

COLLIDE

Student voice at Becket Keys

Climate Crisis

COP 26

What can I do?



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INTERVIEW WITH MR. SCOTT-EVANS

AN INTERVIEW WITH MR. SCOTT-EVANS
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ARTICLE WRITTEN BY ELEANOR SAVINE

What are your general thoughts on the climate crisis?

Mr Scott-Evans begins by saying that “I really think that the next decade is going to be crucial.” He talks about being “Inspired by Prince William’s Earth Shot prize and the idea that, really, we’ve got to make this decade count,” going on to compare this to “When President Kennedy said we’re going to go to the moon in this decade, not because it’s easy, but because it’s hard.” He says that “It’s the same with this situation, we’ve got to do it in this decade, it’s not going to be easy, it is going to be hard, but we’ve got to do something about it.” He continues by referring to our school’s situation, commenting that “There have been times since we opened in 2012 when I’ve been frustrated by the ‘short-termism’ of central government.” He talks about the issues he faced when setting up the school, using the examples of having to install thousands of fluorescent lightbulbs, rather than LEDs (which are brighter, last longer, and will pay for themselves over seven years by using less electricity), along with wanting to choose more environmentally-friendly and cost-effective boilers and wanting to install solar panels on the sports hall roof, but being told he couldn’t because “We’ve got to open this school as cheaply as possible.” He points out that the government aren’t interested in investing in long-term projects to do with things like the environment, because their main aim is the short-term goal of being re-elected for the next government. He mentions that politicians are “Only ever thinking about the next election, not what’s right for the children of our world.”

What do you think about the involvement of youth in the climate crisis?

Mr Scott-Evans talks about the response he's had from students to his presentation on the Earth Shot prize that he had been presenting during Collective Worship sessions that week.

He mentions that at times he is surprised by students' ambivalence, adding that "As I'm speaking to students, I can see on some of their faces that some of them really get it and want to do something about it, but others just don't seem to clock its relevance and it's immediacy."

Mr Scott-Evans highlights the simple changes that pupils could make but just seem to ignore, such as how many people buy bottled water at school every day because it's easier than bringing a reusable one. He also expressed his surprise at the reaction of students to the mention of Greta Thunberg, who he thought they would see as an inspiration, but instead appeared to view as annoying. He says he wants to see young people doing more, and emphasises the generation's need to get a grip of the situation now and work towards making a change.

What do you think that Becket Keys is currently doing well at to tackle the climate crisis?

Mr Scott-Evans begins by describing how the school buildings are much more energy-efficient than they were previously, due to them being well-insulated and having double-glazing, and talks about how "The Welby building has some very good technology which effectively acts like a sort of built-in air conditioning, but without any electricity being used, just through using draughts." He continues by talking about how he thinks that there are some "Really great lessons that go on in things like geography, that do educate students well, and PSHE" and goes on to mention how the school has planted around eighty trees over the past three years, and will plant four-hundred more this year in honour of the Queen's jubilee, along with the fact that the school has lights that automatically switch themselves off at night. As well as this, Mr Scott-Evans also highlighted the fact that the school's food is ordered from within a twenty-mile radius, and is all organic and freshly produced, along with the fact that the plastics used in the kitchen are all compostable and biodegradable, meaning that "The supplies for our kitchen are very environmentally friendly."

What areas do you think that the school needs to improve on to tackle the climate crisis?

Mr Scott-Evans starts by claiming that “The school’s waste management is an embarrassment.” He explains that the school used to think that Essex was recycling the school’s waste, and that the school used to put all of the rubbish into bags where it was mixed together. He comments that he had always been suspicious of this and that it transpires that the school’s waste was being sent overseas to be burnt, buried, or chucked in the ocean. He adds that he is “quite pleased to see that Brentwood has now gone towards a separate recycling method” saying that “although I know it frustrates families, it’s actually the only way to make sure that it’s being recycled.” However, he then explains that this system has worsened the situation for schools, as it means that the only things we can now recycle are paper and card, which is why the school is considering leaving the system of Brentwood Borough Council recycling our waste in favour of another waste management company, adding that “Although it will cost the school thousands of pounds, we don’t feel it’s morally right to be throwing all this stuff in the bin.” Mr Scott-Evans also expresses his frustration at the fact that “We can’t always get one hundred per cent green energy, because it’s a financial hit.” He continues to say, “That annoys me, because I think everyone should be buying green energy.”

