

The Transition of Energy for Good

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To save life on our shared planet, we have to reach net zero carbon emissions here and around the world. We can affect what happens here, not everywhere except by example and by developing more effective, more economic ways to need less energy and to change from hydrocarbons to sustainable sources of power.

Simply, I think of renewable electricity, whether for direct heat and power or for green hydrogen, the fuel whose by-product is water. Vehicles throughout West Sussex will have to be succeeded by new ones with pollution free propulsion. Planes and ships have to change.

Every home, office and factory will change. The benefit of insulation and heat recovery comes in many ways, including saving money, bringing extra warmth, after better design or retrofitting. My uncle has been warm for four years in a modern flat without turning on the heating. In contrast, his twin sister has lived in a cold house with draughts and a heating system that is neither efficient nor affordable.

One challenge is in developing attractive homes that some retired households will choose for their own benefit. For most, as for my parents, the better choice is near the centre of the village, town or city. That cuts the need and cost of a personal car. It makes possible walking or cycling to local church, pub, tearoom, library, shops and community centre.

There are general benefits additional to the personal ones. The old family home transfers to a growing family who normally will do it up with better heating and insulation. This reduces the need for greenfield building.

The application to develop the Ferring vineyard by the A259 is the latest to need resisting. I support the Save Our Gaps Alliance, working with neighbouring MPs and local groups.

The tenure, the way of living in apartments suitable for happy later years, needs attention to avoid the problems experienced by too many residential leaseholders. Campaigning against retirement exploitation needs support.

This week the Levelling Up minister Michael Gove made generous remarks about my efforts when he announced measures to hold responsible those who caused fire dangers in blocks of flats. I said publicly that the innocent group have been leaseholders who initially were facing unaffordable costs to put things right.

His praise should be for the campaigning charity Leasehold Knowledge Partnership, the cladding groups and the powerful National Leaseholders Campaign, created by women facing unfair doubling ground rents. We are promised legislation next year to help all residential leaseholders. This year, I hope we win openness on the commissions and fees on building insurance premiums. I cannot remember how long ago I first raised the scandal of custom-and-practice exploitation.

One advantage of experience in parliament and in the community is continuity, never letting go of a subject. I have supported efforts by local and national campaigners. One group prompted me to revise the Highway code, bringing vulnerable road users to the front cover: walkers and cyclists, not just drivers of cars and lorries.

Local campaigners last century asked me to bring attention to eco-products. I predicted we could move on from separate sections for 'good' products to incorporating best principles into every product. Building in is better than bolting on.

Be aware of the energy challenge. We should reduce energy use by 15 percent or more by 2030. MPs rightly believe part of the Energy Profits Levy should bring forward energy efficiency funding as part of a national and local 'war effort' on energy saving and efficiency.

During the net zero transition we need flows of oil and gas to heat our homes, fuel transport, and generate a reducing part of the power we need. I am a practical realist on energy. Greater, faster progress is essential.