

Communicating Hope in the Real World

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Abstract

This paper outlines a methodology for campaigning on environmental issues at a time when hope is in short supply. Brief consideration is given to the real world context. Current environmental concerns are set within the present economic downturn. Our science is generally much better, and many more players are interested in the environment. There has been a media revolution in the last 10 years, and there are now many more ways of communicating information. The equation ‘Proposal + People + Opportunity = Change’ is explored. The principles elucidated are applied to a case study of ‘The Bee Cause’, a Friends of the Earth campaign. The implications for Christian leaders are then investigated.

Introduction

Martin Luther King was a man who did what he thought every Christian should do. He had a famous dream, and many of us have a dream even if we do not articulate it. For whatever reason, whether because of a faith or simply love of nature, or intuitive sense of what is sensible, I believe many people yearn for humanity and the environment to be in balance again. At Friends of the Earth, a secular organisation, we are also striving to achieve a positive relationship between people and the environment. This is the official vision of Friends of the Earth,¹ and we must make huge strides in that direction in the next 40 years. We say 40 years because if we look at the environmental trends it is obvious that if we do not react quickly we will never achieve that, and all we will do is manage the decline of the human race, if we manage it at all. That may be a tall order: it probably fits into the bracket of ultimate hope rather than proximate hope, touching on the many good things that Richard Bauckham has put forward.² It is probably what we all want isn't it? Martin Luther King and

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many other great communicators, when we look at what they did, had a clear vision of what they wanted, and were change makers. There was a huge gap between their vision and the reality at the time, but they were very rooted in that reality, they did not hide from people how bad reality was, and they communicated with a very clear intent. They were challenging the reality, whether it was aggressive Nazi foreign policy (as in the case of Churchill) or the evil of segregation in the USA. They wanted to get as many people on their side as possible to challenge that current reality, and to bring about their vision. That ought to be our collective challenge as Christians. However good or bad we are individually at communicating, collectively I suggest that we are trying to get many more people on board to challenge the reality. This will then bring about our vision or get us as far down the road as we can towards our vision, as fast as we can. So I want to talk about some reflections from my experience, with Friends of the Earth, with Tearfund³ and elsewhere. How do we communicate a vision of hope in a very tough reality?

The Real World Context

Now we will discuss the real world context and some general implications for change makers, including Christian leaders. Then we need to focus on opportunities to bring about change. We need to be realistic, but realism frequently exposes opportunities. Campaigners spot the weak points in the opposition and they go for them. We will use the opportunities to bring about something good that no one has even thought about, and to make it happen before anyone has time to object. All of us need to look out for opportunities, because there are so many threats that we have to provide a counterbalance. We will now consider five areas to give the context, and then look at how this all comes together in the UK.

Some of the real-world environmental context has been covered by Martin Hodson⁴, and the trends are dire. Mark Lynas' book *The God Species*⁵ goes through the main environmental issues and where we are in terms of hitting the buffers on them. The introduction and the early chapters are a cogent summary of the big issues. Friends of the Earth may disagree with Lynas on what we should do about these issues in some instances, but it is a good summary of the big problems and where the world is in relation to them. Lynas introduces the whole idea of a safe operating space for humanity. We can tamper with the environment so much, with climate change, with biodiversity, with the nitrogen cycle, with water and so on. If we go too far, however, we tip the planet into a new equilibrium that is probably much less healthy for us and the wildlife and nature that we currently know. We

are up against the buffers already on climate change, on biodiversity, and on the nitrogen cycle, and have almost certainly gone over the limit on those three. Now we need to slow down that change and minimise it as much as possible even if reversing it appears impossible, inside hundreds of years at least, according to our current scientific knowledge and technology. All we can do is mitigate, but we can make it better or a lot worse. On other issues, the challenge is to stop us going over the limits, keeping us within the planetary safe operating space for humanity. That is the strategic challenge.

