

West Dartmoor U3A

Meeting Report for November 2019	Prepared by: David Jowett
Speaker: John Tunnicliffe	Subject: Anthropocene II, We're already there

The term “Anthropocene” has not been universally accepted by Earth scientists for the present geological period, which has long been known as the holocene, but the speaker told us that Paul Crutzen, a Dutch Nobel Prizewinner and expert on climate change, had suggested that a new name should be given to the period during which human beings have been the predominant force affecting the planet. He proposed “Anthropocene”, analogous to holocene, pleistocene and the rest, which refer to the most recent periods, but containing the element *anthropo-*, used in many scientific terms to denote our species. Several other eminent scientists, including Professor Peter Wadhams, author of the book “Farewell to Ice”, have concurred in supporting the new designation.

The speaker’s main point was that the drastic effects of man’s activities on the Earth’s climate, and ultimately its geology through rises in sea-level, were not just predictions but are with us already and in some respects are probably irreversible.