Witness Seminar: The development of green infrastructure in the UK and the impact of the environmental movement

Convened for the Oral History of the Environmental Movement Project

This account of the meeting was based on a transcript that has been judiciously corrected, edited and some minor additions to make to make it more concise, and easy to read for general circulation. We have endeavoured to check name spellings, but it has not always been possible to contact every participant to confirm, so please be cautious in this regard, and note that the spoken word is not always grammatical.

The meeting was held on the 13th May, 2024 at the London Wildlife Trust's Camley St Natural Park in London. We are extremely grateful to the Trust, who generously hosted and sponsored the event, and all those involved in organising and contributing to the meeting and the participants were asked if they had any objection to making this document public.

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Key	
[inaud] - inaudible word or phrase	[sp?] – spelling unclear/unknown
[incomp] - incomprehensible word or phrase	[?] – substantial section where audio is inaudible

Participants (in alphabetical order):

Syed Ahmed, Chair, Community Energy, London
Lydia Blake, Land Manager, Sustrans
Mathew Frith, Director of Policy and Research, London Wildlife Trust
Des Garrahan, Former Chair of Board of Trustees Ramblers Association, & Freelance Writer
Nick Gardner, Head of Climate Action at The National Lottery Community Fund
Roger Geffen, Traffic Reduction campaigner, Transport Action Network
Jeremy Iles, Coordinator, Urban Agriculture Consortium*
Brian Kelly, Director, Organic Lea
Duncan Law, Head of Policy & Advocacy, Community Energy England
Jane Stephenson, Director and former CEO of Resource Futures
Nicky Scott, Coordinator, Devon Composting Network
Malcolm Williams, Founding Director - Zero Waste International Trust and ex-CEO Cylch - Wales Community Recycling Network

OHEM project team members in attendance from Royal Holloway, University of London

Dr Barbara Brayshay, Post-doctoral Researcher
Dr Toby Butler, Reader in Geography
Chris Church, Project Officer
Professor Felix Driver, Geography
Jeremy Iles, External Liaison Officer*
Dr Saskia Papadakis, Post-doctoral Researcher

*Jeremy Iles was both a seminar speaker and project member at this event.

1. **<u>Group A: how did you get involved in the environmental movement and why?</u>**

Barbara Brayshay: *Is everyone ready to start? Okay, so, just a little point of how I think we might be able to make sure that everyone gets a chance to speak. What I'm suggesting is that we actually go around the table, so, that you can respond to each of the questions. I'm going to have to ask you to be a little bit circumspect because we have only got 40 minutes for this discussion and I'm sure we can probably spend 40 minutes just thinking about each question. If you're eating lunch, I think we'll start over here. [Laughter] What I would just say, the first question we've got here to ask is, how did you get involved in the environmental movement and why? What we would be really interested in is actually, the inspiration; the inspiration for whatever it was that ignited your interest in action, or perhaps your passion or however you think of it. If there was anything that really triggered that, maybe watching a television programme or a particular event, obviously, would be quite interesting for us. So, can we start with Lydia?*

[00:02:25]

Lydia Blake: Yes, so, I'm Lydia Blake, from Sustrans. How did I get involved in the environmental movement? Well, my first role in the environmental movement was here, at Camley Street as an apprenticeship, but my first time here was being brought pond dipping in year two from my year two primary school teacher who used to bring us out into such spaces. I'm a year younger than Camley Street, I reckon, so, in terms of being open to the public. So, I'm attracted to it through my history on this site. One of the other things that really had an impact on me growing up was having a secondary school, Parliament Hill, that backed onto the Heath. So, even though I grew up in Camden, being able to spend most of my lunchtimes as an adolescent sitting by the pond and in green space and having an interest in the natural environment can be virtually in an urban area, and yes, that was how I got started.

[00:03:39]

Barbara Brayshay: *Lovely, can we move around the table?*

[00:03:41]

Matthew Frith: I'll try and be quick. I'm Matthew, from London Wildlife Trust, and I got into this purely by accident. I was working for Greater London Council in 1985, in its preparation to be abolished, in order to pay for rehearsal fees, I was trying to be a musician, which never came to pass. Previously, when I was a child, I was allowed to scrabble around in the nearby rough grounds close to where I lived. I was allowed to take small animals, butterflies, and caterpillars home which obviously died. Then I got that pummelled out of me; the interest was pummelled out of me by university, and I went to study zoology, and it was all very reductionist, genetics, biochemistry; nothing about the kind of world we live in, from my perspective. So, then I tried to become a musician, I got a job at the GLC and then somebody introduced me, I won't tell you how, but they introduced me to a small team working at the GLC, and I was asking what they did, and they said, 'Well, we're working on the ecology of London.' Because I'm a Londoner, it just clicked, and from then on, I got to work with them, and then two of them, 'Have you heard of London Wildlife Trust?' As soon as I heard about them, I left that team and joined the Trust.

[00:05:13]

Barbara Brayshay: *Jeremy?*

[00:05:14]

Jeremy Iles: I'm Jeremy Iles, I grew up in Devon, in Torbay, so, I was naturally at home by the sea, and in the countryside, and I guess that is where my interest in being outdoors has always stemmed from. I grew up and watched pictures of the Torrey Canyon Disaster, the oil spill on the Isles of Scilly (1967). Although Devon wasn't directly in the frontline of that, there was oil on the beaches all around the South Coast. I think any of us who grew up in that era, would have watched that on *Blue Peter*, and that had a huge impact on me. I didn't study anything relevant at university, I studied English literature, but I did join the conservation group and tried to go out and do good things, scrub

bashing, etc. My ethos was always to do something worthwhile and somehow or other that brought me to the London Wildlife Trust in 1984 and I worked there for six years.

[00:06:15]

Barbara Brayshay: *Lovely, now, Des?*

[00:06:18]

Des Garrahan: I'm also a Londoner born and bred, and I love the place so much that I did both my degrees at London Universities. I have actually, weirdly never struggled to understand that nature is out there in an urban environment. It has never been a challenge to me I've seen it all my life without realising it, I think. How I got involved in the environmental movement, I suppose there are two stages to that. I've been active for twenty-five years, which means I've either been paid by an organisation that is within the environmental movement or I've sat on a board or chaired a board of some other organisation like that.

Previous to that, a similar sort of story, my last paid job, was around the London Office of the RSPB, but I'm not qualified to talk for the RSPB at this gathering. I always remembered that my nan used to take me to the park that was across the road, she lived in Lee Green, and we used to feed the ducks. So, I think feeding the ducks was the first thing that brought me into the environmental movement and the last thing I did professionally, was to tell people to stop feeding the ducks because of the salt and everything that was in the bread and things like that. I suspect, although I understand that is a neat little anecdote, that much of what I've done is around those simple things and wanting to make a difference for me, essentially and firstly, but for everybody in the outside world.

[00:07:54]

Barbara Brayshay: *Brian?*

[00:07:55]

Brian Kelly: Hi, I was born in East London and grew up here, I've lived here most of my life with a few gaps. We used to go on holidays to family places in the West of Ireland and the South Coast of Cornwall. So, I enjoyed those opportunities to be out of the city and in these much more rural areas, and agricultural areas. I did a degree in social science and then spent quite a number of years trying to figure out what next, and resisting being dragged into something that I didn't want to do. So, essentially, I kept my options open as long as I could. I travelled a lot, I did a lot of WWOOF-ing, volunteering on organic farms, and then volunteering for TCV as it was then, the National Trust, RSPB, you could claim the dole and go and work for them at that time. At that point, I realised that is where I wanted to go workwise, careerwise. I didn't have the right qualifications. I did a master's in environmental science. Through that, I got some opportunities in Mexico, a post-graduate opportunity, and then worked in India for three years on environmental and social justice projects. I then realised that all the problems that I was talking to those people about in very rural marginalised communities in India, a significant number of them were actually stemming from where I was from, and I should probably go back to my community and do something there rather than where I was. So, I came back to East London in the early 2000s and got involved in food growing organically and recycling, reusing with a project called Forest Recycling, which still exists now. It was part of the London Community Recycling network.

[00:09:56]

Barbara Brayshay: *Thank you.*

[00:09:59]

Roger Geffen: I'm Roger, I was also born and bred in London, but there the similarities with other people's stories probably end. I am a real late-starter in terms of environmentalism. Basically, I left university without a green brain cell in my head, I look back at some of the essays I was asked to write by our German teacher when I was doing my German A Level. She must have been a bit of an environmentalist because she set us titles to make us write in German. She set us titles like: 'Pros and cons of the car, pollution, price of progress or curse of modernity'. Yes, the price of progress, we'll have some more progress, we're paid to clean up. The advantages or disadvantages of the car, it's just all advantages. Anyway, those who think there are disadvantages should go back

to the 19th century where you belong. That is what I was thinking as a teenager. I left university, came back to London, started my first job in Central London and decided, let's try cycling into work because that is how I got around university. I was mostly doing that because it was a way of saving money and it felt mildly eccentric and that felt nice too. Then I realised I was overtaking all these people in metal boxes and what they were doing was far crazier than what I was doing. So, I discovered this thing called the London Cycling Campaign. I was in London, and I was cycling, I could see why you might want to campaign for it, and I joined in. The next thing I knew; Well, I was living in South East London, near where the government, at that time, was planning to build the East London River Crossing straight through an 8,000-year-old ancient woodland about a mile and a half from where I was living. So, I started going off with some other friends from the London Cycling Campaign, I was doing that as a volunteer, and we started going off down to Twyford Down, where the direct-action road protest movement was just beginning to take off. It ended up taking over my life. By this stage, although I had done a music degree, I was working for a little classical record company, it was going nowhere, and I was going nowhere with it. The next thing I knew was we made huge progress on mobilising public opposition to road building and then we had to fight another road scheme up in North East London, so, I jacked in this career that wasn't actually going anywhere and threw myself into road protests. I did that for a bit, and then did Reclaim the Streets, which moved the debate from roads to cars; that's another story.

I then ran out of energy, and eventually decided, how do I keep this going? I did a master's degree in transport, worked for a local authority, and then eventually migrated back to campaigning with Cycling UK. It took a long way to get there.

[00:12:46]

Barbara Brayshay: *Thank you, that's great. The next question that we've got is how you think your sector has made an impact on the green infrastructure. So, maybe this is an opportunity to reflect on perhaps where you started and how things have changed, in the period of time that you've been engaged, however long that is or however long that has been.*

[00:13:11]

Lydia Blake: So, my, I've been at Sustrans for seven years, my experience slightly lesser than others maybe in the room, but the role I play at Sustrans, I am one of our land managers, so, I look after things we've built. So, I have the privileged position of being able to look back at kind of what past colleagues have put into place that I then keep and take forward into the future. The impact that I think the Cycling Agenda has had on making things possible, from taking volunteers out to build cycle routes with shovels and spades to now Highways England to build cycle routes next to the motorways as a matter of course. They wouldn't be doing that if it hadn't been for people going out with shovels and spades, thirty-odd years ago or forty years ago, the Bristol to Bath railway path celebrated its fortieth anniversary the other year. So, I think the art of the possible of the ideas and little seeds that are sown that spiral into policy, you have to show people something before they even get people involved. Yes, I think the National Cycle Network is a really good example of how that has come about. Still having an impact; it is different, you can't really go out with a shovel and wheelbarrow and expect the same results, not on the same scale, but actually, a lot of the stuff I work on now, still has its roots in someone's idea of what is possible and building new. This year, we will be opening a new traffic-free route between two towns in Buckinghamshire, and it still feels like you're pushing the envelope and shaking people up every time you do a new piece of work. There is still a lot of ground to cover.

[00:15:36]

Matthew Frith: It's easy for me to talk about the London perspective from a wildlife NGO, and certainly, my work since the 1980s; I've been involved in this work since 1987. We've achieved things which didn't seem possible back then, but they also now seem they're still, as Lydia was saying so much more that needs to be done. There are now over 200 nature reserves in London, when perhaps in 1987 there was a handful, twenty per cent of London's land cover is afforded a level of protection for its wildlife value alone. That is not to say that protection is sacrosanct, but it was more than we had in 1987. There are beavers in Ealing, and beavers in Enfield, who would have thought that we would be getting an extinct European rodent back into Britain? Again, they're not purely wild, some are in Devon, and Essex and parts of Kent and parts of Scotland. There are serious considerations for the reintroduction of lynx taking place perhaps in Northern England and Southern Scotland and there are more people involved in the work that we're doing than we ever had before, and our audience; I'm taking the point

that Chris made at the beginning, about that still not being that representative of society. We are making tangible progress on that perspective across certainly wildlife trusts, and I'm sure we can say the same for the case of the RSPB, the Woodland Trust, and the other kinds of taxonomic NGOs that focus on particular aspects of our biodiversity. So, I think it is easy to pick at some of the things that haven't gone so well. Chris mentioned we were covering threatened spaces; well, I think we are because we're involved in water ponds which are almost the most threatened now in the UK and they're almost extinct in London. We've also seen the recovery of species like the peregrine falcon, which wasn't breeding in London twenty-four years ago and now, there are something like twenty-four or twenty-six breeding pairs. Again, they've come on their own accord, because we've addressed some of the pesticide issues out in the wider countryside. So, there are lots of swings and roundabouts and ups and downs, but I feel we have made some impact in the policies and practices that government and industry and businesses are doing, maybe not as fast and as profound as they should be but certainly far more than they were doing 35 years ago.