Another big issue is the economic downturn and the instability that it brings politically, economically, and socially. It has huge implications for our agenda, but one of them is the headspace that politicians are in. We have seen it many times, with politicians essentially saying that the environment will have to wait. A classic case was UK Chancellor, George Osborne, at the Conservative Party conference in November 2011 when he said, ‘We know that a decade of environmental laws and regulations are piling costs on the energy bills of households and companies.’⁶ He went on to say that Britain should not lead, and we should not go any faster or slower than anyone else. That is completely wrong factually. What is leading to the rise in energy bills is our reliance on fossil fuels, particularly international gas and oil prices. The amount that has been added to bills because of so-called green policies is a fraction of the overall rise. The government’s own figures show that. So there is a real retrenchment by some politicians. Some of these probably never cared anyway, but are using the economic downturn as an excuse for not doing anything. The battle is by no means over. There are other more positive voices in the government, people like Greg Barker MP,⁷ the Minister of State for Energy and Climate Change, and Oliver Letwin MP,⁸ who is senior adviser to David Cameron, and a cabinet minister without portfolio. There are many who are concerned about the environment in the UK government, but the battle is really on over how far and how fast Britain goes.

The third feature of the current context is the better science. We are so much more aware of what is going on now than we were even a few years ago. Sometimes we do not like what that science tells us, but we now know how fast the polar ice caps are melting each year. We know that April 2012 was one of the wettest on record in the UK, and March 2012 was one of the driest on record. That information is made public and it is not only the Times and the Telegraph that publish this material, but the tabloids do too. In the UK, there is a fascination with the weather. The information gets out, and that is really significant. We are being handed evidence on a plate if we know how to use it.

Fourthly, there are now many more players that are interested in the environment, and committed to doing something, than there were. Twenty years ago Jonathan Porritt, former Executive Director of Friends of the Earth, would appear on television, and he was like a voice in the wilderness. There were very few people speaking out in the media on the environment. It was Friends of the Earth, and my predecessors like Jonathan, who got the debate on climate change going. It was Friends of the Earth who first started work in the UK on illegal logging, and that got mahogany imports banned. Now not just the big environmental organisations are involved, but the big development NGOs are too. There are now a number of Christian environmental organisations. There are big businesses that are committed to the environment because they know it is going to have a large impact on their supply chains, and on the resources they need to do business. Before the Copenhagen climate summit, thirty or more of the FTSE 500 company leaders in the Corporate Leaders Group publicly called for action on climate change. This is a radical change from where we were 20 years ago and it is surprising that it is not making more difference. So there is huge potential with the number of organisations now committed to this agenda.

The last topic we will briefly consider is the media. Until relatively recently (or at least, when I started my working life) there were no laptops, there was no e-mail, there was no web, there was no mobile phone, there was no Facebook and there was no Twitter. Some may say that the working world was less stressful without them. Whatever your view, what is clear is that all those things have come in the blink of an eye in historical terms, and have brought some distinct opportunities. These changes mean, for example, that communication with the public is no longer controlled almost entirely by media moguls. There are many channels that are not under anyone's control and that we can use. The big media empires still have a disproportionate influence, but we have many more means of communicating than we did 10 years ago. Secondly, with these technological innovations, communications have become much more relational and linked up, so that communities of interested parties can be in rapid and constant touch from their laptops or smartphone. They can exchange urgent information, access data from anywhere in the world via the web and coordinate action locally or internationally. These are profound changes and huge opportunities for social change.

How can we apply all of the above to the UK context in 2013? Clearly we have savage public expenditure cuts, insecurity, and job losses. People are feeling very cowed by the economic situation they are in. They are very insecure, not wanting to invest money in

things that environmental organisations work on. At the same time, some people are more open to the need for change because nobody can say that this way of life, this way of running our economy, is working. So how do we connect with people in this situation? The UK has a Coalition Government. When it came in people were debating what exactly that would mean, but there is a Coalition Agreement which sets out exactly what they are going to do. That has given some stability, but there are big differences within the Coalition which provide major opportunities. Important debates are taking place behind the scenes about general economic growth versus green growth. There are also big battles about regulation despite the fact that the Government is obviously against regulation. Publicly the Government has its deregulation agenda. Ministers, however, know that they are not going to get some of the things they need without regulation. For example the Electricity Market Reform Bill in the Queen's speech on 9 May 2012 brought in a complete re-jigging of the energy market.⁹ It is a politically recreated energy market, and is regulation in another form.

Lastly there are battlegrounds that will affect what the UK does or does not achieve in terms of cutting carbon, protecting green space and other environmental initiatives over the next 20 years:

1) On energy. The biggest contributor to our greenhouse gas emissions in this country is the energy sector. How we produce our energy is crucial. Will we become a place that is much more efficient in the use of energy and for the rest rely on renewable energy? Or will we carry on our dependence on fossil fuels and ignore energy efficiency?

