



Environment and Climate Change Committee

Corrected oral evidence: Mobilising action on climate change and environment: behaviour change

Wednesday 27 April 2022

10 am

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Baroness Parminter (The Chair); Baroness Boycott; Lord Browne of Ladyton; Lord Colgrain; Lord Grantchester; Lord Lilley; Lord Lucas; Baroness Northover; The Lord Bishop of Oxford; The Duke of Wellington; Lord Whitty; Baroness Young of Old Scone.

Evidence Session No. 12

Hybrid Proceeding

Questions 126 - 129

Witnesses

I: Steve Smith, Executive Producer, Picture Zero Productions; Matt Bourn, Director of Communications, Advertising Association; Dr Kris De Meyer, Director, UCL Climate Action Unit.

Examination of witnesses

Steve Smith, Matt Bourn and Dr Kris De Meyer

Q126 **The Chair:** Good morning, and welcome to our evidence session this morning on our inquiry into mobilising behaviour change for climate and environmental goals. Today, we are going to be focusing on the specific issue of how media, advertising and government communications cover climate change and environmental goals and what that means for impacting on changing people's behaviour.

We are delighted to have three witnesses, two with us in the room and one on Teams. On Teams, we have Steve Smith, who is an executive producer at Picture Zero Productions. In the room, we have Dr Kris De Meyer from the UCL Climate Action Unit. We are very grateful for Matt Bourn stepping in at short notice because, due to family circumstances, the chief executive of the Advertising Association was unable to be with us today. Welcome to you.

If I can just say before we start with the grilling, there will be a transcript taken of this meeting, which will be provided to all the witnesses, and you can review that before it is finalised. The meeting is being webcast live and will be subsequently made available on the Parliament website. I remind members that, if they have any relevant interests, they should declare them before speaking first today. Thank you for that.

Before I begin, thank you to both Steve and Matt for the written evidence that you—in Matt's case, your organisation—provided to the committee at the initial stages. We are very grateful for that.

Some of the evidence we have already had has been very clear that social norms are really important in determining people's behaviour and that advertising, media and communications have a role in determining what those social norms are. Therefore, we would like you to lay out your views on how you think that media content influences public behaviour and the public's readiness to change behaviour in order to meet climate and environmental goals.

Steve Smith: Good morning. Thank you for inviting me here. It is really clear to me that media content is critical in helping influence the public's readiness to change behaviour to reduce carbon emissions. The science is really clear. If we are going to avoid going over 1.5 degrees of warming, we need to halve global emissions by the end of the decade. It is worth remembering that it has taken the UK about 30 years to halve emissions to current levels, so the scale of the challenge is really enormous. I do not think that the behaviour change required is possible without the unique role that the media has to play in the huge societal shift needed, to enable audiences to understand what needs to be done, participate in it and influence the outcomes from climate change.

The other thing that is also clear is that the stories we tell each other shape the way we see the world. Unfortunately, the pictures that we see on our screens, both TV and social media, still largely reinforce lifestyles that make high-carbon living normal and aspirational. While there have

been lots of efforts from all broadcasters over the last couple of years, particularly in news, to increase climate coverage, watching the vast majority of available media—the television shows and films that we love—you would still have no idea that the earth is in crisis. Arguably, the world depicted in most of the shows and films that we watch and love is no longer the world that we live in.

There is a really interesting quote from Dorothy Fortenberry, who is the screenwriter of “The Handmaid’s Tale”. She says that, if you are making a story about anything, in any place, and you do not have climate change in it, that is a science fiction story. That is well worth thinking about.

The other challenge is that, in the past, climate on TV has traditionally been framed as either a science or a natural history subject and has often been depicted in a very apocalyptic way: the planet is frying and the world is warming. There is a lot of evidence that, if all audiences get is that very pessimistic approach, it is very disempowering for some audiences who tune out and think that nothing can be done. We need to focus on empowering the media to create content that supports the transition to an environmentally sustainable society. Audiences need optimistic solutions and science-based climate messaging.

There are also some interesting parallels with diversity. We know that we do not want lots of films about diversity; we need diverse programmes with diverse programme makers. Success with climate is not just by having lots more versions of “The Blue Planet” but by reflecting scientific recommendations in all contemporary content, from cookery shows to fashion, to gardening and DIY—all these things. It is how about we raise those issues in a way that inspires audiences.

Matt Bourn: That was very interesting, Steve. I can speak about advertising. The Advertising Association’s members include the commercial broadcasters. At COP 26, the commercial broadcasters made an announcement around a real focus on climate change in all of their editorial programming, not just news. I can see a real shift happening within the commercial media industry, but also within advertising.

From our industry’s perspective, we have an initiative called Ad Net Zero. The goal of Ad Net Zero is to say that, by 2030, every ad should be a green ad. What do we mean by that? We mean that every ad should be made in a sustainable way, through its production and distribution, and we understand the carbon involved in that; but also that it should be promoting a sustainable product or a sustainable service, something that we know is better for the planet.

All our research within the industry, looking at advertising professionals and what they want to do, indicates that they want to be working on promoting products and services that are known to be better for the planet. Right across our industry, whether you are looking at agencies, sales teams within commercial media owners, tech platforms or the sales and marketing teams within the brands, this is top of mind and something that we have tremendous support for.

Ad Net Zero originated in the UK. Our focus in the first two years has been on building the support for that, and we have over 100 organisations, including the big agents and holding groups, such as WPP, but also the big advertisers, with Unilever driving it as chair. Sky is a fantastic supporter of that as well.

One of our interesting challenges is scaling this beyond the UK, because the climate crisis is a global issue, not just a UK issue. Advertising, if you look at that, is a global issue. Our big focus is on how we connect this thinking. How do we start to make every advertising professional think about the carbon involved in their work, day to day? How do they report that? How do they measure it? How do they reduce it? Also then, when you look at the work that they are making, how do they challenge it?

There is a fantastic initiative within Ad Net Zero called Change the Brief, which originated from Mindshare, which sits within WPP. It essentially says that you should look at the brief that comes in from the client and ask, "How can you make that work better?". To give you a simple example, say I am making a car ad and I want to challenge the way in which people think about driving a car. I need more than one person to be in that car; I would like to see three or four people driving in that car, because we know that that behaviour is a better behaviour.

The fascinating thing for me is that advertising sits as almost a service industry to every industry, and every industry faces the climate challenge, and so they are all looking for solutions. Advertising sits at the centre, with this opportunity to accelerate the change. However, we need to encourage a change of thinking, certainly, within the industry.

Government regulation will play a really important part in all this as well. Look at car ads in the UK: the majority of car ads that are now appearing are for electric cars, electric vehicles or hybrids. When you look at the weighting of those ads, they are ahead of sales, because, in the car market, the brands are using advertising to essentially create market demand. They are building the market because they know that, by 2030, they cannot be selling any more petrol cars.

You can look at pretty much every single sector and ask: what is the push? What is the lever that you pull and how will advertising, through the promotion of that sustainable product or service, help shift people towards that?

Dr Kris De Meyer: I am a neuroscientist, and that means that I bring a slightly different angle from Steve and Matt to this. The way I think about this question of how communication in the media landscape is setting people up for behaviour at the moment is through the lens of what we know from neuroscience and psychology.

I agree with Steve and Matt that media, marketing and PR have a role to play in that shift that needs to happen. If we are looking at the question of what is currently happening and how well the media and PR are doing that, the answer is not very well.

You can see that in the data from polling organisations such as Ipsos MORI. Over the last 15 years, it has been asking people, "How concerned are you about climate change?" Occasionally, they will also ask them, "How willing are you to act on it? How willing are you to do something about it?" We have seen awareness and concern about climate change going up since 2014. There was a dip in 2010 but from 2014 it has been going up. It is now at an all-time high. People's willingness to act has not moved. People's willingness to act in 2021 was exactly the same as in 2014. The reason for that is that raising awareness of climate change in itself does not lead to the behaviour change that we are after.

Communicating about climate change and the urgency of the crisis in itself does not lead to the changes that need to happen. The reasons for that sit in something that Steve already mentioned: the threat messaging that is inherent in all the crises. The "code red for humanity" messaging does not help people to understand how to act. It tells them that there is a big problem, but it does not help us to understand what to do about it.

On the psychological responses that people then have to that kind of messaging, the outcomes of that are confusion and fragmentation of opinion about what it is that we should be doing. The confusion sits in the fact that there are so many different voices out there, all the way from saying that we should move to overthrow capitalism and bring in a new system, to radical system change, to tinkering with the current system, to not doing anything at all.

