

Earth Studies Lecture “Using Planet Earth”

The Dolphin community was delighted to host our second Earth Studies lecture on Wednesday 23 November “Using Planet Earth”. We invited Dolphin children from Year 5 upwards, families, friends, alumni, neighbouring schools and the local community to an event that explored our current dependency on oil and how we need to transition to other forms of energy and modify our lifestyles for a safe and healthy future.

Our main speaker, Professor Chris Rhodes, shared his vast knowledge and expertise at our mulled wine infused gathering last night in the main hall. When Chris was working in Russia after the Chernobyl disaster he turned his attention to the environmental aspect of producing and supplying oil and has lectured and researched on this topic for decades. Guests from all generations learnt that in no uncertain terms, although oil will not run out, it will become increasingly hard to get at and too dangerous for our planet’s well-being to burn. The age of oil will come to an end whether due to price constraints or ecological disaster and we need to start transitioning now in order to be prepared.

Chris highlighted the various and complex aspects of industrialisation changing our climate and ecosystem and shared his passion for the [permaculture movement](#) which promotes ‘*living lightly on the planet, and making sure that we can sustain human activities for many generations to come, in harmony with nature.*’ We were treated to an image of the junglesque roof garden in central Reading at the development centre RISC – [Reading International Solidarity Centre](#) – that is a hub of information and training for those keen to learn more on the topic. Chris assured us that despite the urbanisation of our communities, if we apply permaculture logic to our local environment we will regenerate not just our polluted air and dilapidating soil but also a sense of interconnection with our neighbours and our planet.

Following these wise words, Chris was joined by a panel of environmental and energy experts from our Dolphin community – Evelyn Dietche, Charles Jones and Barbara Andrea as well as a special guest from [Friends of the Earth](#) – Jo Bodimeade. The Q & A discussion was kicked off by Jake Morris in Year 7, who recently represented Dolphin at a local public speaking competition, courageously speaking on the topic *Living with Oil*. Year 7 have been exploring how oil is used for a wide variety of everyday items, looking at how this came about and gaining an understanding of the renewable options we can move to. Jake’s question was simple – ***Why is only 15% of the UK’s energy from renewable sources?*** The panellists all shared their views but it was hard to sugar coat the reality that the adults managing the world Jake and his classmates are growing up in put profit before the environment. Renewable energy just doesn’t have the same return as fossil fuels and therefore stakeholders such as investors and pension funds providers are not compelled to support it.

After a fascinating discussion reflecting the varied backgrounds of our panellists with a range of helpful perspectives on how we can live in a sustainable way, we welcomed our final question: a sixth form student from Newlands Girls asked ***What can we do, we do not design government policy or work for large oil firms, how can we make sure we do our best to help the planet?***

Our panellists helped send a clear message to the audience. Most of the energy individuals use is for transportation, heating and food. If we walk or cycle, avoid air travel, buy local, seasonal food and turn down our thermostats and draught proof our homes we will start reducing our carbon footprint. We were reminded how important it is to make these small changes but also to use our democratic rights

to encourage policy makers to do their best – the recent change in supermarket plastic bags demonstrating how powerful these changes can be.

Jo Bodimeade closed the evening sharing the ethical everyday choices she makes and how easy this is – from buying clothes made with recycled bottles, finding bargains in charity shops and having her reusable coffee cup everywhere she goes as well as becoming a vegan.
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