



Achieving More Purposeful Connection as Leaders

From 6.00pm on Sunday, October 11th 2020
until 11.15am on Wednesday, October 14th

Background Note and Agenda for our 50th Leadership Conversation

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

This is me!

Tell us more.

Yes I can



This is me!

Tell us more

Yes I can, yes I will!



Our Purpose...

This three-night Leadership Conversation provides a unique space for us to take a step back and find real depth and breakthrough as we examine what it means for us to achieve more purposeful connection in key aspects of our leadership. This will involve accessing and exploring our deeper wisdom and knowing about what is truly important to us as leaders right now - in a context that may for some of us have changed beyond all recognition in the past 6 months.

Building on the 'connect, not convince' theme that Pete Ashby set as a foundation for the 'Leading Culture Change' theme, the conversation will create a space in which we can explore the quality and power of connection we are finding with:

- **Ourselves** - who are we as leaders. Is the life we are living true to the life that living in us? How are we finding ourselves changing and growing - what new qualities, perspectives and positives are emerging for us at this time?
- **Others** - our key leadership relationships: who are we up to something significant in the world with? Are our relationships of the quality to carry the scale and weight of purpose?
- **Our organisational systems** - are these enabling or inhibiting our capacity to achieve success? Where/how is the system running and where/how are we running the system?
- **Our context** - how is the world changing? What is our part in this, large or small?

This unique atmosphere of St George's and the foundation of trust and openness that have been established in Pete's stewardship of the Fellowship over the past 4 years provide a unique space in which to step into these larger questions in our leadership. Which is why this will be a 3 day Conversation, allowing us space to explore deeply and powerfully this theme of purposeful connection - in many ways the life force of our leadership.

During this Conversation we will take advantage of the extra time that we have together to build in space for personal reflection. We will be careful to pace ourselves so that you can absorb the subtlety and richness of this learning on the one hand and engage with energy, purpose, and fun on the other.



3 days...

Three days and three nights together seems a luxury in the lives of busy leaders, but all our experience tells us that the third day is the one that makes all the difference. It allows us to get to the depth of connection, self-honesty and insight that is the heart of our work at St George's House - 'nurturing wisdom'.

During this Conversation, Chris and Karen will also introduce some new practices for personal 'presencing'. This is something we hope will help us to sustain and nurture the unique space we find at St George's House and carry it with us into our daily lives. It is a way of being that enables us to access the intelligence not just of the head, but also the gut, heart and soul - different sources of knowing that are particularly important for these big themes of purpose, connection and trust. It is also the knowing we learn to access in the moment as leaders when we find ourselves facing a familiar question, 'what do I do when I don't know what to do?' - when the way forward is unclear and we are most in need of wisdom.

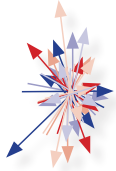
Space, Pace and Grace

These are three important words which we will seek both to apply in our process and to cultivate in our leadership during this Conversation. **Space** is about grounding and presencing ourselves so that we are clear in our minds and able to make wise choices. This enables us to act with **pace**, vigour, energy and decisiveness when we know it is needed, and to be patient when the time is not right. It also enables us to have the **grace** to see others as they really are and engage from a place of humility, understanding and respect.

The three stages to our Conversation

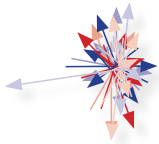
Hopefully you recognise the familiar words on page two!

They are designed to capture the three general stages around which are discussions at St George's House are structured:



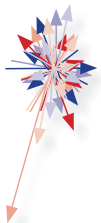
"This is me!"

We put stage one under this heading because we want to encourage you to share a story that helps us understand 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 deeply what is drawing each of us forward in our leadership journeys, what may be holding us back and what new wisdom, insights and potentials are stirring within us.



