

TONY BLAIR INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL CHANGE

Planes, Homes and Automobiles: The Role of Behaviour Behaviour Change in Delivering Net Zero

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Introduction

Discussion of climate policy is dominated by the commitment of governments and companies around the world to delivering net-zero emissions by 2050.

But setting targets is the easy part of the challenge: much harder is establishing how they will be delivered.

And while there are many pathways to delivering net zero, they have two things in common.

First, while our decarbonisation to date has not required major changes to our economy and society, the next phase will be more costly, visible and impactful – requiring profound changes in how we produce and use energy, how we move around, the buildings we live in, and our environment and countryside.

Second, meeting the net-zero goal – and our arguably more difficult interim targets in 2030 and 2035 – cannot rely on technology deployment alone. It will also require significant behavioural changes from consumers (and voters) across the country.

The requirement for behavioural changes means that debates around the politics of net zero are increasingly, and rightly, focused on issues of public consent and support. Net zero cannot and should not be achieved on the quiet. If the government's targets are to be achieved, voters will need to act. And while passive consent may be enough in some areas, for net zero to be politically achievable it will need active support from those voters.

While that issue is widely acknowledged, discussion of behaviour changes required for net zero is often simplistic. Broadly speaking, there are three main positions:

- Net zero is "win-win": those who argue that net zero need not involve challenging trade-offs and is, in the words of Boris Johnson, a "cake have eat" agenda;¹
- **Big changes are good:** those who argue that many of the behavioural changes required for net zero are desirable not just for reducing emissions, but also because of other (sometimes moral) reasons;
- Big changes are bad: those who claim that the behaviour changes required for net zero are so
 profound that they will mean "the end of the comfortable lifestyles we have enjoyed for
 generations".²

But none of these positions reflects what is really required, or what could be the most politically deliverable pathway to net zero. Unquestionably net zero requires trade-offs, and not all changes will be popular – but it does not call for a reduction in living standards, and in many cases offers significant co-benefits. The most politically deliverable pathway to net zero is one that focuses on a limited number of

specific behaviour changes, minimises the need for massive lifestyle changes such as an end to flying or mass conversion to plant-based diets, and that maximises the delivery of wider benefits.

At the moment, our approach to behaviour change is stuck in a vicious circle: voters have low knowledge and little inclination to act, politicians are reluctant to put in place policies to incentivise action, and technology deployment is not high enough to drive cost reduction.

But a better way is possible: by strengthening voters' understanding of the changes that will be needed and engaging them properly in policy design, this can be turned into a virtuous circle – where higher public understanding and knowledge enables greater political courage, and increased technologydeployment levels cut costs and make net-zero behaviours a social norm.

This report aims to shine a light on the behaviour changes required for net zero by exploring two questions:

- What consumer behaviour changes are likely to be required to achieve net zero in the UK?
- How ready is the UK public to make these changes?

Finally, we set out high-level recommendations for how government should both build the case for and implement behaviour change as part of its broader net-zero strategy.

This report builds on our recent report, <u>Polls Apart?</u>, which showed the potential for division on net-zero policy and how, while much of the focus to date has been on the engineering and technology challenges of net zero, the political challenge is at least as big. The Tony Blair Institute for Global Change will be undertaking further work to explore those issues in key sectors – particularly buildings and transport.

Behaviour Changes Required to Meet Net Zero

There is no single pathway to net zero, but the 2050 target – and the interim targets of cutting emissions from 1990 levels by 68 per cent by 2030, and 78 per cent by 2035 – mean we can have a high degree of confidence in the types of changes required.

Most economic models on delivery of net zero categorise those changes into three different groups:

- **Technology changes:** changes to technology and fuel use that do not impact behaviour, such as lowcarbon fuels instead of fossil fuels for industrial production or electricity generation.
- Behaviour changes: individual or societal behaviour changes such as flying less or eating less meat.
- **Combination changes:** measures that require a combination of technology deployment and behaviour change, such as use of electric vehicles and heat pumps in place of petrol cars and gas boilers. These changes are often supported by wider interventions such as tax changes or consumer choice restrictions.