Does the school have an issue with food waste, and if so, what are we doing about it?

Mr Scott-Evans talks about his experience of visiting the Eden Project over the summer, and comments that looking at their waste management systems made him think that “We should have dedicated food waste for students to use. At the moment, student food waste just goes to landfill, and that is horrendous because that lets off loads of methane and is an easily recyclable resource.” Continuing, he mentions that the school’s food waste is low because “The kitchen are extremely good at thinking about the menu,” giving the example of leftovers of a roast chicken being used to make wraps and sandwiches the next day. However, he says that “the actual recycling of food is not happening in the school, and that is a problem and so we need to fix that.”

What generation do you think is mainly responsible for the climate crisis?

Mr Scott-Evans quotes Barack Obama, who said that “We are the first generation to feel the impact of climate change, and the last generation that can do something about it.” He explains his view by saying that “He was speaking to his peers; he identified the people of his age are the first to really realise that there's an issue, and if they don't fix it, it will be too late. So actually, it is everyone's responsibility right now to sort this and we've got a decade to do it. I don't think it's the time to point fingers and say ‘you do it’, ‘no you do it’, everyone's got to do it, but I think we all realise that actually the extravagances of the 1990s, 1980s have cost the planet dearly, and it's gonna be the younger generations who are gonna have to pay for the mistakes made in those generations, but those generations didn't know what they were doing, the current generations do, and I think there is righteous anger from people like Greta Thunberg towards them because they're not doing anything about it, they're continuing to live in the extravagances of the 1980s and not waking up to it.”

What is your opinion on students who miss lessons to protest about the climate crisis?

Mr Scott-Evans answered by saying that “I think anyone who goes on strike has to have tried other things first. A strike is a last resort. Now, I don't mind anyone going on strike, as long as they can say they've tried everything else first. I say the same to teachers.” He goes on to mention the questions he asks anyone who is considering going on strike, such as whether they've written a letter to leaders such as the Queen, their local MP, the Prime Minister, and the Secretary of State, joined Greenpeace, donated to charities, or taken action themselves through things like recycling. He says that a person should “Do all the things you can do first, and then, if you think people still aren't listening and you want to go on strike, I will support you one hundred per cent, but don't do it as your first port of call.”

How do you think the school's Christian ethos impacts our approach to the climate crisis?

Mr Scott-Evans begins by explaining that in every faith, not just Christianity, the role of humans is to act as stewards of God's world. He says that "As a school of faith, we should be looking very carefully at what we are called to do as Christians to look after the planet, and it's a wonderful way to witness to the world about the importance of our faith." He explained how he would like to see different religions across the world working together to tackle the climate crisis, saying that "If they came together just on the central issue of the environment, what a statement that would be to the rest of the world." He used the example of the impact we could collectively make if every church used their land to plant trees, and concluded by saying that "For me, it's at the heart of why I'm so passionate about the environment, because I see it as part of my job."

WHAT CAN WE DO AS STUDENTS?

- Use public transport or walk
- Recycle old worksheets/paper
- Only print when it is necessary
- Use a reusable cup/bottle
- Try to avoid fast fashion brands when shopping

CAN WE RELY ON COP26 FOR OUR FUTURES?

BY HOLLY LARKIN

In 1994, a treaty regarding climate change came into force and everybody within the United Nations signed it, creating COP.

The COP (Conference of the Parties) held its first meeting in Berlin, March 1995. This year's appointed President of COP26 is Alok Sharma, representing India.

The main objectives for the COP is the decision making and monitoring of climate change and how we can change it all over the globe for a better future, as it has and will continue to impact the whole world.

This year's meeting will be held between the 31st of October to the 12th of November, in Glasgow, to discuss how we can tackle climate change and there will be lots to discuss. More than 20,000 delegates from 197 countries will be attending, alongside an outstanding 120 heads of state, which highlights how important this year's COP is as this will be the biggest attendance number the COP has seen to date.

