Runnymede Borough Council

Climate Change Communications Plan 2024-25

21st March 2024

1   Introduction

1.1   The Runnymede Borough Council Climate Change Strategy 2022-2030 sets the strategic objective to "positively engage with residents, businesses, community groups, national government and local government, and universities to share information and encourage positive behavioural change to adapt to or mitigate climate change". This is in support of the national government target of achieving net zero emissions by 2050 and recognises that the Council has a role to play by using its sphere of influence to encourage positive behavioural changes in creating a prosperous, caring, and healthier borough.

1.2   A key element of environmental behaviour change is the need for the communication of accurate, frequent, and up to date information. Communication is a central feature of the COM-B model of behaviour change (Figure 1), specifically within the areas of psychological capability and reflective motivation but can also play a role in other areas. The need for an annual communications plan related to climate change and sustainability is also captured in the Council's Climate Change Action Plan (Action ID 8.2).
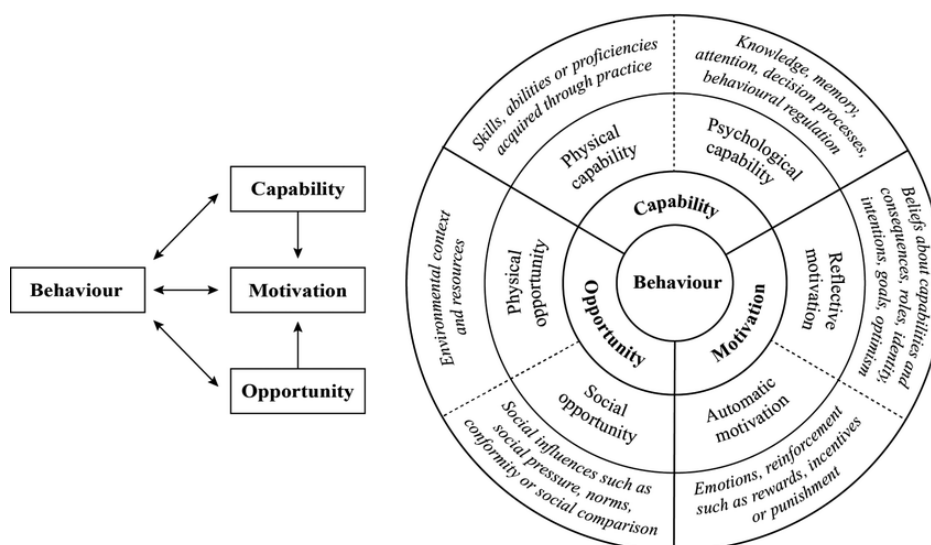

Figure 1: COM-B Model of Behaviour Change[1]

1.3   On 21st March 2024, the Council's Corporate Management Committee adopted this Climate Change Communications Plan for 2024/25. This plan is focussed on running campaigns during the course of the financial year based on the following two themes:

- An **anti-idling campaign**, aligning with Action ID 3.9 (publicise and share information about cycling, walking, and sustainable transport initiatives) of the draft Climate Change Action Plan. There will be two dominant streams of the anti-idling campaign, aimed at schools and level crossings.

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[1] Michie, S., Van Stralen, M. M., & West, R. (2011). The behaviour change wheel: A new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions. Implementation Science,6 (1), 42. https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-6-42

- A **food waste campaign**, aligning with Action ID 4.6 (Engage and collaborate with partners to facilitate behaviour change in Runnymede's local communities, adopting more sustainable and resilient waste practices) of the draft Climate Change Action Plan.

2 Overarching Campaign 1: Anti-idling

2.1 Leaving engines running while stationary for longer than a minute is known as 'idling'.[2] Idling behaviour forms a largely unnecessary source of air pollution, which has been linked to various public health issues. While it can be challenging to measure the impacts on localised air quality from idling, a report from the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) indicated that quantities of carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide produced by idling were nearly twice that compared with turning the engine off and switching it back on.[3] The public health and environmental impacts of idling, alongside the financial savings that can be made by turning off an engine, make this behaviour an important one to address across Runnymede.

