

NATURE: OUR BEST CLIMATE TECHNOLOGY?

9th February 2017, IET London: Savoy Place

The Nature Conservancy



intelligence²

THURSDAY 9TH FEBRUARY, 7PM, IET LONDON: SAVOY PLACE

It was historic. The 2015 Paris climate agreement saw every member country of the UN pledge to cut its carbon emissions to zero by the second half of this century and keep global warming at well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels.

There's just one problem. To reach this goal the world would need to shut down all of its coal-fired power stations by 2025 and ditch the combustion engine entirely by 2030. To reach its own targets, the UK will need to decarbonise the vast majority of its electricity supply within a mere 15 years. Eliminating fossil fuels this way is going to be extremely challenging. An extra lever is needed to reach the Paris climate targets. But from where?

The answer, many voices are now suggesting, is to use nature itself as a climate technology. Artificial carbon-capture technologies are still in the lab, and will be expensive and difficult to scale up quickly enough. But, say experts, we already possess a ready-made, affordable system of carbon sequestration with billions of years of R&D behind it – soil, peatlands, wetlands and grasslands. Better managed, restored and protected, these ecosystems could provide more than a third of the carbon reductions needed by 2030 to keep to the 2°C limit.

On February 9th Intelligence Squared, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, will bring together some of the leaders in this field to examine how nature itself can be harnessed to cut our carbon emissions.

Take forests. Conventional wisdom says that we shouldn't be cutting down trees. On the contrary, say some experts, with the right safeguards in place harvesting trees could be at the core of a new low-carbon bio-economy. Timber buildings, for example, can act as long-lasting carbon stores, at the same time as reducing the need for concrete and steel, which produce more than 5% of atmospheric carbon emissions.

It's not only wood. Other solutions – such as growing more crops while using less land, or restoring mangroves and wetlands – present opportunities for carbon storage at scale. Unleashing nature's own 'carbon-capture' technology could be as significant as stopping burning oil.

But how feasible are these solutions on a global scale? Some argue that such measures are not practical, and that they'll disrupt the livelihoods of farmers, especially in emerging economies, where agriculture and forestry are still the major source of economic progress.

Is nature the great, abundant technology that we have failed to tap? Or would it limit economic progress for those dependent on agriculture and forestry? How to reconcile these risks with the opportunity for the climate?

Join us on February 9th, hear our panel of experts, and make up your own mind.

SPEAKERS

Justin Adams



Global Managing Director for Lands at The Nature Conservancy, one of the world's biggest environmental and conservation organisations, where he specialises in sustainable agriculture, forests and smart infrastructure. He was formerly a senior executive at BP Alternative Energy, and senior adviser to the World Bank.

Tony Juniper



Sustainability adviser and former executive director of Friends of the Earth. He is the author of *What Has Nature Ever Done For Us: How Money Really Does Grow on Trees* and *What Nature Does For Britain*, and is co-author with HRH Prince of Wales of *Harmony: A New Way of Looking at Our World*.

Kerry McCarthy



Labour MP for Bristol East, and Shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs until June 2016. One of Parliament's most vocal advocates for sustainable agriculture and responsible land use. She sits on the Environmental Audit Committee and is co-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Agroecology for Sustainable Food and Farming.

Andrew Waugh



Award-winning architect behind the world's largest timber building, currently under construction in London, as well as a nine-storey residential building in Hackney that is the second tallest timber residential structure in the world. He is a founding director of London architecture practice Waugh Thistleton.

Jon Williams



Partner at PwC specialising in Climate Change and Sustainability. He leads PwC's work in private sector forest sustainable land use, helping companies to manage the business impact of sustainability. His clients include financial institutions in both developed and developing economies, and companies in the retail, consumer goods, healthcare, energy and mining sectors.

CHAIR

Matthew Taylor



Chief Executive of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA). Before joining the RSA in 2006, he was the Chief Adviser on Political Strategy to Tony Blair, and the Director of the Institute for Public Policy Research between 1999 and 2003.