



# High performing leaders: *going for the stretch*

From 6.00pm on Sunday, October 13th 2019  
until 11.15am on Wednesday, October 16th

**Background Note and Agenda for our 39th Leadership Conversation**

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

This is me!  
Tell us more  
Yes I can!



## **This is our 39th Leadership Conversation**

**It follows on from our first 3-night Conversation in March that was our most exciting and *stretching* Conversation to date.**

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### **At this Conversation we will:**

- Assess what we regard as the top 3 or 4 challenges facing us as leaders who already perform to a high level and want to become higher performing still
- Devote quality time to asking what it is about us as individuals that has resulted in these challenges holding us back as leaders
- Support each other in sharpening up personal strategies for ensuring that by one means or another we step free from these constraints so that we can significantly raise our game
- *Stretch ourselves* as leaders to enable us to reset our ambitions and priorities and step forward as top performing leaders with a greater sense of confidence and purpose.

### **Building in time for personal reflection**

During this Conversation we will take advantage of the extra time that we have together to build in time for personal reflection as we progress.

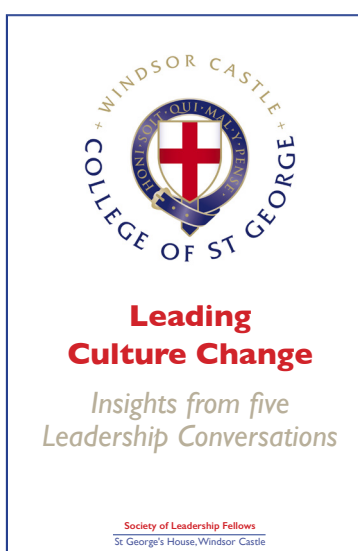
We will be careful to pace ourselves so that you have a chance to absorb key points of learning across the three days and feel re-energised when we finish at 11.15 on Wednesday October 16th.

## Drawing on our key themes across the series so far

During this Conversation we will draw on a number of the major themes that we have explored with Leadership Fellows across the previous 38 Conversations.

In telephone conversations with participants beforehand, Pete will ask which themes you would each most like to explore and we will then tailor the agenda accordingly.

In preparing for this Conversation, it would help a lot if you have any time to dip into one or two of the leadership themes set out on the [Leadership Insights](#) page on our website. The front covers of four of these themes are hyperlinked below, and they all contain insights that we would love to be able to pursue when we are together in Windsor.



## The three stages to our Conversation

You might be wondering what is the significance of the nine words on page two!

They are designed to capture the three general stages around which we will structure our discussions:

### "This is me!"

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

If we are to achieve strong connections across our group, we each need some sort of stake in the discussions from early on.

### "Tell us more"

Stage two is under this heading because we hope that by now we will all be drawing on the power of questioning to draw others out more.

We want to get behind each other's stories to understand better what is holding us back, and what's driving each of us forward as leaders.

### "Yes I can!"

Stage three is under this heading because it is about each of us stepping into a really empowered place where we feel confident *stretching ourselves* as leaders because we have a greater sense of all that we can make possible.

**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 Sunday evening to mid-morning on Monday*

Once we have welcomed you to this Conversation, we will ask you to sign up to the Guiding Principles that we have developed with Fellows since St George's House established the Society in 2016.

## **Creating a circle of trust**

If there is any "magic ingredient" in our Leadership Conversations, it is surely the exceptionally high levels of trust that Fellows invest in the process - and each other.

Whenever we achieve significant breakthroughs in thinking, we know that it is our trust in the goodwill and generosity of spirit of everyone in the circle that has made it possible for so many of us to find ourselves **outside our comfort zone** at times, and okay about being there!

Possibly our greatest point of learning since we started these Leadership Conversations is that these moments of letting ourselves feel "uncomfortable" have been **essential** to the breakthroughs that so many Fellows have achieved.

## Which challenges concern you the most?

We will start this Conversation by asking which challenges concern you the most as a leader. This is something that Pete will discuss on the phone with everyone joining us, and shortly before the Conversation he will circulate a note with a summary of the challenges that Leadership Fellows have identified.

So often the first challenge that Fellows raise at a Leadership Conversation isn't actually the main issue that you need to engage with during this time in Windsor.

Many of us simply **don't know** what we most need to resolve until we have given ourselves time to relax into the space and focus on what we really want to achieve as a leader - and what is getting in our way.

Story-telling enables us all to get to know something about everyone else in the group.

Listening to others' stories triggers all sorts of ideas within us about aspects of our own leadership style that we might not have thought about for a long time, if ever.





# Tell us more

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*From mid-morning on Monday through to Monday evening*

There will come a stage by mid-morning on Monday when everyone has shared a story about themselves, and we have in our minds a number of key leadership challenges that have come forward from us as a group.

We will then ask ourselves what are the top two or three challenges that we need to engage with in greater depth.

## **Questioning and active listening**

As we address our top concerns in turn, we will be mindful of our guiding principle about gaining insights through questioning and active listening.

We can't overstate its importance to the success of this Conversation.



