Northern Ireland Environmental History Workshop

Online meeting, Friday 26th January 2024

This account of the meeting was based on an auto-transcript that has been judiciously corrected, edited and some minor additions (including hyperlinks) to make to make it more concise, and easy to read for general circulation. We have endeavoured to check name spellings, but it has not always been possible to contact every participant to confirm, so please be cautious in this regard, and note that the spoken word is not always grammatical.

The meeting was held on Microsoft Teams and organised by the Oral History of the Environment Project based in the Geography Department of Royal Holloway, University of London, in partnership with Social Farms and Gardens, Friends of the Earth and Linen Hall Library. We are extremely grateful to all those involved in organising and contributing to the meeting and the participants were asked if they had any objection to making this document public. There were no objections.

If you wish to skip to a particular section, click on to the table of contents item you would like to jump to below.

Table of Contents

Part 1: Introductions (all participants)

Miriam Turley 0:24
So thank you everybody for joining.

My name is Miriam Turley and I work for Social Farms and Gardens.
And I'm really pleased to have been asked to host this session today on the history and evolution of the environmental movement in Northern Ireland since 1970s and I'm really pleased to see everybody here. Patricia and I were approached by my ex-colleague Jeremy Iles. I used to work with him in the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (now Social Farms and Gardens), and because we had worked together before he had approached us just to get some recommendations for interviewees in Northern Ireland and how to approach running this session. And so with James Orr's help from Friends of the Earth, we decided on a collaborative approach. And this is how we came up with this workshop today. So thank you all so much for coming and for joining us. Before I hand over to the oral history of the environmental movement team we just wanted to do a round of introductions and would like everybody to just speak and introduce yourself for anybody who hasn't met you. So there's quite a few of us here, I think we've got 18 people in the room so if you would just say your name, your organization and maybe just take like less than a minute each. So maybe I'll start with Sharon, would that be OK?

Sharon Morrow 2:16
I'm Sharon Morrow, an ordinary citizen. I've been a member of Friends of the Earth since maybe in the late eighties, hard to remember, it's when Jonathan Porritt was (FoE) Director, and I didn't know anybody who was involved in the environmental movement at the time. But he was talking such sense. I thought, yeah, I've got to follow this guy. I have been involved in many of the projects that friends have founded in Northern Ireland over the years and it's great to see them on the ground. It's just great to be part of this survey.

Brayshay, Barbara 3:09

My name is Barbara Brayshay and I'm one of the oral history research team.

I'm a postdoctoral researcher and I'm an oral history interviewer. That's my role on the team. My organization is Royal Holloway, University of London, and I've been involved, you know, around the edges of environmental activism for a long time, and I currently sing in the climate choir movement.

Peter Emerson 4:27

Peter Emerson, now running The de Borda Institute. In the 70s the environmental movement was much the domain of Mike Bracci and Mike Villiers-Stewart, who used to alternate as chairs and secretaries of two different organisations, one of which is the Irish Conservation Society, I can't remember the other one, in 1977 I think it was, we set up SANE the Society for Alternatives to Nuclear Energy, in 1978. I organized Belfast's first cycle-in and we had bicycles everywhere; and on the basis of that we set up Friends of the Earth with Derek Alcorn. In 1981 I helped set up CND and also three of us stood in elections for the first your first time under the Green, or should I say Ecology label; and then in 1982 the Green Party in Ireland was set up and it's very similar to De Groenan, it was very much on the anti-nuclear movement. And then in 1983, it set up the Green Party of Northern Ireland.

Eric Randall 5:51

Eric Randall, formally of Brighton Recycling for 30 years and now independent.

Declan Allison 6:10

I am Declan Allison and I'm a campaigner with Friends of the Earth. I suppose I started with Conservation Volunteers in 1990.

Michael Harper 7:28

OK, my first introduction to Northern Ireland was when I was working with Chris Church in London for Friends of the Earth and I came over for an annual conference in Northern Ireland to talk about energy in about 1989, and then I subsequently moved in 1992 to develop wind energy projects; and now I am vegetable growing.

Sasha Workman

I'm Sacha Workman I started in1988 in the Jonathan Porritt era in London. I set up something called Paper Round and I was involved also with the start of the blue bins which you see around the place now. And then I moved on to something called

Global Action Plan, which I did for a couple of years. Then I came home to work in Northern Ireland for B9 Energy, which Mike had set up with David Surplus and I worked there for about 20 years. And I now work with Helen's Bay Organic Garden, and I design biodiverse gardens.

James Orr 8:42

Hi everybody and good to see you. First, I got involved in Bishopscourt Peace Camp, a sort of ecology camp with Peter Emerson and he got me arrested several times by military police, thanks, Peter! And I think that was about 1980/1981. Around that time or shortly after I set up something called the UCD [University College, Dublin] Ecology Society and then I did bits and pieces with Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and then Friends of the Earth.

Sue Christie 9:26

I came over here in 1982. I'm an ecologist and I worked in academia for a while. Then I was with Ulster Wildlife for about five years. Then something called Northern Ireland 2000, which was community organizations getting active in their environment. And then I was chief executive of Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL) for about 25 years. I retired about 10 years ago and I'm now chairman of Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful and I am on a couple of other boards.

John Woods 10:01

Hi how lovely to see all these faces. I came back home to Northern Ireland in 1994, having worked for Friends of the Earth in Scotland, and I started off working with Sue at NIEL and I was helping out with the Northern Ireland Environment Strategy. And then there was the Sustainable Northern Ireland project... it's still there. Then after that when I got very caught up with peace process stuff and then came back and did some work for Friends of the Earth as freelance things like Magheramorne Quarry and then then I worked for Friends of the Earth - became director for Northern Ireland back in 1999, I think, did that for 10 years. Then the Green New Deal work, I've been freelance since then really. Some environmental stuff, then food, farming and the Countryside Commission, so I'm back in that kind of environmental, land and agricultural space.

John Barry 11:20

Hi everybody. I'm John Barry, lovely to see you all. By day I'm a mild mannered professor of green political economy here at Queens University Belfast, but at the weekends and in the evenings, a serial troublemaker and climate and ecological activist. I'm also recovering politician. I was Co leader of the Green Party for a number of years in the 2000s and for seven years I was like the only guy in the village - I was the only Green Party representative on Ards and North Down Council.

Miriam Turley 11:55

Very brave. And Saskia.

Papadakis, Saskia 12:02

Hi, I'm Saskia. I'm a member of the oral history of the environmental movement team and I'll be probably doing a lot of the interviews in the north, so I'm just here to listen and learn. It's really nice to see you all.

Miriam Turley 12:22

Thank you. And Patricia Wallace and Phillip

Philip Allen 12:27

Hi everybody. I was involved with the old Ecology Party and still in the 1989 elections, there were Council elections, and I am a forester now, and I teach permaculture, which is the design of environmentally productive places or systems. And I sometimes do environmentally friendly garden design for people. If I cut down a diseased tree we usually try and plant two it's place, things like that.

Patricia Wallace

Hi I am Patricia. I work with Miriam, and we're delighted to host this and we feel we've done our work, we've got you all in the room and it has potential for a whole lot of things. I first met James Orr when - I'm a recovering politician like John from Ards and North Down Council, - but I took councillors down to see the reed bed system. Do you remember that James, in Castle Espie? and they kind of laughed, you know, after which they should have been looking to do their council buildings, we've

still got a lot of sewage going into our seas. So I think this reaffirms and will document and give credit to people that have gone before us and in the environment movements. It's very important to just reaffirm that work that has already happened and that we're working on the shoulders of.

