Designing Communication that Changes Behaviour
Caroline Wilson (cwilson@dmu.ac.uk), Dr Katherine N. Irvine and Dr. Grieg Mill
Institute of Energy and Sustainable Development, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK

Introduction
Changing attitudes and norms can be a successful route to adjusting unsustainable consumption habits in the developed world. Less clear is how communication campaigns work towards encouraging these changes. Examining variables from two well-respected theories could deliver enhanced communication effectiveness. The potential value of this study is that it may help to account for a lack of success of some mass communication campaigns in which knowledge acquisition has failed to have attitudinal and/or behavioural consequences.

Framework
The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) was used alongside the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) to build a framework for examining the chain of effects from receipt of communication through to behaviour change.

Method
Participants were initially approached immediately after taking part in a communication activity focussed on changing environmentally significant behaviours. A second data collection a month later tracked whether, with time, intentions had been translated into actions.

Results
Evidence was found to support a causal chain. The effects of some communication variables was transmitted through other variables in a behaviour change chain.

Discussion
Communicators and evaluators need to design and measure campaigns with the understanding that communication does not always have direct effects. This may mean different messages are needed for consumers at different stages of contemplating behaviour change. It also means evaluations need to track progress along the route to behaviour change, not just behaviour change itself.

Illustrations:
• Above: Example of campaign materials used to encourage behaviour change.
• Right: Messages can have their impact through attitudinal changes rather than direct.
• Far right: One campaign activity saw shoppers targeted with Switch it Off message.

Acknowledgements:
This work has been made possible as a result of a bursary funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council.