Advocates of accelerated climate action are often attracted to behaviour change in their analysis, for two reasons. First, because such changes are often calculated by models to be very cheap. It is, in modelling terms, cheaper to cut emissions through mass adoption of plant-based diets than by offsetting the emissions from meat consumption through expensive carbon-removal technologies. Second, because they often align with a wider political view – for example, that vegetarianism or reduced consumption are right for other reasons such as morality and equity, as well as good for the climate.

Those who are sceptical of net zero often seize upon these types of argument, suggesting that the huge scale of behaviour changes which some advocates argue for (becoming vegan, stopping flying, giving up a car) is not politically acceptable. People will not put up with these, the argument goes, so the whole net-zero target is not achievable. And that position reflects a wider nervousness in the electorate; while there is increasing evidence that concern on climate change is widely shared across the country, voters may be wary of the equating of climate action with radical behaviour change and wider cultural values that they may not share.

So the level and nature of behaviour change required is a highly contested space; and will, to a large extent, define the political debate around net zero.

What Behaviour Changes Are Required for the UK to Meet Net Zero?

Given the polarisation of these positions, the first crucial question is: what behaviour changes are required to meet net zero?

To answer that question, the Climate Change Committee (CCC) has modelled a "Balanced Pathway" to net zero, which involves a combination of actions set out under the three categories above. The government's analysis, published in April 2021, ³ does not categorise the measures required to meet its target in the same way. But it appears broadly similar: while there is likely to be slightly more emphasis on "combination" changes rather than pure behavioural change, the overall approach appears largely aligned.

And the contribution that behaviour change makes to those pathways is huge. From 2009 to 2019, 87 per cent of emission reductions were delivered through measures requiring no behaviour change – in particular the decarbonisation of our power sector. But that proportion falls to just 41 per cent from 2020 to 2035, and emissions savings from behaviour change (either "pure" behaviour change, or via deployment and use of new technologies) rises from 13 per cent to 59 per cent.



Figure 1 - Pathway to net zero

Source: https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/sixth-carbon-budget/ and TBI analysis

Given that delivery of the government's targets is so heavily dependent on behaviour change, we need clarity on what these changes are.

But that is an unclear and contested space. As noted above, some have argued that net zero requires mass transition to vegetarianism, an end to international flights, or mass transition away from cars. Those

are perfectly legitimate positions to take – but they are not necessarily required to meet net zero. They are, in part, based on wider politics and values.

It is not necessary for everyone to stop flying – in fact, we need to reduce average kilometres travelled per person by plane by a maximum of around 6 per cent between 2019 and 2035. We do not all need to become vegetarian; on the CCC's pathway, meat and dairy consumption reduces by around 20 per cent in 15 years. We do not need to stop using cars – kilometres travelled per driver need fall by only around 5 per cent. This is not, of course, to argue that there may not be other reasons to advocate for more significant behaviour change – but it is not required to meet net zero.

Figure 2 - The six key behavioural changes required for net zero

	Behavioural change	Change, 2019–2035
Homes and consumption	Install low-carbon heating and energy- efficiency measures	~40% of homes on low-carbon heating systems All new heating systems are low carbon Accelerated installation of energy efficiency
	Reducing waste to landfill through reduced consumption/increased reuse and recycling	Remaining waste per person (after recycling, composting) down 37%
Transport	Increased walking, cycling, public transport in place of car usage	Car km per driver down 4%
	Purchase/use zero-emissions vehicle	~60% car fleet is battery electric

All new vehicles are battery electric

	Reduce international travel and domestic flights	Plane km per person down 6%
Diet	Reduced meat and dairy consumption	Meat and dairy consumption down by 20%

These are not the only changes required to meet net zero; others, such as reducing food waste, and acceptance of changes to some products and services, will also be important. But the key elements to a successful behaviour-change strategy should focus on the limited number of changes that have the most impact.

