



HOUSE

OF LORDS

# Environment and Climate Change Committee

## Corrected oral evidence: Mobilising action on climate change and environment: behaviour change

Tuesday 7 December 2021

11.05 am

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Members present: Baroness Parminter (The Chair); Baroness Boycott; Lord Browne of Ladyton; Lord Cameron of Dillington; Lord Colgrain; Lord Lilley; Lord Lucas; Baroness Northover; Bishop of Oxford; Lord Whitty; Baroness Young of Old Scone.

Evidence Session No. 3

Virtual Proceeding

Questions 17 - 22

### Witnesses

**I:** Sally Copley, Executive Director for External Affairs, Sustrans; Fiona Richards, Operations Director England North, the Conservation Volunteers (TCV); Ugo Vallauri, Co-founder and Policy Lead, the Restart Project; Gareth Ellis, Project Director, the Green Valleys.

## Examination of witnesses

Sally Copley, Fiona Richards, Ugo Vallauri and Gareth Ellis.

Q17 **The Chair:** I now open the second session with our four panellists: Sally Copley, the executive director for external affairs at Sustrans; Fiona Richards, the operations director in England for the Conservation Volunteers; Ugo Vallauri, who is the co-founder and policy lead for the Restart Project; and Gareth Ellis, project director for the Green Valleys. Welcome to you all.

I will ask the first question. What have been the most successful behaviour change projects delivered by your organisation and the communities you work with, and, frankly, why were they successful?

**Sally Copley:** Good morning, everybody. Thank you very much for inviting Sustrans to be a part of the panel this morning. We are a national walking, wheeling and cycling organisation. I want to tell you about a couple of our most successful behaviour change projects. I have to say, to begin with, that I think two things make them successful.

The first is that we have to make it so that the easiest way to get about is by walking and cycling—not just easier but the easiest way to get around. The second is that we are completely embedded in the communities where we work. That reaps huge dividends in terms of the actual impact of the work that we are doing.

Our projects combine community-led street design, activities and infrastructure improvements to create healthy streets, which improve air quality, increase green spaces and reduce carbon emissions. Encouraging people to walk and cycle rather than drive is one of the few ways you can make an immediate impact on air pollution in your neighbourhood. There is not very much in the field of climate change where you can make an impact today by personal action, and I think people feel that.

As to the kinds of things we have done where we have made it easier for people to walk and cycle, there are dozens and dozens of projects across the country, but I will tell you about one in Stockton-on-Tees, where we have an active travel hub. Stockton has one of the higher deprivation rates in England. It is higher than the England average. It also has a correspondingly lower life expectancy. Heart disease, cancer and respiratory illness cause many early deaths in Stockton-on-Tees. As in most urban areas, there are traffic congestion issues.

Since 2009, the active travel hub has worked in Stockton-on-Tees to deliver activities, advice and resources to help people to become more active and confident, walking and cycling in the community. Since 2010, over 20,000 people have been more active through everyday walking and cycling, which is brilliant. Every year we have worked with others in the community, volunteers and other organisations, to deliver over 400 bike rides and 500 community walks, which improve people's health, fitness and well-being levels. It gets people outside and builds a connection and engagement with each other and networks. Of the hub users surveyed,

51% came from the top 20% most deprived areas, which is really significant, 85% strongly agreed that they felt healthier and fitter, and 78% cycled more as a form of transport.

We are quite clear that the success of that project came from embedding it in the community. I am quite fond of citing Ruth Bader Ginsburg—I am sure you have all heard this as well—that you fight for what you believe in, but you do it in a way that brings people with you. When you are embedding your project work in the community, you are listening to people and engaging people from the very outset. That could be having a conversation with people outside a primary school on a street in north Belfast, considering how we could work together to introduce a cycle lane or encouraging more walking to school. We are having those conversations directly with parents and city councillors at the very earliest moment. We are having community engagement events outside particular areas where we want to introduce safer streets and encourage more walking and cycling.

There are a number of ways we can do that. They build collaboration and ownership, and that is what brings people together to make it work.

***Fiona Richards:*** It has been very inspiring listening to everybody's stories so far. The Conservation Volunteers is an organisation that has just over 60 years' experience in connecting people and green space through a whole range of volunteering opportunities. Some of the most successful, and probably some of the most well-known, will focus on our green gym offer, which is a programme of activity that brings people out into the outdoor space to improve that green space and, as part of that programme, has opportunities to focus on physical exercise, health and well-being and healthy eating.

