Duration: **0:17:45**
Date: **24/06/2020**

START AUDIO

Interviewer: Cool, so yes, I was having a look at your diary, but I guess we can spend maybe 20 to 30 minutes in this discussion, and I will make some questions, and then if you want to comment on anything, or if you want to send me anything later on, you can send me by email.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: If we could start, maybe, can you tell me how familiar you were to repairing and reusing stuff prior to this exercise?

Respondent: There had been plenty of thing I've had a go at repairing, and so on, in the past. I'm more inclined to take things to pieces and try and build things from the components, with more ambition than success in most cases, but…

Interviewer: Can you give me an example of that?

Respondent: Trying to think of an example now. The recent projects that I've had have been rather more straightforward. At one stage, I was trying to make an electromagnet to make fixed magnets, so I had taken to pieces various bits to get some copper wire

and so on out, but I didn’t have a suitable power supply for it. I didn’t have a suitable power supply for it, and I know enough, I know my level of ability enough to stay the hell away from the mains, so things like that. Then, I end up kind of distracted.

Interviewer: What is your general level, your level of technical skills, in relation to…?

Respondent: My theoretical knowledge is better than my practical knowledge. I've got backgrounds in physics and mechanical engineering both to undergraduate degree levels. I've got some postgraduate, which included looking at some medical devices, but much more from the theoretical level, and I've done some practical electronics but not a huge amount, and I've got something of a workshop with primarily woodworking, and I've done a welding course, so various assorted bits.

Interviewer: Nice, and can you tell me a bit about, what was the object you were trying to repair?

Respondent: I figured that the easiest option would be to try and show you. The screen is frozen for me, so I’m hoping you can see me still, but…

Interviewer: Yes, I can see you.

Respondent: Yes, so it is an inspection camera that I got from Lidl, so the device with the- oh, yes, I didn’t put the batteries in it, did I?

That'd be why, but it was working when I got it, but the clips at the back, one of the springs, that one, was lose, and they are supposed to be pinned on two sides, but it was only pinned one side. When I used it on one occasion, I think the spring had connected. There was a cross connection between the batteries, and it was overheating quite dramatically.

It is one of these things that I had around, and I never got round to- by the time I identified that it was a problem, the convenient warranty had passed, and it was one of these things, that the value of the item was just at the wrong place for it to be worth the headspace to try and get it sorted. When the link came round, it was, "Let's see if I can actually get that blasted thing working".

Interviewer: Yes, but you said you didn't use it much, right? You noticed it had broken, but then-

Respondent: I tried to use it a couple of times, or I used it a couple of times, and then once it overheated, it was the, "I don't want to use that again in case it overheats," so I put it to one side to deal with later.

Interviewer: What did you use it for?

Respondent: I can't honestly remember what I initially used it for, but after I got it fixed this time, I used it, because I was running Ethernet cables around the house that we are in, so it was drill a hole through the wall, or into the wall, and then I can use the

inspection camera to see if there are any electrics, or anything nasty behind there.

Interviewer: Got it.

Respondent: I used that pretty much the day after I'd got it sorted, in order to do a job with a lot, to run the cables around the house, in a way that felt a lot safer, because I could actually see and make sure there wasn't anything hidden.

Interviewer: How did you go about trying to fix it? Did you look into information? Did you buy, I don't know, spare parts, the spring? What tools did you use?

Respondent: Because it was fairly straightforward, it wasn't sophisticated electronics where the problem was, it was only mechanical problems, I just took the case, took the cover off, and had a look at it myself. I've got things like the precision screwdrivers.

When I was looking, there was a plastic sheet that was held on with double-sided tape to the back, I presume to keep dust and stuff from getting into the electrical contact, so just a case of taking it to pieces to the point where I could access the bit, the spring that was loose.

I can't say as I bothered to do much research, because I could see essentially what the problem was, just it was awkward to fix.

Interviewer: Do you think now it is really solved? It doesn't overheat anymore?

Respondent: It worked fine. I was keeping an eye on it very carefully as I was using it, but because I could see what the problem was, and understand what was going on, if I got it working, I would know I'd got it working.

Interviewer: Do you think if the problem was more internal, or in the electronic part, or in, I don't know, the board, would you try to repair it as well?

Respondent: Not unless it was very obvious. I used to have a soldering iron, but it has managed to get lost last time I was moving, so the soldering I did I had to do with a blowtorch, which was not ideal, and would have been completely useless for working on the core electronics.

I would at least had a look and seen if there was anything obvious like the dry solder on a join, but once it gets into the electronics, it is pretty much, it would have been a case of having a bit of a Google, but probably beyond me.

Interviewer: How relevant would you feel if there was some sort of, I don't know, community repair shop in your neighbourhood, or some kind of public facility in which you could take things to be repaired, even if run by volunteers?

