

**Once More with Feeling**  
**James Willis**  
**16 Jan 2013**  
**Discussion Notes**

The discussion was ably chaired by John Hubbard

Points made from the floor:

- *Speaker:* Can't doubt what has been said by James — One big difficulty is the development of coal-fired power stations in China. The population in India is two billion and they have hardly started exploiting energy yet. Is it futile to address the problems of increasing energy demands and CO<sub>2</sub> rise in the UK when faced with these global problems?
- *Speaker:* But do we, then, do nothing? If people do nothing it (the catastrophe) will happen. In 2006 he and his wife installed solar panels and other energy-saving devices and saved 65% of their energy demand. If this was replicated by 1 million/5million/50 million people it would start making an impact. They had paid for this by not having holidays. Picking up on James' analogy they hope it is a crystal that spreads.
- *Speaker:* Had had 'had the temerity' to review the climate change debate. Brought a written critique of James' 2006 address for those interested. Thought James' approach emotional. 'Touched' by the idea that any of us can have an influence. The eco-friendly things we do are like rearranging the deckchairs on the *Titanic*. Questioned Wikipedia (source for graphs in the 2006 address) as a reliable source for information.
- *Speaker:* In your 2006 talk you challenged the doctors you spoke to to take a lead. Have you had any feedback?  
*James:* No, nothing. It's desperate when you make an argument and nothing happens. There are bigger voices than mine putting the opposite view. One positive outcome was an invitation to address a senior group in the Glaxo Smith Kline building near to the M4.
- *Speaker (works in renewable energy industry):* Finds that when he explains that fossil fuels are finite resources, and points out that using them saves the customer money, he can sell the idea of renewable energy more easily.
- *Speaker (Lady):* Picked up on the fact that China is developing one power station a week and will be doing so for the next seven years. She suggested that if we developed ways of stopping our emissions, we could then sell or give this technology to them, to ensure they don't repeat the mistakes we made in the past.  
Is there an alternative source of power? Will nuclear fusion be the answer?  
*James -* In the '60s Sir John Cockcroft (Nobel Prize for 'splitting the atom') predicted we'd have nuclear fusion within 15 years. This hasn't happened. (JW's) personal belief that we will have to use nuclear power in the medium term to make up the energy we will need.
- *Speaker:* Agreed with much of what had been said but two further points:
  - The nuclear industry also has finite resources - uranium supplies are limited and the carbon footprint of extracting it is high.
  - Everywhere there is massive opposition and scepticism about global warming. We are using up finite resources such as coal and gas, which are easier to 'sell'.
- *Speaker:* From 2006—2012 there has not been a lot of change. Key question - how do we 'activate' the 20/30/40 year olds?
- *Speaker (retired Civil Engineer):* The increasing use of energy in China, India and also Africa is problematic. However, China is the largest producers of photovoltaic cells. China as well as

India and Africa have intelligent people who will grasp the problem. UK has solved some problems, e.g. cleaner use of coal and can 'show the way'.

- *Speaker (PhD)*: Mentioned a cartoon showing an empty room, which was the meeting place of 'the Apathetic Society'. Scientists are working on CO<sub>2</sub> capture and the UK leads the way. 40% of this work is done using Chinese money. Unfortunately some of the things we do aren't advertised enough. Please take into account that the UK is doing a lot on global warming.
- *Speaker (Mrs Lesley Willis)*: When James suggested doing this talk and discussion she had been pretty hostile to the idea. We don't like to think about climate change. We are busy, have lots to do. She has a lot of respect for him for going ahead. It has made her read and hear a lot more. We have to try to hear and read more on the subject. If we read inaccuracies and vitriol, such as those written by a newspaper columnist, there should be a barrage of letters of complaint. We should write to our MPs. We should challenge those who support extravagant use of energy. Why do we now have a Minister of the Environment who denies climate change? We should all find ways to make our voices heard. (*Applause*)
- *Speaker*: I agree humans do affect climate change, but have you studied solar activity and the effect on climate change?  
*James*: It is not for me to study this. I have to listen to the experts. I believe they consider all angles, including this one. Personal theories I may or may not have are immaterial.
- *Speaker*: Highlighted the problem of false 'balance' in the media. i.e. Setting up a 'debate' between someone representing a body of mainstream evidence and someone representing a tiny minority view, apparently on equal terms. This is a common format for radio programmes which gives a false impression of legitimacy to the minority view.  
*James*: cited a recent Today programme about shale gas exploitation when John Humphries gave Nigel Lawson (a prominent denier) equal weight, indeed the last word, against a speaker who was voicing mainstream climate-science opinion. James had made an official complaint about this distortion to the BBC.
- *Speaker (Retired GP)*: James had been *too nice*. The reason that we are faced with 'vitriol' and 'certainty' is that many have their own interests, e.g. the 'oil men' in the US. Both President Bushes in the US were 'oil men'. Groups like those gathered have to try to exert 'people power'.  
In the UK we are doing quite a lot about reducing our emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>. In 2011 there was 7% less than in 2010. At the same time China's increased by 24% and continues to rise. The US went from 20 to 17 metric tonnes\*. But at the same time Australia went from 17 to 18 metric tonnes\*. (\*as remembered in good faith from the discussion)
- *Speaker (Chartered Engineer, now Chair of Energy Alton)*: Mentioned scientists' dreams and the pragmatic realities. He believes China is aware of the problems and consequences of energy consumption and emissions. He also thinks scientists and engineers will be finding solutions, but it is the politicians who need to be informed. We can write to them. Locally some are informed including HCC., but there is the need for carbon neutral houses and the greater use of renewable energy. When *Energy Alton* was offering loft insulation for free as DIY a lot of people thought there was a catch. Many however took up this opportunity. The Government are now offering a Green Deal and this is striving towards a 50% reduction in energy output as per the latest Kyoto Agreement. In the Green Deal there will be funding to help insulate solid wall houses.
- *Final speaker*: was surprised at the obstacles. Climate change is politically polarised. Those supporting it are seen as 'the loony left'. We have to persuade people that it affects everyone. 'Loony right' can put the boot in. Think of the suffragettes, if they had said 'Forget it', they'd only have been *men* at this meeting tonight!