I1: Barbara Brayshay: *Jeremy?*

[00:18:31]

Jeremy Iles: I'm trying to think about this in a holistic way. What would it have been like if those of us in this sector *hadn't* been doing what we're doing? All the while, we're talking successes of our movement out there, the forces of the other target, the forces of progress that have been pushing on relentlessly. So, the whole of the motorway network that's been built in the last sixty years, for example. So, if we hadn't been holding onto something or promoting a different vision, things would not be as nice out there now. We talk generically about city farms, 1972, Kentish Town City Farm was the first, just up the road here. Bristol followed quite soon afterwards, in 1974, I think, the Windmill Hill City Farm. Bristol is a sizeable city with four city farms, two of which were in the centre area two of which were in the periphery, and there was another one which is further out. They have survived for fifty years in one form or another in spite of everything else. So, Windmill Hill City Farm was set up on a derelict site which had become a lorry park and was scheduled for redevelopment, but people occupied it, literally took it over, and did what we would now call, "planning for real", and got Windmill Hill City Farm off the ground on the back of an envelope - it's still there fifty years on. What is really important

about these places, and I include the Bristol and Bath Railway Path in that as well, they have become community anchors in the broadest sense of the word. They may not be buildings, they may not be big infrastructure, but they have become places where the community places their values. So, the city farms collectively become places, as does Camley Street, where people take their children to get their first-hand experiences of growing food, seeing animals, pond dipping, going cycling or whatever it is they're going to be doing. That inculcates each generation in succession. I see it all the time, having lived in Bristol for thirty years and my kids having gone to the city farms. Now, my neighbours, who are thirty years younger, are taking their kids to the same city farms. I think that is a really important point of how we have made a collective impact. It doesn't matter whether it's the site of an infrastructure, the wildlife or any of the other; we've done that between us.

Barbara Brayshay: *Des.*

[00:20:56]

Des Garrahan: Definitely, following on from that point, I think that is true, isn't it? You mentioned a number of nature reserves that we've got in London and things like that. Part of the infrastructure now is that people like me and people I know develop roots to go from nature reserve to nature reserve so, both those things become embedded within the structure. If you were to include just the square mileage of the links or things like that, we have had an enormous impact in the last fifty years. I can only talk about the last twenty-five but the last fifty years. However, there are things that I think we do need to recognise and some people have already touched on it before about that. It seems to me as we've become more successful with that, we've narrowed sometimes the audience that we are talking to all the time. It is no coincidence that this is an almost exclusively white audience that will hear about this. I've worked on lots of different projects trying to reach out to other audiences and things like that and the success isn't there, and I haven't been able to achieve it, that is for sure. I think that is because of the things that we have been successful at in this movement. For the walking movement, national trails, and routes that are there, do not have a wider appeal to an audience or, in fact, we're not communicating to that. Also, the last thing I will say, is that ten years ago, I was involved in a conversation with the GLA, about something called a Fifteen Minute City. I have to say I reckon that has been one of the most successful campaigns I've ever

been involved in, because the people who hate it, really hate it. [Laughter] And so, I think we are and sometimes we should measure our impact on what we're doing on the other side or how the other side is reacting to us on that basis. I also think that it is starting to push us into boxes. So, most of the organisations I've represented in quite high-level governmental discussions, I've been to parliament about the green belt. None of them are theologically opposed to building on the green belt, it's just that we can't ever say that out loud in London now because you would be giving back something that people have fought, for so long to defend. I understand the benefits of it in lots of instances, but sometimes, there are certainly things; It isn't worth going to the wall for entirely sometimes I think the green belt. So, it is a mixed bag but definitely on the plus column, I think, the infrastructure.

Barbara Brayshay: *Brian.*

[00:24:01]

Brian Kelly: So, Organic Lea was set up in 2001 and the vision was of a transform to change to the food system, and we wanted to explore what our role was in that, particularly from a food growing perspective. I guess, in those days, it felt quite lonely as a small community organisation in suburban London. There were other people doing similar stuff, but there were large distances between us, and it was felt to be kind of eccentric and on the margins. I think as we developed, many others did as well. The people that had I suppose understood and spotted this opportunity and had this passion; it started to develop into a bit of a zeitgeist and started to grow. A lot of it was based on the organic movement which came many years before and there were lots of people who, back in the 2000s, could go back to those times and bring their experience. But there was quite a young movement in the 2000s around community food growing. Then the Lottery came in in the mid-2000s and actually, put quite a lot of money into a couple of programmes, which I think from Organic Lea's point of view, and many others, really supported them to move into a different space and started to have a real impact in terms of what was going on in their local areas. Other organisations started to emerge from those, I suppose, anchoring-type organisations. So, then, you ended up actually, with a lot of the gaps being filled in and a lot more of it happening and all of a sudden, it didn't feel so lonely. Actually, what you did, then creating from these spaces, which increasingly are starting to emerge, is actually more community infrastructure, as well as the infrastructure

of those spaces. Essentially, all of those spaces are just people who aren't working in isolation, they're actually connecting together and starting to work together, I think what has happened, in the last decade or so is you've got a real food movement emerging where you've got the Land Workers Alliance developed as a union for small-scale growers, including urban and rural and that is all linked into La Via Campesina. So, essentially, we are part of the biggest labour movement in the world. So, no longer does it feel that lonely, we are now part of the solution and actually, where many people now think is where we should be going. They struggle to figure out how they actually go there, but I think you've got all these emerging groups who are showing the way, and I think we're still fighting against a massive system which dominates, but it doesn't seem a thankless task.

[00:27:04]

Roger Geffen: Okay, three quick answers, I hadn't realised that we were mostly going to focus on projects. If anything, I've done more work on policy, on protests. I'm going to do one answer from protest, one on policy and then a diversity-related answer on a project. Protest. Jeremy, you talked about how most motorway networks had been built in the past sixty years, but if we hadn't had a road protest movement, particularly in the 1990s, we would have had a lot more roads being built and that would have involved an awful lot more climate emissions. We won for a while, road building largely stopped for a good fifteen or twenty years, it's back with a vengeance. I think this time, we're going to defeat it with legal arguments rather than protests, that is very much of a live issue. The first answer is we stopped an awful lot of roads and an awful lot of the associated carbon. So, that is the protest answer. Policy-wise, I'm now going to come back more specifically to cycling and the Active Travel Agenda. When I was fairly new in my role, the national budget for cycling was precisely zero pounds and zero pence. In 2005, we got them to allocate five million nationally, for cycling. In 2000, when Boris was Prime Minister, he was actually really quite keen on cycling. I know it feels odd to be praising Boris, but there we go. We got two billion, so, an annual average of 400 million; eight times what we had in 2005. We never actually got that funding coming through, but that was the promise, 80 times more than we had in 2005. [laughter] We were still saying it's only a quarter to a third of what is needed. So, that is how far we still had to go but also how far we'd come from where we were in 2005. My last one on projects, and this has more to do with my ex-colleagues at Cycling UK rather than anything I was personally doing on

some of the project work we do. Sustrans does all the great projects of building stuff, we do projects which are much more about people. Getting people to give them an opportunity to try out cycling with a real focus on diversity. And we've got a whole load of evidence from those sorts of projects that is perfectly possible to increase the number of women who cycle than the number of Asian women who cycle, Asian teenagers, girls, people with disabilities, people with every health condition you can dream up, it is possible to get them cycling. We just need to be able to scale up, but we've got the evidence that these projects can work.

[00:29:34]

Barbara Brayshay: *Perhaps you may be able to get me on my bike.*

[00:29:39]

Roger Geffen: All right, I'll take you up on it.

[00:29:41]

2. Group A: Overcoming barriers to the establishment, development, and scaling of your project

Barbara Brayshay: *It's been in the shed for quite a long time. Just as time is of the essence, we might have to bring together some of these questions, we've got a list here. So, the next question is about overcoming barriers to the establishment, development, and scaling of your project. I think you know, we could bring into that conversation the question about competition, the sort of competition that might be part of that, and government actions as well as barriers. So, I see you doing a bit of mental juggling and adding all those things together. Of course, they may or may not all apply to particular projects, so, Lydia, would you like to start off?*

[00:30:30]

Lydia Blake: Okay, I'll just do a little jiggling around. So, yes, barriers to establishment- Building things is really hard especially as you're trying to say, build a network which by the very nature of it, only really works if it goes; especially if we're trying to get people to

cycle somewhere. If it goes from somewhere, ideally where there are people, to somewhere, ideally where there are people, and it's a hard thing to do. The best sort of dowry I guess that the National Cycle Network had was thanks to Mr Beeching because the disused railway lines, that formed, I suppose the core backbone and initial tranche of being able to get your hands on land to make the project happen. I think we wouldn't have had the successes we've had today. The story goes that the founder of Sustrans was ushered into a room with a filing cabinet and each filing cabinet was a folder with a piece of a disused railway line, and it was a pound (£1) a file. So, he played Supermarket Sweep with his wishes and that formed the backbone of the land that and my colleagues, look after today. We had a good start, but when you are trying to establish and develop new infrastructure without, when it is not subsequently on where you happen to have individual land negotiations, we've been looking to fill a missing link between the edge of one of our traffic-free routes and the town that we want it to connect to, for, I reckon at least 30 years. The farmer: the grandfather, who owned, a son who owned the land, the grandfather died; he said no, his son said no, and his grandson, is a maybe. So, you know, maybe at last; the project, and now it's lasted two generations of their family so far. That is one of the, you know, for somebody who is involved with these things on the ground. The other one is obviously, funding and it is especially difficult to sell large-scale projects. People like to be involved in large-scale projects; they want a whole route. To say this will take us another 10 metres into the next field, actually, it's quite hard to get people involved in that as an idea. So, I think it's the thing that would go, think big and have a big impact, but where every mile and every metre takes a lot of effort.

[00:33:47]

Barbara Brayshay: *That's great, thank you.*

[00:33:50]

Matthew Frith: I was thinking in terms of projects first and foremost is that when Jeremy headed up the London Wildlife Trust, we had barely two buttons to rub together. Over the following twenty years with the emergence of the National Lottery Heritage Fund and various other lottery-funded projects, there was a concerted effort and coordination from similar players to get the natural heritage on their agenda. So, by the time we drew down our first grant from what was the National Lottery for refurbishment

of a tower Crane Park Island in Whitton, that was money we had never seen before and we've subsequently drawn down millions, that's just London Wildlife Trust, there is a collective of 46 wildlife trusts across the UK. London Wildlife Trust has drawn down millions to help create Walthamstow Wetlands with Waltham Forest Council and Thames Water. Wilbury Wetlands with Hackney Council and Thames Water. This building {at Camley Street Natural Park}, which has replaced the old sheds that were here before, you can see some of the dome is there, and projects that are benefitting chalk grass, benefiting water voles. Also, critically, that money is not let out of the purse unless we can demonstrate how it is benefiting people. Our nature conservation was traditionally seen to be an anti-people or certainly not engaging kind of discipline. London Wildlife Trust and most of the urban-based wildlife trusts working with and for people has been in our bloodstream from the very outset. So, it has never been hard for us to do that. I think the more challenging thing for us now and I show this in my presentations that I did, is that when we were formed in 1981, there were about six organisations in London doing stuff for nature in some form or other. I now have to spread that over four slides which include the local authorities, there are thirty-three of them, the NGOs, and there are about ninety of them in some form or other. The climate companies, whether it's landowners, Network Rail or Thames Water; all the big consultancies who do nature or help development get through. Then, of course, you've got the government agencies who are mostly based in London who want to do stuff. Even the Home Office, with its prisons, is doing stuff for nature in Wandsworth and Holloway, etc. Trying to get some level of coordination for 900 friends-of groups as well, in terms of Friends of Green Spaces, is very difficult. So, whilst we can argue that the numbers involved is a mark of success, are we actually dealing with priorities for nature conservation in London? That is much more difficult to address because the government has pulled away in terms of resources and it is almost like you sort out yourselves. I think that has been the biggest challenge for us.

[00:37:09]

Barbara Brayshay: *That's your biggest barrier.*

[00:37:10]

Matthew Frith: Yes.

[00:37:11]

I1: Barbara Brayshay: *I think we'll have to hurry along a bit, but Jeremy, can you?*

[00:37:15]

Jeremy Iles: I'm going to try and summarise what I was going to say in the next bit. If it hadn't been for people like us drawing stuff on the back of envelopes and saying, 'Do this, this is possible,' this would not have happened. Whatever this is so, this, Camley Street, wouldn't have happened, The National Cycle Network wouldn't have happened. I was in the first meeting in the Mud Dock Café in Bristol, we actually had the back of an envelope, and we drew the National Cycle Route on. If the city farm movement hadn't drawn it on the back of an envelope; I remember going to meetings with people in the London authorities saying, 'Can we do this, please, the London Cycle Network, can we build a cycle route through the middle of Trafalgar Square?' 'Don't be ridiculous,' they said, 'It can't be done, you can't take road space away from cars.' Well, you can, it's clearly obvious, you can do it. Look around London now, it's not perfect, but compared to what it was like twenty years ago, it is astronomically better for everyone who isn't in a car, which is the majority of people. But we had to create that vision and the conception. Now, as the new generation of people have come into local authorities, both councillors and officers, more of them understand what is possible because they can understand what we drew on the back of an envelope. Just to move on to the food movement, and to refer to what Brian said. The City Farm Movement never set itself up to grow food; it's an anomaly, it's an ambiguous title. The City Farm Movement was there to provoke thinking about green space. If you look up nowadays what does a city farm do? This is a place for lifelong education, it's about community empowerment, it's about community capacity. What Brian has referred to, and what Organic Lea and a new generation of food-growing projects are doing is - bolting onto that conceptual idea of education of the public - in a most benign sense - actually, about food-systems transformation. That will, in a very, very, long time from now is - we are facing a huge struggle because of climate change and the vested interests of the global supermarket supply chain, blah, blah, blah. What we need is radical rebooting of our food system, and it is people like Organic Lea and projects like it; there is one in Bristol called Grow Wilder, run by the Avon Wildlife Trust, which is actually a nature conservation project that grows food. So, I think what

we have to think about is where we started from and how this whole movement continues to evolve on our envelopes.

