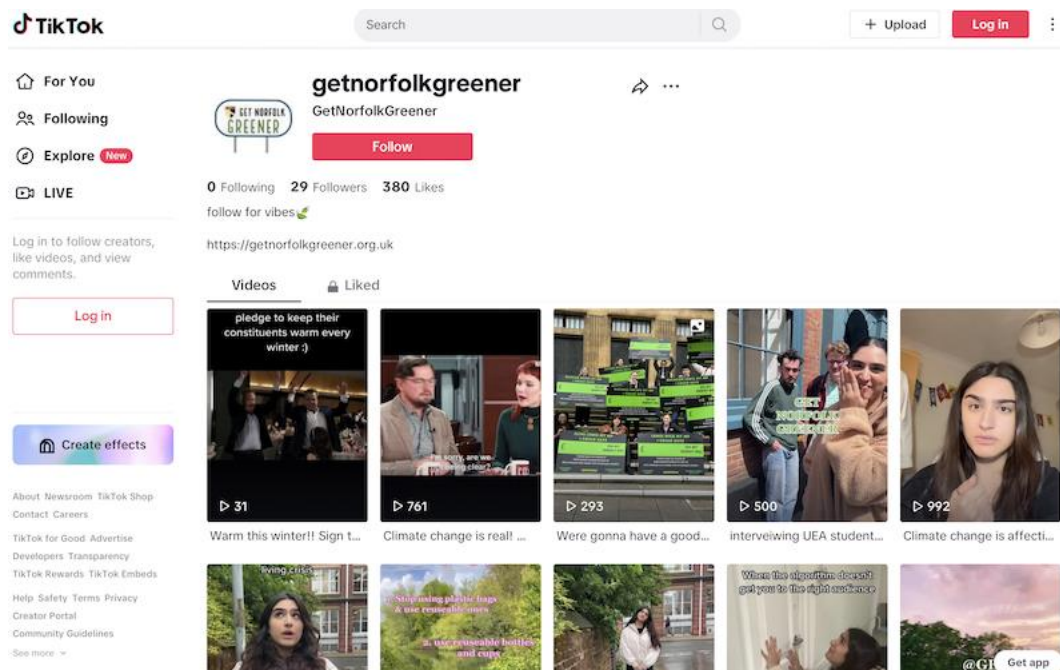


'Get Norfolk Greener': A Small Experiment In Localising A Climate Campaign

Chris Rose - published at <https://threeworlds.campaignstrategy.org/?p=3004> 23 8 23



Tiktoks by the UEA student campaign Get Norfolk Greener

Earlier this year I worked with a class of 28 third year University of East Anglia (UEA) students on a group project in which they created and ran a short campaign – ‘[Get Norfolk Greener](#)’ – which localised the climate and energy propositions of a national campaign backed by 40 voluntary organisations. While for the students it was first and foremost an exercise in learning-by-doing, the element of localisation can make many campaigns more ‘real’ and tractable for a wider range of audiences (especially [Settlers and Prospectors](#)), and might be relevant to a number of change efforts.

At least in the UK, localisation to Parliamentary Constituency level may be vital to building a resilient and durable base of support, not just to achieve objectives but to conserve and consolidate gains. In a [post last year](#), I argued that to tackle the impacts of intensive agriculture, nature campaigns need to be resourced and organised at the Constituency level (just as the farming lobby is). My experience of working on recent nature and climate/ energy campaigns is that this is still sorely needed in the UK, with many campaigns overly reliant on national public opinion and social media.

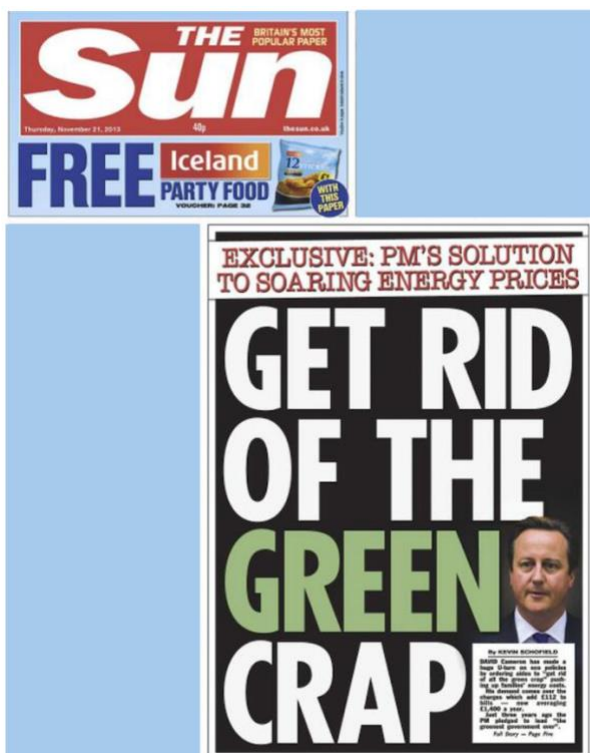
The national campaign the UEA students localised is [Warm This Winter](#), whose objectives include access to cheap renewable energy, help with energy bills and upgrading homes with heat pumps and insulation. The very need for the WtW campaign in 2023 is at least partly due to previous failures to convert public support into durable consolidated gains and groups of constituents confident to make the case with MPs.

The Need To Anchor Gains

Any campaign can make progress when it runs with the winds of public opinion in its sails, and those winds carry also along a flotilla of politicians, the media and corporates. The trickier test comes when it encounters significant headwinds. Fairweather friends may fall away, and forward progress may be reversed if the tides and currents run against you. This is why campaign groups need an engine which does not depend on favourable winds (usually paying supporters), and to put down anchors against backsliding (eg social or legislative).

The UK's most successful climate campaign was Friends of the Earth's '[Big Ask](#)' campaign in 2005 – 2008 [see analysis [here](#) and [here](#)]. Fortuitous competition between the main parties to look green before a General Election swept the campaign to victory and, unusually, success was consolidated in law, in the shape of the 2008 [Climate Change Act](#). That statute imposes a legal duty on UK Governments to set and meet carbon reduction budgets to bring about a 80% cut in emissions by 2050. So far it's acted as an anchor stopping the UK from drifting backwards on climate but it hasn't prevented significant climate obstruction.

The greatest success for obstructers of action on climate in the UK came between 2010 and 2015. Right-wing Eurosceptic and climate-sceptic Conservative MPs exploited Prime Minister David Cameron's small majority and forced him to U-turn on supporting for onshore wind energy. Cameron declared he would get rid of the "green crap", and defunded household insulation programmes, despite having the worst housing stock in Europe.



The Sun, 21 November 2013

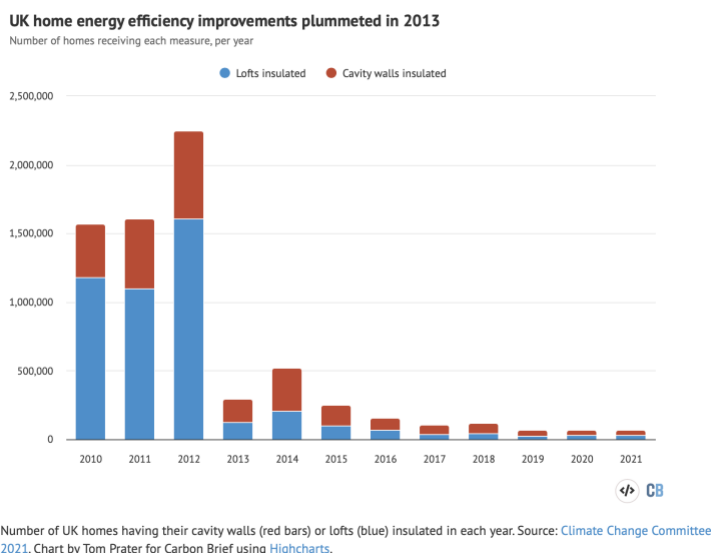
In 2019 I tried to find out how exactly this had happened, given that UK public opinion had remained overwhelmingly in support of wind power throughout. When nobody seemed able

to tell me, I looked into it myself – detailed in the blog [Killing The Wind Of England](#). A critical factor was that while NGOs and the renewables industry had won the ‘air war’ of national public opinion, they had failed to turn this expressive support for wind power into instrumental political support at a local level. There was no social ‘anchor’ in the form of an established lobby at the local level, which was where their opponents acted to manifest one. Consequently it didn’t take much in terms of opposition, to make it feel like a lot.

