

## **Research Project: Behaviour Change and Social Marketing: Promoting Sustainable Behaviours.**

**Researchers:** Prof Ken Peattie, Dr Sue Peattie, Dr Lorraine Whitmarsh, Dr Adam Corner, Lori Frater, Dr Hazel Nash

**Background:** There is widespread agreement that the transition to more sustainable production and consumption systems has a significant behavioural component relating to consumers, managers, investors and other stakeholders. A number of approaches to behavioural change have been applied to promote more sustainable behaviours including those based around regulation, financial incentives, social marketing interventions and 'nudge' based measures rooted in behavioural economics and the framing of information. Taking a broad perspective much of BRASS research involves at least an element of promoting sustainable behaviours through regulation, economic measures, marketing activities or the management of infrastructure. There are also other projects that relate to specific behaviours such as transport behaviours (see A2) or climate/energy behaviours (see A33). However there are certain elements of BRASS work that are more explicitly dedicated to understanding influences more broadly on sustainable behaviours, the range of complex factors that influence them, and to testing particular approaches to behaviour change.

### **Aims and objectives:**

- To understand the potential of social marketing approaches to promote pro-sustainability and responsible behaviours amongst a range of stakeholders;
- To analyse the potential of financial measures to promote more sustainable consumer and householder behaviour;
- To better understand the potential for new regulation to influence consumer and retailer behaviour;

**About the research:** This project had several distinct elements:

- **Regulating behaviours:** This involved a study of the introduction of the new mandatory charge for single use carrier bags in Wales in 2011. A team of researchers conducted questionnaire based interviews amongst consumers and businesses immediately after the introduction of the charge. The research produced an analysis of the attitudes, awareness and acceptance of the charge by the public and an analysis of the attitudes of retail companies, their level of understanding of the regulations and Welsh Government guidance, how they have introduced the charge (including staff training and record keeping) and how they will disseminate the proceeds from the charge.
- **Financial incentives for sustainable behaviour:** Through a study of direct and variable charging (DVC) for waste management as a tool for local government to influence behaviour. DVC schemes typically involve charging householders for the amount of residual waste they produce requiring collection and not charging for recyclables. This can be done based on weight of waste collected or on the number and size of containers used.
- **Social marketing for sustainable behaviours:** Although social marketing has been established as an approach to behaviour change since the 1970s the vast majority of applications have concerned health issues. More recently it has been increasingly applied to issues of environmental sustainability and BRASS has been involved in theoretical work exploring the potential application of social marketing for behaviours such as consumption reduction and low-carbon living (see A33) and to explore the extent to which sustainability applications may require a theoretically different approach to social marketing and the emergence of hybrid social/commercial approaches to marketing.
- **The influence of self-identity on sustainable behaviours:** Amongst the range of influences on sustainable behaviours, self-identity (rather than social identity) is under-researched and this

work sought to assess the influence of pro-environmental self-identify on consistency across a range of behaviours along with the more conventional influences of pro-environmental values, perceived behavioural control, subjective norm, attitudes, and demographic factors. This was studied through a postal survey of a representative sample of the UK population to which more than 550 responded, and a literature review and workshop on breaking and creating habits for sustainability.

**Results and outputs:** The mandatory single use shopping bag research showed that although the vast majority of people in Wales were aware of it, much of the detail was misunderstood, such as what type of bags and shops were subject to the charge. In particular despite 70% support for the charge among shoppers, very few people were aware that the money could go to charity, with a significant minority of people (13%) believing that the charge was introduced for financial or economic reasons. Although the Welsh Government sent out 40,000 information packs to retailers, the majority of those surveyed reported receiving no official information about the charge. Like consumers, they relied on the media or other retailers for their information.

Findings from the work on self-identity show it to be a significant behavioural determinant over and above conventional Theory of Planned Behaviour variables for carbon offsetting behaviours. However, pro-environmental self-identity was only a significant predictor for certain other pro-environmental behaviours; background variables were also important predictors.

- Frater, L. (2012), Leading the charge? Payment for single use carrier bags in Wales, [\*Northern Ireland Law Quarterly\*](#), 63 (4), 551-562
- Peattie, S. and Peattie, K. (2012), [Social marketing for a sustainable environment](#), in Hastings, G. et al.( eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Social Marketing*, pp. 343-358
- Whitmarsh, L. and O'Neill, S. (2010), [Green identity, green living? The role of pro-environmental self-identity in determining consistency across diverse pro-environmental behaviours](#), *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 30 (3), 305-314
- Peattie, K. and Peattie, S. (2009), [Social marketing: A pathway to consumption reduction?](#) *Journal of Business Research*, 62 (2), 260-268

**Impacts achieved/potential for impact:** In 2010 four BRASS Researchers contributed to an invited submission to the *House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee* call for evidence on Behaviour Change. BRASS expertise in social marketing for behaviour change has been fed into a range of different initiatives and organisations. BRASS is an accredited supplier of research services to the Welsh Government's *Sustainable Living Framework*, and it has provided training, consultancy or help in social marketing's use for the promotion of pro-health and safety behaviours (for Norfolk Council), of responsible consumer behaviour (for the Trading Standards Authority), of pro-sustainability behaviours for the Climate Change Commission Wales, Wales Council for Voluntary Action, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and the Fire Services for the UK and Wales (see also A33). Dr Sue Peattie was also responsible for developing educational materials for the UK National Social Marketing Centre, and working with them and a number of other stakeholders to develop a set of professional standards for social marketing.