Forces for Nature
Interviews with environmental funders
What Winning Looks Like

Environmental Movements' Recent Successes

- Sony
- Motorola
- Walmart
- Delage
- Colgate Palmolive
- Fritos
- Kellogg
- Unilever
- Roche
- AstraZeneca
- Pfizer
- Dong

- Persuaded 200 of the world's companies to set emissions reduction targets to help limit global warming to less than 2 degrees C.

- Helped make it a crime to sell illegally harvested timber in Europe.

- Protecting forests around the world.

- Supported the creation of a marine protected area the size of the UK around Ascension Island, protecting one of the last refuges for huge predators in the Atlantic like Marlin.

- Worked with the Munduruku people to block a mega dam on the Tapajos river of the Amazon.

- Helped create the world's largest marine park in the Antarctic's Ross Sea.

- Helped the Paris Agreement on climate change enter into force - a 'promise to the Earth' by 195 countries to work urgently together to solve our global climate crisis.

- Helped prevent oil drilling in Virunga National Park, home to critically endangered mountain gorillas.

- Successfully pushed for an international agreement ending all legal trade of pangolins, the world's most trafficked mammals.

- Stopped BP drilling in the Great Australian Bight by alerting BP investors to the associated risks, protecting endangered whales and other species as well as helping to prevent climate change.

- Protected tigers whose numbers are now on the rise after a century of constant decline.

- Supported China to ban its domestic ivory trade, reducing demand and elephant poaching.

- GIANT PANDAS which were downgraded from 'Endangered' to 'Vulnerable' on the global list of species at risk of extinction.

- Forged an agreement with Gujarat State Government to conserve Asiatic lions.

- Protect our Australian Bight.
This is the second compilation of interviews with environmental funders by the Environmental Funders Network (EFN). The first, A Splendid Torch, was published in 2014.

The interviews featured in this report were conducted by Phil Murray and Jane Cabutti in late 2016 and early 2017. Phil is a part-time researcher for the Environmental Funders Network and Jane leads the organisation’s efforts to expand environmental philanthropy.

Emma Clyde, EFN’s Administrative Assistant, transcribed the interviews, and they were edited by Jane and Florence Miller, EFN’s Director. The publication was proofread by Penelope Miller and designed by Pete Bishop (www.banyandesign.co.uk). Fay Ford (www.fayford.com) provided the illustrations to represent some of the environmental sector’s recent achievements, shown in the inside cover pages and on the cover.

Many of the sector’s illustrated achievements were mentioned by the donors interviewed in this report; others were listed as the sector’s greatest recent successes when EFN surveyed environmental leaders in late 2016 and early 2017. That survey’s findings were written up in What the Green Groups Said: Insights from the UK Environmental Sector.

EFN receives grants, donations and in-kind support from many of its member organisations. We are extremely grateful for this support, without which the network could not exist in its current form. In the 2016/17 financial year, the following trusts and foundations provided core funding grants: Arcadia, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, McKintosh Foundation, Schroder Foundation and Waterloo Foundation, with an additional 40 foundations supporting EFN’s work through membership fees.

The network is guided by a committee chaired by Hugh Raven (a trustee of the John Ellerman Foundation), and including Catherine Bryan (Synchronicity Earth), Jon Cracknell (The Ecology Trust), Simon Ferguson (Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts), Stephen Pimitt (a trustee of Global Greengrants Fund UK), Stoph Stares (Waterloo Foundation) and Harriet Williams (Goldsmith Family Philanthropy). EFN would like to thank them for their leadership and ongoing support.

The views expressed in this report are those of the interviewees and should not be interpreted as official positions of the Environmental Funders Network.

Funders interested in joining EFN or finding out more about the network should contact EFN’s Director, Florence Miller, using the contact form at www.greenfunders.org.

For this report, some recent successes of the environmental movement (global) are included.

Illustration: some recent successes of the environmental movement (global)

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Illustration: some recent successes of the environmental movement (UK)

*Re-interviews: Jamie, Jessica, Sarah, Ben and Kristian were originally interviewed three years ago for EFN’s publication A Splendid Torch. We interviewed them again in late 2016/early 2017 to see how their giving and views on philanthropy had changed.
Introduction

Welcome to stories of fifteen remarkable lives. Inside are interviews with people who have devoted themselves and their fortunes to addressing the greatest crises ever to have faced humanity: the dual prospects of climate change and ecological collapse. These people are not just forces of but forces for nature.

We wanted to document and share their stories not for the sake of awing readers – though each of the interviews is awe-inspiring in its own way – but rather to rouse and motivate. As you read them, you will repeatedly come across calls to arms from donors who want you to get involved, no matter your means. Our goal in publishing these interviews is for those calls to be heard by as many people as possible, encouraging them to devote some of their assets (whether funds, expertise, connections or influence, or any combination thereof) to addressing environmental issues.

The donors offer plenty of advice about how to be an effective philanthropist: First, find your passion and, as Lisbet Rausing advises, ‘Work within that area, because then your heart will help sustain your stamina.’ If you want to make a change, it will require a lot of effort,” says Gunhild Stordalen. ‘Being passionate, having a deep and abiding passion has helped sustain Kristian Parker puts it, ‘We've got to the point where the status quo to those that move the boundaries of what is possible.’

Choose to enrich your life! Philanthropy is a great privilege; those who can afford to be philanthropic enjoy one of life’s greatest pleasures. Some of the interviewees expressed astonishment that more people do not get involved. ‘I find it difficult to understand why people don’t want to be on this journey on your own,’ advises Jochen Zeitz. ‘Collectively we can have a much bigger impact.’

Lisbet Rausing’s philanthropy has been strengthened by world-class experts and local activists [who] help us make the best use of resources. ‘You don’t want to be on this journey on your own,’ advises Jochen Zeitz. ‘Collectively we can have a much bigger impact.’

Chris Hohn argues that philanthropy must play a very specific part: ‘Philanthropy is a drop in the ocean of overall climate finance, so it must play a catalytic role. It needs to be collaborative, be prepared to “fail fast” and constantly rebalance the portfolio between grants that support the status quo to those that move the boundaries of what is possible.’

Money is vital – as Kristian Parker puts it, ‘We've got to the point where most of the biggest climate funders sit around the table and say, “Being strategic isn't our problem; the problem is not having enough funds available to invest in all the ideas out there, and in all the opportunities.”‘ But each of the funders interviewed here gives vastly more than funds: they make use of their expertise, their networks, their investments. Sarah Butler-Moss says, ‘[F]unders have to look at every aspect of where they can influence change – not just in terms of grant making but in terms of their influence with policy makers and with their investments. … We need to use everything within our power to influence change.’

Mike Velings and Amy Novogratz are transforming the aquaculture industry through their investments, as well as their philanthropy. ‘We realised that either we could give it away once . . . or we could try to build something that can sustain itself and keep going on and maybe, with returns, do it again.’

When you’ve found organisations or initiatives to support, do it with trust. ‘You can never do too much due diligence on a charity,’ says Lisbet Rausing. ‘But once you have selected your partners, trust them. Don’t micromanage them.’ Many of the funders interviewed describe how they prefer to support organisations with core funding, trusting the grantees to decide how best to use the money to achieve their missions.

Choose to enrich your life! Philanthropy is a great privilege; those who can afford to be philanthropic enjoy one of life’s greatest pleasures. Some of the interviewees expressed astonishment that more people do not get involved. ‘I find it difficult to understand why people who have such a lot of money don't give more,’ says Ian Gregg. ‘It's hugely motivating to be helping to preserve the landscape for our children and grandchildren.’ I know very well-off people who do not share their wealth, ‘says Lisbet Rausing. ‘Those people are to be pitied, because they miss out on what gives life meaning: collaborating with people for the common good.’

Kris McDivist Tompkins had a fascinating career as CEO of Patagonia; her late husband Doug Tompkins was founder of The North Face and of Espiri. Yet, she says, ‘Even though we both had extraordinary business careers, I think that we would both have said that this is by far the most rewarding work we have ever done, meeting the most interesting, thoughtful, enjoyable individuals. And it’s exciting.’

There couldn’t be a more important time to give. As Kristian Parker puts it, ‘[T]he risk is not “investing and failing” or “investing and not getting what you want,” the risk is not investing. You can argue that $1 spent today is worth $10 spent in ten years. There is a lot of momentum now, and this is a perfect time to come in.’

Florence Miller
Director, Environmental Funders Network
Q: How did you get interested in environmental issues?
A: About 25 years ago we went on a series of summer trips with our kids to the Amazon, Borneo and Africa, over three consecutive years, and some of it was quite rough and tough. We came up the Amazon at night in heavy rain with my five-year-old daughter under my poncho and when we ran aground my two teenage boys had to get out and help push the boat up the sand over and over again. Those experiences left the entire family somewhat impregnated, like a science fiction movie, with the environmental ‘virus’ and it wasn’t clear who was influencing whom. The kids went off to different environmental careers at about the same time as we geared up to give our money to environmental causes. We became steadily more psychologically immersed, year by year. There was no defining moment of seeing the light – we saw the light long ago, pretty clearly – and in the end we decided we would put everything we could get our hands on, which is to say pretty much all the money we have, into a foundation. None of this stuff about giving half your money.

We do, however, keep 20 per cent in my name so that we can do things that would look a little odd in our public or our private foundation, and if something is too racy – a good example would be some start-up high tech new battery effort, ragged and made them extremely angry, which they deserve. So we have helped to support. We’ve been running some bad guys for twenty years now we have been supporting the Centre for Public Integrity, which is a charity in the US, and another group called Integrity, which is a charity in the US, and another group called the Grantham Prize. After a few years of that it wasn’t clear that anything new was happening despite all of our time and money. We saw the media world imploding and wondered if the money we had been spending on the prize could instead fund an investigative journalist, or a few, to focus on environmental and climate related work.

We spend a third of all our money on communications aimed at changing hearts and minds, and we work quite closely with some of the dozen or so groups who are doing investigative journalism into environmental bad behaviour. For several years now we have been supporting the Centre for Public Integrity, which is a charity in the US, and another group called Inside Climate News, both of whom have won Pulitzer prizes in the last three years for the investigative journalism that we have helped to support. We’ve been running some bad guys ragged and made them extremely angry, which they deserve.

Q: What are your environmental priorities?
A: About 10 or 11 years ago we funded the Climate Change Institute at Imperial College in London. By then it was clear that climate change was our focus, so eighteen months later, we helped set up a climate research institute at London School of Economics. All our other environmental giving overlaps with climate change, but some of it certainly covers other ground, too, particularly with World Wildlife Fund.

Q: Why did you focus in on climate change?
A: It’s pretty simple: if you don’t get the climate right, everything else you do environmentally will eventually be wasted. Incidentally, the other 96 per cent of philanthropic giving will be totally wasted, too, and a lot of it merely exacerbates the problems that we have on climate change; to the extent that philanthropy fosters any kind of growth, consumption, etc., it hastens the point of no return, perhaps.

It’s quite clear to climate scientists and to most physicists and people in related fields, too, that business as usual will make civilization as we know it impossible probably within 100 years and it will accelerate the collapse of society – which probably began some time ago. It’s well known that Syria had had the six dreariest in its history prior to the war, during which over a million destitute farmers went into the cities without a penny being spent on their relief. In the last two years there has also been a terrible drought in many parts of Africa, from South Africa all the way up to Ethiopia, and in some of these places populations have increased ten times in my lifetime, while the ability to grow food has not. You don’t have to be a rocket scientist to realise that if they do that again they are finished. But even if the populations just double or triple from here they may have impossible problems.

So I am particularly concerned with Africa as a flashpoint of trouble, the coming together of climate, population, erosion, bad farming practices and then the trans-ripple of the problem to neighbouring areas like Europe through emigration. People don’t seem to be able to handle compound arithmetic very well; it’s not a great skill of Homo sapiens. We just don’t get that we can’t maintain this growth in pollution and carbon dioxide, in physical possessions, in consumption, etc., it hastens the point of no return, perhaps. To the extent that philanthropy fosters any kind of growth, consumption, etc., it hastens the point of no return, perhaps. Giving will be totally wasted, too, and a lot of it merely exacerbates the problems that we have on climate change; to the extent that philanthropy fosters any kind of growth, consumption, etc., it hastens the point of no return, perhaps. It’s quite clear to climate scientists and to most physicists and people in related fields, too, that business as usual will make civilization as we know it impossible probably within 100 years and it will accelerate the collapse of society – which probably began some time ago. It’s well known that Syria had had the six dreariest in its history prior to the war, during which over a million destitute farmers went into the cities without a penny being spent on their relief. In the last two years there has also been a terrible drought in many parts of Africa, from South Africa all the way up to Ethiopia, and in some of these places populations have increased ten times in my lifetime, while the ability to grow food has not. You don’t have to be a rocket scientist to realise that if they do that again they are finished. But even if the populations just double or triple from here they may have impossible problems.

