

Business threats and opportunities from the social challenge

“To understand how people respond to a changing environment and develop thriving, cohesive and informed communities.”

Issue

The behaviour and choices made by people in response to environmental change will affect the extent and speed with which the country can mitigate against, and adapt to, these changes.

One of the greatest uncertainties in the global climate change models is what level of GHG emissions there will be in 2020, 2030 etc. This will ultimately be decided by the choices of billions of individuals.

Understanding behaviour and its consequences is complex; recent studies have shown that energy consumption between matched households in identical properties can vary by a factor of seven because of different lifestyle choices.

How can people be encouraged to change their behaviour? Why are some messages or interventions to change behaviour successful and others are not? How do ‘tipping points’ occur in public perception when a previously acceptable social behaviour becomes suddenly unacceptable?

Business Threats

- Consumers reject products/brands that are not regarded as sustainable.
- ‘Localism agenda’: individuals and communities demanding more localised food production and procurement systems.
- Current production systems and products can be seen to be a problem and ‘wrong’ irrespective of the actual evidence. Public opinion may lead to an effective ban.

Business Opportunities

- New products/brands that are ‘sustainable’.
- ‘Localism agenda’: individuals and communities demanding more localised food production and procurement systems.
- New business models based around selling to community groups rather than individuals; eg communities buying wind turbines, car clubs etc.
- Innovative products that allow consumers to make choices about their own environment impact; eg smart meters for energy use.
- New patterns of living and working that are more sustainable; eg use of digital communications to support an increase in home working.

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