That means that people look at all the different messages that come out about the things that need to happen and, if they do not have their own strong opinions formed, they will say, "This is confusing. I don't know what I should be doing. Should I install a heat pump, or should I insulate my home, or should I be doing both?" When it comes to transport, they will ask, "Should I buy an electric vehicle or should I give up my car totally?" or "Should I move closer to my workplace so that I do not need to have that transport any more at all?" That kind of confusion sits across a certain percentage of the population.

The other thing happening is the fragmentation of opinion. People who form their own strong opinions about this come to hold a set of positions that might say that they want this thing to the exclusion of all the other ones. Some people will say that it is not individuals who need to change their behaviour; it is Governments who need to regulate, or it is businesses that need to be regulated.

Some of these divisions might happen on a much more granular scale. You could have fights even between people who are concerned about climate change, such as between those who think that we should all become vegan and those who think that we should have high-quality food produced with love and care. You might have differences of opinion about whether we need nuclear energy or more renewable energy, et cetera. That kind of fragmentation of opinion leads to the confusion that exists for those people who have not yet made up their minds about this.

In my opinion, that is where we are at the moment, but we have ways of breaking through this.

The Chair: Can I ask two supplementary questions quickly? First, Steve, you mentioned the point that we need this content in all programmes, not just more versions of “The Blue Planet”. You used that very memorable phrase from the screenwriter of “The Handmaid’s Tale”: if it does not have climate in it, it is science fiction. Do you have any suggestions for us as to how we actually achieve that in your industry?

The second question is to Matt. I read the Ad Net Zero, which I think you launched in November 2020. It has five actions. I was particularly interested in the fifth one, which is harnessing advertising’s power to support consumer behaviour change. There is a distinction between what our advertising can do to, as you say, change a brief and what it can do to positively support consumer change. I wondered whether you could give us any examples of what the industry has done since November 2020 on delivering action 5.

Do you think that that is something the industry can do itself, or might there be a role for government in regulating types of certain advertising? For example—and I am speculating here—are SUVs on open roads in the countryside an appropriate form of advertising, or is that where the Government might step in and say that there should be a footnote to say that you should bear the following information in mind? I am asking for your views on the rightness of advertising regulating its own industry in this particular contentious area.

Steve Smith: The good news is that we are starting to do this. The media coverage that we saw around COP 26 last year shifted a gear. It is also interesting that BBC research says that, in 2021, it saw the biggest ever reach for its programmes with environmental themes. It reckons that approximately 70% of adults who are 16-plus in the UK consumed at least 15 minutes of radio or TV outside news bulletins reflecting climate. So messaging is getting through.

The other important thing is the role of education. In the film and TV industry, we have BAFTA albert, which is the authority on sustainability in the industry. It has been doing an enormous amount of training, particularly editorial training, and getting producers to think about how we can start getting sustainability messages in contemporary content. I know that in recent years it has trained over 11,000 people in our industry, which is brilliant. We have initiatives such as the sustainable soap summit, where we try to convene writers, producers and directors from continuing drama to think about how we can start bringing these ideas into their content. We are starting to see that come through.

Another important thing is that, instead of having climate change specials, which can sometimes not get big audiences, we can try to get audiences to see this stuff in the shows that they love and watch. For example, “The One Show” regularly does features on climate change. That show has high ratings and so people will stay and watch it, whereas

if you have a climate special, people might not always tune into it. “The Repair Shop” has been brilliant in trying to get people to think differently about loving and reusing treasured items, rather than throwing them away. We are seeing lots of these things coming through. Even on shows such as “RuPaul’s Drag Race”, they make clothes out of reused and recycled materials. This is the way that successful messaging can come into content. Perhaps that reaches audiences more effectively sometimes.

Matt Bourn: I will deal with the first part of the question, looking at examples from the ad industry. I will give you two examples. One is almost a natural example of what we are seeing happening—bearing in mind that I watch ads every single day; that is my job, and I report back on those to the team and to the industry. Probably McDonald’s most high-profile recent advertising campaign is for the McPlant burger. It is pushing meat alternative burgers, and this has been a very visible advertising campaign during the first quarter of this year.

It is interesting that you can spotlight different examples consistently of big brands testing and innovating with new products. In a way, they are testing consumer demand for these alternatives. You can spot this each day of each week, with different brands testing different things.

In addition, there are leading companies within our industry that are pushing this even harder. Sky is a fantastic example of that, with Sky Zero and the creation of the Sky Zero Footprint Fund. It has put £2 million into a pot, and SMEs and interesting new companies with sustainable solutions can bid for the pot to see if they can win an advertising campaign to help drive and encourage behaviour change.

The most recent example of that is a company called Pura. The ads appeared this week. It makes, essentially, sustainable baby wipes and nappies, with no plastics, and they are flushable—all the things that we know we need with baby wipes and nappies. Through the Sky Zero fund, it is now on TV. That is again a good example of the way in which advertising drives innovation and competition. It wants to celebrate the new things that there are out there. I hope that has answered the first part of your question.

The second part is more about the government role in looking at advertising. We are strong believers in the importance of the Advertising Standards Authority. It consistently looks at misleading environmental claims. If consumers see an ad that they think has a misleading environmental claim, they can talk to the ASA about that. The ASA is well aware that there will be increased scrutiny on ads. If you think about it, if we are moving to a net zero economy, and saying that every product and service has a sustainability angle on it, we need to make sure that the claims within all those ads are factually correct. That puts an intense responsibility on the industry, but the ASA is fully aware of that and working with the Competition and Markets Authority on misleading claims and the Green Claims Code.

One thing we have to do as an industry is help our workforce understand this issue from every single angle. As work is being made, we need our ad professionals to say, "Is that factually correct? Is that based on science-based targets? Does it stand up?" That is why one of the most recent things we have done with Ad Net Zero is to develop the first training programme of its kind. That is a six-hour online training programme for every ad professional to understand climate science. We are pushing that as part of the Ad Net Zero supporter base. We are asking every company that says it is a supporter of Ad Net Zero to put its staff through that training.

Again, I would lens that through the fact that we are focused on the UK market. Actually, we really need everybody who works in advertising around the world to do this. That is where I think we get to a UK Government role in this, around leading the way and showing what best practice is. We are in constant conversations with the Government Communication Service. We would love to get to a point where the Government Communication Service is also sustainable in the way it is operating its ads. We have regular conversations with it, using tools such as AdGreen, when it comes to production and measuring the carbon involved in ads.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: My question is for Matt, and a bit for Dr De Meyer. My question is a bit more brutal than the Chair's was about advertising. I am a very snobby television viewer. I was vice-chair of the BBC, so I am deeply imbued in BBC public service values, but once in a while I develop a passion for something such as "Grand Designs" and am forced on to the commercial platforms, whether I like it or not. The thing that strikes me about advertising when I go on to a commercial platform is this basic contradiction at the heart of it. Though we may see plant-based McDonald's adverts, there is still a wall of very smart advertising for not very good food and promoting a "Buy, buy, buy" mentality.

There is the option that Dr De Meyer put forward, which is that people do not know what to do—whether to get an electric car or not get a car at all. The not getting a car at all option simply does not exist in the advertising world. Are we whistling in the wind if we think that advertising is ever going to get us to a point where the real option facing people—diminished consumption—is going to be part of its repertoire?

Matt Bourn: Every industry is facing the same challenge, which is, essentially, to carry on functioning within a capitalist scenario, selling products and services. They are having to shift to a more sustainable way of doing that, everywhere you look, and advertising is the service that helps promote that to the customer. What you will see from the advertising industry is essentially a reflection of what is being sold. The more industries shift, and the quicker they shift, is where I think real government scrutiny needs to be. Are we shifting industries fast enough so that, when we see the advertising of what those industries are

producing, it is helping to move customers to a more sustainable way of living?

Baroness Young of Old Scone: Perhaps Dr De Meyer wants to comment on whether overreliance on the advertising industry is a mistake.

Dr Kris De Meyer: It certainly is not going to get us all the way. It will have a role to play only where options are available and where you can press more decisively for more environmentally friendly options. Where these choices are not available, or where the mere messaging around the choices available is not the blockage that prevents people adopting a certain type of behaviour—which is often the case—advertising will not be able to do the trick.

Social norms were mentioned before as a very important driver of behaviour change. That is indeed an important driver and advertising can help with those social norms. If you look at all the behavioural factors that determine whether or not people adopt a behaviour, you will see about 15 different ones, at least. Social norms is only one of them. A very interesting tool was developed by the Scottish Government a few years ago, called the Individual-Social-Material model. It looks at all these drivers and blockages at the individual, the social and the material level. Social norms is one of them, but there are all these other ones. Advertising can play a role in pulling some of these levers for behaviour change, but not all of them.