After 2019's COP meeting, which was held in Spain's capital, Madrid, lots of big issues were unfortunately left unsolved. However, one crucial agreement was made - to cut down carbon dioxide as this in itself largely contributes to our global warming crisis. Every nation promised to construct a plan to lower their carbon emissions by the next conference. Even though the 2020 COP didn't take place at its allocated time due to Covid19, many countries have still failed to fulfill this promise. Due to this, new promises will need to be agreed and hopefully this time will be completed.

In this year's summit, the government are planning to reduce the UK's carbon submissions to 'net zero' - which means virtually no carbon will be released - by 2050. The government also has plans to change all cars to electric to again cut down carbon emissions. This movement will drastically impact our future promises to lower our carbon footprint.

Last year, from the 19th November to the 1st of December, a mock COP was held by 350 youth delegates online where a treaty with 18 different polices was developed. This treaty was later given to the high-level climate action champion, Nigel Topping.

The goals and promises within the treaty included teaching the youth about the climate crisis we are in, how each country will commit to a green recovery plan, and how they will also have to commit to high targets and provide the fundings to complete them.

Greta Thunberg, a young environmental activist, spoke at COP26 addressing how carbon budgets have been declining and how she wants to change that, but needs the entire worlds help to accomplish this; she also stated she will 'keep repeating herself' until its completed.

Overall, COP26 is an important event and should not be ignored due to the impact it will have on our futures for a better and healthier planet.

WHAT CAN WE DO AS TEACHERS?

- Turn off lights when leaving classroom
- Be mindful of paper consumption
- Use public transport when possible

HOW TO AVOID A CLIMATE DISASTER, OR HOW TO SHIFT THE BLAME?

A BOOK REVIEW BY ELLA MIDDLEDITCH

Bill Gates: software developer, entrepreneur, business magnate, investor, and apparent climate activist. With world leaders and celebrities descending on the COP26 forum as 2021 comes to its penultimate month, we should cast our minds back to the campaign of Bill Gates to halt the crescendo of global warming*. *How To Avoid A Climate Disaster: The Solutions We Have And The Breakthroughs We Need**, published February 2021, is the latest publication of the noted philanthropist and, debatably, the most frustrating.

Gates states on page six of the introduction himself: "the world is hardly lacking in rich men with big ideas about what other people should do"; he is "another rich guy with an opinion". And herein lies the problem with this book – Gates is an incapable advocate for the planet. Regardless of technology that could save our planet; his other contributions to environmental activism; his façade of self-awareness that appears before the book has even begun - it is undisputable that this publication is entirely inappropriate. A recent UN report found that the wealthiest 1% bear the greatest responsibility for climate change as individuals, and whilst Gates surrendered his position as the richest person in the world back in 2017, he held the title for twenty intermittent years, and now occupies fifth place with an approximate \$131 billion net worth. So where does Bill Gates stand in the climate disaster? A perpetrator and its defence?

Perhaps this is too harsh. True enough, it is impossible to separate the efforts of everyday climate campaigners and their private lives. There is certainly value in what Gates has to say. Nuclear and hydroelectric energy are undeniably worth exploring whilst fossil fuels act as the leading proponent of carbon emissions, and the suggested electrified public transport systems should work on resolving the 16% of global emissions that is created by transportation. To his credit, Gates does separate the efforts of individual environmentalists to the actions of governments somewhat, including ideas for healthier interactions with the planet that relate to both groups – a narrative that tends to be omitted by the climate-conscious elites. The suggestion in section three of the book to switch from gas furnaces to electric pumps is a cost-effective solution to heating and air conditioning emissions in the long run that can be achieved by a significant number of households. Gates does frame some of How to Avoid A Climate Disaster around what sanctions nations can implement to protect against the ambitions of companies, however; an interesting decision given his own entrepreneurial history. Whilst it avoids attributing the blame to specific people, it seems to imply a cynical view of the corporate values in the modern day. Staying with the theme of heating, Gates suggests that if the government introduced a minimum energy efficiency (lessening the amount of energy wasted by appliances), the energy demand from air conditioning units could drop exponentially. Yet he fails to consider the source of the issues: the companies themselves. With his own insight into the world of commerce, Gates admits the lack of care businesses have for the state of the world; he admits that, without intervention, corporations will not turn to sustainable methods that would help the consumer and the planet. He admits that corporations choose to fail us.

