MY PHILANTHROPY

A collection of interviews with high-profile givers from the worlds of politics, broadcasting, sport, music, art and business.

Featuring Jon Snow, Monty Don, Eddie Jordan, Dame Anita Roddick, John McCarthy CBE, Jeremy Irons, Harvey McGrath, Sir Trevor MacDonald OBE, Martha Lane Fox, Darcey Bussell, Rosa Monckton, Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson, Jodie Kidd, Jane Asher, Bob Wilson, Kristin Scott-Thomas OBE, Ian Hislop, Baroness Julia Neuberger DBE, and Colin Greenwood.

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INTRODUCTION

In a decade of enormous change for the voluntary sector, individual giving has taken centre stage. And it is likely to become more important, particularly in an age of spending cuts. The good news is that across the world philanthropy is on the rise. The value of the Sunday Times’ Giving List of 100 of the UK’s wealthiest people increased by 21% in 2013; and donations from the 231 ultra-high-net-worth individuals in the paper’s Rich List reached the second-highest peak in 12 years.

However, it seems that philanthropists are giving away a smaller proportion of their wealth than in previous years. And among all UK donors, there are signs of a weak culture of giving. NPC’s 2013 report, Money for Good UK, highlighted that less than half of donors think people should donate to charity if they have the means, and this figure is likely to be even lower among non-donors. We need to work to build a culture of giving, to embrace and applaud the generosity of those who choose to give away their wealth to improve the lives of others.

At NPC, we believe that we should celebrate giving: to encourage individuals to give more and, importantly, to be open about it. With charities facing increasing difficulty in bridging the gap between growing demand for their services and falling income levels, we hope that now more than ever donors will look to support organisations that have the greatest possible impact on the lives of those in need. We need more people to share why they choose to give to a particular charity—and not one of the other estimated 180,000 in the UK—and what it means to them.

In this collection, nineteen high-profile individuals introduce the charities they feel most passionate about, and the reasons they first became involved. For some it was a personal experience or the chance to give to a local organisation that formed the initial connection; for others it was the opportunity to offer their expertise or the result of a lucky encounter. Several have chosen to align themselves to a particular charity, while others have donated to more than one cause. Here, all our philanthropists share what they have learnt, and offer their thoughts on how charities could make the giving experience more rewarding.

We collected these philanthropists’ stories between 2006 and 2012 for NPC’s magazine, Giving Insights, but this is the first time we have brought them all together. A strong theme emerges that one of the great joys of giving is that it is fun and rewarding, as well as supporting the causes we care about. Since NPC was founded in 2001, we have worked with many individuals to help them at every stage of their giving journey: from choosing a cause and identifying effective charities, to evaluating success. This continues to form an important part of our work.

We hope that reading these stories of the rewards giving can bring will inspire others to think about how they might use their resources—whether that’s money, connections or expertise—to change lives for the better.

Rachel Findlay, Head of Funder Effectiveness, June 2013
One of the charities I feel most passionate about is…

The New Horizon Youth Centre, which is a day centre for homeless and vulnerable teenagers around the King’s Cross area of London. The community-based centre runs counselling, accommodation advice, art, sport, employment prospects, life skills programmes and IT training. These are designed to prevent social exclusion and build self-esteem.

I originally became involved in this charity because…

I was sent down from university for partaking in a sit-in in the 60s and applied to run the centre which had recently been founded by Lord Longford. I am still chair of the project today.

I have been particularly impressed by New Horizon because…

Its professionalism and targeted, holistic structure have resulted in highly effective outcomes for its young people—whether that be jobs, accommodation, life off the streets, reconnection with family roots, relationships with probation officers or improved mental health. It has a very good reputation, with no need for marketing, and a large volunteer base.

An issue that New Horizon could teach other charities in its field is…

Having a focus so that it’s clear what its purpose is and—for those who work there, its beneficiaries and its supporters—how they fit into it. The danger with very large charities is that unless they are well evolved they can lose focus. In addition, some large organisations claim that they can solve (or even eradicate) a specific issue just by throwing a lot of money at the problem. In reality their approaches need to be more preventative and educative to be successful.

Charities can make the giving experience more rewarding by…

“It’s important for donors to know that they can create change.”

Providing unobtrusive feedback, such as a simple email celebrating the project’s achievements, which may inspire further giving. Trying to establish active relationships with donors can be a win-win situation. It’s important for donors to know that they have some power and can create change, and equally when donors specify what they’re interested in this can encourage the charity to dream up innovative ways of doing things and drive organic change within the organisation.

One of the most satisfying elements of giving my time and money to charities has been…

I have a portfolio of charities, which includes charities of different sizes focused on different causes. I find it just as satisfying and uplifting to sit on the board of the National Gallery wrestling with the problems and the opportunities facing such a superbly resourced and brilliantly run organisation, as I do with my involvement in New Horizon. But the commonality of the two is that both have a very clear focus on what they are trying to achieve, whether that be delivering the people’s art back to the people or giving homeless youngsters much needed self-esteem leading to a job and a roof over their heads. What is key for donors is how easy it is to understand what a project does and how far you feel a part of it by donating your time, your contacts or your money.
The charity I feel most passionate about is …

The Fork to Fork foundation, which works with small groups of persistent offenders, the majority of whom are heroin or crack addicts. The charity enables these young people, who are often mentally and physically ill, to work with the soil and with animals to produce food. What they produce is mainly for their own consumption and is shared with their families and neighbours, but it is also sold on in box schemes and at farmers’ markets. The ultimate aim is to tackle the related issues of substance abuse and crime by getting people back into the workforce and reengaging them with society.

I was originally motivated to start this charity because…

A few years back, I discovered that the tiny town in Herefordshire where I live had one of the highest per capita heroin use rates in the UK. At the same time, the more research I was doing on food and its impact on behaviour, the more outraged I became by the government’s refusal to acknowledge the problem of rural drug use. I had always dreamed of winning the lottery, buying some land and educating rural youth with skills that they could put back into the community whilst earning a living. I then realised that I didn’t need to win the lottery to make a difference. With only £10,000–15,000 you can kick-start these ideas with matched funding from other organisations.