We did a study comparing some of our traditional conservation activities where, simply, people with an environmental conscience and motivation joined our groups to work on the land and green spaces, with the motivation of people where they were signposted to a green gym, health and well-being offer.

We found that it did not really matter what people's initial motivation was. The impact on them and their life-changing experiences came from the connection they made with each other. There is the power of intergenerational and multi-interested groups of people coming together around a common purpose. Being able to see, observe, witness and experience the tangible and visible change they make to the environment that they care about, and then to engage in conversation, learning from each other about an unstructured but supportive environment that creates safe, physical activity that enables people to have an opportunity to think, reflect and connect with each other, builds an ownership.

That collective action has introduced some of the people who are perhaps most distanced from their environment and community to be able to see that it is accessible for them and it has a health and well-being benefit for them, and that they have something to offer other people.

A lot of our volunteers will be from more vulnerable groups, who perhaps have not experienced that ability to be anything other than a receiver of a service. The notion of being able to contribute will be part of something bigger, and feeling valued, regarded, respected and heard have been some of the most important aspects for embedding more and more appetite for positive, pro-social activity and a move away from some of the more damaging experiences within their life. It is the promotion of recovery, green recovery and health recovery. Ultimately, it is never more needed than right now.

**Ugo Vallauri:** Thank you for inviting us. We are a much younger charity. We were founded as the Restart Project in 2013. Our work focuses on fixing our relationship with electronics and campaigning for the right to repair our products and avoid having to send them to landfill, or hopefully recycling, prematurely.

Our successful activities have always had a strong community aspect to them. We were known originally for running community repair events. We called them Restart Parties. We were the first group to start running such activities in the UK. Today, nine years later, over 200 groups replicate this work, independently from us for the most part. We have grown to provide support and help others to get started, or just to help get the voices heard of those who are trying to make a difference by repairing, reusing or prolonging the life of products that they already have.

These kinds of activities bring together communities in very interesting ways. It is about the outrage that people have for things that fail prematurely. It is also about the resourcefulness of the very skilled communities that we all live in. It is about relearning how, in our communities, there are plenty of people who still care about making an impact on preventing waste and have the skills to help others to learn how to be more resourceful at preventing waste, learning why certain products break and whether they were designed in a way that makes it harder or impossible to repair them, or learning about the barriers that we are experiencing.

Some of our most successful activities have been in helping groups to see the bigger picture not just of their single monthly activities but of the importance of bringing groups together by way of collecting data about the main problems that people see at these events, as well as the environmental impact generated by each repair and collectively the amount of impact that we all have.

At the same time, it is helping to channel the frustration that people experience when having to throw away something that would otherwise be completely reusable, minus maybe a prohibitively expensive spare part that you cannot even buy any more. It is understanding that community activity plays a big role in making it visible that repair and reuse should be the first option but that there are barriers that communities cannot fully overcome by themselves.

Part of this success has been in bringing together and acknowledging—this is a theme mentioned by Rob in the previous session—the diversity of groups and approaches, and not expecting everyone to follow the exact same approach. It is bringing together networks. We have a history of trying to convene and bring together groups and networks of groups across the UK and internationally.

In the UK, we are particularly proud of having created, three years ago now, the Manchester declaration. It brought together the first UK-wide gathering of community repair activists from all over the country. Groups of community repairers got together and wrote a crying letter asking designers, as well as politicians, to think carefully about the barriers that we experience. Increasingly, by bringing groups together and linking the frustration about the individual product that you cannot repair with the need for a collective, global and universal right to repair, we are trying to help make that connection and see the role that every group can play together in changing the narrative and putting on more pressure to make these issues central to policy-making.

**The Chair:** In telling us about your most successful projects you have also been able to demonstrate the wider benefits to health of connections and skills that we are giving to people. Thank you for that.

**Q18 Lord Lucas:** What are the challenges faced in developing community behaviour change activities on climate change and the environment? Are there limits to the potential contribution from community activities in your area of focus?

**Sally Copley:** The challenges are whether the things that we know make it successful are put into place. There is a real theme from the earlier panellists this morning about community engagement.