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‘The pressure on water and food and biodiversity is just intolerable. [It] will get worse and worse until we rise to the occasion or the occasion eats us for lunch.’

growth in Africa. We have no political correctness problems at the foundation; we are not reporting to anyone, so we can say what we believe to be the truth in these matters, which is a wicked advantage. Increasingly we say, ‘Why don’t we give our money to…’ and we do. We look for leverage wherever we can get it and one of the ways to get that is to invest in the critical areas that other people are scared to invest in.

Q: Is there anything about philanthropy that you find frustrating?
A: Everything is frustrating to do with climate change! The inability of other funders to realise its significance. A: We have a number of things we look for. One of them is leverage: how much impact do you get per dollar spent. So, for example, when we were looking to hire lawyers, we gave points to a country where you can hire a lawyer for slightly more than in the US. With global warming, it doesn’t matter where you burn the forest or the coal, every unit of carbon dioxide is the same. So if you can get advocates, lawyers, organisers at a quarter of the price in India, you should be thinking about putting your money there rather than the US. Sometimes, once in a blue moon, it’s the case that the US has some kind of political leadership leverage, where it is so much more important to show progress there than in any other country, but mostly we’re looking for a reason not to fund in the US.

The other thing we look for is political incorrectness: we are interested in groups that might not be able to raise any money because, for example, they might focus on a sensitive issue, like population. We have an increasing tendency to fund things that others are unlikely to fund because we are answerable to nobody.

We did fund the Sierra Club for four years [even though we] would consider to be a success?

Q: What would you say to people who feel they can get more immediate and tangible impacts funding other issues outside of the environment?
A: Immediate success but eventual failure is a completely wasted effort. It characterises too much of modern life, including corporate activity. We are in it for the well-being of the long term, aren’t we? If you subordinate the general success of us as a species for short-term effect then you are rather the living embodiment of superficiality – to be polite!

we were hammering the industry into closing plants here, there and everywhere. [Michael] Bloomberg had stuck in a lot of money and we decided to make the most of a temporary, time-sensitive advantage. Now we have moved our money away to India; they are the big movers on the margins of coal, and they are half the price. That’s a disappointing fraction, I must say – half the price; if we went to Indonesia they would be two-thirds of the price. But it’s very inefficient to scale up funding all over the place; it’s far better for each grant maker to pick one area and organisation and give them everything, because they can stay in touch, find more out and have more leverage with the organisation so they get listened to. We require very little reporting. We are sensitive to the idea that some funders give $30,000 and require $15,000 worth of reporting time, so we try to give $800,000 and require far less reporting than some other, larger funds require.

Q: Is there a particular project that you have funded that you would consider to be a success?
A: At the highly leveraged end, we put money into an organisation that does television ads for China. They bring in Prince Edward, or Prince Harry, or the Beckhams, and they do very well. They are hammering the industry into closing plants here, there and everywhere. [Michael] Bloomberg had stuck in a lot of money and we decided to make the most of a temporary, time-sensitive advantage. Now we have moved our money away to India; they are the big movers on the margins of coal, and they are half the price. That’s a disappointing fraction, I must say – half the price; if we went to Indonesia they would be two-thirds of the price. But it’s very inefficient to scale up funding all over the place; it’s far better for each grant maker to pick one area and organisation and give them everything, because they can stay in touch, find more out and have more leverage with the organisation so they get listened to. We require very little reporting. We are sensitive to the idea that some funders give $30,000 and require $15,000 worth of reporting time, so we try to give $800,000 and require far less reporting than some other, larger funds require.

Q: What is the one piece of advice you would give to new funders starting to support environmental issues?
A: It would be that the environment only receives about three or four per cent of philanthropic funds and yet the environment, obviously, is the only branch of philanthropy that involves an existential threat. It is quite possible, sometimes one might even think probable, that we might not win this battle. And if we do not win it, all other philanthropy is beside the point. If we can’t save the planet as a hospitable place for other animals, including us, what does it matter that you’ve been doing research into cancer? So our message when we get a chance is that this should be the senior branch of philanthropy and it’s not. It’s one of the very junior branches, there is just remarkably little giving. That would be my message.

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Peter Baldwin, in 2001, to protect endangered species. She is a member of the Advisory Board of the Cambridge Conservation Initiative.

Lisbet founded Arcadia with her husband, Peter Baldwin, in 2001, to protect endangered culture and nature, and to promote open access. Lisbet also works with a number of family businesses such as Ingleby Farms & Forests, which owns and farms almost 100,000 hectares in nine countries; and Ecolean, a liquid food packaging company. She is a member of the Advisory Board of the Cambridge Conservation Initiative.

Q: How did you get involved in environmental philanthropy?
A: When she was little, my daughter Sigi once noted that ‘Mummy is a Conservative, because she always wants to conserve everything.’ That is right, and I think it comes from my childhood in south Sweden, as I mourned the on-going destruction of my home province, Skåne [Scania]. A beautifully intricate and varied carpet of natural delights, an ancient farming landscape, was ripped to pieces by development. Even as a child I knew how spurious the arguments for its destruction were. It was a fantasy of rationality, even more than of greed.

Q: What motivates you to give?
A: When I was born, in 1960, we were three billion people on Earth. When I most probably will die, around 2040, we will be 10 billion. A decade or two later, we may be 12 billion. In 1960 there were 0.4 hectares of arable land per person. In 2040 there will be 0.15 hectares of arable land per person. Or rather, there won’t. Because that assumes that the amount of farmland from now on will be static. But we are rapidly losing soils, through urban sprawl, wind and water erosion, compaction, salinization, pollutants of all sorts (from heavy metals to toxic levels of nitrogen). Other farmlands, in semi-arid and arid areas, revert to desert as irrigation water grows saline and polluted, aquifers are pumped dry, and rivers, lakes and wetlands dry up. Modern global farming is an extractive industry: we are mining fossil soils, fossil fuels and fossil waters. We are mining soils, in semi-arid and arid areas, that continue to be a success. For example, in 1999 FFI bought 550 hectares in Flower Valley, South Africa, where there were near-pristine fynbos flower meadows under threat of conversion to vineyards. FFI manages the site with the local NGO it helped establish, Flower Valley Conservation Trust. There is now a sustainable harvest of fynbos flowers under ethical work conditions far beyond the original site, across more than 50,000 hectares in Flower Valley. Another example is the 11,500 hectares of threatened forest FFI has purchased in Ecuador to create the Awacachi Ecological Corridor. The corridor links two existing reserves. FFI and its local partner, Fundación Sirua, continue to expand the protected land, buying and regenerating more forest corridors as land becomes available.

Q: Could you tell me about a particular project you have funded that you consider to be a success story, and what impact this has had?
A: In 1998, together with Fauna & Flora International (FFI), we set up what is now the Halcyon Land & Sea Fund. With support from the fund, and working in partnership with local conservation agencies and communities, FFI helps secure areas of threatened biodiversity and habitats through a variety of mechanisms, from land purchases to improved local management. Most importantly, FFI does not have to seek the approval of us or other Halcyon donors for spending project-by-project. Halcyon is an up-front-funded piggybank, where FFI spends as it sees fit. This deep trust, core funding means no bureaucracy and no delays – FFI can respond rapidly and efficiently.

Eighteen years on, the fund has supported many projects that continue to be a success. For example, in 1999 FFI purchased 550 hectares in Flower Valley, South Africa, where there were near-pristine fynbos flower meadows under threat of conversion to vineyards. FFI manages the site with the local NGO it helped establish, Flower Valley Conservation Trust. There is now a sustainable harvest of fynbos flowers under ethical work conditions far beyond the original site, across more than 50,000 hectares in Flower Valley. Another example is the 11,500 hectares of threatened forest FFI has purchased in Ecuador to create the Awacachi Ecological Corridor. The corridor links two existing reserves. FFI and its local partner, Fundacion Sirua, continue to expand the protected land, buying and regenerating more forest corridors as land becomes available.

To date, the Halcyon Land & Sea Fund has secured around 9.5 million hectares of endangered habitat and contributed to the conservation of more than 55.7 million hectares. The fund has supported the development of 28 in-country environmental groups, and influenced conservation across 33 countries. A recent independent evaluation of the programme confirmed this and noted FFF’s ability to invest I know very well-off people who do not share their wealth. Those people are to be pitied, because they miss out on what gives life meaning: collaborating with people for the common good.'
carefully, while taking calculated risks. We are also pleased that FFI has such a fine track record of using Arcadia’s funding to harness support from other donors: our leverage ratio has been more than 5:1.

Q: What is the one thing you wish environmental grant seekers would do differently?
A: Environmental organisations need to collaborate more. Too often, smaller, local NGOs are bypassed by larger conservation organisations, so specialised local knowledge is not used. Saving the environment should not be a competition. Arcadia generally ensures our grantees work with local partners, making use of their knowledge and building their capacity. To further cooperation, we have also supported the Cambridge Conservation Initiative (CCI) since its start. It is a unique collaboration between Cambridge University and the largest cluster of conservation organisations in the world, based in the David Attenborough Building on the university’s campus. CCI works to foster collaboration between NGOs, and to bridge the gap between scholars and practitioners.

Q: What do you see as the biggest challenges facing philanthropy today?
A: We are an odd species, we humans. We hoard resources and we compete with one another. Overcoming the initial reluctance to give is surprisingly hard. I know very well-off people who do not share their wealth. Those people are to be pitied, because they miss out on what gives life meaning: collaborating with people for the common good. Then, of course, it is hard to give strategically and well – because each one of us really knows very little.

Q: How do you feel these challenges could be overcome?
A: Collaborating, networking and, above all, respecting and engaging with both local people and experts. Peter and I outsource much of our environmental grant-making, since it seems to us obvious that domain experts know better than us where the best opportunities for conservation exist and which approaches address local conditions most effectively. So, world-class experts and local activists help us make the best use of resources. More generally, I think we should all work together to generate meta-data: by collating, comparing, analysing and disseminating the results of our work, we may discern data signals about what works and what does not work in conservation. Such evidence feedback loops could help guide our future work.

Q: If you were to give advice to a new funder coming into the field of environmental philanthropy, what would it be?
A: What is your true passion? Work within that area, because then your heart will help sustain your stamina. Do you have any expertise that you can use to leverage the efficacy of your giving? Make use of it if so – whether it is your financial skills, your networking abilities, your expertise in an academic field, your knowledge of a local region or your IT expertise. You can never do too much due diligence on a charity. But once you have selected your partners, trust them. Don’t micromanage them!

There is only one way to evaluate if you are successful – through measurement, data collection and scientific analysis. Never let a charity merely claim success and be highly wary of those who like to highlight anecdotal examples.

And finally, as a grant-maker you are a free soul. You are neither business nor the government. You are independent and so you have a unique opportunity to experiment. Take risks! If you never fail, you have failed.
Q: What has changed in your giving in the last three years?
A: I’ve been doing a lot of work, outside of Tellus Mater, looking at technology disruption. Two projects in particular: one [RethinkX] that is essentially a think tank looking at the role of technology disruption and trying to understand the kind of speed and scale at which these things can move. The second is a separate programme we have been thinking about launching on communicating with other stakeholder groups around clean energy. Our overall aim is to speed the energy transition [from fossil fuels to renewables].

We have spent a lot of time over the last 18 months exploring how to communicate the benefits of clean energy to conservatives in the US. We had some really interesting insights from that. My belief now is that market forces and technology can play a far greater role than most environmentalists believe; that actually there is a far greater role for technology to drive this disruption and this transition. The role of policy is more in facilitating and supporting this area.

Through the Tellus Mater Foundation we will still continue to support the groups we supported before, in terms of work seeking to change the finance system, but we are now much more focused on technology disruption and its implications for solving problems across society.

Q. What do you think are the most significant changes to the environmental sector as a whole in the three years since we last interviewed you?
A: I think the pace of change is the biggest thing. There is some momentum now which there wasn’t before: it feels like we can see a pathway. With Paris, from a regulatory standpoint, and with the progress of some of the technologies and the adoption rates of some of those technologies, there’s progress. I think these things snowball so I’m much more optimistic than I was two years or so ago. I’m more optimistic from a business technology standpoint than I am from a regulatory standpoint, but in my mind certainly the role of regulation and policy is less of...
a primary one now. I think it was the only solution that we saw two years ago and now there is an enormous role for business and technology to play to really deliver de-carbonisation of the system.

Q: As a result of those positive changes, what interventions are now needed in the environmental sector?
A: I don’t like the term interventions as it suggests a kind of top-down solution, whereas I think the role is to support, speed up and facilitate the transition that is already under way.

But there are areas where perhaps we do need more focus. Agriculture for one doesn’t get a whole lot of focus – the cow is a great contributor to climate change – and buildings is another area where perhaps regulations have more of a role to play that we don’t focus on much. There are solutions there but they are not being scaled; they are not reaching the kind of momentum of change that other sectors have. I think the key is looking at the whole greenhouse gas pie and understanding sector by sector where market forces and economics are driving change. Then it’s a case of figuring out where we need to support and facilitate change. And where the economics are not competitive – where we need to actually intervene and drive change.