Public Attitudes Towards Behaviour Change for Net Zero

The fact that the number of changes required is relatively low does not, of course, mean that it will be easy, or that the public is ready or willing to act.

This section explores this question – focusing on public understanding of net zero; willingness to act; belief that climate change can be tackled; roles of individuals, businesses and governments; and incentives.

Do People Understand What Net Zero Means and Recognise They Have a Personal Role in Delivering It?

Before engaging the public on the behaviour changes required to meet net zero, it's reasonable to think that people need to understand what net zero means and that they recognise they will have to change behaviours in order to help deliver it. But the currently available data indicate there is a long way to go on both counts.

First, we examine general awareness around net zero. BEIS Public Attitudes Tracker has asked the question: "Before today, how much, if anything, did you know about [net zero]?" since 2019 when the government legislated for a 2050 net-zero target.



Figure 3 – Net-zero knowledge in spring 2020 and spring 2021

Source: BEIS Public Attitudes Tracker; waves 33, 37. https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/public-attitudes-tracking-survey





Source: BEIS Public Attitudes Tracker; waves 33, 37. https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/public-attitudes-tracking-survey



Figure 5 – Net-zero knowledge in spring 2020 and spring 2021 according to NRS social grade

Source: BEIS Public Attitudes Tracker; waves 33, 37. NRS social grade A-C1/C2-E roughly captures the white-collar/blue-collar divide. A-C1 includes junior through to senior managerial, administrative or professional roles, while C2-E includes skilled and semi-skilled manual workers as well as state pensioners, casual workers and those receiving state benefits only. <u>https://www.gov.uk/</u>government/collections/public-attitudes-tracking-survey.



Figure 6 - Net-zero knowledge in spring 2020 and spring 2021 according to income

Source: BEIS Public Attitudes Tracker; waves 33, 37. https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/public-attitudes-tracking-survey

These data show that public understanding of what net zero means is limited. While knowledge levels are rising, that rise is relatively slow. And while demographic differences are not as large as we might imagine, there are significant differences – in particular that knowledge and awareness appear to be highest among high-income and younger voters.

But one might also argue that detailed knowledge about net zero isn't important; after all, we don't need to understand the ins and outs of cancer treatment to agree that we should reduce smoking and fund healthcare. What matters is people's willingness to act to reduce their carbon footprint.

To explore that, we can look at the extent to which people feel that they are doing enough to tackle climate change.

On the positive side of the ledger, when asked directly about the key behaviour changes required for net zero, people recognise the need for action. Research from the Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformations⁴ shows relatively strong awareness of the need for action, with high recognition of the need to reduce emissions from homes and transport, but less recognition of the need to change diets.





Source: Whitmarsh, L., (2020). Tracking the effect of Covid-19 on low-carbon behaviours and attitudes to climate change: results from wave 2 of the CAST Covid-19 Survey. CAST Briefing Paper 05.

But an acknowledgement of the need for action does not necessarily translate into recognition that individuals themselves need to act. Here, the data are more equivocal: most people feel they are already doing enough to tackle climate change.



Figure 8 - Do you think that you are doing enough to tackle climate change?

Source: Ofgem, Decarbonisation Insights Consumer Survey (2020). https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications/consumersurvey-2020-decarbonisation-insights

We can draw two key conclusions from this analysis:

- public understanding of what net zero means is limited and is not increasing rapidly this is clearly a
 problem given the scale and scope of behavioural changes that will be required to deliver net zero;
- while there is wide recognition of the need to change behaviours when prompted, a majority of
 people think that they are doing enough to tackle climate change meaning that much more needs
 to be done to articulate what net zero requires and to seek public support and consent to achieve it.

Do People Believe That Action to Cut Emissions Can Be Effective?

In addition to understanding the rationale for taking action, it will also be important for people to feel that the actions they take are worthwhile – and will actually reduce climate change.



