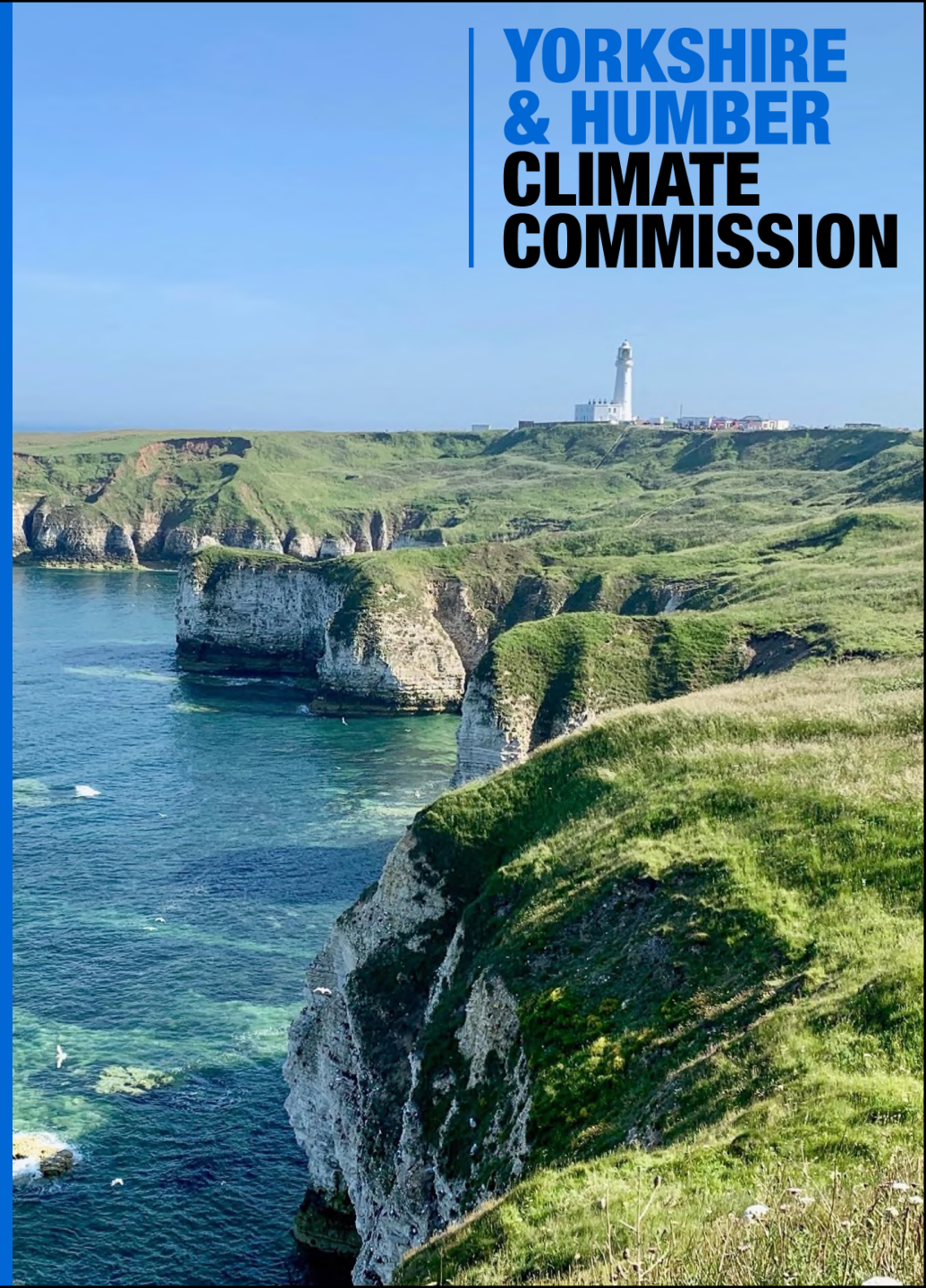


AN INTRODUCTION TO TALKING CLIMATE

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MARCH 2026

**YORKSHIRE
& HUMBER
CLIMATE
COMMISSION**



INTRODUCING THE COMMISSION

- An independent advisory body that supports and guides ambitious action on climate action.
- Operates via a place-based approach at regional scale, bringing together climate leaders from across the public, private and third sectors.
- Established in March 2021, it is the largest climate commission in the UK and the only regional one.
- Supported by 150 + individuals, plus a core team at University of Leeds. Members include an independent Chair, four political Vice Chairs, 40 Commissioners, 40 Associates plus numerous Affiliates and other networks, eg with local authorities (Regional Policy Forum, AAAP).
- Ca. 120 Climate Action Pledge signatories (businesses/organisations/councils).

