



A SPLENDID TORCH

Interviews with environmental funders



Edited by Florence Miller, Phil Murray and Katy Scholfield

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The Environmental Funders Network (EFN)

EFN is collaborating to secure a truly sustainable and just world, fit for people and nature. Our mission is to increase financial support for environmental causes and to help environmental philanthropy to be as effective as it can be. Our members are funders, mainly based in the United Kingdom, who pursue these aims at home and overseas. As their network we will work inclusively, efficiently, transparently and accountably and to high standards of social and environmental responsibility.

EFN does not hold funds, consider or make grants, or advise fundraisers. Please do not send funding requests to EFN as we cannot respond to them.

Funders interested in joining EFN or finding out more about the network should contact Florence Miller, EFN coordinator, at florence@greenfunders.org.

Other recent EFN publications include *Passionate Collaboration?* and *Where the Green Grants Went 6*. These publications, along with other EFN publications and resources relevant to environmental philanthropy, are available on the Resources page of our website: www.greenfunders.org/resources.



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Introduction

This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community, and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can.

I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no 'brief candle' for me. It is a sort of 'splendid torch' which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.

George Bernard Shaw, quoted in *George Bernard Shaw: His Life and Works*, Archibald Henderson, 1911 (Hesperides Press)

If George Bernard Shaw's rousing words aren't enough to inspire you, we invite you to spend some time in the company of people similarly committed to the good of the whole community. These are people who have devoted money, time, skills and passion in an attempt to tackle some of the most urgent issues of our time.

In 2013 and 2014, the Environmental Funders Network interviewed ten environmental donors about what motivates them to give, what strategies they have adopted for their philanthropy and how they ensure that their donations have

the most impact possible. Whether you are considering donating to environmental causes for the first time or are an experienced environmental grantmaker, we think you will be inspired and motivated by what they had to say.

Documented in these pages are some of the lessons they've learned from many decades of combined experience in environmental grantmaking. The funders we interviewed were passionate about their work and refreshingly candid about what has and hasn't worked in their efforts to address complex, often systemic problems.

While their approaches to giving show some marked differences, a number of key themes emerge across the ten interviews. These include:

1) Be bold, and accept you may have failures. "Philanthropy is meant to be a place of taking risks", says Jessica Sweidan. Jamie Arbib puts it this way: "I'm coming from a venture capital background and that's what we do. You make a number of investments, and some of them fail, that's the nature of things. I'm relatively comfortable with risk. What we want to do is to encourage these more game-changing ideas.... As a foundation we don't feel the need to justify ourselves so much, and I think that liberates us." Seize the opportunities offered by the freedom of being answerable to no one but yourselves. Invest in ideas that are aimed at step change, even though they may have a high

risk of failure. If you don't invest in high-risk, high-return ventures, who will?

2) Fund for the long term. As Kristian Parker puts it, “Change just doesn't happen fast. You have to make long-term commitments to any enterprise.” Most of the funders interviewed provide funding to organisations or projects over many years. Sarah Butler-Sloss is a “great believer in providing at least three years of funding”; Martin Stanley always takes the “ten-year view”; and the McIntosh Foundation has supported one organisation for over 35 years. Ben Goldsmith stresses the importance of persistence and focus: “You need to get to know the groups that you're supporting and stick with those groups through thick and thin. Maintain focus, don't flip from one thing to the next and be reactive.”

3) Offer core/unrestricted funding. If Winsome McIntosh could ask grantmakers to do one thing differently, it would be “to focus more on unrestricted funding instead of restricted funding for programmes”. As Harvey Jones puts it, “There's this very project-based approach that everyone's got, where they won't fund overhead. From a charity's point of view you're then forced to pretend that what you're doing is a project, when clearly it isn't.” “You have an NGO that is turning itself into a pretzel to try and recoup as much core funding as it can, and it's never totally covered”, says Winsome. “You could give much greater flexibility to an organisation and its talent if you gave it unrestricted funding.”

4) Give, give, give. As Sarah Butler-Sloss puts it, “The biggest challenge for environmental philanthropy is that there are so few environmental funders.” Research published by the Environmental Funders Network¹ confirms this view; only four per cent of charitable giving in the UK goes to

environmental causes – giving is not yet anywhere near the scale that it needs to be to tackle the big challenges we're facing. Frederick Mulder encourages prospective donors to “get your feet wet”, while Edward Whitley calls on funders to “stay true to your aspirations, and be tenacious”. Start giving, start learning, and start seeing a difference.

Other common themes that emerge from the interviews are the importance of fostering collaboration within the sector and the value of investing in great people.

The ten funders interviewed here followed different routes into environmental philanthropy – Harvey Jones sold his online cycle business and was looking for a new challenge, Winsome McIntosh and her husband inherited an established foundation, and Jessica Sweidan, in her words, “got very, very angry”. Each of them has taken on different challenges, from declining fish stocks to climate change to re-imagining a sustainable financial system. But in his or her own way, each funder has helped to catalyse change or preserve something valuable. We hope that their stories will inspire you, and that they will provide valuable food for thought in terms of what comprises effective environmental giving. As ever, EFN is keen to hear your views, so please contact florence@greenfunders.org with any feedback.

With our thanks to ten very busy people for taking the time to share their knowledge: Jamie Arbib, Sarah Butler-Sloss, Ben Goldsmith, Harvey Jones, Kristian Parker, Winsome McIntosh, Frederick Mulder, Martin Stanley, Jessica Sweidan and Edward Whitley.

ENVIRONMENTAL FUNDERS NETWORK

¹ Phil Murray et al., *Where the Green Grants Went 6: Patterns of UK Funding for Environmental and Conservation Work*, London: EFN, March 2014.



Harvey Jones

Pig Shed Trust

After retiring as Managing Director of Wiggle Ltd, an online cycle goods retailer, Harvey set off as skipper of a 55ft sailing yacht for a year-long voyage to the Arctic. What he saw on the trip and the books he read while he was away led him to decide to work in the environmental sector upon his return. After selling Wiggle, he established the Pig Shed Trust.

EFN: Can you tell us how you came to be interested in environmental issues?

HJ: I was brought up a country boy. I'm a yokel. My earliest memories are of going out with ferrets catching rabbits in the back of Transit vans, or being down on the shore catching any kind of fish that couldn't move quickly enough. I didn't have a paper round, I had a cockle round. So my childhood was very connected to the natural world. But it was the natural world as prey.

EFN: Could you give a bit of your history, your story, how you came to be an environmental philanthropist?

HJ: I went off sailing for a year [after I sold my business] and then came back and sat on my lawn and thought, "I've no idea what to do." I had retired without meaning to, hadn't given any thought to what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. It was terrible, I found it really destabilising. Getting involved with environmental stuff was to try and find meaning. It sounds awfully dramatic. [I was] trying to find a reason to get up in the morning because I need a plan, that's the kind of person I am.

I think we can make progress. I'm not looking for a bed of nails to lie on. This is about achieving something worthwhile.

The fact that we've suddenly exceeded global limits has posed *the* question of our time. That's the thing which has changed in the last couple of decades. We've hit the limit – we can't generate any more pollution, we've hit the CO₂ limit and other things. There are no more fish – we've eaten them. It's time to wake up and work out what we're going to do next. It's the big challenge of our age.

EFN: What are the main environmental priorities you have identified for your giving?

HJ: We work mostly in marine conservation. It's clear that the environment is a small proportion of philanthropic giving in the UK, and that the marine aspect is an even tinier fraction. We've also worked with Hampshire Wildlife Trust and we've supported Greenpeace in relation to the Arctic.

EFN: What approach best characterises your giving?

HJ: Our priority is to see tangible outcomes. We're not particularly wedded to education or values or trying to make people 'better'; we think it's really important that we actually achieve some measurable gains for the environment.

I really struggle with trying to make sense of that model of charitable giving and philanthropy where it's just a constant treadmill of trying to get the next grant in, to spend the grant, trying to find the next donor...it doesn't make sense to me. I think we need to be smarter. We're interested in how we can do environmental work in a business-like way so that it becomes self-sustaining and doesn't need constant philanthropic funding. I really see trust funds as seed capital to start a series of projects that will become self-sustaining and possibly able to repay the capital so that we can apply it to the next project. Not all projects can be funded that way but if we can make projects self-sustaining ... the model that we've created is compelling enough that it will grow in any case.

EFN: Could you talk a bit about how you came to have that approach?

HJ: Many third sector organisations want to achieve what businesses achieve, and they'd like someone like me to come along and tell them what that is. The problem is that they don't really want to hear it. What they really want is for me to sign the cheque, that would be the best thing, or if I tell them how to rub the magic lamp and the genie of business comes out and makes them loads of money, that's second best. What they don't want to hear is: "Well, we need to work out what our strategy is, we need to work out our tactics, we need to know what our Unique Selling Proposition is, we need to work out what our product is, how we're going to market it, what our benchmarks are..."

EFN: Are you making any investments where you are looking for a financial return as well?

HJ: Yeah, definitely. We understand now that idea of something which is an investment which would have a return on trust funds. It's a higher risk, lower return than a business would normally be able to undertake but, because it's got the environmental outcome in line with our objectives, then as trustees we're confident in taking that increased risk.

For example, we're funding Hampshire Wildlife Trust in order to help them develop extensive cattle grazing so they can get their nature reserves back to a good, healthy biodiverse state.

*"I'm not looking for a bed of nails to lie on.
This is about achieving something worthwhile."*

What we've done is fund against the cattle themselves, so that we're acting like a bank. We're making a loan to the Hampshire Wildlife Trust to purchase cattle against a charge on the value of the cattle, but the loan is repayable in relation to the outcomes of the project.

At the moment, the major project we are looking at is a scallop ranch. The trust will provide seed funding and,

if necessary, fund the whole project. We intend to get our money back, but we'll be taking a far greater risk than a commercial entity would be willing to take and we'll be much more patient about the financial return. But if you look in ten years we should have it all back, and we should be seeing the environmental outcomes of the project as well. In this case we are charging a modest interest rate, because the point of that project is to prove that it is commercially viable.