Figure 9 – Can we actually reduce climate change (CC)?

Source: BEIS Public Attitudes Tracker; waves 29, 33, 37.



Figure 10 – Possible to solve climate change if we make the right decisions

Source: YouGov/Sky Survey (2021). https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/gkct8b2i0l/Sky_ClimateChange_210331.pdf

Here, the results are more positive: there's quite a bit of optimism that we will be able to limit climate change. And while there's a political divide, a majority of both Labour/Conservative identifiers and Leave/ Remain voters believes that this is possible. But it's worth noting that there is a slight decline in the number of people believing that we can act to mitigate climate change – and it is possible that this number will fall further as the unavoidable impacts of increasing temperatures become clearer.

Who Does the Public Think Is Responsible for Acting?

Across political issues, fairness concerns are important and people tend to want policies that are focused on those who are responsible for causing a problem – in the case of net zero, the "polluter pays" principle. People are also sensitive to having to pay undeserved costs and to others receiving undeserved benefits. Therefore, it's important to examine whom voters deem responsible for climate change and who they think should bear the burden of acting to address it.



Figure 11 – Who's not doing enough?

Source: The People and Nature Survey for England, Module 4 (2020). https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/people-and-nature-survey-for-england



Figure 12 – Who's responsible for fixing climate change?

Source: BEIS Public Attitudes Tracker; waves 29, 33, 37.

Striking points from these data are:

- While people think that the public has a large role to play, they generally think that the responsibility sits with others rather than with them: for many people there is a sense that the public should act, but that they themselves are doing enough.
- People believe that both business and government have a vital role to play. It is therefore imperative that any approach to behaviour change forms part of a strategy in which others are required to do their part as well. Without this, political consent will be difficult to secure.

Why Does the Public Think We Should Act?

Different framings of climate change issues may appeal to different groups. While Extinction Rebellionstyle concerns and framings may appeal to some voters, they will actively discourage others. But that doesn't mean that voters who are sceptical of environmental activism don't care about climate change. There may be other framings, such as preserving England's natural environment or making the UK a leader in the technology of the future, that appeal to this type of voter.

Figure 13 - Why look after the environment?



nature-survey-for-england

This analysis demonstrates the importance of tailoring messages around behaviour change to different audiences – the rationale for acting will vary and simplistic messaging focused around a limited number of benefits is likely to be less effective.

What Measures Might the Public Support?

Finally, we look at data on which measures the public is likely to support. While data on this subject are limited, YouGov recently explored attitudes toward different approaches to reducing emissions – focusing in particular on the role of tax and regulation.



Figure 14 – Attitudes towards taxes and regulations (2021)

Source: YouGov/Sky Survey (2021).

These data not only show that increased prices are unpopular, but that attitudes toward both regulation and tax vary significantly among different groups of voters. So while both tax and regulation will have a role, the case for them has not been made and fairness of implementation will be crucial to ensuring a political mandate for action.

Public Attitudes to Key Net-Zero Behaviour Changes

Awareness and willingness to act are one thing; getting people to take the actions necessary to reduce climate change may be another. In this chapter, we investigate in greater depth whether people are currently willing to make the behaviour changes required for the UK to meet net zero.

We explore this by looking at some of those key changes – decarbonisation of our homes, transport choices and diets – through four lenses:

- Action taken to date are people reducing their carbon footprint in these areas?
- Awareness do people know about low-carbon alternatives?
- Propensity to act are people willing to adopt low-carbon behaviours and technologies?
- Barriers what are the key barriers to behaviour change?

When asked about the key low-carbon behaviours required to deliver net zero, a significant proportion of the public recognises the need to change.

Decarbonisation of Our Homes

Improving energy efficiency and moving to low-carbon heating is essential if we are to meet net zero. But it is perhaps the most challenging aspect because it requires almost 30 million homes to be retrofitted, at significant cost and with extensive disruption.

