



## COMMUNICATING CLIMATE IMPACTS THROUGH ADAPTATION

*Tips and activities for Women's  
Institute Climate Ambassadors*

## About Climate Outreach

Climate Outreach ([www.climateoutreach.org](http://www.climateoutreach.org)) is a team of social scientists and communication specialists working to widen and deepen public engagement with climate change. Through our research, practical guides and consultancy services, our charity helps organisations communicate about climate change in ways that resonate with the values of their audiences. We have 15 years' experience working with a wide range of international partners including central, regional and local governments, international bodies, academic institutions, charities, businesses, faith organisations and youth groups.

## About the WI and their Climate Ambassadors

The National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI, [www.theWI.org.uk](http://www.theWI.org.uk)) is an educational, social, non-party political and non-sectarian organisation. Founded in 1915, the NFWI is the largest voluntary women's membership organisation in the UK with some 220,000 members in over 6,300 Institutes across England, Wales, and the Islands. The NFWI has a long history of undertaking educational work and campaigning on a diverse range of issues. The organisation's resolution process means that members play a central role in defining policy and bringing issues onto the organisation's national agenda.

In 2016, the NFWI decided to recruit WI Climate Ambassadors via federations: WI members who felt passionately about climate change and who wanted to campaign locally within their communities. The NFWI now has over 100 Climate Ambassadors registered across England, Wales and the Islands, who form helpful bonds with their MPs and wider community on the issue of climate change.

## Project team

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## How to communicate climate impacts - A guide

This short guide contains the building blocks for effective climate change communication, including Do's and Don'ts as well as recommendations on using images to communicate your story. As such, it is the first step in planning an activity or event for WI members.

## Communicating climate impacts - Ideas for activities

These activities have been designed to communicate the science of climate impacts in a way that is engaging and empowering for WI members. We 'road-tested' these ideas in workshops with WI Climate Ambassadors. The feedback from the ambassadors was that these are the types of activities that WI members would want to get involved in.

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## Case study: The impact of a WI Climate Ambassador

Jill Bruce (Chappel and Wakes Colne, Essex Federation) talks about her experiences of lobbying her MP to take climate change seriously.

## Tips for running a successful event

This tip sheet is based on feedback from the Climate Ambassador workshops and Climate Outreach's own experience of organising climate change events.

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## Useful additional resources & Appendix

Links to websites providing suggestions for how WI members can live a more climate friendly lifestyle.

A stylized green bird, possibly a kingfisher, is perched on a branch. The bird is facing right and has a long, pointed beak. The background features faint, curved lines and a leaf-like shape, all in shades of green.

# How to communicate climate impacts

*A guide*

# Introduction: Communicating the impacts of climate change

Social scientists have amassed a wealth of evidence all pointing to the same conclusion: we make sense of the world through our **emotions** and our **values**, more than by learning and recalling facts and figures. The messages we pay attention to are **stories** which speak to our **identities**, that reflect our values and the things we care about.

The facts and science of climate change are important elements of the climate change message, but on their own they are not enough to build positive and lasting engagement with this crucial issue. Connect with people's values, craft messages that can engage with people's emotions, and understand how people's identities (who they are, and the type of world they want to live in) drive their engagement with climate change. This is crucial in order to make the otherwise abstract and technical language of climate change feel relevant to WI members.



Photo: © The WI

Effective climate change communication is not just about finding the right words. It is also about communicating through a **messenger who the audience trusts** and using the right **images and visual vocabulary** to support your message. Bringing all these elements together into a **narrative structure** will maximise the effectiveness of your climate change messages.

This resource was designed for WI Climate Ambassadors in the UK, but much of the guidance will be useful to anyone wishing to communicate climate impacts and ways to adapt within their communities.

See *Appendix* (page 32) for information on the research underpinning this project.

# Principles for effective climate science communication

*Climate change communication should start from the 'values-up', not from the 'numbers-down'*

## ► THE ISSUE

When Climate Ambassadors were asked what climate change impacts WI members were worried about, they remarked that they are concerned about the impact of climate change on future generations (including their own grandchildren), wildlife, and vulnerable people in developing countries. These are the kinds of **values and concerns** that should be the starting point for any engagement on climate change.

## ► RECOMMENDATION

Rather than leading your communication with the big numbers of climate change (global limits to warming, or sea level rises in 2100) instead highlight how climate change is already impacting children, wildlife, and vulnerable populations, here and abroad.

*Connect messages about climate impacts with empowering stories showing the practical actions that can make a difference*

## ► THE ISSUE

Talking about the impacts of climate change happening here, and happening now, can be a powerful way of making climate change concrete and immediate. The problem is that the fear created by these stories can also be disempowering for some – producing feelings of helplessness, and lack of control. So while there is nothing to be gained by downplaying the seriousness of climate change risks, messages need to combine warnings about climate impacts with advice on how to reduce climate risks (or protect ourselves from them).

## ► RECOMMENDATION

To make a message about climate impacts effective and motivating, include information about practical, realistic and positive responses that members can take (see *Ideas for activities*), as well as being honest and clear about climate risks and the dangers posed by climate impacts. Magnify the power of these messages by using examples of actions already being taken by other WI groups and members.

## *Communicate through trusted messengers who have a shared identity with your audience*

### ► THE ISSUE

Trust is an essential component of effective climate change communication. Trust acts as a short cut – even if your audience doesn't fully understand the science behind the climate message, if they trust the messenger they are more likely to go along with what is being said, and the suggested actions. Unfortunately climate change is often seen as an 'environmentalist' issue, and the environmentalist stereotype does not always have positive connotations (for those beyond the 'green bubble').

### ► RECOMMENDATION

As a Climate Ambassador for the WI you have a strong sense of a shared identity with your audience, which makes you a highly trusted messenger. Talk about climate change through your shared interests, for example; food, the local landscape, or gardening. The more you can talk about 'us' and 'we', the greater the sense of shared identity and common cause you can build with your audience.

## *Use a narrative structure*

### ► THE ISSUE

It helps to use the structure of stories as a way of building more meaningful engagement with climate change. Most everyday communication takes place via stories, anecdotes and images (more about images on page 10). A story has a beginning, a middle and an end. The beginning sets the scene, the middle introduces a problem or challenge that has to be overcome, and the end tells what was done to overcome that challenge. This is a much more compelling way of telling your message compared to simply listing facts.