## Focusing on our movement in thinking

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

**Expect more**, because if you expect more now you are certain to take more away on Wednesday morning.

We will be focusing on some of the toughest leadership challenges that we all face and so we will need to give ourselves time to develop winning strategies. The key is that as we move forward through the Monday we are each aware of how we are **shifting** in our thinking.

It's so important that we don't let ourselves get trapped into fixed positions. We always learn the most from those who move on in their thinking, and sometimes change their mind.





## Yes I can!

*Tuesday morning through to 11.15 on Wednesday*

We hope that we will have had some memorable moments on the Monday! However good they might be, they won't be anything like as powerful as they will be on Tuesday and then on Wednesday morning.

### **Feeding back and coaching across our group**

This is the stage in the Conversation when we will encourage a higher level of feedback and coaching across the group.

We will all have told our own stories and listened hard to how other Fellows responded to our questions about theirs.

Now we can live the philosophy of **assuming the best of each other**, and offer and receive feedback in the safe space of the Vicars' Hall.

It is remarkable how quickly we can all move on in our thinking, and manage to shift something that has been stuck in our minds for a long time, when we have the benefit of honest feedback from peers who want the best for us.

## Adopting a multi-speed approach

For the Tuesday to achieve all that it can, it is important to accept that we all tend to move forward at different paces.

Some will find that fairly quickly on the Tuesday morning you manage to crack something that has been worrying you, whilst others will want more time for reflection and thinking through personal options before you are ready to come to some sort of decision.

We each need to be free to set our own speed, knowing that other Fellows are there for us, on our terms.

Sometimes we find that a Fellow who achieves a quick breakthrough in their thinking is more than happy to concentrate their energy on supporting others, only to find a little later on that a breakthrough that someone else has made triggers a **much bigger breakthrough for them** than the one they have already had!

By this stage we should have achieved such a strong sense of **mutual trust and shared energy** as a group that we are all able to move further forward than any of us thought possible at 6.00 on Sunday.

Not sure whether we can achieve this? **Yes we can!**



# Agenda

## Sunday, October 13th 2019

<b>2.30pm+</b>	You are welcome to check into your room in St George's House
<b>4.30pm</b>	Tea in the House for those joining Evensong in the Chapel
<b>5.05pm</b>	Evensong ( <i>optional</i> )
<b>5.50pm</b>	<i>Vicars' Hall.</i> 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 take an agreed question into small groups and then share our personal answers with the wider group
<b>7.40pm</b>	Free time/ drinks in the Sitting Room of St George's House
<b>8.15pm</b>	We have a working dinner in the House Dining Room
<b>9.30pm</b>	We go through to the Sitting room for tea/coffee with port or brandy
<b>9.45pm</b>	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 in the Sitting Room

## Monday, October 14th

<b>7.45am</b>	Breakfast is served in the House Dining Room
<b>8.45am</b>	We start again promptly in the Vicars' Hall
<b>11.00am</b>	Personal reflection time
<b>11.30am</b>	We move on to Stage 2: <i>Tell us more</i>
<b>1.00pm</b>	A hot buffet lunch is served in the Vicars' Hall and we work together in our groups
<b>1.55pm</b>	Team photo on the West steps of the Chapel ( <i>weather permitting!</i> ) then we are back together as one group, with time for one round of small groups in this session
<b>3.00pm</b>	Personal reflection time until 4.00pm. Refreshments from 3.45

# Agenda

## Monday, October 14th (contd.)/

<b>4.00pm</b>	Conversation resumes. We take stock of the progress that we have made in tackling key challenges, refocus and move forward, moving in and out of small groups as necessary
<b>5.45pm</b>	Refreshments, then resume the Conversation at 6.00pm
<b>7.15pm</b>	Free time then drinks in the Sitting Room from 7.45
<b>8.15pm</b>	Dinner is served in the Dining Room
<b>9.30pm</b>	We go through to the Sitting room for tea/coffee and drinks. If anyone has any sort of musical instrument, please bring it out!

## Tuesday, October 15th

<b>7.45am</b>	Breakfast is served in the House
<b>8.45am</b>	We start again promptly in the Vicars' Hall. Some re-energising activity then on to Stage 3: <i>Yes I can!</i> We agree a new shortlist of challenges to tackle, with space for cross-group feedback and coaching as individual Fellows raise specific concerns with other members of the group
<b>11.00am</b>	Personal reflection time
<b>11.30am</b>	We take stock of insights so far and agree our agenda for the rest of the morning
<b>1.00pm</b>	A hot buffet lunch is served in the Vicars' Hall and we work together in our groups
<b>2.00pm</b>	We resume as one group, sharpening up insights so far and our key priorities for the remainder of the day
<b>2.45pm</b>	Personal reflection time and refreshments from 3.15
<b>3.30pm</b>	A key part of the Conversation in which we focus our energies on Fellows who feel stuck in some way and would appreciate additional group support to enable them to move forward in their thinking