First, we look at the actions that people claim to have taken to date.





Source: BEIS Public Attitudes Tracker; waves 29, 33, 37.



Figure 16 - Actions/intentions to limit contribution to climate change

The data show that only around half of people have taken steps to reduce their home energy use, and the majority believe they are doing as much as they can to save energy at home.

Second, awareness - do people know about low-carbon heating?





Source: BEIS Public Attitudes Tracker; waves 12, 20, 24, 28, 32, 36

Source: Ofgem, Decarbonisation Insights Consumer Survey.

Awareness is at relatively low levels, and has not increased over time – a major challenge given the centrality of decarbonising our homes for delivering net zero.

Third, we look at the likelihood of people to take action.



Figure 18 - Very/fairly likely to install a low-carbon heating system

While a minority of people is willing to install low-carbon heating systems, the number of people who are willing to act has risen significantly in the last two years.

Fourth, barriers.



Figure 19 - Why haven't you installed renewable heating?

Source: BEIS Public Attitudes Tracker; waves 20, 36.

There is a wide range of barriers, but cost and concerns about hassle and the scale of the work involved are the key ones to overcome.

Conclusions

On the downside, people have relatively low awareness of low-carbon heating – indeed, awareness levels are around the same as they were in 2015. And many already feel that they are doing enough to reduce

Source: BEIS Public Attitudes Tracker; waves 20, 24, 28, 32, 36.

energy use. There are formidable barriers to getting people to act, with cost and hassle as key barriers to action. But in the last couple of years, both awareness and willingness to act are rising – and by tackling key barriers around cost and hassle, significant inroads could be made.

Decarbonisation of Our Transport Choices

Transport is now our largest emitting sector and decarbonisation of all modes of transport, allied with a shift to lower-polluting forms of travel and – in some cases – demand reduction, is a critical element of any credible net-zero plan.

First, we look at actions taken to date, and why people are taking them. In Figure 20, we examine whether people have driven less, driven a hybrid, and/or travelled less by air and among those who have, whether part of their motivation for doing so has been to fight climate change.



Figure 20 - Have you travelled less/travelled less for climate change?

Increasing numbers of people claim to be taking the actions required for net zero, and increasing numbers are explicitly doing so to reduce their emissions.

Second, we look at the likelihood of acting.

Source: BEIS Public Attitudes Tracker; waves 29, 37.





Sources: BEIS Public Attitudes Tracker; waves 13, 21, 29. Ofgem, Decarbonisation Insights Consumer Survey. Ofgem categories are: quite/very likely to get, already have one; quite/very unlikely to get. Don't know/unsure excluded.



Figure 22 - Are you likely to drive less/fly less?

Source: Ofgem, Decarbonisation Insights Consumer Survey.

These data show that while a growing number of people are considering purchasing an electric vehicle, many feel they are already doing all they can, and only a minority is willing either to drive or fly less to reduce emissions.

Fourth, we look at the barriers to action.





Source: Ofgem, Decarbonisation Insights Consumer Survey.

Conclusions

When we look at electric-vehicle uptake, awareness is higher compared to low-carbon heating, and people are increasingly willing to consider buying an electric vehicle. But a significant proportion already feels that it is doing all that it can – and that cost and hassle (this time in the form of concern about charging infrastructure) are the key barriers. If the main barriers of cost and range anxiety can be addressed, uptake should follow.

And when we look at "pure" behaviour change – flying and driving less – a majority is either unwilling to act or feels that it is already doing all it can.

Decarbonisation of Our Diet

How about with diet and consumption? Here the data are thinner, but there are some indications that people are acting.

For actions taken to date, we examine whether people have been cutting down on meat and dairy consumption.





The data here show that while some people are acting – and acting because of the carbon footprint of these behaviours – the proportions doing so remain relatively low. Given the wider data on readiness to reduce meat and dairy consumption, there is a strong argument that this will be one of the most challenging behaviour changes to deliver.