### ► RECOMMENDATION

Try using a story structure in your climate communications. There is more guidance in *Ideas for activities* but for example, a message about the risks of flooding in your community from climate change could be told as "Many of our families have lived here for generations and learnt how to cope with occasional floods (beginning). But climate change means the floods are happening more often and getting worse (middle). So we need to plant more trees along the river banks to reduce the damage caused by flooding (end)."

*Stress the high level of agreement amongst scientists that climate change is real, it's happening now, and we are the ones causing it*



► THE ISSUE

Climate scientists can tell us a great deal about how the climate will change in the future. And whilst we know heatwaves will become more intense and frequent as the planet warms, scientists can't predict with certainty if there will be a heatwave in the UK in a particular year, and if so, how long it will last and what the maximum temperature will be that year. Because science is all about dealing with uncertainties, scientists often focus on what they don't know before emphasising points of agreement. At school we are taught to expect science to have the answers, and so the presence of uncertainty can be a barrier to engagement and understanding. When people hear a scientist talking about uncertainty they may interpret that as ignorance.

► RECOMMENDATION

Lead with what we do know about climate science, rather than the uncertainties. Stress that 97% of scientists agree that climate change is caused by humans. This is important, because the public underestimate the level of scientific agreement. And public perceptions of the extent of the agreement among climate scientists seem to really matter. If people can be persuaded that the level of agreement on climate change is greater than they had previously thought, then their levels of concern about the issue may increase.

# Do's and don'ts of effective climate science communication

DO...		DON'T...
...use personal stories and testimony, not 'big numbers' to talk about climate change.		...rely on technical jargon, graphs, and numbers to get your audience engaged.
...connect with your audience on the basis of your shared identity as members of the WI.		...use activist or overtly environmentalist language which may alienate some members of your audience.
...be honest about the seriousness and urgency of climate change, but show there are actions that people can take today to help them and the people in their lives make a difference for the better.		...only focus on doom and gloom messages that paint a bleak and hopeless picture of the future.
...strike a balance between the local and global aspects of climate impacts. Local impacts make climate change feel real and immediate but WI members also care about the impacts on people in other parts of the world.		...only talk about far away places or the longer term future. This can make people think climate change has nothing to do with them.

# Using images to communicate your story

When people are asked what image comes to mind when they hear the term 'climate change', there is one overwhelmingly popular answer: polar bears and melting ice. While this is an effective visual shorthand for climate change, it has reinforced the impression that climate change is a distant problem, remote from people's day-to-day lives.

The principles of using images to communicate climate change are the same as those for the language of climate change:

- Tell a human story about climate change – show people in the images you use wherever possible
- Combine photographs of climate impacts with images of people taking action on climate change
- Use images that are relatable – landscapes, situations, activities that are familiar to a WI audience
- Don't only show images of 'typical environmentalists' (who most people don't identify positively with) or famous politicians – show ordinary people in the kind of everyday situations your audience can identify with. If showing images of protests and demonstrations, try to focus on people who are not the 'usual suspects' – people need to see themselves reflected in the imagery

Below are some examples of images that support the recommendations for effective visual communication of climate science. For more images and information visit [www.climatevisuals.org](http://www.climatevisuals.org)

## ► TELL A HUMAN STORY ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

This photograph of a flooded street shows very clearly the human side of climate change.

Photo: [Wendy North](#) (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)



► COMBINE PHOTOGRAPHS OF CLIMATE IMPACTS WITH IMAGES OF PEOPLE TAKING ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE



An image showing someone 'getting on with' a low-carbon action (such as installing insulation) is a good motivator for others to do the same.

Photo: Nick Nguyen (CC BY-SA 2.0)

► USE IMAGES THAT ARE RELATABLE AND SHOW ACTIVITIES THAT ARE FAMILIAR TO A WI AUDIENCE

The Climate Coalition 'Show the Love' campaign has been a popular way for WI members to engage with climate change.



Photo: © Elsenham WI

► SHOW ORDINARY PEOPLE IN THE KIND OF SITUATIONS YOUR AUDIENCE CAN IDENTIFY WITH

The life of a young family living in Oxford is disrupted when they need to move out of their home for a few months during the 2013/2014 floods.

Photo: © Oxford Mail



► PEOPLE NEED TO SEE THEMSELVES REFLECTED IN THE IMAGERY OF PROTESTS – ENSURE YOU SHOW ‘ORDINARY PEOPLE’ AND NOT JUST ‘TYPICAL ENVIRONMENTALISTS’



This picture shows WI members at a Climate Coalition lobby, putting pressure on MPs to take action on climate change.

Photo: © The WI

# Communicating climate impacts

*Ideas for activities*

DROUGHT  
FLOOD  
HEATWAVE

# Introduction

The activities detailed below are designed to communicate current and future impacts of climate change in the UK in a way that is engaging and empowering for WI members. The activities draw on the principles for effective communication described in the *How To Guide*. They have been 'road-tested' in workshops with Climate Ambassadors and feedback suggests that they are likely to work well with members. Each set of activities is preceded by a factsheet detailing the science behind the issue.

We recommend that you start by bringing WI members together to introduce the reasons for the activity, the background and the benefits of the actions. We have used feedback from Ambassadors and our own experience of running workshops and events to create a tip sheet for holding an enjoyable and positive conversation about climate impacts (see page 25).

WI members like to get hands on, make a difference, be involved. So while these activities can be used as a follow-on to presentations about the climate science, they can also be thought of as a way of communicating the climate science. They are designed not only to limit the harm caused by the impacts of climate change: these activities are also intended to get participants (both in the WI and in the community more broadly) talking and thinking about what climate change means for them.

As the *How To Guide* explains, **the most effective way to engage people with climate science is not through sharing the facts about long term global trends, but by making climate change seem relevant, immediate and local.** Then, having built that connection, it is important to provide your audience with actions they can take that will make the impacts of climate change seem less overwhelming.

The activities focus on what climate scientists have identified as the major risks for the UK – flooding, heatwaves, and droughts.

Each set of activity suggestions begins with background information and facts. These are there to help you, if you want to use them. If the information doesn't feel helpful or relevant there is no need to include them in the preparation and planning.