The challenges start when community engagement is not genuine and when organisations and bodies do not start with the experts in their streets and where they live, not forgetting that our mission in Sustrans is to make it easier for everybody, wherever they are, to walk, wheel and cycle. That is at the very core of our mission. The challenge is when that is not done in a collaborative way or at a collaborative design level that puts local people at the very heart of it. That immediately sets you off on the wrong starting point.

A further challenge is communication, if it is not made clear what the vision is, what it is we are trying to do or how this will be of benefit. The benefit is from making it the easiest way to get around, bearing in mind that something like three in four people say that they would cycle more if it was safer, easier and more enjoyable. I would contend that some of the best things about cycling and walking are that it is cheaper, healthier, there is immediately less air pollution, and it is more fun. It is the only way I can guarantee that I am always exactly seven minutes late. Being able to communicate that to people—why it is a benefit for us together and showing people—makes an enormous difference. Not communicating with or engaging people is a really big challenge.

There is another challenge that I cannot not mention, and that is funding. Funding can be quite stop/start. On the one hand, you have your capital funding for infrastructure to make sure that you have fully accessible paths. What you also have to be able to do is support people in making use of those. The revenue funding for behaviour change work is really pivotal. We have found it to be quite challenging when it is difficult to realise the real cost benefits of improvements to road schemes or removing vehicles from particular paths, if you do not then support communities to make the most of them.

**Fiona Richards:** Sally has mentioned funding very clearly, which is really important in terms of the whole range of being able to appropriately engage with communities and listen to their voice, but also to reassure them that you are going to stay. There is nothing worse than the short-term buzz, motivation and momentum you get from something, and then two years down the line, for whatever reason, there is no way to make that sustainable in a short period of time, and you need more time but the funding is over. Communities will talk a lot about their faith in organisations that can really help them to make the most of their resources, their assets and their strengths, but then too quickly they are not able to see that through. The patience that goes with sticking with something is very important.

What we know particularly about behavioural change and successful outcomes are things to do with retaining and re-engaging with groups of people who, if we are not careful, we lose sight of by virtue of having to withdraw.

TCV has a community network membership of just over 1,700 members now. All those groups benefit from support, guidance and access to safe practice, insurance and the sorts of things that make looking after green spaces practically doable for local groups. The ambition is to get to a much more integrated network rather than just small groups working on their own. The notion of collective action and being able to sustain that through good communication, robust offers of practical support and service and being able to join people in activities that give their project a boost, a lift and a move forward—all those things—require much more focused resource than, I think, charities can manage on their own, for the most part.

The other key area is about not working in competition but in collaboration across the whole emergency agenda that ensures that communities, wherever they live and whoever the particular lead organisation is, have an ability to collaborate and build resilience in a framework that can support people to engage and benefit from the wider environment in which they live.

**Gareth Ellis:** Good morning. What I was going to say about the resources for the community group has been well covered. When we need the necessary support from local government in particular, or other statutory bodies, we increasingly find that their limited resources—particularly in staff time—mean that particular projects can be

marginalised or brushed aside because the officers do not have time to deal with them, or they simply go into a queue. For example, asking for permission to use a land lease might take nine to 12 months to get through to an officer's desk, and we have a three-month application for a grant to do something.

We also increasingly find a reduction in staff capacity, both on the community side and necessarily in the statutory bodies that we need to engage with through the proper process for permissions, engagement and technical expertise. We are often seen as something that is not necessarily a statutory function of authorities and bodies, and we tend to be pushed to the bottom of the pile. There is an understanding with certain council officers with busy workloads that we are not going to be a priority.

Unfortunately, there is a real impact on enthusiasm and deadlines for grants. We then feel let down by other parts of local government and further up that system, in that the lack of resources and lack of support impacts us. We need to unlock that. We are not asking for money from local government. We can get the money from the Lottery or others. What we need is an officer to be able to deal with our queries in a timely fashion, and we increasingly find that local authorities struggle to do that.

**Ugo Vallauri:** Some of the challenges for the Restart Project might mirror what has been said already. Certainly, it is to do with the expectation that potentially the work done by community groups in our domain can substitute more comprehensive action than that done by local and waste authorities, for example. It is very easy to give visibility to these types of activities, because they are exciting and bring a message that resonates with the vast majority of the public.

We also need to be aware of the size of the challenge. If we are talking about the UK being the second largest per capita producer of electrical waste at 24 kilograms per person per year, between 20 and 40 kilograms of waste might be prevented at each one of these events—and they happen in each community once a month—while waste is generated every minute.

