

## Climate change and human behaviours

### How can understanding behaviours contribute to climate change?

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There is increasing interest in designing policy interventions to sustain positive individual or societal behaviours and to encourage behaviour change which tackles environmental issues including climate change.

Behaviourally focused approaches will often provide a broader mix of policy options than regulation and financial incentives.

#### Long tradition of influencing behaviours

Policy-makers have long sought to influence human behaviour for the benefit of individuals, society, and the environment. Traditionally, policy instruments have been limited to legislation, regulation, and financial incentives or disincentives – so called ‘carrot and stick’ approaches. However, in certain contexts these traditional measures can be viewed as ineffective, and sometimes have only limited benefits.

Alternatives using behavioural approaches are increasingly being developed to provide a broader mix of policy options. These respond to the complex nature of values, attitudes and motivations which drive particular choices and actions. This complexity presents a key challenge in encouraging specific types of behaviour related to trees and forests.

#### What behaviours might be useful?

- Woodland managers are varied and include private owners, charitable organisations, local authorities, government bodies and community woodland groups. A wide range of values,

attitudes and motivations will therefore be found among woodland managers.

- Woodland managers can be encouraged to take a variety of actions to contribute to climate-change mitigation and adaptation including practices to **create new woodlands, expand existing woodland, plant a more diverse range of resilient species, use trees to reduce flooding**, and manage for diversity.
- Members of the general public can be encouraged to take action to limit climate change as well. For example, through tree-planting, conservation activity, advocacy and campaigning for environmental change, and citizen-science activities to monitor changes in **trees**, habitats and species abundance that can inform management responses.

#### Different ideas about how to change behaviours

There are several ways in which behaviours can be thought about and defined. Many approaches focus on encouraging individuals to change their behaviour or continue what might be considered as sustainable behaviours, e.g. recycling plastics.

However, it is also important to consider external factors and the wider context that might enable people to change behaviour. For example, supporting land managers in diversifying the tree species chosen for woodland creation through providing targeted advice about species suitability for particular soil and climatic conditions, and providing pathways to source seed or plants of diverse species.

## Principles for influencing behaviours to tackle climate change

In developing policy and practical interventions to help address climate change, the following four principles can act as a guide for encouraging sustainable behaviours.

- **Base choices on an understanding of people's values**  
Segmentations classify managers into different groups based on shared characteristics such as motivations, values and preferences. This is important as advice and support can be tailored to the different segments.
- **Facilitate active involvement of participants in design and implementation**  
Approaches that involve woodland managers or the public in jointly designing the interventions that aim to change behaviour have more chance of success – the process of engagement will provide an idea of the key issues that might make it difficult to change behaviour and provide ideas about solutions and opportunities that could enable change.
- **Target the wider social and physical environment**  
Focusing interventions beyond the individual can be useful, e.g. by targeting families, communities, and specific networks of woodland managers. Demonstrations and field trips can be ways to encourage woodland managers to adopt new behaviours. And community/group projects can be important in bringing people together for collective action.
- **Adopt a multi-faceted approach**  
Combining different mechanisms, such as targeted grant schemes, advice and support, promotion and communications, use of agents or groups to act as knowledge brokers, and infrastructure investment can all contribute to interventions which change behaviour. A menu of options allows different routes for woodland managers and the public to engage and get involved.



## The principles in action – ideas of how behaviours can be targeted.

### Woodland management for climate change

#### *Understanding owners' motivations and values*

A segmentation of woodland managers has identified timber producers, multi-functional managers, eco-centric managers, enterprise-focused managers and individualists. Each segment pursues different management activities, and responds differently to varied kinds of interventions. It is important to get to know the various types of woodland managers.

#### *Involve owners in identifying actions to take*

Work with a sample of different owners to identify actions such as choosing tree species that will cope with a warmer climate, change or mix species to drought tolerant types on sensitive sites, develop a management plan that includes contingency plans for climate change. Next explore with woodland owners how these actions might be encouraged.

#### *Target networks that already influence owners*

Explore the networks and groups that woodland owners are linked into and include these networks in developing ideas and solutions that might encourage and support woodland managers to act.

#### *Use different approaches to encourage action*

Develop approaches that allow owners to get involved via different routes. Incentives might have a role to play e.g. the Woodland Carbon Guarantee that encourages tree-planting for carbon sequestration. Support and advice are important mechanisms that might encourage and enable action. Field trips to demonstration sites can illustrate practical approaches that can be more widely adopted.

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