



From good to great: *creating your own fast track*

from 6.00pm on Monday, November 25th 2019
until 3.30pm on Tuesday, November 26th



Background Note and Agenda for our 42nd Leadership Conversation

Society of Leadership Fellows, St George's House, Windsor Castle

GREAT



This is me!

Tell us more

Yes I can!



This is our 42nd Leadership Conversation

It focuses on the top concern of so many leaders: how to become better still so that we edge forward from good/ very good to great!

At this Conversation we will:

- Ask which **personal qualities** of ours should be most important in enabling us to accelerate our transition from good to great
- Ask which **downsides** of ours could get in our way and need to be handled thoughtfully if they are not to slow us down in our journey from good to great
- Ask how we might **share our journey** with colleagues in a way that inspires them to step up the pace in their own journey from good to great
- Support each other in **creating our own fast track** from good to great, personalised to our own leadership journey and drawing on the insights that we have gained through others sharing their own challenges and ambitions.

Can we be a great all-round human being AS WELL?

At various stages during this Conversation we will challenge ourselves on how our quest to become a great leader fits in with the rest of our lives too.

We will check that we're **not** pursuing our leadership ambitions at the expense of the rest of our lives.

Can we be a "great leader" AND a great partner/ family member/ all-round human being as well?!

The three stages to our Conversation

Throughout this Leadership Conversation we will draw on some of the best ideas that we have gained through the previous 41 Conversations in this series. We will structure our discussions around three stages:

1 "This is me!"

We put stage one under this heading because early on we want to encourage you to share a story that helps us understand better where you are coming from as a leader.

To help us achieve strong connections across our group, **please** be up for sharing something about yourself in a way that helps others have some sense of the sort of leader that you are.

2 "Tell us more"

Stage two is under this heading because we hope that by now we will all want to mobilise the power of questioning to draw each other out.

We want to **get behind each other's stories** to try and understand what is getting in the way of us moving forward more quickly in our transition from good to great.

3 "Yes I can!"

Our third and final stage is about each of us stepping into a really empowered place where we have a greater sense of all that we can make possible as leaders - for ourselves as well as others.

For every breakthrough in thinking that we achieve during this third stage, we will be able to identify its origins in the stories that we have each shared and the curiosity that others have shown in response.



This is me!

From 6.00pm on Monday through to 10.00am on Tuesday

After agreeing our Guiding Principles for this Conversation, we will explore our first question in small groups.

A few days before the Conversation, Pete will discuss this on the phone with as many members of our group as possible. He will then circulate a note with a summary of your initial thoughts and a "killer question" for our first round of small groups.

Our thinking now is that we should ask you to look at the list of 11 exceptional qualities on the next page that came out of last year's Conversation on *From good to great*, and ask which one or two best capture particular strengths of yours.

We will encourage you to share your answers in the form of **stories**.

Listening to others' stories can trigger all sorts of ideas about our own leadership style that we might never even have thought about before this moment.

I feel uncomfortable talking about my qualities, but know I need to!

I know I wouldn't be a CEO now if it wasn't for my intuition. There's a story in that ...

I love the first one about seeking out the diamond in the rough. I think I'm quite good at that



Capturing the eleven exceptional qualities:

- 1** Seeking out “the diamond in the rough”
- 2** Seeking to capture the essence of every challenge
- 3** Drawing out others’ truth and in the process fostering their courage
- 4** Promoting a team ethos in which we support each other in becoming exceptional
- 5** Trusting our intuition in moments when it tells us to declare ourselves
- 6** Accepting that at times leadership requires us to hold back, without compromising our sense of authority
- 7** Being prepared to be ruthless in how we prioritise the use of our time
- 8** Regarding directive leadership as a last resort, because we expect those around us to respect our authority and influence
- 9** Seeking to solve problems through our influence over others
- 10** Challenging ourselves on whether we are compromising our offer as a leader, whenever we “tone ourselves down”
- 11** Letting our insights into our own strengths and shortcomings heighten our awareness of others.

Tell us more

From no later than 10.00am on Tuesday through to 12.45pm

There should come a stage soon after 10.00am on Tuesday when we have all shared a story about ourselves, and identified a fairly wide range of factors that can enable us to accelerate our transition from good to great.

What is it about us that could get in our way?

We will then ask what it is about each of us that results in us sometimes getting in our own way. We all have traits that can hold us back from achieving our goals.

One thing we have learnt is that our best behaviours as leaders, and our worst, can't usually be "tidied up" so that they form two separate lists. Quite often, a bad leadership habit of ours is based on a relatively good behaviour that we tend to **take too far**. To give just three examples,

- The leader who enjoys a good argument becomes overly combative and thinks they have to "win" the argument
- The leader who likes to prepare thoroughly for meetings becomes so obsessed with being well-prepared that they clam up when asked to respond spontaneously in a challenging situation
- The leader whose favoured decision-making model is consensual becomes intolerant of individuals holding minority views who don't instantly defer to the majority view round the table.

We all learn a huge amount when other Fellows capture the one or two habits of theirs that they see as getting in their own way.

Once we can all see how a strength can convert into a weakness, it is so much easier to do something about it - and try to break that habit!