"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 5pm on Monday evening

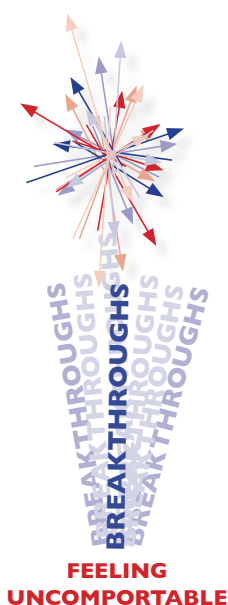
Once we have welcomed you to this Conversation, we will ask you to sign up to the Guiding Principles that we have developed with Fellows since St George's House established the Society in 2016.

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.



Sharing our Stories

What is your purpose for being here? We will start our conversation by inviting you to share your own responses to this question, recognising that so often the first challenges that pop up for us are not always the one we will end up engaging with as our exploration evolves. We will also then extend this into a purposeful conversation over dinner inviting us all to reflect on where we find ourselves in or out of connection - with ourselves/ others/our organisations/our society. This will start to open up the ground for our richer exploration the following morning.

On our first full day together, we will begin by sharing an in-depth personal reflection. Where do we find ourselves in our leadership journey right now? This is the powerful principle of 'Letting our Life Speak' which invites us to look with bare open attention, not judgement, about where we find ourselves right now and what it is that has brought us here. As we do so we will be encouraged to notice things that maybe we hadn't noticed before, not just the usual 'story' we tell people about ourselves but the deeper feelings and energy that accompanies and shapes this. What is this really telling us about who we are and how we connect?

Sharing our own story invites us to 'look again' and enables us all to get to know each other more deeply as a learning community. Listening to others' stories can trigger all sorts of insights and connections that we might not have noticed before. As we do this we help each other to see our lives with different eyes, to 'see our seeing' as Otto Scharmer puts it. This can be incredibly liberating.



Connecting to our deeper selves

Most of us tend to describe ourselves in some kind of narrative - a 'story' that we construct about who we are, what is our role and purpose and we can become very skilled not only at weaving it together in a way that makes us the hero of our own story, but also in then living into the story we have created. We 'make it true'. But what do we do with the bits that we don't like so much, or don't quite fit our story, or the deeper energies and drives within us that don't fit so neatly into the leadership myth we are inhabiting? Our assumption is that much of our deeper power and potential is locked away in the things that just don't fit, that make imperfect sense in terms of our existing narrative.

'State precedes story'. There is part of us that exists prior to our own story, that is wholly alive, that sometimes surprises us by coming up with insights and breakthroughs that we had never thought of before... 'where did that come from?' In the afternoon on Monday, this is what we will creatively explore, with space for walks and purposeful reflection. Connecting with our deeper selves...

Who are we really, the qualities that we embody, some enduring, some emerging maybe. What are we finding ourselves drawn to in this season of our leadership, what are we clinging onto or tolerating that we no longer value? This is a space in which to think the unthinkable and not be constrained... what is really speaking to us as leaders, where are we feeling a call into adventure, or a new, fuller sense of responsibility, or service? The key to this work is developing the capacity to really notice our own energy - what is alive within us and inviting us into a fuller, richer state of being, what is diminishing us, or stemming from a more anxious, compulsive or self-protecting energy. This is heart work as well as head work and requires us to be wholly present with ourselves and each other, something that the unique atmosphere at St George's House supports so beautifully.

Doing this work in small groups can be very powerful as, in the well established pattern of these Conversations, we are able to see ourselves in the mirror of other people's responses and reflections - which often, especially as here where we have no agenda beyond our fellowship, be less distorting than the lenses that we tend to view ourselves through.

Tell us more

From 6.00pm on Monday evening to

After a break for (optional) Evensong in the Chapel, we will spend some time discerning some of the common themes that have emerged through our own personal exploration. What is the world calling for from its leaders at this time, in this now - what is the wisdom we need to be accessing from the recent shock to our systems, our societies, our planet? What are we discerning as a common energy, bigger force for change in all of this. This will inform our conversations over dinner which will be bold, lively and imaginative in the lovely freedom we will have found through our work together during the day.