Q: Could you tell us about a success story you have been involved with over the last three years, where something you have funded has had a significant impact?
A: There are a few, really. There’s the Finance Dialogue, which I mentioned before – we don’t take credit for this in any way, but that’s a clear success story of a network of NGOs and funders [who have] come together to collaborate. I think that’s a really powerful story: if there are only a certain number of dollars to go round then I think they will be spent much more efficiently if collaboration happens and if people are working much more closely and not duplicating work, and so on.

Another couple of areas that look to be making an impact: we gave some seed funding to a group called InfluenceMap, who are doing some great work and beginning to get their voice heard. They are looking at lobbying by industry, and the effect that has, and highlighting webs of influence that aren’t often seen.

We’ve supported Carbon Tracker, who are still doing great work – we gave them some start-up funding way back when (a relatively small grant), but many other funders have supported them since. They’ve gone from strength to strength and are doing some great work. So there are lots of success stories around and lots of things are beginning to move the dial a little bit, I think.

Q: What advice would you give to new funders coming in and interested in supporting environment work now?
A: I think the biggest piece of advice is to understand the systemic nature of the problem if you can, that intervention at any point in the system has effects elsewhere and they are not always positive effects. An attempt to map and understand those systemic links is critical before really embarking on a strategy.

I’d also say be bold. We don’t need more of an incremental approach here; actually we need some probably higher risk but greater impact strategies. Be prepared to fail: back things that can really move the dial, that are unproven, and take some risks.
Dr. Gunhild Stordalen

Gunhild is a medical doctor from the University of Oslo and holds a Ph.D. in pathology/orthopaedic surgery. Together with her husband Petter, Gunhild founded the Stordalen Foundation in 2011 to support work aimed at solving health, environmental and climate challenges. They launched the EAT Foundation’s core values.

Q: How did you get involved in environmental philanthropy?
A: You could say it was part of my upbringing. I was raised on a small farm in rural Norway. The fields and forest were my playgrounds, and the animals my best friends. My parents took great pride in teaching me the importance of taking care of nature and all living things. I set up my first fundraiser when I was in first grade. I gave away my toys in a lottery to raise money for the tropical rainforests. I still remember how proud I was when my mother took me to the bank to send my first contribution to the Norwegian Rainforest Foundation.

I became a doctor to be a force for good, and I’ve always been determined to use my voice for the greater good. During medical school and in the years following the completion of my studies, I worked with various NGOs to promote climate action and mitigation strategies. I grew increasingly frustrated by the lack of action and political will.

Just after the failure of the [climate change-focused] Conference of the Parties meeting in 2009, one of the world’s leading medical journals, The Lancet, published a report stating that climate change is the biggest threat to human health in our century. I wanted to explore how framing climate change as a health issue could attract more interest from both governments and the public. For many politicians, it is easier to get support for keeping people out of hospitals than for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. There are so many co-benefits when it comes to health, climate and the environment. What is good for people can also be good for the planet.

When my husband and I created the Stordalen Foundation in 2011, we wanted to create a platform to merge climate and health agendas. We wanted to focus not only on the risks, but also on the co-benefits from mitigation and new business opportunities. These are also the EAT Foundation’s core values.

Q: What motivates you to give?
A: It can be summed up by the saying: ‘No one can do everything, but everyone can do something.’ I believe great assets come with great responsibilities, and I strongly believe philanthropy has an important role in creating systemic changes that single players or single sectors cannot achieve alone.

When my husband and I established the Stordalen Foundation, we started out by supporting projects and organisations that linked health and sustainability, focusing on what we believed could help scale up and speed up transition. Founding EAT was for me a natural next step in the process, from supporting existing initiatives towards taking a more active part in identifying, setting up and managing new projects where we identify needs.

Q: What are the main environmental priorities you have identified for your giving, and how did you identify them?
A: It started with a simple question. As a board member of my husband’s hotel chain, I was pushing for ways to run the hotels more sustainably. Food and beverages not only make up the majority of a hotel’s ecological footprint, they also impact the guests’ health. So my question was: What can we do that is better for both people’s health and better for the environment? I found research on healthy food, climate-smart food, ethical food and food associated with better animal welfare, but to my surprise, almost no one had looked at how all of these aspects were interlinked. I realised that if I struggled to identify clear guidelines for our hotels and restaurants in Scandinavia, how could world leaders develop efficient, integrated policies to enhance food systems?

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I wanted to create a forum that would piece the jigsaw together, taking a holistic approach to food, health and sustainability, and gathering leaders from science, politics, business and civil society. I wanted to not only map out and fill the knowledge gaps, but to push for integrated food policies and win-win solutions for the industry.

I contacted Professor Johan Rockström, Executive Director of Stockholm Resilience Center, to discuss how we could gather the world’s leading experts and stakeholders from different disciplines and sectors to convene a sort of ‘Davos for Food’.

In June 2014, less than 12 months later, we welcomed more than 400 experts and leaders from 28 countries to the first EAT Stockholm Food Forum. Three years on, EAT Stockholm Food Forum has become a global, cross-sectoral arena where a vast network of partners from politics, business, civil society and all fields of science gather annually. Still, an annual conference alone will never be enough. We need a model to quickly move from talk to walk. To not only convene discussions, but foster collaborative action. Together with Wellcome Trust and Stockholm Resilience Centre, we established the EAT Foundation in 2016, with concrete programs to accelerate change.

Q: Why have you chosen these over other issues?
A: I chose food because it lies at the heart of peoples’ lives and it is the key to our common future. We won’t succeed in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals without getting it right on food. At the same time, transforming our food system can be a silver bullet for ensuring healthy people, a healthy planet and also a thriving economy.

Our global food system is far beyond its expiration date. What we eat, and how we produce it, is driving some
of the greatest challenges of our time, both for people and the planet. While almost 800 million still go hungry, more than two billion are now overweight or obese. When one adds up those who are under-nourished and over-nourished, as well as those who suffer from micronutrient deficiencies, one finds that almost half of the world’s population can be classified as malnourished. At the same time, food is driving an environmental crisis: the global food system is the single most important contributor to climate change, accounting for up to one-third of greenhouse gas emissions, as well as being a significant driver of deforestation, biodiversity loss and the depletion of marine ecosystems. In addition, one third of all food produced globally is lost or wasted.

Change is inevitable. I want to make sure we take the right systemic approach, so we can actually leverage all the synergies. And scale up change fast enough.

Q: How do you decide which specific projects to support, within your identified priority areas?

A: EAT’s core project is the EAT-Lancet Commission. Simply put, it’s a project modelled as a ‘smaller scale IPCC for food’ to identify science-based targets for the food system. In collaboration with The Lancet, we have set up a commission of 20 world-leading scientists from various disciplines and different continents. The EAT-Lancet Commission will provide the world’s first comprehensive assessment of what constitutes healthy diets from sustainable food systems. All our other EAT programmes are building on this work, aiming to implement measures to take us there – from developing international policies to cooking recipes. Together with Chatham House, we are setting up a new commission to develop policy recommendations and guidelines. In partnership with the C40 network [a network of the world’s megacities committed to addressing climate change], we are helping the world’s biggest cities, from New York and Addis Ababa to Wuhan and Milan, to share best practice and implement better food strategies. And through a program called FReSH (Food Reform for Sustainability and Health), developed together with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, we are working with key players in the food industry to create business solutions. We also collaborate with chefs and entrepreneurs.

Q: How would you describe your theory of change when it comes to giving to the environment?

A: Firstly, choose a mission that is close to your heart. If you want to make a change, it will require a lot of effort. Being able to combine purpose and passion will get you far. There is a lack of coordinated political attention and a lack of coordination across key stakeholders. An important role for philanthropy is to help connect the dots and really push for action.

Q: What have you found most rewarding in your grant-making on environmental issues?

A: I can’t think of anything more rewarding than to see actual progress. So much has happened in the last couple of years. Seeing the growing dedication and commitment stretching all the way from key stakeholders to everyday consumers really fuels my engagement and optimism.

Q: And what have you found most frustrating?

A: The clock ticking. I worry that if we spend too much time either denying or debating global challenges, we will miss out on some of the best opportunities to solving them. I find it frustrating that key stakeholders lack the will to invest in prevention, when the price of their inaction is almost unimaginable. There is a lack of coordinated political attention and a lack of coordination across key stakeholders. An important role for philanthropy is to help connect the dots and really push for action.

Q: If you were to give advice to a new funder coming into the field of environmental philanthropy, what would it be?

A: Love the power of unusual suspects coming together to achieve much more if you join forces with others. Learn from each other, share the burden, find a common strategy. I love the power of unusual suspects coming together to form unconventional collaborations. We need out-of-the-box solutions, and that requires teaming up with partners outside of our familiar playgrounds. I’m a great believer in collaborative philanthropy.

Our global food system is far beyond its expiration date. What we eat, and how we produce it, is driving some of the greatest challenges of our time, both for people and the planet.'
Q: How does your personal giving to environmental projects differ from that of the Greggs Foundation?
A: I set up the Greggs Foundation 30 years ago when I was Chairman of the company. It just seemed common sense to give back to the communities which supported the business. The foundation has grown significantly since then but still deals largely with social issues in the areas where Greggs trades. My wife Jane ran the foundation in its early days and although I am no longer actively involved in it, my daughter Fiona is.

From 1990, I increasingly focused my philanthropy on environmental issues and especially what are, to me, obvious links between the condition of the physical environment and individual and community well-being. I chose not to set up a foundation for my environmental giving, but instead to use my assets and income to make donations. I think this is an interesting and sensible way of giving that people with a strong asset base could take more advantage of. My philanthropy includes giving my time as well as money, and this makes it the more satisfying.

Q: How did you get involved in environmental philanthropy?
A: I love being in the countryside. I love fishing, walking and gardening, so I care deeply about things associated with the countryside and biodiversity. I really felt that we were losing these things at a great rate. The statutory agencies don’t have the resources or the will power to deal with some of these issues and I felt strongly that I would like my children and grandchildren to be able to enjoy the same landscape and biodiversity that I have enjoyed. So that was the motivation. We started doing things at a local level first, where we lived: the north of England and the Scottish Borders.

Q: Was there anything you remember seeing that particularly concerned you?
A: What concerned me initially was the decline in habitat along the river bank. Through my fishing I spend time on rivers and have witnessed firsthand a decline in fish stocks, inadequate measures to protect water quality and changes to farming (where many farmers have been incentivised by grants to maximise production, often at the expense of the environment and landscape). It was these changes that I first noticed and became concerned about, and then I started noticing the wider landscape – the use of chemicals, the destruction of woodlands and everything that happens in a river catchment, including domestic and industrial pollution.

Ian Gregg OBE

Ian Gregg was Chairman of Greggs plc, the bakery company established by his father and mother on Tyneside early last century. The first North East Business Executive of the Year in 1983, Ian set up the Greggs Trust (now the Greggs Foundation) as a registered charity in 1987, with the aim of putting something back into the communities where Greggs trade and where their customers and employees live. Since stepping back from the company, he has pursued his lifelong interest in environmental issues.
Q: What are the main environmental priorities you have identified for your giving, and how did you identify them?
A: Destruction of natural habitat, deterioration of water quality and all the species, wildlife and biodiversity that are being affected as a result. I think I have a very different approach to most other philanthropists, in that I have mainly supported one organisation, in which I’ve taken an active part in setting up and managing. This is the Rivers Trust, which is now the ‘umbrella’ body for more than 50 rivers trusts in the UK. I have supported the river trust movement with donations each year for almost 25 years.

Q: Why did you choose the Rivers Trust over any other organisation?
A: I couldn’t find any organisations that were carrying out the work I wanted to support, so I helped set up the Rivers Trust. I was part of creating it in order to deal with problems that I didn’t think were being dealt with.

Q: Do you support specific Rivers Trust projects each year, or does your donation support core costs?
A: I’ve given a general donation each year. The Rivers Trust uses it for core costs and it helps them to maintain their core team. They have multiplied that money many, many, many times by securing grants for particular projects. Securing funding for projects is much easier than for core costs.

Q: Have you been actively involved with the Rivers Trust throughout?
A: I was Chairman until a few years ago. I’ve retired now and am not actively involved, although I am still the President.

Q: Can we please return to the way in which you make your grants, through your assets and income?
A: I donate Greggs shares to the Rivers Trust, which I have had for a long time, and so carry a high level of capital gains tax liability. When I give them to the Rivers Trust, I don’t incur capital gains tax liability. That in itself is very helpful, but I am also able to claim the gift against my income tax, so I can significantly reduce my income tax bill. I don’t give for these reasons, but it is a tax effective way of giving. I don’t have the accounts and administrative burdens I would have with a foundation, so it’s also quite a simple way of giving.