2.2 The overarching objective of the anti-idling campaign is to reduce instances of idling in the borough. Two campaign streams have been identified to support this, in schools and at level crossings.

3 Anti-Idling in Schools Campaign

3.1 Air pollution can be of particular concern for children's health, affecting their lung growth and limiting lung capacity.[4] Schools are a frequently targeted area for campaigns related to idling, due to the impacts on children, the education that can be delivered in schools, and frequency of idling behaviour from parents when dropping off or picking up students.

3.2 **Audience:**

The Council's focus will be on junior schools in Runnymede, recognising the KS2 age group are more likely to be collected by car and not travel independently.

3.3 **Planned Objectives:**

- To engage junior schools in Runnymede on the issue of idling behaviour;
- To run interactive education assemblies on idling behaviour and its impacts on the environment and public health;
- To provide schools and students with educational and information resources related to idling which can then be promoted by schools and partners through their own channels (e.g., social media, newsletters, parent emails);
- To have anti-idling included in all school safer travel plans of engaged schools; and,
- To support schools, as appropriate, in any further actions or monitoring they wish to undertake related to anti-idling behaviour.

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[2] Idling Action London - https://idlingaction.london/about

[3] TRL (2021) Idling Action Research - Review of Emissions Data. TRL-Executive-Summary.pdf (squarespace.com)

[4] Impact of London's low emission zone on air quality and children's respiratory health: a sequential annual cross-sectional study - The Lancet Public Health

3.4   High Level Strategy:

To develop an ongoing partnership campaign working with Senior Leadership Teams within Runnymede's junior schools and with Surrey County Council's Safer Travel Team to deliver a joined up, effective campaign.

3.5   Timeline:

Campaign Q1: Reach out to borough schools to establish campaign interest and engagement. Develop campaign resources to accompany in school sessions (e.g., presentations, leaflets).

Campaign Q2: Run interactive and educational assemblies in interested schools and provide campaign resources to schools and students. Establish school interest to run further initiatives related to anti-idling and support these.

Campaign Q3/Q4: Maintain school engagement providing resources and support where needed to ensure the objectives of the campaign are achieved.

4   Anti-idling at Level Crossings Campaign

4.1   There are six level-crossings in Runnymede, some of which are frequently busy throughout the day and especially during peak travel hours (school start/end and work start/end). Often, the borough's level crossings are down for several minutes at a time with idling behaviour a common occurrence at these sites with consequent increases in carbon emissions as well as air quality implications. While some of the level-crossings do have anti-idling signage, this is typically at the very front of any queue up to the crossing and does not use any behavioural change messaging principles or approaches to encourage drivers to switch off.

4.2   **Audience:**

The proposed campaign would focus on three level-crossings in the borough: Station Road in Addlestone, Station Road in Egham, and Guildford Road in Chertsey. These level- crossings cover three key stations across Runnymede borough and enable resources to be more effectively focussed in a reduced number of locations, rather than thinly spread across all. The campaign would target any drivers that wait at these level crossings.

4.3   **Objectives:**

- To develop anti-idling behavioural change messaging based on best practice examples;
- To identify new locations for anti-idling signage, working with relevant partners;
- To replace current signage with larger, striking, and eye-catching signage and implement signage into newly identified locations, working with relevant partners;
- To work with Surrey County Council and Network Rail as key campaign partners with the aim of encouraging them to promote the campaign through their own channels; and,
- To launch an anti-idling pledge platform for drivers pledging not to idle, aiming for at least 100 sign-ups and providing pledged drivers with promotional materials e.g., car stickers.

4.4   **High Level Strategy:**

To develop and then deliver a six-week public campaign working in partnership with Surrey County Council and Network Rail as key campaign partners to include introduction/improvement of key anti-idling infrastructure and messaging at level crossings.

4.5   **Timeline:**

Campaign Q1: Work with Surrey County Council and Network Rail to identify existing signage for replacement and sites for additional signage at level crossings.

Campaign Q2: Produce campaign materials and resources based on best practice examples. Agree implementation of new signage and develop pledge platform functionality.

