

## #ClimateEnquiry

Many thanks to Malcolm Hart from the University of Plymouth who took the time to answer the questions below, which we did not have time to put to him during live broadcast.

### **Do you think there is enough recognition of the local problems of climate change and what examples are there of plans being made to adapt?**

*How one uses local information can depend on the area in question. Coastlines made of soft rocks and sediments are more prone to collapse and coastal erosion compared to harder rocks (such as many of those in Devon and Cornwall). As the climate warms, species will migrate and need ecological corridors to do so. While tree-planting has only a minimal impact on CO2 levels, creating habitat corridors is a very valuable side impact: actually, it should be thought to be the major impact!*

*The River Otter, in Devon, is being used as an experiment in coastal realignment adjusting to sea level rise. This is not the only example and there are comparable schemes in Wales, East Anglia, and SE England. Managed realignment schemes are much more effective than 'hard' defences that do not allow for sea level adjustments (without just building a bigger wall). Exceptions could be places like London where there is a need for a new Thames Barrier as the present structure nears the end of its design life. Remember that structures, like the Barrier, were designed in the 1970s when views on climate and sea level rise were very different.*

*Local construction must always attempt to 'future proof' to the changing climate.*

*Planning sections of Local Councils must also look carefully at coastal developments and not place property and infrastructure in areas that may well be flooding in a few years.*

### **Do you believe there are any problems with current climate media change coverage, what areas do you think should be given more focus to help communicate such a complex issue better?**

*Yes, there are issues with climate coverage in the media (TV, press and social networks). One must remember that there are those that:*

- *Are already bored with the topic of climate change;*
- *Are convinced that it is for the 'future' and of no concern to them at the present time when they have more pressing issues to address;*
- *Are angered by some militants that block highways, sit on train rooves, etc.; and*
- *Have limited science 'literacy' and – even if they wanted to be interested – regard the topic as too complicated.*

*One must also remember that the press, especially some of the tabloids, are putting out dramatic climate headlines only as a means of selling papers and it is nothing to do with 'communication'.*

*One other issue, covered in the seminar, was how one links present-day experience (weather) with actual climate change. Topics that can raise awareness include the understanding of:*

- *Drought and the sight of dried-up reservoirs, especially in summer 2022;*
- *Drought and failing agriculture in places (e.g., Southern Spain) from where we obtain foodstuffs (oranges, cucumbers, lettuce, etc.); and*
- *Coastal instability (e.g., Norfolk) where drying and soaking (alternately) cause cliffs to collapse and actual homes to fall into the sea.*

*It is, however, always important to assess where the information is coming from before actually believing it completely. The Met Office, British Antarctic Survey, and all the scientific societies provide reliable and well-judged information.*

*We must also remember that when scientists discuss doubts and probabilities, this is not a lack of knowledge but a realisation that we are dealing with complex issues to which – in many cases – there are no definitive answers.*