Lord Lucas: Matt, I am very much of the same mind as Lady Young. I cannot understand how, through advertising, you can get companies to reduce their turnover. Are you going to get BMW saying, "Don't buy this monster; buy a Mini"? Are you going to get Apple to say, "This phone will last you 10 years and the charging cable will not break every three months"? Can you give me a single example of a company that has successfully pursued that sort of policy and flourished? Picking up the same thing with Steve, if you want optimism, when we are asking people to have colder houses, smaller cars and not have barbeques, how do you run optimism with that sort of message?

Matt Bourn: I am not saying that advertising per se has the power to shift that for BMW. I am saying that, if the regulatory environment is such that BMW sees that it needs to move from petrol vehicles to EV by a certain date—which, brilliantly, the Government need to be credited for—it will look at how it is going to create that market. It will then look at the services of advertising to, essentially, shift the market.

Lord Lucas: You come back to the key of government direction.

Matt Bourn: We need leadership from every part. The role of advertising is to help those industries or companies move and shift customer behaviour.

On the point that was being discussed, there is interesting research out there. People want to do the right thing. Why will they do the right thing? It will probably come down to cost and the ease of access to that product or service. Doing the right thing is there emotionally, but, when you get to the reality of it, are they going to be able to do it? It will come down to cost and how easy it is for them to do that.

Governments need to encourage industries as quickly as possible to do that. Industries and the businesses within them are more than ready to do that, and the role of advertising is to promote those new, exciting solutions.

Getting a great EV is not a bad thing; there are fantastic new electric vehicles out there, so there are aspirational ways of living more sustainably. We should be excited about that, to be honest.

The question back to government is whether we are encouraging every industry to move as fast as they can and creating an environment where we can really show new ways of living that will be exciting and aspirational.

Steve Smith: On optimism, I guess you are asking how we, as creators, can help show the world what a climate positive future can look like and the benefits that come from that. We know that there are going to be health benefits from addressing climate change. We know that a plant-based diet is healthier for ourselves, as well as the planet. We have a big obesity crisis in the UK, which costs the NHS a huge amount of money, so there are positives that could come from that. There are the resilient communities that we can build. What would it be like to reclaim the streets and not have as many polluting vehicles around?

The opportunity for creators is to imagine what that future could look like. We know that there is a huge rise in climate anxiety, particularly among young people, and I think that comes down to the apocalyptic messaging that we have. I am not saying that some people might not want to give up a bigger car, but we have a role in trying to show people that they can imagine a future that is better. That is one of the results that comes from solving climate change.

Lord Colgrain: My question is to do with how you achieve the thematic objective and the extent to which you can be economical with the accuracy of the detail. This has come about from a coincidence of timing. I received a request yesterday from the Association of Investment Companies, backed up by the FCA, asking me for parliamentary help, as a member of this committee, on the whole question of monitoring and policing the veracity of advertising content on ESG issues. If companies are not a member of the Advertising Standards Authority and just have their directors or associate directors writing advertising content, saying that companies in which they are encouraging pension funds or whatever to invest in are net zero, but it proves that they are actually not net zero in what they are achieving, how should we set about trying to ensure that they are being reined back satisfactorily?

I suggest that, in a sense, this applies also to Steve. In some of your programmes, do you feel that you could exaggerate the truth in order to gain people's attention? Do you recognise that some of the detail you are putting forward is not wholly accurate, but you are happy, for artistic reasons, to feel that you can do that to grab an audience?

Matt Bourn: Brands rely on consumer trust. They rely, essentially, on you trusting that company and that what it says and what it does is believable. The Advertising Standards Authority is there to act as a watchdog on ads that appear and public questioning of what is being said in that ad. If the ad is found to be misleading in its claims, it will be publicly shamed. The ASA has a very clear strategy. You can see from ASA reports that it publicly shamed a number of different companies for overclaiming or misleading environmental claims within their ads. Generally, that drives national news coverage and it is very well known within the industry.

A brand does not want to be caught out. An agency producing that work does not want to be the agency that is responsible for that brand being nationally shamed. It is an effective system, but, because of, as you described it, the veracity of ESG-related claims, I think that this decade will see us regularly scrutinising advertising, rightly, to make sure that claims in ads are factually correct and that they follow the science. This is what we are consistently saying. This is the point of the training. It is vital. If we say that every single part of our economy is going to shift to a more sustainable mode, then every part is going to be scrutinised.

Lord Browne of Ladyton: I have a conviction that my own personal experience is a bad basis for public policy, but I am going to share something quickly with you, because I want to ask you a very specific question. I watch a lot of Sky—not as much as you do, probably—and I see a lot of this advertising. I have a very strong sense that what they advertise to me is that I should be gambling, I should Just Eat, and, if I am not going to Just Eat from any of the fast places, I should choose one of three very large McDonald's burgers, the choice of which apparently all these very attractive people are confused about. I have no sense at all of seeing a McDonald's plant burger in this choice. Perhaps I should buy the latest Ford vehicle, which is usually driven by a sports personality, or somebody who looks like a sports personality, and nobody else. That is my experience. Your experience of Sky is clearly different.

Rather than us swapping our personal experiences, does the Advertising Association have some data about what is happening to advertising that you can share with us? You recommend Sky very strongly. I like it because it covers sport very well, particularly the sports I am interested in, but its advertising does not appeal to me in the sense that it is being driven by sustainability. It is being driven by capitalism, and I accept that. If you have the data and could share it with us, that would be better, rather than us just sharing these experiences.

I have a question also for Kris. Yesterday, we heard from witnesses who were encouraging us to take what they called a systems approach to

climate change. You described the psychological effect—what is going in people’s heads—of a systems approach. The attractive bit of your really interesting evidence on what effect that is having on people’s ability to choose was your last sentence. You said that we have ways of breaking through. What are the ways of breaking through while sustaining a systems approach?

We were encouraged by the Chief Scientific Adviser yesterday not to do the sort of thing that I thought your evidence was encouraging us to do, which was to pick certain things but to take a whole systems approach. How do we do that and engage people in changing their behaviours? You have ways of breaking through. If you could share them with us, that would be really helpful.

Matt, maybe you could tell me if you have the data.

Matt Bourn: I will be honest. I am asking for the data.

Your description of what you are seeing is a description of reality now. I am describing a world of ads and what that will look like by 2030. One of the things that we are digging into is this: if our ad spend on an annual basis at the moment—we publish the figures tomorrow—is around £32 billion, what percentage of that is promoting sustainable products and services? That is what I want to be able to say: “It is this and I see it growing as this and this and this”.

We do not have the access, specifically, to that data. But we can look at, for example, the auto sector, and ask how many of the ads that are out there are promoting an EV or a hybrid? We know that a majority of ads are doing that; they are essentially reflecting what is happening and what is being sold.

Your observation about what ads you are seeing is a bigger question about what is being sold at the moment and what we need to see being sold, right across the economy, as quickly as we can get there. You will then see that reflected in the ads.

Lord Browne of Ladyton: Your evidence is about potential, not about reality.

Matt Bourn: Our Ad Net Zero plan is about a systemic change within the industry to support a systemic change that is happening in every industry over the next decade to build what you are asking for—a net zero economy. The key thing to bear in mind here is the role of advertising within that. The role of advertising is to stimulate innovation, encourage competition and, ultimately, bring products and services to create demand from customers. That is what we have to work towards. In your experience of the advertising that you are watching, ask why those products are being sold and ask yourself what you want to see being sold within the ads that are running.

Lord Browne of Ladyton: Personally, I want some of these things to be stopped.

Dr Kris De Meyer: It is a very big question that you have asked. From the perspective of the Climate Action Unit, we take a very systems-driven approach and look at the whole system of how media messages get translated into the understanding of the public, how science and policy communicate with one another, and how businesses and policy communicate with one another. Looking at that systemic picture, we then identify the things that are not working within that system.

We are talking here today about the way that media and public understanding are related to one another, but we often do work in these other places as well. We often work with scientists and policymakers, bringing them together with businesses and helping them to talk to government about regulation and so on.

Within that systemic approach—that bird’s-eye view of the whole landscape of all the organisations, players and sectors involved in these conversations—we then see that there are specific things going wrong in each of these places that can be understood from what we know about how the human brain works from psychology and neuroscience.