Campaign Q3: Launch anti-idling campaign with key partners, including distribution and communication of campaign materials across multiple platforms, launch of pledge platform, and implementation of signage.

Campaign Q4: Review outcomes of campaign and agree next steps with partners.

5   Engaging Internally with Council Colleagues

5.1   Although most of the resource for the anti-idling campaign will be targeted outside of the Council operation, the campaign will also seek to engage Council staff, elected members and fleet drivers, recognising the importance of the Council leading by example.

5.2   This will require close collaboration with internal communications teams and fleet operating service areas. Key focusses will be on any identifying existing idling behaviours and reasons for these, methods for combatting idling behaviour, and indicators to assist with monitoring.

6   Overarching Campaign 2: Food waste

6.1   According to Love Food, Hate Waste, 60% of food waste comes from UK homes, generating an estimated 18 million tonnes of carbon dioxide from wasted consumable food and drink. If we stopped binning our food at home, 8 meals per household could be saved each week. It is evident here that combatting food waste can have the dual benefits of emissions reduction alongside financial savings from using items that would otherwise be discarded. In approaching a food waste campaign, it is important to recognise the need to both reduce food waste and recycle any food waste that is generated.

6.2   Surrey Environment Partnership (SEP) currently runs campaigns related to waste across Surrey, which has included at least one food waste campaign for the last few years. Care needs to be taken not to duplicate their work, but rather look for opportunities to partner and support those campaigns.

6.3 **Audience:**

A borough wide campaign targeting all residents who currently have the ability to recycle food waste at their property.

6.4 **Objectives:**

- To run a targeted residents survey to better understand current food waste behaviours and barriers to reducing/recycling food waste;
- To identify food waste behaviours in Runnymede which could inform food waste campaigns using SEP data, alongside any obtained survey data;
- To use learnings to create campaign resources which raise awareness of the importance of reducing and recycling of food waste;.
- To use learnings to create campaign resources which demonstrate to campaign recipients how to reduce and recycle food waste (e.g., recipes, instructional videos, where waste goes); and,
- To partner and work closely with SEP on food waste campaigns.

6.5 **High Level Strategy**

To develop data-informed six-week campaigns during the course of the year focussed alternatively on the importance of reducing and recycling food waste, and how this can be done. To deliver this strategy, the Council will work closely with SEP as a partner to co-ordinate these campaigns alongside their campaign efforts, avoiding messaging duplication.

6.6 **Timeline:**

Campaign Q1: Explore feasibility of running a targeted resident survey around food waste. Identify and review available data from SEP on food waste behaviours in Runnymede to inform materials development. Agree partnership approach to campaigns with SEP to avoid duplication.

Campaign Q2: Produce campaign materials based on key learnings from research from the survey (reduce/recycle) and launch (subject to discussion with and timelines of SEP campaigns).

Campaign Q3: Produce campaign materials based on key learnings from research, survey and any learnings from first campaign for second campaign (reduce/recycle) and launch (subject to discussion with and timelines of SEP campaigns).

Campaign Q4: Review learnings from second campaign ad continue to partner and support SEP food waste campaigns where possible.

7 Monitoring Success

7.1 Monitoring the outcomes of environmental communications campaigns is often challenging due to the difficulty identifying causal relationships between a campaign and changes to individual behaviours. A further challenge is presented by this being the first year of implementing a climate change communications plan and therefore a limited evidence base through which to set campaign reach or targets.

7.2 These challenges are recognised and are reflected in the planned objectives in both overarching campaigns which focus on campaign delivery with key partners and specific actions which can be quantifiably measured.

7.3 Officers will also explore additional measures of success which could be implemented considering the available campaign resources and in collaboration with key partners. For example, SEP run an annual survey through an external consultant focussed on their campaigns and with a specific section on food waste. Officers will explore using the data from the 2024-25 evaluation survey as a method of understanding the success of the food waste campaign.

7.4 Officers will seek opportunities for the Council to run its own evaluations of success. Although these are at to be defined, possible monitoring approaches could include measurement of engagement with social media, quantity of material produced and distributed, and observation of behaviours by officers where feasible.

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