[00:39:56]

Barbara Brayshay: *Can I just ask you to focus on barriers, we've had quite a lot of successes actually as well, as part of this. So, if we could perhaps really focus on that.*

[00:40:10]

Des Garrahan: Okay, so, the trying to actually mould barriers and financial. I do a lot of work with TFL, but virtually all the funding, all the work has to be done by the local authorities in London or local authorities anywhere specifically about walking or things like that, it's Highways Department and things like that. They haven't got a penny, there is no point going in there and asking them to do things because they haven't got any money to do lots of the stuff they're supposed to do. Walking, and providing footpaths and rights of way is a duty, it's not supposed to be a choice they have. Some authorities have not been doing it for 40 years effectively. So, it's not exactly a social contract, but that contract is breaking down and that is a financial and real barrier to me personally now. The examples that I was given, when people talk about things to be done in London and they start mentioning boroughs, there is no point in me going in to meet with Bexley or Bromley, because they won't give me a single penny to do anything about that. That is an issue about that now. I really agree with you about the point of view of us as a movement. I came out of exactly "the leisure" - I've worked for a conservation organisation, but it is leisure that I'm dealing in now. Sometimes our objectives diverge, on that basis. There is an ability for us to talk our way through it, but most politicians see us as all part of the one movement, and I find it quite difficult on that basis at the moment.

[00:41:58]

Brian Kelly: As Organic Lea is a relatively small project, we're not a national organisation but in terms of what we're trying to do, I guess, we are up against this massive system. So, it's not quite competition because we're not competing with them, we're essentially just creating a parallel option of which we are hoping people will start to

turn to, and they are, but there is still a long, long way to go, as Jeremy said. As a small organisation, we are always looking to see how we resource ourselves, and it's all slightly precarious because of grant funding and other income streams. Essentially, how we overcome it is diversifying our income streams and we have got twenty-four to thirty staff, a £1.5 million turnover and only thirty per cent of that is through grants, the rest of it is through food sales. Essentially, we are a social enterprise, and we can operate in that space. Then we come up against the supermarkets, but also, other more commercial veg box schemes. Other veg box schemes around the country have been closed down because others are coming in to compete with them. So, I think it is having that diversity in terms of financial income streams. I think for us, we are a worker's cooperative, so, having a cooperative structure builds a significant amount of resilience into our organisation and we are completely into a collaborative partnership approach. So, again, we are not trying to dominate, we essentially just want more and more people to get involved. I guess those barriers that we face are just about working in partnership with others and being stronger in that way.

[00:43:54]

Barbara Brayshay: *You seem to have, compared to some of the other speakers, you've faced a lot of competition.*

[00:44:01]

Brian Kelly: I guess we're different, we are trying to sell things, and we are also trying to raise money as well, we're trying to do both those things, but that is in a way, the solution is to do more than one thing, to do it more than one way.

[00:44:16]

Barbara Brayshay: *You sort of answered one of those questions. Roger.*

[00:44:22]

Roger Geffen: I'll do an example of how failure to collaborate got in our way massively before either of our time in our respective organisations and then how we moved on

from that. So, back in the mid-1990s, and in the aftermath of all the road protest movement, the government decided well, we're stopping building roads, and they decided to have a National Cycling Strategy instead. Then Sustrans had one vision and the organisations; we were then known as the Cyclist Touring Club, we had a completely different vision of how we were going to get the nation cycling. So, Sustrans' vision was to build all these off-road paths, take the cyclists out of the way of the traffic; to pick up on your point about you can't build a cycle route through Trafalgar Square, so, let's build routes for cyclists away from the traffic and leave the traffic, get the cyclists out of the way of it. We rejected that vision. I personally came into Cycling UK from this organisation which I touched on in my introductory remarks, called Reclaim the Streets, we just need less traffic. Very idealistic, and it took a little while before we converged on something more like, why don't we just call for nicking some road space? It took us a good twelve years before we worked out that this was the way that we could actually get on the same page with one another, and indeed with the walking organisations. Of course, while we were saying, well, we need cycle tracks, well, you're in conflict with the pedestrians, aren't you? So, we had that problem as well, we were seen to want to fight with the pedestrians for cycle tracks. It was only when we really started saying we need to be reclaiming road space, even if we still want to protect it with a protected cycle lane on the faster and busier main roads, that actually, the walking and cycling organisations managed to come together and have a common agenda. Then suddenly, we started actually managing to get some funding, and as I say, that is where we got beyond zero pounds to two billion, even if that was only a promise that hasn't been fulfilled yet.

[00:46:21]

Barbara Brayshay: *Thank you. Well, we're actually pretty much in time at the moment so, if we stop here. There are a couple of questions that we haven't really touched upon so, I'm suggesting that we shufty those into our final discussion. That is the one about our sectors coming together for common aims and the final question about lessons we could learn from the last 50 years. So, if we kind of shunt those into our final discussion. Thank you very much.* [Track 1 ends: 00:47:03]

3. **<u>Group B: how did you get involved in the environmental movement and why?</u>**

Barbara Brayshay: *Is everyone ready, you've had your refreshments? I've already said this, but just to say that what we're trying to do in this session is just focus on that list of questions into three key areas. One is, first of all, you will briefly introduce your inspiration or motivation or whatever it was that lit your fire and got you involved in environmentalism. Then we'll talk about the impact and the impact of your sector, and then we'll talk about the barriers. So, hopefully, we can crack on through that in forty minutes, if we can do that. So, can we start over here? Just introduce yourself and tell us about what it was that inspired you to go.*

[00:01:01]

Syed Ahmed: Thanks, Barbara, hello all, my name is Syed Ahmed, I'm the chair of an organisation called Community Energy London. Going back on inspiration, well, I was raised only about a mile from here, and my day-out trips were at platform one and two at Kings Cross. So, it's always nice coming back to Kings Cross, and if I was a good boy, I would get to come and see some trains. It's always good to see how Camley has evolved over time which is quite interesting. So, just very quickly, thinking about the background. I was always into science fiction as a kid, and then I went to school nearby, Holloway Boy's School. Not many of us went to uni' but I managed to scrape in and I just found a degree which sounded very scientific-y, called geophysics and planetary physics. I went to go and do that and then I found out it was actually aimed at the oil industry. So, it was about going to do geo-physically surveying oil industry. I wasn't particularly against that at the time, not knowing anything about it but one of the things I found out about it was that you had to go outside an awful lot, walk in fields and look at mines and that was really hard work. I hadn't really been out of Holloway and so, going climbing up hills and stuff wasn't really for me. So, I thought I'm not very good at that. The other bit of the degree was doing seismic survey analysis data and you had to be really nerdy, and we'd got mathematical models, and I wasn't very good at that. One of the things that was really interesting was that I learned about geothermal energy and there was a very interesting book out at the time by somebody who became a good friend, Walt Patterson, it was called, The Energy Alternative, and in the late eighties it came out. There was a TV series on Channel 4, and I'm quite surprised that I actually sat down and watched it. But I did at the time, so, that was quite a pivotal moment in making me understand alternative

energy systems and realising that not necessarily from an environmental perspective, but just from a common-sense perspective we weren't doing very practical thinking about how we were using energy. So, rolling on quickly, I did a master's degree, and at the time I was lucky, there were only about two degrees on energy. One I couldn't get into which was at Imperial, and the other one was at Sussex. The thing about the Sussex one is they needed you to write essays and I could barely hold a pencil at the time, I had been doing maths. I learned about policy, at the Science Policy Research Unit. At the time, the government had introduced non-fossil fuel obligations, aimed at the nuclear industry. I worked in policy, in the only organisation that covered things like alternative energy was Friends of the Earth. I worked there and I worked in the industry for 10 years with the Mayor of London, in the Department for Energy, before setting up Energy for London, which was very much about trying to share experiences of why a project in Brent had very similar attributes to a project in Bromley and get people to try and talk about those things. Then also, I've been setting up Community Energy London over the last five years. So, my main aspect is about how can cities, and London in particular, become more self-sufficient in how they serve their energy needs. The climate agenda, of course, came on in parallel which provided me with added impetus. I think I'll stop there, Barbara.

[00:04:19]

Barbara Brayshay: *Thank you.*

[00:04:18]

Nick Gardner: Right, I like many around the table am a frustrated Londoner wanting to get outside I think. I grew up in London as well. My name is Nick, and I work at the National Lottery Community Fund, where I am head of climate action. So, I can't really speak for the whole funding sector, but I will try and take a bit of a funding lens today if I can. I think my main inspiration for the environmental movement was from my family. My grandmother was a botanist by training, and she used to take us out into the fields in Dorset and get us really interested in nature and the natural world. As a Londoner, that felt very exciting, and it was an amazing early period of my life. It involved things like rescuing hedgehogs of which we saw many back in those days, from falling into the ponds and pools that she had built. I think in building these ponds and pools with two

steep walls we had to end up rescuing animals. I ended up "rescuing" lots of frogs, from this water, I was thinking was terribly dangerous for them, so, maybe I got the wrong end of the stick there. She definitely was my hero I suppose in terms of the outdoor world and very much embedded that love of the natural world and our wider planet and learning. Having the fortune really to meet someone who worked out in Indonesia in conservation and development, I felt that I had picked the wrong degree and just went out and lived with them for nearly a year and I got to know and understand nature in a very different context. I really fell in love with and got deeply concerned about the coral reef, and the ecosystems in the nineties, so, I was particularly interested in seeing what I could do to save them. It obviously hasn't worked very well to date unfortunately but that has been a real driver for me.

[00:06:13]

Barbara Brayshay: *Thank you.*

[00:06:15]

Duncan Law: I'm Duncan Law, I'm head of policy at Community Energy England and I'm also a founder director of Transition Town Brixton. My background is I was brought up in Sussex and Bude, in Cornwall in the sixties and then the seventies, that much derided, especially by the Norman Tebbit decade, which is a pretty good affidavit for it being incredibly valuable; the academy for where we're headed really. I drew the peak oil curve in about 1975 and I thought shit, when demand exceeds possible supply, there is going to be a huge ruckus, and that bothered me quite a lot. I read *Small is Beautiful* and so on and then I did an English degree and became an actor and a director, so, I spent a few decades being very self-centred and had a high old time. Climate change rose and came home to roost in 2006. Having done nearly 10 years of activism, I went to the climate camp and decided climate change would be my frontline activity and it has been since then. In the same year, more or less, I set up Transition Town Brixton. I did my permaculture design course in 1999, which everybody should do and that sort of ticketed me into holism and the fact that it is all one system, and we have to think of it and work in it that way. In 2010/11, we set up Brixton Energy which was community energy in Brixton, and I went on to work for Biofuel-watch. Then, five years ago, I got a job with Community Energy England. So, it's a kind of coming home; solutionism, and the

positive process succeeded my angry activism, and that's the most revolutionary place to be, so, that is where I choose to live.

[00:08:09]

Barbara Brayshay: *Thank you.*

[00:08:11]

Nicky Scott: My name is Nicky Scott. I too was brought up in London, but luckily, my family took me to Dartmoor when I was five and I fell in love with Dartmoor, we went there a lot and I now live there. I was very, very, lucky to go to a school called Dartington Hall School and one of the teachers there had a composting business, which I had a Saturday job on when I was sixteen and got paid accordingly. Dick Kitto, he was called and he taught me that there was no such place as a way and that everything could be reused or re-composted; it could go into a technological loop or a composting loop. I went to St Martins, which is just over the road from where we are. I had a really miserable time there and I talked to Dick afterwards, and he said, 'Why don't you study organic gardening.' So, I went to the Henry Doubleday Research Association and started gardening there. I was put in charge of the double-dig beds - don't do that! [Laughter]

[00:09:12]

Jeremy Iles: Hard work for nothing.

[00:09:14]

Nicky Scott: So, my neighbour who was in charge of the no-dig beds spent a lot of time laughing at me. I then moved to Devon, and I had this lust for compostable materials. In those days, the local authorities used to provide skips to our village, and everyone would chuck all their rubbish in there and it was stuff that was going to go to landfill. I rang them up and said, why don't you dedicate one for compostable materials, I'll take it all and the guy I talked to, thought it was a great idea amazingly, for a local authority person. And so, the Devon Community Composting; well, actually, our project, Proper Job, as it

is called now was formed and then the Devon Community Composting Network. I've always

thought in terms of soil health, soil, being fertile, and growing food because I trained as an organic grower and did my permaculture degree, of course, and everyone should do that. It makes you think holistically, and that everything is joined up. I've gone on to form lots of other projects like Growing Devon's Schools, getting into schools and doing things, my Proper Job, our business, I've mentioned and now, I'm working with social gardens, but everything connected, and everything comes around. I could go on, but I'll stop there.

[00:10:40]

Jane Stephenson: Hello, I'm Jane Stephenson. I am now semi-retired, but I still have a role as a non-executive director of a company called Resource Futures that I formed and led in 2006. It is an employee-owned, non-profit distributing, largely consultancy but does project management as well. My background, I grew up in Newark, in Nottinghamshire. I spent a lot of time on farms, and generally in the countryside. I was passionately keen on geography, we used to take a magazine called Knowledge Magazine. I don't know if any others of my age, yes, you're putting your thumb up. I particularly remember reading an article, and this must have been in the early seventies about the destruction of the Amazon rainforest, which, we're still talking about now, aren't we? That just really grabbed my attention and I suppose I started to get much more interested in conservation generally. I went on to do a geography degree at UCL, I think it was in the very early days of things like we called ecosystems. I also did a lot of Latin American studies, and I also had my first introduction through my now husband, who ended up working with a community theatre company, based at Jacksons Lane Theatre. It was a giant puppet company called Puppetry and the person who set that up had squatted Jackson's Lane and we were all involved in the Archway Road Protest. I started to see another whole life out there about what you could actually do by just getting on and doing stuff. We set our sights on going to Latin America but needed to save up, so, I did a post-grad secretarial course then went to work for NCVO, in a small unit that was supporting the Youth Opportunity Programmes. So, I learned there about networking funding and other community projects. We went to Latin America, it was just gobsmacking how little waste there was; well, there wasn't any waste. This is before

plastics, getting hold of your first beer bottle was quite a challenge because you had to have one to hand in as an exchange, so, you had to try and find an empty one. I came back and decided to move to Bristol and that was at the time when Avon Friends of the Earth was setting up kerbside collections using community programme money. I ended up being one of the managers, I stayed there for a while, we were developing practical kerbside collections throughout quite a large part of the West of England, as it turned out. I got made redundant when my first child was- Well, I was pregnant, was I pregnant, yes, I think I only just- No, he was six months old. So, I carried on volunteering for those six years campaigning with the authorities and also involved in Waste Watch which was a national charity set up to put waste on the agenda. So, I was doing a lot of lobbying work generally. I then ended up working for a consortium of local projects on waste issues. There was lots of funding which we might talk about later. That all came to an end, so, we had to commercialise, so that is when we set up Resource Futures as a consultancy really.

