



## **Environmental responsibility**

*A break down of the Environmental Responsibility album.*

### **Martin Reynolds:**

The Creative Climate project is much more concerned around the issues of caring for the environment and offering different ways of conversing about the environment. The climate change debate explores the sort of accountability side of environmental responsibility more and the eco-tourism project in Bwindi National Park, and the video around that, explores both those kind of dimensions of environmental responsibility, as well as the kind of space, the political space, the institutional space in which those two dimensions of responsibility are enacted. And the Creative Climate initiative is essentially a web-based project initiated by Joe Smith, Senior Lecturer in Geography at The Open University, for enabling people to deposit their stories and to talk with each other, to converse with each other about climate change, and about the natural world itself, and what they are doing at different levels and individual levels, at collective levels, national government levels, as well as at global levels, and it will attract, we're hope it to attract groups from all over the world including Amerindian tribes in South America, and so forth. And to provide that kind of space so that it is a creative exercise rather than an exercise in sort of positional bargaining and defending particular positions. It's a space in which different levels of expertise can talk constructively with each other from different disciplinary backgrounds, it's a space in which the public can also engage with expertise, and I think it shows a good example of responsibility in terms of exploring different ways of engaging with nature in the natural world, and people's perceptions of nature in the natural world. Moving on to the climate change discussion, there is an emphasis on the need more for greater regulation and accountability. We have three speakers involved in this discussion. Tom Burke, who's the Founding Director of a group called E3G, Tom has also had a lot of experience as policy advisor to Government, and he's been a Director for the Green Alliance as well. Then there's Dave Frame, who is the Deputy Director of the Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment at the University of Oxford. And Charlie Kronick is the Chief Policy Advisor for Greenpeace. So these are three people who are coming from, at the environment, at climate change, from quite different perspectives although they do share between them the understanding that climate change is very real and needs to be addressed. It's interesting that the debate took place on the day of the inauguration of Barack Obama and so there is a sort of sense of optimism around there which was relayed during the conversation, they made remarks about Obama's inauguration in the hope that that generates, and it's interesting, I think, that the idea of regulation is now coming back into favour with regards to the global economy with the global recession, and certainly Barack Obama, as well as many other western leaders in particular, are calling for greater levels of regulation. Tom Burke echoes that kind of concern with relation to environmental issues as well, that we do need to have greater regulation, greater accountability, and I think accountability and regulation is a thing that runs through the whole discussion. This is used as a resource to illustrate the accountability side of environmental side of responsibility. And finally, going on to the eco-tourism example, this is a fabulous bit of filming actually, made by a lady called Belinda Kirk, who was the Director and narrator on the film, and it traces the history, a very rich story of the development around Bwindi National Park in Uganda, and the eco-tourism in particular, and it's a story that really begins around the late eighties with a concern around the conservation of the Bwindi National Park area, the forest area, and particularly the mountain gorillas, and at that particular time the conservationists were more focused on drawing up a plan of action which focused on the caring for the forest, caring for the wildlife, the gorillas in particular, and this was expressed through the idea of the fortress conservation. But as with many conservation initiatives like this it actually alienated large parts of the population of the people actually living in the area, so in the early nineties there was a move towards what they call 'integrated conservation and development' approach, and this was an approach where they put people back into the policy around conservation, and part of that integrated conservation development approach involved a project around eco-tourism, so enabling the local communities to develop an industry, a tourist industry, centred

around the protection of the mountain gorillas. And the story of the Bwindi National Park is fascinating in a lot of ways. It invites students to really explore for themselves the different dimensions of caring for the environment and the natural world, and being accountable. Bwindi is a kind of microcosm, if you like, which encapsulates all of the kind of issues, agencies, politics around environmental responsibility. So by looking at this video we would expect students to have a greater appreciation of how things are a lot more difficult, and how issues of environmental responsibility are not quite as simple as sometimes they seem on the surface. From the three examples I would like students to take away a sense of inquiry, a sense of general interest about alternative ways of dealing with environmental issues, an appreciation of there being other ways of conversing about nature and the natural world. I'd like them to take away an appreciation of different perspectives, of the way in which perspectives from the business sector, from the government sector, from expert consultancies and academics, and from perspectives of activist groups, whether they're involved in direct action or indirect action, can actually meaningfully talk with each other about environmental issues in a constructive way. And I think finally what I'd like to, like students to take away with them is a sense of the importance around context in dealing with environmental issues, and the context is always changing, and so it's no good being kind of dogmatic about the way in which we feel environmental issues should be addressed, and by whom, at one particular time because the dynamics are forever changing and particularly with, that comes out with the eco-tourism video. So a sense of tolerance, of humility and wonderment, and curiosity I think, is what I'd like people to take away with them.