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

HJ: We're concerned with how you motivate people to change their behaviour. If you think you're not going to sort the environment out until you've made people 'better', you know, 'more moral', then we're not going to sort the environment out, are we? You know, the Babylonians wished people were nicer to each other. It would be great, but in the meantime we have to deal with people as they are, and accept that they aren't rational. We need to make sure our solutions are to the benefit of the people we are working with. There are a few saints in the world, but not enough.

EFN: What have you found most rewarding in your grantmaking and what have you found most frustrating?

HJ: I find it rewarding being part of a much bigger movement. Particularly with Greenpeace I find that, for example with their Arctic campaign. It's also rewarding working alongside the Wildlife Trust and ClientEarth people, who are very practically focused, motivated people.

I'm pretty phobic about bureaucracy so I sometimes find that frustrating, as is the lack of focus in some of the environmental organisations. I find it really difficult when organisations have people at the top level who are not as good as they ought to be. It's a British disease, isn't it: 'lions led by donkeys'. There are some amazing people working really hard at the lower level in some big organisations and they are being let down dramatically by the people at the top. In a business environment those people would have been

spending more time with their family a long time ago. We're lacking really good leadership.

EFN: Why do you think that is?

HJ: I think it's because there are a lot of people in the environmental movement, and the wider charity sector, who don't like the idea of leadership. It's this conflation of altruism with socialism. I'm passionate about equality of opportunity. I'm not passionate about equality of outcome. People are not equal. Management is a skill; people are either good at it or they're not. Particularly in the charity sector, we have a hard time accepting this. This isn't a problem in all organisations. There are some amazing leaders out there and the sector achieves an enormous amount with very little, but I do see a need for a fundamental change in culture.

EFN: Do you have any reflections to share in terms of the way in which grants are made?

HJ: I'm aware how difficult it is to raise unrestricted funding. There's this very project-based approach that everyone's got, where they won't fund overhead. From a charity's point of view you're then forced to pretend that what you're doing is a project, when clearly it isn't. This suits grantmaking trustees, who can say, "We funded this project and it had that outcome, aren't we clever and can I have my MBE please!" It's not quite so sexy to say, "We funded the backroom team and they're doing this and they're monitoring that and they've got people all over Africa looking at what's going on and they've been doing it for ten years and it's really important that they keep going."



Winsome McIntosh

McIntosh Foundation

Winsome has been a Trustee/Member of the McIntosh Foundation since 1972 and has four decades of experience in the wider philanthropic community. She has founded several non-profits including the Community Foundation for Palm Beach and Martin Counties, Florida; ClientEarth, UK/EU; Rachel's Network, US; and the Association of Small Foundations, US. She has written and spoken extensively on issues related to philanthropy.

EFN: How did your foundation develop its focus on environmental issues?

WM: Because we were a small foundation we realised that we didn't have enough money to change all the ills of the world, so we'd have to really focus. We decided to focus almost entirely on the environment sector, which was a brand new movement in the United States in the late 1960s, early 1970s. At that time foundations were not giving much money to it because they considered it controversial, and non-charitable, and they were not risk taking. So we were out there taking lots of risks and having fun.

EFN: How would you describe your theory of change?

WM: We decided that the way to effect change in this country [the US] was to think long term, strive to bring about systemic change, and to do it through advocacy and the law. Charity is about giving to something in the moment that is terribly needed, whether it's a homeless shelter, or food for the poor, or something of that nature. Philanthropy should be trying to tackle the problem that is causing the need for that charity. And so we have always resisted the temptation to do short-term, programmatic work, and instead have tried to bring about systemic change. This is much harder to do and can take years, or decades.

Law in our country today is incredibly important, either on a proactive basis or on a defensive basis depending on the politics involved at the time. If you get it right, either in helping to write that good law or legislative purposes in the beginning, or striking down bad law, you've made a huge difference.

“We have always resisted the temptation to do short-term, programmatic work, and instead have tried to bring about systemic change.”

We have supported a small cluster of NGOs that we’ve often founded, because another part of our strategy is to be entrepreneurial and take risk. Many times that has meant founding new organisations, often public interest law firms, for a very specific purpose. We stay with organisations for well over ten years at a time, and in the case of the Natural Resources Defense Council for over 35 years, and we focus on unrestricted money because in our minds we’re investing in people.

EFN: By entrepreneurial, do you mean innovating and taking risk or do you mean with a profit motive?

WM: In the non-profit world, our ‘profit’ motive is positive change. But the business principles are the same. One of the things that’s dearly lacking in a lot of non-profits is business management experience, whether at the board level for guidance or within the organisation itself. That tends to hold non-profits back a great deal. But for us, entrepreneurial means finding something that needs to be done that nobody is doing, that we are willing to take the risk to do. [Often] that has meant founding new organisations. In our realm of what we’re doing in the environmental community here it has involved founding public interest law firms. So entrepreneurial means founding organisations but also sticking with the strategy over the long term to have a long-term effect.

EFN: Could you tell us about a success story?

WM: Our ... modern success is ClientEarth, which we founded seven or eight years ago. It’s still in the growing stages, but it’s beginning to rack up strategic and important legal victories across the EU. So for a small amount of money ... we can effect changes to the laws of 28 countries.

EFN: Can you tell us what aspects you find most rewarding in your grantmaking?

WM: I think it’s the ability to work with people of all ages who are so talented and passionate and committed to giving back to society. It goes back to our desire to invest in the best possible people that we can.

EFN: Are you referring to civil society organisations or everyone?

WM: It’s everyone ... I think [developing] peer networks of funders is just as important to us as the [NGO] peer networks that we support. To me networks are the most critical and important tool that we as funders have. They inform us, and give us an opportunity to exchange experiences with others working in this field, and from all of this we learn from each other. A lot of the funding that we do is around supporting networks in the philanthropic community as well as in the not-for-profit community.

EFN: What's the most frustrating part of grantmaking?

WM: One of the things that disturbs me is the tremendous growth in the number of NGOs which is not matched by an equivalent growth in funding. And that drives the NGO community to become more and more competitive.... I would like to see greater collaboration but I think that's pretty hard to ask for because there are too many egos involved. Although I think there's strength in numbers I also think those numbers should be coalescing into more viable sustainable organisations with a bigger voice.... Funders could, to some degree, encourage mergers by making it clear they would support this. It's not going to be very popular but from a business perspective I think some of this needs to happen.

EFN: If there was one thing you wish grantmakers would do differently, what would it be?

WM: It would be to focus more on unrestricted funding instead of restricted funding for programmes. What that does to NGOs is tie them up in knots. It also means that you're not investing in the organisation and the leadership of the organisation, you're only investing in a short-term gain.... I think that is being very short sighted because invariably funding of programmes doesn't cover the full cost of doing that programmatic work, and so you have an NGO that is turning itself into a pretzel to try and recoup as much core funding as it can, and it's never totally covered. You could give much greater flexibility to an organisation and its talent if you gave it unrestricted funding.... It's sort of a trap that large foundations in particular fall into. They build up a bureaucracy of programme officers that feeds on itself. It stifles entrepreneurship and risk taking, it just puts everybody into boxes and silos into which the grantees then have to fit themselves. And I just don't think it's a good way to

fund. But it's the majority of the way funding is done right now. I see it first hand from my side of the table, but also from the NGO side because I'm the chair of a number of organisations. So I know what is required for all these wonderful grants, and it's appalling to me.

EFN: If you were going to give some advice to a new funder coming into the field what would it be?

WM: Understand that there's not enough money in the world to cover all the ills. If you really want to make a difference and have a philosophy that you want to espouse, then keep your staffing minimal and be as involved in it, physically and mentally, as you can. Think entrepreneurially, but focus. Think about strategy. When we give a grant, we don't have a grant contract or anything, we're giving unrestricted money, and we only ask for one verbal report per year.

EFN: It sounds as if you are advocating for a very involved and active role. Is that the role that you take?

WM: We have a support staff, but we don't have programme officers. And the other thing about us is that we are very entrepreneurial and we've been doing this a long time, so we don't accept unsolicited grant requests. We make it clear in our public descriptions that we seek out our grantees. And we usually stay with the same grantees for long periods of time and therefore have working relationships with them, whereby they inform us, and hopefully we inform them too.

EFN: What do you see as the greatest challenges facing philanthropy today?

WM: I think the biggest challenge is an unwillingness to take risk. You're going to have failures, but that's OK. In

our society philanthropists are the only ones really who can afford to take risk and lose. We haven't succeeded with all our endeavours. I could tell you about a great \$2 million debacle that we tried, and which didn't work. But we learnt from that, and it made us better funders going forwards.

The other thing I see in the United States is the foundation community acting like lemmings. To begin with there

were few funders investing in climate change, but all of a sudden everyone got on board, with the result that all this funding was sucked up from the rest of the environmental community. And then there was a total failure at the national level to get a climate change bill passed. What I see now is foundations moving towards marine funding and all of a sudden all of the lemmings are going into marine. It's a fascinating thing to watch.





Frederick Mulder CBE

Frederick Mulder Foundation

Frederick has been an art dealer since 1971. He is one of the world's leading specialists in Picasso prints and his firm, Frederick Mulder Ltd, has one of the largest stocks of original Picasso prints in the world. Frederick is the founder and chair of the Frederick Mulder Foundation, funded from the profits of his business. He is also the founder of The Funding Network, the first open and public giving circle in the UK, which is active in eight UK cities and six other countries.

EFN: What are the main priorities for your environmental giving?

FM: I'm interested in climate change. It's where our generation has made the biggest mess and it's where the next generations in particular will begin to suffer.

I think that whatever issues you're interested in, whether it's human rights or global poverty, unless we get the climate change issue sorted correctly, you might as well wipe off everything else. I mean obviously you have to keep working on the other issues, but I've often thought about my funding as [supporting] the people who don't get a say in decision-making. Future generations are the class of people who get the least say in decisions. So it's a sense of social justice really that drives my interest in environmental funding.

EFN: How do you try to effect change in your giving and how does that influence your giving?

FM: I'm still finding my way, but I'm most interested in how the financial industry might be re-engineered to incentivise the move to a low carbon economy. I'm also interested in boring regulatory things because I think it's incredibly important who gets to make the rules and how the rules are made. Often it's the companies concerned that get to do the lobbying on how to write the regulations and I think that consumers and NGOs need to have a much more important role in creating the rules that govern future action by companies and governments.

EFN: How do you choose which organisations or projects to support?

