**Sustainable living for the next generation – (Joseph Owen)**

It was a pleasure to work with Alison, Simon Eden, and David Hutchinson on the Greenprint project, which chimes with much of Green Halo thinking. We achieved a lot by establishing a set of priorities for South Hampshire, which tried to address social, economic and environmental challenges together and emphasized the natural capital assets that our area offers. I know the work is now being undertaken by a very capable doctoral researcher, Rhiannon, who, like myself, is from the University of Southampton. Already, the project has been a crucial component of the successful Solent Freeport bid. It’s fair to say that greenwashing flawed and fleeting regional investment is no longer an option, and the Greenprint should provide mitigation against this. It was reassuring to hear from Anne-Marie about the Solent Green Growth Institute.

I’d like to thank Aldred Drummond and Professor Helm for the stimulating and suggestive presentations. I’ve organised my selection of thoughts using three broad headings: education, accessibility and urgency. These principles, for want of a better word, strike me as a way of addressing the challenges of sustainable living for the next generation and a way of thinking through Prof. Helm’s proposals. None of this will be profound or new, I don’t think, but I’ve tried to formulate an instinctive response, and hopefully that captures the mindset of a youngish person faced with these, on the face of it, phenomenally complex issues.

So first of all, I’d like to address **education**.

\* Our generation must focus on the climate crisis, so it’s important to emphasise the changes that anyone can make, whether that’s by identifying and capitalizing on behavioural shifts, encouraging active travel and low-polluting vehicles, or facilitating working remotely on a long-term basis. It’s paramount that people understand the environmental impact of their lifestyle choices and consumer habits: be it what food they buy, what clothes they wear, or what their pensions are invested in. Raising awareness is key.

\* Making sure that people possess a global outlook is just as essential. Events such as COP26 have to lead the way. We must encourage those who can change to do so, and offset others who cannot so easily. Providing this awareness, and the subsequent political mandate it offers, will give further legitimacy to governments for combatting greenwashing through legislation, and by doing so, protecting citizens and consumers, as underpinned by statutes. The bills being passed by Parliament, referred to by Professor Helm, are an encouraging start.

\* We know changes to individual behaviour alone won’t offset emissions to the levels required but a collective buy-in will, at the very least, put pressure on large companies and those in power. Moralizing about the emissions produced from individuals and households isn’t without merit, but when a Cumbrian coalmine is seemingly approved, for instance, it elicits productive anger in some, but likely breeds despondency, and with that apathy, in others. Governments have to show leadership; as the pandemic indicates, people will broadly abide by the rules in an emergency.

Next, an illustration for thinking about **accessibility**.

\* We must make sure that sustainability schemes are well advertised and well run. Having green initiatives, systems and structures that are affordable and incentivised is vital, such as lowering barriers to delivery for retrofit grants. I’d recount my own experience applying for the Green Homes Grant, on behalf of my Nan, but I’ve my health and sanity to think about. These schemes need to work properly, be accessible and followed through with conviction. Homes should be sustainable at an affordable price. More broadly, we need price parity across sectors as various as the food, fashion and motor industries. People say they want to live sustainably but can rarely afford to do so consistently. Why should they have to wait?

Which brings me to the matter of **urgency**.

\* Our generation will be dealing with the fallout from the failed promises and missed commitments of previous years. Addressing climate anxiety and associated mental health problems will constitute one part of the response. We must also act on the physical health and structural implications of higher temperatures. Access to nature and capital maintenance, as Professor Helm indicated, will be crucial to this. In our region, maintaining quality water supply, restoring flood defences and rewilding are fundamental to future wellbeing.

\* For many young people, the need to address environmental problems is brute fact. They want to see organisations take responsibility through emissions reduction to reach Net Zero, and to see governments show competence and leadership on the green agenda.

I came to the Greenprint project as a relative layperson on green issues. That said, I was amenable to addressing my carbon footprint, thinking hard about increasing biodiversity and the associated costs, and considering the social consequences of environmental damage. I’d suggest that particular attitude among my generation is closer to the rule than it is the exception. There is plenty of good will going around to make drastic changes to avert climate and environmental disaster. I think it would take a remarkable act of self-sabotage to waste that good will. But if those in authority say one thing and do another, particularly at this point, it’ll disaffect both reasonable and unreasonable people. Hearts and minds have already been won in my generation; now we just need policies that work, schemes that are properly delivered, and a consistency of message that is impossible to ignore.

Thanks for inviting me, thanks for listening, and thanks to the other brilliant speakers today, and I’ll hand you back.