Organising the events is not particularly challenging. There is an interested community of people who want to contribute their skills, and we need to acknowledge that that kind of community contribution is essential in highlighting how necessary all of this is, but it is not enough, even if it was to grow at scale, to fix the bigger issue, which is the way our system is currently designed to put up barriers against the reuse and repair of products. Too often, it tends to take the short cut of suggesting that recycling should be the answer, not realising that we could very often prevent something from having to be recycled if we created the conditions for reuse and repair at scale.

Q19 **Lord Lucas:** Ugo, how do we, as politicians and the public, get the information that we need in order to know which products are built to repair and, therefore, what products we should be buying?

Turning back to Sally's exposition on Stockton, what would be the next big thing there? How do you turn that from being a successful, local, low-key community hub into something that really makes a difference to the whole town?

**Sally Copley:** I am sorry, I think I missed the first part of that question because my wi-fi went down. Was it a question about what we do following up with Stockton?

**Lord Lucas:** Yes. How do you take it from being something that is clearly long-term successful but quite low key and quiet—there is not a lot of buzz about it—to being something that is obviously making a big difference to the whole town?

**Sally Copley:** It is one of the areas that we work quite hard on. We are a national organisation based across all four nations of the UK, so we want to be able to replicate within towns and cities where we are working those kinds of schemes in those neighbourhoods. We have a neighbourhood approach. It is very deliberate, because that enables us to be really embedded in those communities.

There are two things in terms of the next steps. The first is that, because we are embedded locally in that neighbourhood route, we carry on growing in the same cities and towns so that that spreads. Our ambition is to have vehicle-free paths across the country connecting us all. Obviously, it is a longer-term goal, but we have dozens and dozens of projects and schemes already in train with many different local authorities and other bodies across the country. The first bit is to be growing that like a ripple effect across the places we are working.

The second is to share that good practice. I mentioned being with parents and talking about a school in a street in north Belfast. The kind of work we were talking about was, "What are the resources that you need in order to make that live here, and what can we share that has worked elsewhere?" I was able to talk with people from School Streets in Lambeth, and SafeStreets, where we have been able to grow walking and cycling access for that, and in Brighton, for example. Across the country we have been able to share those stories. We have talked about storytelling quite a bit this morning. It has been really inspiring for lots of people to hear about it.

There is a challenge for us. It is not just the funding. I absolutely take on board Fiona's point about groups being there and then going. It is about staying. That is why being embedded in the community matters so much.

There is something else that a volunteer reflected to me a few weeks ago. It is about boots on the ground. Who is really going to make this happen? One of our aims is to make sure that we are skilling and enabling people locally to own what we are doing together, so that they can then be part of spreading it. The one thing we obviously do not have is hundreds and hundreds of boots on the ground, but we can certainly give resources and information that help people grow that locally. I am

not saying it flippantly when I cite the line that you must fight for the things that you believe in but do it in a way that brings people with you. The only way we are going to make a difference and bring so many fantastic benefits for communities across the country is if we really do bring people with us. It has to be owned.

It is twofold. It is growing that within the networks and the neighbourhoods where we are, and it is making sure that we are sharing the stories and, of course, talking to people such as you so that we can spread that and see what we can do to build more partnerships with that aim.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I think there was a second half of the question to you, Ugo.

**Ugo Vallauri:** Yes, absolutely. The data that we collect and the insights that we publish based on that data openly give interesting information about the extent to which people want to keep using products that they have had for much longer than manufacturers tend to care about supporting them. As an example, we are currently reviewing data that will show that people tend to use laptops for much longer than the five years that a manufacturer would think is a normal life cycle for that type of product.

The reality is that data on the repairability and reliability of specific products does not always exist. This is one reason why we are asking for real right-to-repair regulation that would help, first, to achieve minimum standards in the repairability of products. There are other ways. For example, the UK could learn from what France has done in creating a repairability score index that could be used by consumers to start seeing what the more repairable and less repairable options are when they buy a new product.

I would just add that there has been quite a lot of enthusiasm about the Government's adoption, back in July, of a regulation on the repairability of white goods that had previously been approved when we were still part of the EU. It was communicated as giving us a right to repair. Unfortunately, it is very far from doing so. It contains some very small steps towards giving professional repairers access to spare parts, but it does not say anything about making any of this universally accessible or affordable to everyone. We need to be quite careful about how these conversations are framed. That is where the experience of real people repairing on a daily basis or as volunteers brings some of these issues to life, away from how manufacturers, and unfortunately regulators at times, tend to shape some of these conversations.