The most beneficial aspect of the charity for its users is…

Getting the produce sold in box schemes or in farmers’ markets is so beneficial because it makes the individuals deal with the community face-to-face. The important thing is about contact, responsibility and accountability. But even more simply, a lot of the benefit is the fact that, three times a day, the participants sit down and share a meal together. It’s radical for them to eat food that they have grown. Through my contact with Thrive—a charity that uses gardening to help change the lives of disabled and disadvantaged people—and my own experience of depression and the therapeutic process of gardening, I strongly believe that connecting individuals in a social context with growing things, and the weather and the climate, is very healing.

An issue that Fork to Fork could teach other charities is…

To start slowly. This is why we are only running a pilot scheme at present. We quickly realised that, to be a success, we had to engage with the local community on their terms, particularly given the hostility towards the people we were trying to help. This meant running discussion groups and steering committees before starting up. My involvement with Thrive also illustrated that, if you work with individuals, you can work on a very small scale.

One of the things I have learnt about supporting charities has been…

To prioritise which charities to support. The hardest thing is turning down charities that approach me, but I can’t support everything. I don’t have the resources (time or money), but more importantly, it would dilute what giving is to me. I therefore only support charities that are local to me and have personal meaning to me. I also believe that, if possible, donors should have at least one charity that they spend time with, in order to reinforce the personal significance.

“Sometimes giving someone responsibility for one seed tray is enough to make a difference to that person’s life.”

Summer 2006, Plum Lomax
The charity I feel most passionate about is…

CLIC Sargent—a charity that improves the quality of life for child cancer patients and their families by providing specialist carers, homes, holidays and grants for families facing financial hardship. Families are often forgotten during their child’s illness, and yet the stresses and strains placed on family life by childhood cancer are immense. A significant number of marriages break down as a result. CLIC Sargent’s home-from-home support allows families to stay close to their children during treatment. This is a vital service because, for some types of cancer, treatment can last for many months.

I originally became involved in CLIC Sargent…

About ten years ago I was asked to sign autographs and bring in goodies for CLIC, which stands for Cancer and Leukaemia in Childhood. (This was before the merger with Sargent Cancer Care last year). Being naturally inquisitive, I decided to find out more about the charity’s work. The quality of the nursing and the support offered to families is just incredible. These true professionals caught my attention. The fact that I could make a difference to the lives of these children and their families made a huge impact on me. So my wife and I got more involved.

An issue that CLIC Sargent could teach other charities is…

A successful charity in terms of fundraising is really driven by its patrons and board members. Charities need people with imaginative brains to encourage wealthy people to part with their money. CLIC Sargent has some great names supporting its work—including Cherie Blair, Gary Lineker and Barry McGuigan. The charity also organises some really inspiring and fun events. Charities aren’t going to make a pile of money running a garden fête. They need events that are much more cleverly thought out. It’s also vital for charities to make it fun for people to give their time.

An aspect of giving I would like to see more of is…

Although a lot of people I know are hugely generous, you often see the same group of people at all the various charity events. I would like to see this circle of people expand. Instead of waiting to reach the age of 50 or 60 before thinking about charitable giving, people should start donating to charities at the age of 35 or even earlier.

One of the things I have learnt about supporting charities is…

To have some discipline with my budgeting. Each year I allocate a budget for my various activities—a certain amount to spend on gambling and a certain amount to give away. I would really like to see more people setting aside a certain percentage of their annual income for charity. People should become more conscious about their giving rather than randomly buying some unwanted gift at a charity auction. Work out what really affects you—whether it’s firefighters, cot death or cancer—and structure your giving accordingly. It’s a whole lot less painful if you plan it first. You don’t miss what you don’t have. I find my giving hugely rewarding, but, as with my gambling, I need to be careful about planning what I spend—and not to give too much away!

“I prefer to focus on one charity and really make a difference to that organisation, rather than be scattered around supporting many charities in a smaller way.”
Body Shop founder, Dame Anita Roddick throws a lot of energy into BODY & SOUL. The charity supports young people in the UK affected by HIV and AIDS. It is one of many that receives backing from The Roddick Foundation.

The charity I feel most passionate about is...

BODY & SOUL is a UK-based charity that supports children, teenagers and families living with or affected by HIV. There are over 64,000 people living with AIDS in this country and it’s one of the four most serious infectious diseases, but people just don’t care about it. This charity’s focus is on young people affected by this disease. The charity has a holistic approach to help people cope with their illness. They use all kinds of therapies: healing by touch, music therapy and group therapy. BODY & SOUL helps to fight the stigma and prejudice that still exists, like the young people you hear about who take 25 different pills a day to cope with their illness but feel they need to hide it from their friends at school.

I originally became involved in the charity when...

We’ve been linked for a long time. The Body Shop Foundation helped BODY & SOUL with funds through its volunteer programme and my husband, Gordon, and I have continued this support. I like the idea of giving while you’re living: you can get your hands dirty, get involved and be part of the issues that you care about. Gordon and I like to find grassroots leaders who are working on the issues that matter to us. You need to get to know the people you are supporting and have a belly-to-belly relationship.

I have been particularly impressed by the charity because...

I love it when you have dynamic, young people who have a sense of responsibility and who care about so much more than what they’re wearing. BODY & SOUL is quite entrepreneurial. It is run by young people who got together when they realised that there was a big hole that needed to be filled. They’ve changed peoples’ lives and it’s inspiring.

The most interesting aspect of my involvement with the charity is...

I support the charity in several different ways. Mentoring is a major part of it. It’s great to be able to say to young people: ‘I’ll mentor you and you can ring me up any time and ask any question’. It’s a good way to be part of things, but you’ve got to be available. The second thing is the money we’ve given them. I see that as my function because when you’re wealthy you have a responsibility. And then finally: networking, networking, networking.

What donors really want is...

What we love is consistent communication. There’s a notion in some charities that you hand over a cheque and that’s it. I think it’s important to keep in touch on a personal level. This emotional relationship with donors is really important. Every brand in business is looking for it and these charities have it—they just have to get better at using it!

Where my philanthropy started was...