Bob Brown 14:17

BB

Hello everyone. I've I'm a marine biologist by background and done a lot of research on marine ecological issues of one sort and another both here and abroad, but I'm now a trustee of Ulster Wildlife, but in the past, I've had various roles - for 10 years I was director of RSPB's operations in Northern Ireland. I've been chair of the National Trust's Northern Ireland section. I've sat on the number of government bodies, including Council for Nature Conservation in the Countryside and the UK's Joint Nature Conservation Committee as well, where I chaired their marine protected areas group. And I've also was chair of the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group for about 6 years, but I escaped from that and so now, apart from my Ulster Wildlife work, I'm sort of working independently. But in the past, I've also been on the board of the Marine Conservation Society as well. So nice to meet you all.

Samantha McCombe 16:04

I am the librarian of the Linen Hall Library in Belfast and for those who don't know, founded in 1788 it is the oldest library in Belfast and also an archive and an accredited museum, and I've been invited to attend today, I think because of our collections.

MT **Miriam Turley** 15:22

Thank you. And I really appreciate everybody giving such a potted history of their environmental past, because I'm sure everybody could have had a lot more.
So thank you for that. We really felt that it was important to get as many people in the room and we know that there's so many strands that will come out from this session as well that will need to be followed up on and it's such an important project and we're so pleased. I'm going to hand over to Jeremy from the project.

IJ **Jeremy Iles** 16:58

OK, great. Thanks very much Miriam. We very much appreciate your hosting and also

the background support we've had from James and Patricia. And this discussion has been now going on for about a year, maybe slightly longer since we first mooted this idea and particularly - thanks for all of you for coming, but also particularly Samantha from the Linen Hall who we only got in touch with last week, rather belatedly, a bit of a failure on our part there, but we had a discussion just yesterday with Samantha and her colleague Julie, so it's really nice that they're here because we are as you will hear, working with the British Library but it's important to us to be recognizing that there are also Northern Ireland based institutions that are in this field. So the two people who haven't been introduced so far are Chris Church (my colleague)

Church, Chris 17:46

Hi, I'm Chris Church. I know two or three people here. I been involved in the environmental movement like Jeremy since 1980s when I worked at Friends of the Earth, having been in a local group before that. Before that I managed FOE local and regional development and in fact came to a relaunch of Northern Ireland FOE in, I believe 1989. Someone might correct me which involved a rather smart garden party organized by a woman who I think was involved in the coffee trade. I've been back in Northern Ireland since doing evaluation work for Groundwork … projects, and even did Derry's Agenda 21 conference. I've been freelance since 1990 until joining this project, which Jeremy and I kind of kicked off the discussions about, about eight years ago.

Toby Butler 18:56

Hi everyone. I'm so pleased to see you. My name's Toby Butler.
I'm a reader in geography at Royal Holloway. I'm the Principle Investigator or project lead for this. Although I have to say it's very much a group thing and as Chris intimated this wasn't actually my idea, so in fact that the idea for this came very much from the movement, and so it was a huge privilege for me to be approached. My background is really in in history and heritage and oral history, particularly. I started out doing oral history in Aberystwyth in Wales where I did a project as an undergraduate interviewing people that in those days were called hippie settlers who come often from England, but had ended up in West Wales to set up all sorts of really interesting communities and sustainable farming and self- sufficient schemes,

which was a really wonderful kind of universe … which I suppose at 20 years old I discovered. Then I worked on a number of oral history projects, mainly around East London, which where I used to teach a Masters in Heritage Studies. One project which is I suppose perhaps slightly relevant, was in Auroville, which is a huge alternative community in India, which has had a lot of reforestation and all sorts of environmental projects. And I spent some time out in Tamil Nadu interviewing the founders of that community. It's about 5,000 strong, it's really very significant. So I'm not an environmentalist beyond, you know, huge sort of sympathy with the cause, but I'm bringing my oral history skills to the table here.

Jeremy Iles 20:51

OK, so I think we've heard from anyone. I'm just going to give you a brief summary about how the project came about because as Toby said, it wasn't his idea, and it wasn't Royal Holloway's idea.

I worked with Chris in 1983/84 … at FOE (London, head office); that was a brief but very, very formative part of my career.
Then I went on and worked at various other organizations, latterly The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens. I was the Chief Executive, and we had our 30th anniversary in 2010. So we applied …. got a very small grant to run an oral history project of that movement in 2010, but I was not the oral historian. We contracted somebody in to do it, but I had the experience of that and then later on when I left that job. I also ran a very small local oral history project for my local allotment in Bristol, which was celebrating its 100th anniversary (in 2017). And that was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. In 2016, I moved on from the Federation of City Farms and was looking around saying 'what shall I do now'? So I got in touch with Chris, who I had known since the 1980s, and had been in regular contact, overlapping with in various guises over the years. I asked for some friendly advice about going freelance or working as a consultant. To which he replied, "don't expect anything to work as you expect it to. Expect other things to happen". About two days later he rang me back and said, look, "I've had this notion in the back of my mind for a while to do a history of the environmental movement and the activists within it from the early days". Now Chris and me are both in our getting on late 60s, early 70s. We know a lot of people who are older than that and obviously younger people and back in 2016, we were saying, well, it's time we did something before people (die)

and move on, and we lose their personal memories, and we lose their … archives. Chris then introduced Barbara into that mix as well.
So 2016, 2017, we met in various locations in London, in the Barbican, in Didcot, (which is on a railway junction in between London, Bristol and Oxford) and in Bristol. We put together what we thought was a reasonable bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund…but … after a year of discussions and negotiations, they rejected it outright. It wasn't even like, sorry, could you tweak this and resubmit?
It was "go away with your tail between your legs and don't come back".
So we were a bit disheartened!
I think that was early 2018 and I think we all just said, "oh, well, never mind, we'll leave it". But later on, say 2019 XR Extinction Rebellion appeared, magically overnight, it seemed, and it was great. They did a really good job at raising awareness and they did get some interesting stuff done, but there was also a very real feeling that they were somehow whitewashing the history of the environmental movement. There were people saying no one has ever done anything to protect the environment before; and we went, Chris and I went, "Hang on a minute. Yes, we did. Yes, we have been. We've been working here for 30-40 years and so have lots of other people, unsung heroes, and it's appropriate that we - not exactly challenge XR - but actually say there is another narrative. And not only do XR people need to know that, but also the wider world does". So in 2019, we started trying to reformulate this and then of course (Covid) lockdown happened. And in between all that, it was like, well, how on Earth do we run this? How do we get something moving?
But Toby came into the frame through Barbara. Toby got in touch with the British Library, Toby was already had contacts with Royal Holloway and this was all done remotely in lockdown.
A big bid went into the Arts and Humanities Research Council from Royal Holloway, which was successfully approved in 2022. And that's when the project started.
So, the history of it is that Chris and myself are … the people with the lived experience of working in the environmental sector, and we are part of the project team employed by Royal Holloway.
And then you've met Saskia, Barbara and Toby, who will now take up the narrative. And there are two others. Felix Driver who's the Professor and Oli Mould, who is also one of the researchers. So, I'm going to hand over to Toby. He's going to run the next part of the meeting. There will be some questions and answers and I don't know whether we're going to break out rooms. We can have a show of hands later on to

see if we want to do that and then towards the end - we're aiming to finish at 12:30 - we'll ask Miriam to wrap up the session and decide what action points there are from this meeting. Again thanks ever so much to Miriam for taking on this role.