We learn so much in our informal, spontaneous together time and then our brains do most of their real learning and deeper processing while we sleep. So first thing on Tuesday morning we will take a pause to garner the wisdom of the night before! What is becoming clear to us as we reflect upon this theme of purposeful connection, of being aligned with our deeper selves, and what aspirations and intentions is this stirring within us that we may want to give voice to - starting to create a new narrative maybe for this next phase of our leadership journey...

From mid morning we will explore turning aspiration into boldness - noticing, remembering and reminding each other of the true power we have as the leaders we are - formal and informal. We will have some fun actually physically embodying our power and noticing what it is like in our bodies when we 'play small' and when we 'play big'. The key question we will engage with here though is how we use our power and presence to disrupt systems and patterns in our organisations that no longer serve us. The time we have taken on Monday to 'see with new eyes' will inevitably cause us to notice with remarkable clarity how and where our current systematic patterns (whether structural or human) are impeding much need change and refreshment. One of the first things we need to do in finding purposeful connection is to address the engrained systematic habits that can take us into disconnect or purposeless connection/collusion. This invites us into our role as disruptive leaders - how bold do we need to be to shake things up and allow new coalitions of purpose to emerge? This will involve us really challenging each other on the extent to which we are running our systems or our systems running us - and this is the place when the power and wisdom of our leader to leader conversations really comes to the fore.

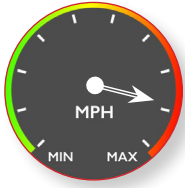
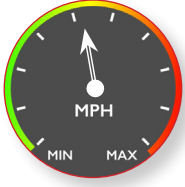
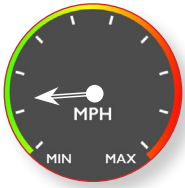


Yes I can!

Tuesday evening through to 11.15 on Wednesday

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 hone in on something that clearly needs your leadership attention, whilst others will want more time for reflection and thinking through 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 a Fellow who achieves a quick breakthrough in their thinking is more than happy to concentrate their energy on supporting others, only to find later that a breakthrough someone else has made triggers a **much bigger breakthrough for them** that what they have already had!



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

We will be focussing on some of our boldest leadership challenges and conversations, so we will need to give ourselves time to develop winning strategies. The key is that as we move forward through Tuesday 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.

Through the evening, we will be encouraging you to start framing and solidifying your new intentions for how you want to show up as a leader in the light of your insights and understandings from your work on connection. Before supper we will do an exercise that will start to lock down our new thinking and intentions into practical steps of change.



Sustaining our purpose and staying in connection

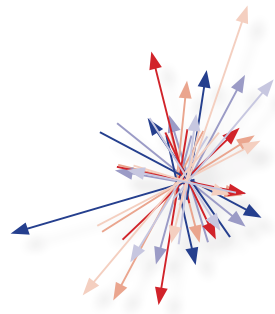
On our final morning we will again pause and take a reflective walk to ensure we have truly captured the wisdom of the night before. Then our work to consolidate and ground our intentions and resolves begins. Our expectation is that by Tuesday evening you will be pretty clear about your aspirations and the conversations you intend to have to pursue these. The hard part, however, is staying true to these when we get pulled back into our day to day contexts. As we noted earlier, 'state precedes story'. If we allow our inner state to change, the narrative we embody changes with us. So how do we retain the state of 'space, pace and grace' that we have found so richly and powerfully in our time together as Leadership Fellows in this Conversation?