It was my teachers who first taught me about it. One teacher would get us to clean out a schoolroom every Friday for the ‘knights of the road’ (we weren’t allowed to call them tramps). Then I read a book about the holocaust, something printed in the 1950s, and that got me going. As a teenager at 15 I used to sell kisses for charity, but that was a cool thing to do anyway. Now, I find that the more informed I get on an issue, the more I continue on the trajectory towards action.

Anita Roddick sadly passed away in 2007, but her philanthropic legacy continues through the work of The Roddick Foundation.
The charity I feel most passionate about is…

The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture is a charity that provides counselling and other support for survivors of torture. When I came back from Beirut in 1991, people would come up to me in the street and say: ‘Welcome home’. It’s very different for the clients of the Medical Foundation—they haven’t come home, they’ve been forced into exile. Also, I had all sorts of support handed to me on a plate. Most asylum seekers don’t. That’s why the Medical Foundation is important. They have counsellors to sit down and talk with people…they also provide medical care to help people get over the physical stresses and strains of torture, as well as practical, legal advice.

I originally became involved when…

“Asylum seekers are often seen negatively, as scroungers. Yet they are actually a resource.”

I went to a launch party for Brian Keenan’s book [Keenan and McCarthy were held hostage together] in the Medical Foundation’s offices. That night I met some of the charity’s counsellors, caseworkers and a few clients and they were asking me: ‘How are you?’ I had been home for about a year and I usually gave the same glib answer. Then it dawned on me that these people really knew what I was going through. They were really saying: ‘I’ve been there too’ and it was hugely liberating. Right then I realised they were people I could do business with.

What’s been really rewarding is…

As a patron, I sometimes host local events and it’s great when people come up and tell you afterwards that you’ve made them change their mind. In our society, asylum seekers are often seen negatively, as scroungers. Yet they are actually a resource. They have a lot to offer us, not least for their insights into human nature—what we can survive, how we cope, our ability to laugh.

Something I’ve found difficult is…

I find it very hard to listen to the stories of some of the Medical Foundation’s clients. These truly ghastly things have happened to them. They may not know where their families are. Some of them have seen their children raped in front of their eyes. At the same time, watching people rediscover their voice is amazing. When I came home, everybody wanted to hear my story. Nobody has ever told me they didn’t believe my story or looked for inconsistencies in my account. But that’s exactly what happens if you are an asylum seeker in this country.

One thing I’ve learnt about supporting charities is…

I decided quite early on to focus mainly on one charity…I felt that if I became involved in the Medical Foundation, I could use my personal experience. I could say: ‘Look, this is what happened to me—imagine what it’s like for others whose experience is much worse than mine?’
Jeremy Irons doesn’t shy away from unpopular causes. In the early 1990s, the actor was one of the first celebrities to wear an AIDS awareness ribbon. For the last ten years, he has been a patron of The Prison Phoenix Trust.

The charity I feel most passionate about is...

The Prison Phoenix Trust, which teaches yoga and meditation to prisoners and prison warders around the UK. It’s such a simple idea and relatively cost-effective because most of the teachers are volunteers.

I first got involved in the charity because...

I like to support local charities and the Prison Phoenix Trust is based near Oxford, where I live. Many years ago, I met Sister Elaine McInnes when she was starting to build up the trust and she asked me to become a patron. I was keen to find ways to be hands-on with the trust as I don’t like just being a name on a letterhead.

Working with prisoners is important because...

I’m a rogue and a vagabond so have a natural empathy for prisoners! No seriously, I always think there’s a very thin line between being in prison and being on the outside—there but for the grace of God, and all of that. It’s clear that poor reading and writing skills, appalling childhoods and child abuse have a huge part to play in landing people in prison. When you meet prisoners you realise that many of them are damaged and also deeply ashamed.

The charity changes lives by...

The Prison Phoenix Trust gets to the root of the problem. It turns the negatives of prison life—the spare time and isolation—into a positive. Helping prisoners practise yoga or meditate can help them build up their sense of identity and deal with the anger that often led them to prison in the first place. It can also bring a sense of calm.

The most interesting person I’ve met through the charity is...

Sister Elaine is one of those people you’re grateful to have met. She’s a Catholic nun and a Zen master and is non-judgemental, has a depth of understanding and wisdom that is so rare. I don’t do yoga or meditate much myself, but I did get to one of Sister Elaine’s meditation sessions once, which I loved.

I support unfashionable causes because...

They’re just the causes you should be supporting: I like to be a flag waver and to stir up trouble! But once a charity has got under way, I tend to take a step back... I feel embarrassed when I’m put in a situation that I feel I am not qualified for and I don’t like it. I’m a do-er really.

One thing I’ve learnt about supporting charities is that...

Sometimes the solutions that charities offer are really simple... I like what Margaret Mead said about not doubting whether a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. It is the only thing that ever has.
One of the charities I feel most passionate about is…

The Integrated Education Fund (IEF) in Northern Ireland. Education there is still effectively segregated. The first integrated school was set up in 1981 by some pioneering parents, and IEF was set up in 1992 to coordinate fundraising to support the development of integrated education in the province. Why does this require funding? Because the Department of Education in NI will only take over the funding of new schools once they have met enrolment and growth criteria, creating a need to find private funds to ‘incubate’ new integrated schools through this front-end period. There are now 50+ such schools in the province, with a target of at least 10% of school places by 2008.

I got involved in the charity because…

Those of us who have experience of Northern Ireland feel passionately that one issue you have to address is generational change, and you do this by bringing kids together at an early age. They need to know that those of a different religion don’t have two heads! Integrated education helps to sow the seeds of significant and lasting social change. You can’t just legislate for community cohesion, you need to address problems at the grass-roots level.

The most interesting person I’ve met through the charity is…

Baroness May Blood grew up on the Shankill Road in Belfast and worked in a linen mill, developing an involvement with the trade union movement. May was instrumental in helping to deal with conflict between communities from 1968 onwards, and was a founding member of the NI Women’s Coalition. She’s a remarkable lady. Amongst other community initiatives, she has been responsible in recent years for driving forward the integrated education movement.

