



Food democracy: the power of food citizenship

Wednesday 24 November at 2pm

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNRLdNZx-M8> (bilingual)

<https://youtu.be/98K0U04IEOE> (with simultaneous translation)

Cadeirydd / Chair: Chris Nott, Food Farming and Countryside Commission

Panel: Camilla Saunders, Sustainable Food Knighton; Hywel Morgan, Fferm Esgairllaethdy, Sir Gaerfyrddin; Siân Stacey, O'r Mynydd i'r Môr / Summit to Sea.

Jane Powell [session organizer]

I've organized this session because I know so many people across Wales want to see change and it's so hard to make it happen. Many community groups are campaigning on various things. There's so much energy and enthusiasm and yet it doesn't seem to reach the government. It doesn't seem to have much effect sometimes so I wondered if there's something missing, because things aren't working as well as they could and I organized this session to investigate that.

How do we get the right people lined up in the right order so that we get the change we want to see? So that's the thinking behind this afternoon session and I'm excited by the speakers we have today. Camilla Saunders is from Knighton and Camilla came to me through a friend of a friend actually, it is a very happy accident and I think I'll let Camilla explain for herself the wonderful work that she's involved with in Knighton so over to you Camilla and I'm roughly timing you for ten minutes.

Camilla Saunders

Thank you, Jane, for organizing this session and letting me speak. I live in Knighton which is just across the border from Shropshire and I'm part of a group called Sustainable Food Knighton and I'm just going to give you a bit of background on how we started and why and what we've been up to. We've been going about two and a half years.

So, our local town council declared a climate emergency in April 2019, and we all felt quite excited about that and inspired but shortly afterwards Karen in our group discovered that an application to build an IPU, that's an intensive poultry unit, had been submitted by Llanshay farm at the edge of town and it was supported by our town council. This seems so totally wrong and counterproductive because we know

that intensive agriculture is one of the biggest sources of greenhouse gas emissions globally. We felt we had to do something and thus Sustainable Food Knighton was born. I don't think any of us realized at the time what a huge task we were taking on. And I think it's just as well because we probably wouldn't have even started and, although lots of different people have given us much valued support at different times, there are actually only four of us in the core group and I think we're all here today and I hope the others will say something as well.

We've all learnt a lot. Powys has been dubbed the poultry capital of Europe as the proportion of intensively reared chickens to humans is the highest known in the continent, that's about 64 per person and rising. So, we set to, we researched the effects of nitrates and phosphates in chicken poo that kill off plants and pollute rivers. Also, nitrogen combines with oxygen to produce nitrous oxide which is a major greenhouse gas and sticks around longer than methane actually. Chickens are fed a concentrated feed which is based on imported soya which means we export the emissions to other countries, and soya cultivation uses lots of water and is contributing to deforestation and social unrest in South America. Ammonia, which also comes off IPUs, can travel through the air on particulates and cause or aggravate lung and heart disease and, while one chicken farm miles from a centre of population might not be very harmful to biodiversity and human health, the cumulative effect of the hundreds of chicken farms in Powys is significant and shocking.

As for the chickens they lead short unpleasant lives imprisoned in sheds. They're not even given the dignity of being called animals; they're referred to as a crop. So, with help and advice from CPRW, that's Council for the Protection of Rural Wales who've done a lot of work on intensive poultry units and an excellent planning advisor, Helen Hamilton, we raised funds and commissioned Helen to write an objection and tried to gather as many other objections from local people as possible. Sadly the Welsh Government, local councils and the NFU are actively encouraging farmers to build IPUs as a form of diversification so that family farms can keep going but in fact only farmers who've got capital or are able to obtain large loans can even think about taking them on. It's a huge amount of initial layout. The farmers don't own the units. They're tied into a contract with a big corporation and around here it's usually Avara which is a merger of Cargill and Faccenda who provide the chicks and feed, collect them for slaughter and dispose of diseased or prematurely dead animals. The chicks grow very fast on the soya and they're deemed ready to slaughter after 36 days and they can hardly move by then anyway.

We also discovered how opaque the planning process is. Any time you want to view an objection to a planning application, at least in Powys, you have to make a Freedom of Information request, as the council refused to publish them on their website citing data protection. And in January 2019, Powys Council changed their own rules so that planning officers can make a decision on an application under delegated powers without it being heard by the full committee, and in theory if the applications are for an IPU of a certain size it should be heard by the full committee

but you're never sure about that. So, we complained about lack of democracy but that was to no avail.

