

## Climate Change - The Rest of the Story

Thank you all for being here. In 2016, working as the owner of a Project Management Consultancy I began to become aware of a deep sense of anxiety. It was quite debilitating and I had no idea where it was coming from.

I do not have time to talk about the journey I took to explore the source of this unexplained anxiety but it led me to doing a Masters in Ecological Design Thinking at Schumacher College in Devon.

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During my time there I learned three important things that shaped the way I see the world.

1. That we are not separate from the Natural World, we are deeply and unmistakably part of it.
2. That the global crises we face of Climate Change, Ecological imbalance and resulting biodiversity loss arise as a product of our habits of consumption and our economic growth mandate.
3. That our actions have significantly impacted the way the self-regulating systems of the planet interact. As a result the climate, and Earth's capacity to support life is changing perceptibly and in many respects irreversibly.

When looking from this perspective, there seems to be something missing from the prevailing attempts to 'fight' Climate Change.

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Much of the work that is being done at this time falls under the category of Climate Change Mitigation.

- **Climate Change Mitigation**

This embraces all efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to prevent the planet from warming to more extreme temperatures.

Mitigation strategies include

- **Retrofitting Buildings** to make them more energy efficient;
- adopting **Renewable Energy Sources** like solar and wind;
- helping communities develop more **Sustainable Transport**.
- promoting more **Sustainable Uses of Land and Forests**.

Climate Change Mitigation work is critical, but it is not the whole story.

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- **Reducing emissions is not the whole story**
  - ***Over Consumption***

Every year we consume natural resources 1.7 times faster than the planet can regenerate them. That is a global average. We would need the natural resources of 2.6 earths every year if everyone on the planet lived the way we do in the UK. Reducing our emissions is not the whole story.

- ***Framing Climate Change for the Public***

I still hear us talking about Climate Change as if it is something we can fix. The implication is that our 'solutions' can solve the problem and that we can continue to live the way we always have. This is a problematic and dangerous approach because it creates a false sense of security that stops us from a more appropriate response. It fails to acknowledge that our planetary situation is a result of Earth's massive self regulating systems becoming unstable. We have caused these imbalances, the resulting irreversible changes like the melting of the ice caps, and the warming of our seas and oceans have set these systems on a new path with new behaviours. It is a form of willful ignorance to perpetuate the notion that we can fix these problems. Reducing our emissions is not the whole story.

- ***Worldview Problems: Survival of the Fittest***

Our Westernised economy relies on the popular narrative that it is important for us to thrive independently. We are familiar with the notion that power begets power. We operate from an understanding that the resources that matter the most are scarce, and understand that more for you means less for me ... and it drives our behaviour. But what has this got to do with climate change? The worldview that says we must compete to survive does so at the expense of the Natural World we live within. The often marginalised indigenous perspective unites in reminding us that without understanding that we are all deeply connected to all life on this planet, we will never understand our place. We will continue to compete and consume; we will continue to destroy, and we will be destroyed. Reducing our emissions is not the whole story.

So what are we missing? Why is Climate Change Mitigation not enough? There is another approach that complements mitigation: Climate Change Adaptation.

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- **Climate Change Adaptation**

**Climate change adaptation** means altering our behavior, systems, and—in some cases—ways of life to protect our families, our economies, and the environment in which we live from the impacts of climate change. The concept embraces:

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- the understanding that Climate Change is upon us and that it will continue to intensify; <click>
- it recognises that the man-made supply chain systems that provide us with food, water and power are designed for efficiency, and less for resilience and will be easily interrupted by the volatility of changing labour and resource availability. <click>
- It understands that the greatest work we can do to protect the land and life we care for is right here in the place where we live; where we can work together to develop our skills and knowledge around regeneration to support the continued thriving of life.

The concept of Climate Change Adaptation is not reserved for 'the environment' but it lives deeply in our developing notions of economy, ecology and society.

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So what could this mean for us, here in Prestwood and Great Missenden?

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- It could mean broadening what we know about the Natural systems around us, embracing the knowledge that is already here, and supporting interesting ways to make that knowledge more accessible and meaningful to all of us.
- It could mean deepening our understanding of the skills we have locally and to develop the skills we need. Recent thoughts about establishing a Repair Cafe here is not just a cool, quirky thing to do, it values the existing wisdom and skill in the community and reinforces the values we want to develop.
- It could mean localising our economies
  - Supporting local business allows money and skill to remain in the community, building our wealth and self-sufficiency. By consciously and actively nurturing local entrepreneurship we bring vibrancy and innovation to this place.
  - Making, growing, locally sourcing our own local resources in a sustainable and regenerative way reduces our dependence on the fragility of external supply chains and future economic shocks.
- It could mean supporting existing efforts to hear the voices that go unheard in the decisions about our communities. The unintended marginalisation of opinion is a symptom of the way our community has grown to operate. By reinforcing our community awareness, we become stronger as we explore new ways to foster inclusivity.
- And perhaps most of all, it could mean finding ways to be together where new relationships can be developed and existing ones nurtured because this strengthens our sense of community. It strengthens our understanding of who we are, and what

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is possible. By extending our curiosity to explore our relationship with the natural world, the past, present and the future, we curate our knowledge of the place where we live. Developing our curiosity through the nurturing of new and existing relationships makes us wise as a community and better able to adapt to what is coming.

These are principles and ideas that come from my own background, but continuing efforts to build alliances and making room for community voices will allow us to extend our existing community vision to align on what is important to all of us in these times and the times to come.

In this presentation, I have steered clear of frightening statistics and predictions. The global warnings are clear and very public and I don't need to reiterate them. It is however worth considering that the future we face will unfold as a result of a complexity that is almost impossible to grasp. In a January 2021 article published in the *Frontiers of Conservation Science*, the authors succinctly described our situation in this way -

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“the scale of the threats to the biosphere and all its life forms— including humanity—is in fact so great that it is difficult to grasp for even well-informed experts”.

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While we act to reduce our emissions, let us remember that this is not the whole story; when the complexity of the situation is overwhelming, let us find ways to nurture knowledge and life;

when we are faced with the extraordinary, simplify.