2) The protection of nature. We saw the backlash when the then Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Caroline Spelman¹⁰ thought it would be a good idea to sell off UK forests in 2010. As Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher tried the same about 15 years before and ended up with a similar result, a huge backlash.¹¹ There is a groundswell of opinion that wants to protect nature in this country which has really taken the UK Government by surprise.^a The planning reforms, which in some ways were needed, went too far in removing people's rights to decide over their local environment. The way those planning reforms play out will have a real impact on nature, and we must make sure they have the right impact not the wrong one.

3) Transport. The big issues for the UK are: High Speed 2 (HS2)¹², a controversial new rail scheme to connect London and Birmingham and then continue further north; and secondly,

^a The selloff of UK forests was eventually finally reversed in July 2012, and the whole affair was undoubtedly a major contributor to Caroline Spelman's eventual departure from office in September 2012.

airport expansion, currently focused on debates around a new London airport or additional runways for existing airports. Some of these issues are not simple, but transport is another large battleground in the years to come.

These are some of the areas which are of fundamental importance for Britain's response to greenhouse gases, and for Britain's response to nature and the environment. The decisions that are made in those areas in the next few years will have an impact for decades to come. Those are the areas where a campaigning organisation on the environment needs to focus.

Proposal + People + Opportunity = Change

There is a basic law of change which applies as we campaign, and this applies to anybody who wants to bring about change. Three things are required:

- 1) A proposal. What do we want to happen? Not just what do we hate, but what do we love? What do we want to see? What is our vision? The proposal might be just one step towards it.
- 2) People to back it. Who those people are, and how many are needed, differs. If it is not a particularly controversial issue, and if everybody thinks it is a good idea anyway, then we do not need a massive demonstration of a million people to bring it about. If the UK Prime Minister has already promised the President of the United States that he is going to war, not even a million people may help us. In most other circumstances the combination of a proposal, the right people, and a political opportunity to bring it about will succeed.
- 3) Opportunity. Timing is critical with campaigns. We need to judge the right moment to push to make a difference. If the Government announces there is going to be an Electricity Market Reform Bill this is the moment to push to make sure it is in favour of renewable energy. There is little point pushing in two years' time after it has carried out major reforms. Likewise a well-crafted and well-timed campaign, which captures the public mood and rides a wave of public and media support, can create opportunities for change when the Government or business was not even considering it. Again, timing is critical.

Sometimes we win, and sometimes we lose, but the above is the basic mechanism. Even when we lose we generally learn things that we can apply next time. Many people talk about the Make Poverty History¹³ campaign from 2005. They say, 'let's have another Make Poverty History', as if that came out of the blue. In fact many people had been working on debt, trade, and aid issues for years. It was their knowledge of the issue, the opportunities, and the interconnections that enabled such a push when the right moment came. The

campaign had some successes and some failures, but it was not built on nothing. It was built on years of work, including apparent failures, and it is worth remembering that. In her editorial to this edition of *Anvil*, Margot Hodson discusses the Christian virtue of perseverance.¹⁴ Campaigners need to persevere and if we lose a campaign, we need to learn from that experience. We need to keep learning from our failures as much as from our successes.

Now we will consider some implications for change makers that have come out of our thinking recently within Friends of the Earth. This organisation has been operating for over 40 years, and has had many victories and some failures. When we look at the challenges facing the world, we cannot carry on doing the same thing. Albert Einstein once said a definition of insanity is, 'doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.' All individuals and organisations that are concerned about the environment will have had some victories, but it clearly is not enough. We need to do some things differently if we are going to make more progress faster. My central thesis is that we cannot carry on doing the same things and hope it is going to have a different impact. Here are five suggestions:

1) To reverse the slide into environmental catastrophe, and hopefully get closer to our vision, we have to scale up the *solutions*. That often means we need to look for the things that can make the biggest difference fastest. This may not be the thing we are most passionate about. We might have spent all of our lives working on X but now it is Y that we need to worry about.

