

Creating a Green Recovery - from what is to what if? [Our Planet Our Future](#) event Monday 10th May 2021.

Our May event was all about how we can encourage a green recovery in our district. We had two speakers and then broke off into groups to discuss related questions.

Firstly Paul Thistlethwaite from [Trust the People](#) talked to us about how we might improve our democracy so citizens can drive the change needed to fight the environmental crisis. He described how our current model of democracy is broken - how it is not representing the majority of citizens and is ill equipped to cope with the global crises we are faced with (Covid, Recessions, Climate change, Biodiversity collapse).

Paul talked to us about how we need to look to each other, rather than to authority to make change. He touched on the need for a new culture and new tools, proposing that decision making should be free of vested interests, an open process. That we need to create a safe space where we can learn to relate to each other before starting the discussion - a reminder that we likely have shared interests and needs. We noted that it takes practice and that listening to other perspectives is a skill that must be developed. Paul's slides can be seen [here](#).

Secondly, Adam Elman, Group Sustainability Director at Klöckner Pentaplast, talked to us about how companies are addressing climate change. Adam touched on the sources of global greenhouse gases, noting that nearly three quarters of carbon emissions come from energy. He talked about how global bodies, governments and sectoral groups are trying to use science based targets to reach the Paris Agreement figures, and how there are also a number of bodies and companies working towards an earlier target of net zero by 2040. By implementing sustainability reporting requirements and working together as specific industries, companies can share best practice to find solutions to their shared challenges. This has the knock on effect of sending messages to governments and consumers that these changes are necessary and encourages even wider adoption.

Adam then went on to tell us about some of the specific projects he has been involved in over the years, from opening sustainable stores and a solar powered warehouse at M&S, to recently helping with raising the first ESG-ratchet linked term loan to the US market at KP. He explained how Amazon is working on new delivery vehicles developed to deal with specific delivery requirements and therefore reducing packaging and how they are working with recognised sustainability bodies to help shoppers choose climate friendly products. Adam's slides can be seen [here](#).

Following the talks our discussion focussed on two questions, with the following thoughts:

- 1. Pressure from Citizens: How can we mobilize grassroots democracy to create a green recovery in St Albans District?**
 - Feels like there is good link with doughnut economics - holistic working, bringing everything together
 - There was a citizens panel run by the district council - making decisions on local items in the past, looking at plants in st albans - budget of £75k to spend on green areas
 - Very hard to get people to engage in complexity and recognise that different models are possible
 - How do we take party politics out of local government? Smaller districts easier to move away from the traditional party model and have more independents, use people's assemblies to get people's opinions and consult on (eg Frome)
 - Can we get into schools - people's assemblies in the school, creating a space where everyone has

a voice and they learn from a young age how a new democracy could emerge

- Citizen assembly on transport - discussion on electric cars and what streetscape might be - but started looking at it from a bigger picture. - transport - how, where, why, do we need to travel, etc. Service rather than ownership - i.e. car clubs, rather than ownership. On transport and on other things. Way forward perhaps, but different sectors will look at it differently.

2. Industry action: How can we help share best practice sustainable activities among local businesses to promote a green recovery?

- Structural incentives from local authorities
- Showcasing and sharing
- We need a green labour force, and not got the training to get this. Eg No one is currently being trained up in St Albans at Oaklands on green issues - how can we get Oakland to set up sessions relating to new technologies .. eg heat pumps
- Setting up local actions that can demonstrate positive initiatives such asTransition Town / Plastic Free Berko - surveyed all the local coffee shops to ask about what form of coffee cups they use. Promoted companies that made positive changes eg when they moved to compostable coffee cups (even better to move to cup free eg Parker and Vine).
- Tring and Berko compostable cups campaign social media hashtag #Cups2Compost encourages