We have already heard several factors being described. We heard about social norms today, and about the cost and easiness of adopting certain solutions. Those are drivers of behaviour. In our experience, the thing that is often missing is the agency; the knowing how to do something. The question of knowing how to change your behaviour, and how to adopt a certain new practice in a professional space—we are hearing examples of from Matt, talking about the struggles that the advertising industry is having with how it is implementing the five promises it has made—all the way to people in the business, policy and science communities. They are all struggling with the questions of how to do more and how to change.

There are many different ways that you can work with these communities to help them start answering the question of how. A lot of our work is through bespoke interventions with communities of experts, or through bringing different sectors together and getting them to talk to each other and collaborate more effectively.

When it comes to mass communication to the public, the answer to the question of how you break through that confusion and fragmentation is that you need to tell the stories of the “how”. You need to tell the stories of how to do this, the actions, the journey and the struggles that a person has to adopt a certain lifestyle or a certain type of behaviour.

That can be through very small stories about very small types of behaviours, but it can also be through much bigger ones. I will give a couple of examples, because it is not enough to just talk about the solutions. If you talk only about the solution, you might give a false sense of optimism and lose a lot of the people paying attention, because they will say, “It is being taken care of. I do not need to care about this any more”. But if you tell the story of the series of actions that allows a person to overcome challenges, find their mettle, build their skill and

build their agency, and you tell that hero's journey of overcoming these challenges, you are then activating social learning in the people who are reading those stories.

The way that most of us learn how to deal with the world around us is from the people around us. We look at them, see them solve a challenge, and then we absorb that and apply that in our own way of dealing with that challenge. I will give a specific example now. A short while ago, we trained a small group of journalists in what we call action-based storytelling; so moving away from talking about climate change as a threatening issue that we need to act on and then leave unspoken what the actions are. We helped those journalists to move towards action-based storytelling, where they looked for examples of stories in the communities around them and tried to turn a story about, let us say, retrofitting and whether heat pumps are good or bad—that is issue-based framing—into a story of a pensioner finding out how to navigate the green grants from the Government, discovering step-by-step what she needed to do with that, insulating her home and putting double glazing in, and then getting the heat pump that was appropriate for her home. That story is now being told by these journalists who have gone through the training.

The training was in November. It took them a while to experiment and to find out how they can shift the way that they are telling stories about climate in that way. That story appeared a few weeks ago, I think, in the Cornish press, and has since been picked up by ITV. It is not a story about climate change. It is not a story about doom and gloom. It is a story about a pensioner, on a very small fixed income, finding her way through the challenge of retrofitting her home.

At the moment, most people turn away from retrofitting their homes because the barriers are too high. They look at the available evidence and available resources and say, "This is too difficult for me. I cannot deal with this. It is going to be too costly. My house is going to be dusty for three months and I don't even know which of all these options I have to choose here". That is what the confusing communication landscape creates at the moment.

The story of the pensioner that was written in the Cornish press and then picked up by ITV has a really nice journey of a person solving these challenges and finding out, with all of her own skills and agency, the steps that she needed to take to come to the place where she now has a warm and comfortable home. It is not a story about turning down the thermostat. It is about getting a warm and comfortable home that does not cost her a lot of money to heat. Somewhere in the piece, she says, "I am a pensioner on a very small income. If I can do it, then so can you". That is the kind of story we need to get to. In every story that we are listening to, we need to get the sense that if that person can do it, so can I. That is how you create a movement towards everyone figuring out what their role is in the big picture that needs to happen.

The Lord Bishop of Oxford: Can I come straight back to Kris, because

Des's question was similar to mine? Kris, what you said at the beginning about confusion and fragmentation was really important for our work as a committee. You have addressed the question of confusion in that very powerful story you just told. Could you comment briefly on combatting fragmentation, and especially whether there is a role for a more authoritative, simpler voice from government, across the piece, on these issues to try to consolidate what is otherwise a fragmented picture?

Dr Kris De Meyer: That is a very interesting question. One thing that is happening within that fragmentation is that people's intuitive, instinctive sense of what meaningful action is in response to climate change is fragmenting. That produces very different sensory, intuitive, instinctive, automatic responses in different people. Some people, as I mentioned, want to overthrow capitalism; some want change within the current system; some want to do nothing at all within that system. Saying "I know the right thing to do on climate change" is okay, if we can then abandon this idea that "my solution" is to the exclusion of other people. We need to get to a sense where we understand that we need to throw the kitchen sink at this. We need to do all these things. We need to be doing all the things we currently can imagine in parallel.

Some of us can get really enthusiastic about some of them: community growing, local food schemes, organic food schemes, international protests or trying to influence international policy. All of us have this niche interest that we can pursue and put our force and mettle behind. If we can then, on top of that, accept that we need to do all these things in parallel, and that we need pluralism in our action approach, that would be the way to start combatting that fragmentation.

That includes the idea that we need all these different types of action stories being told, not just the one about international policy, and not just the one about retrofitting your homes, but also the ones that maybe on the sum of it do not seem to be about reducing carbon emissions that much. Some people want the actions that reduce the most carbon emissions to be the ones that we are all promoting. Other people want things that bring communities together to be the things we are promoting. There needs to be a space. Rather than this fragmentation being a bad thing, it could be a good thing if it came with a sense of pluralism about what was good.

Matt Bourn: This is a huge opportunity for the UK Government and the UK Government Communication Service. We are publishing a report tomorrow looking at the pandemic effect on ad spend. The industry is actually bigger than we forecast it would be before the pandemic. More money is being spent, particularly on online advertising. One key learning is that government became the UK's number one advertiser, pretty much within weeks, and so spend increased by 97%. Why was that? Because we needed a very clear set of messages on a public health issue that affected everyone.

The opportunity here is to ask what clear set of messages we need on a global crisis that affects everyone and that we need to show leadership

on. When the Covid campaign was run, you saw all the big brands in the industry aligning with that and all the big commercial media owners aligning with that—on ITV, Ant and Dec talked about taking time to wash your hands, and we saw Boots and Procter & Gamble running on their brands. There is an opportunity here for government to set out very clearly what good, aspirational net-zero behaviours look like. That is a leadership opportunity.

Baroness Boycott: This is rather directed at you, Matt. You said a lot of times that people are all trying to do their best, but I chair something called Veg Power, and we have done free commercials that have been put on ITV, Sky and everything. Over the time of it, all three channels have drifted the adverts to the back end of the day. I have also been very alarmed by the fightback against the Government's ban on advertising foods high in FSS before 9 pm. ITV and Sky went so far as to say to the Government that, because they gave us a few free ads for vegetables, they should therefore not have a government ban on selling this kind of food to kids. In fact, there was a huge kickback from a lot of Tory Lords in this place against the Government's own amendment, coming up with facts like, "It only makes a difference of one calorie a week", which is total bunk.

You get into an interesting situation, where the advertisers want to say, "It doesn't really work, because it is all about the personal choice. We don't think people are stupid and they make their choice". I have felt rather dismal about the industry wanting to do its best. From our reckoning at Feeding Britain, the Food Foundation, and Veg Power, only 3% of food advertising is for healthy food, except for the very short duration around COP, when Sainsbury's did some fabulous ads about eating vegetables. Nobody else has done is.

Are you saying that the industry on its own is going to step into this space, even though it has fought like mad against a very clever, sensible government regulation?

Matt Bourn: I am sorry to hear your experience.

Baroness Boycott: It is not just my experience. It is about all the children of the UK who have experienced ads for fast food at 5 pm while they are watching telly. The industry fought like crazy. I had hundreds of lobbying letters: "We can't afford it", "The price of broadcasting will suffer", "Our ads don't really work", "You should understand that consumers are very clever". It is kind of shocking.

Matt Bourn: I guess that the HFSS conversation is almost a different—

Baroness Boycott: No, it is about wanting to make money; it is about capitalism and money being opposed to good health and zero carbon. That is the tension that seems to me to be very difficult for people to resolve. I am sympathetic—broadcasters need money too.

Matt Bourn: It is commercial revenue to fund journalists who will be asked to report climate stories that show behaviour change, so

commercial revenue loops back round. I am a great believer in the fourth estate, the importance of a really strong commercial media sector, and evidence-based solutions. The conversation that is happening around HFSS is scrutinising all the evidence that there is on the positive and negative impacts of a proposed ban.

Baroness Boycott: The Government did masses of work on this and said that a ban was what was necessary. That was not the campaigners. That was the Government and No. 10, and it was fought against.