The UK’s geographic Parliamentary Constituencies and ‘first past the post’ election system makes its party politics particularly sensitive to a ground war of well-organised constituency-based lobbying. In 2017 a long-running government tracker poll on wind found that just one person in a panel of 2000 was ‘strongly opposed’ to wind. But such opposition was concentrated among Conservative Party members, and the anti-wind campaign was organised within the Party. MPs were systematically bombarded with letters, emails and face to face visits from activists, as well as the threat that both members and MPs would defect to the more right wing UKIP Party. One MP previously supportive of wind flatly refused to accept polling evidence on the grounds that it did not reflect his postbag. By localising their campaign, the opponents of wind power flew under the radar of wind power’s supporters.

The ‘Green Crap’ Legacy

Cameron’s about face over green policies had a dramatic and lasting effect. In 2012 the UK was upgrading homes a year with loft and cavity wall insulation at a rate of over two million a year. By 2013 that [plummeted 92%](#) and 74%, and has never recovered. This has had serious consequences, especially for poorer people struggling to pay for food and heat their homes. When gas prices spiked after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Simon Evans at Carbon Brief [calculated](#) that ‘cutting the green crap’ ten years before had added £2.5billion to British energy bills in 2022 (and more since).



[Chart from CarbonBrief](#)

Meanwhile the restrictions introduced to make it almost impossible to build onshore wind in England remain in place. In 2023 it [was found](#) that despite being one of the windiest places

in Europe, only two English wind turbines had been built in the past year, whereas Ukraine had managed 19 despite being at war.

The UK Government has just about managed to argue that it is still on course to meet its Climate Change Act commitments because of building windfarms offshore, and the statistical legacy of shutting down coal power. However the same pattern of organising opposition to energy infrastructure as was adopted against wind turbines is now being applied to energy grids (pylons) and misinformation campaigns are being run against adoption of heat pumps.

Get Norfolk Greener

UEA offers a module in '[Activist Campaigning](#)' from within its undergraduate courses in politics. For the past fifteen years it's been run by [Dr Ben Little](#) but he asked me to fill in for him in 2023 while he was seconded to help direct the [UEA Civic University](#) (outreach) project. UEA is based in Norwich, in the English county of Norfolk.

Ben's design of the module was built around some teaching (for which I used some of the campaign training content I use with NGOs) and a group project, which students would design and implement, with an assessment based on their reflection on their experience of doing the project. We needed to find a project 'client' so I contacted half a dozen NGOs, looking for a campaign they already had or had in mind, to which a group of about 30 students might feasibly make a useful contribution, over a month or so's preparation and three week's implementation.

The energy and climate NGO [Possible](#) agreed to help and suggested we connect with [Uplift](#) and the [Green Alliance](#) which were organising a campaign for [WarmThis Winter](#) (WtW), a coalition of 40 mainly national NGOs* (of which Possible is one), ranging from environment and nature groups to energy-poverty and community organisations.

The WtW campaign ask was (and is) straightforward: individuals were invited to use an online form with a pre drafted letter to ask their MPs to sign a 'Pledge' which essentially committed them to do everything they could to encourage more government action on the energy and climate crisis. It read:

"I pledge to help keep my constituents warm every winter by urging the Government to rapidly expand home retrofit schemes, support the swift deployment of homegrown renewables to speed up the net zero transition away from volatile fossil fuels, and provide further financial support to vulnerable households. I will work alongside Parliamentary colleagues to ensure the Government goes further to tackle the energy crisis at every available opportunity, including upcoming fiscal statements and the Energy Bill."

We set out to localise this ask, and work on securing the support of all nine Norfolk Westminster MPs, eight Conservative and one Labour. By way of context most of Norfolk is rural, with one small city (Norwich, population 200,000) and relatively few towns. A national [survey](#) found most of Norfolk is above average for 'agreeableness' meaning people tend to be 'cooperative, friendly and trusting', below average on 'open-ness' meaning they lean towards being 'conventional, down-to-earth, and traditional', and above average on

‘conscientiousness’ meaning they tend to be ‘self-disciplined, cautious, and compliant’ as well as socially conservative.

Not surprisingly, Norfolk can be slow to adopt innovations, and is often seen as a bit of a political backwater. Many people living in Norfolk quite like its sense of relative isolation from the rest of the country. It’s the sort of place where constituents often vote for MPs as individuals rather than by party. I once asked a friend who was our local Mayor how the local elections had gone, and she said “not bad Chris but it all got a bit too political for my liking”.

Not then, perhaps, optimal political campaign territory, especially for one which had to be run in short order (teaching and preparation one day a week Feb – April, a month break and three weeks of implementation in May). On the other hand the default assumption might have been that no MPs would respond to the WtW pledge campaign, or just one would (the South Norwich Labour MP, Clive Lewis, who had a long track record of being active on climate), so we had a default benchmark.

www.warmthiswinter.org.uk

The national WtW format used online resources to encourage individuals reached through participating organisations, to start and join local lobbying events, and contact their MPs asking them to sign up, by email, social media, face to face or phone. WtW provided some good online training webinars from Uplift, 350, and Hope for the Future. Experience suggests that the ‘usual suspects’ mobilised and aggregated by such formats tend to be a thin layer of high-agency Pioneers and so we hoped to use campaign design to make our campaign more accessible and relevant for more of the constituents of Norfolk MPs, and provide evidence that there are impacts they are concerned about, and solutions they support. Here’s a couple of slides from an early briefing:

Basic idea

Our project helps make the ask to Norfolk MPs more effective. Improve on their existing positions.

Plus: insight from many studies/ campaigns ~ lobbying advocacy by the 'usual suspects' has limited new and additional effect. Big picture 'issue' level arguments have little traction with most of the public. Esp for Settlers & Prospectors, people need tangible, applies-to-me/us proposals for pro-climate action, and threats of loss.

= concrete, specific, local, doable 'solutions', with backing from bigger actors (then looks credible). WtW probably lacks these. We can try to find & communicate them.

We are at the 'situation mapping' stage

Before deciding on a specific strategy, tactics and plan we need to look at:

The MPs and their voters - interests, attitudes, who knows who etc

Local Councils (likewise)

Telling examples of potential loss - motivation to avoid climate change
(Problem evidences - esp with stories and pictures)

Telling examples of feasible change (from Norfolk and comparable places)
(Solution evidences - esp with stories and pictures)