Then there's the matter of existing Welsh legislation. For a start the Welsh Government declared a climate emergency in April 2019 and published "Prosperity for All: a low-carbon Wales" and this states the need for - I quote - "reducing the impact on our natural resources" which does not mean increasing animal numbers and intensifying farming. The Welsh Government also passed the Well-being of Future Generations Act for Wales in 2015 requiring all public bodies to think about the long-term consequences of their decisions. It's a really wonderful piece of legislation but in respect of agriculture it's been totally ignored by planners and by Welsh ministers. We wrote to the government, we even visited the Senedd in 2019 but neither Julie James, head of planning or Leslie Griffiths, head of farming and the environment had time to talk to us. They saw no reason to oppose Llanshay or IPU applications in general and Leslie Griffiths assured us she was working on de-intensification of farming and even had a working group to deal with it, but since covid I haven't heard anything else. We didn't get anywhere with NRW, Natural Resources Wales, and they also have to give their approval to any IPU application. They're meant to ensure that Welsh biodiversity is increased not just maintained and people within NRW have really spoken out against intensifying particularly the poultry units.

So, despite our objections, demonstrations and publicity, the application was approved under the infamous delegated powers in October last year. At that point Helen, our planning advisor, did help us apply for a judicial review of this decision and after discussion we decided to go ahead with that. Helen found a barrister from the Environmental Law Foundation who worked pro bono and Buxtons Lawyers whose solicitor worked on a 'no win no fee' basis.

The whole legal team were magnificent, we felt really privileged to have them, they were great. And the JR [judicial review] process was amazing. It was also one of the most stressful things I've ever done. We had wonderful support not just locally but nationally. People were really generous and gave donations which meant we could go ahead. But before we actually had the JR, the council settled out of court and admitted that the manure management plan was insufficient. The case attracted plenty of media attention and was regarded as a victory but although we were deemed to have won, as someone put it, a battle not a war, I felt quite ambivalent about it. We were all pretty tired by the end and we knew they'd reapply and of course there's always some people who think we're trying to ruin the lives and well-being of local farmers even though we always make it very clear that's not why we have this campaign.

Local campaigns such as this can be awkward and divisive and pose questions that are currently not being answered by those authorities who do have the power to make the changes. What are local communities to do when governments and local councils aren't abiding by their own laws and local politics is distinctly tribal? What is local democracy? How can local communities be included in decisions about land use and

food growing when these directly affect them in their surroundings, but they own no land, never will and have no say in policy?

The chickens from IPUs aren't sold locally. They're processed and sold through supermarkets and the proponents of IPUs defend them on the grounds that this is locally produced food and if we don't have them there will be more and more dodgy trade deals with countries with even lower welfare standards than ours and they're providing, they say, poor people with cheap food. I find both those arguments really depressing and very flawed. Why not work to create a system where everybody can afford decent food which is the theme of this conference and get everybody working together so the dodgy trade deals and the IPUs become redundant? Rather than blaming each other we have to be clear that supermarkets and huge companies like Cargill are screwing farmers and consumers to up their own profits and trashing the planet. And it's global: Asia and the Americas are full of intensive pig and chicken farms which I haven't realized before.

Anyway, Llanshay farm reapplied. They added ammonia scrubbers to their initial plan and arranged to export the manure to a biodigester which is actually 60 miles away in Shropshire across the border, contributing to more emissions. This time at least there was a full planning committee hearing and Karen and I were allowed to speak and counsellors did admit that climate change is a serious concern and exporting chicken poo to Shropshire is a just-in-time policy that could easily break down. Nonetheless we were told to take our concerns to Westminster - concerns about climate change at least, and the new application was passed 15 to 1.

Now just before all this through the mediation of MS Jane Dodds a couple of us, Caroline and myself, went and met a farmer who has an IPU near Llan'dod and also a rep from the NFU. We're all women and Jane Dodds joined us and both the farmer and the NFU rep said they wanted to try and improve the images of farmers whom they feel are always blamed and presented in a bad light and that was quite ironic because that what we feel a lot of time too. It was a really good discussion, we all felt included, and we listened to each other even though we disagreed. We had a good listen and chat and so we'd like to try and meet more farmers including organic and regenerative farmers but also, if possible, more so-called conventional although there's nothing conventional about an IPU.

So now we're deciding our next steps. It's unlikely we'll make any further objections or take other legal action. We feel at this stage it could be harmful and polarize the local community and actually unless we can find new grounds for objection it wouldn't succeed, and we could use our energy on some other projects that aren't about IPUs. But I do feel frustrated that small groups such as ours - and there's many such groups across Powys and in other parts of Wales and England taking on equally herculean struggles against IPUs - I feel frustrated any of us should be having to do any of it because ultimately the government, councils and NRW aren't doing their job or abiding by Wales in its own legislation. I think people here would agree that intensive farming of any kind is not a fit method of food production for the 21st century and the

challenges of a changing climate. We now want to keep up the pressure on Senedd members and ministers to de-intensify Welsh farming and would really love some help. We're up against very powerful corporate lobbies for corporations and individuals. It isn't easy but we know that most of the world's food comes from plant cultivation and mixed farming methods generally produced on small farms by independent women farmers outside Europe. We need to explore and pursue this model but how do we do it when there's no political will? That's what we're trying to work out now.