Q: What have you found most rewarding in your environmental grant-making?
A: The extent to which people throughout the UK have identified with the Rivers Trust and actively taken part in the journey. The river trust movement started as local projects in the Scottish Borders and it’s now a national movement with over 50 rivers trusts across the UK. The whole of Scotland is now covered, and more trusts are starting up in Ireland. It has identified a way of working that engages with people who want to deal with local problems, and the Rivers Trust supports them to develop an effective local organisation. I think people really care about rivers, their local landscape and biodiversity. It’s been rewarding to see that if you give people an opportunity to get involved in something they care about and to deal with local issues in the way they want, they will embrace it. The Rivers Trust is a grassroots (or rather, wet-feet), bottom-up organisation and I think that’s one of its great strengths, and why it really appeals to people. They are fed up with ‘big brother’ and globalisation, and here we are, giving them the opportunity to actually change things for the better.

Q: It sounds as if your giving has been hugely successful but have there been frustrations along the way?
A: The main frustration, as I think is the case for everyone involved in the charitable sector, is that you never have enough funds to do everything. There is always far more to do than you have resource to tackle.

Q: Could you tell us about a particular project that has been a success and the impact this has had?
A: One of the most successful Rivers Trust projects was the DEFRA/Rivers Trust River Improvement Project, which in 2014 culminated in the delivery of over £8 million worth of major river improvements across the country at a fraction of the cost and much quicker than could have been achieved by government agencies. It showed the effectiveness of the voluntary sector if given reasonable funding, and the amount of match funding it can generate.

Q: Local giving seems to have played an important role in your philanthropy – can you say a little more about this?
A: I’ve always been aware that the environment is inextricably linked with social issues, such as mental and physical health. The local environment and landscape play such a major role in people’s lives – it’s so important for everyone to have accessible outside space where they can walk, relax and enjoy themselves.

It was for these reasons that I approached the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland about 10 years ago with a challenge: to explore environmental grant-making in the North East region, and look at whether there was scope to increase it within the community foundation local giving model. I also wanted to give the Community Foundation an opportunity to attract new local supporters who might be interested in environmental issues. The result was the Local Environmental Action Fund (LEAF). The funding I have given to it has been matched pound for pound by other local charitable trusts and the Community Foundation.

To date, the fund has given away just under £1.8 million in 236 grants across Tyne & Wear and Northumberland. LEAF was cited as an example of good environmental grant-making in a New Philanthropy Capital report and has received warm praise from leading environmental campaigner Jonathon Porritt.

Q: If you were giving advice to a new environmental funder, what would you say to them?
A: Get involved and give as much as you can. The environment is very underfunded, and it is so important for us and future generations to preserve our heritage, which we enjoy so much and should not take for granted. It’s hugely motivating to be helping to preserve the landscape for our children and grandchildren. Follow your heart, pick something you are passionate about and take an active interest in it. Don’t just dish out £X thousand or million; really follow what’s happening with your grants and it will take you to some interesting places.

Q: What do you see as the biggest challenges facing philanthropy today?
A: I find it difficult to understand why people who have such a lot of money don’t give more. Our society is consumed with wanting more and more material possessions, when we just don’t need them. In terms of philanthropy, the USA appears to be a good role model – people are more generous with the wealth that they earn and create. I think our challenge is getting people to be more willing to share in the success that they have had, or the inheritance they have received.

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Synchronicity Earth builds portfolios of evidence-based projects that address global conservation priorities, supports the projects with its own funds and then seeks to attract new and diverse funders to increase those levels of support.

Jessica was originally interviewed three years ago for EFN’s publication A Splendid Torch. We interviewed her again in late 2016 to see how her giving and views on philanthropy had changed in this time.

Q: We last interviewed you, for A Splendid Torch, almost three years ago. Has anything changed in your giving in that time, and if so why?

A: We have the same theory of change, and we still believe you need multiple interventions to solve environmental problems. Organisationally we have developed and evolved – we have a stronger research hub, we’ve almost tripled our team, and we’ve strengthened our expertise in biodiversity conservation by recruiting new, highly experienced staff. We are continually adding new partners to our work and our programmes.

We are moving from a portfolio approach of giving to more of a systemic approach. For example, we initially held portfolios for forests and fresh water – an ecosystem approach which was really useful in terms of developing our understanding. We are now able to work across the systems, which are of course completely interrelated. So, if we are working in a particular country or place – say the Congo Basin – we take the entire environmental system and sector into consideration in order to really affect full change. This approach is also enabling us to work with a lot of other funders, so we are building more strategic alliances and having a greater impact together.

Q: What have been the most significant changes to the environmental sector as a whole since we last spoke?

A: Environmental funders are as engaged as they have ever been. We are creating stronger arguments and really supporting one another in our understanding of the issues at hand, so I think overall we are raising our game. There is a much greater appetite among funders to collaborate, which is somewhat revolutionary as this has traditionally been difficult. For collaboration to be successful, funders need to be unconcerned with their identity and instead identify the goals and ideas that we can work towards strategically together.

Q: As a result of the changes that are going on in the sector, what interventions are now needed?

A: We are at a tipping point. Biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation are affecting and will continue to affect the livelihoods, health and future of all human beings, and will be an increasing factor for the ongoing refugee crisis. We need to get the message across that the environment is a human concern.

We also need to engage in a more truthful and direct way. We need to be armed with science, but not be afraid of open discussion. We need more forums for honest discussions. The environmental movement has been apprehensive, believing that it can only operate from a platform of positive messaging and hope, and I would suggest that while movements like #ConservationOptimism are essential for showcasing good work, we must also be realistic. I see myself as a guide – taking people on a journey of understanding and offering hopeful ways forward, ideas and opportunities, grounded in truth. There is an apt metaphor of a canoe:

It’s encouraging to see issues like biodiversity, indigenous rights and environmental defenders coming to the fore amongst environmental funders. We are starting to see notable interest and support in these areas, which is great. However, there is still a shocking lack of response from the greater philanthropic sector overall for the environment. Science is showing that climate change, biodiversity loss and threats to ecosystems from development and agribusiness are accelerating, and yet still the responses are paltry. We somehow aren’t accessing beyond the sector and are not messaging strongly enough. Even though there is a huge supply of expertise and science, and incredible people and projects working on the ground, we are still not touching the sides on some of these issues. Synchronicity Earth is working to facilitate a response – to get people to care enough to respond.

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we all have to be paddling in the same direction to get to where we want to go. You can’t paddle that canoe by yourself, you need other people with you, all with different strengths, but all heading towards a common goal.

There are encouraging signs, such as the Paris Agreement on climate, but we have to make sure this is enacted responsibly. What I mean is that we have to be very thoughtful about what constitutes green energy alternatives, considering things like land use in relation to biofuels, the impacts of hydropower and what happens when we dredge the sea floor for minerals.
Q: Can you tell us about something you’ve funded that has had a really significant impact?
A: I have three I’d like to share, that provide a glimpse of the range of work we do and help illustrate Synchronicity Earth’s view that many different interventions are needed to create a fully successful model.

Firstly, from a macro and policy perspective, after eight years of lobbying the EU, deep-sea trawling was finally banned below 800 meters in the North Sea, in the north-east Atlantic and off the coast of western Africa. This will provide protection for the high diversity of fish species, cold water corals, pearl gardens and deep-sea sponges that live in deep waters, and generally for the sediment ecosystems that host a diverse range of species. Our partners Bloom and the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition were instrumental in this. For me this was a lesson in persistence, tireless campaigning and constant, constant pushing – never giving up hope that the bigger picture is achievable.

On a more micro scale, one of our partners, Save Vietnam’s Wildlife, successfully released 20 pangolins, which are critically endangered. They were confiscated from the wildlife trade, treated (put in quarantine and given a health check) and then released in Vietnam. They are continuing to be monitored and so far, so good! It’s a relatively small victory but an important one that contributes to CITES [the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora] and signifies what the work of a small, dedicated group of individuals can achieve. Like Bloom, Save Vietnam’s Wildlife is a very small organisation operating on a shoestring budget, but highly effective in what it does.

My final example is one that shows a more collaborative model. We support the AgroEcology Fund (AEF), a fund that pools money from a variety of different donors, and the number of donors supporting it has risen from four to thirteen in the two years we’ve been part of it. AEF supports individuals and groups around the world, using biodiversity as a core principle when looking at food production. Synchronicity Earth has played a major role in promoting the AEF over the last two years. By being part of a collaborative funding group, our own funding is multiplied, and so is our learning. For instance, we can have an impact in countries that we might not otherwise have a focus on.

Q: What advice would you give to new funders interested in supporting environmental work?
A: Engage with groups like the Environmental Funders Network (EFN), with other funders, who can be incredible allies. EFN has been instrumental for us, as a network of like-minded people. Foundations and trustees from different funds have been incredibly open and very generous with their time and ideas.

Come and talk to us. We created Synchronicity Earth to facilitate learning and these kinds of conversations. We continue to build the intellectual infrastructure to assist others with their environmental philanthropy journeys and are a treasure trove of resources and connections.

Keep asking questions and don’t be afraid to get engaged in this space. There is a lot of virtue within it and there is something for everyone. We have to be bold and be open to what change might look like.

‘Come and talk to us. We created Synchronicity Earth to facilitate learning and . . . to build the intellectual infrastructure to assist others with their environmental philanthropy journeys. [We] are a treasure trove of resources and connections.’

Credit: Triputro/CI FOR NATURE
Q: How did you get involved in environmental philanthropy?
A: I had made quite a lot of money from my work in fund management and decided to give a large part of that back to charity. So I set up the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, with a focus on children living in poverty in developing countries. I wanted to focus on health and malnutrition issues, but early on I realised that climate change was going to be a very serious problem for Africa and India because it would diminish agricultural productivity and water provision. This would directly impact the very same health issues that I was trying to help, and so I could not help children without also being focused on stopping climate change and mitigating for it. I didn't consider myself an environmentalist, but I realised that I had to be in order to be successful in our work with children. At some point, it became clear that this was the correct decision, and that the climate change problem is here and now and happening today in a very serious way. We have substantial drought in Africa that is, I believe, attributable to climate change, so we already have significant malnutrition and other impacts, even though that's not understood or acknowledged by the general population.

Q: Can you remember what made you first become aware of the impact that climate change was having in developing countries, and the impact it would have on the lives of children?
A: Firstly, Jeremy Grantham [also interviewed in this collection] highlighted in a lecture that crop yields start to fall significantly with extensive heat or extreme weather in very material ways. Secondly, I started to meet with African ministers and leaders who told me directly that climate change was impacting their countries here and now, with drought and crop failure. They said their climates had never been like this before, and I notice this wherever I travel in the world – the weather has changed, the climate has changed. Mary Robinson also had an impact on me, with her work on climate justice explaining that actually the poor in developing countries, and the impact it would have on the lives of children?

Q: What motivated you to want to help the lives of children in the first place and what motivates you now?
A: Children are always the least advantaged in society, and especially children in poor countries (through no fault of their own). I was born with a giving gene and having my own children has made me realise the innocence of children. I believe in the Gates Foundation creed that all lives are equal, and it's very hard for me to say the life of my own child is worth more than a child living in poverty in Africa or India – I can't really find any way to justify that view.

Q: What are the main environmental priorities you have identified for your giving and how did you identify them?
A: We did a huge amount of analysis and looked for maximum leverage – what would make a substantial difference? Our analysis showed that you need to go to where the big problems are, and that meant focusing on China, Asia and developing countries. Coal was clearly at the root of the problem – you can't fix the problem of climate change without addressing coal. But overall we have four main priorities: The first is energy – to achieve a climate-safe future, the power sector needs to be fully decarbonised by 2040. New renewable energy is now affordable and providing up to a quarter of electricity in some places, so the transition to clean energy is already underway. We're working to accelerate its progress by preparing energy systems for even higher rates of renewables, while stopping the building of new coal capacity and introducing carbon pricing.

The second priority area we focus on is cities. By 2050, 70 per cent of the world's population will live in urban areas. If cities continue to sprawl as they grow, people will be locked into carbon- and resource-intensive lifestyles. We are working with megacities to help them measure their emissions and adopt climate-smart principles in urban planning, transportation and air quality management. Our third priority is land use. When people damage or destroy forests and soils through efforts to meet global demand for food, fibre and fuel, it releases carbon into the atmosphere. Starting in Brazil, we are supporting pioneering efforts to shift the business of land management towards sustainable intensification in agriculture, combined with forest protection and restoration.

Then finally our fourth priority is around HFCs [hydrofluorocarbons], which are extremely potent greenhouse gases that have been introduced over the last 25 years to replace ozone-depleting substances, following their successful phase out under the Montreal Protocol. HFCs are primarily used in air conditioners, fridges and for making insulating foams. Phasing out HFCs has the potential to avoid up to 0.5°C of warming by the end of the century.

