

Notes from Climate Class and Conversation with Jules Pretty - 14th September 2024

(Taken by Caroline Hall and John Hall)

40 people attended the event in the Manningtree Masonic Hall. In each half of the session, Jules spoke for about 45 minutes and then invited discussion. He also welcomed comments or questions at any time. He did not spend much time explaining the science and facts of climate change to this audience (although he did give a couple of examples of climate change impacts **). Instead, he explained that he would talk about bringing about change in individuals and communities, specifically by means of stories. (See his Climate Chronicles on his website). It is hard to give up stuff, especially fossil fuels, which have been tied up with almost every aspect of our lives for 200 years.

Berthold Brecht:

“In the dark times, will there also be singing?”

Yes, there will also be singing. About the dark times.”

Jules referred to the Essex Climate Action Commission, which he chairs, and the recently published review of its 64 major impacts from 2020 to 2024.

(<https://julespretty.com/content/uploads/2024/07/CPPE-Paper-4-2024-Essex-Climate-Action-Commission-Impacts.pdf>). Essex is the leading county in its progress (with only Yorkshire and Humber being close). But we should be aiming for net zero by 2040, not 2050. He is encouraged by the increased amount of reference to climate change in the media over the last 4 years. Public opinion in the UK has changed, with up to 80% now accepting the fact of human caused climate change (up by 25% over 10 years). Almost 90% in Italy. The public view has changed quicker than governments, business, etc.

In relation to ‘deniers’ Jules talked about the Pareto principle or 80:20 rule. 80% is a tipping point. His version is 20:60:20. Bottom 20% is the noisy deniers, top 20% is the people who are already doing stuff, middle 60% is the ‘climate majority’ who know there is a problem but don’t know what to do. We should focus on them. It can be difficult, so the language is important.

Jules talked about his ‘Thirty for 30 Personal Behaviours for Cutting your Carbon’ (which PACE based our 40 Ways Poster on) being about choice. The entry point can be anywhere. Start with one behaviour then add more. The people in the 60% will move toward the top 20%. Give people time. The policy makers should do it this way.

Backlash. If you go too hard too fast, there is a big risk of backlash. Examples:-

- farmers in the Netherlands were told to reduce nitrogen and therefore reduce dairy farming. Their protests led them to become a far-right party.
- The introduction of ULEZ zone in London caused big protests, whereas similar schemes were more accepted elsewhere. (Air pollution in London is much reduced by ULEZ. In certain hot weather conditions, the air pollution from London reaches North Essex.)

Therefore, need to take care and have some patience to avoid this public backlash, in spite of the scientists' urgency. (This is not really an issue at the individual level addressed by Thirty for 30, or 40 Ways.)

Examples of more subtle or gentle approaches:- 1987-91 in Estonia "The Singing Revolution" - Patriotic songs as part of peaceful defiance leading to independence. And the human chain of 2 million people holding hands across Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Clever symbolism of coming together.

Laughter and vulnerability; Quoted Volodymyr Zelensky "Laughter is a weapon that is fatal to men of marble".

Stories: Jules then spoke about stories as a way to communicate, to understand and to make sense of the world. Humans have always told stories, often by fireplaces and with food. They are like "rehearsals for living".

"If children hear stories they will grow up to be good people; if adults hear stories, they will know what to do."

Some examples from traditional stories:-

Alice in Wonderland – the Red Queen says "I've sometimes believed as much as six impossible things before breakfast.

Goldilocks and the 3 bears – a door to a new world.....but don't fall asleep!

Also, Odysseus returning to Ithaca fell asleep and the ship was blown off course.

Cinderella – Rags to riches archetype. Happily ever after.

Jack and the Beanstalk (JP speculated as to why he accepted beans in exchange for the cow– had he become vegan??!!)

[Bonny raised a question about today's teens not relating to this type of story, but to very different types of stories – how should we make this connection with them?]

Life's journey (both personal, and for communities) is a series of massive transformations which we have not done before. We have no roadmap.

XR have changed their approach because they have realised that they are not going to win over millions of people with shock tactics.

In US there is a group called Third Act which is all people over 60. They carry out climate protests sitting in rocking chairs – the Rocking Chair Rebellion.

Are we changing too slowly? Jules says we still have time, although there are already locked-in negative changes. But we do need to do a lot more sooner than 2050.

Positive signs:-

- Adoption of solar, wind, ASHP, Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs), etc are all showing 'good hockey stick' graphs, i.e. good take up.
- Plant milks now used in 40% of US households
- In the UK 30% of under 30s are vegetarian.
- Analogue meat is coming, either from cell culture or from fungal and algal proteins. 4000 companies in the US are lined up to make it once all tests done etc. Perhaps the analogue meat can be used to replace all the 'junk food' meat

such as deep-fried chicken pieces. Currently 95% of all the world's meat is from intensive systems. 25% of global emissions is from agriculture, and most of that is from livestock production. So, we must somehow to avoid farmers' backlash.

Flying. Some flying is useful and will need to continue. Jules anticipates that it will not be too long before lower carbon-emission flying will be possible. Biofuels are a nonsense and greenwash, but electrification of flying has more potential. "Eviation". By 2030 with a new generation of batteries, there could be 30-seater commercial planes. By 2040 there could be 250-seater planes.

Many businesses **want** to find solutions. The World Economic Forum is doing some good things. 149 out of 220 countries have signed up to net-zero policies. 400m. new jobs coming by 2030. Beginning of a new 'good hockey-stick'.

China. 5 year plan for 'ecological civilisation'. They have now stopped building new coal plants. They have more new renewable energy than the rest of the world put together.

Iceland, Norway, Albania, Costa Rica, Uruguay and Paraguay all have 100% renewable electricity supply (but still use fossil fuel in cars). Serbia, next to Albania, only has 0.2%. UK has 30% (40% with nuclear). Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, Namibia and Tajikistan 95%.

Pylons? Sizewell not needed – will be too late. Government should put money into homes, solar, ASHP, insulation. Jules believes it would be easy to put the new electricity cables under the sea and that this will happen. We need offshore wind because onshore wind is never going to be big enough. **Energy Islands** – tethered platforms with huge wind turbines in deep water. Coming soon, Denmark and others in Europe.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Essex is going for 20% Biodiversity Net Gain (or even 30% in Uttlesford). Nature is often the 'way in' to environmental actions for local communities.

Recovered nature helps us with carbon emissions. A specific example concerns whales. Since whale hunting was banned, whale numbers, which had fallen from 5 million to 1.5 million, have gone up to 2.5 million. This has supported ecotourism, because seven species of whales come to boats off Husavik, Iceland. They move nutrients and sequester carbon because all the carbon stored in their bodies sinks to the ocean floor when they die.

Jules referred to **The Green Wall** initiative to restore the lands adjacent to the Sahara.

Book recommendation: Wind, sand and stars by Antoine Saint-Exupery 1939

Essex Climate Action Commission is working with the Essex Developers' Group. Essex is the only county where all new houses will be net zero.

** Examples of climate change impacts:

- Icelandic poet Andri Snaer Magnason has written a farewell to a glacier.

- Venezuela lost its last mountain glacier this year. And Bogota, with a population approaching 12 million at 2640m altitude, depended on water from glaciers, and is now having to ration water.