FM: I would say I try to be driven by the intervention point, but in practice I actually often get driven by the sense that there's

somebody really interesting at the helm of the organisation. I'm an art dealer and I've always worked for myself, so I suppose I've always been looking for organisations led by entrepreneurial spirits. I like people who are prepared to challenge the paradigm. I've also looked for organisations that are appropriate to the level of funding that I've been able to give.

EFN: How did your involvement in environmental philanthropy come about?

FM: I'd heard about Greenpeace early on and I just thought they were an interesting, funky organisation. After Greenpeace's *Rainbow Warrior* was sunk in Auckland harbour in 1985, I remember thinking, "Greenpeace isn't taking advantage of this to publicise themselves." So I talked to Greenpeace and offered to underwrite an advertising campaign around the sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior*. That made the front page and they did really well. That was my first big funding of a campaign but also, instead of just making a grant, I said, "Let's do this and I'll take all the risk." It worked out really well and that led to a long relationship with Greenpeace, which still goes on today.

EFN: What is the most rewarding thing about giving to environmental causes?

FM: To be honest, environmental giving isn't particularly rewarding in the most immediate sense. Conservation funding, yes, there are good-looking animals with big brown eyes that

you know you're helping, but with environmental funding, the rewards will – we hope – be felt by future generations, and there's no immediate pay-off. And precisely for that reason, I try not to think too much about reward. I hope for future pay-off, of course, that I won't experience, but to me that's the whole point. I come from the art world, and in the art world, you see immediate pay-off, you see a picture you've donated or some exhibition you helped to fund on the wall. But what I'm interested in is right at the other end of the scale, where you don't really get any reward and you don't always know whether it's going to work. It's a bet you're laying but it's for the benefit of future generations and not you.

EFN: What would you say you find most frustrating about environmental giving?

FM: Short-termism. The short-termism of companies is driven by the fact that share prices are so important. The short-termism of consumers, of the public, is probably driven by a kind of selfishness, I think. And the short-termism of politicians is driven by the election cycle. I don't know the answer, but you just have to keep encouraging people to take up a longer-term point of view.

EFN: Can you tell us about a particular project that you've supported that you thought was a success?

FM: The P8 project – it's been very successful. P8 was a process to bring together the largest pension funds in the

"I try not to think too much about reward. I hope for future payoff, of course, that I won't experience, but to me that's the whole point. It's a bet you're laying but it's for the benefit of future generations and not you."

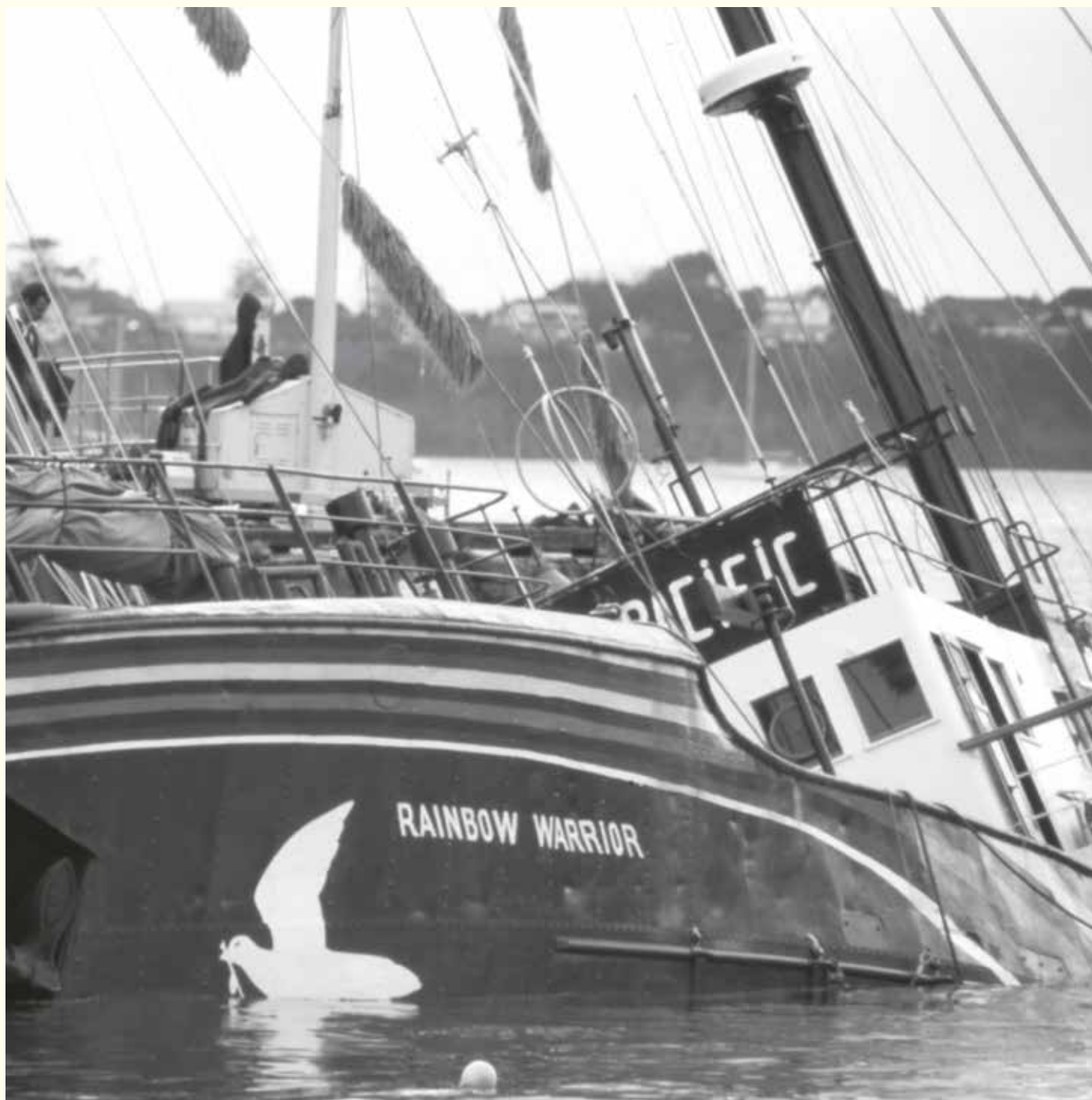


Photo: John Miller / Greenpeace

world to encourage them to put more money into renewables. It's run by a guy called Brian Martel and he's brought now – with my help and the help of others – two or three million dollars that probably wouldn't otherwise have gone into the infrastructure for a low carbon economy. His aim is to get twenty billion dollars into it.

EFN: Is there any advice that you would give to new environmental philanthropists coming into the field?

FM: Get started, get your feet wet! I think that's always a good idea. Have a go in a couple of different areas, but I would say then look for an area you could actually learn about what's going on and be able to fund intelligently and acquire a body of knowledge.

EFN: What do you see as the biggest challenges facing philanthropy today?

FM: I think the biggest challenge is still that wealth is more highly regarded than generosity. There's still a concentration on what's prestigious rather than what's actually important. I work in the art industry so I see it all

the time, there's so much money floating around the big museums and opera houses. I love the opera, but there's so little money, relatively speaking, going into long-term solutions, into things that are longer term and that have less of a pay-off for the donor.

I also think that when you look at what you should fund, the more likely [you are] to get praised for it or to get an immediate benefit – thanks, or a nice dinner, or a nice outing, or a nice exhibition – the less beneficial it is to the world at large. I think people don't do a kind of calculation about how many people will benefit from this gift and to what extent.

EFN: How do you think some of those challenges can be overcome?

FM: I suppose just educating philanthropists. I think that forums like EFN are a great help because potential donors get talking to each other about what they're doing. And I think that giving circles like The Funding Network, which I started, where people can hear about a range of projects, are a good way of finding out what's going on.

“I think the biggest challenge is still that wealth is more highly regarded than generosity.”



Sarah Butler-Sloss

Ashden Trust and Ashden

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 sustainable development charity Forum for the Future. She sits on a number of advisory panels on matters relating to sustainable energy and development.

EFN: Perhaps we could start by you telling us about the different environmental initiatives you are involved in?

SB: I wear two hats. Firstly, there's the Ashden Trust, which is a foundation, and makes international grants mainly on avoided deforestation, and UK grants focused on sustainable farming and transport. The Trust also works to alleviate poverty by encouraging real sustainable development. That work and our regeneration programmes have a strong environmental side to them, so it's not clear cut in terms of "this is our environmental work, this is our regeneration work and alleviating poverty" – they're all very closely linked.

The second hat I wear is for Ashden, which runs the awards scheme [for local energy solutions], and supports our winners. This is a charity, not a foundation.

Impact investing is a big issue for us, in terms of using our capital in a way that is aligned with our grants programme ... so we do not invest in any fossil fuel companies and we have a very strong ethical capital side. Ten per cent of all our capital goes into impact investing in relation to reforestation, renewable energy, and microfinance.

EFN: Why have you chosen climate change in particular?

SB: Because I think it's the most important issue that our generation faces! Generally speaking, our grantmaking comes out of the income from our capital, but because climate change is such a big issue, we decided to use some of our capital as well, by creating what we call the Climate Change Collaboration. Four different Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts work together on this, pooling funds, with a focus on the lowest hanging fruit where we can generate some sort of

“My biggest advice as a funder would be to fund organisations you really respect, rather than trying to change significantly what they are doing. The biggest mistake a funder can make is going in with the belief that you know best.”

change. We’ve been supporting a big programme on energy efficiency. This has involved looking at the instruments needed to encourage wider take-up, the finance models that need to be developed, the training needs, etc.

We’re also looking at sustainable finance more broadly, and at the cultural shifts required to tackle climate change. We’ve been supporting research into how you get the climate message and the environmental message across through the arts. There’s an awful lot we’re doing in this area.

EFN: How do you try to effect change when it comes to grantmaking?

SB: We try to find the real change-makers and then support them. Generally speaking, we fund small organisations that are able to move fast and where our funding will have a bigger impact. We don’t generally give grants larger than £30,000 a year and we often make multi-year grants. I’m a great believer in providing at least three years of funding.

EFN: What do you find most rewarding in terms of giving to the environment and to wider social issues?

