Stafford | Stafford in The World Festival - Victoria Park | Wednesday 2 nd June |
| Moorlands | Leek Market Square | Wednesday 5 th July |
| Lichfield | Market Square | Wednesday 19 th July |
| Tamworth | Castle Grounds | Wednesday 9 th August |
| South Staffordshire | Camp Bestival – Weston Park | Thursday 17 th – 20 th August |

5.2. Joined up communications calendar

5.2.1. To maximise our reach and awareness raising, we have developed a joint communications calendar for 2023, where we will share a climate change and sustainability messages around key celebrations throughout the year such as Valentine's Day, Easter, Halloween, Black Friday, Christmas, and Boxing Day.

5.2.2. Once a quarter we will also promote one climate change awareness day/week to support the agenda. The proposed climate change awareness days have been selected based on their ability to best share messages about climate change and carbon reduction as well as their location in the calendar.

| Date | National Day | Key Messages |
|---|-----------------------|--|
| 14 th February 2023 | Valentine's Day | Share information about how to 'love your planet this Valentine's Day' and how to have a sustainable valentines day. Recycling chocolate packets, chocolate wrappers, only buying what you need and other relevant climate change messages. |
| 9 -10 th April 2023 | Easter | Share information about how to have a sustainable Easter. Linking into how climate change is jeopardising chocolate production. So to make sure we have chocolate, we need to do our bit to be greener. With some suggestions of how people can have a sustainable easter by recycling boxes, and buying eggs with less packaging. |
| 22 nd April 2023 | Earth Day | Sharing the national earth day messages |
| 5 th June 2023 | World Environment Day | Sharing the national World Environment Day Messages |
| 1 st – 7 th July 2023 | Net Zero Week | Sharing the national Net Zero Week messages |
| 24 th – 2 nd October 2023 | Big Green Week | Sharing the national Big Green Week messages |
| 31 st October 2023 | Halloween | Develop a Halloween campaign to tell people how to have a sustainable Halloween, based on swapping costumes, reducing pumpkin |

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|---|----------------------|---|
| | | waste.To reduce textile and food waste. |
| 26 th November | Black Friday | Develop a Black Friday campaign encouraging people to think twice before buying in the sales and if they do buy something, what they can do with their old items, for example donating them to charity or HWRC'S. |
| 1 st – 12 th December | 12 Days of Christmas | Developing a 12 days of Christmas campaign to share how people can have a sustainable Christmas |

5.2.3. A secondary list of relevant awareness days has been collated below for information. We will support these days on an ad hoc basis by sharing and amplifying the national messages. However, we will not run specific campaigns around these days.

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Secondary Awareness Days 2023 | Earth Day -22 nd April World Environment Day – 5 th June Net Zero Week – 1 st – 7 th July Big Green Week – 24 th September – 2 nd October Recycle Week – 19 th – 25 th September National Clean Air Day – 8 th October International Compost Awareness Week 1 st – 7 th May No Mow May – 1 st – 31 st May Walk to School Week – 20 th May – 25 th May National Refill Day – 19 th June Plastic Free July – 1 st – 31 st July Cycle to Work month – August Zero Waste Week – 1 st – 7 th September World Electric Vehicles Day – 9 th September Zero Emissions Day – 21 st September International Walk To School Month – October National Tree Week – Last week of November |
|-------------------------------|---|

5.3. Consultation

5.3.1. At the present time, we have limited knowledge of our residents' thoughts and feelings about climate change. A public consultation around climate change would be beneficial when planning activity in the future.

5.3.2. The consultation will ask the members of the public key questions around their understanding of climate change, how much they care, what kind of personal responsibility they feel and any barriers they face to being greener.

5.3.3. The consultation results will give us a good baseline to be able to monitor and measure and changes in attitudes and behaviour.

5.3.4. The consultation will capture both quantitative and qualitative responses so we can get a deep understanding of our residents. To do this, we will launch an online digital questionnaire, run a handful of in-person engagement sessions in each area, as well as using the carbon bubble road show events to really listen

to residents and capture their feedback.

5.3.5. We propose that the consultation launches in March 2023 and then continues until the end of the Summer. By the Autumn of 2023 we will then have a good picture of what our residents think about climate change and their personal responsibility to be greener. This will help us to plan for the 2024 communications activity.

5.4. Summary of activity

The below yearly calendar plots out when all of our joint communications throughout 2023 as part of the climate change and sustainability agenda.



6. Budget

- 6.1. Each district and borough council is requested to contribute £3,000 alongside a £25,000 contribution from the county council. The funding will be used to deliver the carbon bubble roadshows, consultation activity and events, and social media activity.

7. Scoring and evaluation

- 7.1. The Communications representatives will meet monthly to discuss the ongoing work, and upcoming plans.
- 7.2. Each quarter Communications will report back to the Sustainability Board on the below:

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| Activity that has taken place during the quarter |
| Website clicks (using Bitly) |
| Media coverage |
| Social media engagement (reach, likes, comments) |
| Summer: How many people engaged with at the Carbon Bubble event |
| Summer: How many pledges were made at the Carbon Bubble event |
| Summer: Photographs from the Carbon Bubble Events |
| How many people worked out their carbon footprint using the calculator |
| How many people signed up to the Make Staffordshire Sustainable email |
| What activity is coming up |