Jane:

Thank you very much Camilla. Thank you for an excellent presentation there, there's just so much here to pick up on.

Chris Nott:

I'm the new chair of the Wales inquiry of the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission and one of the reasons why I was asked to do this is that I'm not a familiar face in this community. I'm pretty well known in public life across Wales in a number of other sectors. I've got quite a few things done and the Commission wanted me to bring some of that experience into this arena.

Hywel farms at Esgair Llaethdy, Myddfai in the west end of the Brecon Beacons, which is a family upland hill and all-grass farm with very low inputs. It is cattle, sheep and Welsh mountain ponies. Also grazing on common land to manage the vegetation. And his regenerative and conservation grazing produces high nutrition red meat which he says he sells direct to some consumers. I am hoping that in what he is going to talk to us about which in essence is around the excessive carbon offset forestation is also going to include a little bit more about his farm than I said there because we would all be interested in it. So, Hywel, can I pass the baton on to you?

Hywel Morgan

I farm a low input system, no fertilizer, no chemicals and very little bought-in feed. Some sheep feed bought in the spring if the grass growth is a bit slow. I practice some regenerative farming and similar to organic system but not certified yet.

So pretty much I'll talk about trees today. First of all, I love trees. I plant trees. I've got lots of trees on my farm, 15% of my farm is covered in trees plus I plant about 1000 metres a year in new hedgerows, managed hedges. I don't cut my hedges every year. We just trim a little bit off the side and just manage them, which my hedging contractor doesn't like, but I think our hedges are vital to my farming system. It's an exposed hill farm, and shelter from wind and rain and from the hot, sunny days is vital.

So basically, currently we've seen a huge land grab of upland farms in the area by corporations, city investors, barristers, lawyers and solicitors. Funny enough, barristers, lawyers and solicitors, they seem to know the ins and outs of these rules and they might be looking into the future because at the moment I can't see it paying.

Much of this is driven by carbon offsetting and the tree planting driven by Welsh Government tree planting ambitions and the creation of a national forest. My farm is bang in the middle of the proposed national forest.

Truly using public money to help London-based corporations offset their carbon pollution isn't good for rural communities, the Welsh language, culture, traditions, food security and more importantly our next generation farmers. We currently have lots of biodiversity habitats and are we in danger of losing these to these tree plantations?

If a London-based or English-based company buys Welsh farms to offset their carbon, does that or could it make Wales carbon positive? This is something I've asked my AM, my MP to pick up in the Senedd, Welsh Government. They did ask Leslie Griffiths and she refused to answer them. So, most of the farms coming on the market are snapped up by investors but local agents seem happy with this as they're happy to pay the asking price - or over - and the money tends to be safe.

Like I said I have nothing against trees, but the right tree in the right place and who benefits is the key. Finding a balance between biodiversity and productivity whether that's trees or food is key. I am concerned with what or rather what not Welsh Government or other organizations such as NRW, National Park, Welsh local authorities are actually doing currently.

To put it bluntly we have been too much talking and no action. Farmers are getting frustrated and I for one am really getting frustrated. I discuss with Welsh Government officials quite often. James Owen was on earlier. I discuss with James quite often and I can't understand how one department in government can find money for tree planting then another department says they don't have any money, waiting on the UK government to give them funding. Surely with a climate emergency we need to act today, in three years' time or four years' time in 2025, when the proposed new sustainable land scheme comes into place, a lot of damage will have been done to rural Wales and especially the uplands.

Another benefit of investor buying uplands, they're having hectares allocated on these commons through a 1964 Act, Registration of the Commons Act that they even have their hands on extra land and currently they are having BPS, like all farmers having BPS payments but a lot of this BPS payments are going to the wrong hands. For example, barristers near me they are having lots of money, I won't say how much, but lots of money, just for the luxury of owning land with grazing rights and commons. Surely we have to change? Yes, we are changing but another three, four years of this sort of system is going to do a lot of damage.

The future generations, hardly anything has been said or discussed regarding the next generation farmers and I've got two young kids, I just became a granddad yesterday and I am concerned about their future if they want to farm. Both my kids are keen on farming, one works on a farm and the other one enjoys helping Dad out, but we need opportunity. The current BPS system deters young entrants into farming

whether by encouraging investors to buy upland farms or keeping the old semi-retired farmer on the land by giving him financial support.

Regarding food democracy, I thought I'll also point out a few facts about food security and production. We do currently produce enough food in the world to feed everyone, but distribution, government and warlords and food waste are getting in the way. 1 in 9 people still are undernourished, 39% of the population are overweight, and another fact that I heard last week is that only 5% of the lamb we produce in Wales is consumed here.