Q20 **Lord Browne of Ladyton:** I have a very specific question about scaling up, which I would like to direct to Fiona. In advance, I commend the TCV for what you are doing with the groups you are working with. Manifestly, you are improving people's lives for a large number of volunteers.

You told us that you have been in existence for 60 years. You deserve to

be commended for that, too. That is amazing longevity. You have 1,700 community groups and you have these ambitions for 2035. The tree planting and diversity targets that you have set yourselves are very commendable. You have set yourself a target of having 5,000 community groups by 2025. How are you going to make that exponential increase in scaling up in that very short period of time, against the period of your history? What will be the key to that?

**Fiona Richards:** That is a great question. Thank you very much. As I have said, we have a network of 1,700 membership groups, each of which has a whole army of volunteers behind it. Our own operational service has a number of sites across the UK, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Our links in those localities, with smaller community groups, will also be more regulated and accounted for than we have been able to do so far. We will embark on signing up those colleagues, with support from funding agencies, into that wider network. They will not necessarily all become completely signed-up members of the network, but they will all have a connection to TCV and a locality that enables them to participate in operationally led activities in some of those areas.

In my time at TCV, which is only about three years, we have grown from 600 to double that, and more. There is an increased momentum and an increased interest in all that comes with the multiple outcomes involved in being involved in green space that are beyond just a concern about the environment, although that is key to bringing community groups together and raising aspirations for schools and outdoor education. Children who start their interest earlier and earlier become the next committed group of volunteers and community activists, and we hope to educate and build on the success that we have already had in some of our schools partnerships.

It is a whole-community approach. Our network has traditionally been already committed environmentalists. What we are reaching out for are much broader and wider community network engagements. My hand going up earlier was to boost Sally's response to how we might replicate and scale up some of her organisation's activities, which is by doing things together in that locality and building on that accessible, easy-to-get-to green space. Then, when you get there, you encounter the next organisation that will help you to the next level. It is a real doubling of our power by doing things more collaboratively and together across a much wider agenda.

Q21 **Baroness Young of Old Scone:** That brings me on to my question, which is about activity at a local level in individual neighbourhoods and communities, and the role that civil society in business and local government play. Gareth has already indicated how poorly placed some of our local governments and other local agencies are to respond, because they are just so strapped for cash and particularly people.

Gareth, do you want to add anything to the question of how businesses, local government and civil society work together, and what could be done to get it to happen better apart from the things that you have already

outlined?

**Gareth Ellis:** Certainly. There is a huge variety across local government. Each council may have different responses to climate change. Some are better than or different from others. We certainly find that there is quite a disconnect between high-level government policy and how that gets filtered down, particularly into the statutory functions of local government. We still have a feeling that a lot of the responses are, “We’re concerned about climate change, but it’s not actually my job to do anything about it. My job is to do something else—a specific statutory function that I have a limited budget for—and I don’t want to look beyond the bubble that I’m in”.

We find that the silo effect of different government departments and different departments within local government can be a barrier. Most of us see our council as a single entity. As an ex-council worker, I know that councils are multiple departments that compete for budgets and for whose responsibility this is, where things fall between statutory functions of certain parts of local government. That can cause frustration.

I still think there is a lot of inertia and resistance at the councillor level. We need to do an awful lot of work reskilling and raising awareness among councillors, who will range from having complete climate change denial to serious focused action and everywhere in between. Fundamentally, it is still not embedded into local government that they have a role supporting their communities on climate change.

We are seeing a change with local government on their internal carbon emissions, with lights in council buildings and schools, their vehicle fleets for refuse collection and things like that. I think that is being embedded in local government and progress is being made there, but whose job is it to support the communities to decarbonise ourselves? There is a huge demand for action. People feel that they are limited in what they can do within their own homes in some cases. People feel limited that they now need to look at system change as well as behaviour change. They want to be part of that, but often they find that there are barriers, disinterest or a lack of support from those organisations that could help us.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** I wonder whether Sally and Fiona might talk from their perspective not just about local government but about the business role on a local basis.