‘I wanted to focus on health and malnutrition issues, but early on I realised that climate change was going to be a very serious problem for Africa and India because it would diminish agricultural productivity and water provision. . . . I didn’t consider myself an environmentalist, but I realised that I had to be in order to be successful in our work with children.’
Looking into the future, we must defend the Paris Agreement on climate from the challenges posed by a wave of populist governments around the world. Further, our focus on phasing out coal from electricity generation as well as on promoting renewable energy remain key priorities, with clean air being a critical tactical area. Our work in cities and on HFCs, following the successful Kigali conference [where an international agreement was reached to phase out use of the gases], will be refocused to harness the potential of energy efficiency in the built environment. We are also looking at focusing our land use work on restoration globally by launching a global hub for restoration to remove carbon at scale from the atmosphere.

Q: Why have you chosen these issues over others?
A: The original mission in setting up CIFF was to improve the lives of children in developing countries who live in poverty. This hasn’t changed. I want to solve problems, not make grants. As society’s most flexible capital, philanthropy has a responsibility to do what others, particularly governments, cannot. I believe that our social licence to operate is conditional upon a relentless focus on our mission, with a high appetite for risk where we see the potential to transform children’s lives.

In particular, climate change is crucial because it poses the single biggest threat to the future of today’s children. A climate-safe future promises multiple benefits today: cleaner air, energy security and sustainable jobs, along with stewardship of the planet’s resources for future generations.

Q: How do you decide which specific projects to support, within your identified priority areas?
A: Our current portfolio of grants amounts to around $1 billion in multi-year value, spanning a broad range of issues. Even though this is large in philanthropic terms, it’s a drop in the ocean with regards to the size of the challenges we want to tackle. In order to deliver systemic change with our resources, we think we need to be entrepreneurial, collaborative and catalytic. So we co-create projects with grantees, partners and like-minded funders developing exciting new strategies and programmes. Because we want change to last, we favour theories of change focused on prevention, integration and localisation. Development aid will not deliver the Sustainable Development Goals. We believe the citizens and leaders of low- and middle-income countries are best placed to shape their own futures; that determines our choice of projects and partners too.

Q: Could you tell me about a particular project you have funded that you consider to be a success story?
A: Since 2009, we have committed more than $26 million to the global phase-down of HFCs. Having secured an amendment to the Montreal Protocol in Kigali in 2016, along with strong domestic regulation in major producing and consuming countries, we are now working towards a global phase-down of HFCs. To complement this work, we launched an air conditioning programme to maximise the energy efficiency savings achieved during a phase-down of HFCs and achieve a double climate win. This energy efficiency angle was crucial to secure the Kigali amendment and has been the key driver to secure further philanthropic interest.

Q: Why do you feel it has been a success?
A: Because we started funding it when no one else would. We adopted an ‘orphan’ and an ‘unsexy’ issue. We chose fantastic grantees that have proven they know how to read and adapt to changing contexts. We have finally secured the policy win that we had been seeking since 2009 and, very importantly, we have raised the profile of the issue to the extent that now much more funding is flowing to the space. Specifically, within the trust fund that we helped set up alongside a complementary one from governments, more than 50 per cent of funding comes from funders that had not funded climate before.

Q: If you were to give advice to a new funder coming into the field of environmental philanthropy, what would it be?
A: Philanthropy is a drop in the ocean of overall climate finance, so it must play a catalytic role. It needs to be collaborative, be prepared to ‘fail fast’ and constantly rebalance the portfolio from grants that support the status quo to those that move the boundaries of what is possible. Join environmental networks with like-minded funders like the Environmental Funders Network or the Funders’ Table. We are members of both, and we find them incredibly valuable strategically.
Steve and his family relocated with friends, the Elliott family, from Sussex to Devon in 2007, to buy the historic Pickwell Manor and establish a holiday letting business. They established the Pickwell Foundation in 2012 to distribute some of the profits from their enterprises for social good. The main areas of funding are climate change and projects working with people who are displaced.

Q: How did you get involved in environmental philanthropy?
A: I have been interested in the environment for ten or twelve years – I was always interested in it in a softer way, but it really lit up for me when I came across the Transition Town movement in Devon. I just saw it as a really positive response to climate change; one with some real, tangible outcomes. There are now something like 4,000 transition movements globally, which are basically groups trying to de-carbonise their local economies and to improve the well-being of their communities. I got involved in setting up the North Devon Transition Forum, which was our own version of a Transition Town – having local meetings, trying to get some projects going and to raise the issues within the community.

I’m an entrepreneur and have been involved in running, starting and selling various businesses over the years. The last business that I ran in London was a serviced office company called Venta, and I was just really keen to try and run that as a good, responsible business. We were running 25 properties in central London and I was really conscious of the carbon emissions from the business so looked into offsetting. We decided to build our own solar array and wound up with 25 serviced office buildings in London and 25 industrial buildings in the Midlands, the North West, all over the place, with solar on the roofs. We partnered with someone else, forming a company called Eden Sustainable, and through Eden we’ve invested a couple of million pounds’ worth of surplus funds from the London business into solar. We could see that that was generating quite a good financial return, and it was a way of helping to avert the worst climate weather pattern changes predicted through temperatures rising two, three, four degrees. . . . Part of our work will be supporting the activism side, potentially some of the legal challenge side of it as well, but we are up for the fight. I call it a fight because I see it as a fight, particularly organisation called CEPAD in Nicaragua – particularly working with women and rural workers who are really affected by climate change. They’ve seen terrible droughts there; the crops aren’t coming as they planned due to water issues. We are looking at how we can help them to deploy renewables in their community there.

Q: Has climate change always been the issue that really grabbed you?
A: We see it as the key issue for the next 100 years; it’s going to affect all our children, our grandchildren, and obviously in the West we are going to be better protected than the global South and the poorer communities across the globe. We recognise that the West is largely responsible for the emissions and the damage being caused, so there is some inherent responsibility in terms of climate justice. I certainly feel that we need to be stepping up to the mark and helping to avert the worst climate weather pattern changes predicted through temperatures rising two, three, four degrees. No-one really knows what that means if it gets to the levels at the higher end of that scale. It’s great that things like the Paris Agreement are in place, and the fossil fuel divestment lobbies; I hope that those things are going to gain more groundswell. I think part of our work will be supporting the activism side, potentially some of the legal challenge side of it as well, but we are up for the fight.

Steve Baker
PICKWELL FOUNDATION
Steve Baker and his family relocated with friends, the Elliott family, from Sussex to Devon in 2007, to buy the historic Pickwell Manor and establish a holiday letting business. They established the Pickwell Foundation in 2012 to distribute some of the profits from their enterprises for social good. The main areas of funding are climate change and projects working with people who are displaced.

We also have a foundation called the Pickwell Foundation, and that was set up to distribute surplus profits from our businesses. It’s a grant-making foundation. My wife Susannah and I live in Devon with our friends Tracy and Richard Elliott, and between us we own most of our assets together and we’re trustees of the foundation together. Our worldview is that we try and live within defined limits and boundaries, in terms of consumption. From our businesses we generate quite a lot of profit and we realised some capital from the sale of the London serviced office business in 2015. So we’re trying to live on so much, within limits and boundaries, and then put surplus income into our foundation. We’re also trying to align all our investments with the purposes of our charity, which are climate change and displaced peoples. We’re doing a lot of work with refugee communities right now, Syrian refugees particularly. So we have the renewable energy business, and we’ve also set up a social housing fund, through which we are rehousing Syrian refugees in Bristol. We’re looking at how that can scale up and grow. So we are trying to align our investments and the purpose of our foundation, which is driven by our values. We find ourselves now with a foundation which is growing quite quickly in terms of partners. This year we are making £250,000 worth of grants and that’s going to grow to £350,000 next year. On the climate change side, we think we will be doing more activism work and working with campaigners. There will be some grants given to people directly affected; as an example we are working with an organisation called CEPAD in Nicaragua – particularly working with women and rural workers who are really affected by climate change. They’ve seen terrible droughts there; the crops aren’t coming as they planned due to water issues. We are looking at how we can help them to deploy renewables in their community there.

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with big business – big oil, or extractive industries, and also government policy; the fracking thing recently is just crazy. So we have to campaign and get involved to try to curtail the activities of both the governments and big businesses that are trying to pull that carbon out of the ground. I see that very much as a key part of our mission.

A: I’m a vicar’s son, so probably it’s a faith worldview, ultimately, that has informed my altruism. ‘Try to look after others, give as you go’ have always been principles that I’ve been brought up and somehow picked up on, so I think it largely comes from that. And I have a strong social justice lens – we all do in our community – and there’s a lot of injustice in the world but climate change is the issue we really want to do something about, in the most positive flow of who they are. It’s just that very much as a key part of our mission.

Q: Did this approach come about through your work, your personal life or both?

A: That’s very much as a key part of our mission. We have a matrix for our foundation, which has a number of different investment sizes. We have small, medium and larger grants, and we see ourselves doing a couple of larger grants a year which may be £25,000 to £50,000. These will change as the foundation grows but right now they are more at the £25,000 end of the scale.

We probably do four or five £10,000 grants and then ten to twenty or more of £5,000. About 40 per cent of our focus will be UK based and 60 per cent overseas based. So that’s the matrix and right now, the environmental bit is where we want to step up and find some good partners to work with.

Q: So you are very proactive in seeking projects to support?

A: At the moment we are, absolutely, I’m sure it won’t take long to find them. That’s why the Environmental Funders Network is great, actually, because of the cross-pollination of organisations; I’m sure it won’t be hard to find grantees.

Q: What have you found most rewarding so far in your grant making?

A: In the third sector you just see an awful lot of passion. People who are very driven and working out of their passion are really very inspiring. It always amazes me that the output from charities and social enterprises, a resource-constrained arena, can be phenomenal. It’s great to see people doing something they are really passionate about, in the most positive flow of who they are. It’s just great to work alongside people like that. That’s probably the most rewarding thing for us.

Q: What has been most frustrating?

A: The most frustrating is probably when, as a funder, you get treated like a bank manager. You feel like you are a funder and therefore there is a power dynamic. That makes you feel like you are just a cash point for people to actually speak to us about our lifestyles, necessarily. We have to approach it in a way that’s more positive, without being judgmental. That’s where historically climate change conversations have been criticised because it’s always really negative, doom and gloom.

Q: Do you think climate change has fallen off the agenda in recent years?

A: I think it can be a really polarising conversation, about climate with your mates down the pub, so I tend to have conversations around things like electric motoring or charging points, or home storage batteries rather than ‘we’ve got to stop the warming getting above two degrees’. As Naomi Klein identifies so clearly in her book, This Changes Everything, the link between the consumerist economic neo liberal worldview that the majority of our society subscribes to isn’t compatible with the world that we need to move to. So the conversation makes people feel very uncomfortable because it’s ‘How does this affect me?’ It’s that question. With our individualistic society we don’t give permission to people to actually speak to us about our lifestyles, necessarily. We have to approach it in a way that’s more positive, without being judgmental. That’s where historically climate change conversations have been criticised because it’s always really negative, doom and gloom.

Q: How do you actually choose which projects you support?

A: We have a matrix for our foundation, which has a number of different investment sizes. We have small, medium and larger grants, and we see ourselves doing a couple of larger grants a year which may be £25,000 to £50,000. These will change as the foundation grows but right now they are more at the £25,000 end of the scale.

Q: Do you personally manage a lot of the relationships with your grantees?

A: There are four of us, and we have got three or four other people in our team and across our enterprises. We are trying to involve everyone in various ways in the foundation, because it’s a good part of who we are. We are trying to have a physical touch-point with people a few times a year, and to get six monthly reports from our partners. Again, it’s an area where we are learning as we go. We don’t want to be too close over the top and we want to stay relational. We do understand and feel the responsibility that as the numbers get bigger there is a greater responsibility when it comes to making grants to people. So we are honing our processes as we grow up.

Q: What do you wish grant seekers would do differently?

A: I think just to be brave, to be honest about who you are and where you’re at, I think it’s that integrity thing. So many people tell funders things they think they want to hear, whereas, actually, as a grant makes, you just want to be in the realms of reality! You cannot beat high levels of trust. Even if things are going disastrously wrong, you’ve got to keep the high trust. From my perspective that’s the number one thing.

Q: If you were going to give one piece of advice to a new funder, what would it be?

A: It would be to seek to understand from what others have learnt. There is no new learning, so talk to others, network, understand the space first, understand what others are the good and the effective in the market place and are getting a managed ‘message’ as I call it, so people tell you what they think you want to hear because you are a funder. That makes you feel like you are just a cash point and that’s not good from my perspective. However, I’m not entirely certain how you overcome that because I recognise you are a funder and therefore there is a power dynamic. We just need to be realistic and we are learning how best to manage that.
Sarah Butler-Sloss
Ashden Trust

Sarah set up the Ashden Trust, a Sainsbury Family Charitable Trust, in 1989 and is Chair of the Trustees. In addition, she directs the Ashden Awards for Sustainable Energy (renamed Ashden), which she founded in 2001, and is a trustee of the environmental charity ClientEarth that uses the law to make the case for Divest:Invest. There is the ethical case, and investment in climate solutions.