Photo: © Truro WI

# Factsheet – Communicating drought risks

THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY  
HAS WARNED THE UK MIGHT  
NOT HAVE ENOUGH WATER  
TO MEET ITS NEEDS WITHIN

**25 years**<sup>2</sup>

DRIEST 18 MONTHS  
FOR OVER 100 YEARS

SEPT  
2010

MARCH  
2012

Droughts can last for more than a year or be shorter and more intense, such as the heat wave of 2003. The longer lasting drought across southern England between 2010–2012 received much less media coverage.

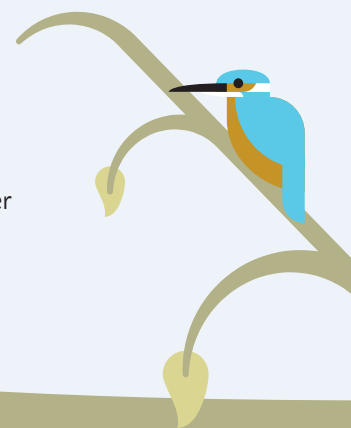
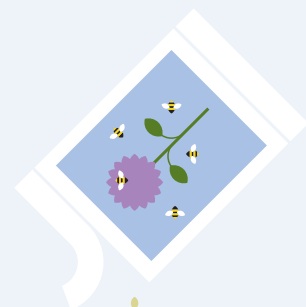
**1/4** OF ENGLAND'S  
RIVERS ARE AT RISK  
OF RUNNING DRY<sup>1</sup>

UK droughts are projected to become more severe and affect larger areas of the country in the coming century as a result of climate change. This, combined with increasing demand for water from a growing population and poor river management, means a quarter of England's rivers are at risk of running dry, and the Environment Agency has warned the UK may not have enough water to meet its needs within 25 years.

This situation could have devastating impacts on nature. UK wildlife and plants have evolved in a temperate climate, which does not experience weather extremes. Most are used

to a higher level of rainfall and cooler temperatures throughout the summer. As a result, drought can be fatal to wildlife. Kingfishers and the water vole are under threat from declining river levels. Wading birds such as lapwings and curlews also suffer during droughts. Hedgehogs and moles also suffer during drought as earthworms burrow deeper underground.

The latest projections by the Met Office show that summer rainfall is expected to decrease significantly as a result of climate change, but when it rains in summer there may be more intense storms. The 2010–2012 drought ended abruptly in summer 2012 with the wettest April to September on record, resulting in widespread flooding. The storms and floods of 2013–2014 were preceded by a record breaking two year drought across southern UK. But people are more likely to remember the floods than the drought.



<sup>1</sup> A quarter of the rivers in England are at risk of drying out: <https://bit.ly/2vgPdVg>

<sup>2</sup> England could run short of water within 25 years: <https://bit.ly/2jm0RLq>

# ACTIVITIES

## Helping wildlife in the UK cope with drought

**The effective communication principle that this activity addresses:** Connecting climate science with the things that matter to your audience. In this case, we are exploring activities that can help wildlife cope with the increased severity of droughts. WI members have told us that they are concerned about impacts of climate change on wildlife.

### **Purpose of the activities:**

- Help protect UK wildlife
- Raise awareness among WI members of how climate change will increase the risk of drought
- Raise awareness among WI members of how wildlife and nature will be impacted by drought
- Empower and encourage WI members to take action on drought risk, and become more engaged with climate change

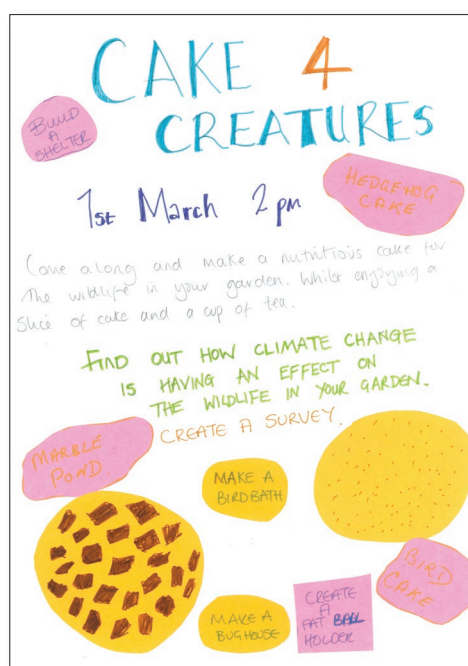
### ▼ ACTIVITY 1

#### Help wildlife charities by recording how climate change is affecting nature in your area

WI groups can help build understanding of how climate change is impacting on UK wildlife by contributing to census activities run by charities like the Woodland Trust. Not only can WI members get involved themselves, they can also encourage friends and family to take part too.

The Woodland Trust is running a project called '**Nature's Calendar**,'<sup>4</sup> which allows people to record how climate change is affecting the seasons and wildlife in their area. It provides a simple form people can use and become a citizen scientist, "contributing to a long biological record that dates back as far as 1736."

Once members have completed the form, bring them back together to discuss what they found, and explore together what their findings tell them about climate impacts in their area, and what steps they could take next on climate change – for example, helping wildlife cope with these changes, as described in *Activity two*.



A poster made at the WI climate impacts workshop encouraging WI members to come along to a meeting to share ideas for helping wildlife cope with extreme weather.

## ▼ ACTIVITY 2

### Gardening ideas to help wildlife cope with a changing climate

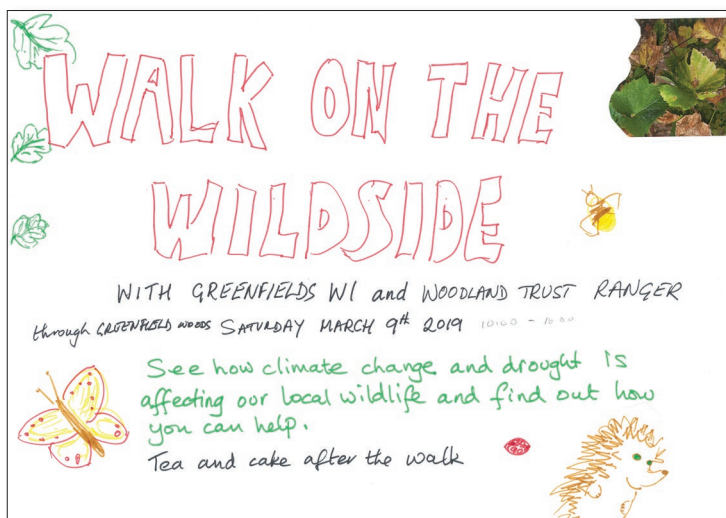
Bringing members together to discuss their ideas and experience of wildlife gardening could be a powerful way of contributing to a better future for the UK's wildlife in a changing climate. Wildlife gardens can act as corridors for wildlife to help it survive extreme weather conditions such as droughts. The Wildlife Trust is proposing a **Nature Recovery Network**.<sup>5</sup> This network is a joined-up system of places important for wild plants and animals, on land and at sea. People's gardens are a vital part of this network. An effective network "allows plants, animals, seeds, nutrients and water to move from place to place and enables the natural world to adapt to change. It provides plants and animals with places to live, feed and breed."