SB: Through the Ashden Awards process we are seeing small organisations become really big players. So, for

example, Grameen Shakti was one of our early winners. At that point they had 60,000 solar home systems installed. They now have 1.5 million installed and every one of those solar home systems is transforming at least five people’s lives. All our Indian winners now have access to policymakers in India, and having the Ashden name has a huge impact on them being able to engage with the government.

EFN: What would you say is the most frustrating aspect of your environmental giving?

SB: It’s really depressing to see how slowly change has happened. When I set the Ashden Trust up in 1990 I had no idea how strong the vested interests are compared to those pushing for environmental protection. I used to think, “Show people the exemplars, show people what can be done, show people the huge benefits of renewable energy and that will be enough.” We’ve done that but on its own it still doesn’t change things.

EFN: Do you have any advice for either funders or grantseekers, given that you wear both hats?

SB: For grantseekers I would encourage people to really understand the foundations that they are approaching,

rather than sending generic funding requests, and then to work with their funders.

As a fundraiser I really enjoy working with a whole range of funders. What they bring in addition to money is often new and interesting ideas.... I think that the ideal funder for the environmental movement is one who says, "I really respect what you're doing, I really like it, I want to fund you and what I'm particularly interested in is X and Y, and can we fund that?" The worst sort of funder that I encounter is the one that says, "We're doing X, Y and Z, is there any chance you can do Z for us, and so therefore change what you're doing and do this totally different thing?"

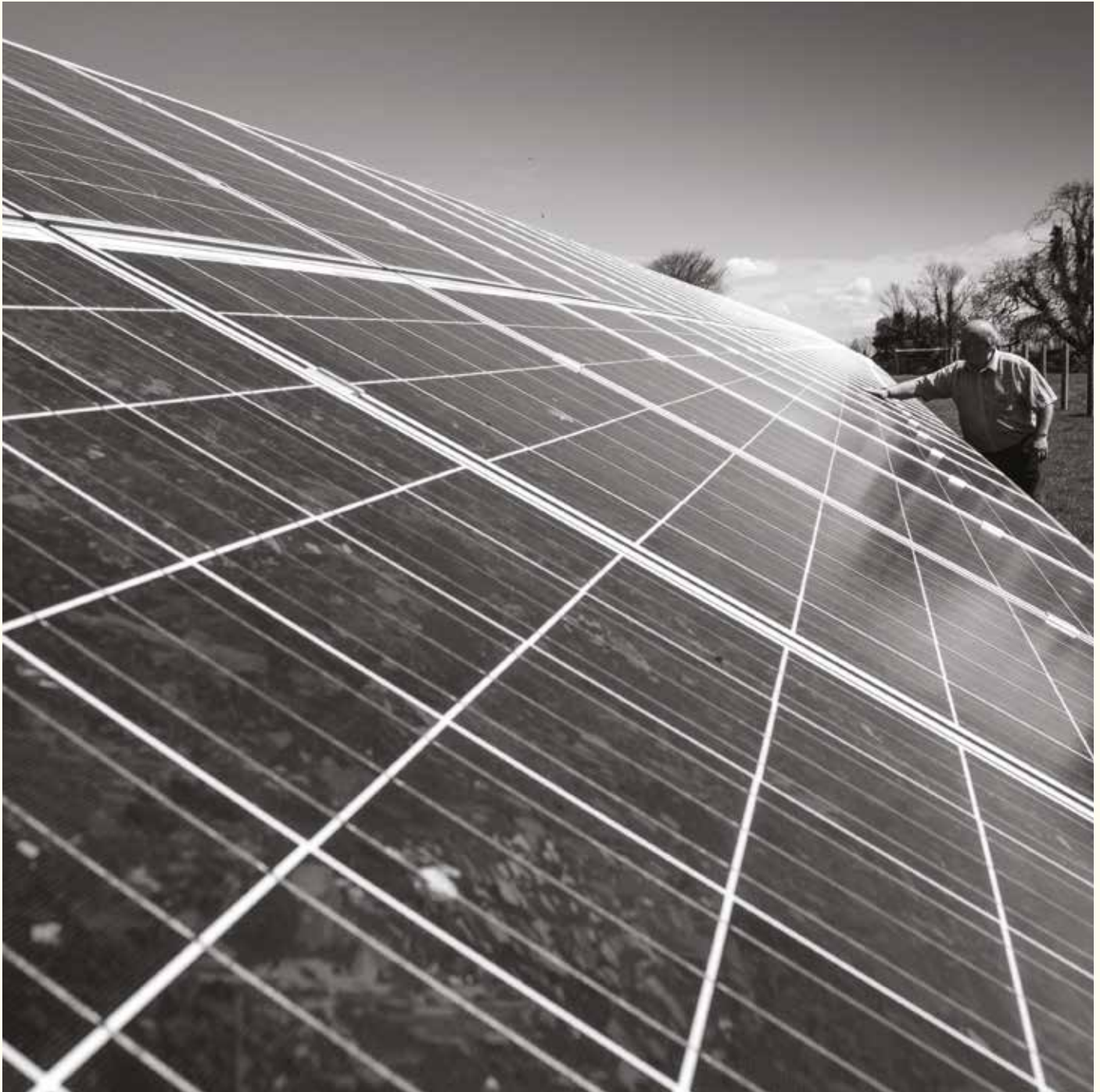
My biggest advice as a funder would be to fund organisations you really respect, rather than trying to change significantly what they are doing. There are some funders that we go to who say, "We are wanting to work on this and we want to reinvent the wheel and we don't want to listen to what's happening on the ground." I think that's the biggest mistake a funder can make, going in with the belief that you know best. Listen to the people who are working on the ground. I've learnt this the hard way because the one really bad programme that we tried to set up involved working overseas on sustainable energy in schools and we tried to dictate to people on the ground and it didn't work at all. I learned a huge amount from that. We should have gone with the people we thought were doing the best job on the ground.

EFN: What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing philanthropy today?

SB: I think the biggest challenge for environmental philanthropy is that there are so few environmental funders. Until recently we had a great fundraiser for Ashden, who had worked as a fundraiser for a long time, mainly for music and arts charities. He worked with us for five years and he was absolutely amazed at how difficult it was to fundraise for environmental organisations.

It's tough for the environmental charities and it's tough for the environmental funders because there isn't much of a direct incentive to fund in this area. If you're an arts charity then you can offer free concert tickets, DVDs, etc. Someone gives you £10,000 and you offer them a series of nice events to attend. There isn't the equivalent for environmental funding. It doesn't bother me because that's not my incentive. My incentive as a funder is that I see a huge set of environmental challenges and I want to help address them and I want to see change. I'm not bothered by kudos or any of those give-backs, but many funders are.

I think it would really, really help if we had a government that talked about the importance of the environment and unfortunately they have stopped talking about that. You know, it would be nice if they handed out some OBEs, CBEs, whatever, to people who are doing great environmental work, whether that's environmentalists running environmental charities or environmental funders.





Edward Whitley

Whitley Fund for Nature

Through his family's charity, the Whitley Animal Protection Trust, Edward initiated the Whitley Awards in 1994 to provide young conservationists with the opportunity to launch their careers and establish long-lasting projects. Edward is Chair of the Trustees of the Whitley Fund for Nature.

EFN: How did you become involved in environmental philanthropy?

EW: There's quite a big family backstory. My great-great-uncle, Herbert Whitley, set up a zoo, and he asked the then very young Gerald Durrell to supply him with animals for this zoo. [Eventually] Gerald Durrell set up a zoo and my great-grandfather set up a charitable trust called the Whitley Animal Protection Trust in the 1960s. Fast-forward from there to 1990 when I was a trustee of the trust. I thought we should include an element of wildlife conservation. I became a friend of Gerald Durrell's and re-established links with him, and helped him raise money for his training centre. I then wrote a book and I travelled around the world to learn about effective nature conservation. That really was the start of a desire to help. For me that wasn't necessarily through having a large UK organisation; what I wanted to do was divert funds directly into the countries where I thought they were needed, with a very low overhead in this country. The whole philosophy emerged from that.

EFN: So your travels provided the impetus for your move into conservation?

EW: Yes, that's right. I then set up a new charity in 1993, which is called the Whitley Fund for Nature. We wanted to keep our overheads very low and make the relationship between the donor and the people that they fund much more direct.

The early days of the charity were funded primarily from the Whitley Animal Protection Trust but the amount of donations has risen over the twenty years, so more and more people have become involved and joined us along the way. Now we have a thriving base of donors and over the twenty years we've probably funded 171 conservationists, working in 74 different countries.

EFN: How does the awards process work?

EW: In a given year we will probably receive 120 or 140 applications and there will be seven or eight winners. They come to London, get to know us and receive professional media and speech training to help them become even better communicators, and that's the start of the relationship. We hope this will help them to be more successful, because they're better funded, they've got a better profile, and we hope they have better political access when they go home. If it all works out well they will succeed in growing their operation. We offer them what we call Continuation Funding, which means they can reapply to us. We're always there for them and if something goes awry we want them to be able to tell us. So we're quite closely in touch. And there's not such large numbers of them that we don't know the important things about what they are doing.

EFN: What motivates you to give?

EW: I suppose it's basically the need. I'm motivated by the need for conservation. But everyone's motivated by what they want to save or preserve; it could be architecture, or helping young musicians. I suppose I was motivated because it came through the family to me and I was well placed to get involved [in conservation] in a way that I wasn't particularly well placed to see the needs of young musicians or any other type of charity. So the motivation was partly the need and also the experience.

EFN: What have you found most rewarding in your environmental grantmaking?

EW: Really celebrating and helping the success of the people that we've funded has been wonderful and the ramifications of that spread far and wide.

It's empowering, I hope, if you are feeling that you want to try to preserve something in your country that is being destroyed and there are enormous forces against you. Nature conservation is always precarious: once a forest has been ploughed up for palm oil then that's it, it's gone. If you are facing this and then see that you are not alone, and that there are people in other countries facing similar problems, that support can be really crucial.

The work we support is very varied. It might be someone working in Costa Rica to try and preserve sharks, stop overfishing, and make the practice of shark-finning illegal. It might be helping someone in Turkey to set up a nature reserve adjacent to one in Armenia so that it connects across boundaries. I find it so rewarding to help people who are dynamic and visionary and articulate.