26:35

IJ Let me pass on to Toby and speak a bit later.

Part 2. Introduction to the project and questions

Toby Butler 26:40

OK, so I've basically been given about 10 minutes just to talk about a bit more about the project to give you a better understanding of … where we're at with this. Obviously this is a really, really big topic. The movement is huge. It's a national project which the British Library, you know, were very insistent that it should be. But with the with the resources we've got, it's, you know, it's always going to be a struggle to think conceptually about kind of how on earth you would do a project of this kind of scope. So what I'm going to do really, I suppose, is outline some of the key kind of decisions that we made to make this doable.

So the first thing is the staff. As Jeremy already mentioned, as there's a team of seven of us, most of which are part time, I hasten to add, but this is unusual for a paid staff team, that we do have environmentalists as well as academics, which is, you know, an incredibly fruitful combination. We've got some major partners. So Royal Holloway is the academic partner; the British Library will be holding the archive. I'll be talking a bit more about exactly what that means a little bit later, but they were very intrinsic in the writing of the bid and really did shape quite a lot of the of the proposals, particularly the kind of technical areas of it, to make sure that what we were doing would fit in with their collection. Also Friends of the Earth are an important partner and they're offering infrastructure and facilities, and often introductions, which is just absolutely brilliant.

We've also got the Wildlife Trusts … as a partner, and they are also going to be offering us some facilities and some guidance which is fantastic.

And finally, we got the Royal Geographical Society and we're actually going to be doing some educational work with them to create teaching materials for schools secondary school, both that I think at GCSE and A level and thinking about that, the citizenship process. So they've got a very big teaching online area of their website. They have a huge number of hits from geography teachers, particularly, so it's just

really great to have them on board helping us with that.

OK, So, what are we doing? We're recording 100 oral histories. These are quite large recordings, 50 of them are going to be what the British Library, full life interviews that can range from anything from seven or eight hours up to 14 hours. We think we're going to be averaging probably around 10 hours. So they're recorded over a number of days over two or three days and they start they really very much with "where were you born? And tell me about your grandparents" all the way through to the present: the idea is to is to put experience in context. So it's not just about people's experience of the environmental movement. It is very much about their their entire lives, so we get a very deep sense of where people are coming from.
So these will part of the National Life Stories Collection at the British Library … which was established in the late 70s and it is now a fairly large collection. It's the amalgamation of a number of different projects … several of which are happening and still in progress. They are focused on different kind of industries, so there's one on the on the supermarket industry, there's one on farming, and one on banking. They did have a few interviews with some well-known figures in the environmental movement, but they had long wanted to address this (environmental) area better, and so they welcomed us with open arms. The National Life Story is a collection that is actually supported by a charity outside of the British Library, an independent charity which encourages life story collection. But the collection does sit within the British Library, and the key thing is that this will be part of the British Library catalog, which means that it will be available online, and we are paying for transcripts to be produced alongside the recordings.
In fact, the biggest cost of this project … is transcription, but all of the interviews will be transcribed and therefore there'll be very accessible. Anyone in the world really will be able to not just download the transcripts, but also hear the recordings from the British Library website.

We also have some other public outputs which are a book, which we hope will have a kind of a popular appeal as opposed to something that's more academically focused. There will be a seminar series which will be more academically focused, and we are going to be running a series of witness seminars, which is a little bit like today, really kind of a collective experience with inviting a number of people to talk about a specific theme or possibly an event. And we also intend to do some podcasting and

work with some other media as well.
I've already mentioned the educational materials and there's an emphasis here, I suppose, on, as Jeremy intimated, that this idea, that sort of younger generations are protesters, perhaps might not be aware of what's come from the past, that there might be lessons to be learned from that. And likewise, given that you know almost everyone that we speak to is still involved, I'm sure there's all sorts of inspiration and different kind of areas that will come out of our interviews with younger people in the movement.
So at the moment we are on a big push on trying to find people that joined the movement in the 2000s and 2010s. So we're not just getting your retired or 50 something plus age groups. But of course, those people will have lived throughout this 50 year period will have something to say about all of it. But we're quite keen to contact some, at least some of the people we will interview, being from younger generations.
So, let me tell you briefly about oral history; some of you I'm sure will be very familiar with it. I've got a whole course on this I could give you, but in a nutshell it goes back really a very long time, I suppose in the UK back to Victorian times if you look at things like kind of government inquiries and so on, but actual recorded oral history obviously comes with the invention of the of the wax cylinder, first of all, and then later, after the Second World War, with the invention of the portable tape recorder. So there's been a huge kind of burgeoning of it post war you could say, and a big kind of democratisation of it [due to the lower cost of the recording technology] There's also a lot of work of this kind in folklore studies and a lot of folk museums, including Northern Ireland, and Wales, and Scotland, where there's some very early work, particularly around dialects and accents and linguistics. Then it moved kind of into the historical realm, particularly in the social history area and I suppose just to say, it has quite a kind of broadly 'left' tradition as a methodology, it's often had a kind of active political bent. And it's very big in certain areas like queer histories, women's history, disability history, working class history, black histories. In the early days, there was a feeling that the written record, the written historical record, often didn't feature people's voices, particularly if they were involved in illegal activity such as, you know, homosexuality, which was obviously the case for much of the 20th century. But also from the kind of people that for whatever reason wouldn't write things down or wouldn't publish books about their lives. And so this is a way that we can access information which otherwise wouldn't actually appear in archives.

So the whole idea is that we're doing this from people's perspective. Of course, that's problematic. Of course it's subjective, but we see that as a strength. So we're looking at the movement from the perspective of people that have people that actually been there, worked it, lived it and built it.
And then using the whole life story methodology means that we can give these accounts of a lot of context and we can deeply understand where those witnesses, if you like, are coming from.
I've mentioned that there's the Long Interviews we don't have the resources to do 100 long interviews, so half of the interviews are going to be shorter, but about four hours, something that you could fairly comfortably do in one day, and that also makes it available particularly for very busy people, who perhaps can't spare two or three days, which is a great luxury when we're not paying people do it.
So, that does give us access to people that can commit that amount of time.
And just to say that the questioning approach, it's semi-structured, obviously we've prepared some questions, but it's very much up to the interviewee to shape the interview and wherever possible, we'll let them lead the conversation, so it's very much their own kind of narrative, their own interpretation of events. It's not an interrogative "Jeremy Paxman" style of interview in that respect.
So one of the biggest challenges we are just trying to kind of figure out is this huge scope that we've got with just 100 interviews.
How are we going to do it? So we've just we've divided it up in various ways. The first thing is that we want a broader spectrum of when people first got involved. Across this 50 year period and so we're going to try and as much as we can even things out across those five decades. Secondly, geographically, we'd like to include voices from as broader geographical range as possible. So and we're essentially doing that by focusing on the Four Nations and we will be doing something kind of quite similar in Scotland, and Wales, as well as Northern Ireland.
And the other thing we've been thinking about is the scope of the environmental activism or environmental work. And so we've really, Chris Church came up with this, which I think just for a useful way of thinking about this, is that the environmental work could be split up into three different areas. We've got the protest, the campaign, but also we've got the policy work actually working with politicians and pressing for lobbying and so on, pressing for legislative change. And finally actual on-the-ground projects, …creating wildlife reserves, or and what green infrastructure, or cycle lanes or whatever it is.

