

Transcript of opening remarks by event Chair, JONATHAN PORRITT, CBE

Welcome. Brilliant to see so many people here this afternoon. I think you are going to get some fairly diverse thinking in our deliberations today. I certainly hope so because that's the nature of the event here and as you can see we are going to be looking at waste and the circular economy.

Conscious as we have to be that the back drop to this is still about a very live and big waste disposal proposal in our midst, namely the Javelin Park incinerator - which is still very live and is bound to inform a lot of the contributions that we get this afternoon - what we hope is that people won't be completely fixed on that story and that we can have a wider set of reflections around different models of managing resources in the kind of economy that awaits us.

What you are going to hear from all of our speakers is a common view that we need to look forward at least for another 20-30 years to get any sense at all about the degree to which we are making good decisions today.

That's really the issue that we are going to be trying to tease out. I am sure you are all very familiar with the Javelin Park proposal. You know where it is now: if things continue down the path that they are on at the moment the construction is due to start in July this year. There are a number of steps that still have to be gone through before then, but that is essentially the issue right now and the facts are well understood.

A lot of people still feel very unhappy about that, and no doubt we'll hear some voices to that effect this afternoon. But our job for you to start with is to open up the wider context about what good planning, good models of development look like in this whole area of integrated *resource* management. I am trying to move people as much as possible away from the use of the word 'waste' because we do really have to get used to thinking much more about integrated resource management in which the word 'waste' gradually diminishes away so that it falls out of our lexicon completely at some stage in the not too distance future.

So I thought what I might usefully do in my opening comments is to suggest for you eight principles that it would be really helpful for decision makers to abide by were they seriously intent on making good decisions around resource management within a fully-fledged integrated sustainable development context. Because that's essentially the essence of what we ask of our decision makers now: not to make decisions without proper concern and attention to a longer period of time during which as we know our economy must inevitably become more sustainable than it is today - otherwise it is a very difficult prospect for the future of human kind in general.

So what are those eight principles?

#1 Transparency

Firstly, good decision-making has to be transparent. It is extremely difficult to command the respect of citizens today where the processes by which any decision is arrived at are obscured by commercial confidentiality or other reasons to keep things secret.

As you know with the [Javelin Park] proposal this has been vexatious from day one. We have not had access to the data that we should had have as people in this part of the world - that has been impossible to get hold of. There is a Freedom of Information process now fully still in play, the Information Commissioner will be hearing that at the end of this month. But good decision making requires transparency and the lack of that in this particular development has been massively

problematic. I remember when we had an event three years ago, two/three years ago, that lack of transparency was a very big issue that people were intent on and I have to say that this is one of the most egregiously un-transparent processes I have come across in a very long time.

#2 Value for money

Secondly, of course, when we are talking about integrated sustainable development we are thinking about environment society and the economy so we have to be able to guarantee value for money for people over a period of time and in this case over the life time of the particular asset that we are talking about here. The same applies to alternative assets that could be brought forward as a different model to what we are getting with this mass-burn incinerator. You'll hear from Tom and from others in the talks that they are going to give that you might want to question whether or not we've actually got value for money in the Javelin Park proposal, but it will be up for you to judge that.

3 Community engagement

Thirdly, coming back to sustainable development it requires a very strong level of community engagement. One of the things we have learnt, often quite painfully, over the last 20-30 years is that to make long term projects of this kind work it is really important to have the community engaged at every step along the way. That has not been possible with this project. You are going to hear more about good community engagement from examples elsewhere, particularly in Oxfordshire.

#4 Efficiency in resource use

Fourthly, just as we need efficiency in terms of the use of financial assets so we need efficiency in terms of material assets - efficiency in resource use. Now for me one of the things that always bugged me most about the Javelin Park proposal right from day one, thinking of it thermodynamically, was that there is no intention to use the heat that will be generated in the process of producing the electricity. Honestly! Today! This is almost insane, it just beggars belief that a combination of responsible local elected representatives of this community and representatives of an apparently responsible private sector company, can so irresponsibly refuse to allow a more efficient process of that kind to move forward. That is one of the things that still completely bugs me. So you may want to return to that and I hope that Mike from Eunomia will give us a little bit of glimpse into that whole notion of waste to energy, energy from waste plants and what that looks like thermodynamically. If I've got the figure right this plant will operate at a total thermal efficiency of around 22%. I don't think you should really *ever* get planning permission for something like that but anyway....