It's a two-way relationship, too: the winners inspire us. For example, Claudio Padua [who co-founded IPÊ – see page 23] inspired me to set up the charity. We learn a lot from our winners.

“Stay true to your aspirations and be very tenacious. That’s the advice that I followed. Things come in unexpected ways.”

EFN: Is part of your role to help build organisations?

EW: We want to make sure they can be successful. People normally know where they need help. They often come to us saying, “We are aware that we are a voice in the wilderness and feel that we need to get more connected.” Often what they are short of is funding, which we can provide, or they are short of profile, which we can help with.

If someone presents a team, it’s a start up like a small company and you can look at their finances and say, “You are far too

dependent on one donor and that’s a precarious position to be in. You need to spread your finances a bit more broadly so you can move away from being so hand to mouth. Let’s work out a plan for the growth of your charity.”

We’ve learnt a lot as we’ve gone on, so we’re in a position where we can help cross-reference a little more. From our position we see someone might be struggling in Argentina and they might be doing a very similar thing but they’ve made more progress in Mongolia. During the week when the award winners are in London they all stay together,



Photo: The Whitley Fund for Nature

and we bring over one of our previous winners and they realise that they are not all alone, that this is a place where relationships can start.

We help them share knowledge with each other, and the people that we've funded in the past are also a great source of experience. Some of our previous winners have been very successful. In Brazil we've had the most tremendous success with IPÊ (Instituto de Pesquisas Ecológicas). When we funded them back in 1992 for the first time, it was a small team of four or five. They have since grown in the most amazing way and now have teams of 30 or 40 people in different projects. When we first funded them there were no conservation courses taught in South America. They built the first conservation centre to have graduates in South America, in Brazil. They really emerged as the leading conservationists in Brazil. The last two or three years they have been invited to Davos – they now operate on a world stage. We are proud and lucky to have found them and to be part of their success and to have helped it to the extent we have.

EFN: If you were to give some advice to a new funder coming into the field what would it be?

EW: Just stay true to your aspirations and be very tenacious. That's the advice that I followed. Things come in unexpected ways.

EFN: Do you have any thoughts about the challenges facing philanthropy and how to overcome them?

EW: Nature conservation is an odd thing, because obviously nature is not going to thank you, or acknowledge you or give you any payback. We had one winner who was involved in conserving wild dogs in Zimbabwe and he was flying in a microplane by himself and he crashed and broke both legs. He was out of radio contact, pretty much unconscious, nothing worked. So there he lay, by an acacia tree which has [huge] thorns and he realised that the wild dogs would come for him. He dragged himself along with his broken legs and pulled himself up this acacia tree. Unbelievably painful, but the other option was to be eaten by wild dogs. So he lay in this acacia tree under the hot sun with a pack of the dogs he was trying to protect waiting for him to drop out of it so they could eat him. I thought that was quite a startling metaphor really!

In a wider sense, I don't think you can say, "This is a better way of doing it than that way." That's always a worry at that point where philanthropy is involved because the person receiving the funds might change what they are doing because they are trying to second guess what the person wants them to say. I think it's important not to be judgemental and just because you think something is right that everybody else should think that. That was the great Victorian trap, that people felt they knew what was good for people – we've come a long way from that.



Jamie Arbib
Tellus Mater Foundation

Jamie is an investor in resource-efficient technologies, with a focus on energy efficiency. He is also the founder of Tellus Mater, a grantmaking foundation that aims to support the movement towards a sustainable economy. The approach is necessarily high risk, understanding that incrementalism is not the answer and game-changing initiatives are required.

EFN: What are the main environmental priorities for Tellus Mater's giving?

JA: What we are trying to do is to take a systemic approach to making grants. We've spent a lot of time mapping the economy and mapping the financial system to try to understand where the real levers are that drive change in the system. Our perception is that a lot of civil society work happens in silos, disconnected from other people trying to solve the same problem from a different angle. The way we work is to try and draw together coalitions. And that's not an easy thing to do. It involves all kinds of value judgements and assumptions.

EFN: So you're targeting the financial system underlying everything?

JA: Yes, and it can be a bit thankless sometimes. I often think it would be a lot easier just to pick a specific on-the-ground issue to try and solve. But we're a small foundation, and we need to focus, and we don't see many other funders operating in this area, there's not a lot of this kind of systemic work being done.

EFN: Tell us a bit more about how you try to effect change and how this influences your giving.

JA: I'd term it a 'high-risk approach'. I think that broadly speaking the NGO world has an incremental approach to change. I think that's how people get grants, that's how people continue to operate. They need to show success and they need to show some form of continual improvement and that's all fine; many NGOs do some excellent work that has very meaningful impacts. What we didn't see a lot of was game-changing or

“You make a number of investments, and some of them fail, that’s the nature of things. I’m relatively comfortable with risk. What we want to do is to encourage these more game-changing ideas.”

high-risk ideas being funded or deployed and I think it’s more difficult for these kinds of initiatives to get funding and traction because people are loath to fail in the sector.

I’m coming from a venture capital background and that’s what we do. You make a number of investments, and some of them fail, that’s the nature of things. I’m relatively comfortable with risk. What we want to do is to encourage these more game-changing ideas. Given the scale and the urgency of the problems, I think we have to try a number of different interventions, to pilot them and help bring them to scale.

The problem with working on systems change is that it’s very hard to identify the impact of what you’re doing because it’s often dispersed through the system. I think that’s why a lot of the large NGOs don’t work at that level. It’s very difficult to report or provide clear indications that what you’re doing is effective. But as a foundation we don’t feel the need to justify ourselves so much, and that liberates us.

EFN: How do you go about choosing specific projects and partners?

JA: We’ve gone through a big mapping exercise of the financial sector and we’ve identified the pension fund industry as an area that we want to focus on. We’ve identified

a number of potential interventions and drawn a coalition together including ShareAction and ClientEarth. The reason we picked this sector is that pension funds ought to have a long-term perspective that considers risks to their investments over 10, 20 or 30 years into the future. We’re trying to see whether fiduciary duty can be used as a leverage point to make pension fund managers and trustees think in these terms, which currently they don’t.

EFN: What brought you to environmental philanthropy in the first place?

JA: I have a cousin who’s about ten years older, a kind of hard-core environmentalist. He used to tie himself to trees to stop bypasses being built and I used to think that was quite glamorous as a teenager.

He had a huge passion that inspired me to a degree, but I wouldn’t say that was the reason I got into this space. Really, it’s the same reason I got involved in clean technology around 2003. The reading that I had done made me realise how serious the problems were. The driver in my mind was the growth of the developing world and the impact that was going to have on global resources.

Initially I saw this as a business opportunity, to look at technologies that used materials and energy more

efficiently. But as I got involved I realised just how rigged the system was against change.... There are plenty of technologies out there that have very short pay-back periods. You invest in them and you get paid back and they are energy saving and so on. [But they] don't get adopted and that's not due to economics in any way because the economics look good. There are all kinds of barriers that stop those things getting adopted. I found that hugely frustrating. It seemed a no-brainer both financially and from an environmental standpoint. So I thought I needed to do something about it. I set up a foundation and started looking into the environmental space.

Initially, the interest was around energy efficiency, or materials efficiency. Pretty quickly I realised that the problems are much more serious than this. It's about our entire way of life. Everything is built on natural capital. I remember plugging some numbers into a spreadsheet to try and answer the question, "What if we had one per cent growth in materials usage every year for a thousand years?" I think [it showed that] we'd be using something like 280 times the resources we use now. We're already exceeding the earth's carrying capacity so it's just not possible to carry on with that kind of model. You see the environmental degradation side much more directly in terms of fisheries, rainforests and all the other ecosystems that we're absolutely destroying on the back of this model that we're living in. The more I read, the more I understood and the more I wanted to do something about it. It has always been from an economic system perspective I guess. That's more my interest than trying to save a particular species or have a particular on-the-ground conservation impact. Although those will hopefully be the kinds of outcomes that result.

EFN: What have you found most rewarding in your grantmaking and what have you found most frustrating?

JA: I think the most rewarding aspect is working with some of the people in the sector. There are some really motivated, talented, interesting people working in this space. That's been incredibly rewarding.

I find the inertia, the power of the incumbents the most frustrating. You start to realise there is no magic bullet, no one button you can press that's going to change things. It's a combination of everything, from technology to policy to corporate incentives, through to share ownership structures and supply chain management. I don't think there's any mileage at all in dreaming up a utopia and saying this would be the system we want to move to and then trying to figure out how we do it. I think you have to be a pragmatist and say, "This is where we are; these are things we can do to shift to a more sustainable path, these are the kinds of things that might change us."

I also find the duplication of effort among NGOs frustrating, and to be frank funders are kind of responsible for this. There's none of the kind of creative destruction that you see in the wider economy, where you see the weaker fail and the strong get stronger. It's actually the responsibility of the funders to support those organisations that are effective and to remove support from those that aren't, or alternatively to push for mergers. If funders can collaborate and implement the same kind of philosophy then I think that would be really helpful.

If you look around the philanthropic sector then there are very few approaches to grantmaking that are what I would term 'strategic'. A lot of it is ad hoc and much more reactive and for me that often leads to a waste of resources.

EFN: Could you tell us about a particular project or partner that you think has been a success story?

JA: I guess the most impactful grant we've given is probably to Carbon Tracker. I think they've had a big impact in at least making people talk about these issues. They use a useful argument with pension funds: "You're the owners of all these companies that are investing hundreds of billions of dollars a year in exploring for new fossil fuel reserves ... but you won't be able to burn whatever you've got, or at least there has to be

a risk. Why don't you divert that money to more productive or efficient sources of energy?"

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

JA: Number one, take some risk. Incremental change isn't going to get us there. Do things that others won't. Number two, talk to other funders and see if together we can generate some 'creative destruction' that helps to make the sector more efficient.





Jessica Sweidan

Synchronicity Earth

Jessica founded the Synchronicity Foundation with her husband Adam in 1995 to support a range of themes. In 2007, Jessica and Adam began exploring how to have a greater impact within the conservation realm. They launched a new charity, Synchronicity Earth, in 2010.

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.

EFN: What are the main environmental priorities you have identified for your giving?