Q: What, if anything, has changed in your giving over the last three years?

A: The big change is that at the Ashden Trust we have got very involved in the Divest:Invest movement. We have been encouraging trusts and foundations, faith groups and universities to think about how their endowments are invested and the impact of those investments. For trusts and foundations, I believe it's important to think beyond just what their grants are achieving, but about their endowments and investments, too, and being integrated and joined up in their approach. My brother, Mark Sainsbury, and I co-founded Europeans for Divest:Invest to encourage more trusts, foundations, faith groups and universities to divest away from fossil fuels and invest in clean technologies.

Obviously we’ve done that with our own endowments; in fact Ashden Trust did so seven or eight years ago. But in 2014, there was the announcement about the Rockefeller Brothers Fund committing to divest from fossil fuels and invest in climate solutions and I had a penny-drop moment. There is no point in doing the divest/invest piece quietly, without anyone knowing. It's not going to make the slightest bit of difference.

Q: Is the legal case for fossil-fuel divestment applicable to trusts and foundations across the board, not just to environmentally focused ones?

A: Yes. In terms of fiduciary duty, it applies if a charity or foundation has a mission related to (for example) international development, conservation, health and well-being or urban regeneration – all of which are being profoundly affected by climate change or air pollution, both caused largely by fossil fuel combustion. So if their endowments are invested in fossil fuels, they are going against the mission of their charity or foundation and are at risk of going against their fiduciary duty. The law recognises that it doesn't make sense for them to be invested in industries that are making the situation worse for the causes they were set up to support.

Q: In your wider grant making, have you noticed any significant changes in the environmental sector since we last spoke to you?

A: There have been some big changes that have impacted the environmental sector, some good, some bad, some very bad. One is the Conservative government coming in; that has had an impact on sustainable energy. Post the coalition government, the Conservative government brought in a lot of measures that really disrupted, negatively, the renewable energy sector and the energy efficiency sector. Through the Ashden Awards, we have seen many solar energy companies going under, we have seen community energy schemes go under, we have seen multi-utility companies cease multi-utility schemes. Now, of course, we have Trump and his team of climate sceptics, along with his decision to withdraw from the Paris agreement. That is all very depressing and scary. So I think there are a lot of external factors that are – well, three of those – very negative to the environment and one that is very positive, so we have just got to shout about the positive things.

Q: What kinds of interventions are necessary now, do you think, given these changes?

A: I think one of the things is that we, as the environmental sector, have to work much more collaboratively. We have got to speak with one voice as much as we can and we’ve got to speak with a much louder voice. I think there is a real case for influential environmental funders to have much more of a say. Governments are changing quite rapidly and have a much more right-wing agenda and we have got to appeal to that by pushing the business case, pushing the opportunities. For me the biggest thing we have got to tackle is climate change; it's absolutely urgent. We have got to move to a low carbon economy as quickly as we possibly can in order to pass this planet on in any fit state to our children and grandchildren. The interesting thing is that very often businesses do get this and there are amazing businesses that are leading the way. We have got to make sure their voices are heard as well.

Generally I think funders have to look at every aspect of where they can influence change – not just in terms of grant making but in terms of their influence with policy makers, and with their investments. I do wonder whether some of the big environmental funders and big funders in general should actually speak with one voice and write much more with just one voice to senior politicians on this issue. We need to use everything within our power to influence change.
Q: Could you tell us a success story from the last three years?
A: Carbon Tracker is still having a huge influence. We funded them from their very early days and we continue to support them. Their work is being quoted by so many important and influential figures from the Governor of the Bank of England to the President of the World Bank; they coined the terms ‘stranded assets’ and ‘carbon bubble’, and they are influencing the City, influencing oil companies and influencing governments. Their work led to the Divest:Invest movement. I’m proud to be able to support Carbon Tracker.

The other one is ClientEarth, which I think is an amazing organisation. They have taken the UK government to court over the Clean Air Act and failing to reach World Health Organization standards in UK cities, and won. Ashden Trust is supporting them to review whether the government is doing enough to reach its legal requirements to reduce carbon emissions by at least 80 per cent by 2050 and all the targets they have to achieve before 2050.

And I’m proud of what is happening on Divest:Invest; the way that things are beginning to change and oil companies are having to listen to what is happening. There is a long way to go but there is great momentum in all of this: over five trillion dollars of assets under management are now committed to divest away from fossil fuels. What is really exciting is seeing that a number of cities’ pension funds are going to come on board, and already 25 per cent of UK universities have divested away from fossil fuels – Oxford, Cambridge, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Cardiff, among others. In total, 688 institutions across the globe are divesting/investing. We are even beginning to see banks doing it – there is a bank in America whose pension funds are coming on board.

Q: Is there any advice you would give to new funders or funders that don’t currently support environmental work but are considering it?
A: I would say first of all, fund what interests you and really enjoy the experience of getting involved in this fascinating area. I would say have joined-up thinking in terms of your grant giving, your investments and your power to influence because I think we need to have a three-pronged approach as much as we can. And I’m a great believer in finding the business case for a lot of solutions – in order to make solutions work they’ve got to be, in the end, financially viable. Philanthropists need to help get a lot of environmental solutions to the stage where they are financially viable but the end-goal should certainly be – at least, in the energy space – financial viability. So there is a great role for funders in helping to encourage, seed and accelerate the growth of environmental enterprises so that in the end they can survive on their own without philanthropists. In terms of conservation, obviously things are different, but I always think the biggest impact can happen when there is a strong business case too.

I also think it’s terribly important to think about the positives, and positive solutions, so you are selling people a dream rather than selling them a nightmare. We have got a lot of work to do but it’s very exciting and it is the most pressing cause, I believe, of our generation, and for the sake of future generations.

‘For me the biggest thing we have got to tackle is climate change; it’s absolutely urgent. We have got to move to a low carbon economy as quickly as we possibly can in order to pass this planet on in any fit state to our children and grandchildren.’

[Photo of people holding a banner with the text: “You have the right to breathe clean air.”]
Q: Can you describe your philosophy and how you approach your environmental work?

MV: With Aqua-Spark itself, we are trying to show that you can have totally sustainable, healthy and affordable aquaculture – fish farming – with financial returns, that are at least the same as traditional industry. To demonstrate that, we are building an ecosystem of 60 to 80 companies across the value chain where we take minority stakes, partner up with local entrepreneurs and then have them work together. We invest in feed ingredients – because you can’t talk about sustainable aquaculture without looking at the inputs; the actual feed-milling; in farming technology; in other ways to battle disease (to eliminate antibiotics and chemicals); and then basically all the way to the supermarket. So we can go to a farm in Iceland and say, “Hey, we have feed ingredients that are more sustainable than the ones you use today and if you are part of this ecosystem they will be a lot cheaper for you, so you can actually make a better profit” because we make a deal with all the companies in the value chain. And then we create access to supermarkets in different geographies. We have built a global platform with over 50 of the world’s best experts, a few universities, etc., to make sure we do this right and can tap into the right kind of knowledge.

AN: To take a step backwards, before all this, Mike was an entrepreneur investor and I was running the TED Prize program. So now you are at a point where you have some really powerful and trying to figure out solutions around making them work financially.

Q: Why did you choose impact investing instead of traditional grant giving?

MV: I have been an entrepreneur all my life, so I really like building things that can stand on their own two feet. I like building businesses. That’s one thing. The other thing is that we made some money in the past and got really lucky, more or less; we are well-to-do. And we realised that either we could give it away once – and we were getting through money really, really quickly – or we could try to build something that can sustain itself and keep going on and maybe, with returns, do it again. We don’t think there is a distinction that grant giving is not good and impact investing is the way to do things; it’s a combination of things. We partnered with WorldFish, for example, which was one of the reasons we started this: WorldFish is an institute in Malaysia that promotes aquaculture to help people get out of poverty. It’s mostly funded by large institutions like the World Bank and [getting funding can be] highly political. One of the reasons we started Aqua-Spark was to see if we could create a different funding mechanism for them that would not be based on politics.

So we made them a shareholder in our fund, basically, and together we are trying to build an incubator program to lift some of their programs up to a level where we could actually make it work financially.

AN: In the case of aquaculture specifically, in the last 10 to 15 years a huge amount of grant money has gone into research and development and it’s been really necessary, but there hasn’t been a lot of outside investment money at all. So now you are at a point where you have some really
We are trying to show that you can have totally sustainable, healthy and affordable aquaculture – fish farming – with financial returns that are at least the same as traditional industry.

great ideas and some proofs of concept, some farms doing things really differently, but it’s about scaling those and expanding them. That’s where you really need investment and to get them out to the commercial market.

MV: And if you really want to change the behaviour of existing large industry players, that’s not going to happen by showing a small financial result. They will say, ‘It’s a nice hobby and we love what you do, but it’s not for us.’

Q: Where do you see the balance between influencing consumers, influencing business and influencing politicians?

AN: We invest in really great companies: we want them to be the obvious choice because they are producing incredible fish, it’s affordable, it’s healthy, it doesn’t come at the price of the planet. So that’s really where our overall influence is. At the same time, consumers have a long way to go when it comes to learning about where their fish comes from, so we have just invested in a US-consumer, packaged goods, frozen seafood company that is helping to tell the story of well-farmed fish, and we will help them build a national campaign there. Because so many different stakeholders are beginning to look at aquaculture as a solution, we are part of that conversation. And our engagement with other things that are not yet happening in the industry – for example, you see no ingredients coming online like insects, etc. for aqua feeds. Fish feed is 20 to 30 ingredients and we think that all the bulk ingredients that are currently in aqua feeds need to be replaced down the road with better alternatives. Nobody is really working on that – it’s also really difficult because if you replace everything at the same time and it doesn’t work, you don’t know what caused the failure. Some people might call us naive but we thought, well it might be a good idea to just quietly start working on that. We support that with grant funding, but not via the fund, just privately. We say we are going to try and get this to work and if it works we will bring everyone else on board and show that it works and start adding the companies these ingredients come from into the fund, to make sure that in the future we can make animal feeds that are actually sustainable.

Q: Do you think your model would work with other environmental issues?

MV: It could potentially work in other sectors but the aquaculture industry is a little special, in the sense that it is relatively young, so parts are a lot less set. We believe that in an ideal situation, before the end of the century, the sector has to triple globally. It’s already as large as global fisheries, so that’s an immense, almost unfathomable amount of growth. The industry is only 40 years old and you can see there is a real eagerness of the people in the experts, professors, scientists who have been working on aquaculture issues for the last decade and who all see the same challenges to make it work and have a real eagerness to solve those problems. Other sectors have hundreds of years of history and it’s a lot harder to change existing parts than forge new parts.

Q: Is there a particular project or company that you would consider a success story?

AN: Yes, we invested in a company in California that produces an alternative for fish meal. Fish meal is derived from wild-caught fish, mostly anchovies, sardines, etc. It has been linked to overfishing, which is terrible for our oceans. But even if you don’t believe that, you are going to need eight times as much in the future and we just don’t have it. This company created a process to create a natural alternative that’s really close to fish. We invested a few years ago. It’s technology which has been created in the past but only recently became commercially viable, and when we invested a lot of people were still very hesitant to get on board. Now the company is growing extremely fast and they have really big industry players on board, which is exactly what we want. It’s attracted, aside from us, well over half a billion dollars in investment in just a year and a half. If it really works, it’s going to be a real alternative for fishmeal in general. It could really address one of the most pressing issues. And our investment – again, it’s early – but our investment financially has done incredibly well too.

Another example of a success story is our investment in e-fishery technology, which is smart feeder technology.

MV: Indonesia has three and a quarter million fish farms, something that is almost too big to be able to imagine. A lot of smallholders have just one pond and it’s really hard to make a living. The smallholder can afford almost nothing but they can afford these smart feeder machines. Eighty per cent of their cost is feed and it creates a lot of pollution, etc. With this machine, you earn the cost back in one growth cycle of shrimp and you save 24 per cent on feed, which means that smallholders can triple their bottom line, make a better living, produce 24 per cent less waste, and suffer from less disease, because all of that rotting food on the bottom of the ponds creates all kind of issues down the road.

Q: What do you see as the biggest challenges in the environmental sector?

MV: I think the biggest challenge, in aquaculture, anyway, is feed. In an ideal situation, before the end of the century, we believe we have to replace 140 million tonnes of fish annually from aquaculture. That implies – if you aim for a feed ratio that is better than chicken (which in turn is better than most other forms of meat) – needing between 300 and 400 million tonnes of feed, assuming we can agree globally that we will only farm fish that make sense in terms of not needing far more weight in feed than they produce in fish to eat.

To put that in perspective, the industry is currently using soy as an alternative to fishmeal – which we think is not a great alternative because global soy production is only about 350 million tonnes annually, and that is for fish, chickens, pork, cows and humans. So if you are using 40 per cent soy in fish feeds, which is what’s happening now, the global soy production would have to increase by 50 per cent at least, just for fish production – let alone increases for other uses.