Members might already have taken actions to garden for wildlife as part of the WI's SOS for Honeybees campaign which calls for action to tackle pollinator decline. You could use the WI **bee friendly gardening guide**,<sup>6</sup> full of useful tips and information about how members could take action. If you would like paper copies of the guide please request them by emailing [pa@nfwi.org.uk](mailto:pa@nfwi.org.uk)

The Wildlife Trust also has some fantastic ideas for **gardening to help wildlife**.<sup>7</sup> And these are broken down by region, as there are 46 different independent trusts. So there will be ideas that are useful wherever you are based.

#### *What are Climate Ambassadors asking WI members to do:*

- Attend a meeting to find out more about how climate change is affecting UK wildlife
- Share ideas for the changes they can make in their own gardens to help wildlife cope with weather extremes
- Explore opportunities for getting involved in helping conservation organisations monitor how the changing seasons are impacting on nature
- Discuss how they can promote this information out beyond the WI



A poster made at the WI climate impacts workshop encouraging WI members to come along to a meeting to share ideas for helping wildlife cope with extreme weather.

<sup>4</sup> Nature's Calendar: <https://bit.ly/2vEiUBn>

<sup>5</sup> Nature Recovery Network: <https://bit.ly/2UZQGxu>

<sup>6</sup> Bee friendly gardening guide: <https://bit.ly/2hWM611>

<sup>7</sup> Wildlife Gardening: <https://bit.ly/2LjvuqC>

# Factsheet - Communicating flood risks

An increased risk of flooding has been rated as the worst impact the UK is facing due to climate change. Bigger, more frequent floods are expected over the 21st century.

There are three main types of flooding that are being affected by climate change: coastal flooding, surface water flooding and river flooding.



OF 5.2 MILLION HOUSEHOLDS CURRENTLY AT RISK OF FLOODING IN ENGLAND, LESS THAN

**10%**

BELIEVE THEY ARE AT RISK



TOTAL COST IN ENGLAND OF THE 2015-2016 FLOODS

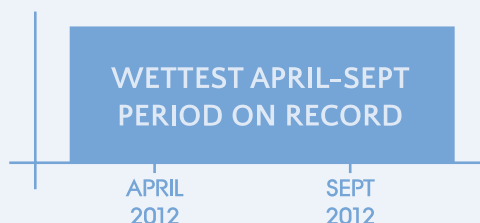
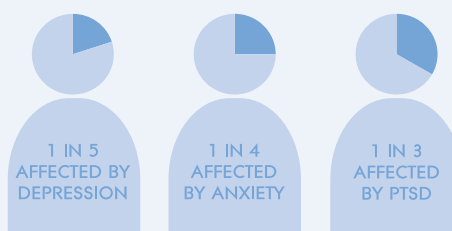
**£1.6 BILLION**

The risk of coastal flooding is increasing because of the rise in global sea level, which is having an effect all around the UK's coastline. River and surface water flooding are becoming more likely because the UK is experiencing higher rainfall. Because warmer air can hold more water, climate change means stronger rainfall events. From 2000 onwards, the UK has experienced its 10 warmest years on record and six of its seven wettest years.

In the past few decades there has been an increase in annual average rainfall over the UK. The average annual rainfall between 2008 and 2017 was 8% higher than for the average for the period 1961-1990. Summers in the UK between 2008-2017 have been on average 20% wetter than the 1961-1990 average.

Of the 5.2 million households currently at risk of flooding in England, less than 10% believe they are at risk and even fewer have plans about how to respond if a flood hit.

## ONE YEAR AFTER EXPERIENCING A FLOOD



# FLOOD ACTIVITIES

## Reducing the harms caused to people by floods

**The effective communication principle that this activity addresses:** Connect messages about climate impacts with empowering stories showing the practical actions that can make a difference.

**Purpose of the activities:**

- Help limit the physical and economic harm caused by flooding
- Raise awareness among WI members of flood risks
- Raise awareness among WI members of how climate change will increase the risk of flooding
- Limit the risks of flooding occurring
- Provide activities that can help WI members engage positively with the flood risk message

### ▼ ACTIVITY 1

#### Helping your local community cope with a flood event

The Environment Agency has developed a template and ideas for communities and individuals who want to create a flood action plan for their area<sup>8</sup> or themselves.<sup>9</sup>

A flood action plan uses the knowledge and skills of the people who live in an area to develop a plan for protecting against the impacts of flooding. The aim is to increase the community's ability to cope with floods, thereby reducing harm and economic damage.

A community flood action plan encourages the participation of as many people as possible in the project to understand local flood risks, and use that local knowledge to create a local plan to manage flood risks and reduce vulnerability to flooding as far as possible.

***What sort of things might be in a community flood plan?***

- A map of locations in the community at risk of flooding
- Local flood actions that can be taken to reduce the occurrence of flooding (see the 'natural flood defences' activity below)
- Local flood actions that can taken during a flood
- Lists of local volunteers / flood wardens
- Important telephone numbers
- Details of vulnerable residents, properties and locations

***What type of flood action plan activities could WI members be involved with?***

- Attend a meeting organised by an Ambassador to hear about flood risks in their community and how a community flood action plan may help local people cope with future flood risks
- Agree and create a flood action plan either for themselves or their group/community
- Contribute to creating and sharing a communications and engagement campaign to raise awareness amongst the community of local flood risks

## ▼ ACTIVITY 2

### Help create natural flood defences to limit the risk of flooding occurring

Natural flood defences are interventions that work with nature to slow down the rate at which water runs off the hills into residential areas. A popular and effective activity is tree planting. Not only do trees soak up carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas, but planting trees around rivers could reduce the height of flooding in towns by up to 20%.