Please ramp up your ambitions!

This is the stage when we will ask how ambitious you each are for what you want to take away from this Conversation. Whatever your ambitions might be, please ramp them up quite a bit!

The more you expect, the more willing you will be to **challenge** some of those leadership habits that don't serve you and threaten to stand in the way of you moving further forward in your journey from good to great.

The key is that as we move forward in our discussions we are asking ourselves how much we are shifting in our thinking.

It's so important that we don't let ourselves get trapped into defensive positions - and if one of us comes out with one of the classics such as "*That's just how I am*" we find a way of challenging it with a light touch.

We always learn the most from those who are willing to move on in their thinking, and perhaps change their mind.

*You say you **don't like conflict**. What are you doing to make sure your team don't protect you from it, because I bet they do!*

*Are you **SURE** there's **nothing specific** holding you back? I can't help wonder if this reluctance of yours to be specific isn't part of the problem*

*In the story you told us last night I thought you were really tough on yourself. Do you think you're sometimes **too tough** on yourself?*



Yes I can!

From 12.45 on Tuesday through to 3.30pm

By some stage late morning on Tuesday we will know that it is time to do a little less "digging" and move on to the stretch part of our Conversation, when we will encourage a higher level of feedback and coaching across the group.

What were we not acknowledging before now?

We hope that we will support each other in sharpening up the different elements of our own fast track from good to great that weren't so obvious before we came to Windsor and started asking ourselves some tough questions!

Once we challenge ourselves as to what we've been missing, or looking away from, it's remarkable how quickly we can move forward.

The key is that we don't **duck** the answers that we have come up with in response to the questions that we have asked ourselves!

I now see that the main person holding me back is ME! Creating my own fast track has suddenly become so much easier

I know I don't trust my best people enough. I've got to deal with that if I'm going to step up

I get it now - I need to speed up more, on the basis that at times I WILL slow down for others to catch up ...



A constant state of movement

In last year's Conversation on this theme we were clear that we saw the transition from good to exceptional as *"a constant state of movement rather than a state of being"*. With this in mind, we are keen to ask whether you intend to **vary your pace** in moving from good to great, and if so, what you see as the best way of doing this.

One of the resolves that has come out of a number of Leadership Conversations since last May has been that leaders occasionally need to **create time for others to catch up**.

It's incredibly important **not** to be so far out in front that even some of your really good people feel they are being left behind.

How you create opportunities for others to catch up with you, and feel inspired to step up the pace in their own journeys from good to great, is one of the key questions that we will want to ask ourselves.

As we go through the afternoon we hope to risk up our thinking that bit more, and really stretch ourselves until that moment when we "hit the buffers" at 3.30pm!

We nearly always achieve a number of breakthroughs in our thinking in the final 15 minutes or so, as we hope you will experience!

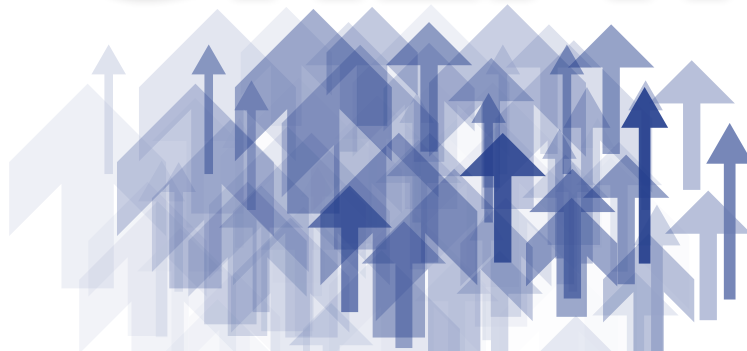
*I think I can ...
and I wasn't in this
empowered space
yesterday!*

*I know I can make
that happen - and
that's exciting!*

*Yes I can -
and in the process I want
to create chances for
others to create their own
fast track, too!*



GREAT



GOOD

What a journey!

Good to....

great!