So that scope means that we're dealing with paid employees, as well as volunteers, and the of kind of protesters that are doing it outside of their normal work as well. So, we're very keen to get a wide scope in that way too.
We're very keen (and written into the bid) and trying to not just interview the usual suspects. We are interviewing quite well known figures for sure, but we are taking care to try and get to different ages, genders, looking at a mixture of race, ethnic backgrounds, classes and disabilities, trying to go for a broad scope as much as we possibly can … to get a variety of voices and perspectives.
And then the final way that we're sorting things out is considering that the environmental movement has many, many different issues. So these are the six (themes) that we're identifying [climate change and energy, landscape and nature, wildlife and endangered species, transport, waste and recycling, pollution], but we're not interviewing equally in all of these.
There are some that we feel … perhaps have got a slightly shorter history as a little bit more kind of specialised - climate change and energy, of course, is absolutely massive and climate has become, has eclipsed almost everything now in terms of the press agenda at least. So we will be probably doing about, you know, 20 interviews perhaps that area, but maybe something like waste and recycling might have a slightly shorter trajectory in terms of the duration of the campaign and its success, so we might be interviewing fewer people. But generally speaking, we're going to be going through these six areas, landscape of nature, climate change, wildlife transport, waste and recycling and pollution.
So how do we find people?
Well, we've got our own networks and partners and and people on the team who have sense of the lie of the land. For years now they've been asking around and we have been reaching out to people in these subject areas for recommendations, taking snowball approach. There's also reading and academic research, which Barbara Brayshay particularly has been doing some really fantastic literature research in the first year, which was another great way that we could better understand the research area. We are also approaching organisations, and individuals like yourselves, and running workshops like this and as a result people email us suggestions or even put themselves forward, which, by the way is absolutely allowed.
So we have this long list and it runs into hundreds now and then we have the difficult situation of selection which is done by committee to decide who we speak to. Not everyone says yes, it is quite a time commitment, but I would say 95% of people are

ready and willing to do it and we're currently about 30 interviews in.
So, that is that as far as my introduction goes. If you have any immediate questions, please be very welcome to answer them.

What we'd like to do now is open this up to a kind of structured discussion.
So we've got some themes that we'd like to raise with you. You may in fact want to talk about something else, which is absolutely fine. It's very much a starting point, but the point of this exercise is first of all to help us better understand the development of the movement in Northern Ireland and while I'm sure the movement in NI has an awful lot in common with the rest of the UK in in many respects, obviously there is a lot of things which will be distinctive. And so when we're when we're moving into interviewing in Northern Ireland, I'd like my research team to have a really good sense of the lie of the land and what the big campaigns were and so on.
So it'll help us with that background understanding and that might shape our questioning and also the decisions that we make about who we interview; and the other thing is we're we would like some suggestions for names of people to talk to, which of course may well include people here in this virtual room.
And we also hope that we might be the start a conversation with you as a community, for you to think about how will the history of the movement might be recorded over the last 50 years. This is a small and partial project and we will only be able to do, you know, some interviews, certainly not enough.
So is this something maybe that you would like carry on with in some way?
And that's partly why we invited Linen Hall along, particularly for things like personal archives – Linen Hall are able to have a conversation with you about where you might want to leave your personal or organisational archives as they do collect in this area. So it's perhaps a chance for us all collectively just to think a little bit about the historical record and how this will be used and thought about and researched in the future. But I'll leave it there.

IJ **Jeremy Iles** 43:36
Yes, great. So if we have a little pause for any questions and answer, you know, questions from the group here, obviously we've now spoken for quite a long time. But we want to give a bit of space for you to ask any immediate questions.
Anybody got anything they would like to raise?

Bob Brown 44:02

Yes. So this is very, very interesting, I must admit. I'm very, quite excited about the whole potential of it; one aspect that I wonder, could you say are you satisfied that you have enough on your list of potential interviewees of the people who have been impacted by the environmental movement, for example, the politicians, government decision makers and so on?

Bob Brown 44:29

Uh, some politicians have been very damaging to the environment.
But of course, they're being quite a few others who have been very sympathetic, but often they are the recipients of a lot of other people in the and activities in the environmental movement.
Are you satisfied you've got enough of them on your list as target list as well?

Toby Butler 44:48

Well, to be honest, Bob, we've decided to not do that essentially. We haven't ruled out politicians entirely. I'm talking about here about kind of cabinet ministers, that kind of level. We are interviewing Zac Goldsmith for example. I'm not saying that we're not doing it, but essentially, we're looking for people that have got a profile in and of the movement itself. And of course, many of those people did end up being politicians. Some of them have been ... (interviewed by other projects) ....already.
OK, so there are some (recordings) in the in the British Library, you know who have already had their own histories recorded. So for that reason, we excluded some people, but we feel with just our hundred and our remit of the movement, we'd like to focus very much kind of on the movement itself rather than looking at its impact more widely, so it's just it's just kind of one of those tough, tough decisions that we've had to make. Chris, I don't know if you want to say anything more on that point?

Chris Church 45:54

Well, really, one of the things we had to do at the start was think, where are the boundaries? We've had people who've started in a movement who've ended up in local government doing brilliant jobs. There's other people doing brilliant jobs on the environment, in local government who've never come from the movement.

Similarly, there's a few journalists who we might want to think about, but by and large, we feel they are observing or engaging with the movement rather than being part of it. We had quiet a discussion about what how those boundaries look, and they are of course quite fuzzy. But we're very open to ideas, but I mean, there are a whole bunch of other projects that could follow on from this. So we are really wanting to get into the heart of a movement.

Bob Brown 46:41
Yes indeed.

Peter Emerson 46:48
As mentioned we started in the 70s and 80s and of course that was at the time of The Troubles. One of the predominant factors we felt was that all our protests had to be pacifist; and we also worked on having a very good relationship with the police. We weren't anti-police or anti-whatever. And we did normally either with a sense of humour or with a little bit of self-sacrificing, going on a fasting and so on.
And the relationship with the police was pretty good. We even got to the stage where the chief of police - this is going back to Downpatrick and Bishops Court, which James mentioned, the chief of the police in Downpatrick, Chief Superintendent, whatever his name, this was just before Christmas, came to the peace camp and said I think you're absolutely right and he gave me a bottle of whiskey.

Toby Butler 47:46
Wonderful.

Jeremy Iles 47:47
And John Barry.

John Barry 47:51
Yes, just on the back of Peter's comment, you know we can't avoid the elephant in the room in terms of the conflict and the post conflict situation, but just to let the team know that there has been some research and I'd be more than happy to pass it on, based upon interviews, of the ways in which various local environmental campaigns actually transcended the sectarian divide. So the two I'd flag up is the

anti-lignite mining campaign at Ballymoney and Stranocum, but also when the West Link, one of the major dual carriageways here in Belfast, was being extended... that brought together people from both sides of the community on both sides of the road. So there's a way in which the environmental movement was able, even in the troubles, to transcend the sectarian division. [1]

IJ **Toby Butler** 48:41
That's fascinating. Thank you, John.

