



BRAND TOOLKIT

HOW TO CREATE AND ESTABLISH **A NET ZERO** BRAND IN YOUR COMMUNITY

INTRODUCTION

WHY THIS MATTERS

Reaching net zero isn't just about swapping boilers or building solar farms. It's about people and the small choices we all make every day. From how we travel to how we heat our homes, the path to a low-carbon future runs through our communities.

But "net zero" can feel distant or confusing. People might care about bills, air quality, or warm homes but don't know where to start.

This toolkit helps councils, community groups, and anyone rolling up their sleeves on climate action to build a simple, powerful, home-grown brand people recognise, relate to, and want to join.

It's based on what we learned in Peterborough, it's designed to be useful anywhere communities are driving the transition.



WHY PETERBOROUGH?

Peterborough is full of contrasts. It's urban and rural, fast-growing and deeply rooted, diverse and full of potential, but it's also dealing with real challenges like fuel poverty, housing quality, and transport access. That made it a great place to explore how a net zero brand could work in practice.

We worked with residents, businesses, and community partners to understand what builds trust and drives action.

WHAT WORKS

People trust people – especially people they know. Use local networks to spread the message – they will know how their audience likes to consume information.

One size doesn't fit all – messaging needs to speak directly to different audiences.

Test and tweak – listen, learn, and adapt.

Money matters. When trusted local bodies handle funding, people are more likely to engage.

Keep it simple – clear, jargon-free communication works best.

We discovered that residents do not always respond well to "net zero" and prefer terms like "future ready" or "warm and healthy homes" – and so the FutureNow brand was created for Peterborough.



STEP #1

DIVE INTO WHAT YOU WANT YOUR BRAND TO BE AND TO DO

Before developing a brand, you need to start to think like a changemaker...

Ask your team:

- Why does this matter here?
- Who are you reaching and benefiting?
- Where will you focus?
- What activities fit local needs?
- When's the right moment to act?

Be specific about your purpose

If you're too broad, it'll be hard for people to relate. If you're too vague, you won't stand out. So, take the time to get clear - what change do you actually want to see?

Understand what's already out there

Find out what your community already cares about. Listen through surveys or conversations, connect with existing groups, and assess your resources.

Build your network early

Map partners such as councils, faith groups, schools, or local initiatives. Share your "why," invite collaboration, and keep a track of your most valuable/influential contacts.

A brand is more than a logo - it's how people recognise, connect with, and trust your work. A strong local brand becomes a rallying point that builds action and community ownership.

Theory of Change

The theory of change helps explain why our communications approach is designed the way it is, showing how a strong, values led brand can:

- See the issue as relevant,
- Feel part of something,
- Know what to do,
- Trust those asking them to act.

STEP #2

UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCE

Before designing a campaign, or planning events, work out who you're speaking to. It might be homeowners, renters, or high-street businesses - and each needs a different approach.

In Peterborough, we identified key audiences including people at risk of fuel poverty, homeowners, local organisations and community groups. Through engagement activities we identified their barriers and motivations for change, which formed the foundations for messaging in the FutureNow campaign.

Be specific

The clearer the picture, the better your communication. Sometimes one broad, community-wide approach works; other times, narrower targeting is key. Look at who is most affected, who is most active, and who you most need to influence, then shape the approach around them.

People first, data second

Data shows the big picture; lived experience gives meaning. Together, they help you design realistic, inclusive solutions

Tap into local knowledge

Monitor local social media, news, and community events. Talk to trusted connectors including faith leaders, teachers, and businesses to find out what really matters.



Look at the numbers

Use Census or local authority data for context including housing, age, income, or language, to understand your starting point.

STEP #3

WHAT'S GETTING IN THE WAY?

Once you know your audience, uncover what stops them from acting and what might motivate them.

People's choices aren't about caring less, they're about practicality, trust, and affordability. Listening builds understanding and empathy and a shared solution.

Through focus groups, surveys, and interviews, we dug into what motivates people and what gets in their way.



Typical common barriers

- Cost and affordability
- Limited information or time
- Landlord restrictions
- Noise or disruption concerns
- Planning hurdles
- Lack of trust in installers or advice

And motivators... (and how they link to net zero)

- Saving money ...by using less energy
- Comfort and warmth ...from better insulation
- Family and future generations ...protected from climate change and air pollution
- Local pride and community connection ...with local energy projects and reduced waste
- Visible project results ...keeping transparent about climate projects successes and barriers

Residents valued local, honest, and clear communication that recognises real-world challenges and focuses on fairness and community pride.

Make it easy to take part

We learned that practical support like food, childcare, travel costs, or just giving people a voucher for their time could make a big difference in getting people to turn up and speak honestly. It shows respect. And it makes involvement feel like a two-way street.

Top Tip

Your brand values don't need to be complicated. For the FutureNow brand, we landed on four:

Leader.
Positive.
Transparent.
Innovative.