**Sally Copley:** One thing that we have done is work hard to involve local businesses in that work where we can. Quite often, there is a bit of fear about what change will mean. Being clearer about the benefits of walking and cycling more can only be helpful, particularly as we seek to make it the easiest way to get about. We would contend quite strongly that improving the walking and cycling infrastructure and introducing that behaviour change in a local community does mean—and the evidence shows—that people spend more money in local businesses. It is a benefit there, too. Quite often, it quite quickly gets fraught and hotly contested.

That is where the communication element is really important so that people can actually see what the changes are and what they will mean.

There are things that would help to support a more civil society and working together with local businesses. Both Fiona and I have talked about the long-term revenue funding and staying embedded in communities. Having that political ambition locally on active travel and owning that across an area, and bringing different partners to the table to own that and model that, will make a difference.

Of course more carrot and stick efforts could be made around behaviour, but really it has to be much more carrot in making this the easiest way to get around. As I say, it is really involving and embedding communities. That includes local businesses in those behaviour change projects.

**Fiona Richards:** Probably one thing to bring this alive is that I am involved with a local authority in Doncaster, where it talks very much about system change around the whole nature of green space, looking after parks, getting people moving, physical activity and a partnership with Sport England. TCV is coming together with existing community groups and local businesses to provide a map of all the opportunities for people to engage with a whole range of activities from active travel through to getting involved in a local park, through to joining a particular club that will give you and your children access to a park that you have invested in and looked after.

It is a huge undertaking, but we have been engaged in consulting with the community, bringing those audiences together and mapping a whole resource full of enticing and inviting opportunities for families in an area where traditionally we would say that they struggle to engage and re-engage in a post-industrial local landscape that has left feelings of emptiness.

The motivation, the partnership with the local authority and the key individuals who are leading and advocating very powerfully for that at a local and central level start to be a real momentum and gear change. That transformational piece of work will probably take five years to realise. There is a definite destination. There is a route map to get there and there is a whole range of organisations participating and collaborating together, not just on their own agenda but sharing that mutually identifiable agenda together in a place.

When we talk about place-based approaches, that has about it the ring of all sorts of particular ills in society, but quite clearly it is about connecting people and green space in the community. There is a real energy to that. With the ability to do that in another location and another location, before you know it you have really built on the transformational change cycle that we are hoping to build.

We would like the resources to research evidence and publish the outcome. I think we are probably still at the stage of resourcing that. That is the other challenge. It is about being able to produce evidence

that is robust enough to convince partners across the nation that that is the way to go.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** Ugo, do you want to add anything about local government or local business?

**Ugo Vallauri:** Absolutely. We see massive opportunity to bring the message to the heart of our community work and to be more widespread across local businesses and local authorities. We have been advocating this, and in London at least we are working on this directly to help local authorities and waste authorities to signpost repair options to people at large. Part of the problem that many people face—and this has been documented by research that we have done at community events—is that they have lost confidence in using commercial repair options. They prefer to just give up and buy a new product, creating unnecessary waste that way.

Of course there are cost issues, but there are other aspects that are about being able to find the right person or business who could repair your products. Signposting viable options in your locality is to do with helping to revive the importance of the repair sector so that the business component of the solution will thrive.

What is interesting about this is that it is a so-called win-win situation. On the one hand, it contributes to preventing and reducing the amount of waste generated. At the same time, it shows a pathway towards the creation of new green repair jobs. Jobs can be created in every community and can complement the type of work that is done by committed volunteers.

In that context, the role of local authorities is very much about signposting and helping people to find the more desirable options more easily. There is another element to this that very clearly came out of lockdown, particularly the third lockdown. All at once, many people started realising that they had a lot of things at home that they did not need any more but that could benefit people in need, such as students doing home schooling. As an organisation, we created a directory of community initiatives across the UK that could take, refurbish and put things back into use in the community, such as repaired and refurbished laptops.

This shows an opportunity to use the communicative power of local authorities to shape the conversation about making sure that everyone who might have something they no longer need can be reminded of the more virtuous options of donating for reuse and repair rather than taking a product to a recycling centre.

This better integration of different aspects of businesses, local authorities and community activities can bring change that will push for the system change that we need to see, as Fiona was saying.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** I am usurping your role here, Madam

Chair, but it would be useful to get examples of really good local authorities and really good joined-upness between different projects that you have experienced, if there are some. We heard about Doncaster. That kind of example would be extremely useful to us, I think.