2) There are technological solutions for many of our energy problems. The challenge is the *political will* to muster them, arrange them, and get them going in the right way. We have to look for scalable solutions, and for the opportunity to bring them about. We have to communicate to people about the solutions to some of the issues we face. Then we need to engage many more people in backing those solutions. This is the real challenge now, and to engage people we have got to connect our issues to their daily concerns. People are worried about fuel prices, food prices, and job insecurity. Our climate change campaigns are not talking about saving the world purely by doing something for the climate. Instead we talk about reducing our energy insecurity by getting clean British energy from renewable energy. We talk about creating jobs from low carbon investment. We talk about stopping constantly rising fuel prices by getting the UK off the fossil fuel hook. One of the things Friends of the Earth is relearning is that people are multi-dimensional. Whole people have emotions. We are a secular organisation, but we do not deny the importance of the spiritual to much of the

public. We have sometimes come across as a very cerebral and purely rationalist organisation, and we *are* passionate about being science based. But people are rounded, and we have learned that we must appeal to the whole person, who has hopes, concerns, and emotions, and is not simply coldly rational. It is important that we look for where people are itching, and what they are worried about. This is not cynical manipulation; it about us understanding their concerns and aspirations and showing them how a healthy environment can help. That is good for them and the environment.

3) If we are going to have maximum political impact we have got to team up much more as organisations and this is a real challenge for institutions in particular. Organisations have their own way of doing things, their own vision and so on. However, we are not going to make faster progress on some of the issues we care about unless we are much more humble in sharing our resources, and in working closely together. Shortly after the new UK Government came to power in 2010, the big environmental organisations sat down together. The expectation was that the next few years were going to be rough. We agreed that there was a need to change gear in the way we worked together. So we have stepped up collaboration since then, both on specific campaigns and on longer term strategy.

4) We all probably suffer from information overload. But how do we stay informed about the things we most need to know, and thereby bring about our vision? Who has the knowledge we need and how do we stay in touch with them? There is so much knowledge out there, and so much expertise, but very often we do not bring it together at the right time to make a difference. We now have modern communication mechanisms, Twitter¹⁵ for example. Twitter is a tool for quickly gathering information, and so if we follow the right people and the right organisations we can quickly find out what is going on, and then if we need to react we can.

5) All of us as individuals, and all of our organisations, need to look at the question ‘what knowledge do we need?’ Where is this knowledge, and how can we link to it so that we can use it much faster when we need it? We need to speed up as we are in a very dynamic situation here, and things move very quickly. Particularly for larger organisations, it is possible to get bogged down in the way things have always been done, and having to plan 18 months ahead before we make a move. Detailed planning has its logic, but we can’t be trapped by it when the situation changes. We are going to have to react so much faster to opportunities and threats in this current environment. This is a challenge to leaders of organisations. How do we do that without overriding all previous agreements on process? We

are going to have to. Frankly, life is too short, and will be for many people, unless we are much better at responding quickly to the opportunities and the threats.

The above are some general principles that anybody wanting to bring about change needs to start grappling with in the current economic and environmental context.

The Bee Cause campaign

We will now give an example of where Friends of the Earth have tried to apply these principles: our Bee Cause campaign.¹⁶ There have been many organisations doing small campaigns on bees. Some have done campaigns on the honeybee, and some have focused on pesticides. These are good: but we still need a joined up plan of action across the UK to reverse bee decline, addressing all causes of their decline and helping all species of bee. That's exactly what we have been calling for. There are over 260 species of bee in the UK. Only one of them is the honeybee. There are about 23 species of bumblebee and 230 species of solitary bee. We need all of these to pollinate plants to maintain the beauty of our countryside, parks and gardens. Moreover, many of our food crops, not our grains, but our fruit and vegetables are pollinated by bees. We were looking for a scale plan to deal with the problem of bee decline.

Secondly, we are deliberately joining this issue up to where other people are at. We are not even talking about honey, but we are talking about food prices. We commissioned research that showed if there were no bees to carry out pollination it would cost UK farmers an extra 1.8 billion pounds a year to hand pollinate food crops. This would have a major effect on food prices, and it was this angle that was picked up on by the media. They were interested in food prices, not how lovely the bee is that we don't want to lose. We are deliberately linking up to people's concerns.

We are also joining up with other organisations. We are not experts on all aspects of the bee crisis, so we commissioned the University of Reading to undertake some research on our behalf.¹⁷ We deliberately designed this campaign to invite others on board who share our interests in saving bees. The campaign had a major success in June 2013 when the Government announced it would be introducing a National Pollinator Strategy.¹⁸ The Welsh Government is ahead of the game and has already drawn up a Welsh Pollinator Strategy so the UK version will need to build on that.

We shall now work with the broad coalition that we have gathered around The Bee Cause to ensure the Strategy contains effective actions and helps everyone play their part in

ending the plight of our bees. We will certainly need action on pesticides, on habitat restoration, and on many other things if we are to turn around the decline in the bee population.