Respondent: I would be interested in it. If I'm honest, I would probably struggle to get involved. I have problems with my mental health, so going into strange places, strange environments, at least the first time, would be difficult. If I knew somebody who was going there already, it would be a lot easier, but at the same time, it is something that, yes, it probably would be interesting, and I might be interested in trying to be involved in it as well.

Interviewer: Have you ever-?

Respondent: There are some repairs that are certainly within my capabilities.

Interviewer: Have you ever been involved with any kind of repair café or any-

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Repair event? Have you heard about them?

Respondent: I've seen examples of a couple of places on the internet, or I've seen examples on the internet of a couple of places. I can’t remember where. I'm sure one of them was London. I'm aware of makerspaces and sorts of things as well.

Interviewer: Have you ever been to a makerspace?

Respondent: I popped into the Dundee one a couple of times, but it ended up colliding, the open sessions, ended up colliding with a welding course, and I didn’t have any specific project at that point, so didn’t get to go back.

Interviewer: How open do you feel these spaces are for people who are not involved with them? How easy is it to walk in and get to know people? How do you feel that-?

Respondent: I don't know. I really struggle with things like that, and I know that a lot of others do as well.

Interviewer: I guess, what would be my last question, do you see any way in which the city, the council, or any other government body, could help society reuse more of its materials, or things that are discarded? It could be in terms of policies, in terms of spaces, or programmes, or financial support, or tax cuts?

Respondent: From a policy level, from a national and international policy level, my thoughts on that are that all manufacturers of an item should be responsible for its ultimate disposal, be it the manufacturers of plastic packaging, or the manufacturers of a washing machine, and that should be built into the plan, built into the costs, and there should be a limit to how far that can be passed on to the next.

In the case of standard plastic packaging, where the recycling already exists, then that might well be that the manufacturer says, “ We will pay a contribution towards the recycling cost to

the councils.” For more difficult objects to recycle, then it would hopefully force them to actually think about the design of the objects in the first place, so that would be from the broad scale policy. Make people responsible for what is manufactured.

On a more local level, then I think the working with community initiatives like makerspaces and the repair pop-up shops from the other end, that have already been started, working with them, and working with them in context actually, of the community and mental health.

The people who benefit from them, in a large part, are going to be the people who would struggle to afford to replace as well. Well, the obvious benefit is where people would struggle to afford to replace, and try and tie it into the social support and awareness there, so it is kind of two different thoughts from the exact opposite ends.

If they set up those charities or social enterprises, then there are degrees of support for those organisations, certainly in terms of rates, and buildings, occupancy, and so on.

In Dundee, we've also got the Men's Sheds, and it is a community Men's Shed in Lochee that I'm aware of, and the Carse of Gowrie. Sorry, I do quite a lot involved in third sector and volunteering, so I have an awareness of that, how it works and so on.

Interviewer: You said there is one Men's Shed in Lochee, and the other?

Respondent: Is in the Carse of Gowrie, in the tech park, just down from Ninewells. I think it is called the ‘[___ 00:14:26] Gowrie Men’s Shed, I'm not certain, that has got quite a substantial workshop

complete with woodworking, and some metalworking tooling, so trying to tie together what already exists.

The Lochee ones are very much at the other extreme. It is just a little shop front, and only a few people, but that is mostly because I don't have the time resources to open it more, space for that matter.

Interviewer: Oh, let me ask you, suppose you couldn't get your special camera fixed, what would you do with it?

Respondent: Eventually, I would have got round to taking it to the recycling as electronic waste.

Interviewer: Which one? In Whitfield or would you know where to take it?

Respondent: I can't remember. Does Riverside still take that? That is probably more convenient for me.

Interviewer: Yes, I'm not sure. I'm trying to get information from them, but it is weird now.

Respondent: To be asking such questions. I know Riverside doesn't take as much, but I think it still takes small electrical items, but I would be checking before I went.

Interviewer: Yes. Now, I guess it is closed, but in any case, they should be working. Okay, do you think there is anything relevant that I haven't asked, related to repair, reuse and repairability, where to get spare parts or tools?

Respondent: Well, actually accessing the correct spare parts these days, thanks to Google, is a lot easier than it was 10, 15 years ago, so…

Interviewer: Oh, so what else do you use, Google, for spare parts and tools?

Respondent: Google, Amazon. If I know roughly what I'm looking for, I'll go to the local shops, anything from Screwfix to there is a little shop called 'Michas' down in town which seems to sell whatever I actually need, even if I didn't know I needed it at the time. I think it is a TARDIS.

Interviewer: What is it called, the shop?

Respondent: Michas, M, I, C, H, A, S, I think, down beside the Marks & Spencer's in town, off of the Wellgate.

Interviewer: Yes, haven't been there, cool. I guess I have pretty much, whatever I wanted to cover, so if you want to send me any updated version of your notes and diaries, please do, but I have, I guess, enough for my research already and yes, thank you for your time.

END AUDIO