Baroness Northover: Sorry, but that was exactly what I wanted to focus on too. When I saw your submission originally, it seemed to me that it was, I am afraid, extremely superficial. You are saying that you could be a major player in this and you are also saying that the Government should take a lead. Here is a case in point: obesity. The Government were seeking to take a lead, and the lobbying from the industry—which I am sure you are familiar with—was to push it in the other direction. As Baroness Boycott has said, the emphasis was that the adverts did not make any difference and so on and so forth. That rather belies the fact that this is a £32 billion business, where £2 million by Sky seems like peanuts.

It seemed to me, from the submission you put in in the first place, that you were not fundamentally engaging with this at all. The examples you have given are very limited. You might say that the Government have to lead, but it is being lobbied all the time by your members. How do we take that forward? Does this come back to what we are doing in this inquiry—seeking to try to promote behaviour change—so that it drives your industry?

You seem to be saying that you can play a leading role. Take this example—and I would assume that you know all about it, because it was a major piece of health legislation where the advertising industry played a key role in lobbying, so I do not think that you would not know about it. How do you address that, in terms of what you have been saying to us about how you are trying to lead in this area and how you are encouraging government to take a leadership role, when your activities in this example actually counter that particular perception?

Matt Bourn: There are a few different points there. I am aware of the ongoing conversations about the HFSS consultation. I am not directly involved in them as a director of communications, but I am aware of them. From the industry's point of view, the evidence still needs to be scrutinised and looked at. You reference data which challenges the number of calories that an ad ban will bring about. Also, there is the point of view about behaviour change and helping people in particular postcodes access food that is of better quality and encouraging better lifestyle and exercise. There are tremendous examples, such as The Daily Mile by ITV, of really good ways that commercial media, supported by advertising, can encourage that kind of lifestyle and behaviour change. That is where I would go to on the HFSS debate at the moment, but I am happy to answer more.

I am sorry that you feel the submission is superficial; for me, it is not superficial at all. If we are going to, essentially, save the planet, and create a world where my children can live comfortably and enjoyably, we need to see change in every single part of our economy. The only way you are going to accelerate that change, once there is government regulation, as I think is needed in those parts, is to use the power of advertising to promote it, to encourage behaviour change, to stimulate the competition and to push innovation.

The role of advertising is to support this change, but advertising cannot make the change happen. It needs the industries to be pushed to change, and there is a really strong role for government in that. It also absolutely needs government leadership from an advertising perspective on, "What do I, as a consumer and as a member of the UK public, have to do to help get this country to net zero?"

Baroness Northover: Why have you fought back against a very clear piece of government regulation?

Matt Bourn: Are you talking about the HFSS piece?

Baroness Northover: Yes.

Matt Bourn: Because within the industry there is a view that the evidence that that decision was based on is evidence that should be challenged.

Baroness Northover: You are permitting fragmentation.

Matt Bourn: No, we are not necessarily permitting fragmentation but asking for the opportunity, for example, for a way of seeing whether that intervention is effective. That is what I believe is being asked for. We disagree with the evidence and have problems with it. We do not think this will work in a way that you think it will work. We would like the opportunity at least to have some kind of test on that.

The Chair: We hear what you are saying. Dr De Meyer wants to come in on this.

Dr Kris De Meyer: I find it so interesting. The disagreement about what evidence is valid is exactly a sign of the confusion and fragmentation that we are talking about. From our perspective, and to go back to the systemic view of where things are going wrong within that landscape, the low-hanging fruit for behaviour change sits with expert and professional communities.

We have not worked with the advertising industry before, but we work with many other business sectors and are running into the same problems in each of them. In each of these sectors there are businesses at the forefront of wanting to change, which then ask for regulation from the Government and say that the Government should lead on this. It like an abdication of responsibility to the Government to take the first step there. The regulation that they are asking for is to create a level playing

field, such that they can start doing the good things against the bad apples that are not doing the good things at the moment.

How that is then received by people who work in government and the Civil Service is that they say, "Whenever we have tried to legislate, we have all that barrage coming over us". That is because within any sector there are many different opinions. Again, there is that fragmentation, and you might have some front leaders who really want to affect change, but then you will also have lots of others who will fight against change that comes their way.

The solution to this would be for those businesses that really do want to change, and which are perhaps assembled in these business bodies, to work together with government in helping it understand what changes are needed. If businesses are only asking the Government to regulate but not helping them to understand what kind of regulation would move the needle on the laggards within that sector, then we are going to keep on running into the problems that we are seeing here.

Q127 Baroness Boycott: The second question is more about how we tell the stories. What makes for effective communication on climate change, and can you give us some examples? How and when is it best to communicate? What are the most effective messages, and who are trusted sources?

I was a newspaper editor for many years and one thing I found very tricky was fatigue on a subject. If you had a war correspondent in the field and then brought that person home because you found that the story had slid off the front page and was now on page 5, and you realised that its interest had diminished to the reader, it was as though you had said that the war was over.

I have noticed this a lot with climate change—that people get up a head of steam about something and then the story dribbles backwards. It is the same across all media, and people would be hard-pressed at the moment to even know that we are leaders of COP right now; the story is nowhere and people are frightened of this and that. It is really about how you can harness—and Kris said the same thing—the use of story to make your point. I am always interested as to why "EastEnders" cannot start thinking about flooding or something, and you have talked before about how we build it into the everyday narrative.

Dr Kris De Meyer: It is true that any particular issue will have the loss of interest that you have described. When we are talking about what would be effective in maintaining a relentless stream of stories about things that we are doing and how we are attacking climate change, it is precisely about those stories of doing and those stories of action. They are not just about climate but about all of these other things in life, where people make decisions, do something and have an interest.

For instance, if climate change were food, our level of sophistication to talk about it at the moment would be, "If you do not eat, you will die, and

therefore you must urgently eat". That is our level of sophistication of how most of the messaging about climate is happening at the moment. We do not talk about food like that. We have cooking classes, we write cookbooks, and we have an entire stable of celebrities who become the people who teach other people how to cook and who tell the stories of the "how".

We can replicate this for anything to do with the changes that need to happen to take us to a sustainable lifestyle in 10 or 20 years' time. Fast forward to 2030 or 2040 and think about how the world would be different: what would we be doing differently from today, from the way that we are doing investment, to marketing, or the way that television or journalism works? All of the changes that you can imagine in that world in 2030 are stories that you can tell about how we get there—about how we start that journey and make those moves.

Baroness Boycott: So how do we do it?

Dr Kris De Meyer: By finding the front runners who are already figuring out the changes that they need to make in their lives. I gave the example of the pensioner in Cornwall who had been able to retrofit her home, and the journalists who shifted away from telling threatening stories about climate change to now telling action stories about climate change, and the businesses that are making shifts.

We ran a workshop only two weeks ago with a big engineering company. We asked it for examples of where it had already been able to make a difference for its clients on climate change. We had 17 people come up with 17 wonderful stories of how they had overcome struggles, managed to shift the client and do something meaningful on climate. We are currently not seeing these stories anywhere in the media.

Baroness Boycott: Are they stories that you think should be promoted by celebrities? How are they going to keep people's attention?

Dr Kris De Meyer: To some degree, they will become just part of the fabric of how the media reports. To some degree, celebrities and influencers can tell their own stories that amplify those of other people who are doing it. Again, it is the kitchen sink argument: all of the things you can imagine we need to do, we can be doing, and we should be doing.

Baroness Boycott: So who kicks it off?

Dr Kris De Meyer: Again, it is the systems approach. The Climate Action Unit is operating in a lot of these different corners, because these things need to move together. We give some training to journalists to be able to shift to that storytelling frame. We give training to people working in businesses in order to know how to start looking for their own agency and their own ability to shift what they are doing in their business. We even ran a programme with Parliament, looking at the roles of parliamentarians and Peers in the shift that needs to happen in society.

In all of these different corners of society you can try to affect that change, and then you can tell the stories about the change that we are discovering how to do.

Steve Smith: First of all, I completely agree with Dr De Meyer. That is important. On action stories, I produced a documentary called “The People versus Climate Change”, which followed people going through the UK citizens’ assembly on climate change. It was really fascinating to see how good climate education made people who previously did not know very much about climate feel that they had agency in their own lives. Everyone who went through that process came out the other side feeling that they could do something about climate change. They did not feel impotent about it.

Peer-to-peer learning is a really effective way of messaging. People like Sue and Mark in our film, who were very normal people, have become very effective at passing that message on to people who are like them. That was an example of action stories—seeing someone like Sue realise that a second-hand electric vehicle was for her affordable and very easy. She says this brilliant thing that using an electric vehicle is just like using a mobile phone, except it takes you places—you just plug it in. That simplicity of message is really good.