STEP #4

NAMING YOUR BRAND - MAKE IT FEEL LIKE IT BELONGS

TOP TIP: Your brand name doesn't have to explain everything. Let your tagline, tone and visual identity help tell the full story. Keep the name simple, and build the meaning through everything else you do.

What we learned makes a great name

- Short, simple, and memorable.
- Distinct from other "green" projects.
- Easy to say and spell, for accessibility.
- Reflective of your community and tone.

How to create it

- Note recurring words or ideas from focus groups.
- Explore local phrases, slang, or natural features.
- Check if the name is available (for instance locally, on Companies House and website domains. Consider if you need to trademark it).
- Test options with residents or partners – which option resonates?

Keep the name simple; the story will grow around it.

Define your tone of voice.

Your brand is more than what you say, it's how you say it. Friendly? Plain-speaking? Playful? Straight to the point? The tone of voice should match the values and vibe of your community.

Write a short sentence about your brand's personality. For example:

"We're friendly and positive, like your neighbour who always knows what's going on. We keep things clear and jargon-free, and we care about the things people actually worry about."

STEP #5

BRINGING THE DESIGN TO LIFE

Now it's time to give your brand a visual identity, a look that people will recognise, relate to and feel proud to share

Build a 'stylescape'

A stylescape is basically a moodboard with a purpose. It's a way to explore the colours, fonts, images and textures that express the feel of your brand. Think of it as a way to test how your brand could look before jumping into logos and layouts.



A good logo should be

Simple – Too much detail won't work at small sizes

Scalable – Needs to look good on a phone screen or a banner

Flexible – Works in colour and black-and-white

Meaningful – It should reflect your values or place.

Accessible – It should be readable and clear

Next step: Once you've got a draft, get feedback again. Ask your audience "does it feel recognisable? Does it stand out? Could you explain it to a friend? "

Top tip: Consider colour accessibility check websites such as www.colourcontrast.cc to understand if your colour choices pass or fail worldwide guidelines

Create short brand guidelines

To make sure your brand stays strong and consistent as your team or project grows, write down some simple brand rules. Make sure to cover:

- Mission and values,
- Logo use, colours, and typography,
- Image and illustration style,
- Tone of voice summary.

Top tip: Make this a living document. Keep it short, keep it practical, and keep it shared.

STEP #6

TEST IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Testing your brand with your community gives you the chance to check what resonates, what doesn't, and what needs tweaking before you go live. Think of it as a two-way conversation. You're not just saying, "Here's what we've made." You're asking, "Does this feel like it's yours too?"

Turn feedback into improvements

After testing, reflect on what you heard:

- What should be clearer?
- What needs simplifying?
- What could be more hopeful, more local, more human?

How to test

Share materials with real people – not just your team. In Peterborough, we shared draft posters with local people in the city centre and gathered feedback through focus groups and conversations. It helped us see what landed well and what needed work.

Here are some questions you could ask:

- What do you notice first?
- What's this about?
- Is it clear and useful?
- Would you trust it?
- Would you share it?

Try to speak with a mix of people from your key audiences and not just those who are already engaged, but also those who might be harder to reach or more sceptical. In our conversations, we asked people to rank which challenges felt like the biggest barriers in their day-to-day lives.

Here's what we heard most often

Cost concerns – upfront costs and running expenses of low-carbon tech

Comfort – wanting to keep homes warm without making sacrifices

Time and knowledge – not enough hours or headspace to figure it all out

Disruption – worries about mess, noise, or upheaval from installations

Renting – feeling stuck because the landlord won't upgrade

Planning – navigating permissions for improvements

Trust – not knowing where to turn for honest advice or installers.

By checking your messaging against these lived experiences, you can make sure your brand isn't ignoring people's realities and it's responding to them.

STEP #7

LAUNCH IT, TEST IT, AND KEEP IT ALIVE

**You've got a brand you believe in.
Now's the time to take it out into
the world.**

A strong local brand doesn't just exist online or in logos, it lives in people's conversations, on community noticeboards, in WhatsApp groups, at school gates and library counters. The more often people see it and connect with it, the more familiar, trustworthy, and useful it becomes.



Practical, low-cost ideas

- Host a stall at local events or markets.
- Add your brand to emails, newsletters, and social bios.
- Use posters in cafés, community buildings, and shop windows.
- Partner with schools or libraries.
- Give out small, useful branded items (avoid waste).

Track your progress

Reach – Social statistics, poster distribution, website visits

Recognition – Simple surveys or event feedback

Engagement – Sign-ups, QR scans, event attendance

Action – Pledges, referrals, downloads

Feedback – What people like or find confusing.



Keep it alive

Celebrate milestones and seasonal moments. Share real stories, refresh visuals, and showcase community champions. But let the brand evolve, keep it visible, human, and inclusive. The more local voices are woven into your brand, the stronger it becomes. So, let your community help shape where it goes next.