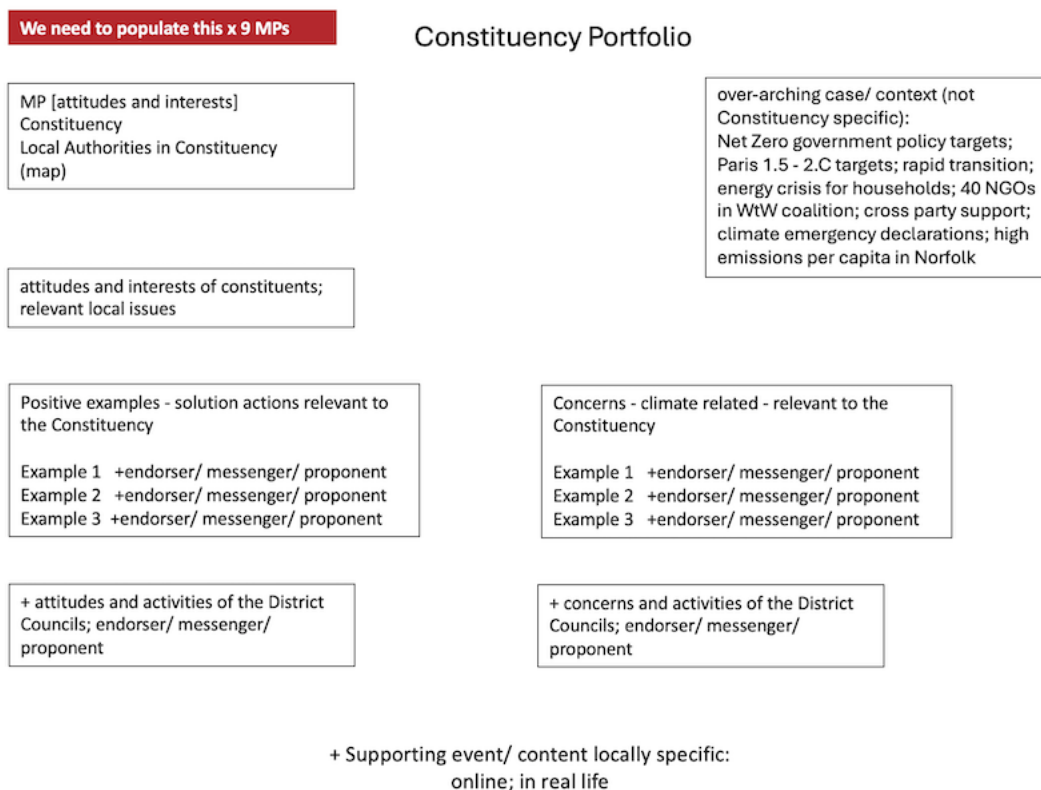
Potential people/ groups we can work with to get a positive ask to MPs - show that climate actions are popular with their voters, and to Councillors (think Similarity heuristic, like-talks-to-like Messengers and Channels)

Then we look for intersections of the above

Students formed six Research Groups, on positive case studies (solutions that work, with relevant benefits), problems to stop or avoid, understanding our MPs as people, relevant voter attitudes, finding constituents willing to talk to MPs about problems or solutions, and work being done on problems or solutions, by local (District) councils. These were then used to

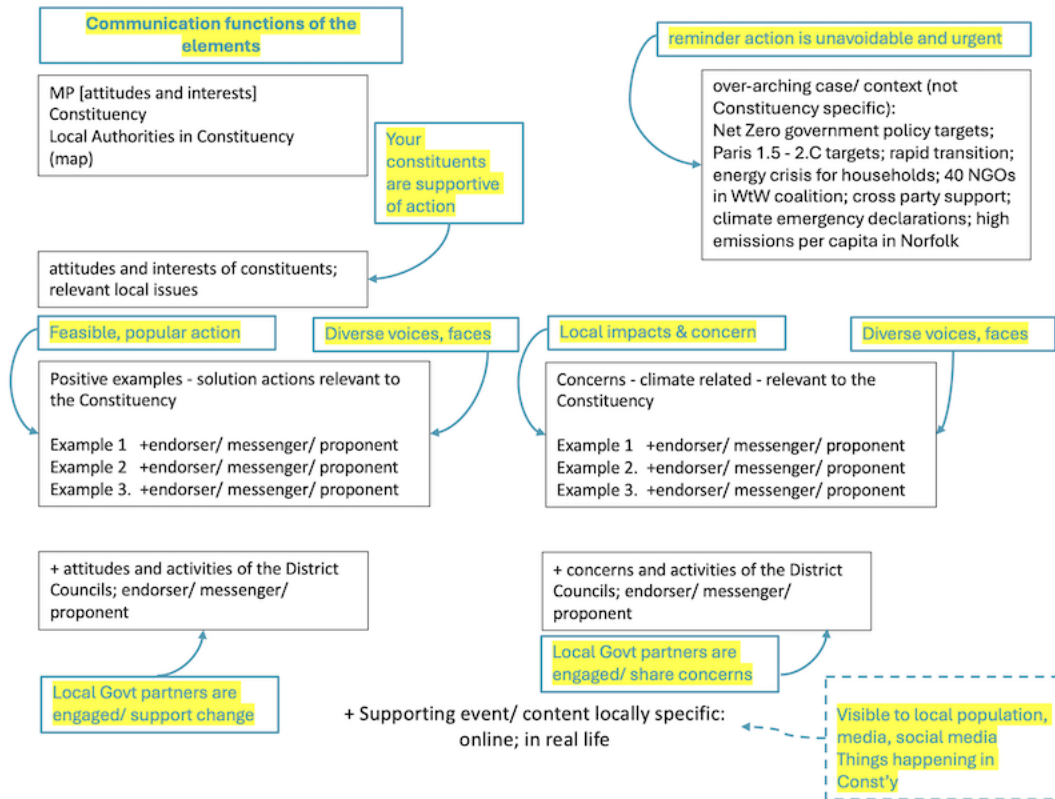
populate a website, social media posts and construct localised communications to the MPs, and to explain the campaign.

[It's a [convention](#) that UK MPs are not obliged to respond to members of the public who are not Constituents. Basically this means campaigns need to engage registered voters, not eg students registered to vote elsewhere. Although MPs are expected to reply to constituents, in practice some do so rarely, especially to tiresome 'usual suspects' who contact them about nationally organised petitions and campaign asks. During this campaign a number of Constituents of Richard Bacon, MP for South Norfolk, were reluctant to take part given that he rarely responded to them. He was even subject [to public criticism](#) from his own local Conservative Party for being unresponsive].



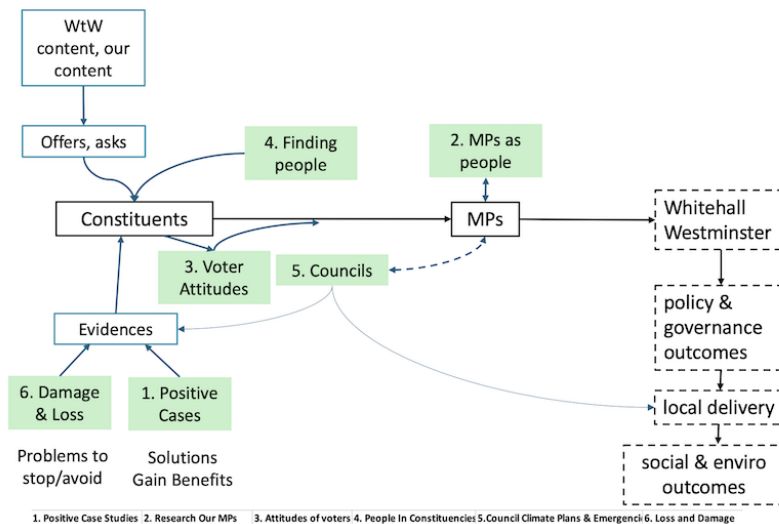
Gathering content in the situation research phase

Students produced a 'portfolio' for each of the nine Constituencies, aiming to match three problem and three solution examples, with a constituent endorser/ messenger/ proponent for each. ['Finding people' proved a slow process, not least because only one of the students had actually lived in Norfolk. It was also disappointing, though after working on other UK local projects, not surprising, to find that NGOs involved with the WtW coalition were unable to help us find the minimum three constituents in each MP's area. This wasn't because of a lack of goodwill, just not being organised that way, and in some cases channelling all their political work through their senior, staff which of course means that the MPs are not necessarily hearing from their voters].



How the elements of the portfolio were intended to combine in making the case for the Pledge to MPs.

Fitting it together



How the Research Groups work applied



Students taking part in a Civic University community 'Climate open Space' event in Norwich, doing a bit of networking with whoever turned up.

Quick assessment - how do they compare on these ?

I pledge to help keep my constituents warm every winter by urging the government to rapidly expand home retrofit schemes. Support the swift deployment of homegrown renewables like onshore wind and solar to speed up the transition away from volatile fossil fuels, and provide further financial support to vulnerable households. I will work alongside Parliamentary colleagues to ensure the government goes further to tackle the energy crisis at every available opportunity, - including upcoming fiscal statements and the Energy Bill.