The launch of this campaign was incredibly successful.¹⁹ We made a flower garden overnight on the South Bank in London. So at six o'clock in the evening there was nothing to be seen, but by six o'clock the next morning there was a wildflower meadow in the concrete circle just in front of the National Theatre. ITV did their breakfast weather forecast from the garden. We saw lots of very intrigued people coming by. This was great to see because on other occasions, if we are on a rally with placards say, (not actually something we do that often), people can be wary of us. On this occasion people looked and dared to come closer thinking, 'this probably isn't dangerous'! It is interesting what happens to people when something completely left-field occurs, like a garden suddenly appearing on a piece of concrete. Two of my colleagues were dressed up as bees, which literally was like bees to a honey pot in terms of attracting children to come and talk to them. A few statistics illustrate how successful the launch was. We had over 100 media hits on the launch day, and radio, television and other media. Within weeks of the launch over 40,000 people had taken action on our website with over 20,000 signing the petition calling for a Bee Action Plan. We also gave away about 20,000 packets of bee friendly flower seeds.

Of course, many people planting bee friendly flowers is not going to cause systemic change overnight, but if it engages them with the issue so that they then push for policies and actions that could bring about systemic change that is a real win. We are also re-engaging with where people are at. Many people are fed up with the politics, and they do not believe that making a big political push is going to make a difference any more. (As it happens, The Bee Cause has engaged our politicians with over 200 MPs of all political colours having now signed their support for a national Bee Action Plan). However, they still want to do something, so: 'Give me something to do. OK, I'll plant flowers, I can cope with that.' But we can harness that and give it political impact. Campaigning on bees continues to be very much in the news. European governments have voted to ban three neonicotinoid pesticides on crops that are attractive to bees. The UK Government refused to back the restrictions.²⁰

Implications for Christian Leaders

We will now move on to consider the implications for Christian leaders. There are a number of questions:

1) We have to face a real strategic dilemma. Do we try to convert more Christians in our churches to care for the environment? Or do we go with what we have got, and make the best of those who do care about this issue in our churches? We probably need to make much more use of the people we have, and when we do that more people will come on board. We should not stop trying to convince our own number, but we can make huge inroads by joining up much more with those who already care.

2) Should Christian environmental organisations ally with Christian or with secular groups, or with both? There can be some sharp divisions in churches, and also within Christian organisations on such issues. We need the Christian environmental organisations to coordinate much more on strategy, vision and long-term goals, quite separately from any joint or public campaigns. I believe we need these organisations to get together to envision where they want the UK to be in 10 years time, and to articulate together to the Churches what church members should be pushing for. There is also much to be gained by the Churches and Christian environmental organisations supporting a well timed ethically correct secular campaign. This would lend the collective weight of the Church and Christian environmental organisations to change. For example if, after Friends of the Earth attacked an editorial in the Telegraph, there was a letter in the Telegraph signed by A Rocha UK, the John Ray Initiative (JRI), Christian Ecology Link, and Operation Noah, saying that the editorial was factually wrong, and it is not just Friends of the Earth who think so, it would make a powerful statement. Just being seen publicly to act together at the right moment would really make people think. A simple joint letter in the right place at the right time could make a difference.

3) Should Christian environmental organisations and leaders focus on local issues or national issues or even international issues? It is theoretically possible to do all three but we only have so much time. Internationally Rio+20, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on June 20-22, 2012.²¹ This was 20 years on from the first Rio conference, and unfortunately expectations before the meeting were low, and those expectations were largely met. However, Rio+20 did give the opportunity for Tearfund, A Rocha UK and JRI staff to collaborate on a second ‘Whose Earth?’ tour. This

took in six venues in England, and about 100 people attended each event.²² In 2013 the big development NGOs worked together on a joint campaign, “Enough Food for Everyone IF”, when the UK had the G8 Presidency and the G20 presidency.²³ The campaign focussed around the issue of food, although there were also some environmental aspects. International development work is really important, and we should not abandon the poor of this world, but we do need to give some attention to the UK. It was the UK that led the Industrial Revolution, and so it would have a big demonstration effect internationally, if the UK would lead on a new green Industrial Revolution. There would be a major impact on our own poor if we could get our house in order on fuel poverty.

4) Should Christian environmental organisations and leaders encourage people to get practical or to get political? Do we plant a flower garden, or go for a national policy on bees? My contention is that we not only need both but more than anything, leaders and organisations need to consciously connect them. You need to harness the practical to engage people; and harness the practical and people’s engagement, to change policy and politics.