Let's get the government, schools, hospitals, local authority to eat more of the food we produce here in Wales and not just chicken. I really appreciate what Camilla just said, but unfortunately our society seems to just want to eat chicken. We need education in schools, agriculture college to promote farming with nature maybe and the schools need to bring back cookery lessons and teach our children how to cook meals with the food we produce, whether it's beef, lamb or vegetables.

When I was on the Agri Academy leadership programme, Welsh Government civil servants would actually push us farmers to build chicken sheds, which I was amazed about. And I'll just finish off quickly by repeating my message of finding the balance between biodiversity and productivity is the key. And as Wales, we need to make sure this public money stays in Wales, not fund London-based pension funds with offsetting carbon here and eventually will that make Wales carbon positive?

Chris:

Well, Hywel, thank you. One thing I'd like to do at the end is try and pick up the themes and I think every theme was in there. I'm going to pick up biodiversity and productivity as a key link in perhaps the solution to a lot of what you talked about.

Can I now introduce Sian Stacey please? Sian is project development officer for O'r Mynydd i'r Mor, Summit to the Sea project which we've all heard about based in Mid Wales. She's currently facilitating a co-design process with the local community as key stakeholders having worked with the project since August 2019 and has endeavoured to bring the voice of the community to the table during the original project and was involved in the transition to relaunch it in June 2020 with RSPB Cymru as host. Prior to this Sian worked for the food and drink programme and Menter a Busnes and had, what seems to me is, the dream job of island manager at Bardsey Island. Sian, you're going to talk about your project so I'm going to pass over to you if I may.

Sian Stacey:

My name is Sian, and I am coordinating the project O'r Mynydd i'r Mor as it's called at present. I was very interested in hearing the Minister from the Welsh Government speaking earlier on. Just for the people who haven't heard about this project before, this project is based in Mid Wales. We take the river Dyfi in the north down to the Rheidol in Aberystwyth as the boundaries of this project and into Llanidloes in the

east and up to Pumlumon and down to the sea in Ceredigion to the west so this is the area we work within.

We have six partners in the project with RSPB Cymru running the project at present. Perhaps some of you will have heard about the project in the past. The start of the project was rather disastrous actually, there were many different issues. One of the things I've always wanted to make sure that I share clearly with people, well, there was a very strong pushback by many in the community but the important thing to communicate is - it wasn't just a crowd of grumpy farmers. There were very important points that people were concerned about regarding what the project was about, so when I started, a year after the project began, my first job was to go out and listen to people's concerns, and they had several very valid concerns.

So, the project restarted then. RSPB took over as the ones running the project and it changed from something which was controlled to something which was going back right to the start to develop something which was much more local. It is driven on a local level and local people are part of it and because of that we've been doing this through the project of co-designing. The next slide is their co-design as it looks, this is what my patience looks like overall [a load of squiggles!] This is what co-designing can feel like and this is where we're at at present in the process. The important thing to say is it's important that you are open and feel comfortable enough to be in a certain situation when you coordinate something which co-designs and also we don't just use this to make our engagement work look good, we do it in order to bring people from various backgrounds together and try and hold the discussion across the different communities, as really we've heard so far today. So, it's about sharing power and looking to see when there's a balance in power within communities. It's about priorities and relationships and making sure that people can take part in different ways. Perhaps holding things on Zoom doesn't always work for people and also that we build capacity.

So as far as what we've been doing, well, we started by framing the discussions and that began with workshops where we asked the question, "What is the future where nature can live together?" I saw in the chat this morning "I can only achieve what I first imagine" so that's what the project does, it helps us think what a better future will look like and from that then we began to develop what that vision looked like and the main themes which sat within that vision.

So, who have we been speaking to so far? Well, we've held many workshops, virtual workshops but also face-to-face workshops at last when the Covid guidelines allowed. We have been developing a group of over 30 local people, a liaison group, which represents community groups or local county councils, people such as the Farmers Union of Wales and many people who try and create a situation where there are different elements of the community having a voice on the table.

We also have been spending time over this summer talking with businesses who earn their living from natural resources. Farms, or it can also be people who work in

forestry or fishing industry, any kind of business which use natural resources. Also, tourism companies such as mountain biking etc and that was a very good way of talking to them about the project and get their ideas for the future and get their input into the co-design process because they own most of the land in this area so it's very important that their voice be heard.

So, what does it look like up to now? Well, the vision, a connected ecosystem from land to sea which will deliver benefits to wildlife and the people today and the future generations, which celebrates the local place and culture. The four themes - again all these have come through the co-design process - a nature rich and sustainable production system, connectivity between wildlife, rich habitats for greater collective benefits, reconnecting people to land use and sea use and nature so that people have a connection with how their land is managed and then reconnecting the economy. We've got a long list of ideas from the community and the next slides are a draft of this at the moment that we have a process of how the projects can be acted upon.