Trees reduce flood risk in several ways. Firstly, if raindrops land on leaves, they sometimes evaporate straight into the air – so less water reaches the ground.

Secondly, the leaves intercept rainfall, slowing the rate that water flows into rivers. This reduces flood risk as floods are essentially caused by too much water entering rivers or streams in a too short space of time.

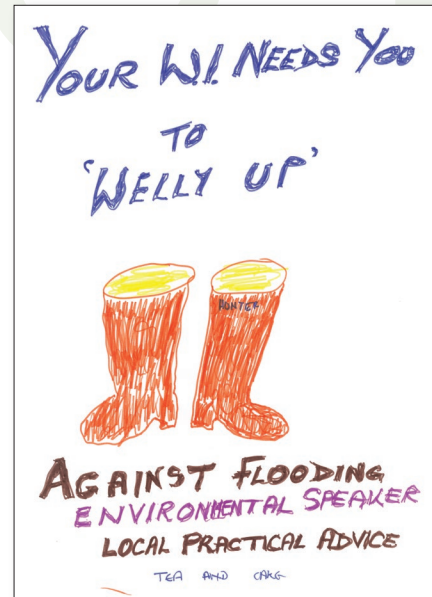
Tree planting also helps by reducing the amount of soil entering and filling up river channels.

The tree planting activity brings people together to take empowering action on climate change, while providing a great opportunity to discuss the topic of climate change. **This example**<sup>10</sup> from the town of Wolverley, in Gloucester, shows the power of tree planting in bringing people together to make a difference to the risks created by climate change.

Some WIs and federations have undertaken their own tree planting projects, so this activity is likely to be popular with members. The Woodland Trust free tree scheme donates trees to community groups – you can request free trees from their website [here](https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/free-trees).<sup>11</sup>

#### **What are Climate Ambassadors asking WI members to do:**

- Come to a meeting to hear about natural flood defences for their community
- Agree a natural flood defence activity for their community
- Find out the opportunities and issues involved for natural flood defences in their area
- Pull together the people and materials needed for the activity
- Work out how they are going to promote this activity and recruit people from their community to turn up and get involved



Posters made at the WI climate impacts workshop encouraging WI members to come along to a meeting to share ideas for helping reduce exposure to flood risks.

<sup>8</sup> Flood plan guidance for communities and groups: <https://bit.ly/2HNXE4p>

<sup>9</sup> Personal flood plan: <https://bit.ly/1RtgUPm>

<sup>10</sup> Volunteer tree planting in Wolverley: <https://bit.ly/2WlUrZi>

<sup>11</sup> Free trees for schools and communities: <https://bit.ly/2pRigNy>

# Factsheet - Communicating heatwave risks

Government advisors from the Committee on Climate Change have warned that the nation is poorly prepared for deadly heatwaves.

2018 was the joint hottest summer on record for the UK as a whole, and the hottest ever for England, the Met Office has announced. The high temperatures of summer 2018 could become the norm by the middle of the century. Globally, 17 of the 18 hottest years on record have occurred since 2000.

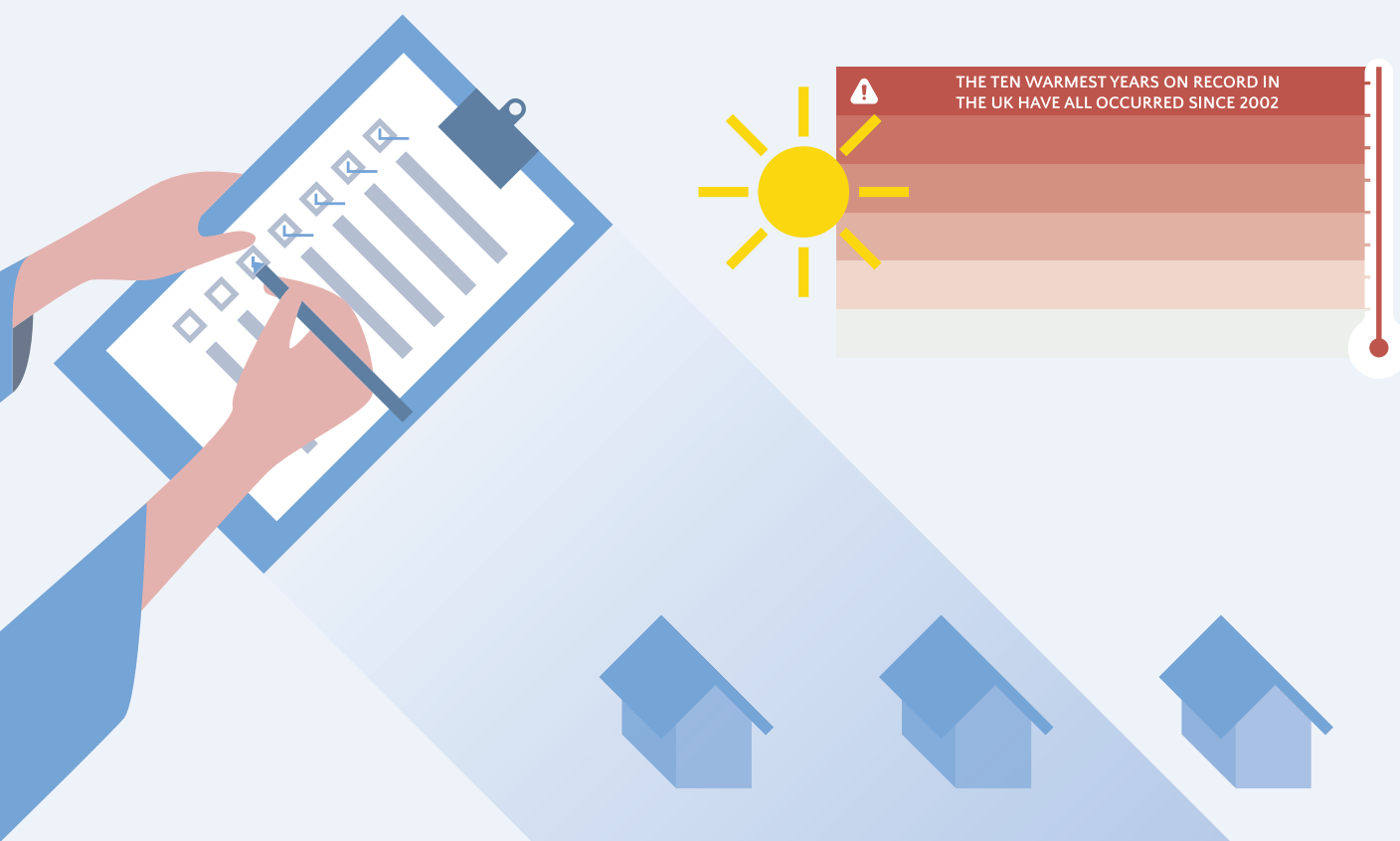
Excessive heat can put people under a lot of physiological stress – the European summer heatwave of 2003 killed 70,000 people, mostly elderly.