MH **Jeremy Iles** 48:43
Absolutely. Got a few more minutes here.
Anyone else want to put a question in or comment?

Sacha Workman 48:52
I was just going say there's a sort of a quite a big Venn diagram going on and certainly Mike and I would both would have had a foot both in in Northern Ireland and obviously in England to start with. So there are campaigns that we would have been involved in there. So I don't know to what extent that fantastic network that went out, how you would ... illustrate that fantastic network that's spread out and still is in touch and still cross-fertilizes each other. To what extent will this link up what people where people have been and where they're going is, that what you meant by when you're saying putting in things in context, will you add those sort of things?

IJ **Jeremy Iles** 49:33

[1] Subsequently John kindly provided us with the references:
The anti-lignite campaign in and around Ballymoney/Stranocum was explored in a PhD thesis by Eamon Magarity: Magarity, E, (2009), Local campaigns for environmental justice in Northern Ireland : opportunities for inclusive social capital and collaborative pluralism development in the context of divergent local social opportunity structures. While it is listed on the QUB Library page – it is not available online unfortunately. The other campaign about the Westlink was discussed in the PhD thesis of Manlio Cinelli, who wrote part of it up in two academic articles:
Cinalli M. (2003), 'Socio-Politically Polarized Contexts and Urban Mobilization: A Study of Two Campaigns of Protest in Northern Ireland', *The International Journal for Urban and Regional Research*, 27 (1): 158-177.
Cinalli M. (2002), 'Environmental Campaigns and Socio-Political Cleavages in Divided Societies', *Environmental Politics*, 11 (1): 163-171.

Yeah, I think so. We have discussed this and as Toby said, we've got 100 interviews to do. It's just on the sheer and logistics of it. Obviously, the majority of the population is in England, and the population of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is much, much smaller, proportionately, but that doesn't mean we don't want to interview people who have both worked in England and then, as quite a few of you have said, you've returned to Northern Ireland, and we'll have to make a decision about that; if we are interviewing somebody, are they actually being interviewed because of the work they did in England, even though they now reside in Northern Ireland? Or are they in the Northern Ireland category? I think that's correct.

Toby Butler 50:15

Yes, I'm also going to say that the way the kind of the life history approach goes means that clearly people do move; also from issue to issue and we do ask about networks, we ask about influences.

So when you have the whole body of this work, you know you could search, say, you know obviously this would be searchable by keyword and so you could find connections between these lives really quite easily now which you know which is really exciting and a way that you you couldn't have done even 20 years ago probably when these things would [often] just be a summary, you wouldn't even have a transcript, you know. But it is complex and of course people do move around and so it's quite hard to tie these things down geographically. And so I think you just have to kind of keep quite an open mind really.

IJ **Jeremy Iles** 51:03

OK anyone else?

SC **Sue Christie** 51:27

Just that the same applies for your 6 sectors as well because an awful lot of people have worked across those sectors and both temporally and in different aspects of their lives. So you may get people that can do three or four or five of those and some other people will be concentrated on one. So that will be important when you're doing your allocation of interviewees.

IJ **Jeremy Iles** 51:53

Yeah, well, indeed. I am one of those people because I've worked both in the transport campaigning, wildlife campaigning, city farm movement, you know?

Sue Christie 51:57
Yes.

Jeremy Iles 52:01
So I'm one of the people who sort of actually crossed over from 1 sector to the other.

Part 3. Discussion 1: What are the key moments and turning points in the development of environmental activism in Northern Ireland?

Toby Butler 52:08

OK, so what we've got is just a, well, three kind of discussion points.
It would .. be great if we could sort of perhaps spend sort of 10 minutes on each, but this is the first one.
What would you say are the key moments and turning points of environmental activism over the last 50 years in Northern Ireland? So that's a big, big, area.
But anyone like to pitch in? We could try this chronologically or just just kind of dot around, but it would be great just great for us to know what you feel the really kind of significant game changing kind of moments for the movement.

Jeremy Iles 53:11
John.

John Woods 53:12
And yeah, well, this is what I wasn't actually here for, it happened just before I came back.
And it seemed as though it had been a quite a moment, so there might be others in the room who will know about it, Bob, you probably were involved, Balinahone Bog - that seemed to be a big deal and it was all the rage when I came back and Theresa had been active in it, David Bellamy had been over, and that was seen as a really

significant thing happening. But that's all I know really. So I thought I'd just put it out there.

Peter Emerson 54:11
One of the other moments was the first inquiry - public inquiry - into transport in Belfast, where they rammed the West Link down, and that was very much... well there was a lovely old woman who, when we were protesting and tying ourselves to the inspectors table, there was a little old woman who's shouted out, 'hurray, Catholics and Protestants together'. Yes, that was one of them.
Then there was the cycle-in of which I mentioned 1978 and a few other things, but maybe possibly the Bishopscourt [Peace Camp) and the CND and the link between the anti-nuclear movement and the environmental movement, I think that did have quite a good influence. Thank you.

Jeremy Iles 55:03
OK. Anybody else would like to contribute?

Bob Brown 55:09
I think another one would be the taking by Ulster Wildlife taking the European, the UK Government to court under European legislation for the damage done to the bottom of Strangford Lough by fishery trawling and fishing. The reason why I'm saying that is because they're leaving aside the sort of biological aspects of it all was the fact that the concerns were largely being ignored by the Northern Ireland Government and Fisheries division. But suddenly it was a wakeup call for them that suddenly there was an external agency which Northern Ireland has never properly had, and that was a European agency; suddenly they had to wake up and realize that they were externally accountable and that not only was a very difficult and tough time for Ulster Wildlife and a lot of threats were made in one way or another about their funding and so on. But it did at the end of the day actually mean that the Northern Ireland government had to start considering very seriously their responsibilities for the environment. Now, they're not still not doing enough in my view, but that's another story. It was quite a turning point that we had this external force coming to us and now of course with Brexit, we're still uncertain as to what the outcomes will be.

Jeremy Iles 56:31
OK, I think I've got Sue and Patricia, with their hands up.

Sue Christie 56:37
OK, first of all, there are a lot of things that we thought were going to be major turning points and we got all excited - and then it didn't happen. The one that I would say is that in about 2007, the Assembly did an inquiry into climate change and wrote a report, etcetera. Now there wasn't a revolution, but I think it did start the end of the protest by most of the politicians against climate change. After that report, which included the DUP believe it or not, it sort of was on the upward thing of, yeah, we're not going to object too much to climate change.
But there have been a lot of things, especially in the waste area, where we thought, OK, this is so bad, it's going to revolutionize how we review our waste, but it hasn't really happened. There's still Mobouy [an illegal waste dump in Co Derry that has caused massive pollution] and hopefully that will cause the revolution that we need. But I, we, have the stimulus and then a little bit happens, but then it doesn't seem to actually best realize the full benefit that it should have done, and could have done. So we may not have quite such wonderful revolutionary points as we might like.

Philip Allen 58:00
In the program in the late 80s, there was global issues that came to the fore like depletion of ozone and the scale of rainforest destruction. And I must say, if I remember the media did a good job in in bringing that home to people and a lot of people became aware of these global issues. So it progressed the green movement.

Jeremy Iles 58:26
Yes. And I think Miriam.