I'm running out of time I believe, so I won't go into too much detail here. I just want to mention what has worked for us in this process. Time is coming out of today. Time to talk, time to be open, to talk about a wide range of things with people and the possibility of cooperating. We've cooperated with many people on the call today, excellent people in the area, Aber food surplus and the projects and with Menter Mynyddoedd Cymru as well. And we also get local people to help shape these ideas, so we have a team of people who are part of the project who are local people.

What has been difficult? Well, the amount of time. Things like this do take time but also we need to have an understanding that is working at the pace of trust, as they say, but also there are lots of people out there who feel that we need to act now - time for discussion is over. So, you've got a balance between the two. Of course, Covid has been an obstacle to us. Talking over a cup of tea and Welsh cakes is always better than talking over zoom. Also, the history of the project still affects how people feel. I also have just included the co-design process for a sustainable farming scheme for Wales. Timing that has been difficult, to develop ideas which can help local farmers but also which are not going to put them on the back foot before this new scheme begins. So just a few things that have been a little bit of a challenge for us. It's very exciting to take part in the discussions today.

Chris

Diolch Sian. Can I introduce Beth Bell please? Beth is working on a Food Ethics Council project called food citizenship and she's going to help coordinate any questions in the discussion we're going to have.

Beth Bell

Thanks to Jane for inviting me here, it's just absolutely wonderful and inspiring and maddening and all those great things to hear from all of you.

I work for the Food Ethics Council on building the food citizenship movement which is a movement that believes in the power of people, that wants to have us think of ourselves as something more than just consumers and being able to recognize ourselves as citizens and the choices and responsibilities and rights and power that comes with that. And our ability to influence food and farming systems for the better. The better for communities, the better for farmers and producers and the better for the planet.

I think, speaking to the conversation today, a really important aspect of citizenship is the conditions that are needed to make sure that everybody's voice is heard, that everybody's voice is valued. So those kind of words like inclusive and accessible and respectful and equal are really important and so too is listening, really listening to what's being said. Recognizing that we're human, that we're all human. We're all, for the most part, trying to do the best we can with what we've got and really the importance of trying to understand the different point of view even if you don't agree with it. All of that is within the kind of context that for that to work we must have trust and we must have good faith and certainly I feel like there's an abundance of both of those things in the room today.

So, with that in mind we've got an opportunity now for questions for the speakers and discussion.

Chris:

While people are formulating their questions, the theme from our three speakers is the action of community. You've got Hywel talking about community unrest about what they're seeing around carbon offset forestation and the manner that's being dealt with. Then with Camilla you've got community action, where communities have actually got together and done something and achieved something in their judicial review and the like. And then with Sian we've actually got a more formal scheme that started in a planned method. You've kind of got various grades of community action. I was wondering maybe Sian, if I put this over to you first of all but others please come in: what's the next step above that? How do we get, I mean we've got three there. How do we how do we get one plus one plus one to make four? How do we get the community voice at the next level?

Sian:

I think that's a really good kind of pick up from everybody's discussions today. It's something that's come out quite strongly in our co-design process, an absolute frustration with people locally feeling like they're not able to influence the policy. People concerned that things are happening around them like we've heard from Hywel where there is a sense of a lack of being able to influence that and I think in a way the original iteration of Summit to Sea is perhaps also a good example of how the community got together and really pushed back against something and were very effective. I think all praise to that actually which might sound odd coming from me as someone that works for the project but I joined at that point of change and we've heard how can this project perhaps or something that already exists in the area be more of that kind of transitional communication tool for people locally to say, "We are

really concerned this isn't working for us", because it sounds like the things that are set up for that aren't quite working. So, NRW maybe isn't working properly. We hear Camilla's frustrations that are the Welsh Government systems working? On paper we've got all these amazing sounding things in Wales, the Future Generations Act but how is it actually happening and being effective for us, for our people?

Chris:

Patrick Hannay [in the chat] mentions Citizens' Assemblies as a bypass to the short limits of normal democracy which kind of fits into Sian's final point there, which was right Sian. There are groups that we have in Wales, you name three of them, one of which I work with, the Future Generations Commission. It's a bunch of very able, well-meaning people achieving a lot but there's a sense that it's not dealing with this particular...it is 'public service board' isn't it? Intended to be? I'm not sure, Patrick, whether you have in mind Citizens' Assemblies, the Public Service Boards or something different that's a more long-term form of democracy?