JS: When we first started out, we were looking at environmental issues in the round, but we really wanted to drill down to the central issues, and for us biodiversity is the crux of everything. So that drove our thinking in terms of where our research would go, and we narrowed our focus quite significantly.

Because we are a young charity and we didn't really have a background in conservation, we came into it sideways, asking questions like: "Where can we be the most effective? And where are the gaps in funding, and why?"

EFN: Why did you choose biodiversity over other issues?

JS: It was the biggest gap that we could apply our funding towards. I think that biodiversity as a concept is really misunderstood, and we find it fascinating, interesting and applicable to everything. I think many people don't really understand the value of biodiversity, or see the risk of biodiversity being commodified. I find that process worrying because it means putting two worlds together which shouldn't necessarily be placed next to each other. But that's a whole other philosophical and political stance.

EFN: How do you try to effect change and how does this influence your giving?

JS: We support a portfolio of efforts and interventions. We're pretty sure there isn't one way forward. The environment speaks to health, it speaks to development, it speaks to energy, food, all of it. So for us, you can only look at the whole story. I've had conversations with people who are all about oceans,

which of course need a ton of attention, but I start to get concerned on behalf of the forests. If you're putting all of that funding into oceans, what about the forests? They need it also. So for me it has to be a balance.

EFN: How do you try to achieve that balance?

JS: We have five portfolios: oceans, fresh water, tropical forests, species, and then one we call human systems. Within each of those portfolios we're doing in-house research to try to work out what the key threats and issues are that we need to be focusing on, where they are, and what is being done to address them, if anything. If not, then can we somehow add value. We're not implementing our own programmes. We are trying to identify project partners in the local regions or sometimes larger organisations that are going in with a greater capacity than we have and identifying particular issues that we can align ourselves with.

Part of the service that we offer [to] donors [who] come to us is that we're doing all of that analysis. We want to give effectively towards the environment and understand that our funding is being best utilised. Charity analysis and due diligence on those charities and monitoring the programmes is absolutely crucial for us. What's nice for [donors who come to us] is they can cherry pick the interests that they have. What often happens is that they'll pick one and then they'll start to listen to all the other conversations we're having and they'll realise that it's actually all connected. They get to the bigger picture of it eventually.

EFN: Do you work with the same partners year on year?

JS: Our goal is to work with [project partners we've identified] for as long as we can or need to. In our previous incarnation, the goal was that they outgrow you over time, so that they don't need you any more. That would be a lovely way to move forward but it takes a long time for those things to be achieved.

EFN: How did you come to be involved in environmental philanthropy?

JS: I'm a very nice, calm person and I got really, really angry. My husband and I had a foundation called the Synchronicity Foundation for over ten years. We gave to healthcare, the environment, endangered species, education, HIV/AIDs, refugee programmes, a whole range of things. Over time, we began to notice that environmental problems were emerging as issues in all of the themes – whether it was a refugee programme where they were now facing environmental threats versus political threats, or a healthcare programme which all of a sudden didn't have access to fresh food and water. So our interest started to grow.

Then we came home one night, switched on the television, and it was literally a movie that changed everything for me – there was an orang-utan in a tree and a bulldozer was coming over. It was the last tree standing, and they were waiting for the rehabilitation unit to come and dart her. The dart

“Philanthropy is meant to be this place of taking risks and having a light foot and having a spirit about it.”

intended to tranquilise her so that she could be moved to the sanctuary actually killed her, because she was pregnant. I just freaked out. I just couldn't believe that this issue hadn't been dealt with. We had tried to fund orang-utan conservation when we first started the foundation. I had assumed that organisations that existed were changing things but for all that they were trying, they were not halting the eradication of orang-utan habitat, and worse....

I said, "Right, we have to do something about this, this is not acceptable." Adam, my husband, who has always had a deep

love for animals said, "The only way we can do anything about it is if we go all in, put it all into the environment and that becomes what we do."

EFN: Do you still feel that anger today?

JS: What I've now realised is that I'm in shock. I just cannot believe that this isn't a bigger part of our daily lives and understanding. Our ethics are no longer aligned. It is more than the environmental issues, it's what does that mean and why doesn't anybody care?



EFN: What motivates you to give?

JS: I think the anger has translated into a ridiculous amount of motivation. I can't move fast enough. It's extraordinary how much you receive when you give, and it grows. The more you give, the more you receive, the more you receive, the more you have to give. It sounds so trite and basic but it's absolutely true. It's my energy source. I live off of it. It fuels me.

EFN: What have you found most rewarding in your environmental grantmaking?

JS: It's been an amazingly welcome space to be operating in. That's because of the need, but also, transparency among the foundations has been extraordinary. I didn't expect that, and that's hugely down to the great work that EFN does, but also the openness of the foundations: "Yes, come and sit next to me and we'll go through things," or "Let me show you how we're doing things." It's an amazing network to be a part of.

EFN: What have you found most frustrating?

JS: Even though we've had successes with getting NGOs to work together, or even foundations for that matter, that can be tedious; the infighting or the protection of their own space and the fear of sharing things with one another. When you are trying to achieve a much greater whole and you get hung up on "this is my space; I'm not going to let you in" or "I don't talk to those people, I need to hang on to my little corner because I'm going to get funding for that", it's petty and frustrating but you just can't get bogged down by it.

EFN: Could you tell us about a project you have funded which you consider to be a success story?

JS: In terms of actual measured success (and we're not typically too worried about numbers, they're only one way of measuring success), we've funded a project with the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust in Madagascar where they are working with a critically endangered pochard, a duck. We have funded a place where staff have been able to live and work and there have been successes with the breeding programme for the ducks. But really what that means in a larger scope is that the country itself is getting behind the notion that it has a responsibility to help restore its wetlands and reforest its slopes. It's this tiny little microcosm of the little duck that then becomes a much larger narrative, gives hope and has knock-on benefits for all species (including humans) that demonstrates how important a healthy ecosystem is for all, and perhaps creates political will to stop trashing the natural environment. To me that's interesting and successful.

EFN: Do you have any advice for a new funder coming into the field?

JS: I find it fascinating how terrified people are to give. I feel as if philanthropy is under threat at the moment in some ways by being over-analysed. Philanthropy – its root is in 'love'. You are meant to love what you do, you are meant to come with a real passion behind it. Research and analysis are crucial, yes, but too much analysis – when linked to reputational issues, rather than knowledge and concern – makes me nervous. Philanthropy is meant to be this place of taking risks and doing things just because and having a light foot and having a spirit about it. So follow your heart is my message that I would give to everybody. Don't lose sight of that.



Martin Stanley

Holly Hill Charitable Trust

Martin has had a varied career working in a family-owned telecommunications company, co-founding a small financial publishing company, working part-time at high-tech startups and establishing and running the Holly Hill Charitable Trust.

EFN: What are the main environmental priorities you have identified for your giving?

MS: In broad terms, various forms of education, wildlife conservation, and biodiversity. I took the view, as well as funding projects, to sponsor graduate students, which would help them at a critical stage of their careers, with the hope that in future decades we will have more well-qualified and motivated people working in the sector. I have also tried to encourage universities to work with projects I support. It's good for universities to have practical problems to help solve, and I've found that wildlife conservation NGOs sometimes don't evaluate and do long-term monitoring of their projects. They can benefit from a more rigorous approach than just hoping their projects are working.

EFN: How do you choose those issues over other issues?

MS: If I'm honest, not in a very scientific or rational way. I suppose I'm at one end of the spectrum, running a small charity, which certainly in the early years I did in my free time. I didn't have any staff or anything, and I work from home. So there was a certain element of chance. When I chose one particular project, by going out to see it and talking to people about it, [they would recommend] some of their contacts, and so I would go and see them too and see their projects. If I liked what they were doing and I got on with the people, then I might decide to provide support. I took the view that the management skills of the people running the organisation were actually possibly more important than the biodiversity they were looking after. Particularly for overseas projects where there's more trust involved, you want to support people who you're confident are going to do the project, who are going to look after the funds.

“Because I’ve got smaller amounts of money to give, I can do more seed funding and early-stage funding ... but also take more risks. When they’re successful, they’re in a much stronger position to win [greater amounts of] funding.”

EFN: What brought you to environmental philanthropy in the first place?

MS: It was slightly unexpected. It was after we sold the family business. I decided to use part of my share of the profits to set up a charity. In the early days, we focused on social issues, some local issues where I lived, and some medical research. Then I got contacted by an environmental project. I started to look around and I thought, “Here’s a sector that’s not terribly well funded, from what I can see, and they’re doing some good work.” I [compared it] to medical research, which gets fairly well funded, and I thought rather than dealing with a whole range of things, which makes it very difficult to manage a small foundation, why don’t I just focus on this, doing the environment and education to improve the environment. So that’s what I did.

EFN: What motivates you to give?

MS: I think it’s a combination of things. After you’ve got a nice house and a few other things, you think, “Well, what am I going to use the money for?” When you sell a family business, it does stop you in your tracks and make you think about your priorities in life.

EFN: Do you prioritise supporting projects or do you give core funding as well?

MS: I prefer to give core funding. It’s something I don’t really agree with actually, just giving project funding and then not contributing to the fully loaded costs of a project so that the NGO has always got a deficit. I think if you are going to fund a project you need to fund all its management costs properly, and to be fair to an NGO, given how long it takes to fundraise, my view is that you really need to fund a project for a few years, so they can achieve something in that time. Otherwise, they just skip around between funders, it’s a sort of a treadmill and they end up spending a huge chunk of their time fundraising.

EFN: What do you find most rewarding about grantmaking?

MS: Because I’ve got smaller amounts of money to give, I can do more seed funding and early-stage funding. And maybe take a more active role, and sometimes give advice, but also take more risks, which I’m comfortable with. And when they’re successful, and get things going, then they can go back to some of the bigger foundations and say, “This is

what we've done with £10,000, we now need £100,000", and they're in a much stronger position to win that sort of funding and develop the project more.

EFN: Could you tell us about a project you have funded that you consider to be a success?

MS: ClientEarth is a good example. Initially I found out about them because I needed legal help with one of the community reforestation projects that I was supporting in Latin America that was threatened by a mining project. Then I got more involved, and they asked me to become a trustee. They achieve a lot with the funds they have and the level at which they are working is really strategic and can influence policy. They've managed to challenge, and stop or delay, the construction of a few coal-fired power stations. There are half a dozen programmes they are working on, including forestry in Africa, new regulation of timber trade in the EU, fisheries management.... Some of the projects they work on are quite long term. They may be working for a couple of years before they start seeing results for some projects; they don't necessarily get quick results.