Miriam Turley 58:30
And I was just remembering the Ecotopia Camp that happened in the early 2000s in County Clare. That was a big organizing date for the student environmental movement, which was an all-Ireland student movement at the time. And then I suppose there were quite a few galvanising moments that could have potentially radicalized people; things like the Shell to Sea campaign and but there's loads of

those aren't there. Gluaiseacht and the Grassroots gatherings were longer term infrastructural outcomes from these events.

Jeremy Iles 58:58
OK, great. John, you've got your hand up.

John Woods 59:01
Yeah, it's me coming back again. Bob, your point about the action of Ulster Wildlife. Now I'm not quite sure - Declan actually will be the man who's got his finger on the pulse of the detail of all of this, when we - Friends of the Earth - took our various complaints to the European Commission and they started infraction proceedings, particularly over sewage hotspots. And then that progressed to judicial review. And I think the thing that's successful judicial review and I think the turning point may have been, but I don't know the answer, but the turning point may have been that Government is now much more vulnerable to action by NGO's, particularly because in one case that we took, we managed to secure a protected costs order, and this all gets quite technical, but it could be actually really quite important, because it meant that we were able to take action without being constantly under threat of going bankrupt, which was the case before that. So that that's worth looking at in a bit more detail and investigating, I think.

Jeremy Iles 1:00:25
OK, Eric And then we'll move on to the second question.

Eric Randall 1:00:32
Thank you. I'm just kind of realizing that my involvement has been primarily through a project side of things, rather than necessarily through the the development of the movement in Northern Ireland per se, not wanting to underplay the importance of some of the environmental projects that have happened. But I certainly know in the case of the waste management and recycling field that the thing that really changed the game was the realization that European legislation had to be taken a heed of; so that that is what changed the game and there's no way councils would have introduced the kind of recycling services that came on stream without the influence

of European legislation having to follow that. And I'm sure that's the case in a lot of areas.

Jeremy Iles 1:01:22
OK, great. Declan, is your hand up?

Declan Allison 1:01:26
Just a more recent example maybe would be the anti-fracking campaigns following on from, you know, some of the Shell to Sea kind of ideas. What we did see was camps and a very, very strong local opposition and quite an aggressive response by the companies and by the police. But I think that was quite a an interesting turning point and …it showed that there was this grassroots mobilisation happening where people were willing to actually sit for extended periods, months and months on site to protect their, you know, their precious landscapes.

Jeremy Iles 1:02:10
OK. I think we move on to the next question and in a minute.

Sacha Workman 1:02:22
Yes, just to say, I don't know, Sharon, whether you thought Magheramorne [quarry] hading to be a massive waste dump and it got converted into not being a waste dump, and that would have involved an awful lot of local people who never would have involved themselves at all. Similarly, quite a lot of people were involved in Larne, with the salt mine thing.

Jeremy Iles 1:02:49
OK, great. Toby, do you want to go on to the second question?

Toby Butler 1:02:53
So thank you, this is wonderful. Thank you so much. So next we would like to look more at the social and political dimension.

Part 4: How did the unique social and political context influence the environmental movement in Northen Ireland/the Republic of Ireland; and what

was the impact of the Good Friday agreement on the environmental movement?

But you may feel that there's other questions in this area that you would like to discuss. So please feel free to take it where you'd like.

Jeremy Iles 1:03:38
OK. Well, James has got his hand up.

James Orr 1:03:43
Yes, I think I should mention the death of Thomas Niedermayer in 1973 I think it was because, very interestingly and there's actually a film about - such a tragic story, what happened to his family afterwards when he was abducted by the IRA; but the police in I think about 1975 wanted to locate his body, and they set up something called the West Belfast Environmental Action Group and under the guise of like what Keep Northern Ireland beautiful do, like community sort of tidying up projects, they actually had a political agenda and a justice agenda as well, to try and find his body. So I think that was really an interesting sort of moment, as well as reflecting sort of the unique context here because under the guise of environmentalism, you know, a lot of suspicions began to be created, particularly in urban working class communities who I think to this day still have a suspicion of mainstream environmentalism. And also in relation to 1998 and the Good Friday Agreement. I've said this before, and I've probably borrowed this from a wiser person than me. But it's this sort of phrase that keeps haunting me that before the Good Friday Agreement, you couldn't really talk properly about environmental issues in case it detracted us from the war effort. And so environmentalism was very mainstream, was very corporate; it was effectively coopted, I believe, by the system, but since the Good Friday Agreement, you can't really talk properly about environmental issues and the scale of the ecocide within Northern Ireland.
Like if you look at the Ecological Integrity index of Europe, and Europe is the most depleted continent ecologically in the world, if you look at that index, we are up there with Malta as being one of the most ecologically depleted parts of of Europe. And you ask yourself, why has that happened, and I think the conflict had an awful lot to do with it. So, since the Good Friday Agreement, you can't really talk about, seriously, a lot of these issues on in case it detracts us from the peace effort.

Yes, we're open for business guys. Let's bring in the international mining companies that we're doing at the minute. Let's bring in the fracking companies. Locate them conveniently around the border to play one jurisdiction off against another, let's invite the global agrifood conglomerates you know, which are changing the landscape and farming and stuff and let them operate with impunity.
So I think the conflict has a really interesting perspective and to me physically it's manifested on the border: the border is the place where there's a regulatory vacuum where companies and, paramilitaries, former and current, or are able to exploit it. So that's where the illegal dumps are. That's where the mining concessions are mostly located. That's where there's an ammonia carousel where you can't really attribute the source of the pollution to a factory farm in Monaghan or one in Armagh. And there's never been an incident of cross border pollution conviction as far as I know, I could be wrong. And that's where the diesel fuel laundering takes place.
You know the border is the physical manifestation of the conflict, and of course there's virtually no regulation at the best of times, but particularly centred around that. So I do think there's a really interesting story to tell. It's not a particularly good story and it's related as well to the conflict, because that's where the regulators or the police don't really still want to operate. And it's also the place where paramilitarism has evolved into the huge profits from environmental crime that still take place here.

PE **Peter Emerson** 1:08:07
Thank you. I will follow on if I may. Partly because I would like to change the questions slightly and to ask: What was the impact of the environmental movement upon the Good Friday Movement, and on the Good Friday Agreement? And one of the things that we had to do during the troubles was to talk about other problems, to emphasize the fact that Northern Ireland was not the unique little conflict that some people thought that it was and one of the things we did in 1992, for example, was to hold a mini Earth Summit and this was coinciding with Rio and we had Sinn Féin and Unionists and we got them all together and we were talking in a sort of rational way.
And we did the same in 1986, which is just after the Anglo-Irish agreement and we had this huge public meeting, and we were talking about decision making. That wasn't organized by the Green Party, but it was organised by an organization called

the New Ireland Group. But even so, Northern Ireland is a very small place and everybody knows everybody anyway. So on that occasion, again we were bringing people together in a way that the normal political activities don't cater for. And yeah, the the impact I think was was pretty huge.

Jeremy Iles 1:09:26
OK, that's great. Sue Christie.