Hywel

Can I come in here, Chris? I think the best way to deal with this is through consumers because consumers are really powerful. They ultimately decide what they eat, buy but supermarkets are controlling. I'm not sure who's in control, the supermarkets or consumers? I think the consumers have a power but the supermarkets have the control, so I think we need consumers to take it back in their control. So, demand on food produced locally and produced to how we want it produced and just tell the supermarkets this is what we want. If you're not happy with chickens produced in big chicken sheds, don't buy it. The trouble is, chicken is classic, it's too cheap, for what we get. Is it nourishment? Is it nutritional food at the end of a day? I'm not sure.

It's like our hospitals and schools and education, government, etc they've been talking for years about local procurement but they're not actually doing anything. If you go into hospital or your children go to school demand better quality food. I was talking to a head teacher. She has two schools in her control, and she said the food in school is shocking. This is our future, and we are feeding them substandard food. If the human body was an engine, you wouldn't put this substandard food in that engine, would we?

Chris:

You raise a fabulous point, Hywel, because if the moment which the supermarkets 'got this', almost the problem will be fixed, looking at it globally. Sian spoke French earlier and she spoke better French than I can speak but I spent a lot of time over there and you can't buy cheap chickens in France. It's a price product, it's not a volume product and I've often wondered how it's reached that particular position over there as compared to here but as consumers, we only have the democracy of their own spend, their individual spend. That's like their protest vote is not to buy it. What you're sort of advocating is a wider voice than that, I think, and I wonder if that comes back to Patrick's point about Citizens' Assemblies.

Beth:

I might come to Vicky.

Vicky:

There were two points. One was about deliberative democracy because you don't have to go down the exact route of Citizens' Assembly in order to achieve the essence of its benefits and in Wales we have smaller societies so we can do non-randomized selection and still be inclusive as Sian has mentioned but it is a very powerful tool which complements representative democracy to work together, they are not instead of.

Coming back to Welsh Government's policies and things like the offsetting and so on, it's very common that a good project goal is lost because the details are wrong, so you have to get the details right. Which is another reason to go to the Citizens' Assembly model so offsetting isn't something wrong with a principle actually but how it works out is very damaging very often. The last time they did it was counterproductive in a big way. We funded the polluters and that's being mooted again as a reasonable thing to do plus losing agricultural land to solar panels and forests especially close to where the food is needed like around towns is foolishness incarnate.

So, it's getting the details right and it's the same with a whole bundle of things like how you insulate, how you put in renewable energy. Unless you get the details right it is often counterproductive. It's waste of money at best, counterproductive quite often. So that's why you need the citizens involved in making the decisions but in a deliberative manner so they're fully informed before they make any decisions and that takes a bit of time.

Beth:

Steven Jacobs, I think just pivoting a little bit to how to have people be informed about land use and food sourcing and so on. Stephen, do you want to say a bit about that?

Steven Jacobs:

There's a need to educate or re-educate people as to value and something that Hywel said earlier and I'm sure we're all doing it, it's just how do we coordinate it? It's like Hywel said, my kids too, at school the food is appalling so we give them food to take because I'm not having them...when they were little we used to let them have a treat of having a cooked dinner there but it was so appalling even my children turned their nose up to it. There is this nonsense that, "oh it's expensive", well it's not because half of what you put in front of them goes in the bin.

So, it's how do we turn all of that around whilst the vested interest, the economic models of businesses, is to sell more, sell more, sell more which is why for the last three, four, five decades people have known that that model leads to climate change that becomes irreversible and damages people's lives and it's carrying on. One of the things that I would say about Wales is that Wales has the potential because it has some culture left that I'm afraid is even less evident across England.

It has some culture left. Is there enough to build upon so that we can get that value agreed amongst us? That sounds really heavy. I'll tell a joke now.

Hywel

Can I come in there, Steven? When I was on the Agri Academy we had a session with how to lobby government and the only thing I took out of our session was anybody and everybody can lobby government. You don't have to be part of a union, you don't have to be part of group, you can lobby government on your own. Now we're out of the EU we've got devolved government in Wales and I think most of us will know either an MP or an AM or see on a regular basis. When it was the EU or UK Westminster how often could you bump into your local representative? If I can do it, meet up with politicians where the AM, MP you just send them an email. Most of them are on social media. Point out what is happening. When I raised with my AM and MP about tree planting with city investors and corporations, they were totally unaware of it and they thanked me for highlighting this issue for the. So, if you have got something you need to discuss or raise a point with your politicians, they might not agree but they feel obliged to do something about it. Yes, as a group of people we are stronger but individually we can do something and as for poor standard food in schools just tell your head teacher, she'll be thinking the same and she can help out.

Beth:

There's a bit of a discussion in the chat, Patrick Hannay is making a point around getting beyond activism around what we don't want, to activism to what we do, so that's that kind of imagining and sharing a better future.

Chris:

I can see Camilla wants to come in on what Hywel was saying.