Forthcoming Issues and Opportunities

There are a number of issues that are rising on the environmental agenda in the UK, and all of these come with opportunities.

One contentious area is shale gas exploration and ‘fracking’. The Government recently gave the green light for shale gas exploration to continue in the UK.²⁴ Fracking has been linked to two small earthquakes in the Blackpool area.²⁵ As exploration companies get permissions to drill we are seeing a major backlash from local residents and concerned environmentalists. I expect to see more fight-back in the future, connecting rich and poor communities. Fracking firm Cuadrilla is now drilling in Lewes in Sussex. Local people are unlikely to say, ‘Oh, all right then, please pump loads of noxious chemicals into my back garden.’ Unsurprisingly they are up in arms.²⁶ It’s an opportunity to make the point that we need to get off fossil fuels for a whole range of reasons, not just for tackling climate change.

We have already considered the question concerning the energy mix for the UK. There is going to be a review of our electricity market. We need to get off increasingly costly gas that is sending our fuel bills soaring. Crucially we need to set a target in the current Energy Bill to decarbonise our power sector by 2030. We also need better Government energy efficiency measures to help make fuel bills more affordable for older and vulnerable people.

In addition we need to address the issues of overconsumption and living more sustainably. We also need to work out how to engage more people in local planning issues. As a result of the new planning regulations in the UK, each community will be able to bring in a neighbourhood plan. This is a chance for communities to make sure that local developments have people and the environment at their heart.

Those are some of the opportunities. But to reiterate, to bring about change we need a proposal, people behind it, and to be clear about the opportunity to push. People want to bring about change, and some are in a more privileged position to be able to do this than others. We constantly have to ask ourselves what is the best opportunity, because we have limited resources to make a difference on something that could scale up to big change.

Strengths and Weaknesses

We all have particular passions, we all have strengths, and we all have weaknesses. We do not all have to do exactly the same thing. So we should all look at ourselves and try to discover what we are made for. What is our particular role? What is our vision? We may all share the idea that people and the environment should be in balance, but what do we particularly have a passion for? If anyone has not answered that question yet, then I'd encourage you to take some time out to think it through and do so – and perhaps get some help from someone.

What about our own strengths and weaknesses? There are two schools of thought in management: constant appraisal of people and helping them to address their weaknesses; and the idea that most of us have strengths and we generally do much better when we are playing to our strengths. The further one goes up the management ladder, the more a person has to develop skills in a broader range of areas. However, it is well worth asking, 'what are my natural strengths?' because we probably have the biggest impact applying what we do well. There are many kinds of help available to do this exercise. Particularly recommended are a series of books called StrengthsFinder.²⁷ StrengthsFinder 2 is for those in formal positions of leadership.²⁸ It is useful personally, but doing it with teams of people to help them understand their strengths and weaknesses is even better. They can then apply themselves more consciously to having an impact with the gifts that God has given them. The underlying point is that we need to think of what God has made us for in this complex and challenging time. We will then be able to apply ourselves to getting the big changes that we all need to see.

Then we should ask who are the individuals that we work with most effectively? Who is in our team? This can be a formal team or people we just happen to know casually.

Finally, what is our sphere of influence? Wherever we are, and whatever role we are in, we almost certainly have a bigger sphere of influence than we realise. Think of our relatives, our family, who we know at work and who we know at church. Add up all the circles that we are part of, and think of who we might try to influence, quite deliberately, to get more on board with environmental issues.

Conclusion

Christian leaders have a role to collectively grasp the difficult environmental context we are in, and point the way out of it for church members and the wider public, even though sometimes we know it is going to be a long and dark journey. Sometimes only faith and perseverance keep us going, but we do need to point the way out. We need to have a vision and point people towards it, and we need to take people with us by joining the dots with their issues so that they can see how relevant our concerns are to them. There is huge scope for Christians, even the relatively small number of us, to understand these issues. We need to have much more impact than we are currently having. Our challenge is to ask what we need to do differently to have the impact that we are called to have. This should be out of love for nature and God's creation and out of love for our fellow human beings, knowing that God calls us to love both.^b

Biography



Andy Atkins has been Executive Director of Friends of the Earth since June 2008. He was previously Policy and Campaigns Director at Tearfund. He has been involved in organising the Make Poverty History campaign, and the Stop Climate Chaos coalition. Andy is committed to finding solutions for environmental and social justice problems and is an experienced leader, campaigner and communicator.

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