And given Gates' actions, as businessman and billionaire, we should hardly be surprised.

A typical resident of the United States has a yearly carbon footprint of 16 tons, one of the highest averages in the world. Globally, this number is closer to 4 tons. According to a report published by The Conversation in February, Bill Gates has an annual carbon footprint of 7,493 metric tons, mostly from his private jets. To put that in context, Bill Gates has a higher carbon footprint than almost 1,900 people around the world combined.

The pollution Gates pushes into the atmosphere he claims to counteract through the purchase of carbon offsets – the funding of environmental projects to reduce greenhouse gases, usually through direct air capture: the trapping of carbon in rocks. As miraculous as this sounds, the technique has been regarded with deep scepticism relating to its effectiveness and reliability, especially since a ProPublica report in 2019 that found that several programs that sold carbon offset credits never involved themselves in carbon reduction schemes. There are growing concerns at environmental organisations such as Greenpeace that carbon offsets diverts funds from long-term climate reduction projects, and the support of a such a wealthy and apparent ‘eco-warrior’ Bill Gates will only heighten this potential: the global spending on carbon offsets being set to grow to \$100 billion by 2030.

Gates argues that his absurdly high carbon footprint is acceptable, however. He calls his private jets a “guilty pleasure” and urges ordinary people to turn to electric cars, however economically inaccessible, slamming the accusations of hypocrisy in the next breath.

There are some merits to his defence – “we are not going to stop building buildings and flying planes” for climate change, in all likelihood. Greener methods must instead be developed to resolve the issue. But Gates’ efforts to pursue eco-friendlier methods such as biofuel as aviation power, still pump a reported 39g of CO₂ into the atmosphere per one megajoule in comparison to the 75g of fossil fuels. His efforts are not enough. Grounding a private jet will not save a planet, but it will certainly do a lot to help it. A pattern of behaviour is emerging between him and his associates. Environmental activism is marketed adjacent to business; it is commercialised, even sensationalised, for the sake of public image. This book is arguably one such example.

How To Avoid A Climate Disaster is a good book. The proposals are sound, and though the work is not revolutionary it is relevant. But Bill Gates is not the right author. His recognition of climate change and monetary support of climate change projects is admirable, but not enough to forgive his recklessness. His personal participation in the destruction of our planet cannot be forgotten. Yes, it is imperative that governments, corporations, and even individuals make what effort they can to resolve climate change. Yet Bill Gates' book cannot convince himself to change, so why would it convince anyone else? Another rich guy with an opinion, and another book for the charity-shop pile.

WHAT CAN WE DO AS PARENTS?

- Consider where food is source
- Encourage children to reduce water usage
- Use public transport when possible

THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND MENTAL HEALTH

BY JOSHUA BENAD-SMITH

Climate change is one of the great challenges of our time. The effects of global warming on our biology are a concern for the entire scientific community. Rising temperatures, heat waves, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, droughts, fires, loss of forest, and glaciers, along with disappearance of rivers and desertification, can directly and indirectly cause human pathologies that are physical and mental. However, there is a clear lack of studies on mental disorders linked to climate change. The full effects of global warming have not been accepted globally, meaning we cannot establish the impact of global warming on mental health. However, those who show a change in mental health in different population groups are those who are directly exposed and more vulnerable in their geographical conditions, as well as a lack of access to resources, information, and protection. This shows the ignorance of those who are not effected through global warming, showing that attention should be placed on this before the countries that are not so effected end up like we are ignoring. Although mental health has not been researched alongside climate change, health and well-being has. The major public health organisations of the world have said that climate change is a critical health problem. According to the US, climate change makes many existing diseases and conditions worse, and it helps pests and pathogens spread into new regions. The most vulnerable people including children, the elderly, the poor and those with pre-existing health conditions are at increased risk for climate-related health effects.