#5 Avoid Infrastructure lock-in

Fifth, and this is important, this is getting more into the complicated stuff around sustainable decision making and infrastructure management. These days it becomes increasingly important to avoid what planners describe as 'infrastructure lock-in': a series of decisions which once taken cannot then be undone, however bad those decisions might look at some point in the future. This project obviously has a very high element of infrastructure and financial lock-in to it. It will essentially dictate part of the way in which resources are managed in this part of the world for at least 25 years and probably longer.

Energy from waste plants are clunky plants today - even now this is a clunky technology. This is not smart technology. One can legitimately describe it as really quite basic technology, possibly even

stupid technology. Because what we know is that the speed of technology change in this whole area is going to be dramatic. We will see incredible changes around the technology brought forward to help manage resources more efficiently than we do so today.

As I was thinking about this today, I couldn't help but make a comparison in my mind between this plant and Hinckley Point. Now I know you might find that a ridiculous comparison but none the less I'm looking at this absurd decision to build two new nuclear power stations at Hinckley Point using a technology that is already completely redundant in many respects and leaving a legacy for much much longer than this proposal will leave one - but it is very similar.

#6 Towards a circular economy

Sixth principle, we need our decisions in this whole area of resource management to take us towards what is called the circular economy. You are going to hear a lot more about that today – how to move us away from very simplistic, very crude linear routes to creating economic value. At the moment much of our economy is based on this extremely linear process where you take raw materials from the earth or from our economy, you fashion them into the products that we need in society and once you've done that they are disposed of and they go into a waste stream. There is a huge surge of interest now around this notion of the circular economy. It has been very live for the last four years: it's a big thing in the EU, it's going to become a critical part of fashioning genuinely sustainable economic models for the future.

7 Future-proofing

Seventh, we need all these decisions to be future proof, we need them to allow for the kind of changes that are going to happen at some point in the future. That means they have to be proof against the inevitability of changes, some of the changes that will happen through the EU, I am making an assumption here, as you can tell, that on June 23rd people will be as sensible as we need them to be, but through the EU we know that we will see higher targets for recycling and resource use. We have to make decisions that are proof against changes of that kind. What is the point of making big decisions that cannot possibly factor in the inevitability of that process.

#8 An ultra-low carbon future

Lastly, we have to make decisions today that take us towards an ultra-low carbon economy. I'm finding a lot these days that people haven't really caught up with the implications of the Paris Agreement. The agreement that was signed back in Paris in December was then formally signed on in New York by 60 of the world's countries that originally signed up - and will hopefully be ratified over the course of the next year by all of those countries. People haven't really got their heads around the true import of the Paris Agreement which has asked governments now to accept that our current thresholds for what we hoped would be a stable climate, namely no more than a 2 degree centigrade average temperature increase by the end of this century, is not good enough.

The scientists are saying that will not give us a high enough probability of a stable climate. So the science now tells us we are going to have to think about a stable climate within a temperature threshold of no more than 1.5 degrees centigrade average temperature increase by the end of this century. That may not sound like much, but 2 degrees centigrade coming down to 1.5 degrees centigrade is an absolutely gobsmackingly massive change in the speed with which we are going to have to introduce new processes, new technologies, new ways of creating wealth. It is an imperative that we cannot ignore.

So to bring forward very *carbon-intensive* technological routes to managing our resources today, just doesn't make any sense whatsoever - because we will be on a very dramatic decarbonisation trajectory from this point on. So if you think about Javelin Park with an asset life time of 25 may be 30 years, do those who will be investing in it think that it will still be doing something useful for us in the year 2050?

I just want to remind you all that world leaders now are all signed up to something called the 'Zero Net Carbon Economy by 2050'. So what are we going to do when we bring forward a new asset which demonstrably is not heading towards net zero emissions and which will still be in our midst in 10, 20, 30 years' time. This is the height of irresponsibility - it is actually imposing upon people a carbon legacy which will cost us dear to deal with for a very long time. So we cannot put that to one side. We don't know what the emissions will be from Javelin Park - 26,000 tonnes per annum, whatever it might be - but it's a significant volume of additional greenhouse gas emission.

So those are the eight principles just to help think about ways in which good decision-making should happen in this space. Without that we are entitled to question our politicians and indeed our wealth creators, and ask them to do a better job than is currently being done.