[00:14:38]

Barbara Brayshay: *Thank you, that's great. Last but not least.*

[00:14:42]

Mal Williams: I'm Mal Williams, and I should warn you—it's always a bit risky giving a Welshman the final word! My path to environmentalism began in an unusual way. As a young man, I dreamed of flying, which led me to a role as an RAF navigator flying Vulcan bombers. Part of that training involved simulations where I "annihilated" Leeds, hitting a telephone box outside the Leeds General Station. While it was only a simulation, it struck me that this wasn't the path I wanted—I didn't want to be part of a machine that kills. That experience marked a turning point, and within a year, I left the Air Force. From there, I turned to academics, earning a degree in economics from Cardiff University. Just as I completed my studies, I read *The Cost of Economic Growth* by E.J. Mishan, which questioned the entire concept of exponential growth on a finite planet. Mishan's message was that it's mathematically impossible to live sustainably while pursuing endless economic growth. That realisation shook me—I'd spent years studying economics, only to discover its foundations conflicted with the prospect of human life on earth - true sustainability writ real. To support my family, I worked as a croupier

through college and even managed a casino for a while. Running a casino taught me more about the mechanics of the economy than any classroom. It became clear that if we wanted to double a casino's profits—or GDP—all we had to do was get people to spend and circulate money faster. This experience was a powerful analogy for our global economy, which seemed driven by endless consumption rather than sustainable practices. Despite a few career twists, I ended up pursuing teaching, as my grandmother had always predicted. But I quickly became disillusioned with the "controlling" education system and eventually shifted my focus to environmentalism, which felt like a calling after my E J Mishan light bulb moment years previously. t that time, a close childhood friend of mine, Mike Croxford MBE was running an anti-waste initiative called CSAWS (Community Support Anti-Waste Scheme) in Cardiff, inspired by similar work taking place in Bristol with Avon Friends of the Earth, orchestrated by the "Godfather of Community Recycling" Dick Perry in Bristol. Jane has already referred to that, it was cutting edge. This was where I learned a vital lesson: governments, local authorities, and waste companies don't recycle—people do. Real change only happens when individuals get involved, and education plays a crucial role in this. So-back to teaching, I guess.

Nick Francis, owner of Clarfield Wastepaper at the time, an early colleague and recycling promoter, gave me the best advice I've ever heard on recycling: "Only collect what you can sell immediately. If you're collecting paper, don't mix in plastic. If it's plastic, don't mix in paper." This simple but powerful concept became what I later called -and wrote and published - the *Clean Stream System. (pub 2000)*. The operation copied one that was run by Avon Friends of the Earth in Bristol. It expanded to Cardiff in the 1980's, and then to Newport in the 1990's as Mike Croxford moved to live there. In 1997, I became CEO of *Cylch*, the Community Recycling Network for Wales, which was inspired by the Community Recycling Network for the UK. It was created in anticipation of Wales becoming a devolved nation in 1999. Cylch started with twenty-eight member organizations in 1997 and grew to nearly eighty. What I learned from those years is that real change-makers are often the ones working quietly, without seeking recognition, taking risks, making mistakes, and simply getting things done and the motivations varied – not all were environment focused. Most – in fact- were motivated by community enhancement or people benefit.

One of the key change-making principles I advocate is to create "exemplars"—real-world examples that demonstrate what can be achieved. Rather than fighting against resistance,

set up a working model and let the positive results speak for themselves. For example, when some doubted our ability to achieve recycling rates of more than 25% or 40% (as happened) our exemplar schemes quickly reached fifty percent, proving that change was possible. Today, Wales invested heavily and recycles sixty-six percent of its waste, well ahead of England's forty-two percent -Westminster left the investment to "the market place" from 2005/6. In essence, my journey has been about learning, adapting, and finding practical ways to push forward on sustainability. If you want change, sometimes the best way is simply to get on with it—and the positive results will inspire others to follow. Success breeds success and the opposition to any change is always quite strong.

[00:20:44]

4. **<u>Group B: What impact has your sector had on Green Infrastructure?</u>**

Barbara Brayshay: *That's a good segue into our next question, which is about impacts and about the impacts that your sector has had on green infrastructure. So, can we start with you?*

[00:21:00]

Syed Ahmed: I'm here as Community Energy London but I just want to pull the lens back up, I think actually on the broader issue of decentralised energy. Of course, the energy sector has been dominated by a few energy players with larger power plants, typically sited far away from where we want to use the energy. As soon as you start looking at the energy questions from a kind of urban city perspective, we want to say, well, why is it we're importing all of our energy needs into the city, what is it that we can do here? I think hand in hand with new technologies coming through that could provide energy more efficiently locally, at the point of use. There has been a policy framework to say how can we make sure that the systems are something to be considered from the very outset of planning, anything to do with any neighbourhood or any part of the city. When I started, in the late nineties and early 2000s, the decentralised energy sector made up only about eight to ten per cent of UK electricity production and now, we're up to something like fifty to sixty per cent and growing all the time. But still in terms of the barriers from a city's perspective, we have still got very, very far to go. Part of the problem is that policymakers have this kind of cycle, they get excited by the local, they find it challenging, and they're talked to by lots of big industries who give them the idea

that all the solutions can be solved by lots of big power stations. We're seeing that cycle at the moment, and policymakers are far too receptive to big oil and gas and talking about things like hydrogen, carbon caps and storage, and the ever-present threat of nuclear being talked about on a constant basis. So, as a consequence, the small-scale players don't have access to the big policymakers, but what we do is actually, we just carry on doing what we do, regardless of whether or not the resources are there. It is absolutely clear that the argument is on our side, and it just takes a matter of time for policymakers to realise once they've gone through every other alternative and they've failed, then they need to deliver on something, and they come back to the local. That is really the main area; It's not in terms of the whole question of climate change, but it is a really powerful aspect. So, what have we achieved? I'll just say that we've got more policymakers to understand more by them crossing off all the list of other things they've failed on, that they need to listen to communities and local authorities to what can be done at a local level. We've managed to get local authorities, and the big barrier that we have is local authorities, of course, do not have any statutory requirements on energy or climate. There is no council position or reporting requirement on them on climate or energy. So, quite rightly, especially in the age of austerity, many local authorities say, well, why are we even entertaining an idea about trying to do anything about reducing carbon emissions or generating the kilowatt hour of energy, we've got other priorities like dog dirt, or pavements or anything else. We have managed to turn that around. So, a big thing is, especially in London, we've got nearly every London local authority with a climate change action plan, every London local authority hiring people actually to take on energy and climate issues. We've got new funding streams for the London local authorities, the carbon offset funding through Planet Requirements. Most importantly, we've got that new generation, something that was referred to in the earlier session, officers and councillors who can really see examples of what can be done and actively want to see that happen in their area. They are willing to engage with community groups to see how they can explore those opportunities in their areas. We are only at the very start of that process, but the really good thing is we've got this tipping point going on here at the moment, where actually, those decision makers and key stakeholders who hold the purse strings and the ability for these projects to go ahead, actively interested, wanting to take part, understand the full benefits and the co-benefits that go beyond just energy and climate, so, that is really exciting times.

[00:25:40]

Barbara Brayshay: *Thank you, that's great. Nick.*

[00:25:42]

Nick Gardner: It's really hard to follow these without [laughter] thinking of all of the links and all the connections. So, you want me to explain how the funding sector has made an impact on green infrastructure. I think that is a big question. I think lots of people have already mentioned the lottery funding today, so, some of the big programmes out there, the exemplars around kerbside collections I understand was lottery funded well before my time, that has made some significant changes in how we look at our recycling and waste collections today, local food fund and various other large-scale funds. I think just one observation on that is that the lottery funding and other funders who have often looked individually at the project-by-project basis, and I think where we have made the biggest impacts has been ways to move from more of ad-hoc funding situations to take a more systematic view on how you can try to use the funding to help people overcome the barriers that exist. I also was a geographer, so, looking at that, my friend termed it as spatial holistic because quite hard to look at anything in the world without trying to work out what is impacting on something else. The other thing I learned through having become a geographer was it was very hard to get a job as a geographer. [laughter] So, I became an economist, and one of the things we learned in the economic world that we did consultancy for was that it was so much easier to make the government and others listen when you can make the economic arguments. It's the Treasury who have the real power over making any kind of policy decisions. I think that led me into some interesting projects, for example, looking at making the economic case for Cycling England. Back in the day, there was some really interesting work there and work that has come around again. Having done that, I think it was quite interesting to go back to my roots, which was as a youth worker here in Kings Cross. Like others, I have seen the development of this place over a couple of decades, and it has been really interesting to see how funding has really changed the landscape just in this very small patch and see how open and accessible, it has become and what resources for the local community. Having understood a little bit about the small-scale grassroots projects that I've started to look at, the evaluations in lottery funds and other things, and really, wanted to try and start to support them. Going on your point, Mal about copying, we

spent our whole childhood at school being told copying is really bad and you shouldn't do it. [laughter] I think I would try to turn that on its head and actually say, find what is working and let's go ahead and blooming well copy it, that copying is good. So, I was really keen to set up a way that the people running with small-scale ideas, had the opportunity to learn from at least other people doing other small-scale ideas and what was working for them and what was a challenge for them. So, we set up an online network for the project and that was an ability for the people to connect with each other and to learn from each other in the early days at least. We focused on four things, that communities needed. There was meeting other people with ideas and inspiration, having resources and the knowledge to be able to do things, and time, of course, but funding is always at the top of that. So, I think that funding always tends to come back to the funding story for me. Just a quick word on your question, because you're question talked about how the sector has made an impact on green infrastructure. I think it is also maybe poignant to talk about the funding sector's sometimes blindness to the environmental impacts of other things that they fund. So, it can be a little bit difficult, you can often fund with one purpose in mind and sometimes, funding has led to negative environmental impact for something that is well-meaning in a social space but perhaps have been slightly blind to that side. Quite interesting, I'm not going to go down that rabbit hole, it is quite an interesting potential area to explore as well.

[00:30:06]

Barbara Brayshay: *Thank you, that's great. So, I think we'll have to crack on.*

[00:30:08]

Duncan Law: Yes, I'll try and be as quick as possible. I represent a sector of 800 plus organisations over the whole UK delivering renewable energy, the powers between 200 and 300 thousand houses, it should have been a million by 2020 if the government had not put blocks in all the way. What it particularly brings is the power of the local, the power of the people, and the power of connecting stuff up. So, if you can think of an energy activity, Community Energy is doing it and probably in combination with another activity because that is locally appropriate and those become replicable models. Very often they are targeting areas which are just not being targeted by commerce or by government, for instance, heat. There are big government schemes and … big

commercial opportunities but there are millions of people who will fall between those stalls and Community Energy is in there trying to work out how to make that happen. It is also an incredibly powerful place to operate because fundamentally, the purpose of the energy system is to enable people to do work and most decisions are made by the people locally, your travel, your house, what you use moment by moment. That is essential to reducing and we cannot achieve the transformation, the transition even unless we do a big amount of reducing at the same time as powering up the green infrastructure. I would say it brings more than green and more than infrastructure. A lot of social infrastructure around couching the entrepreneurs in community benefit, in environmental outcomes about empowerment, about joining up and making more than the sum of their parts, making things complementary and therefore more efficient and powerful. An ethical dimension, a justice dimension and an equity dimension and I think those are the things that our sector brings.

[00:32:15]

Barbara Brayshay: *Thank you.*

[00:32:18]

Nicky Scott: Wow, such a lot to respond to, it's difficult to know where to go. Our project started off very modestly and I really thought that within a few years, we would get everybody in the world compositing, and they would see the benefit of it and there would be no one who was going to chuck that valuable resource away. I've always hated the word waste and I think of it as a wasted resource. What actually happened with our project is that I got approached by a local radio company and I was on a radio show and then the county council rang me up and said, 'What the hell have you been saying to the radio, we're getting inundated with people all over Devon wanting to set up their own little community composting projects?' It's a very long story but I'll cut it really short, they actually then employed me, a bit later on, as the network coordinator for Devon. We had at any one time; things come and go a bit, but we had twenty-five or twenty-six projects on the go. The national network was set up about a year after we set up the Devon one and that was set up by the people at Community Recycling Network and the Federation of City Farms. We were invited to a meeting in Bristol actually, with people from all over the country. The national network was formed and then we almost

immediately hit this barrier, which was the Landfill Directive. Basically, the law said that we weren't allowed to legally do what we were doing. We spent a lot of time fighting a government; I came up to Whitehall many times and met many ministers, at meetings, and meetings with the Environment Agency, and Defra, all sorts of things.