Signed, _____ MP

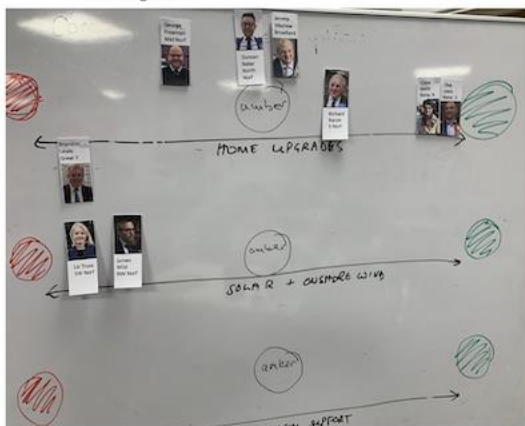
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Brandon Lewis Great Y	Jerome Mayhew Bristol/and	George Freeman Mid North	Clive Lewis North S	Chloe Smith North N
James Wild NW North	Richard Bacon S North	Liz Truss SW North	Duncan Baker North North	

Group 2 in future watching brief



Comparing MPs positions to the WtW pledge asks

Researching Local Stories

Students investigating energy and climate problems at local level looked at nature and landscape and energy poverty.



It's well known that the Norfolk coast is experiencing accelerated coastal erosion, flooding and saltwater intrusion as a result of climate change but other impacts are less well known. In 2018 UEA research by Dr Jeff Price studied 834 species from Norfolk's characteristic flora and fauna, to see what would happen if the average temperature was allowed to increase 2.C. He found most of Norfolk's bumble bees, larger moths and grasshopper species would die out, along with the Swallowtail Butterfly, only known in England from the Norfolk Broads, and many traditionally 'common' species such as Grey Partridge, Water Vole, Common Frog and Common Lizard could be lost.

Norfolk bluebells under threat from 'quiet invasion' of Roman plant
<https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/23488984.norfolk-bluebells-threat-roman-plant-alexander/?ref=twtrcc>



edp24.co.uk

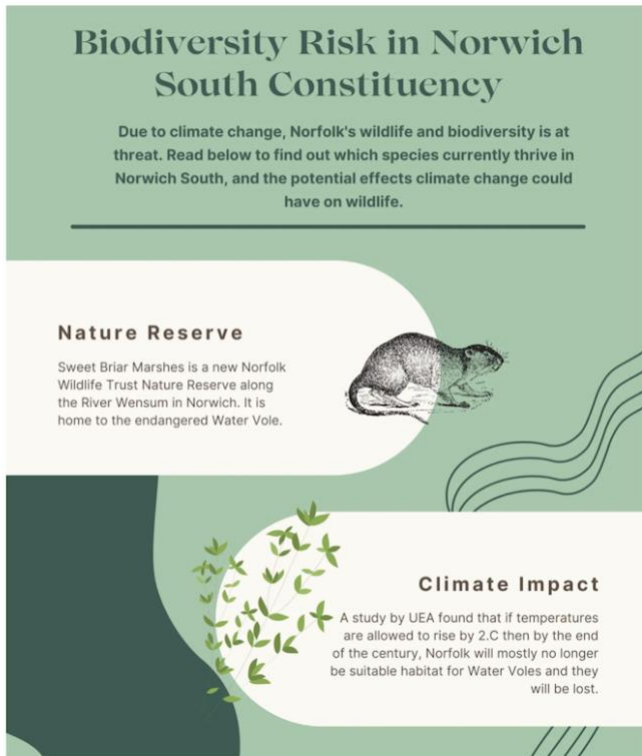
Norfolk bluebells under threat from 'quiet invasion' of Roman plant
Plants in Norfolk are under threat from the "quiet invasion" of a plant which is native to the Mediterranean.



Alexanders *Smyrniolusastrum*

Alexanders is a common rather invasive, edible, flowering plant of a green-yellow colour, which is known for its rapid growth. The Mediterranean origins of Alexanders means it struggles during long hard winters, however it is currently thriving not only close to the coast, but inland too.

Climate heating is leading to introduced species such as Alexanders displacing native flowers such as Bluebells which are adapted to cooler conditions.



Page from Get Norfolk Greener website, for S Norwich

Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk

In 2021, King's Lynn declared a climate emergency. They have brought their Council net zero target forward to 2035. Their first phase is focused on reducing corporate emissions to meet the 2035 net zero target. Phase two focuses on the role and scope of influence in helping to reduce emissions across the district.

King's Lynn & W Norfolk have taken steps which include: installing solar panels in council owned properties; installing air and ground source heat pumps; using green tariffs for electricity, hiring a UEA Graduate to help deliver the climate action plan; and setting up Norfolk Climate Change Partnership (NCCP). The joint refuse collection contract with Breckland and North Norfolk District Council will further improve the efficiency of refuse collection in the district and reduce emissions.

Source:

https://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/info/20095/energy_and_climate_change/806/our_climate_change_work

Page from Councils section of the Get Norfolk greener website – Kings Lynn and west Norfolk Council covers the Constituency of James Wild MP and part of that of Liz Truss MP, and is one of the more active Councils in Norfolk on the climate and energy crises. Students surveyed national studies of local Councils, Climate Emergency declarations and subsequent actions, and made direct contacts. They found that Great Yarmouth appeared to have no climate plan at all.

Positive Case Studies

Norwich is already making way to prevent further climate change, and make energy and housing more affordable for its constituents through Passivhaus.

Positive Case study: Passivhaus, Goldsmith Street



What is a Passivhaus?

Passivhaus is a building standard that is specifically designed to reduce residents' energy consumption.

How do they work?

Architects considered placement of windows and angle of roofs to maximise heating efficiency.



Passivhaus homes are predicted to be 70% cheaper, dropping heating costs to £150 a year!

Passiv Haus scheme in Norwich – overall practical climate action as a result of Council policies is at a very early stage compared to many parts of the UK.

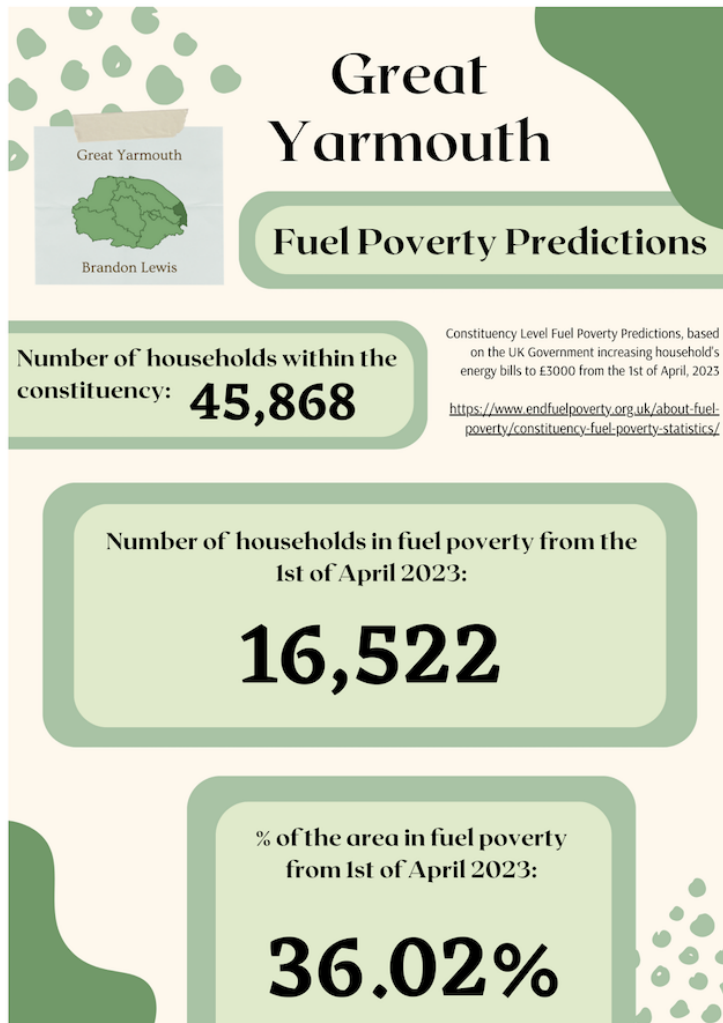
One decarbonization expert told me the County was about a decade behind the next-door county of Suffolk, and a further ten years behind cities like Manchester.