Camilla:

We tried. We went to the Senedd. We're prepared to go again but it needs vast quantities of people because it's too easy to dismiss half a dozen people. I think if all the people here who feel really strongly about the lack of democracy and how much real need and desire there is for change actually if we could all come together and have something...have hundreds of us at the Senedd. I don't think just a few people plodding along and they were all...I mean, for goodness' sake, we even got to talk to Neil Hamilton, "Oh yeah, we hate IPUs". You know, it needs a lot of energy and I'd be very happy to do that, but I don't want to have to do it on my own or with just a small group.

Chris

If I could just comment on that having worked lobbying with Welsh Government on other projects for some time there's also an element of focus within that because there's lobbying that's bound to fail no matter how worthy and there's lobbying that if it is that done properly can achieve quick change so it's an element of inspiration as well as perspiration in how one does that sort of thing. Sorry Beth, I cut across you.

Beth:

Not at all. Vicky you've got your hand up.

Vicky:

It was just in terms of lobbying, there's an art of process to success and one of the shortcuts - Citizens Cymru are past masters at it and if we could get this agenda onto their table, we could work with them to achieve things. Just a suggestion, we would have to be members probably.

Beth:

Chris and I, we were speaking earlier just about how do you get that two plus two equals five? All of these amazing pockets of local things that are happening - how do you amplify that and be able to share that, share the things that work? Liz, I think you were making a point in the chat about the need to both look to the future but also be really present in the now. Do you want to speak to that?

Liz:

I'd just like to add on Camilla's point. I think it's incredibly important that teaching with lobbying work has care for their own team within their plan. It's not nice going to talk to people who you know are ignoring you, so actually you have to build care in. Some people are very resilient on that, others aren't, but that has to be part of your plan. But really the reason I jumped in on the conversation on the chat - for context I'm working specifically campaigning against genetic modification across the UK and one of the problems that we at GM Freeze have been having and other organizations are having, is that it's a lot of the funding and a lot of the focus of organization is positive solutions right now and obviously we need positive solutions, they are incredibly important but we can't get enough money to keep going on fighting against the basics, and I think there's a danger that we kind of get a bit idealistic about, "Oh you know, we've got such a great vision, that means everything will be okay".

We can't drop the ball on the things that we're against. We have to, as a movement hold all of that and I think perhaps more in England or UK-wide stuff than specifically in Wales there's a lot of...well, there's a whole stream of funding - the Farming the Future fund which is not funding anything that's about objecting anymore. Somebody who I won't name refers to it as "all so much kumbaya" which I think is a little harsh because it is you know...obviously we need solutions, but we can't fall into the trap of being the nice alternative. We have to be present in what we object to.

Beth:

Does anybody want to come in on that before I move us on to talking about procurement, everybody's favourite topic?

Camilla:

Well said. It's much nicer to do things that people like you for doing. You have to stop being afraid of not being liked otherwise we won't get there.

Beth:

Steve Garrett, you've talked in the chat about prioritizing procurement around healthy local food, but I've gone on to say the link between that and building a sustainable food system. Would you say a little bit more about that please?

Steve:

I'm generally not a fan of top-down approaches to any sort of problem. Generally, change comes the other way around in my experience but there's always seemed to be in terms of trying to create a sustainable food system for Wales there are two ways in which top-down would make a massive difference. Kevin Morgan at the university has been singing about this for so long but is it too simple?

Why can't I see what the problem is with actually prioritizing procurement from local producers? It puts a huge injection of our money, our tax money into supporting local producers. Yes, it's gonna cost more and yes, it might mean a little bit more council tax, but my sense is that right now there's a receptivity to the cost of actually being more sustainable. Accepting, especially right now post COP26 and all the rest of it a general sort of interest in that.

Also, governments have the capacity to run campaigns which change public opinion in ways that none of us as individual groups are able to do. We did it with drink driving, we've done it with smoking. Why don't we have an investment in a campaign that explains to Welsh people why it's a really good idea to try to source locally, and if you go to your supermarket and they haven't got it, complain? I agree with whoever it was it says consumer power, yeah ultimately it's people buying stuff that's going to affect the business model. And I said we know from our experience of the farmers' markets in Cardiff, we're just a tiny, tiny little proportion of customers but there's been a real...we are busier than ever to be honest because more and more people are looking for it. I just think that there needs to be some investment in a route to market infrastructure that makes it easier for people to get this stuff and a campaign alongside that to back that up.

Beth:

Brilliant, thank you Steve. Anybody want to come in on that?

Hywel:

Hi Steve, good points. As a farmer who produces and sells red meat off the farm direct to consumers there's a couple of challenges. It's really rewarding not just financially but just communicating with people that buy and eat your products especially when they say that was good.