We managed to get the law changed and we now have permits rather than extensions from waste licencing, we have permits for it, it should be a fairly easy thing to set up a project. We then set up a food waste collection project, this was before our local authorities were doing it, we set up a food waste project. We were actually funded by Defra to do a compost; to adopt this programme to look at methods for composting food waste in vessels. Then Animal Byproducts legislation came and that hit that very hard because it made it very difficult to do. There was a loophole, that if you were using the resulting compost from the site of the growing and it wasn't leaving the site then you could do it. That took me into working with schools a lot, which then led to the Growing Devon Schools Project. We set up over a hundred schools in Devon doing food waste composting projects and that has spread to other networks now. There is something called the Mycelium Network which is doing the same all over the country. Although the Community Composting Network folded a few years ago, we have reinvigorated that now, thanks to Zoom. Thanks to the lockdown actually, we realised that we can carry on and we don't have to physically go to Sheffield all the time and that kind of thing. We had projects in Scotland, and it was a big logistical thing just getting together. When you've got very small, often rural; well, rural and urban actually, because we've done a lot of work with food waste projects in London, in Hackney. We've helped with projects like a place that was overrun with rats and all sorts of things, we started doing composting there and actually, we're using a bokashi, which is a fermentation system there to stop the rats and it has really spiralled. Just recently, with South Hams, which is a big area of South Devon, they have actually put aside £200,000 for composting. That is since I've been made redundant by Devon County Council finally, they put that money in. I am now being reemployed to do work throughout the whole of South Hams. A lot of that is really about writing really good materials for community engagement. We did a two-day master composting training programme the other day. We did a Biochar thing the other day. We're working with Bokashi. There is just more and more that comes out of it and linking into local food and to health centres and social prescribing and community gardens. So, it becomes this whole holistic, joined-up agenda, it goes on and on.

[00:36:44]

Barbara Brayshay: *That is fantastic, thank you. Shall we move on?*

[00:36:51]

Jane Stephenson: Hello, I'm Jane Stephenson. I am now semi-retired, but I still have a role as a non-executive director of a company called Resource Futures that I formed and led in 2006. It is an employee-owned, non-profit distributing, largely consultancy but does project management as well. My background, I grew up in Newark, in Nottinghamshire. I spent a lot of time on farms, and generally in the countryside. I was passionately keen on geography, we used to take a magazine called Knowledge Magazine. I don't know if any others of my age, yes, you're putting your thumb up. I particularly remember reading an article, and this must have been in the early seventies about the destruction of the Amazon rainforest, which, we're still talking about now, aren't we? That just really grabbed my attention and I suppose I started to get much more interested in conservation generally. I went on to do a geography degree at UCL, I think it was in the very early days of things like we called ecosystems. I also did a lot of Latin American studies, and I also had my first introduction through my now husband, who ended up working with a community theatre company, based at Jacksons Lane Theatre. It was a giant puppet company called Puppetry and the person who set that up had squatted Jackson's Lane and we were all involved in the Archway Road Protest. I started to see another whole life out there about what you could actually do by just getting on and doing stuff. We set our sights on going to Latin America but needed to save up, so, I did a post-grad secretarial course then went to work for NCVO, in a small unit that was supporting the Youth Opportunity Programmes. So, I learned there about networking funding and other community projects. We went to Latin America, it was just gobsmacking how little waste there was; well, there wasn't any waste. This is before plastics, getting hold of your first beer bottle was quite a challenge because you had to have one to hand in as an exchange, so, you had to try and find an empty one. I came back and decided to move to Bristol and that was at the time when Avon Friends of the Earth was setting up kerbside collections using community programme money. I ended up being one of the managers, I stayed there for a while, we were developing practical kerbside collections throughout quite a large part of the West of England, as it turned out. I got made redundant when my first child was- Well, I was pregnant, was I pregnant,

yes, I think I only just- No, he was six months old. So, I carried on volunteering for those six years campaigning with the authorities and also involved in Waste Watch which was a national charity set up to put waste on the agenda. So, I was doing a lot of lobbying work generally. I then ended up working for a consortium of local projects on waste issues. There was lots of funding which we might talk about later. That all came to an end, so, we had to commercialise, so that is when we set up Resource Futures as a consultancy really.

Jane Stephenson: Yes, just a few things. So, in the early days, this is going back to the setting up of the Environmental Protection Act and Waste Strategy 2000. We were very successful through Waste Watch the CRN and others in getting some high-profile cross-sets of party-political support for what we were doing. That was quite influential. In terms of some of the work, the Management of Household Waste Recycling Centres, we did all the work on developing protocols for that and best practices and that is still ongoing. So, particularly about introducing reuse opportunities in those centres. The whole issue about waste data, we still don't have very good data, particularly on business waste, it is a lot better for household waste. Resource Futures, which I used to run is still the leading company dealing in waste composition data. We do lots of study for Defra, and others. Community engagement we've talked about a bit but that has always been very much at the heart of what we three have all been trying to do, is actually build on public engagement and supporting people to take action in their own areas. Mal, I am sure will talk about the collaborative change programme in Wales which has really been very important... we've also had some impacts in the private sector too. One of the projects that Resource Futures runs is run in cooperation with AkzoNobel i.e. Dulux Paint called Community Repaint, which has been going on for thirty-five years now, I think. So, there have been quite a lot of areas. But where we haven't, and where we three; I'm sure I can confidently on behalf of all of us, it is about consumption actually. So, recycling is not top of the agenda; you've spoken about this; we need to reduce the amount of what we consume and energy and particularly resources. We have a long way to go, and we don't have any more funding programmes to allow that, well, in my view

anyway: there aren't any significant funding streams to develop approaches to reducing consumption and change behaviours – we did have these in the early days.

[00:39:47]

Barbara Brayshay: *I'm giving the Welshman the last word.*

[00:39:50]

Mal Williams: I'll keep it short. I mentioned at the beginning how the sector in Wales has definitely had an impact because as I mentioned, we are at sixty-six per cent recycling and England is learning that they haven't done what they should have been doing and they're struggling and likewise Scotland to a certain extent. So, the evidence is there. I learned very early and I think I will just make this point that change always comes from the periphery, it never actually comes from anybody at the top because basically, people at the top were just protecting their own interests all the time. Call that bullying if you like, I do. And it is a system that we should rail against because the power actually, now lies with us as consumers, our votes don't count much because they've been bought by other people. But as consumers, we do have the power to actually choose what we buy or don't buy. The elephant in the room, as was hinted at here with the reduction thing is the fact that we've got to reduce our own consumption. We're actually one and a half, or two and a half or three and a half planet's worth of resources depending on which set of data you look at, at a time when we can't afford to do that. We can't have exponential growth. Anyway, the sector has an influence by serving up these examples, by showing what is possible, against what the industry is saying is impossible and what the government is saying is impossible as often as not. I think that is an optimistic thing because it shows that even if we think 1.5 degrees or 2.5 degrees of climate change is required as a reduction is impossible, then maybe it is not impossible. That is an optimistic thing from my point of view.

[00:41:41]

Barbara Brayshay: *That's great, thank you. We've got just five minutes left. I think quite a few people have mentioned from what they've been saying already, they've mentioned barriers. The barriers*

that they have experienced. Perhaps we could just go once around quite quickly and you could perhaps mention the most significant barrier, let's just say the most significant barrier that you've encountered.

[00:42:06]

Syed Ahmed: And how we could overcome them?

[00:42:10]

Barbara Brayshay: *Yes, it would be a bit like in two sentences.*

[00:42:11]

Syed Ahmed: Yes, very, very quickly, two points. I think the community perspective around energy is because it is a relatively recent action in terms of communities that are trying to take greater control over the supply and generation of energy. One is just giving confidence to the stakeholders that these people are competent, trustworthy, and able. They are solid people that they can deal with in terms of helping achieve not only their goals but the goals of the political stakeholders as well. In terms of funding, the key to that was that confidence is what we gain when then there was something called; We campaigned for the Department of Energy because they're called the Urban Community Energy Department. There was a Rural Community Energy Department. We then said, 'What about the city?' they said, 'Okay, you can have an Urban Community Energy Department.' Then only one-fifth of it was spent, and the then government in 2015 closed it down. So, then we had to go back to the new mayor, Sadiq Khan, he gained our trust or we gained his trust, I guess, and through that process, we've now had seven rounds of funds of two and a half million pounds, that has helped 200 projects in London. Now we're working with about ten local authorities, providing about another four million pounds worth of funding at the local authority level. So, the key to that is showing the trustworthy sector or very competent people who are very engaged and wanting to work with the local authorities and the mayor to do what they want to do. So, I think that is a key aspect of that why we were successful.

[00:43:46]

Barbara Brayshay: *Right: well, we have actually pretty much run out of time. Is there anything that is really- Is anyone really wanting to say in terms of values before we go?*

[00:43:57]

Nicky Scott: Yes, one thing I really wanted to say was that when I started off on this journey, everyone assumed that you were working with volunteers and that the volunteers were going to do all the work. We called our project Proper Job because we wanted to pay people. The real challenge was actually getting funding, because once you've set up a project, it is very easy to get funding to start a project and to start a new thing, it is really difficult to get that really necessary core funding because you are working with things that you are not making a lot of money from at all. With compost, it is not valued high enough, so, the health of our soil is in the health of- You know, there is such an important vital thing that people are cottoning onto more and more. But still, projects that I've been involved in are giving away their compost that they've made and that kind of thing. They say, 'How can we make more money?' I say, 'Sell your compost for £10 a bag, don't give it away.' Funding for core funding would be so important for a lot of projects.

[00:45:04]

I think related to that is that when one talks about infrastructure, certainly in the waste sector, people within the sector think about trucks, capital projects and just as important is the infrastructure about the community engagement and the social side of it. You need to spend as much on that if you're going to reduce the amount of waste, but the money always seems to go into the capital projects.

[00:45:35]

Barbara Brayshay: *The capital projects, that's right.*

[00:45:37]

Jane Stephenson: We are not going to change behaviours if we just spend on capital.

[00:45:41]

Mal Williams: Here, here.

[00:45:43]

Barbara Brayshay: *Thank you very much.*

[00:45:45]

Duncan Law: Can I just say one thing lastly, which is a really big-picture thing? I think it is that the environmental movement wagged its finger for a long time and had minimal traction because people don't like having fingers wagged at them. We still haven't got the traction that enables the people who can at the stroke of a pen, make a huge difference to understand the scale of the problem and the power of the solution and the vital importance of people. We need everybody involved and we need a transformation. The moment we stop talking in those terms, we have actually lost the war, we've actually given up hope of ever achieving what we need to achieve. I think we need to keep on. I was going to say government but it is actually not the government, it's this government. Local government is passionate about it, and they're trying to find resources. The Labour Party.

[00:46:43]

Mal Williams: Don't hold your breath.

[00:46:44]

Duncan Law: No, but they have got stuff that no previous government has got, and they've put stuff in the policy in terms of supporting communities to do things from the bottom up.

[00:46:53]

Jane Stephenson: But the key, I'm sorry, I'll try- I was talking with one of the top civil servants who were around at the time, Michael Meacher when he was the Minister for Environment, who made a massive, big impact actually.

[00:47:07]

Mal Williams: Yes.

[00:47:08]

Jane Stephenson: What Michael Meacher did is he wanted to listen to everybody. So, when he was given that brief, he wanted to listen to Friends of the Earth, and Greenpeace, just as much as he wanted to listen to the waste management companies. So, we need people in power who have the ability to open their doors to everybody. Otherwise, they just will go down the track of being influenced by the most powerful.

[00:47:33]

Barbara Brayshay: *Well, everyone, thank you very much, we are actually still on time, with a bit of a hop, skip, and a jump towards the end of our conversation. So, thank you, and it's tea break.*

[Track 2 ends: 00:48:15]

5. Plenary session: is your work a niche activity?

Barbara Brayshay: *What I've heard this afternoon is that a lot of people reckon that what they've done has had big influence. Anyone feeling kind of incandescent about being described as green-nichers?*

[everyone laughing]

[00:00:16]

Des Garrahan: Not incandescent but I've certainly sort of agree from another point of view. One of my last roles at the RSPB was to talk to people about the sort of work they were doing, and one of the most staggering facts about a great organisation which is very successful was that if anybody had an idea of what success looked like, it was different depending on who you'd spoke to, and so I think that's definitely a green niche that is created in lots of places. And it's, I think quite interesting from just today, the people who were involved in commercial organisations and the bottom line of some sort to run to, a great many charities, although it isn't an endless fund of money, do not have a bottom line to- And so it's sometimes difficult to get people to talk about that. Greenpeace, which I know it's easy to bash somebody who aren't in the room, but I mean I wonder how many, you know, seals they've actually saved, you know, it's quite an interesting concept that one.

[00:01:24]

Barbara Brayshay: *Anyone else want to come in on-?*

[00:01:33]

Roger Geffen: I'll do one, I mean the idea of niches, I mean we humans just, we form niches, don't we? I think this is what humans do, we form little kind of communities of common interest and we work, we find people who we can work with and we kind of reach out and, kind of, you know- Like an ant colony where each of us know, doing, doing our little thing, not quite- Trying to be collaborative, sometimes being competitive with some other colony that's trying to invade our space. Not quite knowing how the whole colony's going to work anyway but trying to do something in the hope that it's

useful without quite knowing how it's going to be useful in the end. And I think we all have a sense that we've done things that are useful and that the people who work in that sort of policies sphere of kind of passed the Climate Act, that's also been useful, but even that is really taking its time to have its impact, we're still having to pursue legal challenge, after legal challenge, after legal challenge to get them on- The Climate Change Act to bite, it's, it is biting but still only slowly. Challenge, after challenge, after challenge, that's another niche. They're all niches, they all overlap and, you know, I wouldn't worry there's seven billion of us humans, you know, seven billion humans and we've all got to find our niches and try and do something useful.

[00:02:47]

Chris Church: *I mean Brian you were talking about how lonely projects had actually started to link up and create a bigger space.*

[00:02:53]

Brian Kelly: Yes, so I think what that policy person is doing is kind of missing the point largely and I think you've got policy, projects and what was the other P you've got there?

[00:03:04]

Chris Church: *Protest.*

[00:03:05]

Brian Kelly: Protest, so I think it's about- They're doing different things and I think policy is clearly just a massive compromise, ultimately. If policy becomes, turns into reality you end up with a massive compromise and largely kind of in the balance of the most powerful interests, so you end up actually not being, moving very far from the status quo, if at all. Whereas projects have the ability, because they are in niches to actually do it as they want to or - Or kind of experiment with what is needed and it's that kind of exemplar sort of situation that you can create with a project, which then- So that's one project, and that's not going to make a massive difference but if you then start to linkup those projects where there's enough of a sort of a commonality there into a

movement then they're not projects anymore and it's not policy. The policy then has to follow and that's where policy can be affected if it is- Because policy can't lead I don't think. It might do in certain times, but essentially the balance is all wrong, whereas if you've got a kind of movement which is then allowing policymakers to make the kind of more radical decisions that are actually needed – and that's where we're at here in terms of the environment and general kind of society. That's the only way to do it without a massive disruption which we may end up with anyway, it's just how do you kind of get through that in the least sort of problematic way as possible.