FUNDERS



EXAMPLES OF SUPPORTERS



YPIP – YORKSHIRE POLICY INNOVATION PARTNERSHIP

- YPIP is a regional partnership working on new and better ways of sharing knowledge and making decisions to improve local lives and places in Yorkshire.
- Brings together academics, decision makers, and communities to harness the power of collaborative research and innovation to address local challenges with informed policy making.
- Foundations already been laid by other existing collaborations (including **Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission**). YPIP seeks to extend the reach and impact of this regional infrastructure to bring together information and good practice at local, regional, and national scales.
- YPIP has five 'work packages', one of which is about supporting communities in their places. Community groups in the region are vital, front-line champions of climate action. They foster collective achievements, encourage sustainable habits, and drive localised change, but can often work in silos.
- YPIP aims to facilitate connections to other grassroots groups across Yorkshire. Ultimately, this can help expand their capabilities to scale up activities and build their own resilience and that of their communities to a changing climate. Communications plays an important role in this.

CLIMATE COMMS COLLABORATION

- **September 2025:** Meeting of the Blueprint Coalition (local government organisations, environmental groups and research institutions calling on government to support local authorities in delivering climate action with a joined up approach) led to connection between YHCC and ADEPT. Both working on a climate language guide – decided to collaborate to co-produce one (similar audiences.)
- **October –November 2025:** YHCC Communications team met and worked with Emma Parker Reynolds of Coast Marcomms on the content of the guide. Evidence was broadened to include Climate Outreach’s updated *Britain Talks Climate and Nature 2025* report and toolkit, along with Roger Harrabin’s written evidence to the Energy Security & Net Zero Committee and Potential Energy Coalition’s *Talk Like a Human* language guide.
- **December 2025:** YHCC held three workshops with ca. 70 Commissioners and Associates on Scenario Planning for 2026 and beyond (looking at changing political headwinds). The major ask to emerge from the sessions was for support and guidance on comms and language.
- **March 2026:** *An Introduction to Talking Climate* published by ADEPT and YHCC.

Download the guide: <https://www.adeptnet.org.uk/talking-climate>

ADEPT

Association of Directors of
Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport

AN INTRODUCTION TO TALKING CLIMATE

March 2026

AN INTRODUCTION TO TALKING CLIMATE

An introduction to talking climate
ADEPT - March 2026

This guide suggests practical approaches to communicating about climate and nature in ways that resonate with people's everyday lives. It has been produced by ADEPT, together with Yorkshire & Humber Climate Commission, and is designed to inform broad, general communication, while also recognising that messages need to be tailored to specific audiences.

The guide draws substantially on insights and evidence from the [Britain Talks Climate and Nature 2025 Communications Toolkit](#) from Climate Outreach, an up-to-date, in-depth analysis of how Britons feel and think about climate and nature. The toolkit is based on extensive quantitative and qualitative research, surveying over 7,000 people and using focus groups to draw out strategic implications for policy and communication.

We have also used other sources and inspiration from professional communicators and organisations specialising in climate change communication, which are signposted at the end.

It is designed to be a reference tool and a strategic resource for effective, evidence-based communication. It can be read sequentially to build an understanding of the principles, or specific sections can be accessed when required, when preparing particular communications. The quick guide table offers at-a-glance alternatives to common terminology.

The guide is intended for use by local authority place teams, but we hope it will prove useful to anyone engaged in strategic climate communications. While the guide focuses primarily on public-facing communication, the principles equally apply to internal communications, engagement with stakeholders, and communications within professional networks. Consider your specific audience when applying the guidance: a message for residents may need different framing than one for local authority staff, business leaders, or community organisations, even when discussing the same topic.

Climate communication is evolving rapidly in response to public attitudes, political context, and best practice, so this guide will be adaptable over time and should be reviewed and updated regularly to remain relevant. It is a starting point for busy communicators, and we urge you to take a deeper dive into the reference materials it is based on.