Our closing session will therefore focus on ruthless prioritising - what is the movement that I am seeking to cause and what is the state I know I need to embody to make this happen. This is so much more than an action plan. Instead of focussing on another 'to-do-list' that, with the best will in the world, we will forget when we return to the deluge of the everyday, we will focus on how we manage our state to enable ourselves to be more grounded in our purpose and more constant in our connection. Drawing on the experience of our work together and some of the practices we have used to access and strengthen our personal presence we will help each other create a personal programme for embodying, monitoring and re-accessing our more powerful leadership states. This is about developing the capacity to be our own coach:

- to notice when we are in a state of purposeful connection and when we have lost it, or been caught into reactivity and leaking our energy
- to remember who we really are when we are at our best and to return to this way of being

When we learn to do this effectively, our actions follow naturally from our state - we are not driving ourselves and getting frustrated when we don't achieve. We learn to notice who we are being and to choose to be who we are - then achievement follows. This will set the basis for our reflections and conversations in the whatsapp community we will set up to stay in connection after the Conversation. How are we finding ourselves showing up in our lives - state rather than story...

Agenda



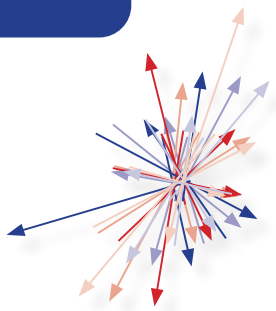
Sunday, October 11th 2020

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	<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
7.40pm	Free time/ drinks in the Sitting Room of St George's House
8.15pm	We have a working dinner in the House Dining Room
9.30pm	We go through to the Sitting room for tea/coffee with after dinner drinks
9.45pm	Private floodlit tour of St George's Chapel, departing from the Sitting Room (<i>optional</i>).

Monday, October 12th

7.45am	Breakfast is served in the House Dining Room
8.45am	We start again promptly in the Vicars' Hall
11.00am	Personal reflection time
11.30am	Sharing our stories
1.00pm	A hot buffet lunch is served in the Vicars' Hall and we work together in our groups
1.55pm	Team photo on the West steps of the Chapel then back together in the Vicars' Hall
4.00pm	Personal reflection time

Agenda



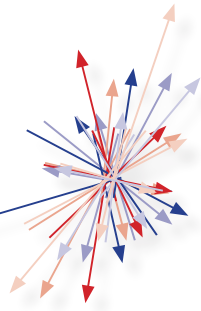
Monday, October 12th (contd.)/

5.05pm	(Optional) Evensong in the Chapel
5.45pm	Refreshments, then resume the Conversation at 6.00pm. On to Stage 2: Tell me More!
7.30pm	Free time then drinks in the Sitting Room from 7.45
8.15pm	Dinner is served in the Dining Room
9.30pm	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 13th

7.45am	Breakfast is served in the House
8.45am	We start again promptly in the Vicars' Hall. Some personal space and then we begin our work on our aspirations
11.00am	Personal reflection time
11.30am	We shift our focus and start looking at how we are connecting with our wider organisational systems and where we should be disrupting forces for disconnection
1.00pm	A hot buffet lunch is served in the Vicars' Hall and we work together in our groups
2.00pm	Work in small groups on key leadership conversations
3.15pm	Refreshments
4.15pm	Personal reflection time