Some of the audience research, particularly by the BBC, shows that hard-hitting approaches tend to be most popular with those who are already passionate about the topic and want to shock others into action, but that most people seem to want to know what they and government can do, and what big businesses are doing.

There are six key messages that we need to bear in mind, which have come from research that On Road Media has done. First of all, it is really important that we make it doable and show that change is possible, and we do not always do that. We also have to get into the habit of normalising action and not inaction in the way that we show things on screen. We need to focus on the big things that make the most difference. For example, the UK tends to be very obsessed with recycling, thinking that that is the biggest thing that it can do to solve climate change. While responsible recycling is important, in the scheme of things, it is a very small percentage of our greenhouse gas emissions. We need to focus on the bigger things such as transport use and food.

How can we, in content, connect the planet’s health with our own health? That is a really important thing to do, as is evoking responsibility to the young and the future. We know that that it is quite effective, perhaps having messaging whereby older generations think about the responsibility for their grandchildren, for example. Also, how can we keep it down to earth? Straightforward messaging is really important.

We have to root everything in science and make sure that we form a trust with the audiences as well. Exaggerating is not necessarily helpful. We have to make sure that broadcasters are trusted sources; that is particularly important given the worry around greenwashing and

disinformation. Again, the BBC particularly, and most broadcasters, would say that trying to meet audiences where they are is important.

I agree with you that flooding would be a brilliant thing for soaps. Soaps love disasters. If I ran "Coronation Street", I would flood Coronation Street, because it would give you no end of storylines and would be something that people who have experienced flooding, particularly in the north of England, would really relate to. It would be a very strong storyline. These things are slowly coming, but there is also a bit of a nervousness among producers that they can go that far. We have to reassure people that audiences are keen to have this kind of content as well.

Baroness Boycott: Why do you use the words "go that far"? What does that mean?

Steve Smith: We have a lot of catching up to do in our industry. Following COP, the broadcast industry had an initiative called the Climate Content Pledge, which is a commitment to tell these stories in our content. But we have not really done very much of that. It was only in 2018 when we were still treating climate change as an impartial debate, with climate sceptics given equal airtime. It is taking our industry quite a lot of time to adjust to that change. It is happening, and it is why the training in our industry is so important, but there is still perhaps a bit of nervousness around commissioning decisions about what would be off-putting for audiences. That requires time, but unfortunately we are running out of time. We need to get on with it, do we not?

Q128 **Baroness Northover:** We have gone around this to some considerable degree in earlier questions, and we will also come on to it later. The question is about the role that Governments play regarding coverage of climate change and environmental issues across media types and in advertising, and how the UK Government are currently doing. Given that we have explored this to some considerable degree, what else might you wish to add at this point?

Steve Smith: It is really important that broadcasters cannot do this on their own. I worry that there is a sense that government might be leaving behaviour change to industry, but we need really clear policy frameworks and timelines coming out of government.

The connections with Covid are really important. Climate change is a crisis. We have eight years left to halve our emissions in order to avoid going over 1.5 degrees. If we agree with the IPCC report, we have to get on with this really quickly—and I am assuming that the UK Government agree with the IPCC report, because they signed off on it.

We need a very urgent, clear framework for broadcasters to respond to. Broadcasting and content work much better if audiences can see that there is a clear policy that supports what they are saying. Broadcasters have a significant role to play, but editorial choices need to be independent and separate from government as well.

It is really interesting. If you think about past BBC programming—such as Helen Archer’s domestic abuse storyline or evidence of the impacts of plastics in “Blue Planet II”—it helped inform the national conversation, but this was in the context of legislative change, either beforehand, in the case of the coercive control legislation, or after, in the case of single-use plastics. I do not think that the media can work in a vacuum and I do not think we are getting this clear messaging from government.

I saw the evidence that came from the Government Communication Service. If this is the biggest crisis we are facing, Together For Our Planet and #OneStepGreener seem to be quite small communications initiatives, really, on something as serious as climate change.

Dr Kris De Meyer: There is the messaging towards the media and advertising industries, which Steve covered. Of course, clarity of messaging and policy is important there, but this comes back to the conversation we had before. If you do not help the Government understand what that regulation should be, they, by themselves, are not in the best position to work it out alone. You need to give the guidance for you to be guided in return.

When it comes to the Government’s own role of communicating about this to professional sectors, and also to the public, it is again about telling stories of what you are doing. The best way to get the urgency of a crisis across is by explaining the things that you are doing to solve the crisis, not by hammering on that we have only eight years left to halve emissions. The stories of what you are doing to address the problem are the ones that signal the scale of the importance that you, as a Government, are giving to that crisis.

There are two datapoints. From polling data during Covid, we know that people’s perceptions of how threatening the COVID situation was, were mostly informed by the actions of government. What government is doing at any moment in time influences people’s risk perception the most. I think it was Ipsos MORI data and I could find a link, if you are interested in that.

The second one is anecdotal. “The News Quiz” occasionally gets a comedian on to talk about climate change. Two years ago, one of them came on—it was after the publication of an IPCC report—and said, “Biggest crisis in the world. I thought, if it’s that big a crisis, I need to be able to find out what the Government are doing about this. So I went to the GOV.UK website and I started to look for what the Government are doing about climate change, and I couldn’t find anything”. That is an example of how that kind of messaging is absent at the moment.

This cannot be resolved by publishing a 10-point plan; that is not a solution to it. When Britain was trying to win the war, it did not publish a 10-point plan of how it was going to beat the Germans. It was publicising, day by day, the actions that it was taking to win a particular battle. Again, it is the stories of the doing that are so important here and the struggles that you are overcoming.

The Government should use the same recipe, though for different reasons. Here, it would not be so much to build agency in the public but to help the public understand that there is a really big crisis and that the Government are playing their part in it and expecting other people to do their part.

Matt Bourn: Great answers—I completely agree. I would encourage us to look really closely at the learnings from the Covid campaign, which was the best live example of, essentially, mass behaviour change, rapidly, in a crisis. We also need to look at the way that the industry and brands responded and supported that. They saw the leadership that was coming from government, and they reinforced it through their own advertising. If we were at a point where we had a set of similarly clear messages, you would see those reinforced by big brands through the advertising that they carry. I look at ads every day and I have not seen what I would describe as a clear set of net-zero messages yet.

Lord Lilley: I really wanted to come in on the previous question but I will tailor it to this. First of all, I will just put on record that I find very chilling the idea that big business, big broadcasters, big advertisers, the Government, academia and journalists are all uniting to sell a single story. It is the road to serfdom to me, but you are doing it. The question is how effective it is going to be. We were told by the Climate Change Committee that 60% of necessary change would require behaviour change, but 51% percent of that is where the Government are requiring things like electric cars, and so would change behaviour. You have to buy an electric car when you cannot buy another one, and you have to heat your house with a heat pump when you cannot do it with gas. That left about 8% or 9% percent where it is going to be voluntary behaviour change. What I want to know from you is whether you think that this sort of comprehensive messaging will achieve an 8% percent reduction in emissions or not.

Matt Bourn: All the consumer research is pointing towards people wanting to do the right thing and wanting to buy the right things. Certainly, there is research from dentsu in our submission that says that, by 2030, people do not envisage buying something that is obviously bad for the planet and will make conscious decisions. We are seeing a continual rising of that kind of self-responsibility in what people will look to do and buy and the decisions that they make around travel. I hope that that 8% to 9% is there in that consumer desire, particularly from younger generations that are coming through.

Dr Kris De Meyer: My answer is slightly different, in the sense that most of our behaviour does not come out of strong, conscious attitudes that we have. Most of our behaviour comes from our interaction with the environment; it is automatic, mindless, instinctive and intuitive. That kind of behaviour change sits in the part that currently is labelled voluntary, where we are expecting people to change their behaviour. That is really difficult. If you want to reduce your plastic use or buy organic or travel less to your workplace, the physical environment might be constraining

you from making any of those changes, and consciously going against that would be really difficult.

You asked in one of your questions what is needed. What is needed in addition to messaging, campaigning and stories of action is a restructuring of the physical world around us, whereby the default behaviour is not the bad behaviour any more, like it now so often is, and the easy behaviour becomes the right behaviour for the environment and the planet. That will need some regulation of industry sectors, which need to work together with the public. From my perspective, Lord Lilley, the public and citizens are a part of that conversation. It is not only academia, business, media and Governments; citizens are a part of that.