Examples of public health risks:

- Extreme heat and poor air quality increase complications from underlying heart and respiratory conditions like asthma, renal failure, and pre-term birth and as temperatures rise, there will be more heat-related illness and deaths in both urban and rural areas.
- The risk of very large fires has increased and will increase further across California and other parts of the West, directly threatening peoples' lives and causing severe air pollution across large areas.
- The frequency and intensity of heavy downpours has increased and is likely to increase further, raising the risk of flash flooding.
- Ticks and mosquitoes that transmit illness like Lyme disease and West Nile virus are likely to increase and spread to new areas in the United States.
- Heavy rain events will likely increase exposure to water-borne illnesses including linked to sewage contamination of drinking water.

These are just a few of effects of global warming. As more physical related illnesses arise this in turn has an effect on mental health, therefore the impact of global warming will effect both physical and mental health.

WHAT CAN WE DO AS SHOPS?

- Paperless receipts
- Paper carrier bags/encourage people to bring their own bags
- Use digital marketing instead of physical

INSULATE BRITAIN – THE COURAGEOUS NUISANCE

BY MACKENZIE THOMSON

The modern message is clear, Insulate Britain are a nuisance. They block the roads, act tedious on the media, and drag on with useless messaging no one cares for. However, this characterisation fails to remain justified in a modern climate.

First of all, many people view their methods as their greatest wrongdoing as their disruptive methods cause annoyance for many. Insulate Britain are known as the national annoyance which protests and blocks roads, taking up everyone's time, although, when considering these methods it's important to consider the history and nature of protesting. Major historical protests and movements have only proved successful when using disruptive, many times even violent actions for justice. Malcolm X did not advocate for civil rights with just a nicely worded letter to the president, and the suffragettes never thought such a thing was enough either. Yet, the civil rights and suffragette movements are now hailed as heroic deeds by those who fought and even gave their lives for the justices we enjoy today. When advocating to change it's important to remember that protests can almost never hope to change the status quo without disruption and actual protest, so simply critiquing the idea of causing disruption or taking action is often looking on a small, selfish scale, especially when protesting a cause such as saving our environment and our species. Insulate Britain may even find credit among some as they've been able to find a way to cause disruption without the physical damage and harm that past protests, even the more favoured ones of the past year have caused.

The cause they protest for, is overall one of massive importance as most people would agree. Climate change is a real issue and possibly the most devastating issue we may ever face, the destruction of our planet and extinction of current species. The goal of Insulate Britain is to protest and cause disruption in order to place pressure on government to act to start taking steps to fix the issue before it's too late. As revealed by COP26, we are currently on a potentially cataclysmic tipping point, with immediate action required to prevent the small rises in temperature that will devastate the planet. Most homes in Britain remain uninsulated, with many homeowners not having the adequate funds to do so themselves. Insulating homes would go a long way in ensuring we play our part in defending our planet, but also prevent the potential class division of facing climate change, with richer citizens having access to measures such as insulation to protect themselves from differing climates. Although, it could be argued that their response gives quite limited scope. By restricting themselves to such a narrow policy Insulate Britain have potentially limited discussion of other climate change measures, as well as having to defend their specific position against claims such as a lack of government funding post covid, and the difficult logistics of such a policy.

Overall their cause seems noble enough, although, this is not necessarily the correct way to solve the problem. This policy would help to slow climate change, but it ultimately can not prevent it and may only stall the inevitable due to a lack of addressing the cause. Climate change and environmental destruction are ultimately caused by the modern world's economic organisation. The continuation of unchecked capitalism with the profit motive and free markets remaining dominant causes a lack of environmental concern. The environment and climate change do not fit into the modern business idea as taking care of the environment causes a loss of potential profit, while harmful actions such as producing more plastic and dumping waste remain too profitable to avoid. These businesses are then able to hold massive sway in western governments, with many countries even allowing these companies to directly fund representatives, ensuring their corporate interests are protected. Without addressing the actual causes of climate change and shifting our economic and political organisations in the modern world, small steps such as insulating homes in Britain ultimately only hold potential to stall the inevitable cataclysm of extinction.

WHAT CAN WE DO AS PARENTS?

- Consider where food is source
- Encourage children to reduce water usage
- Use public transport when possible

Produced by Amelie Ladlow and Isabel Gladding