Agenda

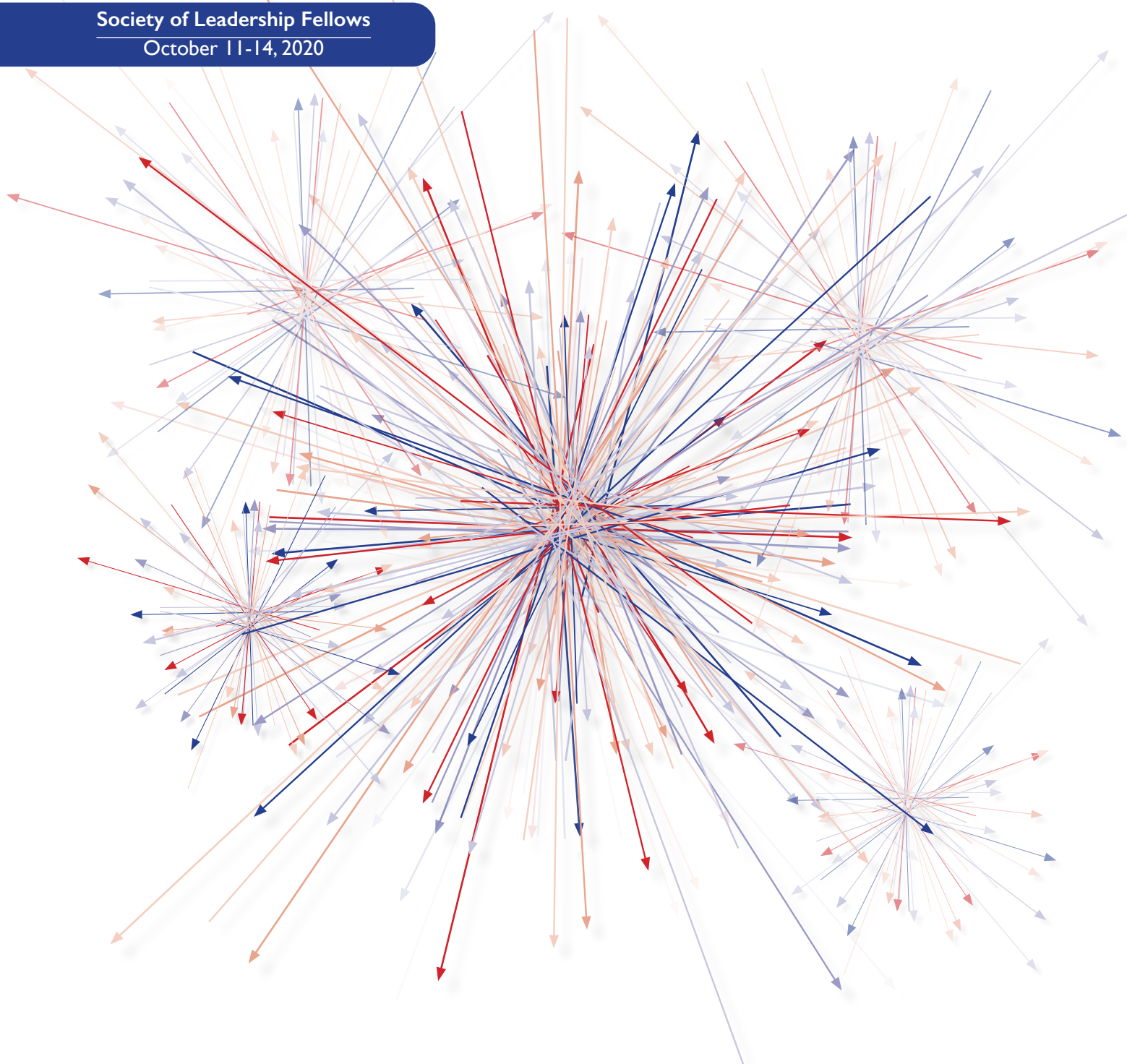


Tuesday, October 13th (contd.)/

5.05pm	Evensong (optional)
5.50pm	<i>Vicars' Hall.</i> Refreshments, then restart the Conversation at 6.00pm. We move onto stage 3 "Yes we can!"
7.15pm	Free time then drinks in the Sitting Room from 7.30
8.15pm	Dinner is served in the Dining Room
9.30pm	Coffee, drinks and conversation

Wednesday, October 14th

7.30am	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
8.30am	<i>Vicars' Hall.</i> We start again promptly , and invite any personal insights that draw on our discussions the previous evening. Then into small groups to work on our commitments to our leadership practice going forwards
11.15am	Close of the Conversation



Video link-up: Monday, January 18th 2021

In the final minutes of the Conversation we will confirm the time for a follow-up video link-up in January 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 5.00pm on Monday, January 18th 2021