Energy Poverty

To show the basic facts about energy poverty in each Constituency, the campaign used [figures from the group End Fuel Poverty](#) which break down to local levels. Students also reserached more personal local stories.

Fuel Poverty in Great Yarmouth

In 2022 over [three million UK households were in fuel poverty](#) and the government estimates that this could rise to over [eight million households in 2023](#). But what does this look like on a constituency level? See our infographic below on how fuel poverty impacts Great Yarmouth's residents.



Energy poverty stats for Great Yarmouth – Constituency of Brandon Lewis

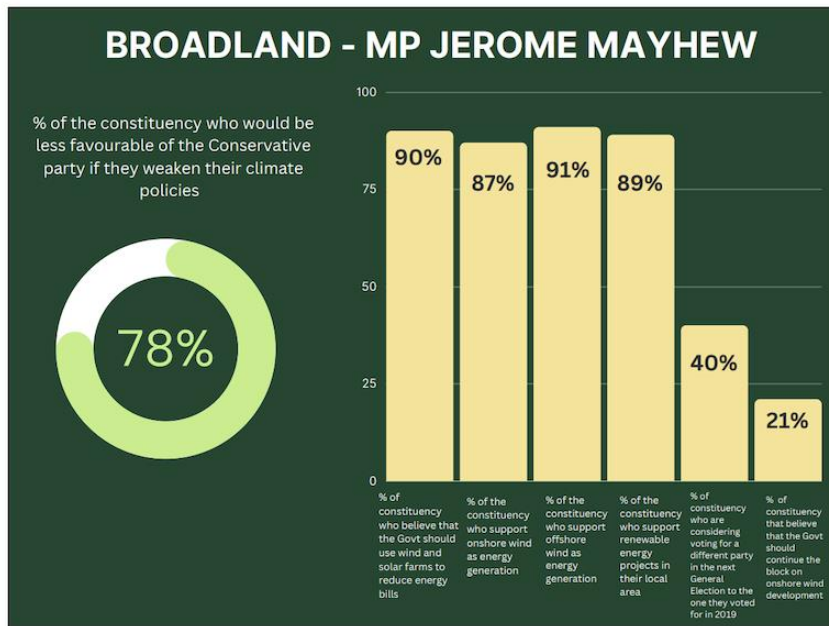
Voter Attitudes

The campaign drew on an accessible and relevant [survey](#) conducted by Survation for Renewable UK in 2022 on voter attitudes to forms of renewable energy and the attitudes of politicians to renewables.

Unlike most national surveys which poll about 2000 people, this involved over 6000 and so could be broken down to Constituency level.

Attitudes of Constituents

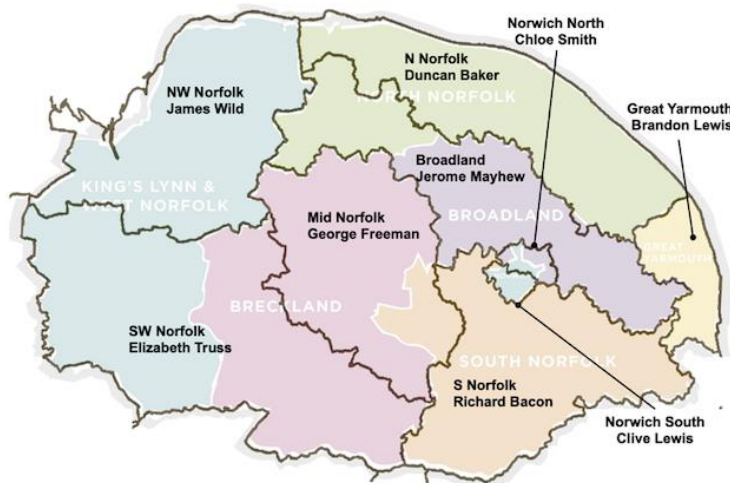
Survation carried out polling in every constituency on public attitudes to renewable energy. Voters in every single constituency in England, Scotland, and Wales strongly support offshore wind and the building of local renewable energy projects. Find below the results for Jerome Mayhew's constituency, Broadland.



Data from Survation Poll of 6114 UK adults, broken out at Westminster Constituency level. Poll conducted for RenewableUK, fieldwork 27 July – 4 August, 2022. [View poll and data link.](#)

Broadland page of Get Norfolk Greener website, showing attitudes of voters in Jerome Mayhew's Constituency. (Contrary to the assumptions of many politicians, this and other polling shows most Conservative voters are more not less enthusiastic about renewable energy than Labour voters).

The Intersection of Norfolk Councils and Constituencies

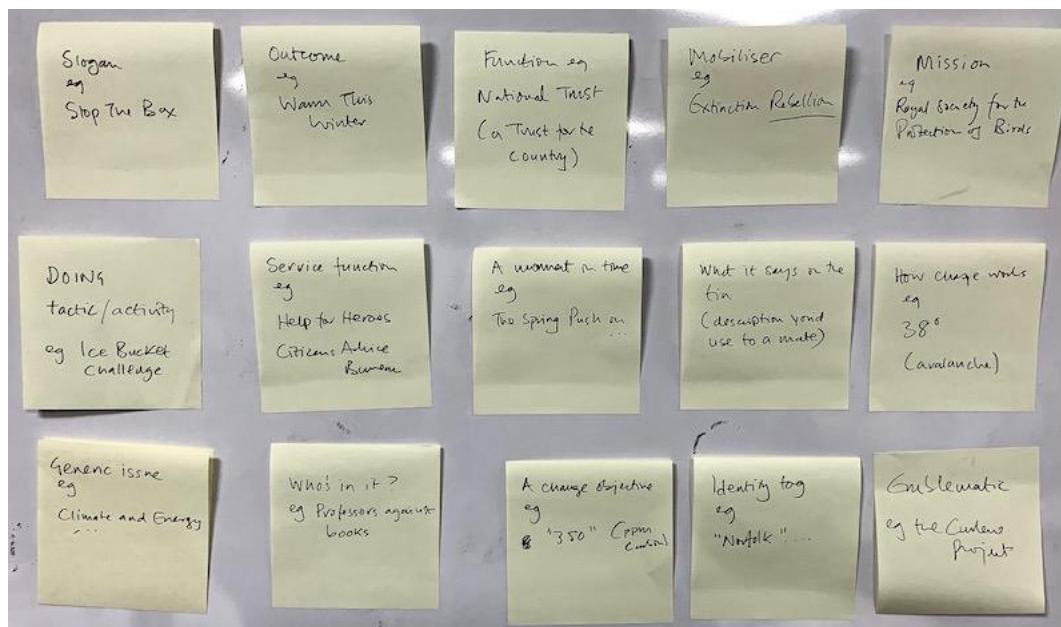


Westminster Constituencies overlaying District Councils & Norwich City Council

The political geography of Norfolk.

Campaign Name

Once the research was finished, the campaign needed a name that would ideally sound 'normal', sum up what it was for and trying to do, and relate to locality (identity – weighted to Settler but not excluding to others). Students used these functional cues to brainstorm possible names.



In 15 minutes the students came up with these names: Green Norfolk Nine, Get Norfolk Greener, Warm Up the Pledge, Norfolk Climate Action, Heat Norfolk's Homes, Pledge Against Poverty, UEA Student Pledge, Norfolk Student Pledge, Give Truss The Trust, Norfolk Students Warm This Winter, Climate Action in Norfolk, UEA Action For Norfolk Energy, End Fuel Poverty in Norfolk, Keep Norfolk Warm This Winter, Norfolk MP Pressure Group, Chris & The Cool Kids, The Student's Pledge To Save The hedge, The Student's Pledge to Give Norfolk The Environmental Edge.