While much of the guidance is informed by a national survey of Britons' values, local context - including political dynamics and local priorities - is important and should inform your thinking when shaping communications. These tips are here to guide you, but you know your audience and local circumstances best.

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Translate and explain

Don't use technical and elite jargon: it's alienating and excludes people.

Likewise, statistics aren't trusted and should not be overused. Instead, explain why climate action and policies matter and what they mean for people's lives. For example, saying that a council or organisation has set a target to reach net zero by a specific date is meaningless to a lot of people, only engages specific groups, and is polarising for others.

Tips:

- Describing a vision of how things can be better and connecting it to the things people value (health, happiness, protecting nature, safer area, a sustainable future for our children) scores much more highly.
- Do support with evidence, but present it through tangible examples and stories rather than relying on statistics to do all the work.
- Consider the placement of underpinning evidence and data: panels, appendices and notes for editors (for press releases) provide other options for more detailed information.



Champion inclusive language

Language matters. The words we choose have the power to shape how people feel about themselves, and how they feel about others.

Inclusive language can help to shift attitudes and behaviours: it doesn't exclude, stereotype or discriminate, or propagate prejudice or bias. While inclusive language is continually evolving, it's important to do the research, embed inclusive principles into all communications, and listen and adapt to feedback.

Tips:

- Be specific and accurate, avoiding euphemisms, umbrella terms and figurative language.
- Identify the causes of injustice, acknowledging that inequality is created, not inevitable.
- Be careful with words and phrases that put the blame in the wrong place, including loaded language that can propagate harmful stereotypes.

Talk about climate and nature

By understanding why people distance themselves from climate change we can tailor better communications.

Only 4% of those polled by More In Common and Climate Outreach denied that climate change is real. Britons who said they didn't think about it much gave reasons from it not coming up as a topic in their daily lives to feeling a lack of agency, depressed, and it being too complicated.

Of the top five worries about climate change, 'harm to nature and wildlife' was significantly the highest. The majority feel strongly or somewhat appreciative and respectful of nature and say being in nature makes them happy. They are also proud of the UK's work to protect and restore natural places - this extends from planting trees and reducing littering, to working with farmers on environmental solutions and building new wind farms and solar farms.

Tips:

- Generally, people don't use or understand terms like 'mitigation' or 'adaptation', though they do support them. Language around 'tackling climate change' or 'taking climate change seriously' resonates, so long as its explained and connected to tangible benefits, for example building better flood defences or making our homes more suited to heat.
- Nature doesn't exist as a standalone: climate impacts are a major contributor to species decline and the breakdown of ecosystems that we rely on (including for our national security). Show the link between the nature we love and want to protect and the effects of climate change - and how restoring nature is a crucial part of the solution.

Normalise enthusiasm for clean energy

People across the political spectrum are supportive and proud of the UK's move towards clean energy and support for renewables vastly outweighs opposition to them (only 15% don't like seeing wind turbines in the countryside).

Use stories of progress to underpin this.

Tips:

- Talk more about how clean energy is a good investment in a more secure and self-sufficient future for the UK and how continuing to transition to clean energy leads to good things for us all.
- Avoid trashing a valued part of our shared past or present - people recognise the need for transition from fossil fuels, but have a sense of pride in our industrial heritage.



Common climate language terms and some preferred ways of talking about climate action. This is complementary to the guidance and tips above and should be used in accordance with your local/specific context and issue.

Common terms

Preferred way of talking about climate action

Biodiversity loss	Losing nature, damage to nature, protecting nature and wildlife.
Carbon footprint	Carbon emissions
Carbon neutral	Largely used by corporates, has fallen out of favour due to greenwashing. Use 'Net Zero' (but see opposite)
Circular economy	Less waste, more re-use & recycling, cutting costs, better use of resources.
Climate change	'Climate crisis' will work for an informed and concerned audiences; for general communications consider using 'changing climate' or 'global heating' when couched in wider communications linking to climate impacts felt in your place, community, or issue.
Climate resilience	Planning for, better protecting against, and responding to and recovering from extreme weather events; strengthening community responses.
Climate adaptation	Taking action to prepare and protect our communities and organisations from extreme weather.
Decarbonisation	Moving to clean, more secure energy.
Nature-based solutions	Working with nature to deliver solutions.
Emissions	Use this term, but be specific to the context: e.g. transport emissions, air pollution, industrial emissions.