The risks during heatwaves can be increased by poorly adapted homes that overheat.

Urban areas can suffer especially badly during heatwaves. More than a third of the additional deaths during the summer 2018 heatwave conditions occurred in London.

Older people, people with chronic illnesses and children are the most vulnerable to heatwaves as they often lack the ability, resources or awareness about the need to keep themselves cool.



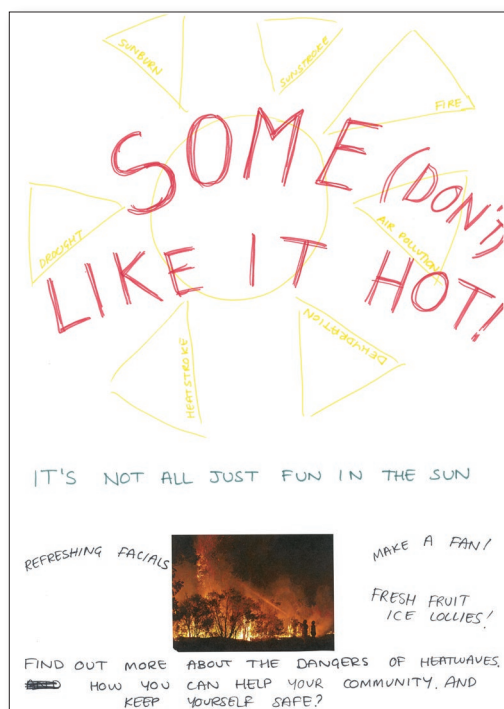
# ACTIVITY

## Supporting vulnerable people during heatwaves

**The effective communication principle that this activity addresses:** Connect messages about climate impacts with empowering stories showing the practical actions that can make a difference.

**Purpose of the activities:**

- To raise awareness amongst WI members of the risks to health posed by heatwaves
- To raise awareness amongst WI members of the growing risks from heatwaves caused by climate change
- To reduce the risk of harm caused by heatwaves to vulnerable people in the local community



A poster made at the WI climate impacts workshop encouraging WI members to come along to a meeting to share ideas for helping vulnerable people in their community stay safe during a heatwave.

### ▼ ACTIVITY

#### Sharing ideas for helping vulnerable people in the community during a heatwave

Public Health England has produced [resources](#)<sup>12</sup> intended to mobilise individuals and communities to help to protect their neighbours, friends, relatives, and themselves against avoidable health problems during spells of very hot weather. WI members can draw on these resources to help raise awareness in their community about the risks posed by heatwaves.

**What are Climate Ambassadors asking WI members to do:**

- Identify the heatwave thresholds for your community when vulnerable people are likely to be at risk
- Understand the ways in which people become at risk in heatwave conditions
- Identify actions people can take to reduce their vulnerability and cool themselves down
- Work with local support services to share best practice for identifying and helping vulnerable groups

<sup>12</sup> Public Health England – Keeping healthy when it is really hot: <https://bit.ly/2JRtbF2>

# Case study

# The impact of a WI Climate Ambassador: Jill Bruce, Essex Federation

Joining a WI climate lobby in Westminster in 2015 was the catalyst that prompted me to get more involved in campaigning on climate change. While I had known about the issue for many years beforehand, I wasn't sure that there was anything I could do about it.

I and two other WI members attended the lobby hoping to meet our MP, Sir Bernard Jenkin. He couldn't get through the crowds to meet us that day, so we arranged to meet him at his constituency surgery. The more I read about climate change as I prepared for the meeting, the more concerned I became.

Like many other WI members, I want to make sure we protect our world for future generations. My grandsons are aged 6 and 8. We must change what we are doing in the next ten years so that we can avoid the most damaging effects of climate change and so that they can enjoy a safe world for the future.

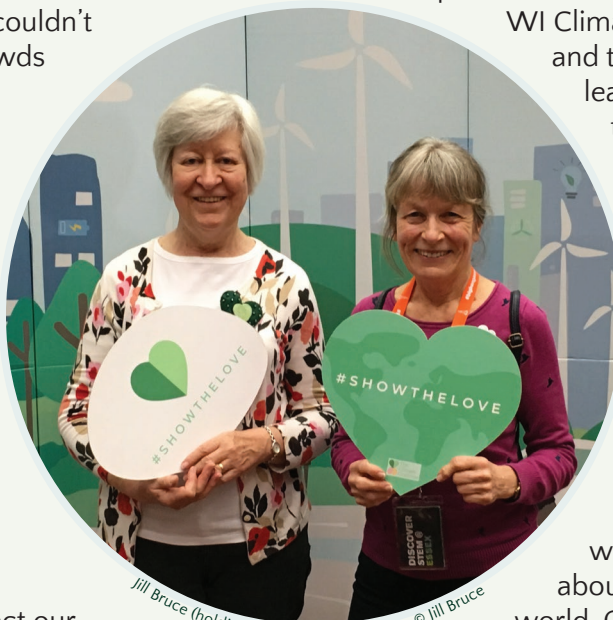
Since that first meeting, we have continued to meet regularly with Sir Bernard. He has now chaired four annual public meetings on climate change in the constituency. He has written to government ministers to pass on the

concerns that emerged from these meetings, and joined the Conservative Environment Network.