My involvement with the charity has included…

In addition to assisting with funding, I have tried to widen awareness of the need for, and the needs of, integrated schools in NI. I have also given the charity some thoughts on policy—such as how they might lobby government. Until recently, politics in NI wasn’t a question of ‘have your bins been emptied regularly and is the education provision satisfactory?’ It was polarised along religious/Republican/Unionist issues. Hopefully we’re now moving into a phase where more normal civil society is reasserting itself, and locally elected representatives will be driven by what their constituents want—amongst other things, provision of more integrated education.

What I like about the charity is…

I like the fact that the charity is building capacity for societal change. I’ve always been interested in charities where you can get serious impact from your funding. There is a lot to be done, and I encourage IEF to be more ambitious. Local businesses in the past seem to have been reluctant to support it for fear of putting their heads above the parapet, although this may be changing with the new political architecture. But IEF has been around for a while and the cause is appealing—so why is it’s profile so low, and why do these schools only constitute 6% of the school population?
The charity I do most work for is…

The Depaul Trust, of which I’m President. It is a homeless charity focusing on some of the most disadvantaged young people in the UK. It gives them the strength, the information and help they need to make something of themselves. In an interview with Prince Charles he said that in societies which some might describe as primitive, there is a transformation from childhood to adulthood often marked by initiation ceremonies. We don’t have those rites of passage—young people are often dumped from one stage to another and not surprisingly some of them fall on difficult times. The Depaul Trust positions itself just at that point where people are having problems in making that transition from childhood to adulthood. Along with providing permanent homes for these youngsters, the charity also trains them in basic skills such as budgeting, cooking, personal hygiene and how to open bank accounts. Real, practical skills that might sound mundane, but are very important for vulnerable young adults.

I selected this charity because…

When I started doing News at Ten, I’d be driven home across London and see people sleeping rough. I was astonished how these people under the arches near Waterloo and Charing Cross could survive. Somebody at that time asked me to be involved with the Depaul Trust and I was ripe for the picking. Homelessness was an entirely new phenomenon to me. Where I grew up in the West Indies there are enormous extended family networks. I never saw homeless people as a child.

One thing I would tell other donors is…

Something I borrowed from Desmond Tutu. He said that ‘however little you do, you could probably help to make a difference’. You don’t have to sell up and go and live with a charity to help. I do the Great Ormond Street Hospital carol concert each Christmas—they always thank me at the end but I really haven’t done a damn thing. I get a night off work, get chauffeur-driven there, and announce some carols. But if that helps such a fantastic organisation raise more money, that certainly makes me feel better.

The role of television…

Can be very important. Whenever we do news pieces about famines in Africa or suchlike the switchboard phones go beserk with people wanting to help. Once during the Bosnian war a reporter decided not to focus on the latest fighting that day, but instead did a piece about a young guy who was playing football when shrapnel exploded and he lost an eye. At the end of it, a lady called and said: ‘I’m 75 and have had a good life, and wondered if there was a way I could donate part of one of my eyes’. Being cynical journalists, we thought it was a prank call, but it turned out to be real. I’ve always said give people a chance and their true nature will come out. I’m a great believer in the extraordinary depths of human kindness that exist in this world.

“One terrible thing about journalism is that we dart in when there’s a crisis but we never go back to see the consequences.”
Martha Lane Fox, the dotcom entrepreneur and founder of Lucky Voice private karaoke, recently set up her own foundation, Antigone. She tells us why she funds a charity that helps people on death row.

A charity I feel passionately about is...

Reprieve, of which I’m a trustee. It’s one of the charities I support through my foundation. Reprieve gives legal representation to people facing the death penalty, who often don’t have anyone else representing them. I love being associated with Reprieve because, along with its incredible work, it is filled with such amazing people. Most of the lawyers Reprieve supports are under 30 and work in phenomenally difficult circumstances. For example, there’s an incredibly brave American woman who is one of the only women to go into Guantanamo Bay—she goes in for weeks at a time. To be involved with people like that is humbling.

I care about this issue because...

I’ve always been passionate about prisons. I watched a documentary on Feltham when I was very young that had a huge influence on me—I also hate small spaces! I’m actually more interested in how we set parameters around what we think is wrong and how we treat people as a result of this, rather than prison itself. In fact I nearly went into the prison service to become a prison governor. I got onto the Home Office Fast Track scheme, then thought ‘what are you doing? You’ll last 20 minutes before they fire you!’ So I decided to play to my strengths, and try to change things from the outside.

I think technology could influence charities...

One reason I’m so passionate about Antigone is because it gives me the opportunity to see how technology helps some of the charities we’re supporting. Money is only one small part of my work with charities, and increasingly I hope to be able to give more of my time. When you come from an entrepreneurial background there are things you do instinctively, like building networks or linking people up—and I strongly believe in the power of the web to champion causes.

I don’t find it hard to choose which charities I support...

I’ve got quite a clear sense of what I’m passionate about. Without sounding cold hearted, I don’t worry when I say ‘no’, because if I say ‘no’ with cash, I might say ‘have you talked to this person or that person?’ The things I am focused on, around criminal justice, nursing, heath and education, provide a fairly broad base to start from.

I find philanthropy rewarding on two levels...

I like the fact that relatively small amounts of money and time can have a big impact. Some money I donated to Reprieve paid for an investigator, who got DNA evidence that exonerated the only minor left on death row in the US, who was also mentally ill. As a result, the High Court made a ruling that it wouldn’t put minors on death row, which is an enormous achievement. On a more intellectual level, I’ve also enjoyed thinking about how you can move pieces in a bigger social agenda. It’s interesting to try and help charities think more strategically about how they can use technology.
Darcey Bussell—the Royal Ballet’s former principal dancer—tells us why she feels so strongly about a charity that’s saving the world’s rainforests.

The charity I feel most passionate about is…

Rainforest Concern, which is a UK based charity that targets biodiversity ‘hot spots’, particularly the dense rainforests in South America. They don’t just buy land, they work with the local community to preserve the forest and species that live in it. They work with local organisations to help people living close to the forests find ways to earn income which doesn’t have a negative impact on the forest.