There are pros and cons to all of these. Immediately after that session we had a talk on how local councils work from Felix Brueggemann, Communications Officer for North Norfolk District Council and asked him what he thought. "Three word names are popular" he said, tapping 'Get Norfolk Greener'. So we adopted that.



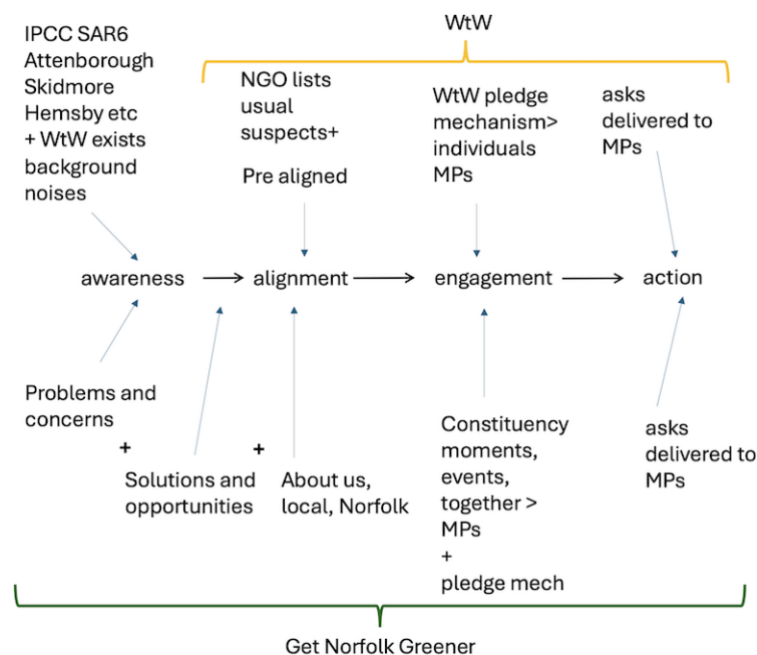
Felix Brueggemann of NNDC

Logo

Students developed a logo for the campaign following similar principles to the name. It wanted to say 'place' (identity) and 'green'. A map of Norfolk was tried, a long with a green tree but the map of Norfolk is not very recognizable and the campaign was not about tree planting. In the end it was based on the road signs you see when entering Norfolk, a 'you are here'.



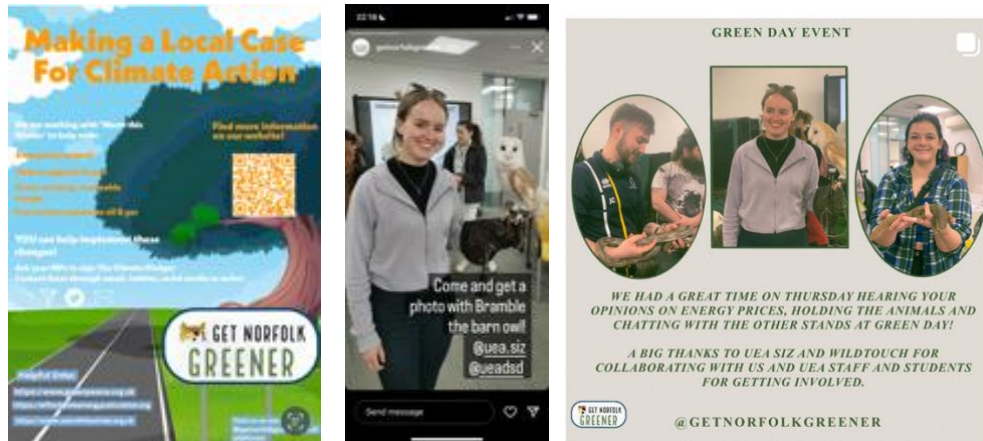
The Plan



Above: overview of how the campaign design localised the WtW pledge: framing it as a local campaign, and bringing that to Constituency level with messengers and evidences.

Campaign Launch

For logistical reasons and because we hoped to engage some of the 3,700 staff, 4,000 post-grad researchers and 12,000 undergraduate students at UEA, the campaign was launched at a (pre-existing) 'Green Day' held at SIZ, the UEA Student Information Zone.



Students made a flier with a QR code linking to the website and social media. After considering free coffee as an incentive to other attract students, the team chose animals because so many students miss contact with pets or wildlife. The campaign paid a local animal rescue charity ([Wild Touch](#)) to attend with animals used to meeting people, attracting crowds to talk to.

Realising that a lot of people were still walking past, two students found a small whiteboard and turned it into a stop-and-talk device, in the shape of an instant opinion survey. This led to several deeper conversations and local stories, together with the insight that many students didn't know what an 'energy crisis' or 'energy poverty' actually meant.



a good stop-and-talk device



open question - and we display your choice - it counts - you can see that: great invitation to a conversation, puts respondent in control + accountability - this is who we are

Re-Purposing The Affordable Energy Calculator

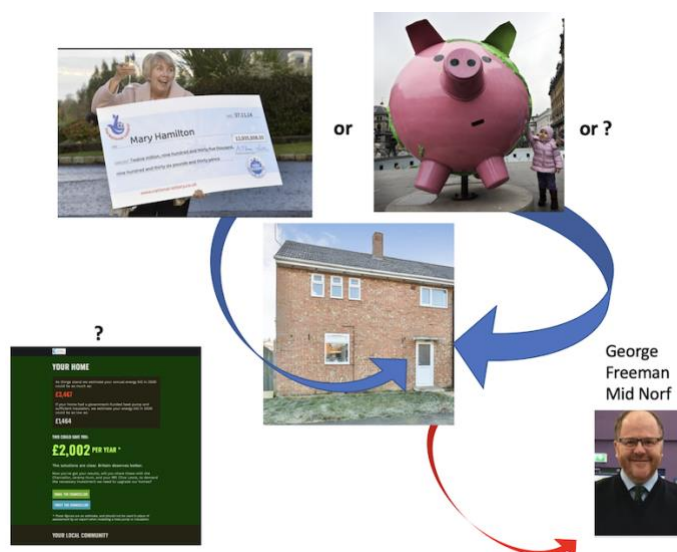
As part of the national WtW campaign, Greenpeace, working with Cambridge Econometrics, had produced an online [Affordable Energy Calculator](#).

With the answers to a few simple questions about any home, this neatly converted the complicated and techy question of upgrading homes with heat pumps and insulation into a simple, personalised results in money terms.



The screenshot shows the 'AFFORDABLE ENERGY CALCULATOR' interface. At the top left is the Cambridge Econometrics logo. The main heading is 'AFFORDABLE ENERGY CALCULATOR' in white text on a dark green background. Below this, it says 'Supported by GREENPEACE' and 'Heating your home shouldn't cost the earth'. The main body of the page is white and contains the following text: 'UK homes waste more energy than any in Western Europe. But it doesn't have to be this way.' followed by 'Greener homes would keep communities warm and healthy and save us all money in the middle of a cost of living crisis.' Below this is a bold heading: 'SEE HOW MUCH YOU AND YOUR COMMUNITY COULD SAVE.' There is a text input field labeled 'Postcode'. Below the field is a small disclaimer: 'Data collected on this form will be stored anonymously and used to illustrate how much people across the UK could save on their energy bills.' At the bottom is a large green button labeled 'GO'.

Greenpeace agreed to let students repurpose the Calculator. They set out to visualise the results of householders willing to use it as a way to send a message to their MP, which could also be shared with local and social media.