[00:04:41]

Syed Ahmed: Thanks, I'm just trying to think. I mean you mentioned I think Chris, and I actually realise going back to my Master's, the reason I went to Friends of the Earth was I could not find anything about wind power apart from some pamphlets written by Friends of the Earth when I was starting my Master's. Now renewable energy is the biggest component of the global energy system, you know, and the UK has increased it's GDP several times over since the 1990s when I was doing my Master's, and energy consumption in the UK has gone down, carbon emissions has gone down. I can't go to a dinner party now when I talk about the work I do ,and people ask me about whether a heat pump is a good thing or a bad thing. We've got over one million homes with PV, which we didn't have ten years ago, everybody knows what an electrical vehicle is. In the next few years thousands of energy story units and heat networks and heat pumps and PV panels and retrofit houses are- They're, I think that kind of comment has just missed the point that so much has changed without them actually being aware of it. So in many instances our projects, or bits that we're doing are pointing where there are still gaps but the fact that many of us around this table still work in these sectors after twenty years, twenty, thirty years, showing the testament that these things are difficult to get traction but they're still growing. So, yeah, I'd counter that of, perhaps somebody in Oxford who probably needs to get their head out of a book a bit more and go in the projects.

[00:06:14]

Chris Church: *Jane?*

Jane Stephenson: Yeah, I mean I was just thinking about the latest – I mean this is on a personal level, the latest projects I've become involved in which is a community garden in some land in our local pub. And the people who are turning up to work on that, once a fortnight, on a Saturday morning are not anything like the people in this room. There are lots and lots of people from a very diverse group who want to be involved in some of these initiatives, and if you look at the way that the whole reuse sector has developed, I mean that is explicitly at the very beginning satisfying the social need as much as an environmental need. So it's, not just us doing this to sort of -

[00:07:10]

Chris Church: *So one of the things that four people have mentioned was something along the lines of added value, we could do this commercially but we're doing it through a co-op or a social enterprise, we're getting a lot of added value. Anyone kind of feel that that is an important part of it or-?*

[00:07:31]

Duncan Law: Yes, I mean I represent a sector who's primary motivation is to do something material about climate change and who's very soon after secondary motivation is to deliver social and community benefit, and as a result I'm working with geniuses across the board, amazing, amazing people who mobilise more amazing people who ripple out into the community and invent the future, that- Somebody mentioned [incomp 00:07:58] and I think, you know, the government paradigm is we'll make a rule and you'll obey it and trickle down will happen and it doesn't work. The big problem with government policy and the Climate Change Act is delivery just isn't happening, and the thing is because there's no intrinsic interest in the government really in achieving that, it's just something they've set themselves. Whereas when you do stuff locally there is intrinsic interest. People get involved and the contacts they make and the difference they're able to make, and the stuff they can point at and talk about and poke and polish becomes a really important part of them and the impacts of that ripple out, and change the common sense and change what is possible. So let's make, you know, and local is going to happen whether we like it or not, there's no other way forward, so let's pioneer stuff locally, it's the most powerful place to be.

[00:08:49]

Chris Church: *Nick?*

[00:08:51]

Nick Gardener: I just wanted to be like, I think maybe it is easier to poke and prod at something which is local and visible and tangible, and when you've got- There's almost a vacuum of sort of this greater vision of what the environmental movement can achieve at an national scale and international scale, but that is inherent on us at the community level to kind of demonstrate what that greater vision might look like. But I think this plays out in the funding space as well, you talked about niche, Chris, and niche environmental projects and are we talking to ourselves a bit in an echo chamber. I think there is an element of that and the funding, the funders are also guilty of that to some extent because funding environment has always looked like a funding environment or funding the other. Whereas to Duncan's point, you know, there are so many social, health, economic benefits that we just need to make a better case of creating those links, the intersections if you like between those different spheres and show that investing into environmental projects can have all of those other benefits as well.

[00:09:52]

Chris Church: *I mean I'll come to you, but there does seem to have been a problem when a lot of the waste companies, waste co-ops when they were facing people like Veolia, when contracts were coming up for renewal, made big cases about the value of outreach and engagement but that didn't seem to cut any ice with the procurement or tech- People assessing the tenders.*

[00:10:15]

Jane Stephenson: Yeah, I mean that's part of it but it was a very, it's a complex picture and I don't know, I mean Mal might disagree with me, but I don't know whether we would have ever envisaged that the community sector would be running all of the waste contracts in the UK I think our role was to develop best practice of how to do that. Some of which has been taken on board, some haven't. And there's a number of reasons why those enterprises closed down, which there isn't time to go into today-

[00:10:59]

Chris Church: *Well I don't want to say too much but I mean if we just take the comparison-*

[00:11:01]

Jane Stephenson: No, but it wasn't just because of-

[00:11:07]

Mal Williams: I think one really important thing, it's sort of the elephant in the room, starting with your comment about the policy work in Oxford. We only ever hear in the media a lot of chat about football and celebrities and who's doing what to whom; and we don't get the good news stories certainly about the environment. I mean for example, do you know that an area the size of Denmark in China was actually greened for a ten year period between 1995 and 2005, and I mean it went from being the Sinai desert to being the Wye Valley in that ten years. Five-hundred billion, five-hundred million, sorry, five-hundred billion World Bank fund given to some people, and they ended up with an area which is now self-sufficient in growing its own food, so thousands and thousands and thousands of Chinese are moving there as we speak, and so on and so forth. There's another project in Cairo, near Cairo, sixty kilometres from Cairo where it started off with plastic palm trees with compost around the bottom and now there's 40,000 people working there, and there's a university there and there's a library there, and there are a lot of people there. Okay, it was funded by the European Union but that's a big optimistic story which basically says you can green the desert. Now if you can green the desert, we can green Wales, we can get rid of the sheep you know?

[00:12:30]

Syed Ahmed: Just very quickly say that a big part of the problem is the literally and figuratively the oil tankers are the incumbents. So that's a big problem is that incumbent organisations who have built up their business models over fifty years, even though they recognise that change is coming, they're making sure that it happens slowly, and that's the big problem. So I think the commercial, the environmental, the social, all those arguments are on our side, and it depends to what extent we're frustrated that things aren't happening fast enough. But I mentioned on energy, once the economics came into it and that the technologies were cheaper, lots of the kind of markets and business came

into that space and the regulations as well. So, you know, part of the reason I'm sticking to what I'm doing is I'm very much glass half full, could it be better, could it be faster? Yes, it could do. But the direction we're travelling in is very clear, and also if you take away the environmental aspects of it and some respects of carbon and energy, people want to live in greener, healthier spaces, London sells itself now as being somewhere, hopefully, it's still too expensive, but is a greener, healthier place to live because of cycling, because of green spaces, because of more energy efficient homes. So those are the arguments that'll win, not necessarily per se the environmental ones by themselves.

[00:13.52]

Jane Stephenson: In the years that I've been involved we're a lot better for talking to each other across these different topics and for me, the elephant in the room where we haven't been quite so good, is looking at the links between environmental disruption and conflict and war, and whilst there are some people talking about this, it doesn't have wide enough discussion. It's a very big issue.

[00:14:25]

Nicky Scott: Yeah, I wanted to say a couple of things. Jane said something to me earlier which I was hoping you were going to say Jane but-

[00:14:32]

Jane Stephenson: Oh, sorry.

[00:14:33]

Nicky Scott [laughing]: The fact that all the small grass roots projects can't make an effective sort of a lobby for large organisations, well for the government because they just by their very nature, very niche and small and it's difficult to connect them up and to have that big enough voice. And the other thing is when I was actually working for Devon County - Well I was working for Devon Local Authorities, so I was employed by all the local authorities in Devon in the waste department, which I hate that word waste, anyway. So I wanted it to be the wasted resources department and I said I should really

be employed under education and health, you know, and they've very silo based, and when I pointed out there was someone in another part of the county hall that was working on this project, no one had heard of this sort of energy sector people, they just don't talk to each other. They are getting better in local authorities at joining up those kind of silo, the silo thinking, but we've got to break out of that and come up with a new economic paradigm which does fully value the social economic and environmental triple bottom line properly, rather than just focusing on the economic all the time.

[00:15:45]

Chris Church: *Indeed. For small projects that are struggling to keep going and to meet their own targets, trying to take on that big picture is kind of scary.*

[00:15:57]

Jane Stephenson: I think we were also particularly talking about within the waste sector, I mean just, you know, reflecting on the way that the nature organisations have got much of a stronger voice at a national level than in the resources sector. We've lost that sense of working across the whole resource sector over the years, and that's something I feel as a loss.

[00:16:19]

Lydia Blake: I think there's something to a certain degree about coming together, so and recognising your strengths and differences within an organisation such as sort of Recycling UK keep having more of a kind of policy and campaigning feel rather than sometimes sort of delivering stuff but actually, especially when you're talking about policy. Good policy comes from a combination of both, of both doing- Policy doesn't do things, policy sets direction and other people do things. Policy gives the, policy learns from what people do and what people ask for because ideas don't happen in a vacuum, look at the sector. And I think in recent years the walking and cycling one foundations have had this alliance of lobbying which means that they're tending to, not always ask for the same things, but having at least some, when speaking to government, having some sense that we have discussed this amongst ourselves and here are our top requests which has started to win at least in funding pledges, let's not say in terms of how things have

actually turned out and cascaded down. But I think that's been a big positive in recent years really. So, yeah, and this idea policy, about things feeding up and feeding down and actually it works well when policy looks at what is happening on the ground, takes the best ideas and amplifies them and also then when people on the ground say, 'Here's the hole in your policy because you haven't considered X and Y and Z'.

[00:18:14]

Chris Church: *I think Jeremey's keen- Yes?*

[00:18:16]

Jeremy Iles: Yeah, I just wanted to start with your question, are we in our little bubble, in our little niche world, have we made a nice world for ourselves. But, no, because I'm still quite furious about stuff and in fact I get more furious, the more radical as I get older. But being realistic we have to work with what we've got, whether that be this government or the next one, it doesn't matter. We still have to work with what we've got. So going back to building coalitions to look at the next, what are we going to - In fifty years' time when the next group of people do this research in this room, what will the bits of paper, the backs of the envelopes look like that we've been visioning now, which will be the agenda for the next twenty, thirty years. We've had some of those ideas floating in the room this morning, this afternoon, and I think I'd go back to the fifteen minute city idea, let's call it fifteen mile an hour city, because actually if you made all the cars go slow and go away all together, it would be a fifteen mile an hour city. And then that by definition will become fifteen minutes. Why is that contentious I wonder? Why do you think that's contentious? Because the big businesses want us all to buy another car, it happens to be powered by electricity this time round, it's still perpetuating exactly the same system which is unsustainability mobility in a corrupt way. Anyway, I could go on for a long time, but the point is to build policy coalitions. So in the bit of work I'm doing on urban agriculture, we have something called a policy influencers' network group, it's an online forum, we can invite as many people as we like because it's on Zoom. It's extraordinarily effective as opposed to having to travel around the country to get people together. You can have local authority, or academics, practitioners in the same space float ideas, try them out. They might be half baked but it's better than not having a recipe at all. And I recommend all of us, whatever field you're in, is do the consultation

first. Start with the consultation, build a coalition, build the argument and the bits that are the common denominators that we all agree on are the bits that will have most power and influence in future policy.

6. Plenary session: Are you getting your messages to policy makers?

[00:20:32]

Chris Church: *In a few months' time we're going to be doing a seminar like this with policy organisations, and is there a message from the project side. We need, for change, as we've always said, we need policy, infrastructure and engagement to make the pie. And we're saying, I think, some people have said that the engagement has led to the policy. We had twenty years or so of community recycling before we got the Household Waste Act, but other people would say the Seatbelt Act, the government said, you will wear seatbelts, companies put seatbelts into cars, people did it. That was totally top down. Whereas you could argue recycling maybe local food has been much more grass roots up. But if we're going to influence- Are we actually getting our messages to policymakers?*

[00:21:26]

Duncan Law: See, well it's easy it's a belt and a plug and, you know, there's one solution. You talk about food - there's a myriad of solutions, and every locality has a different solution, and it feels to me like we can beat ourselves up about making a good world for ourselves but actually the thing that's going to make a difference is people wanting this, and they want what's better. And until they see something that's better, they think what they've got, the iPhone 666 or the car, or whatever it is, is the best. Until they've experienced community engagement and a stake in something that's really making a difference and which they have a chance of altering the progress of, they don't, that doesn't feature as a priority in their lives and that's why I think working with the energy that's coming towards us in gendering as much more as we can and making the local paradigm and making it as infectious as possible- When we set up to transition down Brixton, we set it up as a centre of infection because we were the first in London and we had people coming from Norwich for six months and then they went and setup Transition City Norwich, you know? And if you've got a good enough idea and you publicise it a bit, people will sniff it out because what they want is something that's going to make stuff better for them and their cohort, and that's why I think bottom up and

grass roots are interconnected and is so much more powerful because it's a much more powerful ecosystem that what the government has. And it changes every five years anyway, whereas you build a strong local ecosystem, people stick around. I've been in Brixton thirty-seven years because I joined the Lets Scheme (Local Exchange Trading System) in 1992. [laughing]

[00:23:10]

Roger Geffen: I think an issue for us, but also, it'll be interesting if policymakers understood it to some extent, is not to create the situation where we as a sector are kind of leading the way and then it gets co-opted because policy shifts and then others can come in and benefit from it. I mean at a certain level that's okay because then the scale goes up but essentially then we as a sector need to stay un co-opted and need to stay on the edge, so when you're talking about recycling, great, that's started to happen in the policy change, large corporate- Large waste companies are able to come and do recycling, eventually they moved into reuse, it's harder and it took them longer to do it but they, I mean they do not all- There's a lot of reuse not happening but they are doing it because policy has come in and dictated that's what's happening. But essentially where the sector should have kept going is, actually this is about consumptions and it's not about this technical solution that we've managed to pilot because that's all it is, and we need to acknowledge that's all we're doing at that level but what we're doing all the time is what Duncan's talking about, is that connection with individuals, households and sort of local networks and we just need to stay there. Wherever that is, we need to say there and keep pushing. We can also keep a piece of the- Kind of where there's more income coming in, yes, let's base what we're doing on that as well. So, yes, London veg' box scheme as well as doing the radical sort of food policy stuff with the people we're working with but don't get sucked into competing against Abel & Cole and Riverford, because essentially then you've lost. You're now in their game rather than our game, and we need to be playing our game.