I chose to support this organisation because…

I’ve always been interested in nature and I’m passionate about saving oceans and forests and lakes. When you have such an amazing world, it’s important to save it. In my own lifetime the world’s rainforests have been halved. This means that we’re losing species at an incredible rate. It makes me want to get out there and put a big brick wall around the rainforests— anything to stop it from happening! If people knew more or could see for themselves they’d probably say, ‘okay, I can do something about this’.

I’m surprised environmental charities are so under-funded but I guess that’s because…

We’re more inclined to focus on things that are on our doorstep and to think in the short term. Because we don’t live near rainforests and we don’t see what’s happening, we focus on other things. If only we could think in the longer term to protect future generations.

The most satisfying thing about supporting Rainforest Concern is that…

Unlike dancing, which is a selfish art, this is not all about me. To know that you’re giving something back feels good. As soon as you have kids, you want to make them understand and appreciate their surroundings. It’s also about slowing down. As you get older you realise that it’s not necessary to live in the fast lane and I realise that I only need to be happy—and for me and my family to be healthy.

My tip to donors is…

If you do a lot of research and are passionate, you can do so much more. If I concentrate on one charity, I can learn more and know what I’m talking about. That way I feel that I’m making much more of a difference and doing a better job.

Organisations like NPC fill a gap…

There are people who are wealthy and want to give, but they don’t get the right advice. People may know an awful lot, but they might not know about charities and how to give constructively. NPC can help to show them how giving money to charities can work for them.

“I think that saving the rainforests will probably be the best thing we can do for our children.”
A charity I am passionate about is…

The Bulgarian Abandoned Children’s Trust, which was founded last year. A friend made a film about Mogilino, one of the many children’s institutions in Bulgaria, which was shown on Channel 4 and the BBC. It caused uproar because no-one knew how bad the situation was over there—in fact Bulgaria has the largest number of institutionalised children in Europe. Children are left lying in their cots and never lifted up, they die from neglect and starvation and lack of human contact. Many are put in these places because they are blind or deaf, or just have a cleft palate. I’ve just returned from another visit, and in one institution I saw children who hadn’t left their room for eight years—had never seen the sunlight.

The charity works by…

One thing it runs is a Baba (granny) programme for the young children. We’re focusing on putting people into these institutions, and we are working with local NGOs. On my last trip I also met the mayor of Sofia and asked him about his policy of these institutions and on adoption laws. In Bulgaria for a child to be put on the international adoption register he or she has first to be rejected three times by a Bulgarian national. But many of these children are Roma children, so don’t even get the chance to be rejected once by a Bulgarian. The mayor invited me to go back to meet the head of his party and the head of social affairs to help them write a social affairs manifesto, so I’m going to do that.

I first became heavily involved in charity work when…

I probably wouldn’t have done all I do if it wasn’t for Domenica, my thirteen-year old daughter who has Down syndrome—she really put me on a different track. When Domenica was diagnosed, I was thrown in the deep end and someone suggested I contact the charity KIDS. One of the services it offers is a home-learning service. Someone will turn up at your house every week, and teach you how to care for your child. No matter how good your family are or your friends, there comes a stage when you want a professional to come in and say ‘this is what you do’. Domenica’s tongue was lolling out and she needed to be able to control it so that she could begin to talk. I was told to put Marmite around her mouth to exercise the tongue—little things like that. It gives you something to aim towards and it puts you back in control.

My message to donors would be…

Give more time. Diana (the late Princess of Wales) was a pioneer in that way. There was a moment in her charitable life when she resigned as patron from over 150 charities, because she wanted to be more hands-on. I’d say choose a few, immerse yourself and try and understand the ethos of what the charity is about. I do have a problem of getting very emotionally involved, I suppose because of Domenica and because of the nature of the work I support. That’s why it’s also important to have organisations like NPC that can hover over and observe where the most pressing needs lie.

If I could wave a magic wand and change one thing…

I’d like to see is everybody recognising that we share a common humanity. In the Bulgarian institutions, where children are treated like battery chickens this doesn’t exist. We need the ‘carers’ to see themselves in these children. I showed Savannah the film of Mogilino, and afterwards she said: ‘If we lived in Bulgaria, Domenica would be in one of those places, wouldn’t she?’ I told her that she would, and Savannah replied ‘Well Mummy you have to keep working then’.

Rosa Monckton is best known for heading up both Tiffany & Co. and Asprey in London, as well as for her close friendship with Diana, the Princess of Wales. Here, she tells us why she feels passionate about a charity supporting abandoned children in Bulgaria.
Which charity do you feel most passionate about?

The Laureus Sport for Good Foundation is a bunch of 42 sports people, most of whom are retired, who all believe in sport. In all sorts of different ways sport changed our lives, so we believe in the power of sport to do good things. We support a number of projects between different communities; for example, in Israel and Palestine, we bring children together to meet each other. It’s amazing—you stick children in a sports team together and they have a great ability to learn and get on. We also supported a similar project in Northern Ireland.

How have you found being a trustee—has it been a steep learning curve?

I have been involved in other things at this kind of level. I find it really interesting that you have a direct impact on projects, whether it’s deciding what we are going to fund, or looking at how we fund. Because we now fund 68 projects, it’s fascinating what we can learn from each project. When you are in a fortunate position and have money, it’s very easy to just say to people who approach you ‘Yes, we’ll give you some money’. But it’s important to be involved and think about what would make the projects work and be sustainable.

What has been the most satisfying aspect of your work with the foundation?

Definitely the opportunity to visit the projects. I’ve just come back from Rwanda and that was life-changing. I think that if you’re sitting looking at an application form, you can score it, and it can be helping a lot of people, but a key part will be going to see the project. We try and build up a really strong relationship with those we support, so that if they are having problems, they’ll just give us a call. We have a couple of guys who spend a huge amount of time in contact with the projects, to get to know them and see what help they need.

How did the trip to Rwanda come about and what role does sport play there?

We support the National Paralympic Committee (NPC) and the Rwanda visit was a trip linked to that. It was amazing. We arrived mid-morning and were chatting to the guys who run the project, and then an hour later we’re at the genocide memorial—it’s just so powerful. Seeing things like that is really important because it makes me more motivated to do the less exciting stuff, like pushing paper around and balancing budgets, when you know you’re making a difference.