Source: BEIS Public Attitudes Tracker; waves 29, 37.

Conclusions and Recommendations

So what can we conclude from this analysis?

First, that **behaviour change is unavoidably a much more important part of the response to climate change than has been the case to date.** Almost all of our decarbonisation in the last decade has been achieved by reducing emissions from our power sector – which has required no more from consumers than acquiescence in slightly higher electricity costs, in a context where bills have not risen because of reduced energy use. A much greater proportion of changes in the next 15 years will be delivered by behaviour change than in the last 15 years. This cannot be avoided and must be part of any credible strategy.

But while our targets cannot be achieved without significant behaviour change, **the number of behaviour changes that really matter is relatively limited.** It is not the case that net zero requires total transformation in all aspects of our lives. There is a relatively small number of key behaviour changes that will deliver most of the necessary emission reductions.

The **behaviour change required for net zero is not simplistic or binary.** A binary articulation of the net zero challenge – either we all become, in the words of the Prime Minister, "tofu-munching tree-huggers", or we accept that net zero is unachievable – is a false one. In fact, targeting those who are most able and willing to act in the next few years could enable behaviour-change targets to be met while enabling the key technologies and behaviours to be mainstreamed.

But we have a long way to go to prepare and engage the public in the kinds of behaviour changes that will be required:

- Consumers have low awareness of the concept of net zero, and some of the behaviours and technologies required to deliver it: awareness of net zero is low and rising only slowly. The same is true of the technologies that will be required, in particular low-carbon heating.
- Awareness of the need for behaviour change is too low: while those polled recognise the need to make these behaviour changes when prompted, most consumers already believe they are doing everything that they can to tackle climate change.
- Willingness to act is mixed: in some areas such as electric vehicles willingness to act is rising. In others such as heat and diet change willingness is much lower, though rising in some cases.
- **The barriers are clear:** the key barriers to delivering behaviour change for net zero are knowledge, cost and hassle. Only by addressing all three of these will it be possible to deliver the required step change in behaviour, technology and adoption that achieving our carbon targets requires.

Recommendations

The barriers to action are significant – but they are not insurmountable. So far, the UK government has done very little to articulate behaviour-change requirements, or explain the rationale for them, or make them easy. Action in these areas could enable a rapid change.

1: Active engagement of voters/consumers: too often, policy is made in Whitehall without engagement with either the consumers or voters who will be affected. Models like the Climate Assembly show that there are alternative approaches which involve collaborative engagement and could result in better policy design. Government should move away from the current highly centralised model, and towards one that directly engages people and communities in how net-zero targets can be met.

2: Clear communications: while public communication is not a silver bullet to get us to net zero, a higher level of public understanding will be essential if we are to ask voters to act. But the last significant government campaign on climate behaviour change – the Act on CO₂ campaign – was axed over a decade ago. Since then, we have seen only piecemeal campaigns on issues like electric vehicle uptake. The government urgently needs to develop a communications and public engagement strategy on the specific behaviour changes needed, and how people will be supported in making them. That campaign should be focused around:

- **Honesty:** at present, the government has said very little about the behaviour changes required for net zero. It is inadequate at best, and disingenuous at worst, to embark on the journey to net zero without honest presentation of what voters will need to do, why they will need to do it, and how they will be supported. That needs to be a key element of the forthcoming net-zero strategy.
- **Specificity:** while many people both those in favour and those against argue that net zero requires wholesale and rapid behaviour change, the evidence shows that key changes are limited to six behaviours. The government should identify the behaviour changes it is prioritising and articulate them.
- **Demystifying:** at the moment there is significant confusion on the types of behaviour changes and the likely timing of them shown by headlines that refer to "millions of homes having gas boilers ripped out by 2025" and claims that we will "no longer be able to drive our cars". Neither of these is required for net zero, and government has a central role to play in explaining the nature and timing of changes needed both to drive a more evidence-based public debate and to enable preparatory work for those changes to be undertaken. Government should also ensure that voters can access data on the behaviour changes that they will need to make moving from messaging around the many millions of changes required to the appropriate steps for individuals and households.
- Modelling of behaviour changes: there is extensive evidence that modelling of behaviour changes that is, seeing other people act – can provide a compelling incentive for individual action. Government policy should focus on driving early adoption of key behaviour changes and communicating their effectiveness and success.