Within the entire ecosystem of people having a stake in that conversation, we need to be able to decide the changes that we cannot make individually. If I want to go plastic-free, I then need to spend a lot of time traveling to the shops that allow me to be plastic-free. If I want to have the convenience of walking into my supermarket and buying my stuff, I need my supermarket to change the way that it presents things to me. Certain types of behaviour change need to come from a change in the environment, not a change that is inside me.

In answer to your question of whether it is going to be effective, it will not be if it sits on its own or if we are relying only on comms. We need all of these other pieces to be put in place as well.

Lord Lilley: Can I just make the question more specific? The Government are going to decarbonise electricity. They are going to make all transport and heating electric, so voluntary issues do not apply to that. What they do apply to is, first, food, and issues of animal emissions and methane, and fertilisers; secondly, air travel; and, thirdly, waste and the overconsumption of goods produced from fossil fuels. Can you reduce those things enough to save 8% or 9% of our emissions? Are people going to stop travelling by airplane because they see a soap character stopping travelling by airplane?

The Chair: Before you add to your already fairly full answers, gentlemen, can we invite Steve in, if he wants to say something first?

Steve Smith: I was just going to have another thought about this, though whether it is enough to save 9%, I do not know. We have to remember that the public are not just consumers or viewers; they are also employees. One of the things that I have noticed is a huge shift for companies wanting to get to net zero—an enormous change. In the broadcast industry, it is not just what we see on screen but how we make our content. Of course, that influences people thinking about things in their home life. Things that they think about to change their behaviour in the workplace go back into their home life.

Increasingly, industries and organisations are having very strict travel policies—discouraging flying, for example, when trains are available. Businesses are thinking of new ways of eating. Certainly in our industry,

the idea of having more vegetarian catering on location is influencing people and how they think about things.

When it comes to aviation, I do not think that we can just leave that to behaviour changes. We are going to need something like a frequent flyer tax. We need to remember that 70% of flights are taken by 15% of people, so it is not the average person going on their holiday that is the problem.

Dr Kris De Meyer: Again, it is the kitchen sink argument. We will need a lot of different changes to make that possible. We will need some behaviour change through messaging, where people realise that they do not need to take 10 flights per year and could do with a bit less; that is one thing. Another thing is that Governments could help to change the choice architecture and make train travel easier and cheaper than flying. In the UK at the moment, it is still a lot cheaper to fly to Edinburgh than to take the train there, most of the time.

The third thing is that we need innovation in some of these places. Although I am not banking on it, in 10 years' time we might have electric, hydrogen or ammonia planes. Those things will help with the shift that needs to happen. If those technical innovations do not pay off, we will need to work harder on these other levers. The possibility is that they will come off, and then we will need less voluntary behaviour change and can do more through technological and innovation-driven change.

Lord Whitty: I have two points. Can you provide the material that Matt referred to on where you are going to get together spending on advertising? Is that confidential information? It is about where the money goes. I absolutely take the point that advertisers are very good at communicating, but who pays them is the key issue, and what for. We need to see the balance of advertising in order to make a conclusion as to what the industry as a whole can produce. That is a technical point; could you let us know what you can provide us with and what you cannot?

The other point goes back to this issue of who is trusted. Peter just said that, when all the big boys are giving you the same message, he gets worried. I think that when all the big boys are giving you the same message, people become increasingly sceptical. Both may be true, but who is the best person or institution, and what is the best mode or media, for getting across messages? There is a built-in scepticism about a lot of advertising, even though people follow the trends, and there is a built-in scepticism about government. One of the reasons that the Covid crisis was well dealt with is that we believed the boffins, at least at the beginning, while we did not necessarily believe the politicians. Who is trusted to convey these seriously big messages to get people to change, quite dramatically, at least over time, what they are doing? And how do we do that?

Dr Kris De Meyer: If you were to ask the pollsters that question, they would come up with a list of doctors, engineers and scientists, ranked in order—20 or 30 different professions. That is not the right answer from

our perspective. Psychologically, you believe people who say things that are close to what you already believe. Sometimes that is your friends and family and the people close to you, because they share your values and beliefs. When they then say something, you might pick that up. Sometimes, it is the celebrity who we admire and trust for other reasons. When they say something that chimes with what we believe, that might be something that we pick up and trust.

We may trust people in one domain in life. Let us say we trust a doctor to give us good health advice. If that doctor starts talking about climate change, there is no guarantee that you would trust that doctor. It is the same with any other profession or any other voice or sector that you could find here.

It is about understanding and breaking down the big message, and not thinking that we always need to tell the big story of climate change and the climate crisis. It is about breaking it down into all of these different, smaller stories, where climate change interacts with people's lives. Then you will have the trusted voice.

A doctor can give health advice to people about the benefits of active travel. That is where people will believe what the doctor says, and that is then something that can help with the behaviour change away from fossil fuel transport. There are all these examples of where you find a person who is trusted for a particular reason; if they can communicate about climate change in a way that is linked to that reason, that trust can be carried over.

I am also thinking about the question of having a unified response to something and whether that generates scepticism. Think about traffic safety. Traffic safety is not enormously controversial; most of us abide by all the rules of traffic safety. We are taught them as a kid, though not by our parents saying that we are going to die if a car hits us; they take us out to the road and make us look left and right, and that is how we learn how to keep ourselves safe in traffic. The issue of how you keep yourself safe in traffic has receded into the background of our minds. We do not consciously spend a lot of time thinking about it. It is only when we have a close brush or a narrow escape that we might say to our friends and family, "I really had some luck there when that happened".

Climate could become the same. In 10 or 20 years' time, climate could have receded into the background of our everyday lives, and all our choices and behaviours will be about keeping ourselves safe with respect to the climate crisis, which by then will probably have developed further from where we are now. Rather than it being a threatening thing that hangs over our heads, it has to become the backdrop to the choices that we make in life.

We all have a role to play in that. Doctors, engineers, scientists and the media all have a role to play, and we can all find a place where what we are saying can be trusted by other people.

Steve Smith: Off the back of that, there is not one key message that works for every kind of audience. Britain Talks Climate has done fantastic work on an evidence-based toolkit designed to support organisations that want to engage the public on this. It has broken down the public into seven tribes and, by looking at that, you can find out what effective messaging can work for those different groups of people.

Going back to “The People versus Climate Change”, we really need to understand that someone like our character Sue from the film is very effective at talking to other people who are like Sue. They trust her. That peer-to-peer is a really important thing to do.

Getting back to trust, the only other thing I wanted to say is that we have not really covered disinformation and greenwashing. I am particularly concerned at the moment that denialism is turning into delayism over climate change and net zero. We also ought to be very concerned about some of the disinformation that spreads very easily on social media. That is where it starts and breeds, and then it is amplified. Some interesting work has been done by an organisation called Global Witness, looking at how Facebook’s algorithms, for example, amplify climate disinformation very quickly. That is concerning, and there is a need for broadcasters to be trusted and impartial in this area of climate change.

Matt Bourn: Echoing the earlier answer, if I come back to “every ad is a green ad”, every ad is a nudge for a behaviour or decision around something you might look to buy, do or enjoy. There is not one person about whom who could say, from a brand point of view, that is the person. What we are trying to create is a way of living, where every ad would be encouraging a sustainable decision. People might not even realise that, because it would just be them buying an EV, but that is what we are working towards.

Baroness Boycott: Because it has come up in previous sessions, I want to ask you about the role of fear within all this. Matt, you said that coronavirus was a textbook example of how everybody could change their behaviour in 24 hours, but we did have nightly briefings from the Prime Minister, and everyone was aware that it might happen to them in the next few hours. I am interested in what we could take from the way that the coronavirus response was delivered by the Government into climate change—presumably, it is unreal that the Prime Minister is going to come on every night.

Picking up again what Steve said just now, there does seem, at the moment, to be an enormous backlash against green policies, especially with the oil crisis, and a lot of disinformation out there. Again, I completely agree with Kris that it would be great to have climate change, in a way, behind us, but right now it is so far ahead of us that we cannot see it. Something has to happen to accelerate us down the road. Is that the Prime Minister on TV at 6 pm every night, telling us what our carbon emissions are? What is the starting point? How are we going to get anywhere by 2030 if we are really far behind and facing some backward

steps?

Steve, do you want to start? I am picking up on what you said about disinformation flooding us.

The Chair: Can keep your responses fairly short, gentlemen, on this one?

Steve Smith: Fear is not always helpful. In fact, giving people hope is a much more positive message. I am not sure that it would be helpful to have the Prime Minister come on TV every night and say that the world is going to fry, but we need to make sure that we have accurate information, particularly about the consequences. On what we need to do, we know that we need to halve emissions. The "how" questions are the ones that are up for debate.