What advice might you give to others looking to get involved in philanthropy?

You don’t need to give massive sums of money to people to make a difference. Whatever your interest, there are lots of foundations out there who can help you give your money away well. Most foundations are very good at spending money, because they have to be. You can get more added value from working with a foundation than running a project yourself.

If you could change something in the world, what would it be?

People’s attitude to disability. I’ve travelled all over the world and have seen very different reactions to me as a disabled person. I spent time in China last year, and there people couldn’t actually believe I was married and had a child. It’s ok for me because I’m quite vocal and can fight for my rights, but an awful lot of disabled people can’t. If that’s too big a thing to change, I would want to enable disabled people to fight for their own rights.
Which organisation do you feel most passionate about and why?

If I had to pick one, I would say Greatwood. It cares for ex-racehorses which would otherwise have been abandoned and uses them to help children with special needs and learning difficulties. I have always been passionate about horses, so when I was approached by the charity, I was immediately taken by the idea. Once I saw the cutting-edge work they do with the children, I was blown away. I have ridden with autistic children who are in their own world with zero communication at the outset. Put them on a horse and it is remarkable, they open up and will have a conversation. It is an amazingly powerful experience. I let the organisation put my donations towards those areas where they think it is most needed. Recently, they have used the funding to convert one of their barns into a classroom.

Why did you choose to set up your own foundation?

I have done a lot of work with charities over the years, but I wanted to become more proactive. Instead of spreading myself out and attending lots of glitzy balls or making ad hoc donations to charity auctions, I decided I needed to focus my efforts and so set up the Jodie Kidd Foundation. My foundation focuses on three charities that I’m passionate about. Greatwood, because of my love of horses and the amazing, therapeutic effect horses can have on people. The Monsoon Trust because of my love of India and the trust’s fantastic work in improving access to education and healthcare for women and children there. And finally the NSPCC, specifically ChildLine. I started supporting them after visiting one of their centres and being so moved by the stories from the counsellors that I decided I had to get involved.

How do you work with the charities you support?

I’m hands on. With Greatwood and the Monsoon Trust I’ve been involved since the very beginning, and its been so rewarding to watch the organisations develop. I’m not a funder who just sits back and says ‘lets do an auction or a dinner.’ I love actually seeing where my money has gone. I’ve just returned from a trip with the Monsoon Trust to the slums of Delhi, where I saw the amazing impact of their education and immunisation projects. I was moved by how much they have accomplished and how much more work there is to be done. I can’t wait to raise more funding for their work, and of course, go back again to see the difference in person.

What advice would you give to other donors?

Setting up a charitable foundation is not easy. It is a serious commitment, but you just have to stick with it. It took me almost a year and a half to get my foundation set up and it was a lot more expensive than anticipated due to legal fees, website development, marketing and events and efforts to raise awareness. It was frustrating at times, but once I get my mind on something I’m committed, and I knew that at the end of the day I was going to make a huge difference. The whole experience has been amazingly rewarding, difficult and fantastic and I would do it all over again in a heartbeat.
Jane Asher is an actress, writer and businesswoman, with a cake and sugarcraft business in London. She is President of The National Autistic Society, Parkinson’s Disease Society and Arthritis Care.

Which charity do you feel most passionate about?

There are many causes I feel passionate about, but the three I give most time to are Parkinson’s disease, arthritis and autism. I’ve worked with the National Autistic Society (NAS) for nearly 30 years now. My interest began when I went to a charity tea party at the House of Commons and met some children with autism. I knew almost nothing about autism then, but I learnt from their carer, Lorna Wing, a highly-respected pioneer in the autism world, that it was not only a complex and potentially devastating condition, but also fascinating. I was immediately hooked. Thirty years on, I’m now President of the NAS.

What’s the most rewarding part of your work with the NAS?

In our units there are many older people with severe autism who were only diagnosed very late, and it’s heartbreaking to see their intense difficulties. Nobody should have to grow up with that level of confusion and distress. Nobody should have to grow up without the sort of support that will enable them to lead lives of dignity and happiness.

So the most satisfying part for me is seeing the NAS reach people with autism at a stage where they can be given the chance to reach their potential.

What does being president of the NAS involve?

I most enjoy visiting our schools and units and meeting people with autism and Aspergers, because I get to see the results of our work and continue to learn. But I know I’m most useful when it comes to fundraising, getting press coverage, and fronting campaigns and appeals. It’s very satisfying to be able to use whatever skills I have as a performer to speak on behalf of those who may have severe problems with communication. Inevitably, my work with charities also involves plenty of cake-related activities, like charity teas and bake-athons.

Is there anything you’ve found difficult about working with charities?

I’ve sat as a trustee on various boards over the years, and there’s no question that a good chair is key. As in any ‘business’, difficulties usually come from not having the right person in the job. My day-to-day contacts are with the fundraising, marketing and PR departments, and, again, it’s people that really matter. Good people in these areas are like gold dust, they’re so important. It’s also crucial, obviously, for charities to have terrific chief executives, and they need to be paid what they’re worth.

What advice can you give to other supporters?

It’s important not to spread yourself too thinly. I’d love to help everything I possibly could, but if you pop up endorsing every other cause, you become useless. Also, whether you’re promoting autism, cakes or a new play, the public very quickly sees through the use of a name with nothing behind it, so the most important thing of all is to support something in which you have a genuine interest and involvement.
Which charity do you feel most passionate about and why?

The Willow Foundation, the charity that my wife Megs and I founded just over ten years ago in memory of our daughter, Anna, who died of a rare cancer aged just 31. From humble beginnings in our spare bedroom, it is now a national charity that annually provides 1,500 uplifting special days for seriously ill 16 to 40 year olds. These can be anything from a hot air balloon flight to a premiership football match, pop concert or family break—whatever the beneficiary chooses. These special days give people living with life-threatening conditions a break from the stresses of hospital visits and treatment, a chance to feel normal, confidence and the opportunity to create precious memories.

Why did you decide to set up your own charity rather than giving to an existing one?