Sue Christie 1:09:30
Umm, James and Peter have been saying quite a bit and I'm trying to take a slightly different tack on it. We tried and thought that it would be possible for the environment to be the place where which was apolitical, and that we could get everybody talking about it and working towards it. And you know, we never had them in the same room, but we'd have talked with Gerry Adams, we would have talks with Ian Paisley etcetera, etcetera and we thought yes, this is an avenue for us to get there. I think instead of that it's been the opposite because we haven't had an Assembly, because if we do have an Assembly, it's only talking about the sectarian aspects and all the politics has been moved away from issues that are well, they affect people's lives, but they aren't really environmental. We've actually been shut out, as opposed to having that avenue of access in to expand the understanding of an action on the environment. I don't think that that is a permanent problem. I think we might still be able to get that, this is something we could all agree on the need to act, but to date it hasn't been a positive thing.

Jeremy Iles 1:10:52
OK, to Declan. Sorry, John Woods first.

John Woods 1:10:57
And so when I came back in 1994, having been working for Friends of the Earth in Scotland, my, my very strong impression – well not just an impression it was the fact that I was coming into a a country which was not functioning democratically.
I mean it hasn't done ever. I mean, in fact, it was Ireland up until 98, had never really been a functioning democracy. It had been a dysfunctional democracy arguably, that you could say that we're still at dysfunctional democracy, but but that's aside.
But it just didn't function in the normal kind of way, so all the decisions were being

made by civil servants. People felt deeply disempowered. People would say to me, and I came into that slightly naively 'oh we can change this, we can change that we can influence government?', but you can't influence government because they're completely unaccountable and the ministers were appointed from Westminster and civil servants didn't need to respond.

So I think that's that was a really important political context pre-98. I think another thing the bear in mind. Again, it struck me as I came back and was probably one of the reasons I left Northern Ireland in the first place after school, was that the very the innately socially conservative nature of Northern Ireland society. Now OK, lots of people were active in the environmental movement as we've heard. But overall it was and it and remains actually socially conservative society. So I think that that's a kind of a strand to consider.

And the final one, which I think is related to the movement's relationship with government, was how things worked here in, in the movement compared with the experience in Scotland, and for example, and this is the kind of stand-out example, and others in the room be well aware of this, that Friends of the Earth was not part of Northern Ireland environment link and Friends of the Earth as as I experienced it, certainly felt as we were rather kind of out there radical and unacceptable in many ways, compared with our friends and and colleagues in perhaps we say the the well in in a number of other established NGO's.

It's another discussion, but I'd be fascinated to hear this from their point of view, but we certainly we were doing things which were just seen as a bit too radical; and therefore collaboration was difficult. And I think the movement was a little bit fractured in that in respect for a while. So I think it's just another theme to look at.

IJ **Jeremy Iles** 1:13:42

OK, I've got Declan. And then Michael and then we better move on. So Declan?

DA **Declan Allison** 1:13:48

Yes, so the I mean an element of the Good Friday Agreement is this idea of a mandatory coalition and political parties are then forced to designate themselves as either nationalist or unionist, really, if they want to have any position of power; so that I think has kind of cemented the sectarianism, it has kind of institutionalized sectarianism. And so what we see very often in environmental campaigns where there's strong local opposition to a development of a road, or whatever it happens to

be, you know fracking sites, gold mining in the Sperrins, it happens all over.
We see sectarianism injected into the campaign by political parties where sectarianism doesn't exist, so we have cross-community opposition. But sectarianism is ejected into it in order to create division within the community.
So we've seen this just time and time again. So while we have more - or at least in theory we have more democracy, or at least better democracy than than we used to have, we have now also have this cemented sectarianism which perhaps maybe didn't exist in quite quite the same way, albeit that people were killing themselves or killing each other before that and they're not killing each other now, but certainly within community campaigns we see this injected sectarianism that that really doesn't exist naturally.

IJ **Jeremy Iles** 1:15:16
These are the sorts of sensitivities in the Northern Ireland context which we don't understand, so thank you so much for sharing it. Let's just take the next two questions and then move on. If people want to go beyond12:30, I'm sure we can, but let's do that in a second, Michael.

MH **Sacha Workman** 1:15:36
Sorry, it's me again. Just to say that on the Good Friday Agreement, it did feel really positive for a while whenever we got a Green Party MLA in, because of the way our voting system worked, and we did get somebody in there and we did think we had bit more access because the politics became much more local. But then that of course, swiftly moved on.

IJ **Jeremy Iles** 1:16:00
OK. And then just, Peter, before we move on.

PE **Peter Emerson** 1:16:04
Yes, as as we all know, Brendan Behan's famous quotation, 'The first item on the agenda will always be the split'. The arguments or discussions that we had in the 70s revolved around the question.
Well, is the Irish Conservation Society radical enough? And Friends of the Earth was saying no, we have to be much more radical and really get out there. And then the argument moved on, and the question was, well, should the environmental

movement be political and and go into the Green Party, or should it stay outside of politics and keep ourselves pure and simple, or pure and holy, so there were those discussions and yes they were utterly relevant to the in the environmental movement in Northern Ireland.

Jeremy Iles 1:17:01
What have you got left on your questions? Toby?
Is there another one?

Toby Butler 1:17:08
That there is one more yes.

Jeremy Iles 1:17:10
So are people happy to run over? Let's go back to the question.

Toby Butler 1:17:28
OK, so well, you may feel that we've covered this already, but that was looking you know at some quite big picture politics. But what about the local campaigns and the local contexts?

Part 5: How has the movement adapted to local contexts?

And how things have played out? Perhaps at the more micro rather than the macro scale would you say?

Jeremy Iles 1:18:00
Right, Bob?

Bob Brown 1:18:02
Yeah, I think one way that it has adapted and continues to adapt and that is through environmental education and that hasn't been talked about very much this morning. But I think that is an enormous area of potential and I think it has been seen as such, where local schools have been engaged and have done an enormous amount of work through their volunteering, through the education of their kids and so on. And it's been going on for some time, so that the the youngsters who were being

educated and going out on field trips and so on, back in the 1990s are now approaching the point where they are becoming decision makers.
And it was very much the environmental movement that was actually promoting environmental education through the schools, and we were dragging, if you like, We were dragging the Department of Education along with us, sometimes kicking and screaming, to actually help and support this work.

Jeremy Iles 1:19:01
OK, Declan.

Declan Allison 1:19:06
Yes. So I think the legacy of the troubles, the lack of government here, is that we do have a very strong Community sector. You know, people haven't been reliant on government to provide them some basic services. So they've been forced to do it for themselves very often, and that strong community model has, I think, shifted away from maybe some of the issues that they were working on before, such as housing and transport and that kind of stuff into environmental stuff. And so that idea of strong, very locally sided community campaigns working in coalition as part of the network as part of the movement, with allied organizations in different areas that has become a model of the environmental movement here that is perhaps dominated by large organizations elsewhere; it's dominated by very grassroots, very, very local organizations here.

Jeremy Iles 1:20:12
OK. And Chris, I see you've got your hand.

Church, Chris 1:20:15
Yes, Declan has maybe covered what I was going to say, but having watched from abroad it has been the feeling that over the last 25 years, partly because of the paralysis in Stormont and the institutions, but things like Strangford [Lough] and Ballynahone have become kind of rallying points for national but very locally focused campaigns that in a way we haven't seen in England. I may be wrong, but I just quite interested to see how much really has focused on some of those really key local points. But maybe that's just the way the media portrays it.

Jeremy Iles 1:21:03
OK, I'm very conscious there's a lot of people haven't spoken at all.
So now is your chance. Anybody who has not spoken would like to please do so.