There is a danger when we say, "Why can we not just delay net zero by a bit, because we have an energy crisis?" We need to put that into the context of what the consequences are if we delay it. If we break our carbon budget to go for 1.5 degrees, that has consequences for taxpayers, who will, for example, have to pay to build more flood defences in the UK. These things are not without consequences, so we need to make sure there is a very balanced discussion around the worry about delaying some of these things because we may not feel we can afford it. I do not think we can afford not to do it.

Matt Bourn: I would say that the learning from Covid was just how rapidly government can create a core set of assets and make those available to brands to reinforce that, so that what you see is not necessarily just government advertising but messaging repeated and reinforced in different ways. It helps normalise it, if I see that on a Sainsbury's ad or on an ITV ident.

I come back to the difficult question of what the big message is. It is lots and lots of different things, so there is work to do on that. If the Government Communication Service can get to the point of making available those types of assets, I am certain that brands and media owners within the industry will pick up on those, because they want to be seen to be doing the right thing.

Dr Kris De Meyer: From a neuroscience and psychology perspective, neither fear nor hope are the answer, because emotions, in general, are not predictable levers of behaviour. You can make one person fearful and they will behave in one way, and you can make another person fearful with a message, and they behave in a different way. It is the same with anger and with hope.

With fear, the possible outcomes that you can get are people becoming anxious and paralysed and not knowing what to do; people becoming frantically activist in the way that they think they need to do something, which can become very extreme; people switching off and saying that the message is too scary and they do not want to engage with it; or people becoming denialists and saying that the message is scary and they are

being manipulated, and so they are going to start looking into it, and then finding a narrative that supports the view that people behind the message are in it for their own benefit.

If you take a landscape of responses to fear messaging, that explains pretty much the state that we are in today. That is where we sit with the confusion and the fragmentation. It is exactly what psychologists who were looking at this from the 1970s onwards predicted would happen.

The only time when fear is a good communication mechanism is when, at the same time, you can communicate a solution that feels concrete, doable and effective. That means that, if you do the solution, the reason for your fear has gone away. That is why fear was a relatively good mechanism to communicate on Covid, because, at the same time, you could communicate the actions that people could do to keep themselves safe from infection, or then later to get a vaccine. On climate, we are constantly missing those concrete, doable and specifically effective actions.

With hope, the problem is that if you communicate just the message of hope through solutions, people will say that because someone else is solving the problem, they do not need to do anything. Neither of these emotional things are the right way to go.

We should think of emotions not as something that we want to trigger in our audience but almost as a side effect or consequence of the fact that we have got through to them with our message. It is not the main driver to action. The driver to action is learning from the people around us—the peer-to-peer learning or social learning that we have talked about. It is about seeing someone do something and then saying, “If they can do it, I can do it as well”.

Q129 **Baroness Young of Old Scone:** We have covered quite a lot of this, but I want to ask one proper question and one rather flippant one.

I want all three of you to imagine that you are allowed to be Prime Minister for a day and that you are savvy enough to understand what comms, advertising, media and other communications mechanisms can do, and to tell me what you, as a Government, are going to do to fill the gap that so many people have identified of there not being clear, concrete, doable, specific actions being communicated clearly. That is the proper question. What should the Government be doing in this area?

The second question is whether you think that the Government Communication Service is beyond hope in this.

Steve Smith: Again, it goes back to those doable actions. What is really interesting is looking at audience research around what people think is effective for climate change and what they are doing. There is a disconnect; as I mentioned earlier, we get obsessed with recycling. It is really interesting that, when I have made content around diet and food, despite saying, “Reduce your amount of meat”, what audiences tend to hear is, “You are banning me from eating meat”, and they get very angry

about that. No one is banning anyone. We need clear, very simple messaging around reduction in meat. The Climate Change Committee recommends 20% to 40%. Prince Charles says that he goes two days a week without eating meat. The Government could do very clear, simple messaging around things like travel, meat use, and our houses.

Unfortunately, what we sometimes get is confusing messaging. I remember, around COP, there was the concern that Allegra Stratton was talking about not rinsing your plates before putting them in the dishwasher and doing things with bits of leftover bread. These are the toepoint-y things that really do not make any effect at all. That seems to be a very confusing message to come out of an official government communications person.

Whether or not the Government are up to it, I have to hope that they are. Again, we should learn these lessons from Covid. I really agree that very effective messaging came from Covid and there are lessons that we can learn from it—the sense that, when we really think something is a crisis, government can change overnight. But with climate change, we are still not doing that, are we? We are still not really seeing climate change as the crisis that the science says it is. That is a very worrying thing for me.

Dr Kris De Meyer: Psychologically, we will never get to that point. That is the reason why we need to find another way. We cannot get to the point where all of us will be in sufficient agreement that it is a crisis in order to then move forward. We need to do it in a different way, which I have already hinted at several times.

The kind of message that I would do as Prime Minister would be quite different from what is out there. Let us backtrack a bit. We have heard simple messages, we have heard aspirational messages, and we have also heard people ask questions such as, “Should we not have messages about reducing things?” We are now talking about different types of messages that work with the different segments that Steve was mentioning before.

Different kinds of messages of that type resonate with different groups. Some groups will latch on to the simple messages of what they can do, some will latch on to the aspirational message of how they can buy something better that is at the same time good for the environment and acts on climate change, and some people will want to hear only messages that talk about reducing our consumption. So that is the breadth of the messages that we are talking about when we are wanting to reach all of these seven segments.

As Prime Minister I would tell an honest story. I would say, “We have set a target by 2050. To be honest, we do not really know how we are going to do it at the moment, but we are taking that very seriously. We are going to be very serious about trying to achieve this, and we have started in this way. By starting in this way—by having these conversations and by bringing in that regulation and making this kind of change—we are

figuring out what it is that we can do next and how we can do all of the percentages that sit in the Climate Change Committee report and all of the things that need to happen”.

I would then be honest about the struggles that I am running into—the difficulties, the lobbying against a certain change and all of that. I would also celebrate partial successes, because those give the sense and the idea that we are doing something about this that is meaningful and that we are making a difference.

On your flippant question, as you described it, no one is beyond saving.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: You are a kinder human being than I am.

Just by way of a note, we should be going back as a committee to the Government Communication Service to ask when it is going to publish its strategy that it promised to let us see.

Matt Bourn: Thank you for the opportunity to indulge in thinking of being Prime Minister for a day. The first thing that I would want to do, before I said anything publicly, would be to be confident that, sector by sector, I believe in the business paths to net zero. It is a joint effort. There is an internal conversation with scrutiny against every sector. Are you on the road to net zero by the targets you are setting? How are we going to continue to make sure that you are? Are you doing it or do you need regulatory support to do it?

To a certain extent, that is also the advertising challenge: with clients and what we advertise, is the client portfolio made up of clients that are genuinely on a path to net zero? Do we buy into that? Do we believe that? Are we supporting them in this shift to do that?

Then I would ask each of those sectors to help me with the practical action that they need their customer base to make. As government, we would then articulate those actions in different ways.

On the Government Communication Service, it is very different from what the COI was, which was disbanded in 2010. That is possibly something to have a think about.

In the UK advertising sector—I am going to tub-thump for a second—you are blessed with the best ad agencies in the world, and you have many of them on the roster, including the likes of MullenLowe and M&C Saatchi. Generally, advertising is only as good as the brief it gets, so you need a clear brief and then you will see a very clear articulation of that through campaigns.

If I was inside the GCS, I would probably ask whether we had a clear brief. I am not sure that it does.

Lord Whitty: Matt, could you just answer my question, on the material available?

Matt Bourn: I would like to take that away; to be candid, that is the question that I have been asking about the scrutiny that we need to put on our ad spend figures during the course of this decade. The closest that I have managed to get to that so far is within the auto sector. I would like to take that away and come back to you. It may be possible, from a sector perspective, as a starting point. It is not a small job to analyse that spend, because, essentially, we have to look at the content of those individual ads and put a spend against it.

I believe that ads follow what companies are promoting in their products and services, so the more you see sustainable products and services on shelves and offered to customers, the more you will see ads promoting those.

The Chair: Thank you for that openness to come back to us on that, which we appreciate, and the fact that you stepped in with 24 hours' notice. I am sure you might think that you have earned your money today.

We would like to thank all three of you for the excellent contributions you have made, which have provoked interest among the committee, as you will have seen. This is the last evidence session in our inquiry before we have the Ministers before us, so thank you for ending on a high. With that, I formally close this meeting. Thank you.