During the six years that Anna was ill we found that there were lots of charities for children and for the elderly, but none for the age in the middle when people should be at their prime, building a life, a career and a family. There was a huge gap in the support on offer for 16 to 40 year olds, so it made sense that we tried to fill it. When she was ill, Anna said to her Mum and I that her illness would not only try and destroy her, but would try and destroy us, but it didn’t have to be that way. She knew that a positive approach to her illness was crucial to her treatment. Anna was a nurse so understood illness and its impact on the lives of both seriously ill people and their loved ones.

What’s the most rewarding part of your work with the Willow Foundation?

Without a doubt it is the countless photos and the most moving thank you letters we receive. People tell us the same thing time and time again; the special days may be short but their impact is long-lasting. There is the young woman who, after her makeover, had the confidence to leave the house for the first time after she lost her hair in chemotherapy. There are the two boys who watched their Dad in the last days of his life talk to a premiership footballer from his hospice bed; their pride was immeasurable and will provide some positivity at such a formative point in their young lives.

What are the challenges of being a founder and celebrity figure for a charity?

It does make it harder to step back from the charity—something I need to think about as I approach 70! The personal story behind the familiar face from TV and football is interesting to people. However, I also recognise that we need to reduce the charity’s reliance on me and enable Willow to stand out on its own. To help with this we are building our group of celebrity patrons, many of whom have firsthand experience of special days. But we are also starting to build independent evidence of the impact of special days which we hope will mean we can access a whole new range of supporters who are motivated by the impact, perhaps more than the association with celebrity.

What advice would you give to other people thinking of setting up a charity?

It’s a strange word to use when you’ve lost a daughter but these ten years of Willow, and Anna’s five year journey with her cancer have been the most enriching years of my life. But it has been tough and all consuming. My advice would be to really understand the investment of time, energy and sacrifice that is required to make a charity a success; employ a good team who really feel the cause and its values; and try to maintain some balance between work and play.
You’ve been a patron of Hope and Homes for Children for over 5 years now, what led to you getting involved with the charity in the first place?

Charities have often asked me for support and this one, Hope and Homes for Children, just stood out for me. The idea of a family being broken up through war, economic disaster or because of AIDS, with children abandoned in an institution really affected me. We have all heard about the orphanages in Romania for example. Hope and Homes for Children campaigns vigorously to shut down or to obtain pledges to close many of them, placing children in local and welcoming families. I come from a big family myself and was the eldest daughter of five, and I also lost a parent when I was young. I remember feeling the anxiety of wondering what would happen if I lost the other one and I was left in charge. Hope and Homes for Children is a useful and effective charity and we can all relate to the importance of being a family unit.

What does your work as patron involve?

I try to give my time usefully. The main thing I can do is keep talking about the charity’s work. It’s vital to show the terrific work that is being done and the changes Hope and Homes for Children brings to the lives of terrified children. The charity is well-known and well respected in the countries where we work, but we need to raise our profile in the UK.

What’s the most rewarding part of your work with the charity?

Seeing the charity’s work first hand really confirms my faith in the whole project—it gives you the hope that something can be done, and that’s rewarding. I find the grassroots work of the charity appealing, and I think the fact that they’re working on the ground across a whole range of countries is amazing. I went to visit some of their work in South Africa a few years ago and I’m hoping to also go to the Ukraine with the charity soon.

The founder of Hope and Homes for Children, Mark Cook, is absolutely passionate about getting children into a safe and caring environment. I remember him telling me the story of how he found a bombed out orphanage in Bosnia with children hiding in appalling conditions in the basement because everyone else had run off to save their own lives and families and left them.

“"It is difficult to face up to these facts but as responsible adults it’s so important that we do.”

Is there anything you’ve found challenging about working with charities?

One of the most difficult things is getting over the guilt of not having enough time to do more. It can also be quite overwhelming emotionally. I was very shaken on my visit in South Africa, the problems are so relentless. Over there the main issue is children who have lost their parents to AIDS. The idea of having to care for your six brothers and sisters when you’re 12 years old is just terrifying. Yet when I saw the work of Hope and Homes for Children there I saw hope. The charity sends in ‘aunties’ who help with teaching everyday chores, dealing with authorities, helping with homework and importantly, can offer advice when needed. For example, many of the houses have fires in the middle of the room and there are lots of accidents each year when young babies fall into them. The helpers can teach the young head of a family how to avoid dangers that to an adult are obvious, but to such a young and overwhelmed person are not.
Which charity do you feel most passionate about?

I’m very keen on a charity called Railway Children. A few years ago, I made a film in India about a train journey, and found myself accosted by runaway kids who live around train stations. There were always boys trying to shine my shoes, and I came across one boy on a trolley who had elephantiasis in both legs. It was unbelievably grim. Even the thickest hide gets pricked with conscience at some point.

So I asked the film’s producer, a very nice Indian bloke, what I could do. He told me about a really good charity that sets up night shelters for these kids, with separate rooms for girls and boys, where they get refuge and education. It’s so much better than giving the kids a few rupees just to make yourself feel better. I’ve continued to support Railway Children since then. They are very good news, in India and around the world. One of the great joys of this charity is that they’re a very ordered organisation, which makes sure that money is used effectively.

What is the most rewarding aspect of your charitable work?

It makes me feel less guilty sometimes. And it’s great to get reports and see how my money is being used. When one of the girls’ shelters went up, Railway Children sent me fantastic descriptions of exactly what happened to the girls. The detail was amazing. They were very keen to make sure I didn’t think they were wasting anything. They are a really good charity.

Do you have plans to get more involved with any of the charities?

I’m not hugely keen on people telling each other how much they do for charity. It’s Harry Enfield’s fault. One of his DJ characters spent the whole time saying, ‘I do a lot of charity work but I don’t want to talk about it,’ then didn’t stop talking about it. He was a very funny character, and he had a lesson for us all.

Is there something to be said about role models being positive and encouraging about giving?

If it worked, I’d be all for it. But sometimes I’m just suspicious of it, especially when someone talks about their great charitable giving, and they’ve given £300 when their annual income is over £5bn. I’m afraid the widow’s mite is the story that I tend to stick with.

Have you found anything difficult about being involved with charities?