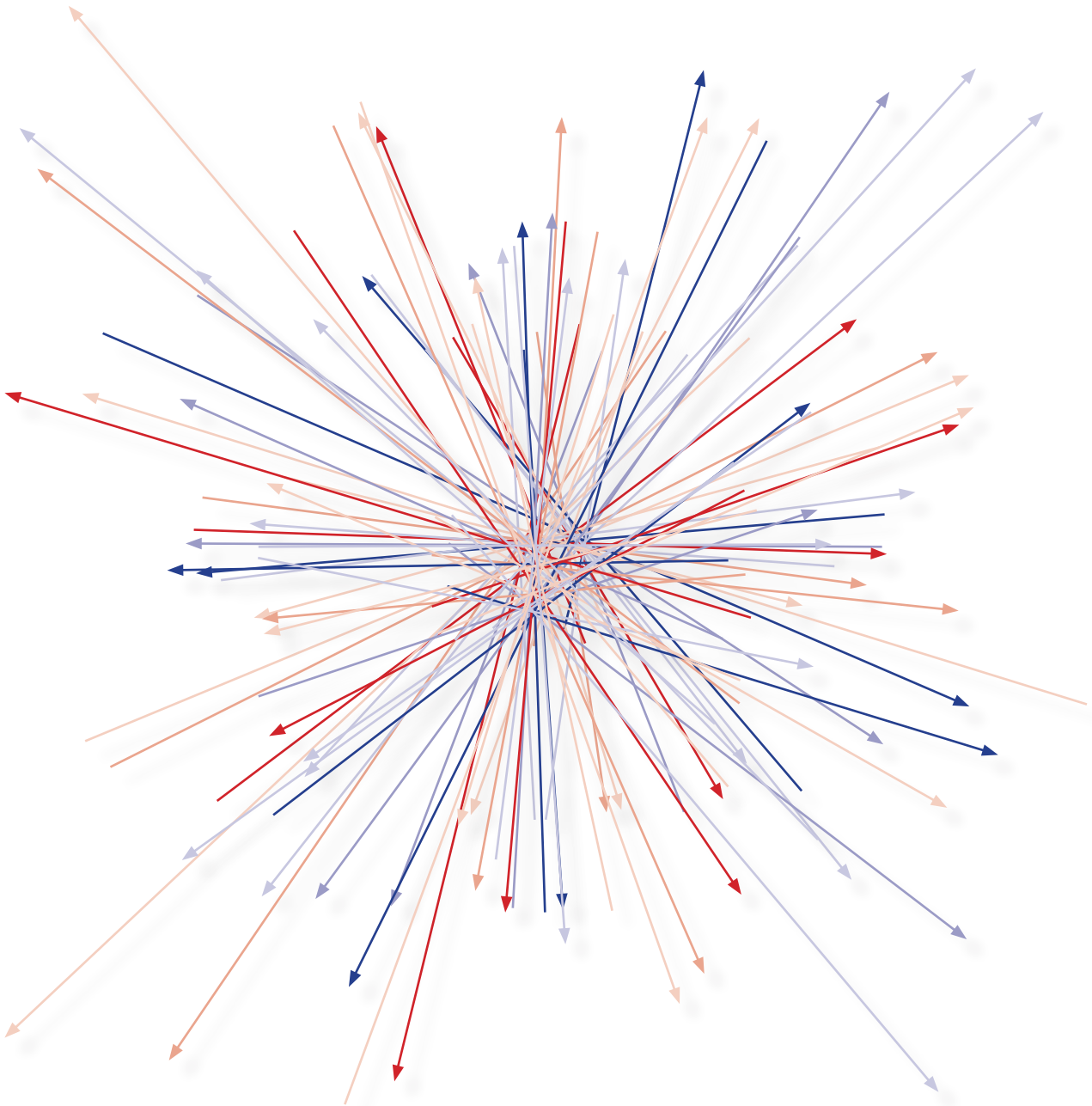
# Agenda

## Tuesday, October 15th (contd.)/

<b>4.50pm</b>	Tea
<b>5.05pm</b>	Evensong ( <i>optional</i> )
<b>5.50pm</b>	<i>Vicars' Hall.</i> Refreshments, then restart the Conversation at 6.00pm. We concentrate our collective energies on those who feel close to some sort of breakthrough and would welcome additional inputs from other Fellows
<b>7.15pm</b>	Free time then drinks in the Sitting Room from 7.45
<b>8.15pm</b>	Dinner is served in the Dining Room
<b>9.30pm</b>	We go to No 25 the Cloisters for our social evening, with a singer and live music

## Wednesday, October 16th

<b>7.30am</b>	Breakfast is served in St George's House. Please clear your luggage from your bedroom, because the domestic staff need to service the rooms. You are welcome to leave it in the Sitting Room or bring it down to the Vicars' Hall where we will be for the remainder of the Conversation
<b>8.30am</b>	<i>Vicars' Hall.</i> We start again <b>promptly</b> , and invite any personal insights that draw on our discussions the previous evening before agreeing our challenge for the final round of small groups. When we return from groups, we sharpen up our key insights and resolves through <b>personal "leadership walks"</b> before we draw our discussions to a close just before 11.15
<b>11.15am</b>	Close of the Conversation



## Video link-up: Wednesday, January 15th 2020

In the final minutes of the Conversation we will also arrange a time for a follow-up video link-up in January 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, January 15th 2020**