What will that do to the rest of the Brazilian rainforests? There is no more space. We don’t think that’s the way forward. But that’s several decades away and it takes billions to fix and today there is no incentive for anybody to do anything about it, it’s not on the radar. We have talked to philanthropy institutions for years and most foundations are focused on sustainable fisheries but almost nobody looks at aquaculture because it has a bad reputation and it takes decades for some of these larger grant making bodies to turn around. They are missing the battle.
Ben Goldsmith

*JMG Foundation*

Ben chairs the Advisory Board of the Goldsmith family’s JMG Foundation, which funds campaigning and advocacy work on environmental issues. In that capacity, in 2003 Ben co-founded the Environmental Funders Network. Ben is also the Chairman of the Conservative Environment Network, a Trustee of the Children’s Investment Fund Foundation, one of the UK’s largest philanthropic foundations. Ben is CEO of Menhaden Capital, an investment firm with a focus on green industries.

Ben was originally interviewed three years ago for ENF’s publication *A Splendid Torch*. We interviewed him again in late 2016 to see how his giving and views on philanthropy had changed in this time.

**Q:** Has anything changed in your giving over the last three years? If so, why?

**A:** Yes. At the start of 2014, the JMG Foundation got involved in the emerging campaigns against the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) being negotiated by the United States and the European Union, along with related agreements like the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the EU. This has become an important area of activity for the foundation, and brings us back to an area of work that my father supported in the mid- and late-1990s. Both TTIP and CETA are set to chill regulatory ambition in Europe and North America by giving extensive new rights to fossil fuel companies and other large corporations to sue governments. They will also encourage a race to the bottom in standards as so-called ‘non-tariff barriers to trade’ are targeted – things like different approaches to regulating in areas like food safety and environmental health. It’s hard to see how something like the Paris Agreement on climate mitigation would not be significantly impeded by deals like TTIP and CETA.

**Q:** What have been the most significant changes to the environment sector as a whole in the three years since we last interviewed you?

**A:** The huge change for the British environment sector is clearly Brexit. I think the big challenge right now is to ensure that our government adopts all of the EU’s hard-fought environmental protections into British law. After that, we’ll get to push hard for our own environmental laws to go even further than European law. The EU’s Common Agricultural Policy and Common Fisheries Policy have been pretty bad in environmental terms. So far, with more than three and a quarter million people across the EU signing a self-organised European Citizens Initiative against the deals, and active campaigns in 23 out of 28 member states. We’re also starting to see some movement on issues like antibiotic resistance in the livestock sector, although a huge amount remains to be done. I am also really encouraged to see increasing interest in re-wilding.

**Q:** What interventions do you think are needed now from environmental groups and funders?

**A:** Seventy per cent of UK is farmland. Under ‘Pillar One’ of the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), huge amounts of taxpayers’ cash is distributed to farmers simply according to how much land they own, with virtually no strings attached, and for no public benefit. There is a ‘Pillar Two’, representing just 12 per cent of the CAP budget, under which cash is given to farmers for protecting and restoring the natural environment. But that’s not nearly enough. As farming has intensified, this country has experienced a steady and frightening decline of wildlife, as well as replacement of beautiful landscapes with intensive farmscape ‘green deserts’, increased soil erosion, lowland flooding, pollution of waterways and so on. The opportunity for this country to replace membership of the CAP with a new British system which only provides cash to farmers in exchange for demonstrable public benefit is too exciting for words. The green movement is mobilising on this now.

**Q:** Can you tell us a success story from the last three years, where something you have funded has had a significant impact?

**A:** I feel the grants that the JMG Foundation has made in relation to CETA and TTIP have been pretty successful so far, with more than three and a quarter million people across the EU signing a self-organised European Citizens Initiative against the deals, and active campaigns in 23 out of 28 member states. We’re also starting to see some talk to experienced funders at the outset and then try to find a focus for your work, either by thematic issue, by geography or by approach (supporting academic research, funding lawsuits, doing environmental education, etc.). Often funders use a combination of these, and then bring their own values and sense of what represents a ‘win’ into the picture too. If you are able to narrow down your focus, then that will make it possible for you to start interacting with the civil society groups working on a specific issue, and to build up your understanding and relationships. You will then be able to target your grants in a proactive way, and to spot emerging opportunities. Try to avoid scattering funding around in little bits and pieces on lots of different issues.

‘Talk to experienced funders at the outset and then try to find a focus for your work, either by thematic issue, by geography or by approach. . . . [T]arget your grants in a proactive way. . . . Try to avoid scattering funding around in little bits and pieces on lots of different issues.’
Jochen served 18 years as Chairman and CEO of PUMA SE, and co-founded The B Team with Sir Richard Branson, an initiative to catalyse a better way of doing business for the well-being of people and the planet. He founded the Zeitz Foundation for Intercultural Ecosphere Safety in 2008, which supports initiatives that do that on a small, national and global level.

When I bought Segera, I was looking for any sort of guidance – from conservationists, from certification programmes, anyone who could help me find a way not to have to reinvent the wheel and make too many mistakes along the journey. I quickly realised that there was very little out there. There were lots of certification systems that were focusing on a very particular area but there were few, if any, that were focusing on protected areas with conservation and biodiversity value. There was very little that would look at conserving the land, finding ways to involve communities, looking at the cultural aspect, which is so critical, and using business as a force to find solutions. So we decided to set up The Long Run by coming up with a really holistic way of looking at private land conservation and water conservation. We developed a certification which is now an accreditation; The Long Run is a member-run and owned organisation that is now one of the world’s largest sustainable development initiatives led by nature-based businesses.

I also promote the idea of the 4Cs through my foundation in Kenya, which is separate from The Long Run; that's two initiatives. And of course there is also The B Team, which I co-founded with Richard Branson and in which we now have 24 global business leaders trying to do this on a big scale – trying to do better in terms of the environment but also in terms of social engagement. So The B Team is sort of the umbrella of the traditional big businesses doing this work, The Long Run is doing it in areas with conservation and biodiversity value, and at Segera I am doing it on the ground with my own property.

I am doing all of this because I believe that 65 to 70 per cent of environmental impacts are caused by business, so business needs to come to the table. That’s where I am focusing. And rather than saying, ‘I want to protect a specific species’, at the end of the day if you don’t have a space for the species, then what’s the point? So preserving the space is paramount – without the space, without the land, without the water being put to use in a way that allows communities to prosper on one side but also the environment to be preserved, your species won’t be saved. And there are only so many national parks and protected zones that you can create. So I believe that private engagement – through businesses, mostly, but also individual landowners – needs to be part of the solution.
Q: What have you found most rewarding in your work on environmental issues?
A: Finding a lot of like-minded individuals out there in the world. You just have to connect and find them. You don’t want to be on this journey on your own and I think collectively we can have a much bigger impact. Finding those individuals is rewarding because they have experienced similar things, good and bad, and you can share your best practice and your vision, your ideas and sometimes your frustrations because certainly none of this is easy. I think it’s very rewarding that you are not alone on the planet and trying to do this, there are many out there who want to be part of it.

Q: What have you found most frustrating?
A: That it’s not going fast enough. I’m not a patient guy. It takes many decades to solve existential issues, massive problems, and unfortunately the dial doesn’t move quickly. Also, the more people you bring in, the more complex it gets. There is no quick fix, everything is interconnected – which is great, but on the other hand sometimes makes it harder to really accomplish the goals that you set for yourself. So, being impatient about achieving the long-term goal and the fact that there are not enough people (and in particular businesses) out there who really get involved in solving environmental issues, I guess is both motivation and frustration at the same time.

Q: Can you tell us about a project you have funded that you consider to be a success story and exactly what impact that has had?
A: With The Long Run we had specific goals that we set – how many acres we wanted to put under the 4Cs management. We are now close to 12 million acres and would love to grow to over 20 million acres, so we have set ourselves clear goals in terms of how many members and how many areas, how diverse in terms of a global footprint we want to be. Beginning to achieve those goals is great and I think that’s why as a businessman you always want to have a clear objective, you know, you want to have an exit strategy. Philanthropy shouldn’t be forever; it should be clear that you are kick-starting initiatives and hopefully, eventually, they can run on their own. With The Long Run we’ve already accomplished a lot in the six or seven years we have been operating, with The B Team the same; we were very active in the Paris climate conference with our B-Leaders and we had a lot of positive remarks from politicians that business was finally at the table, supporting and helping. Once again in The B Team we have clear KPIs [key performance indicators] that we want to accomplish with the various initiatives that we are involved in on a big scale, as well as in terms of implementing them into our own businesses.

Q: If you were to give advice to a new funder what would you say to them?
A: I’d say it’s important that you get involved with areas that you are passionate about, but there is no point in reinventing the wheel. I think this should all be about collaboration and partnership and there is no point in having to do it all yourself. Setting up a foundation takes time, it takes a lot of energy and it takes making mistakes. So look out for what you are passionate about and see where you can have the biggest impact but scan the landscape first and see if there are other organisations out there that can help you achieve your goal before you do it yourself. There is no point in duplicating efforts if others have already gone through the learning curve well in advance. I always say I wouldn’t have started The Long Run initiative if somebody else had something close to what we believe is a truly unique way of looking at conservation. We took a year of time to really research before we decided that, well, nobody’s done it – we should do it.

Q: What do you see as the biggest challenges facing philanthropy today?
A: There’s not enough of it. And I think bringing business to the table, rather than looking at business just to donate a bit of money here and there. Trying to find business approaches that we can kick-start through philanthropy and impact investing is a way to look at business in a different way. So I think it’s important to bridge the gap between pure philanthropy and pure business. I think that model is missing today because if it’s pure philanthropy it’s clear that it can’t benefit business. I don’t believe that’s a good idea. I think we should use philanthropy to benefit business but with a different model that is ultimately win-win.

Q: What have you found most rewarding in your work on environmental issues?
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Kris McDivitt Tompkins
Tompkins Conservation

Kris was the CEO of Patagonia clothing company for 20 years, during which time she built the brand into a model of corporate responsibility. In 1993, Kris retired from Patagonia, married climber/entrepreneur Douglas Tompkins (founder of The North Face and co-founder of Esprit), and together they concentrated their efforts on conservation work in Chile and Argentina.

Q: Could you tell us about a recent success story and what impact this has had?

A: We still feel that we have a lot to do, but I'm very proud of what we have achieved so far. We've helped to create six new national parks, expand one national park, establish two provincial parks, and assemble the world's largest privately owned nature sanctuary open to the public. We haven't done all this alone – we've collaborated with fellow conservationists, many philanthropic partners, and four different presidents! That latest national park is taking shape: last year the Argentine President Mauricio Macri and I signed the documents for the new Berá National Park in the great Berá marshlands region of Corrientes Province, one of South America's largest wetlands and a globally important habitat for birds and other wildlife.

Q: What have been the most rewarding and frustrating things about working within environmental philanthropy?

A: Even though we both had extraordinary business careers, I think that we would both have said that this is by far the most rewarding work we have ever done, meeting the most interesting, thoughtful, enjoyable individuals. And it's exciting, making a new national park, it doesn't happen every day. We have had a lot of good results and that is certainly encouraging. But the headaches are big, the list is long. Certainly when we got started in Chile, there was a lot of suspicion about what it was we were doing, because it was new, nobody had really done it before. So that was tough and there were always conflicts, inherent conflicts between development and conservation, and you have to be ready to ride those storms out. You're working socially, culturally and politically in almost everything you do, so that takes a

Q: What is it that motivates you to give?

A: My first experience in environmental philanthropy came through working for Yvon and Malinda Chouinard at Patagonia. We recognised that manufacturing inherently causes pollution, and so worked hard to mitigate the company's ecological impacts, and also to educate our customers about threats to the environment – something that not a lot of companies were doing back then. Family ethics are important to us, Doug and I and always believed that 'the more you get, the more you give'.

We've always loved wildlife and masterpiece landscapes, and we both became increasingly concerned about the extinction crisis. The destruction of the natural world, the over-developed and over-populated world, over-consumption – we were just watching all of these things very consistently and seeing what's happening because of them. I don't believe that the extinction crisis is something that you can just write off as the cost of progress. You have to fight against those things. If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem.

Q: What kinds of work do you try to support to help resolve those issues?

A: Our family foundations are focused on four key areas: conservation of landscapes; restoration of damaged landscapes and of extirpated species wherever we are working; agriculture (as my husband said, 'If you don't get agriculture right you can forget about the rest of it'); and activism. We have always believed that activism must go hand in hand with the other areas of our work.

We used to give out a lot of grants every year, but many years ago we decided that we would focus our funds, our family foundation funds, on our own work here in Chile and Argentina. So the strategies are varied, but largely focused on converting key habitat into national parks which enjoy full national protection in those countries. Then we have a very, very big re-wilding programme, which is bringing back species in the areas where we work. In Argentina, this includes jaguars, giant anteaters, pumas, vultures – a long list of species that have been extirpated from the area for many years.