As someone in the public eye, every day brings an unbelievable sack load of charities asking, ‘Will you do this? Will you do that? Will you make a speech here? Will you launch our project?’ It’s overwhelming just how much charitable endeavour there is and how much seems to be needed. You can’t do it all, and some charities never understand that.

Do you have any advice for other potential donors?

Everybody get involved. It’s fantastically rewarding, and the more you know about what’s happening with the money you give, the better it is. You feel the possibility of change.
Which charity do you feel most passionate about?

I feel most passionate about the charity we set up in memory of my parents—the Walter and Liesel Schwab Charitable Trust. It’s there to support young refugees and asylum seekers to get access to education. My mother came to this country as a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany and she got lots of help from a whole variety of people of all faiths and backgrounds. I find it quite horrifying how awful we often are to refugees and asylum seekers. We set up the trust so we could give grants to young people.

Have you found anything frustrating?

I sometimes think that there shouldn’t be as many charities as there are. I’m a believer in charities merging, although I know it’s difficult. I’m also worried about the number of charities that have effectively become deliverers of government services. I don’t think there’s anything wrong with being a not-for-profit that delivers public services, but it does make the charity ‘spark’ quite difficult to find. For me it isn’t the same as doing something really creative as an independent charity.

How does your faith influence your charitable involvement?

My faith says that you have to give away 10% of your income, for the sake of tzedakah, loosely translated as social justice. So that’s a strong driver to try and even things up and make things better for people. Then there’s my family history—hence the interest in refugees and asylum seekers, and the interest in accuracy about data. I hate it when people lie about the numbers of people coming into the country, and regard all asylum seekers as a threat.

You were the volunteering champion for Gordon Brown’s government. Why do you think volunteering is so important?

Volunteering is brilliant for charities, for their beneficiaries, and for the volunteers themselves. People need something to do, and volunteering gives us some meaning in our lives. Charities that have volunteers giving their time to make things happen feel different from charities that are only staffed by professionals. I’m not saying that volunteers can replace professionals—usually, they can’t—and they are not free. They need to be managed, supported, trained and thanked.

The Coalition Government is calling for a ‘more giving society’—do you agree with the Government that this requires a culture change in the UK?

It does, but the problem is that government can’t tell people to give to charity. It can create a culture where it’s attractive to give to charity, and there’s certainly more that it could do on that front. Government can set a lead, but we also need to see more leadership from people who earn a great deal of money. If the chief executives of the banks give away large chunks of money, then people a bit more junior than them are likely to do the same. If that’s the culture, people will do it.

Do you think everyone has a responsibility to give to charity?

I think everyone has a responsibility to give both money and time. Even if you’re poor, you can probably give a little bit, and the wealthy should give proportionately more. You can’t just say it all has to be done by the state, because it doesn’t.
How did you get involved with Children’s Radio Foundation (CRF) UK?

I was lucky enough to be introduced to the Chair of the CRF UK Board in Oxford where I live. When she told me about the work the charity does across Africa, I was struck by the essence of the project: using radio to empower.

CRF has such a high impact at a relatively low cost. In South Arica, where the project started in 2006, it broadcasts a radio programme every Saturday on the South African Broadcasting Corporation. The programme gets over 300,000 listeners a week and the broadcasts are distributed internationally to over 7,000 listeners on Soundcloud. There are now 35 projects in six countries, serving as a springboard to a wealth of wider opportunities. That’s one of the greatest things about CRF: it is not a means to an end, but the beginning of something brilliant.

How does the charity empower young people and change their lives?

Each project is community-focused, but the basic premise remains the same. By developing skills in radio production and journalism, young people are able to find their own voices and, more importantly, find a platform from which their voices can be heard. We have just started a new project in Liberia with Unicef. High school students are trained in radio production to create interviews and audio debates, which are then uploaded and shared with students in other parts of the country. Through partnerships with local community radio stations, the sustainability of this project is ensured.

What is the most rewarding aspect of giving your time or money to charity?


“I am learning how the minds of our future generation work, and I want to help others find and gain from the magic of radio.”

CRF launched its UK branch last month. The aim was to help grow the profile of the charity and instigate a new conduit for funding. It was an honour to be asked to speak at the launch, set within the beautiful All Souls Church in Oxford, the site where Oxfam was inaugurated. It’s funny, even though I’m in Radiohead I’m not used to public speaking, so it wasn’t easy. But I managed to pluck up the courage to speak to the 150 guests and hopefully helped spark further interest. I was so moved by the films that were played on the night that everything I’d planned to say went out the window.

Has anything been frustrating or challenging?

Everyone who I’ve worked with at CRF UK has been so informed, committed and great fun, but currently the entire UK Board runs on generosity alone. Frustrating is too strong a word but, like any small charity, running on a tight budget is a challenge. In Radiohead we didn’t really ever do the “toilet circuit” as it’s called, so maybe I’m now paying my dues!

What advice would you give to other patrons or donors?

Finding something you’re passionate about is an obvious one. I’ve never got behind a charity before, but I totally understood CRF straight away and I think this made it attractive for me. It is easy to describe what CRF does and even easier to say why I am so passionately involved. Also, it’s important to find a charity that you think you can bring something to. From the age of five I can remember listening to the radio with my mum, and looking back now I think that had a profound effect on the course my life has taken.
TRANSFORMING THE CHARITY SECTOR

NPC (New Philanthropy Capital) occupies a unique position at the nexus between charities and funders, helping them achieve the greatest impact. We are driven by the values and mission of the charity sector, to which we bring the rigour, clarity and analysis needed to better achieve the outcomes we all seek. We also share the motivations and passion of funders, to which we bring our expertise, experience and track record of success.

Increasing the impact of charities: NPC exists to make charities and social enterprises more successful in achieving their missions. Through rigorous analysis, practical advice and innovative thinking, we make charities’ money and energy go further, and help them to achieve the greatest impact.

Increasing the impact of funders: We share the passion funders have for helping charities and changing people’s lives. We understand their motivations and their objectives, and we know that giving is more rewarding if it achieves the greatest impact it can.

Strengthening the partnership between charities and funders: Our mission is also to bring the two sides of the funding equation together, improving understanding and enhancing their combined impact.