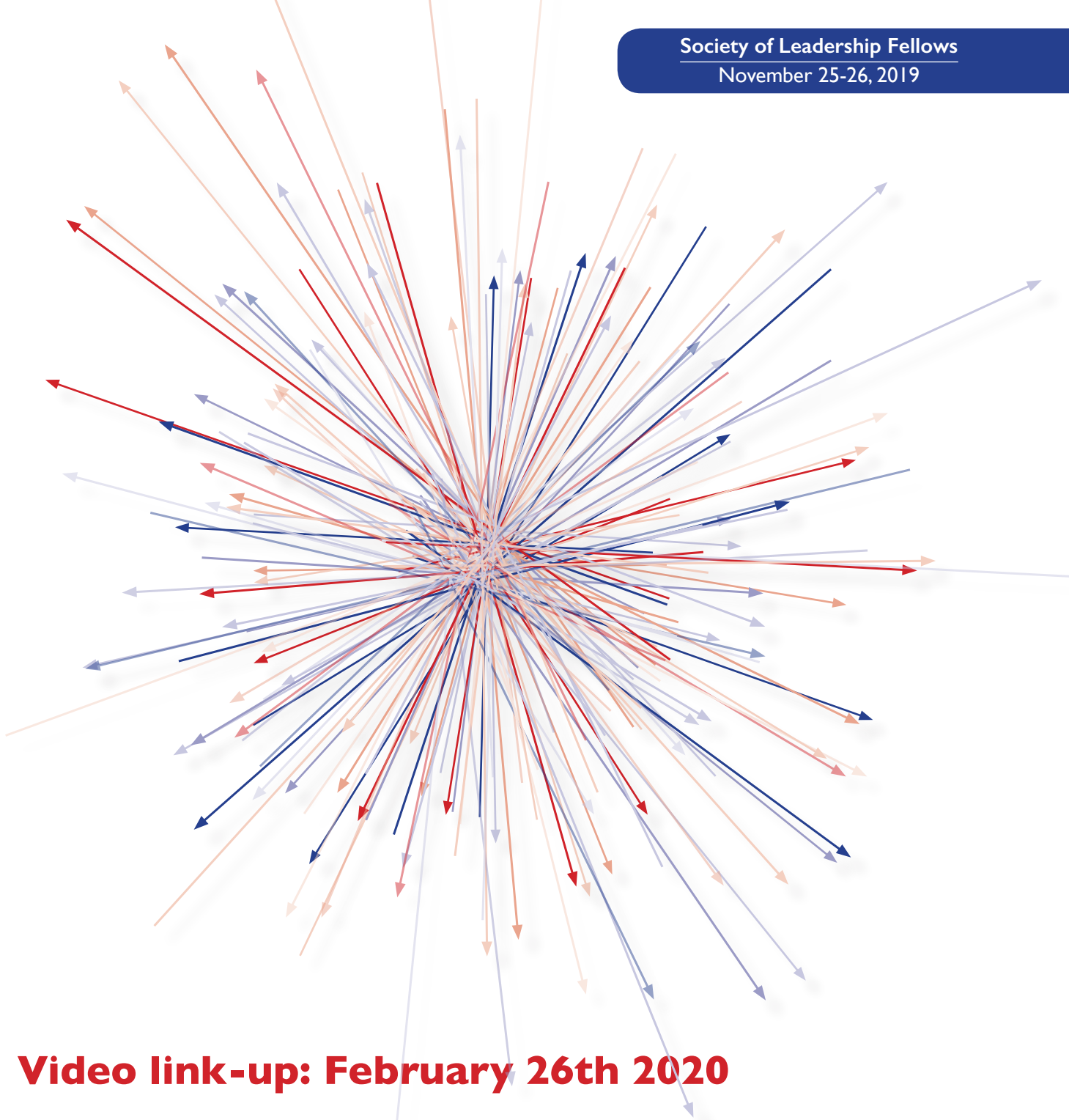
Agenda

Monday, November 25th 2019

2.30pm+	You are welcome to check into your room in St George's House
4.30pm	Tea in the House for those joining Evensong in the Chapel
5.05pm	Evensong (<i>optional</i>)
5.50pm	Vicars' Hall. Refreshments, then start of the Conversation at 6.00pm. Introduction to the Guiding Principles and then on to Stage One: <i>This is me!</i> We break for small groups and when we return we encourage you to share some aspect of your personal story that helps the group understand <i>one or two of your key qualities as a leader</i>
7.40pm	Free time/ drinks in the Sitting Room of St George's House
8.15pm	Working dinner in the House Dining Room
9.30pm	We go through to the Sitting room for tea/coffee with port or brandy
9.45pm	Private floodlit tour of St George's Chapel, departing from the Sitting Room (<i>optional</i>). After the tour, please join us for a nightcap

Tuesday, November 26th

7.45am	Breakfast is served in the House Dining Room. Please clear your personal belongings from your room and bring them down to the Vicars' Hall, so that the domestic staff can prepare our rooms for the next group
8.45am	We start again promptly in the Vicars' Hall. At 10.00am or earlier we move on to Stage 2: <i>Tell us more - and what is it about you that could get in your own way?</i> We move in and out of small groups as necessary, before we agree our key "take aways" at around 12.20 and prepare for Stage 3: <i>Yes I can - and creating my own distinctive fast track from good to great</i>
12.30pm	A hot buffet lunch is served in the Vicars' Hall and we work together in our groups. There is time for some personal reflection after lunch before a team photo on the West steps of the Chapel (<i>weather permitting!</i>)
1.45pm	Back together as one group, we draw out the key outcomes of our lunchtime discussions. We prepare for our final round of small groups, after which we invite you to create your own fast track from good to great through " personal leadership walks into the future ". We close the Conversation on the dot of 3.30pm



Video link-up: February 26th 2020

In the final minutes of the Conversation we will also arrange a time for a follow-up video link-up in February 2020 to swap notes. This will give us all a chance to hear how much progress we have each made in taking forward our resolves.

The key to us making the best possible use of our time is for Fellows to share a brief email beforehand updating the rest of us on how you have acted on your resolves, and especially which ones you found the most challenging – and we then take it from there!

Suggested time for Video Link-up:

3.00 to 4.00pm on Wednesday, February 26th 2020