EFN: If there was one thing you wish grantmakers would do differently, what would it be?

MS: That they funded core costs more; they're too fixated on projects. And if they do fund projects, they should fund the real costs, including management overheads for running the projects. And they should fund projects for longer.

I think there may be an issue with the donors looking for novelty and they want to skip around from things and find exciting new things to do. If you get to know a team of people and they're working well, and you are supporting them, why

not continue supporting them? If you switch to a different organisation, it takes time to find out how they work and then they may have all sorts of internal problems you don't know about and some of the funds may be wasted or not well used while they are sorting out those internal issues. I think part of the reason that some charities want to sponsor projects is they think it's easier to disengage with NGOs. They think, "We're just going to support this project, we're not going to cover all your costs, and then the project will end after a couple of years and it's easier to walk away." Whereas if you are funding core costs or fully-costed projects, if you walk away unless there's a proper plan in place, what's going to happen at the end of it? It could be more disruptive.

EFN: If you were going to give some advice to a new funder what would it be?

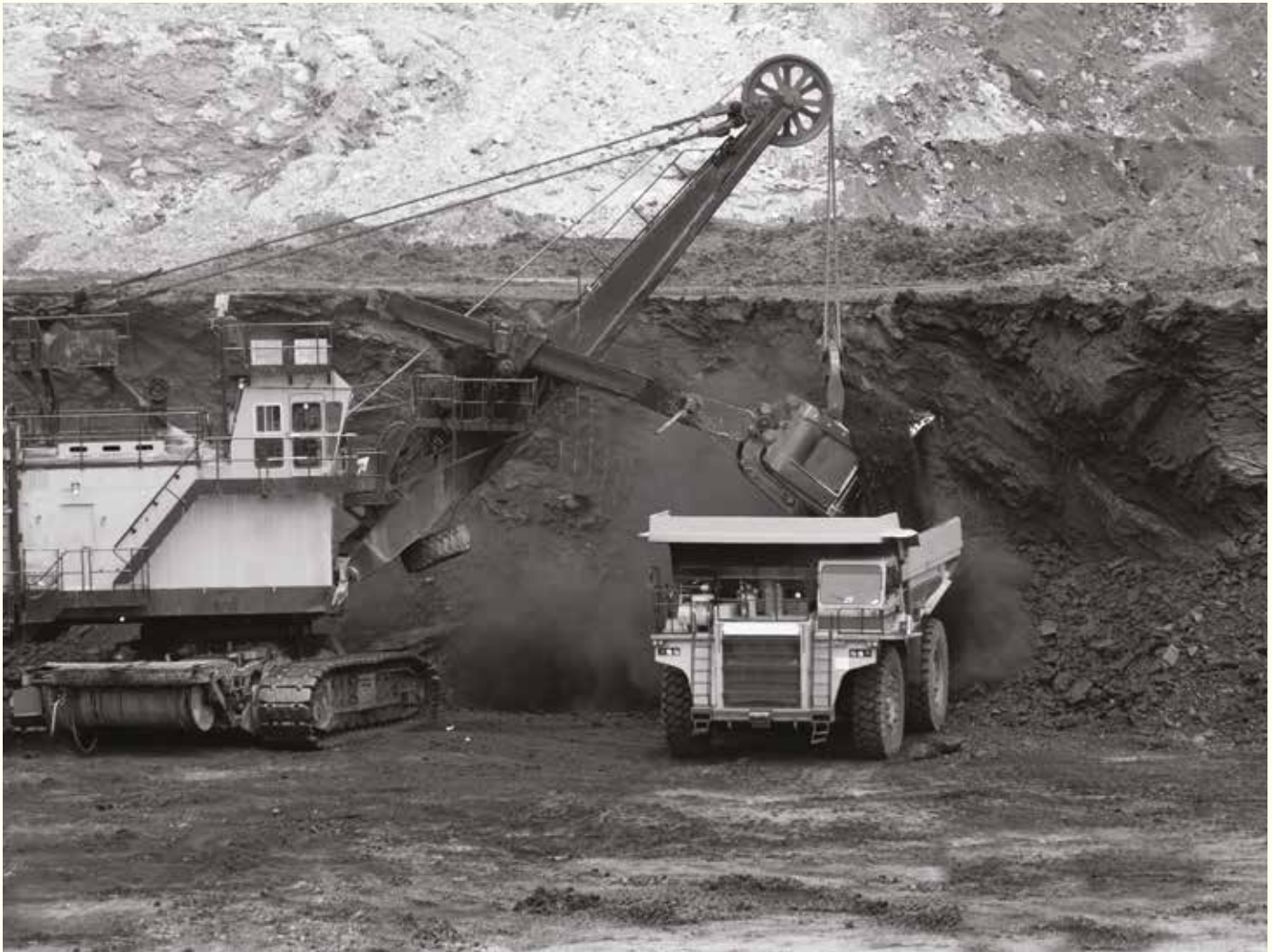
MS: Take a ten-year view. I think lots of these projects are long-term projects and if you support a project for a year or two years, I don't think that a lot's going to change in that time. You've got to take a ten-year view. So even though you might say, "OK, funding is conditional on achieving certain milestones, certain targets", a lot of the results take time to achieve. If you get earlier results, probably the reality is that those are the outcomes of some previous person's funding, not after just six months of funding the project.

EFN: Are we right in thinking that you are spending down your funds?

MS: Yes. When I set up the charity, my idea was to run it for a few decades and spend out the funds during my lifetime. I have spent out the funds quicker than expected, mainly due to the wildlife conservation projects I supported in Latin

America and Africa. I could see there were huge pressures with a lot of illegal logging and hunting; forests were being destroyed at an alarming rate. I found that to support the projects, for example, they might have needed £20,000 – so what was the point of me giving them £2,000 when it would not have done the job? And small NGOs in those countries find it hard to fundraise. It meant my donations were made

from capital and not income, so the funds declined quickly. But I took the view that there was no point in keeping the funds, as in some cases the forests and wildlife 20 years later might have been destroyed. It does mean the various projects now have to find other sponsors, but they are much better established and stronger organisations now compared with 10 to 15 years ago, so better able to fundraise.





Kristian Parker

Oak Foundation

Kristian is a trustee of the Oak Foundation, based in Switzerland, and oversees Oak's environment programme.

He is also a marine biologist and received his Ph.D. in environmental sciences from Duke University. He was a member of the marine charity Oceana's founding Board of Directors.

EFN: What are the Oak Foundation's main priorities for environmental giving?

KP: Climate change and marine conservation, basically, are the two major themes. There are some other minor things that we do but those are 95 per cent of what we do.

EFN: How did you come to choose those themes in particular instead of other environmental issues?

KP: My perception of both of these issues has evolved to the point where I don't think climate change is an environmental issue anymore. It never was. It's a humanitarian issue, it's an education issue, it's a disease issue, it covers all the issues. Climate change will impact everything we do, so in that sense I don't view it as an environmental issue. And marine conservation is a bit of a mix of both [human and environmental].

EFN: How do you try to effect change when it comes to giving to these issues?

KP: You know, there's something in common with both climate change and marine conservation that very quickly brings you to policy or regulatory change. In terrestrial systems you can buy protection. In marine systems you cannot because they cannot be privatised for the most part. You can't buy reefs. You can buy rainforests, you can buy temperate forests, you can create private parks. We now know that's not enough even for terrestrial conservation, but in marine conservation you don't even have the option.

And the biggest impact on marine environments, it's not pollution, it's fisheries. Where have all the fish gone? Well, we ate them all, fishers caught them all. Fisheries are not

the only cause of environmental degradation in the marine environment, but they are the largest single cause. And fisheries are managed by governments and therefore you have to deal with policy.

Climate change is the same thing; to go to scale you have to deal with policy change. So that's the type of work we do. We fund a lot of advocacy and campaigning work, and the tools necessary to bring about policy change, whether it's fisheries policy change like the Common Fisheries Policy, which was recently reformed, or the conversations that are now in the press about the new 2030 targets for Europe on reducing carbon emissions.

EFN: How do you decide which specific projects or partners to support?

KP: Over the last fifteen years, we've developed a strategic framework from which we work. This developed somewhat organically and somewhat strategically depending on the issue.

With respect to climate change, it's easy; you can go where the tonnes of carbon are, so we started off in North America and Europe and now have drifted towards the three major emerging economies: Brazil, China and India. And then within those geographic areas, it really depended on the opportunities and the players.

We believe in core support, in supporting organisations long term, so that helps us choose who we want to work with.

And we believe in capacity building – building the field – as opposed to simply meeting our objectives.

EFN: Do you have an open application process, or do you tend to go and find the organisations working in those areas?

KP: We do have an application process and we do receive unsolicited applications, but most of the investments we make are because we reached out and found a partner.

EFN: What brought you to environmental philanthropy in the first place?

KP: In a general sense I've always been interested in the environment because of its beauty, its complexity. I'm a diver, I love going to see wildlife, I love being outdoors. I trained as a marine biologist. It wasn't difficult for me to see that the threats to the oceans were pretty significant and that there weren't many philanthropists focusing on marine issues.

But my motivation for why I started and my motivation today are different. I've evolved. For me, people pigeonhole the environment as something about biodiversity or wildlife or whatever you want to call it, whereas climate change is not that. And then my motivation with respect to fisheries has also evolved: if you're interested in climate change, food security, terrestrial biodiversity loss, then you should

“If I could ask for one thing, it [would be] for grantmakers to find space to take more risks. I think we have to be more comfortable with failure.”

care about the oceans. Because if fisheries continue on the path they're taking, they will collapse and those sources of protein will have to come from somewhere else. That means intensive agriculture, which has a high cost for biodiversity and by comparison uses a lot more of the limiting resources we have, which are land and water.

So I am now driven by the simple desire to protect all the beautiful things that I have seen on behalf of future generations, and by the knowledge that these aren't only beautiful things, these are necessary things for future generations.

EFN: What would you say are the most rewarding aspects of your grantmaking?