Our activity locally also continues to grow. I have now joined Essex Federation Public Affairs committee, and organised an Essex wide Show the Love meeting earlier this year which was well received. Next we plan to hold a workshop for Essex WI Climate Ambassadors and those interested in learning more about the role. I co-write a weekly column for my local paper, and I write climate change articles for Essex WI News and my local village magazine.

I know I'm not the only WI member who cares deeply about the future of our world. Climate change is the biggest threat our families now face, and we can do a great deal to fight it if we choose to. People listen to WI Climate Ambassadors. The reputation and strength of our organisation means we can reach out to others and motivate them to take action. You really can make a difference, whether that's by talking to your MP, local or national businesses, or just your own friends, family, and your WI.

**Jill Bruce**  
WI Climate Ambassador  
Chappel and Wakes Colne WI





# Tips for running a successful event

- **Use your name if you are known to the people you want to invite.**

People will respond more favourably to an invitation from someone they know and trust.

- **Make good use of the local media to help promote your event, and tell a human story to build interest amongst WI members in your group.**

Let the media know about your event in advance, and make contact afterwards with photographs to let them know how it went.

- **Explain the topic, why it is important and the benefits members will get from attending.**

See the *How To Guide* and the screen-shots of the posters ambassadors made at the workshops for ideas.

- **Design a simple feedback form for the event.**

Getting feedback about what they enjoyed about the event can be helpful for you and other Climate Ambassadors thinking of planning a similar event.

- **Choose a venue that is familiar and accessible to your audience.**

If there is limited disability access let people know.

- **Invite your MP along.**

MPs consider WI members as important messengers in society. If they see members of their constituency concerned about these issues, they will more likely take action. Make sure you have tea and cake available!

- **Explore opportunities for sponsorship or other types of support from organisations in the community.**

Running events and putting on activities can be time consuming and costly – if you were planning a tree planting activity perhaps a local nursery can help with loaning out the tools or reduce prices for saplings.

- **Check what dates the venue is available and give people plenty of notice.**

A month is ideal – but send out reminders nearer the time.

- **Find out what would be the best time to hold the meeting and make sure the venue is available for hire at those times.**

For example working people may not be able to attend until after 6pm, whereas others may be uncomfortable being out on their own at night if it is dark.

- **Ensure the venue has enough room for the number of people you want to attend, and has all the facilities you will need for your meeting.**


For example, will you need a microphone to make yourself heard? If you are not familiar with the venue, check it out yourself before booking.

- **Think about what type of room layout will be best for your meeting.**

Rows of seats are fine for a lecture but if you want to get people talking with each other and coming up with ideas, a cabaret layout with tables is better.

- **Provide refreshments.**

Let your participants know there will be refreshments available.



# Useful additional resources & Appendix

Below are ideas and resources for making lifestyle changes, and videos that communicate climate change in a way that reflects the principles in the *How To Guide*.

## Low carbon lifestyles

A new report from social scientists at Climate Outreach and Cardiff University – *Mainstreaming low-carbon lifestyles* – has been designed for use by community groups such as the Women's Institute.

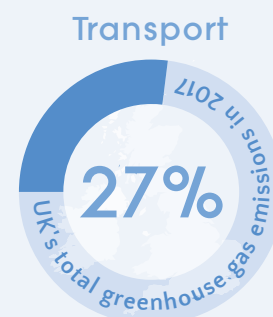
The diagrams below are taken from the report, and list some of the steps WI members can take that would make a significant contribution to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases.

➡ <https://climateoutreach.org/resources/mainstreaming-low-carbon-lifestyles/>

The aim of behaviour-change campaigns should not be for everyone to live identical, low-carbon existences, but for individuals' behaviours to be as consistent as possible with a low-carbon lifestyle, within the constraints they face. The kinds of high-impact changes that (most) people can make to their lives include:

### Transport

Following reductions in emissions within the energy sector, transport (particularly passenger cars) is now the biggest source of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the UK. One study analysing<sup>13</sup> behavioural scenarios in ten countries found that living car free and avoiding air travel were the most impactful actions that an individual could take (aside from having one less child).<sup>14</sup> Changing such behaviours also has the potential to contribute to systemic change (e.g. living car-free reduces the need to build more roads).<sup>15</sup>



## Agriculture



## Diet

As an increasing number of studies show eating a plant based diet is one of the most impactful behaviours that individuals can take.<sup>15</sup> According to one estimate,<sup>16</sup> if everyone in the US did not eat meat or cheese for just one day of the week, it would be equivalent to taking 7.6 million cars off the road. Going vegan can reduce emissions from food by up to 90%,<sup>17</sup> but even just cutting down on meat (especially red meat) and dairy can contribute to a sustainable diet.<sup>18</sup>



ADOPTING A  
PLANT-BASED DIET

**300-1600kg**

approximate CO<sub>2</sub>e  
reduced per year.<sup>15</sup>



PURCHASING GREEN ENERGY

**100-2500kg**

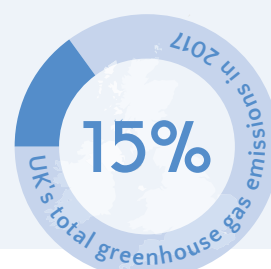
approximate CO<sub>2</sub>e reduced per year.<sup>15</sup>

## Household energy

In the EU, heating and hot water account for 79% of total final energy use of households, and 84% of energy for heating and cooling comes from fossil fuels.<sup>19</sup> Curbing this energy use is one of the most important areas for low-carbon lifestyle change. Switching to green energy providers, use of smart-meters and intelligent thermostats, installing high-performance insulation, and upgrading household equipment to the most efficient technologies, are all good examples of actions that can be taken as part of a low-carbon lifestyle.<sup>19</sup>



## Residences



BUYING A MORE  
EFFICIENT CAR

1190kg

approximate CO<sub>2</sub>e  
reduced per year.<sup>15</sup>

## 'Investment' decisions

Moments where people 'invest' in something new (e.g. a new car, or a household appliance) are excellent opportunities to influence changes that have long-term implications. For instance, influencing a decision to buy an energy efficient appliance is likely to be more impactful than trying to change an individual's use of a non-efficient appliance.<sup>20</sup>

## Civic actions and political engagement

Civic actions and political engagement are hard to measure and therefore typically do not feature in charts and lists comparing the impacts of different behaviours. However, these types of behaviours cumulatively have huge importance in how we transition towards low-carbon societies, having the potential to influence long lasting impacts through policy and structural changes, and are still 'behaviours' in the sense of being things individuals can choose to do (or not). Members of the public play a major role through exercising their rights as citizens. Examples of actions include: writing to locally elected representatives and voting for candidates who have strong climate credentials.<sup>21-24</sup>



<sup>13</sup> Capstick S, Lorenzoni I, Corner A, et al. Prospects for radical emissions reduction through behavior and lifestyle change. *Carbon Management* 2014; 5: 429–445.