[00:25:06]

Des Garrahan: But what happens when their game arrives in your game. So for a little while I sat on the board of the YHA and the fact that the YHA got successful in certain places meant that Travel Lodge and that moved in, and there is no out-competing those

people in that business. So YHA had to roll back because of that and they're still, their ten most profitable, which is virtually their own ten profitable YHAs are- Three of them are in London, which is nothing to do with the image they project at all, and that- So I mean, you know, that- And you speak from experience, I'm not suggesting you don't know what you're- But it is, what happens when Abel & Cole come for you then?

[00:25:53]

Roger Geffen: Well we'll just move.

[00:25:55]

Des Garrahan: But where?

[00:25:56]

Roger Geffen: We'll be teaching people how to grow, so you don't buy from them, you don't need to, you can grow your own.

[00:26:01]

Des Garrahan: But so then, you see you're going to talk yourself out of your market.

[00:26:04]

Roger Geffen: Absolutely.

[00:26:05]

Des Garrahan: Oh, okay.

[00:26:06]

Chris Church: *Well I mean there's that evolution, Jane said that the waste industry- the community waste people never expected to be running-*

[00:26:12]

Jane Stephenson: Well, I don't think they did really, no.

[00:26:14]

Chris Church: *Yeah, but at the same time if I look at Germany where community energy is what sixty-five per cent? I mean we could be looking at a place- I assume you'd like to be at sixty-five per cent for-*

[00:26:26]

Syed Ahmed: Well I think in Germany just the model is that an awful lot of collaboration between the communities and the municipalities and that's where we need to go, and that's where I kind of said part of the problem is just touching a policy point, we don't actually have local authorities with any direct remit around energy or climate. But just to your point very quickly, Chris, two quick thoughts. One, policymakers love making new policy and all the previous policy was clearly wrong and new policymakers with new PPs from Oxford and Cambridge have got brand new policies which of course are the best. More often than not some of the policies aren't great beforehand, could be tinkered with and made better. But I presume any new government will kind of say, everything that came before them was absolutely useless and we're going to go through a period of three years of reflection and the make the best new policy. So that's a bit of a problem and a risk actually because more often than not what you need tweaking, you don't need absolutely massive radicalisation, not in all cases. But that's something that policymakers often just kind of dismiss. Just one other thing, just harping back to the diversity issue that we talked about, which is that we tend- The phrase about echo chamber was made before. I mean I've recently spoken to climate assemblies by London boroughs, so they said come in and talk about energy, and I came out with some absolutely brilliant presentations about energy and London, and it went down like a cold bag of sick. [laughing] You know, people were so disinterested in what I was talking about and what I thought, it's a cost of living crisis, aren't you- But, you know, they're more worried about where their kids are going to school and not getting knifed on the streets and, you know, the mould in their houses. So possibly one of the problems with maybe the environment sector is looking at everything only through a green lens. So, you

know, for instance, many of the environmental groups have looked at climate and energy, they've not really looked at the cost, the bills cost, you know, in terms of actually the transition to cleaner energy. So just to say we often need to kind of speak a bit more to kind of adapt our message to a broader set of people, who are a more diverse audience to find out what it is that they want and that's when you'll actually gain more traction.

[00:28:35]

7. Plenary session: how ethnically diverse is the environmental movement?

Chris Church: *Well let me just throw something back then, which is that if I look at pictures of local projects whether it's local food or people installing solar panels in Brixton, there's a fair chance, at least fifty per cent of the young people in those pictures will be non-white.*

[00:28:53]

Syed Ahmed: Yeah, but I, it's funny because just-

[00:28:54]

Chris Church: *And the environment mo-*

[00:28:56]

Syed Ahmed: - across that one point, very quickly. I'm the chair of Repowering London as well, and one of the pictures that you're talking about I've asked for quite some time to update and this is being recorded, but hopefully, you know, it'll be found out later on- But some of them are staged. You know? So to what extent they can be as diverse as you can, that's one of the issues as well but we need to- We need to, look no matter, and Brixton's groups are fantastic but then they're atypical and we all have to make more efforts to reach out to all sections of our community, not just those ones that are more willing to come up and turn up on a wet Tuesday afternoon.

[00:29:37]

Lydia Blake: I think it's about class as well, not just ethnicity. I think class is a bigger issue- Sorry, I know I'm not- I just wanted to intercept there, thought, but I think that class is even a bigger issue.

[00:29:48]

Chris Church: *I mean Jane was saying that people were turning up to do your community food- Your community flower bed or whatever, weren't the people who were normally part of the environmental movement-*

[00:29:58]

Jane Stephenson: No, but they were, they were people who lived in the village who wanted to do something for the village.

[00:30:03]

Chris Church: *So the idea, the dream, the idea seems to be that practical projects are a great way of involving people, and indeed they are, people who turn up for tree planning or whatever. But somehow they don't seem to translate into political support for environmental change.*

[00:30:22]

Syed Ahmed: I think those projects need to be designed to be able to do that, you can do both but you need to be having- And you're not ramming it down people's throats unless that's what they're really after but basically those messages are there and you are reinforcing them all the time through the action of doing and you're making sure people are aware of what their actions actually are rather than somehow they've got to figure it out themselves. But it's not too heavy it's just sort of explaining why you're doing it and what it's achieving and they've- You've got to consciously be having that politics alongside it in a, yeah, in a way that is appropriate, that you don't lose it.

[00:31:04]

Roger Geffen: In reflection - firstly, as I said earlier, I've done more protest and more policy than projects, just reflecting from that perspective but first point, from an active travel perspective, I don't think we can be accused of having been in an environmental niche, if anything our problem has been the opposite. We've really struggled with the fact that, you know, cycling ticks so many different policy boxes whether it's environment, you know, clean air, climate, physical activity, you know, there's social inclusion, tourism, you name it, that's an awful lot of different government departments that I've just kind of ticked. And in a way our problem has been, you know- Show us the evidence that you deliver time benefits, oh show us the evidence you deliver air quality benefits, show us the evidence you deliver physical activity benefits. There's so many different evidence bases that we're always being expected to show. We've got them all, to be able to kind of present them to umpteen different government departments is actually really quite hard work, joined-up government is easier said than done. So we go and talk to the transport department which is our main source of funding but actually we're trying to talk to them about health benefits. So I think that in that respect, you know, I don't think we've been stuck in an environmental bubble, if anything we struggle with the [inaud 00:32:24]. The project bit I think already is more diverse than our generation. We are mostly of a generation, and I think that the project level is kind of a lot more people coming through from a younger generation who are more diverse than my generation, our generation. I think that'll be shifting over time. Yeah, I'll leave it there. I do want to kind of have a reflection on relationships between protest, policy and projects at some point.

[00:32:51]

8. Plenary session: Is the Environmental Movement now part of the establishment?

Chris Church: *We've got another fifteen minutes. One thing I would like to- We've had stay on the edge, keep pushing, keep innovating but I suspect we'd have the RSPB here as the largest land owner in Britain, or fourth, something like that.*

[00:33:07]

Des Garrahan: It's in the top five, isn't it?

[00:33:09]

Chris Church: *Certainly in the top five.*

[00:33:10]

Jane Stephenson: National Trust-

[00:33:11]

Chris Church:*. If we don't have National Trust, RSPB and we have the Wildlife Trust. I mean, but that's not so much about keep on pushing the envelope is it, or is about actually maintaining heritage and keeping things going?*

[00:33:28]

Matthew Frith: Yeah, but it's keeping things going and recognising that things are changing, you know, we've touched on climate, we haven't really touched deeply on what the climate is likely to be doing to the things that we perhaps have been cherishing. You know, from a nature conservation perspective that's going to be very different from some of our other issues. Because habitats have changed, species will disappear, new species will come in, pathogens and pests will take hold in ways that people don't really understand in this moment in time. And it's all too vast to grapple with and I'm just thinking of the kind of messages that my younger colleagues in their twenties are talking about, is that they're just fearful of the future. Absolutely fearful in the way that I do not recall when I was twenty, or twenty five. At that time it was nuclear destruction which, you know, pretty devastating, and it might still happen but the climate and eco anxiety is running rife at the moment in our younger generations. And of course the feeling that we're getting is that we have mucked it up. We collectively, our generations, not necessarily us in our room here today, but our generations- And I go back to what Mal was saying, you know, we're working in a society which puts so much emphasis on superficiality, however we might describe it. And I'm sure we all get some benefit of that, hey, I support Crystal Palace Football Club and they're doing quite well at the moment but whether it's Strictly Come Dancing, the whole issue of celebrity culture, even going back to that policy walk in Oxford, I imagine that government thinks of society as either

passive consumers, whatever we chuck at them and entrepreneurs working in an orthodox economical system, and anything else does not compute. The idea of stepping out of a consumer society is, does not compute. That is really scary because the whole system would start to collapse. The whole system would start to collapse if you don't address the climate issue but that is just too vast for them to deal with. So I think it's just the, they just keep turning the same old wheels because they don't, it's too scary to get off them or to slow them down or to change tracks.

[00:36:06]

Syed Ahmed: And going back to your point on landownership, I guess what's interesting is that if you are- Within that top ten or whatever, who's doing something similar- who else is doing stuff like the Wildlife Trust where it's actually very devolved, control over smaller areas of land that you amalgamate it and so essentially you've got a system where some interesting stuff can be done, where decisions can be made at a much more local level, where the RSPB and The National Trust possibly don't have a structure like that. And where, what are they thinking in terms of land justice and land reform?

[00:36:45]

Matthew Frith: Land justice is I think another elephant in the room because, you know, discussions within the NGOs about those of us who manage land or own land, you know, it's almost like we're the good guys, or the good girls. But hold on a minute, that's not necessarily- That's still an organisation that is not democratically accountable. [laughing] The RSPB, The Wildlife Trust, The Woodland Trust, The National Trust, we are just landowners, and we are not democratically accountable in the way that I think land ownership rights, land rights for everybody, the commonwealth is not discussed within those organisations because it means disassembling their whole structure.

[00:37:31]

Des Garrahan: Canals and Rivers Trust is another one, and I mean they own a huge amount of land in that, and when they were made into a charity they were given loads of liabilities, i.e. they've got a whole, a very old infrastructure that they only know when it fails when it fails, because you can't check it. But they've got a huge asset base. You've

only got to go up to Tottenham Hale and look at the piecemeal building because they do not want to flood the area with land that they're selling off with that. And, again, that's another one I've spent a year on their board monitoring them. They had got virtually nobody on that board that is an expert in either of those fields and that, it's just- It is quite stunning sometimes to hear, you know, I have to look at that. And that's, land justice is really important I think on this.

[00:38:19]

9. Plenary session: What lessons have been learned?

Barbara Brayshay: *Okay, so there's some big, big issues, but what I'd like to come back to is the last question and maybe go- Just sort of go round, don't have to say anything, but what lessons would you take away from what we have done about success or failure over the last however long you've been involved? I mean I don't know if there's anyone- Some people have been involved for thirty, forty years, what have we actually learnt from doing this basically practical stuff, changing where we live? Anyone want to come in with a lesson or two?*

[00:38:57]

Mal Williams: I'm going to start if you like. Well first of all there's no such thing as failure, there's only learning. Which is a good place to start really, isn't it, because that means I've been learning a lot. [laughing] And the other thing is that the elephant in the room which was referred to the book I mentioned about economic growth is that if we don't take into account environmental and social accounting, as well as financial accounting, as is starting to happen, although I'm not holding my breath, we did- And if it did happen, if I was going to wave a magic wand over the government to turn them all into wise people they would initiate a statutory requirement for every single organisation on the planet, let alone in this country, to account for themselves environmentally and socially as well as financially. And there would be a profit and loss that they'd have to stick to on all those measures. So, okay, that's a big question. They're starting to call it environmental social governments, I say they, because they're the enemy. Those that promote competitiveness and glorification of winners and so on and so forth. Whereas I would rather actually make a case for the average man. I've always considered myself as a sixty-one per cent person. I was in grammar school, sixty-one per cent was fine. Sixty-

five per cent and teachers started expecting things of you and fifty-eight per cent they were telling you to do a bit more. [laughing] Sixty-one and you were ignored. That's what I learnt from education, right? And what I've learnt from the fifty years of experience is that, as I say, there's no such thing as failure and that we in the so-called periphery are the ones that take the chances and make the mistakes and now and again get things right. I can only offer Wales as a country that's got things right partially as compared to England, I only compare to England because that's an easy thing to say. In the same way as New Zealand's got it right in rugby terms.

[00:41:11]

Barbara Brayshay: *Okay, lessons. Going to have to be quick fire here-*

[00:41:13]

Nicky Scott: Very quick one. I've been branded as living in cloud cuckoo land for a long time and it's a very nice place to be I think and it's everyone else who's- [laughing] It's the others that aren't facing up to reality. It's just really what Mal's just said, you know, because we're not living, we're not paying the true cost of things. I did a theatre show years ago, we're not paying the trust cost of food for a start.