KP: You have to be extremely patient and dedicated to the issue. That's what it takes to get the real rewards because none of these things happen very quickly. The aspect of this work that keeps me going despite progress being slow is our partners, the people that we work with, the ones on the front line who are at it every day, all year, all the time. I think it's their passion that keeps me going, rewards me the most, as opposed to the victories, which take time to come. I think if it weren't for them I would pack it up and go home.



EFN: What would you say are the most frustrating aspects of your grantmaking?

KP: Policy change is extremely complex. I understand why a lot of people don't want to do it because measuring progress is extremely difficult; if you only want to make investments in philanthropy where you can measure progress year to year, policy change is not for you. The measures of change are pretty diffuse and hard to grab onto [and it] requires patience and conviction. You may have to fund something for a long time before you get serious signs of progress and then ultimately it may take a decade before you see the policies you expect. And then you have to see that they're implemented! So I guess what is most frustrating is that change takes time.

EFN: Could you tell us about a particular project that you've funded that you'd consider a success story?

KP: The Common Fisheries Policy. That was a series of investments with a range of partners – including WWF, Oceana, Pew and others – starting almost twelve years ago and culminating in a Common Fisheries Policy which is likely to result in an increase in fish production in European waters. To some extent, that's our ultimate goal. There's a lot of moving parts to that result, a lot of partners, a lot of investments, but to finally look at the charts over the last five years and really see an increase in the fish in the water is really pretty rewarding. I think this reform will guarantee and maintain the increase in fish populations.

EFN: Why do you think that work has been a success?

KP: Persistence!

You may be familiar with Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's *Fish Fight*: we invested in that after it got going and that was one

of the unexpected positive things [that happened] – that and having a fisheries commissioner who happened to really believe in driving change through. So I think it requires persistence, it requires a little bit of luck and it requires some strong partners. And I think you also have to be quite involved in the process so that you can fine tune your investments along the way. You can't just make the investments and walk away.

EFN: If you could ask grantseekers and grantmakers to do something differently, what would it be?

KP: The relationship between grantseekers and grantmakers is a complicated one. I guess if I could ask for one thing, one thing for both sides, it [would be] for grantseekers and grantmakers to find space to take more risks. I think we grantmakers have to be more comfortable with failure and the grantseekers have to be more willing and comfortable enough to be able to approach grantmakers with ideas that may fail.

Failure is part of philanthropy; it should be part of philanthropy. Try to understand the position that your partners are in, your grantseekers, try to feel like what it's like to be in their shoes because I think you'll make better grants that way. You can do that in different ways: you can join the board of an NGO, you can get close to them and make long-term commitments. Change just doesn't happen fast, you have to make long-term commitments to any enterprise.

Impact-driven philanthropy is great, but you need to understand that there isn't [always] something you can measure every six months. In the field I work in, there's very little that will tell you after one year that you're successful or not and I think it's destructive to expect NGOs to be able to deliver on that time frame. You have to make long-term commitments.



Ben Goldsmith

JMG Foundation

Ben chairs the Advisory Board of the JMG Foundation, which funds campaigning and advocacy work on environmental issues. In 2003 he helped to establish the Environmental Funders Network. Ben is also a founder of WHEB, a leading specialist 'sustainability' investment business, and he is the Chairman of the Conservative Environment Network.

EFN: What brought you to environmental philanthropy in the first place?

BG: It was because of my uncle, Teddy Goldsmith. He was a globally respected figure who was talking as early as the 1950s and 60s about soil erosion, problems of major infrastructure, and the threat of dramatic climate change. He was the big influence on environment issues in my family. As a result, in 1990 my father started to support the environmental movement in Europe.

As importantly, it came from just growing up outdoors. If you're one of those kids who loves the natural world, you start to realise that the fabric of life is really being warped and pulled apart by our activities everywhere. I don't see how you can be a nature lover and not be an environmentalist.

I think the overriding challenge of our generation is to figure out a way to end the situation in which our very existence is causing the collapse of the natural world. Ultimately we'll destroy ourselves that way. I think it's the challenge of our time.

EFN: What motivates you to give?

BG: I like to make change happen. It's not really a philanthropic or altruistic motivation; it's not about being a good guy, it's because I feel intensely angry about things that are happening in the world and passionately devoted to making change happen. One of the most powerful ways to make change happen is to spend some philanthropic money wisely.

I've got massive respect for some of the big environmental philanthropists such as the Rausing sisters, Michael Bloomberg, Chris Hohn, Jeremy Grantham, Tom Steyer – some of these very big philanthropists who've emerged in recent years and who are supporting the environmental movement. Less than

“Working with other foundations and collaborating with them is important. They all have different ways they go about supporting different kinds of work and sometimes your collaborative effort can be more valuable than going it alone.”

five per cent of philanthropy globally is spent on environmental causes and yet it's *the* cause, so I salute those who are showing real leadership.

EFN: Can you tell us what the main priorities are for your environmental grant giving?

BG: We chose as a family to do all of our giving together, to centralise our philanthropic capability into one foundation. We felt that by [working] together we would have a greater impact because, as with investment, you've got to think about things carefully, you've got to think about strategy, you've got to think quite hard about who you're going to give the money to and for how long. You have to maintain your attention on a particular topic for a reasonable period of time, I think, to achieve an impact. All of these things become harder to do [on your own], so we came together with the new JMG Foundation in 1998, the year after my father died. I chair the Advisory Board of the foundation and I focus all of my philanthropic activity through it.

In the first five years, the JMG Foundation focused its grants on campaigns against industrial agriculture, campaigning on corporate-led globalisation and 'free trade' agreements, and campaigns against nuclear power. Some of these issues remain priorities for the foundation today.

From 2003 onwards we dedicated a specific programme to climate change, which we see as one of the foremost environmental challenges of our times. We looked to focus on industries where there was a window of opportunity to reduce carbon emissions significantly. European Union regulations on fuel economy, requiring manufacturers to build cleaner cars, provided one opportunity. Road transport produces one-fifth of Europe's carbon emissions, so improving fuel efficiency is really important.

It's a slightly nerdy topic, perhaps not one that individually we'd have gone for, but collectively it made sense, to actually try and achieve a real impact. Our advisers Jon [Cracknell] and Harriet [Williams] put together a funding plan which we ran for several years, culminating in 2007 when the EU set binding targets for new car and van fleets. These require carmakers to drop average emissions by 40 per cent by 2020. Greenhouse gas emissions will be substantially reduced by those standards, as China and other emerging markets are influenced by the EU's rules.

After the fuel economy dossier was signed off, we sought another window of opportunity on climate change. At that time [2008], there was an uptick of concern for the plight of the rainforests – epitomised by plans to offer countries such as Brazil and Indonesia financial incentives for preserving the huge carbon reserves embodied in living forests.

That was the entry point for JMG. We've seen campaigns to reform the market drivers of deforestation really take off. We've funded several campaigns trying to get major brands to reform their supply chains to reduce the pressure to cut down rainforests in the tropics.

More recently we've become interested in the livestock industry, which I think is one of the most vile industries on the planet, in terms of factory farms. A particular angle is that these systems rely on antibiotics. It's hard to keep livestock in the grotesque conditions of factory farms without antibiotics, otherwise they get infections that spread like wildfire and they die. So antibiotics help prop up this system – in fact, 80 per cent of antibacterial drugs used in the US are given to livestock. This is hastening the end of the era of antibiotics because the abuse of antibiotics in farming means that bacteria are developing resistance and that spreads to the human population, with the 'super bugs' that we hear about in the news. If you can get the medical establishment and the wider public to call for an end to the prophylactic abuse of antibiotics in factory farms, then factory farming will have to reform.

EFN: How do you try to bring about change and how does that influence your giving strategy?

BG: One of the best things that you can do is to hire a team whose full-time job is to figure out a giving strategy. It's difficult for someone with a full-time day job elsewhere to be an effective philanthropist without a team of people helping him do it, or at least some sort of adviser.

You need to get to know the groups you're supporting and stick with those groups through thick and thin. Maintain focus, don't flip from one thing to the next and be reactive. Be

proactive in choosing an issue, then find the best participants working on that issue and stick with them – be dogged.

I also think working with other foundations and collaborating with them [is important]. They all have different ways they go about supporting different kinds of work. Sometimes your collaborative effort can be more valuable than going it alone. We try and do that. We were instrumental in setting up the Environmental Funders Network, which was really for the purpose of increasing collaboration among funders.

EFN: How do you choose specific projects or partners?

BG: The first thing is always to map an issue, so to identify all the different tracks of work on a particular issue. To take rainforests, there are national policy frameworks in exporting and importing countries, international agreements at the UN level, markets-orientated work on companies buying or selling products associated with deforestation, as well as the consumption preferences of individual consumers and on-the-ground conservation.

The task we set ourselves is to figure out where promising opportunities might arise, and to take a view on what tactics might be most useful in realising these opportunities. A lot of the time this leads us towards NGOs that excel in campaigning and advocacy. To stick with the forests example, whenever we do see a positive change, nine times out of ten it started with a hard-hitting public campaign.

EFN: What would you say is the most rewarding aspect of environmental grantmaking?

BG: Winning battles! It's harder in the environment than other issues, but winning battles, especially after a long struggle, is hugely rewarding.



Following campaigns [that we supported] by Greenpeace and Rainforest Action Network, among others, one big consumer goods company after the next announced sustainability procurement standards for their pulp and paper. That was a huge result. Policies at companies like Disney, Mattel and Staples – they’ve come about because of the pressure from environmental groups we’ve been supporting. That’s all rewarding stuff.

EFN: What would you say is the most frustrating thing about environmental grantmaking?

BG: I don’t think there’s anything frustrating about grantmaking. I think it’s the opposite: it’s a release of frustration and anger. Frustration is the feeling of not being able to do anything about

it. Everyone can do something about it, whether it’s joining an environmental organisation, or altering the way they spend their money day to day, or choosing how to vote. But I think a very nice way to make a difference is through philanthropy, if you’re blessed with wealth and can do that. It’s a nice way to relieve the frustration of seeing all this stuff happening around you and not being able to do anything about it.

EFN: Is there any advice that you’d give to new environmental philanthropists coming into the field?

BG: Give big, be strategic about it, and maintain focus. Try to pick battles that are big enough to change the world but small enough that you can win them.



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