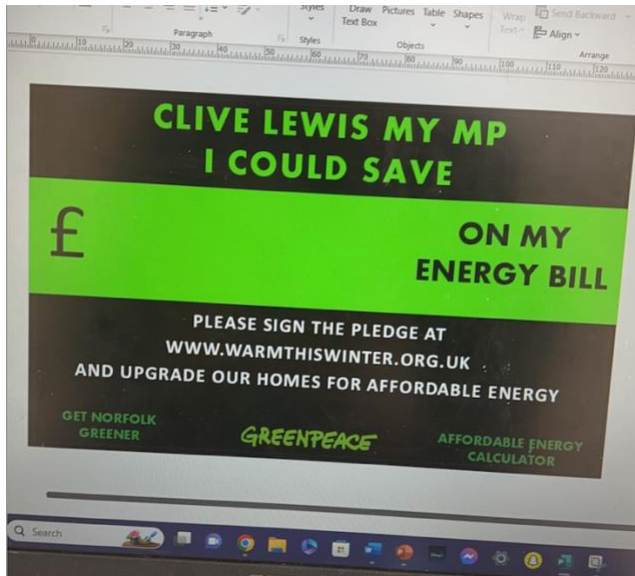


Stimulus from an ideas generation session on using visual language to combine householder, saving money and their home to personalise and visualise the Affordable Energy Calculator.

Students considered various ways to say 'savings' or 'more money' in visual terms, and what emotion should be conveyed (eg angry, hopeful, cross, celebratory etc).

Candidate visuals included a piggy bank and a presentation cheque (above) but they opted for a changeable Estate Agents' type sign, retaining the Greenpeace colours and 'shouting out' to the MP.

This could turn the act of using of an online App into a publicly visible if micro real-life public event, on the archetypal 'doorstep'.



Sign design on a student's computer for use by bill payers outside their homes



Broadland Constituent Sophie, in Fakenham, holding an Affordable Energy Calculator sign calling for MP support. After a bit of experimentation, students opted for the handmade changeable £ numbers, mimicking changeable signs on cars in used car lots (at the suggestion of our printers).



Instagram posts. Lydia from NR14 south-east of Norwich, and her large poorly insulated house with a huge potential saving.

Lydia - MP Richard Bacon

"Protect the environment as well as people's pockets"

Appearance can be deceptive. Lydia tells us about her mums home in NR14 and how difficult it is to heat the space. It's a family home which is sentimental, her mum bought it when she was in her early 20's and is now a pensioner, and over the years it has become less affordable to maintain.

Lydia discussed having to wear gloves indoors during the winter as she works from home and it is unaffordable to heat her home due to its size.

13:52

Act now! UEA students enlist Norfolk MPs for energy campaign

In East Anglia, over one in ten households live in fuel poverty. Houses with poor energy efficiency suffer the worst. Action is needed now.

by East Anglia Bylines — May 13, 2023 in Climate, East Anglia, Energy, Featured, Politics



Get Norfolk Greener with their messages to the nine Norfolk MPs. Photo credit: Get Norfolk Greener.

Outside Norwich City Council offices - article in [East Anglia Bylines](#)

Listen: Get Norfolk Greener Live Radio Interview on The Social

May 17, 2023

Niamh Sheehan and Dilys Goodridge spoke to Kitty Perrin live on The Social, a BBC Radio Norfolk show for young people by young people, about the Get Norfolk Greener campaign. They discussed where the Get Norfolk Greener campaign originated, the... [Read More »](#)



The campaign was covered in several local radio interviews

MP Sign-Ups

During the 19 days from the campaign launch to the end of the module, the campaign succeeded in holding one face to face video meeting, with Duncan Baker, Conservative MP for North Norfolk. During the call he agreed to sign the Pledge, becoming the fourth Conservative MP to do so (of [47 MPs nationally to date](#)). Duncan Baker is a member of the Conservative Environmental Network and a member of the UK Parliament's Environmental Audit Committee.



'Thumbs up' as Duncan Baker MP backs the Pledge

As well as students, the call was joined by local resident and businessman Matt Higham, who runs a Deli in Wells next the Sea. He [described](#) how high temperatures in 2022 had forced his shop to shut because the refrigeration system could not cope, and called for more rapid action against climate heating.

Deli in Wells, Norfolk, Hit By Climate Change

May 14, 2023



Matt Higham, manager of Arthur Howells Deli in Staithe Street, Wells-Next-The-Sea, has had his business impacted by climate change, so he has asked his MP Duncan Baker to sign the Warm This Winter pledge because, "we need more rapid action to curb climate heating".

"Last summer if go so hot our refrigeration could not cope. We had to shut" says Matt Higham. "Small businesses like ours are already being damaged by climate change. We need to act and do everything we can to stop it get worse."

Duncan Baker said: “I am delighted to sign this pledge because it is so important to create a cleaner and greener future for generations to come. I also wholly agree in doing all we can to retrofit our housing stock to help keep households warm every winter. From small changes we can do ourselves to larger actions within governments we need to continue investing in sustainable and renewable forms of energy”.

Later the same day, Clive Lewis, the Labour MP for South Norwich also signed the WtW Pledge, saying “Glad to sign this pledge from @ThisWinterUK and @GetNorfolkGreen. My Energy Equity Bill demands a rapid expansion of retrofitting and a universal energy allowance. I am very proud to see this student-led campaign fighting for energy equity in Norfolk”.



From Get Norfolk Greener social posts

Jerome Mayhew MP wrote to a Constituent explaining the reasons he would not sign the pledge, while Chloe Smith, MP for Norwich North, issued a statement explaining why she would not be signing “for now”.

Five Constituents wrote to NW Norfolk MP James Wild but despite several follow up messages, no reply was received. Constituents also wrote to Richard Bacon and Brandon Lewis but received no response. The campaign was unable to find Constituents to write to Liz Truss and George Freeman.

Both Freeman and Bacon were involved with a campaign against electricity pylons to carry power from offshore wind energy to connect with the National Grid, through their Constituencies. George Freeman and Chloe Smith both had Government Ministerial jobs at the time (the usual UK Government convention is that Ministers do not support non-governmental campaigns, although in practice they do manage it if it suits their purposes).

North West Norfolk Constituency



Awaiting a response

Get Norfolk Greener has contacted North West Norfolk's MP James Wild, asking him to sign the Warm This Winter pledge to commit to expanding renewable energy and protecting his constituents from fuel poverty. He has yet to respond.

Conclusions

Get Norfolk Greener was a student learning process and neither a test of a model for NGO campaigns nor a test of the student's abilities by results.

Achieving two MP sign-ups was better than might have been expected and as many of the students commented in their reflections, had we started active campaign earlier, had the long Easter holiday not existed, and had we gone on longer, we could have achieved more. Sentiments many readers may have encountered in professional campaign evaluations. They also identified the need to build up a stable of social media post material in advance and the missing local events in Constituencies.

One major disappointment was our general failure to effectively utilise the community of UEA (some 3,700 staff and 4,000 postgrads as well as 12,000 undergrads) as a 'pool to fish from' to find Constituents (and then their friends or neighbours). There are a number of reasons why this may have been the case.

Perhaps the toughest job fell to the students researching the attitudes and activities of District Councils. They accumulated a lot of information and intelligence and made some useful 1-1 contacts but were not helped by the May 4 Local Elections which distracted Councils and prevented Officers from making any public statements, which I should have anticipated. If the project had gone on longer and we had succeeded in running at least one event in each Constituency, bringing together MPs with Councillors and the public could have been very useful. As it was the Affordable Energy Calculator home visits turned out to work well and absorbed a lot of the available time.

In my opinion Get Norfolk Greener's work probably meant WtW achieved more than it otherwise would have done in Norfolk. One rather obvious reason for that is that although the national WtW coalition is in theory impressively large, only a small proportion of the organisations behind seemed to be actively engaged on the ground, as opposed to sharing asks online. Fewer still seem to be able (or ready?) to turn out members, supporters or other contacts willing and able to engage with their MPs as Constituents.