**The Chair:** Absolutely.

- Q22 **Lord Browne of Ladyton:** The last question is the same as the last question in the previous session, so you have had time to think about it. How might government work better with civil society to enable and encourage behaviour change for climate change and the environment? How might government policy better support civil society activities?

We are somewhat limited in time and there are four of you. Could you be reasonably short? You can always write in later with other ideas. We have heard something from you about what you would like the Government to do. I will start with Sally, since she had her hand up anyway.

**Sally Copley:** It will be the same things from me. It is about enabling us to work with local communities, and the continuation of revenue funding. It is about making the case. If there is one thing we have to do, it is to make cycling, walking or wheeling the easiest way to get about, not just easier but the easiest way.

I had my hand up, because there was a figure that I was going to give you. Fiona is right about being able to evidence that. It is certainly something that we are working towards. People who walk, cycle and use public transport spend the most in their local shops. Typically, they each spend 40% more per month than car drivers. That is really important to know in terms of the local community and that work. Continuing to support us in delivering that will be invaluable. We need to do more to demonstrate the impact of a positive change. Telling the stories and sharing the examples would be the best thing, but, yes, the real changes would be making sure that it is possible for local authorities to invest, to give the time and to make the infrastructure changes that make walking and cycling the easiest ways to get about.

**Gareth Ellis:** My answer is what I alluded to earlier. It seems relatively simple for Governments to write policy, but that has to filter down through 50 or 60 years of legislation and regulation to determine what individual council officers, regulatory officers and what have you deal with in their day-to-day work. The vast majority of that is not written with any reference to climate change or to the challenges we currently face. There is that disconnect.

We are there with a lot of the policy, but that has to translate through to action level, to officers who determine applications and to council staff who deal with the day-to-day work. That policy needs to be made real to people's jobs and to people's communities. We see quite a disconnect between a vision, which is often good from government, on acting on climate change and very large targets, and it not being filtered down when we find it is a struggle to realise.

The communities are all on board with that vision. We want to help. We know that our councils are strapped for cash. In many respects it is not, "We don't need your help", but, "Get out of our way and let us get on and do this, because we can find the funding from elsewhere". Getting that policy filtered down through all the levels and structures that we deal with on a day-to-day basis is where government needs to focus the effort now. It is on making that policy real and turning it into action.

**Fiona Richards:** I do not have much to add. I would probably say that there is a real art to community groups being able to self-organise and to be empowered to do stuff, but to know their limitations and to have a local government that is responsive to their needs. It is that balance between community empowerment and engagement and being alongside, supportive and enabling that to happen.

Local authorities with a motivational vision and a bold commitment to seeing it through, and the capacity to bring communities in without overburdening them with rules and things to comply with, are the ones that are quicker, more agile, flexible and adaptive to the needs of the local community.

**Lord Browne of Ladyton:** Thank you, Fiona. Ugo, you may well get the last word here. You have a very obvious regulatory change that you would like to see enacted.

**Ugo Vallauri:** The main thing is that we want everyone to find it convenient, affordable and possible to repair the products they have. We have been petitioning the UK Government to extend the right to repair regulations to smartphones, tablets and laptops. The European Union is ahead of the game on these products. There is no commitment so far by the Government. We ran a poll recently that shows that over 80% of the public really want a commitment from the Government in this area. That is across demographics and political spectrums, so it shows that the frustration that people have with the current system is real.

Another aspect on which the UK could lead is in removing some of the barriers related to the cost of repairing. Fiscal policies could change the game, either by removing VAT on repair activities—there are interesting examples happening in Austria and Germany—or providing people with partial vouchers to cover some of the repair costs as an attempt to revive a repair economy and reduce the amount that we waste.

There is a lot that can happen. Connecting the push bottom-up with a system change top-down could really help to move these issues further and much more quickly than just counting on communities to fix everything.

**Lord Browne of Ladyton:** If you come to a Select Committee with a proposal that has 80% of the public behind it, you have a fair chance of getting a recommendation.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ugo, Sally, Fiona and Gareth, for your

contributions this morning. They have been really appreciated. Thank you also for all the work that your organisations enable in communities up and down the country. We will listen and reflect on your words carefully. If, as Baroness Young pointed out, you have examples of where you have been working well with local authorities, we would be pleased to receive those separately after the meeting. Thank you to all of you.