Patricia Wallace 1:21:18
I suppose, Jeremy, there's been a few individuals that have done things like the plastic bag woman, and she used to go round with all the plastic bags attached to her, around all the councils and but she was right, you know, people thought, you know what she's doing. But she actually managed - I think we had a plastic bag tax before England and in Northern Ireland, which was quite amazing, you know, so she's in Australia now, isn't she, Miriam?

Miriam Turley 1:21:47
Shirley Lewis? Yes.

Patricia Wallace 1:21:48
So there's people like that that created a movement around them that we need to document as part of the process, I think.

Jeremy Iles 1:22:00
OK.

John Woods 1:22:06
So sorry, Jeremy, the quick quick one. The question again was how did the movement adapt to the local sort of circumstances? Was that it? Because I'm just thinking that that actually, a part of the answer there is the use of the courts, the European Commission and the courts, there's definitely, that's something that we did in Northern Ireland, which wasn't been done in the same way and other parts of the UK. And that's because they had functioning democracies in the rest of the UK and we we didn't, and therefore we felt that the only recourse was to the courts.

Jeremy Iles 1:22:37
We could question whether we have a functioning democracy in Westminster!

John Woods 1:22:41
Quite well, yes, things have changed.

Jeremy Iles 1:22:43
Yeah, I mean, everything's relative in their context. James?

James Orr 1:22:50
Yeah, I'd like to interest in John, you say that because I was going to make a related point on litigation. What we have seen, because of the constitutional vacuum and the dysfunctionality within government and not having a government, what the environmental justice movement has done is is dug deep in the communities. That's one strategy that Declan has mentioned; and the other strategy is that what we're seeing now in the last 10-15 years is a huge rise in litigation, not necessarily from NGOs, apart from some cases, like those that Friends of the Earth takes, but from individuals as personal litigants, so there is probably 50 or 60 cases in the last few years that have come through the system that despite our cost protection and it's still prohibitively expensive to get the court. So individuals are in High Court, you know, virtually every week now, fighting local environmental cases on their own. And I think that's probably quite unique to Northern Ireland, possibly within Europe and what's happening is a network of peer to peer support that that we're seeing again exactly because of the point that John made that, you know, where do you go when you don't have a government to lobby or to campaign with or and even if you do, if it's if it's totally effectual. So that that rise in community or individual environmental litigation is incredibly worthy of study.

Jeremy Iles 1:24:25
OK.
Just to keep moving along … if you're happy Toby … we will move on. I mean, this isn't a sort of selection process, but if there's anybody who we should particularly interview, this is a good opportunity for you to, as Toby said, nominate or suggest names like you've just done. Patricia, the bag lady who might be a bit beyond our

scope to go to Australia. I would hope we could do that remotely, but as Toby said, you could nominate yourself as well if you wish. If there are any names, please throw them out as now or email me later or whatever you wish. We've also said what next for the at this work in Northern Ireland and as I said, we're pleased that the Linen Hall are sitting in and listening.

[Chris Church then summed up the recommendation and selection process]

If any of you wish to have a further conversation, I'm sure Chris and myself are in any other members of the team would be more than willing to do that.
If there's a local initiative that comes out from yourselves that you want to work with the Linen hall on, and if there's anything we can do to help and advise, give our limited expertise on that basis, we'll be absolutely happy to do so.

I would just again reiterate our thanks to all of you for taking part and giving you opinions so succinctly and you know thoughtfully and I'm just going to hand back to Miriam and ask her to do a closing round. So thank you.

Patricia Wallace 1:31:50
Could we have an idea of the timeline, Jeremy, what's your timeline here? How long will you be giving yourself to complete the interviews?

Jeremy Iles 1:32:05
Oh, sorry. Yes. The project runs at the current time till September 2025 and as has been said, we've carried out about 30 interviews. That doesn't mean they've all been finished, because there's a lot of admin' work that goes on once, so the interviews have actually taken place. There's an awful lot of further work. The transcription, then checking the transcription etc. So that's the other 70 interviews carried out during 2024 because of the time it takes then to process those interviews and the project is due to end, as I said September 25.

Miriam Turley 1:32:50
And Michael has asked, will the final interviews be video or just audio?

Jeremy Iles 1:32:56

The main interviews are audio only, and as Toby said there'll be a transcript and the transcripts are verbatim.

Peter Emerson 1:33:24
As we all know, the COP conference that in Glasgow was kiboshed if that's the right word by India and China. Exercising the veto, the COP conference don't like majority voting because obviously you can't get consensus by majority vote. So then they then resort to a process which they call consensus, but it does give countries the right to veto, which of course is the very opposite of consensus and and decision making is, if only in the COPs, is so fundamental to the environmental movement, I would argue, but it was also majority voting was a major cause of the troubles here. The right wing coalition in Israel is a major cause of the conflict in the Middle East. And Brexit, that was a multi option vote. The fact that it was a done by a majority vote for some major part of that problem as well, and it goes on and on and on in countless conflicts and decisions being taken all over the planet. And I would argue that maybe the environmental movement should look at decision making as well as everything else. Everything is connected, as they say.

Miriam Turley 1:34:45
Thank you. And so do people feel happy and clear about the process to recommend interviewees to the to the project.

Patricia Wallace 1:35:45
And the other thing Miriam was we discussed and memorabilia and just while we've Samantha here from the library, I know that you take some archives, but if people have posters or that kind of thing with the (Linen Hall) library, be interested in having them.

Samantha McCombe 1:36:03
Thank you, Patricia. You've teed me up nicely to make our pitch and and our appeal. So and just for those who maybe don't know, we have been collecting the Northern Ireland political collection started with one civil rights leaflet in 1968 and we now have some 350,000 items. So much so that we're actually just about to start a scoping study for a second building and for our political collection so that we can showcase it. And we're hoping to have a research centre in an oral history repository

as well. So that's some exciting news, but we are so interested in community archives, organizational archives, individual archives, and we always welcome and material about instances of activism. It is really what the community, you know, archives by and for the community is my catch all phrase. But yes, we love, we are continuing to collect the living collection and we love placards, we love posters, Flyers, all of the ephemeral material.
I do not doubt that all of you have a wealth of material that you have.
You have gathered up over the years and and we do have some fantastic archives and collections that it would be a pleasure and a privilege to add to. So if you have a material that you think would be of use, please do consider the Linen Hall as a repository so that it will be available for future generations.
When I said at the start, we were founded in 1788. You know, I always think I can't think about today or tomorrow or even next week. I think I'll have to think 100 years from now, so it's so important to capture all of the incredible work that's been done in all of these areas and through all of these things. And you can just drop us an email in the first instance. It's info@linenhall.com. Go on to the website.
Look at some of the work that we've done and the digitization that we've been able to do. Our Extraordinary Women resources is a great example of some donations that came in.

Miriam Turley 1:39:05
Thank you.
And yeah, does anybody have any any final comments or closing remarks that they'd like to contribute?

Toby Butler 1:39:15
Only to say thank you all so much. I can't tell you how valuable this has been.
It it's and so many of you have attended, all my dreams have come true today.
So thank you. It's been absolutely brilliant. Absolutely brilliant. Thank you.

Miriam Turley 1:39:32
Just to say thank you so much to everybody for coming. And yet, to privilege to see so many of you and to many of you that I've known over my years in the environmental movement as well. So … nice to see everybody and thank you to

Jeremy and the team for coming along and explain their project and they look forward to seeing what's coming out of it.

- Ends -