Common terms

Preferred way of talking about climate action

Environmental protection	Looking after people and the environment, protecting the natural world.
Green investment	Investment in clean, low carbon industries / clean, low carbon economy / clean, low carbon future.
Green jobs	Jobs (if the context demands specificity around sectors / industries, feel free to name to the innovation and skills you're promoting).
Hard to reach, hard to engage	This term, which is often used as a descriptor for marginalised communities, subtly shifts blame onto those groups or individuals. It implies that they are the problem, rather than the economic and political decisions that have systematically excluded them. Instead, consider using: hardly reached, under-estimated, seldom heard, under-served, easy to ignore
Net zero	Don't use it in isolation or as shorthand; it's a technical term and isn't well understood. Put it in context and always explain it as a solution for reducing further climate change and link to practical actions.
Renewable energy	This term is widely understood, but you can also use clean power, clean home-grown energy, energy independence, energy security.
Sustainability	The term is coming back into common parlance - go for it! The term acknowledges what everyone can agree on: that we need to conserve natural resources and protect global ecosystems to support health and wellbeing, now and in the future.

SOURCES AND FURTHER INSPIRATION

An introduction to talking climate
ADEPT - March 2026

- Britain Talks Climate and Nature 2025 Research and Toolkits - <https://climateoutreach.org/btc/2025/report/>
- Potential Energy Coalition: Talk Like a Human - US non-profit organisation, set up to shift the narrative about climate change - <https://potentialenergycoalition.org/downloads/Talk-Like-a-Human.pdf>
- Roger Harrabin's written evidence for the Energy Security and Net Zero Committee September 2025 - <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/148038/pdf/>
- Climate Outreach - [Communications Toolkit](#)
- The Institute of Actuaries Report - <https://actuaries.org.uk/planetary-solvency>
- Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit - <https://eciu.net>
- Inclusive language - <https://fightingtalk.uk/>
- Making sense of what people think about climate change (especially net zero) - <https://climatebarometer.org/>
- Larger Us - works with organisations to support their members to have climate conversations - <https://larger.us/>
- Climate Emergency UK - aims to empower those advocating for change both within and outside councils - <https://climateemergency.uk/>



FEEDBACK

"Superb, useful and timely work from ADEPT and [Yorkshire & Humber Climate Commission](#). For me a big takeaway is "don't use net zero as shorthand" - so important, because people deeply care about nature loss and about the increasing impacts of extreme weather. They want to see leadership that takes these seriously and doesn't hide behind shorthand or euphemisms." **Andrew Wood, Planning Consultant**

"How we talk about climate and nature has never been more important & this is one of the best simple guides I've ever seen! ... Do share & thanks to [Yorkshire & Humber Climate Commission](#), [ADEPT](#) and [Climate Outreach](#) " **Oliver Harmar, CEO Natural England**

"This is great. Thanks so much for the update and congrats on the release. Brilliant to see how Britain Talks Climate and Nature is being applied." **Morgan, Climate Outreach**

"This is amazing! I've shared with X who is leading our civic comms campaign to make sure this reaches him too." **Internal email, University of Leeds**

GET IN TOUCH!

- Yorkshire & Humber Climate Commission website: <https://yorksandhumberclimate.org.uk/>
- Yorkshire and Humber Climate Action Plan: <https://yorksandhumberclimate.org.uk/inspire/climate-action-plan/>
- Yorkshire and Humber Climate Action Pledge: <https://yorksandhumberclimate.org.uk/do/commit-to-the-climate-action-pledge/>
- Become an Associate or Affiliate: <https://yorksandhumberclimate.org.uk/do/get-involved/>
- Contact the Commission: YHClimate@leeds.ac.uk
- Email me: K.M.Lock@leeds.ac.uk

QUESTIONS!

- Do you think this guide could be useful to your group?
- How does your group communicate to external audiences? What platforms do you use? Who does it? What kind of experience do they have?
- What communications challenges do you face? (Technical, financial, messaging, content creation, other?)
- Is your communication strategic (planned), reactive, or ad hoc?
- What issues have you come across engaging with audiences?
- Do you want help amplifying your comms? How can we support each other?