But we need more local processing units for red meat for instance. Smaller abattoirs dotted around the county not just these big supermarket style processors. They have a place obviously to supply big supermarkets. Currently I'm having an issue with my processor and the butcher. The butcher's just had an

operation so they are struggling to deal with my request before Christmas so we do need a bit more opportunity. But as for consumers going to the supermarket and complaining - go to the local shop, just go to a local butcher. When the smaller supplier, the butcher, the more connection there is and that is a classic example of how food production works.

Growing food is quite simple, most of us can do it. Obviously, we need land but the bigger the chain there's more people involved, the more complex it gets, and I think going back to my point about the government, they've been talking about local procurement for years, councils have. They just need to do it, there's too much talking, just do it. The facilities are there, just do it. For example, the NRW, they've given go ahead to these chicken sheds and they know it's a broken system, but I think everybody's too scared to change or step up or even make a mistake.

I think we've got a system; a lot of these people are just too scared to make a mistake in case they lose their pension. Let's do it. I'm fed up of too much talking and no action. Time's moving on, we should have done something yesterday, not in 3 years' time.

Beth:

Thank you. There's quite a bit in the chat around local supply chains, how to make it easy for people not to use supermarkets so much. Does anybody want to speak to that?

There are a couple of organisations like the Open Food Network who are trying to look at the tech that sits underneath what are the things that local suppliers need to be able to manage supplying lots of different shops so they are not bamboozled with a thousand spreadsheets.

Camilla:

I just realized that we could look to other countries. I know in France and in Italy they produce much more food anyway in bigger countries, but supermarkets do all have local food and we have got the co-op in Knighton and people have asked them to stock local food but because they have such particular standards, and they want particular amounts, but supermarkets could be much more accommodating than they are. They could take the misshapen vegetables and all that, and I think again that needs pressure.

Beth:

Absolutely.

Hywel:

Can I come in with a question to everybody? I discussed tree planting and corporation investors buying up Welsh land. To me, it's just the end of rural communities. It's similar to building reservoirs and dams to supply water to a different country.

What can we do to prevent the repeat of this land grab again? And the fact that Welsh public money is going to offset an English company or corporation's carbon pollution, does that make our country carbon positive? Isn't that something to be really worried about? Welsh Government are really pushing this tree planting. Trees are part of a solution, raising livestock ruminants is, in my opinion and a lot of scientists' opinion, as good if not better than tree planting. I think we need the balance of everything, so we need to discuss this now and really do something about it.

Sian:

I think it's really complicated and that's why trees comes across as such a simple solution which is why it's so easy for so many people to get behind it because it seems really simplistic. "Okay great, I can plant a tree and we're done, or I can buy this patch of land and it's done", but it completely loses all of that nuance and it completely loses the people, the community, the language and sometimes even the biodiversity aspect as well. So, it's a case of how we come together to...I think that's why within the Summit to Sea work the narrative and the policy aspect has come out. People want to be pulling together to create a kind of counter-narrative that these aren't just plains of unpeopled land without any culture or history. There are people here and there's life and how can we demonstrate what's being done here is good but also challenge, to always improve on ourselves and I think that's definitely coming out from a lot of the farmers that I talk to in terms of, "We think we're doing good but if we're not we want to do better", but also, as Hywel said, fed up of being lumbered with the blame landing with them. I don't think I've got an answer for you, Hywel, but we need to be coming together. We probably need someone with a really good PR or communications head to work with us to try and present something that includes the complexity of what we all face in our everyday to counter that simplistic message.

Beth:

Thank you, Sian. I'm going to hand back to Chris to bring it home.

Chris:

Well, I was just wondering how to pull all this together. There's a sense in the conversation - David versus Goliath in a way but we just have to remember that David beat Goliath and anybody followed the story in detail would know he was always going to because he was fleeter of foot. One of the senses that came through this is that we have bodies in Wales that are responsible for these agendas and there's a sense that they might mean well but what they're doing isn't actually addressed at the things that they need to be addressing it at and in that way there's two themes that have come out of this.

One is lobbying. What is it this movement can do to try to persuade these people to do things in the right way and and to cure the unintended consequences? I think it might have been Vicky or Stephen who talked about how when the tree planting initiatives of national forest of Wales came about, it fell through the gap that they'd end up planting on land that could be used for agriculture etc so one is how does one communicate this voice?

And the second is Sian's last point I think which is a PR and public campaign that wins the people over, and the lobbying wins the influences over. The people with power to do things. It was Steven Garrett who said that there are direct things that our government could do here which could move what we're trying to achieve here forward in the right way. One would like to think that the individuals within those organizations would feel comfortable on this call, that they would be sympathetic to things that we were saying and for the reasons Hywel articulated. Whether it's insecurity or power or maybe stuck within an inadequate legislative framework that perhaps needs adapting. You can boil this complicated discussion down to a number of small things that one could do that actually could make a difference and as I started with it would be very good if two and two could make five very quickly.

It's been a terrific conversation, thank you to all the participants.