There may be many reasons for this but perhaps especially in the case of issues that affect land in rural areas, it puts them at a disadvantage compared to interest groups such as the

NFU (National Farmers Union), long seen as the most effective lobby in Westminster politics. (As discussed in previous posts on [intensive farming](#) and Bovine TB in cattle and badgers [here](#) and [here](#), the NFU is assiduous in [encouraging](#) individual farmers to act as messengers and engage face-to-face with political processes).

Members sought for National Park and AONB Conservation Boards

🕒 24 January 2023

📄 Text only view

* Environment



Defra is looking for new Secretary of State members to join National Park Authorities and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Conservation Boards around the country. The deadline for applications is 20 February 2023.

The National Park Authorities and AONB Conservation Boards play an important role in achieving the government's commitments to protect 30% of land by 2030, and their target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Secretary of State members have an important role in delivering these targets, while championing diversity and inclusion, especially in identifying strategies to improve access to protected landscapes to all parts of society.

Influencing your area

Secretary of State members have an important role in influencing priorities for National Park Authorities and AONBs. For example, they:

[NFU post](#) encouraging farmers to join the Boards controlling National Parks in 2023. Of course it's right to have some farmers on such Boards but they are often over-represented and National Parks are not supposed to be farm-parks. Agricultural intensification is still taking place in the UK's 'National Parks', to the detriment of nature, amenity and ecosystem function.

As to climate and energy, the 2010-15 situation documented in *Killing The Wind Of England* has changed – now for example there is an organised green group – [Conservative Environment Network](#) (CEN) - amongst Conservative MPs with over 150 MP members and 500 Councillors. Duncan Baker who signed the WtW Pledge is one but so is Jerome Mayhew who didn't, and George Freeman who is now a CEN 'alumnus'. On the other hand, the Conservative ['Net Zero](#)

[Scrutiny Group](#) of about 20 – 30 MPs, ex MPs, Lords and political supporters formed in 2021, has been actively lobbying to obstruct progress in ending use of fossil fuels, and shares members and has many ties with the same political network that forced Cameron into the ‘Green Crap’ reversal. They are very unrepresentative of public opinion in the UK, including amongst Conservative voters but may be more cohesive and determined than CEN – it’s hard to tell.

At any event, there is much to be gained by the proponents of pro-environmental action organising to have a more effective ground game. In the case of Get Norfolk Greener, although we were admittedly an unknown quantity, despite contacting NGOs, we struggled to find three Constituents in each of nine Constituencies, who were prepared to sign a letter asking to meet with their MP.

So, how ambitious would it be for national NGOs to set up a reliable pool of say six people in each Westminster Constituency prepared to meet with their MPs to press the environmental case at a Constituency level?

There are 650 UK Westminster Constituencies. $650 \times 6 = 3,900$ people. The average number of voters per Constituency is 74,000. Six would be 0.008% of the Constituents. Not a very large proportion.

In his recent book [Reflections](#) former RSPB executive Mark Avery argues that the much quoted nominal 7m combined memberships of conservation NGOs in the UK probably actually represents about 500,000 individuals but that is still a large number.

If Mark Avery is right and the real number of ‘committed wildlife conservation supporters’ is about 500,000, finding 3,900 committed enough to meet their MP when needed would mean persuading 0.78% of them.

But of course there are other people who might ‘strongly agree’ that their MP should act on a cause they care about – in WtW’s case for example, the agenda is much broader than just that of environment groups. In reality, building such representation is also not just about asking people who are paying supporters of cause NGOs. In the case of Get Norfolk Greener some of those who did contact their MPs did so because I know them as friends, and I asked. The same was true of some of the friends of students. Activating those strong social bonds cannot be done just through mailing lists and social media.

And it’s true that in some of the national UK NGOs there are people whose job is to organise in this way, although not always with contacting MPs in mind. Plus there are often just one or two of them, far fewer than devoted to other tasks. Some national NGOs make a virtue of working closely with the many existing (and new) local campaign groups at the ‘grass roots’, which is a good thing so far as it goes but it can be a very lop-sided relationship, where the volunteer locals gradually burn out as they are left to do too much of the groundwork, especially in evenings and at weekends, with little or no access to the resources of the established NGOs which have been accumulated through marketing and fundraising.

I don’t know how true this is in other countries but in the UK at least it seems to me that one reason there is such a gap between public opinion on issues like climate change, and the

actions of politicians, is that the expressed opinion captured in polling or manifest online is not sufficiently expressed face to face.

It's long been said that "all politics is local" and that remains true, even when it comes to tackling global issues like climate change.

Thanks Due

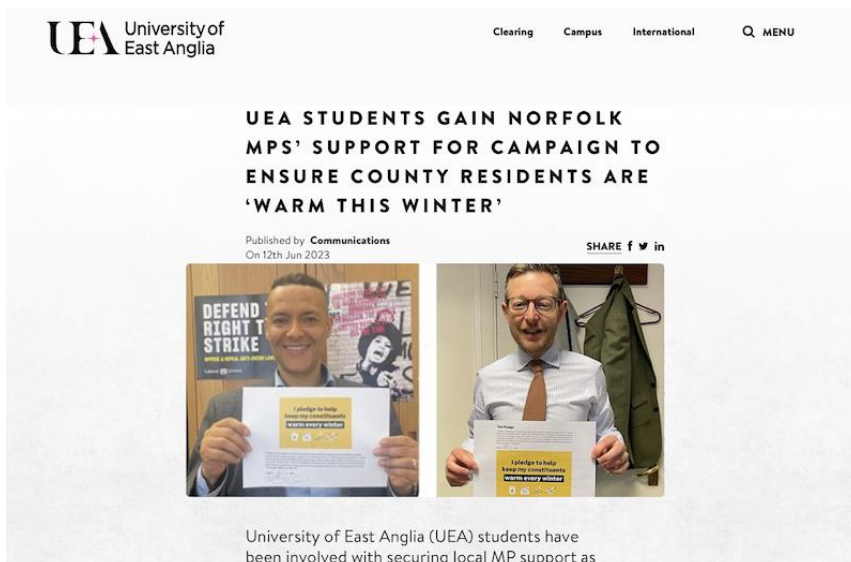
The UEA Activism project had useful 'remote' support from Uplift, Green Alliance, End Fuel Poverty Coalition and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT), and collaborated with the Greenpeace group in Norwich on the Affordable Energy Calculator home visits. Nick Acheson, an Ambassador for NWT spoke to students about nature in Norfolk, John and Rory Scott of KSBR gave an introduction to the techniques of qualitative research, John Tully of UEA ran a session on project management, Dr Jeff Price shared his research, and Jenny Kirk organised interview practice with UEA Broadcast Journalism students. Thanks to them all and the UEA Broadcast House facilities team without whom I would have thoroughly failed on IT. Finally thanks to all the students, who taught me a lot.



Some of the UEA 2023 Activist Campaigning module students



A qualitative research training session with [KSBR](#)



UEA wrote up the project [here](#)

Given the effort invested in creating the WtW coalition, I suspect it's likely to continue in some form until the next UK General Election, and will try to build on that bridgehead of 47 MPs.

*The groups being: 350.org, 38 Degrees, ACRE - Action With Communities in Rural England, Ashden, Bioregional, CPRE, The Countryside Charity, Centre for Sustainable Energy, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, Chartered Institute of Housing, Citizens UK, ClientEarth, Climate Cymru, Debt Justice, End Fuel Poverty Coalition, Fair Energy Campaign, Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland, Fuel Poverty Action, Global Action Plan, Global Witness, Green Alliance, Green Christian, Greenpeace UK, High Peak Green New Deal, Hope For The Future, Hope Valley Climate Action, Intergenerational Foundation, Islamic Relief,

Make My Money Matter, Moorlands Climate Action, NEON, New Economics Foundation, Northern Housing Consortium, Operation Noah, Oxfam GB, Parents for Future UK, Possible, RSPB, Save the Children, Stand As One, The Climate Coalition, The Wildlife Trusts, Uplift, WWF UK, We Care Campaign, Women's Institute

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