

# Just Forests submission on RTE's performance in communicating climate change to the public.

February 12, 2014

## **Background to this submission:**

The RTÉ Audience Council is undertaking a project seeking to examine the role of public service broadcasting in Ireland in communicating the topic of climate change to the public. A research report examining RTÉ coverage trends in relation to this issue has been circulated to a broad range of individuals and organisations in Ireland with an interest in climate change communication. The Audience Council is seeking responses to the report and recommendations in relation to RTÉ's coverage of issues linked to climate change. Responses to this form will be collated and submitted to the RTÉ Board and other key RTÉ personnel in March 2014, some of whom will subsequently discuss the report and responses to it with the Audience Council.

Please note that this form will close for new submissions on Monday February 17th, 2014.

In the interests of openness, ideas, suggestions and recommendations in relation to RTÉ's climate change coverage submitted via this form will be associated with the names and institutional affiliations of respondents when collated and presented to the RTÉ Board and other personnel. In the event of broader publication on the Audience Council website, an opt-out option is provided below to disassociate your name and affiliation from your contribution. We believe that this approach offers the best balance between transparent contributions to this project whilst encouraging respondents to be candid. All queries relating to this form and the project as a whole can be addressed to Audience Council members Mark Cullinane and Clare Watson at [rte.ac.climate@gmail.com](mailto:rte.ac.climate@gmail.com)

## **What are your views on RTE performance in communicating climate change to the public?**

For the past 25 years since founding Just Forests in 1989, I have often felt very agitated by RTE's poor performance in communicating climate change issues and related natural resource decline issues.

As an active NGO trying to increase the general public's knowledge and considering the significance of climate change and associated matters Just Forests has had very minimal pick up of our press releases reported on by RTE - with the exception of Mooney Goes Wild.

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**Please outline any specific recommendations you have with regard to how the communication of climate change on RTE programming may be improved and expanded.**

We are all global citizens now, and our awareness of international affairs including climate change has never been more relevant to examining and understanding our position in the world. We consider it vital that Irish broadcasters like RTE view it as part of their remit (to a greater or lesser extent across media and platforms) to bring staff and viewers/listeners increased awareness, understanding, knowledge and tools to make sense of their position, and that of their country, in the world.

This can be done by developing new current affairs type of program dedicated to climate change issues with invited speakers with climate-related backgrounds taking part. There is no shortage of expertise in Ireland on this matter. The Irish public needs to be kept informed on how they are to cope with future climate change matters and RTE are in a great position to provide the necessary information/education.

Do you have any further comments in relation to the content of the research report and any of the issues raised in it?

The global population passed 7Billion in 2011 and is set to rise to over 9.3Billion by 2024. Natural resources and environmental goods and services are the backbone of all economic development. Climate change is seriously impacting those goods and services. We strongly feel that RTE has an obligation and a responsibility to ensure programming accommodates and reflects this reality without any delay.

In December 2013, Just Forests made a submission to the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) which we believe compliments this particular matter. Our Just Forests submission to the consultation process on the Draft Strategy Statement 2014-2016 of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) is available to download on our website at: <http://www.justforests.org/public-submissions>

We fully agree with the 'Research Findings' by Mark Cullinane and Clare Watson, for the RTE audience council and congratulate them on their great work.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.