<sup>14</sup> Ortiz DA. Ten simple ways to act on climate change. *BBC*, <https://bbc.in/2D2OrnN>

<sup>15</sup> Wynes S, Nicholas KA. The climate mitigation gap: education and government recommendations miss the most effective individual actions. *Environ Res Lett* 2017; 12: 074024.

<sup>16</sup> Meat Eaters Guide: Report – Reducing Your Footprint. EWG, <https://bit.ly/2XIIJUK>

<sup>17</sup> Aleksandrowicz L, Green R, Joy EJM, et al. The Impacts of Dietary Change on Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Land Use, Water Use, and Health: A Systematic Review. *PLoS One* 2016; 11: e0165797.

<sup>18</sup> Gallagher J. Meat, veg, nuts – a diet designed to feed 10bn. *BBC*, 17 January 2019, <https://bbc.in/2TT0ng5>

<sup>19</sup> European Commission. Heating and cooling – Energy – European Commission. Energy – European Commission, <https://bit.ly/1ozQrJ3>

<sup>20</sup> Gardner GT, Stern PC. The Short List: The Most Effective Actions U.S. Households Can Take to Curb Climate Change. *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development* 2008; 50: 12–25.

<sup>21</sup> Doherty KL, Webler TN. Social norms and efficacy beliefs drive the Alarmed segment's public-sphere climate actions. *Nat Clim Chang* 9/2016; 6: 879–884.

<sup>22</sup> Act on Climate Change. Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, <https://bit.ly/2Z5YVd5>

<sup>23</sup> Moser SC. Communicating climate change and motivating civic action: Renewing, activating, and building democracies. *Changing climates in North American politics: Institutions, policymaking and multilevel governance* 2009; 283–302.

<sup>24</sup> Feldman L, Hart PS. Using Political Efficacy Messages to Increase Climate Activism: The Mediating Role of Emotions. *Sci Commun* 2016; 38: 99–127.

# Understanding your carbon footprint

This questionnaire provided by the WWF inquires into the areas of food, travel, home and general consumption. Once the questionnaire is completed the website offers tips on how to reduce your footprint.

➡ <https://footprint.wwf.org.uk>

## Finding the changes that are right for you

People are different, and so are their carbon emissions and the resources available for reducing them. The *What You Can Do* website allows its users to look for the approaches to reducing carbon emissions that fit their individual budget and resources. While this resource is primarily targeted to the United States, the sustainable activities will be familiar to UK audiences.

➡ **What You Can Do:** <https://bit.ly/2EQxD2G>

## Car sharing

In addition to reducing congestion, which by itself reduces the emissions of car transport in general, sharing cars can significantly lower the carbon footprint of drivers and passengers by making every mile driven more efficient. Car sharing can take various forms, from agreements among employees within an organisation, car sharing clubs, to online travel arrangement platforms.

This could be an idea you discuss with your WI group, perhaps creating a rota for sharing journeys with different drivers.

➡ [www.co-wheels.org.uk](http://www.co-wheels.org.uk)

➡ [www.liftshare.com/uk](http://www.liftshare.com/uk)

## Videos

The first two videos below were produced by the UK Committee on Climate Change: one explains climate risks to the UK, by region, and the other outlines the UK's policies for reducing climate change.

The American climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe has produced a series of fun and informative *Global Weirding* videos.

➡ **Climate risks to the UK, by region:** <https://bit.ly/2HPreGU>

➡ **UK's policies for reducing climate change:** <https://bit.ly/2WiGWTz>

➡ **Global Weirding:** <https://bit.ly/2W3mXEf>

# Appendix

## The research background to this project

The principles in this guide have been developed from a range of academic studies about effective communication carried out by psychologists, social scientists and Climate Outreach's own research. This academic evidence base has been combined with our 15 years of practical experience supporting our partners to communicate about climate change.

We used the results of surveys and interviews with WI Climate Ambassadors completed in 2018 and 2019 to create this guide, as well as conversations that took place during two whole day workshops in Manchester and London in 2019, with a total of 80 WI Climate Ambassadors (see picture).



Photo: © The WI

Climate Ambassadors using this guidance to run events with WI members are provided with a form to record their reflections of what worked well, what could be improved, and any additional resources needed. This feedback will be collated in a report to be produced in the latter part of 2019 which will be used to summarise learnings from the project and suggest opportunities for extending the model out to additional public audiences.

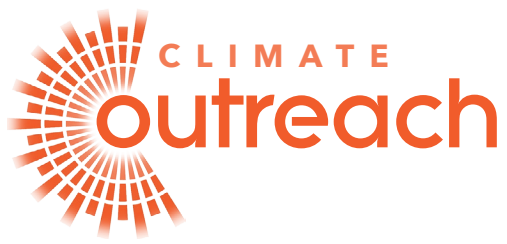
This partnership is a model for providing practical, evidence-based guidance for public engagement on climate impacts across the UK.

One of the key principles for effective climate communication is to avoid jargon, and use the everyday language your audience is familiar with. We have to break that rule briefly to explain how the principles of effective climate communication are being applied here.

Limiting the harm caused by climate change requires two types of action, which are two sides of the same coin:

- **mitigation:** limiting the amount of future climate change by eliminating emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, for instance by stopping the use of fossil fuels to generate energy
- **adaptation:** coping with the **impacts of climate change** which are already occurring, and will continue to occur, even as we eliminate emissions of greenhouse gases

The activities included here are talking about **adaptation**. We have also included, in 'Useful Resources', some ideas on the actions people can take to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases (mitigation).



[www.climateoutreach.org](http://www.climateoutreach.org)

[www.thewi.org.uk](http://www.thewi.org.uk)