We also promote ecological agriculture through family farms and ranches, where we focus on protecting wildlife habitat, conserving soil and supporting our conservation goals. A thread running through everything we do is close work with local communities, encouraging and supporting economic stability and environmental activism – we've given grants of over $100 million for this kind of work.

Q: How have you been involved in the conservation work in Chile and Argentina?

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So our work is focused on creating parklands, sustaining biodiversity, restoring degraded lands, reintroducing missing species, encouraging environmental activism and promoting ecological agriculture. We started by buying habitat in Chile and Argentina. These are large plots of land; over time we bought about 2.2 million acres, all of which is going to create new national parks in Chile and Argentina. We're working on another six now and we hope to conserve somewhere around 15 million acres in total.

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lot of patience – which I have less of; my husband tended to be more patient and take the long view on things, so thank goodness we were not similar in that sense!

As they say, it’s not how much money you have, it’s what you do with the money you have. I believe in the ethics of philanthropy and so to have been able to have committed almost $300 million to conservation over our time, which for our small family foundations has represented a lot of our personal assets, it’s been the most gratifying time in our lives – and we have had extraordinary lives!

As one of our good philanthropist friends says, ‘Your last shirt has no pockets.’ You can’t take it with you; it’s what you do with your assets that tells the world who you are, tells yourself who you are. Sitting on a bunch of money and not using it for those things that you hold dear I think becomes an ethical question.

Q: Is there any advice you would give to a new funder who was thinking about coming into the world of environmental philanthropy?
A: Regarding conservation, I think that one of the basics is to inform yourself about what’s taking place, whether it’s the extinction of species, and come to understand what the root cause is of this particularly fragile point in time in human history. What has happened; how have we allowed climate change to take place without doing anything about it? How have we allowed ourselves to become so disconnected from nature upon which we all depend to survive – how did this happen? Really try to understand the crisis itself, and then hook yourself up to the people who are doing the best work, who are really results driven, who are working for the long term. We have great partners in our projects; people come to us because we are very results driven. We have probably protected and converted more international park [land] than anybody anywhere in the world and people want to be a part of that.

Q: How do you go about selecting the best people to work with?
A: I think that – especially having come out of the business world – we make great partners for people because we are well known for the quality of our work and the completeness of our work and so people find us. There is that, and then there are other people out there who are philanthropists whom we know want to partner with us because we have shared goals and shared standards. A lot of this has to do with standards; what are the standards we are going for? I think people trust us because we do have business backgrounds, we have our own money in the game, our own skin in the game, so that makes a difference to people. If we are willing to put our own money in, then other people are willing to put their own money in on our projects.

Q: And you like to work in a long-term way?
A: Yes; sometimes there are social projects that are attached to conservation that are much more immediate, but basically we are looking 100, 200 years out when [we hope] these national parks will still exist and it turns out to be a great strategy for long-term investment. Absolutely.

Q: Are there any big challenges that environmental philanthropists are facing at the moment?
A: First of all, it depends on where they are. If they are in Europe, I think that philanthropists have to be really careful about where they invest their conservation funds. Everybody is working with a sense of urgency, or they should be, and the challenge is to find projects that are very specific, well-managed, well-budgeted, that have timelines attached to them and really show results. Get them done and move on to the next one, because in many cases and with many species, time is running out. I think it’s better not to get involved in something that is sort of nebulous, with outcomes that aren’t well-specified, and instead to work with people who are known entities and have the characteristics to accomplish things and then keep moving. So don’t get spread out, focus on a few things and go more deeply. Treat your conservation dollars the same way you would the investment of your personal funds. These are cherished assets and you need to go to the best and the fastest. Force yourself to do your due diligence and make sure that every pound or dollar is well spent. I think the really important thing is, if you are going to be a philanthropist, be serious about it, because conservation dollars are scarce. Out of all the philanthropy world, I think the environment gets four per cent, if that. It’s so ironic that the one thing upon which all healthy life depends gets the least amount of philanthropic dollars, so be smart about it.
Q: What, if anything, has changed in your giving over the last three years?
A: The biggest thing is not so much with my giving but with my time. I see the need to focus on climate change. We have had some significant victories recently. With the Paris Agreement and renewable energies moving faster than anyone ever expected, there has been a lot of progress. But if the two things I have are time and money, then I’m starting to steer more of my time towards reaching other people to convince them that climate change is an issue that is receiving too little attention, given the scale of what will happen if we don’t deal with it. We are on track for maybe three degrees Celsius [of global average temperature rises] at the moment, and that is a frightening scenario: two degrees is already pushing the limits. We need to get below that and we’re simply not on track. The good news is that we have had a lot of success and philanthropy has had a lot of success. So, I just want to tell that story and encourage others to engage.

Q: Tell us a bit more about exactly what you are doing in that arena.
A: With four other foundations, we have an effort that we are calling ‘Go Big’ to reach out to existing and potential philanthropists around the world and talk to them about climate change – why we see it as important and how it might affect the work that they are already doing. In our conversations, we help them think about how they might invest in climate change mitigation. It’s a peer-to-peer type effort. If they are interested in investing in climate change, then we will provide them with the opportunities – and there are many of them! The reason I’m doing this is simply that we always talk about strategic philanthropy, but we’ve got to the point where most of the biggest climate funders sit around the table and say, ‘Well, being strategic isn’t our problem; the problem is not having enough funds available to invest in all the ideas out there, and in all the opportunities.’ So being strategic now is going out and talking to other people, encouraging them to give, not so much deciding ‘do I give to NGO A or NGO B?’

We want to meet people where they are: if they are health funders, then let’s work on air quality; if they work on poverty, let’s work on energy efficiency. It’s not so much about bringing them to our issue but finding ways to work together that bring about the co-benefits of addressing air quality, energy efficiency or food waste, for example.

Q: Are you spending most of your time and funding on climate change now, or are you still working on some other areas?
A: Our Environment Programme still works on the oceans and they are still my passion. But with things like ocean acidification and warming [brought about by climate change], we’re on track to lose coral reefs. My team are still investing in NGOs working on the oceans, but the reality is that if we can’t stop climate change then that work will be lost. About half of our Environment Programme budget goes towards climate; sometimes maybe a little bit more than half.

Q: Can you tell us about a success story you have been involved in over the last three years?
A: This may seem like a sales pitch for offering organisations core [i.e., not project-based] support. Through the ClimateWorks Foundation, we invested in an organisation called the International Council on Clean Transportation. They play a role as a think tank, highlighting best practice regarding fuel efficiency in cars, and they also play a watchdog role on air quality. It started with a conversation between them and a few other NGOs about whether diesel cars were actually meeting the air quality standards. They then commissioned research from a university – and that’s how ‘Dieselgate’ came out.

Now, that victory was accidental, nobody was really looking for this. They knew there was an issue with how the rules were being enforced, but had no idea that behind this was active cheating. It just shows the value of having these civil society organisations watching out for the proper enforcement of regulations. We had given them core support – without which they might not have been able to do this work.

Out of the scandal has come an opportunity for electrification of transportation – air quality in London is a prime example; it’s simply not up to European standards. Those standards are based on what’s needed to maintain people’s health, not some arbitrary number. The levels of pollutants in the city are just not what people should be exposed to.

Q: Do you prefer to provide core funding?
A: We do. We tend to give it to a sub-set of our partners and it depends where they are in their development. But we provide a fair amount of core funding across our programme areas, because we believe that it is one of the most constructive ways of building capacity. It’s hard work to raise money and it’s hard work to raise core costs especially. More funders need to do this; we don’t need to torture NGOs into having to come up with the new ideas. Sometimes you’re investing in people, in a concept, in the people that are running it and the potential for change, not necessarily a specific outcome.

Q: What do you think have been the most significant changes to the environment sector as a whole in the last three years?
A: Last time you interviewed me I spoke about how I didn’t view climate change as an environmental issue but as a human issue, and that is even more the case now. It’s the disadvantaged people in the developing world that are going to be hit the hardest by climate change. Not us, them. You know, heatwaves or a change in rainfall.
‘If the two things I have are time and money, then I’m starting to steer more of my time towards reaching other people to convince them that climate change is an issue that is receiving too little attention, given the scale of what will happen if we don’t deal with it. . . . With four other foundations, we have an effort that we are calling “Go Big” to reach out to existing and potential philanthropists around the world and talk to them about climate change. . . . [W]e help them think about how they might invest in climate change mitigation.’

patterns directly affect food production – all of these things are going to hit the poorest people the hardest.

I think part of my evolution as a philanthropist has been about not always focusing on the goal. The big example I’ll give is the evolution of what used to be our marine protection areas programme into a small-scale fisheries programme. So instead of focusing on the objective of protected areas, we turned it on its head and focused on small-scale fishermen. It’s now a brand new programme, and the strategy is still in development, but the framework is completely different. It’s no longer focused on protected areas, instead it’s focused on how we can help small-scale fishermen become sustainable. In that context it’s become a human issue also. If you add climate change into that picture, helping to form resilience in both the ecosystem and the communities becomes a form of investment in people’s livelihoods and in their ability to access cheap protein.

There are a lot more people working as small-scale fishermen in the world than as industrial fishermen. They use a lot less fuel; they receive far less in terms of subsidies and together they catch almost as much fish. That doesn’t mean they don’t have any impact on the environment, but they do tend to do less damage to the environment than industrial fishing does. For us to protect the oceans through small-scale fishermen – it’s not going to be easy, but I think its going to be a change in the way we look at a problem. So, instead of looking at how to protect an area and keep fishermen out, we are asking, ‘How do you keep a system that benefits both the environment and the fisherman?’. Small-scale fishermen are a natural ally in a sense.

Q: What advice would you give to new funders interested in supporting environmental work?

A: I would encourage people to get to a place where they trust organisations with core grants because they are the most valuable form of support. Given to some key partners it can really open them up to huge opportunities. You don’t have to do it forever but I really encourage people to work out what they would need in order to be comfortable giving core support grants. Because, as a funder, ultimately you can have a strategy and you can have people working to help you find the big projects, but the people doing the work have pretty good ideas too. Sometimes simply supporting those ideas is the most effective way to act – not second-guessing them so much.

I would also reiterate the risk of not doing something on climate change. You can argue that $1 spent today is worth $10 spent in ten years. There is a lot of momentum now, and this is a perfect time to come in. A lot of the scepticism over technologies like renewable energy and solar energy has been wiped out. Solar energy is cheaper than coal in some places and it’s only going to get cheaper, for instance. So, this is a great time to start supporting climate change work and it’s also a great time to get more for your money – because in ten years’ time if we are headed towards three degrees [of temperature change], then unfortunately all the money in the world is not going to stop it.

We have got to reduce our emissions to a level we can adapt to. I don’t know if it’s possible for a lot of people to adapt to a temperature change of three degrees, especially those poorest people who are already struggling to survive. If you add heat waves, lower crop yields, changes in rainfall patterns, diseases that weren’t there before, pests that weren’t there before, we simply won’t be able to handle the consequences.

I spoke about risk the last time you interviewed me. I think now the risk is not ‘investing and failing’ or ‘investing and not getting what you want’. The risk is not investing, right? We need new people coming in with good ideas and passion. It’s not only the money we want, it’s the passion and the intelligence and the drive to invest in the next big idea.
FORCES FOR NATURE

Living Landscape

What winning looks like

Some of the Environmental Movement’s recent successes around the UK

Renewed power: - the price of offshore wind dropped far enough in 2017 to make it competitive with gas

Restored rural & urban habitats through conservation programmes in Scotland, creating jobs, planting green roofs and street trees and creating new parks

Reintroduced beavers to Scotland

Persuaded the UK government to commit to creating a Blue Belt around all 14 of the UK’s overseas territories - the greatest conservation commitment by any government ever!

Persuaded several retailers to stop selling neonicotinoid pesticides, which are harmful to bees

Provided free energy advice and support to 8,000 poor and vulnerable people, helping them save money, stay warmer & clear debts through energy efficiency measures in their homes

Helped persuade the Government to establish a £1 billion Brownfield Fund to get houses built on brownfields, protecting green space from development

Created thousands of new ponds for wildlife, towards the goal of a million ponds

Helped persuade the Government to establish a £1 billion Brownfield Fund to get houses built on brownfields, protecting green space from development

Began the largest wetland restoration in Europe; the Great Fen

Established a sustainable fishery in Lyme Bay where fishermen earn up to 30% more while fishing less and marine life is recovering dramatically

Persuaded politicians across parties to commit to phasing out coal in the UK

Sustained pressure to reduce air pollution across the UK

Won a High Court case against the Government over its failure to tackle illegal air pollution

Drove the passing of the Climate Change Act and subsequent carbon budgets

2008
2015
2018
2023
2043

Helped usher in England’s plastic bag charge, reducing plastic bag usage by 85% in England (saving over 6 billion plastic bags in 6 months)

Prevented fracking in Britain (so far)

Created or restored 15,800 acres of wildflower meadows across Britain
FORCES FOR NATURE
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