[00:41:38]

Barbara Brayshay: *Okay, Jane?*

[00:41:39]

Jane Stephenson: Well, I think the most successful things I've been involved in have all involved collaboration, whether it's collaboration with a different sector or with others within my own sector and that you can't do anything on your own. The other elephant in the room which we've not talked about is the failing our democratic system which, you know, when you've been comparing with the energy situation in Germany, you know, we have this archaic first past the post system which does not lead to anything good.

[00:42:18]

Syed Ahmed: Just very quick, I feel like the situation I think where we've been is that kind of saying, at first they ignore you, then they laugh at you, as you were saying, and then they fight you and that's the process we're in at the moment, as the incumbents realise there are real existentialist problems in terms of their business model, and then you win. And I think it's just a question of that-

[00:42:37]

Mal Williams: Then they love you.

[00:42:38]

Syed Ahmed: -and when we are in the process of the arguments winning, the one thing I would say there are risk associated with winning as well, which we shouldn't be complacent of. So if we do think of that vision in fifty years of actually all our visions actually being achieve, there'll probably be some things that are, some, you know, unexpected consequences out of those that we can't quite envision, and I think if anything we probably need to have a project of that. If we do win, because I think we're on a pathway, what are the problems associated with that.

[00:43:06]

Barbara Brayshay: *Okay, I'm going to come back on futures just as a final but, Nick, you said something earlier about copying. Nothing wrong with copying good stuff. And is there a lesson here that we shouldn't always necessarily be kind of- I mean you must be forever as a funder looking for the things that you think are going to go well?*

[00:43:26]

Nick Gardener: Yeah, and looking for the next best thing or the next innovation, and actually that's maybe not the right way to look at it, is it? I was actually going to say something that goes against that which is to celebrate the innovation because I was going to back up Brian's point really which is that remember you're talking about learning about the environmental moment. It's a movement that needs to keep moving. The background context changes so we need to constantly kind of reinvent where the edges

are in the battle, remembering to celebrate the successes and then going back to Jeremy's place of being pissed off and ready, getting ready to go to the next point because that's where this movement is the most effective, I think.

[00:44:05]

Barbara Brayshay: *Okay, so celebrating the innovation.*

[00:44:07]

Nick Gardener: Well celebrating success and then moving on to the next bit to tackle. Because overall we've, the last fifty years have seen rapid, rapid improvements in quality of life globally for people. We can't get, you know, this has been a very successful period for humanity, it's also become one of the most challenging and risky times for humanity. So we've got to keep reinventing where we're going to move and sit within that and try- I'd agree, you know, trying to push the mainstream to take up the mantle and then move onto the next bit.

[00:44:37]

Barbara Brayshay: *Okay.*

[00:44:38]

Lydia Blake: I think in terms of pushing the mantle is something that in my very day-to-day basis, building new stuff is easy, keeping your existing stuff maintained and working and ticking along is awk- I say building new stuff is easy. That's a challenge that people find it easy to get involved in and do the vision and pushing your envelope and coming up with new ideas. I look at paths that we built thirty years ago and I have to find essentially the same money to rebuild them but say, 'Can I have the same just to make it all right again, I'm not breaking any moulds, I'm not reinventing any wheels,' and especially in the context Matthew was saying about climate change and having land and managing stuff and looking after stuff, is becoming more challenging and more difficult, and so when we are- When we say we look to government and the establishment to sort of take on the mantle and keep things going, not selling it to them as it's going to be easy

and cheap because the thing should be that we build something and it goes into the local authority ownership and then they look after it and take it forward. But what tends to happen is the important interesting or the expensive bits drop out of it ,and you're left with then cutting slices out of things and then you're left, and you lose the social impact and you lose the added value as sort of the focus moves on to the next project or the next new things. So that's a kind of not thinking about how things are going to continue and be sustained and maintained into the future, is I think a bit of a, sometimes something the environmental movement does less well.

[00:46:33]

Chris Church: *So moving onto- Sorry, did you want to?*

[00:46:36]

Roger Geffen: No, I just wanted to point back to [inaud 00:46:38] sort of protest, policy and projects and picking up on the point about the importance of people networks. Because I thought that, I think that still work, still made- Just want to kind of reflect back that, now I was involved in the road protest and then aftermath of reclaim the streets, and the people that I got to know through that and the trust bonds that I felt through that when I first got to know Duncan through the climate camps – apparently you were both in climate camps together, I didn't know that. But, yes, those kind of people networks are really important and people can kind of go off and disappear in different directions and some people stick with protest for a lifetime, not very many, others go and form little projects that, you know, and use the personal networks that they've picked up from protest and still keep in touch with other people who are related] in policy work. You know, I think that the people networks that underpin that relationship between the- The three-way triangle that we're talking about here are actually really important for the triangle to work. So, yeah, people who started it all.

[00:47:40]

Chris Church: *So we should be able to do that, Jeremy?*

[00:47:42]

Jeremy Iles: No, I'll just wait until you're finished and then I'll say something.

[00:47:46]

Barbara Brayshay: *Until I've finished?*

[00:47:47]

Jeremy Iles: When you've wrapped up this session.

[00:47:48]

Chris Church: *Oh, right, okay. Well what I was actually- I was going to actually ask one last question which is, what's next? I mean we've- I mean community energy has come through quite strongly. Community recycling has had to go through some serious changes and developing different niches, local food is developing this really interesting focus on land workers, land justice that really wasn't there maybe twenty years ago. Are there things that- And we're also going to face the climate crisis getting worse. Are there things that people working on the kind of project-focus work should be doing that we're not doing now or is it just more or the same and better?*

[00:48:32]

Nicky Scott: Well you haven't mentioned health, social prescribing is a really big thing I think which is coming up and building soils. I mean that's the work that I'm on. We need to do a lot more work on having a soil, a national soil policy because we can sequester so much carbon by looking after our soils.

[00:48:49]

Mal Williams: Too right. I will go for Wales again, the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act has made a huge difference to the way in which politicians think in Wales because they can no longer think in terms of just four years, they have to think about literally the next generation and the generation after that.

[00:49:05]

Jane Stephenson: We should be lobbying for that.

[00:49:07]

Mal Williams: And we should be lobbying for that, big time, yes.

[00:49:09]

Chris Church: *Okay, yes, Duncan?*

[00:49:11]

Duncan Law: Coming back to what I said earlier which is that, you know, if we can't come up with a model that can involve everybody we've just lost the war, and if we aren't building that into the way we operate on every front, we've failed. We need to, I think Futerra said at the very beginning of the climate movement, urgency is easy to talk about but urgency without agency is futile, because it'll scare people shitless and what we need, agency needs to be at the centre of everything we do I think.

[00:49:45]

Des Garrahan: One of the things I often think about is before we actual pandemic, we had an epidemic of loneliness and everybody seems to have forgotten that. In the world that I'm, you know, are acting in getting the people who are not literally going to care about what we do in this room but are not even going to visit the space outside there to get those involved, is a very difficult sort of choice about that. So that horizon is big and that's a big sort of thing for, vision for me to try and get out.

[00:50:19]

Syed Ahmed: That's a great conversation, I just want to kind of again draw the lens back because something Matthew mentioned, he was giving his perspective of younger people and where their kind of priorities are at the moment. So I think one of the things is, you know, if we just take ourselves out of the environment perspective for the moment and think about what the next generation, and actually- What the next ten to

twenty years mean for the whole, society as a whole, what some of their priorities are now. Younger people can't buy a home, I'm guessing most people in this room own a home, and have had the privilege of owning a home for quite some period of time. I'm regularly told by the volunteers and interns that I hire, that they'll never own a home. So, you know, there are things, for older people, we've got an older age population. So I talk about those things, what does it mean in the context for us? Making sure that younger people can have really good jobs actually within the sectors that we're promoting, making sure that they don't have to spend £2,000, £3,000 a year on energy by making sure that energy costs go down, they can reinvest that money into actually owning their home. Making sure that as people retire they've got opportunities to work with volunteer groups and other kind of, and use their resources and knowledge in terms of many of people who I work with in the community energy sector. So there's bigger societal broad questions, so we shouldn't be so kind of, you know, what's the word-? We shouldn't look down just within our small area, what are the bigger- It's the things we need to cut our cloth to what the priorities as a society are. If we're thinking just very small all the time, we'll remain small. It's, you know, if we're going to speak to younger people and we're going to talk about a kilowatt hour of energy or a tonne of carbon, they're really not bothered. If you put it in the context of having a decent home, a decent job, and reducing the cost of living crisis for them, then they'll be more interested in it.

[00:52:05]

Jeremy Iles: I totally agree with that, and I think we also need to learn to give space for those new voices to come up and express what they want to do in their own way, and not necessarily copy what we've done, we're going, that's fine, that was for your generation, we're doing it this way now.

[00:52:20]

Chris Church: *So is there a scope for some kind of agency to actually support, almost like the green co-operative start up area, or does that exist?*

[00:52:31]

Syed Ahmed: I think basically all of us, it's incumbent upon all of us- As I said, those incumbents on the side of evil, if you want to call it that, they're not changing. Equally on our side, we need to be all aware and step out of our comfort zones to make sure we talk to a broader set of people to find out why is it that they're not doing enough about what we think that we're- Is a really interesting thing to do, and how we can make it easier for them to do that. I think all of you might be thinking, we do that already but actually, you know, you need to talk to some of those stakeholders who haven't been interested in what you're doing and find out why haven't you been coming to our door more.

[00:53:08]

Brian Kelly: Yes, I think it's about the scale that we want to operate at, and we have to operate at multiple scales but I think what we have to do in the next few years is really prioritise operating at that really hyper local scale, so that you're connect with those people and the way- And you're just understanding what they want to do, and then we could set up an agency that then organises the response to that, or we could actually say there's a number of us in the different sectors within the environmental and social justice sector and we just need to- We can be that agency. We just need to facilitate and respond to those needs and- So it's about having, I guess, sort of national or regional organisations who then link to more local but then you've got to have a link down to the hyper local and be essentially focusing all the energy in response to the ideas that are coming down.

[00:54:07]

Barbara Brayshay: *Okay, we've got three people here who have said almost nothing today and I'm just wondering if any of you would like to, Saskia, Toby and Felix, anything you'd like to react to what you've heard today or to feedback?*

[everyone laughing]

Barbara Brayshay: *This is called putting you on the spot.*

[00:54:32]

Felix Driver: It's a lot of food for thought I think to be honest. I don't know about Saskia and Toby-?

[00:54:39]

Toby Butler: Well yes, indeed. I mean there were just some interesting observations on kind of the, words and just the motivations and backgrounds and so, you know, in the early session, just the importance of training and courses and short courses and doing things, doing courses but then they're rubbish and then you find a better one and how you can kind of reinvent yourself through education or experience more apprenticeships. Or say you're coming from being in the education sector - that was music to my ears - that there's still something transformational about that and the importance offering people opportunities often through small and short courses is actually a really great way to kind of change hearts and minds, isn't it, I suppose. So I thought that was something that I reflected on. Then the other thing was about the kind of idea of action and projects and how, exemplars, and how kind of they can in fact be incredibly, a small local thing can have, you know, incredible echoes over time and space, if it works its way through to policy and into those kind of areas. So I think that was something which will be coming through from this morning. Also just struck by some of the patterns, you know, it was so interesting just having people from such different kind of perspectives and different areas, some of those kind of connections. But just this last session is just a bit extraordinary, I was talking about, just kind of processing really but just, yeah, I would have thought that kind of climate change and the kind of, you know, the panic around that would loom massively large in this discussion and we've touched on it, and the younger generation being fearful of it. But it's really interesting that actually you've all come up with other things which tend to be perhaps a little bit more concrete shall I say or less generalised which is interesting. So that's just one point-

[00:56:26]

Barbara Brayshay: *Saskia?*

[00:56:28]

Saskia Papadakis: Yes, I guess I spend a lot of time thinking about the, along with climate crisis, the kind of catastrophe of austerity and I thought it was really interesting today how that kind of came up in different ways but that everyone's kind of found- Like just the ways people have found navigating kind of the huge loss of resources and funding and things that that entails for lots of the different projects and organisations that people have been talking about, and, yeah, lots of things to think about and take- I mean I feel like also everyone could have spoken for a lot longer on a lot of the subjects, I really appreciate everyone kind of like squeezing the kind of story in such a short time.

[00:57:19]

Felix Driver: I'm going to have another go Chris, I think we have to reflect on the taking for granted the assumptions about, so for difference between projects, protests and whatever the other one was-

[00:57:33]

Mal Williams: Policy.

[00:57:34]

Felix Driver: Yes, policy, and I think that has come out, the intersection between those things. I think another thing that's clearly come out is, you know, the definition of the environmental movement and its relationship to other social movements and the need to think again about integrating the social project. And I think the final thing is, you know, some of us have spent a lot of time, spending a lot of hours interviewing people for life histories and maybe that hasn't come through.- You know, you've all been very, very energised about the agendas today and in the future, but thinking about those life histories and what they're revealing about people's motivations and so on, and their life stories-. I mean you mentioned education there, you know, that's what we're spending a lot of time thinking about. So there might be something there about the intergenerational that we've not said too much about today, so that's my reflection.

Jeremy Iles: Anyway, it's been really interesting, some of you have sort of stepped in at the last-minute which is great, and really nice to meet people. I hope, I think the team

would say, yes, it's been too short, we certainly could have had longer to have the panel sessions and as you've all travelled and put in the time, it's a shame in a way we couldn't just extend it for an hour. When we discussed the venue for this event, I said automatically it's got to be at Camley Street Natural Park, and they went, 'Why?' and I said, 'Well because it is the place to go in London as an example of voluntary sector and local authority green infrastructure,' and I think those of you who've had a little walk around, heard already from Lydia who volunteered here and who came here as a kid and, and quite few of you said you'd watched its development over the years. So I think it's been a really good choice, and I'd just like to say thank you very much to Matthew and his colleagues for everything-

[applause]

So thank you very, very much and we'll be in touch.