- Tailored messages: while public concern about climate change is high, motivations for action are varied. A communications campaign that is focused on, for example, the moral case for action will appeal to some voters but alienate many others. The government's approach should both tailor messages – for example by focusing on economic benefits, community cohesion or the rights of children and future generations – and messengers.
- **Clear calls to action:** exhortations to behaviour change, without clear calls to action on what people should practically do, are unlikely to deliver real benefits. At present, a household that is willing to get a heat pump will find it enormously difficult to access the funding and installation expertise required. Clear calls to action, with easily accessible pathways to the funding, technologies and infrastructure which enable behaviour change to be delivered, need to be at the heart of public communications for net zero.

3: Make behaviour change a central part of a comprehensive strategy: polling data make clear that delivering the behaviour changes needed is dependent on a comprehensive strategy – one which enables consumer action, but also ensures that others, particularly government and business, are also acting in a visible way. But to date, the government's approach has been to shy away from behaviour-change requirements. That needs to change. Making behaviour change a central part of the net-zero strategy requires:

- Fairness: the data show that for people to act, they need to know that others are acting too. That means two things: first, that action from consumers and voters must be matched by action from government and business; second, that behavioural changes are designed and implemented in a way which is fair to everyone. A perception that wealthy people are more able to access value from behaviour changes, or that costs are being spread in an unfair way, will be fatal to delivery. So measures designed to incentivise and enable behaviour changes in a fair way must ensure that both the costs and benefits are fair and are perceived to be fair.
- **Making it easy:** for all the key behaviour changes, hassle is a key barrier. Decarbonising our homes requires intrusive work; moving to an electric vehicle is dependent on accessible and affordable charging; cutting meat consumption requires easy access to palatable alternatives. Government should not rely on the willingness of the public to "do the right thing" it should use options that make change easy, such as requirements on suppliers to deliver higher levels of low-carbon products (whether food, cars or heat pumps). We are beginning to see evidence of this, for example through the government's commitment to introduce a mandate on suppliers to increase the proportion of electric vehicles they sell. Replicating that approach elsewhere is vital.
- **Cutting costs:** There should be a relentless focus on cost reduction in the technologies that will enable the required behaviour changes: low-carbon heating; energy efficiency; electric vehicles and the associated infrastructure; and plant-based food. Where costs are unavoidably higher – for example in the case of home heating – the fair distribution of those costs will be even more critical.
- Foresight and phasing: while almost all of us will have to undertake significant behaviour change by 2050, in many cases those changes can be phased in. For example, we need not all get heat pumps

in the next ten years – though many people will, that can largely be achieved through new purchases rather than forced changes. Explaining how the changes will be phased is crucial both to secure public consent and address public and media concerns about the scale and pace of change.

Next Steps

We are on the cusp of a new, and very different, phase in our decarbonisation strategy: one that is dependent on behaviour change.

For the government, this means that the net-zero strategy needs to embrace the challenge of behaviour change – engaging with voters and making the required changes easy and cheap.

The Institute will be undertaking further, more detailed work on this – looking in particular at how the major changes in our homes and transport choices can most effectively be delivered.

Charts created with Highcharts unless otherwise credited.

Footnotes

- 1. ^ https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/apr/22/boris-johnson-urges-leaders-to-get-serious-at-climate-summit
- 2. ^ https://thecritic.co.uk/its-alright-for-some/
- 3. ^ https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukia/2021/18/pdfs/ukia_20210018_en.pdf
- 4. ^ https://cast.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CAST-Briefing-05.pdf

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