

SOCIETY OF LEADERSHIP FELLOWS,
ST GEORGE'S HOUSE, WINDSOR CASTLE



‘NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF YOUR VOICE’

From 6.00pm on Wednesday 12th November until 12.00 noon on Friday 14th

The central enquiry of this Conversation is – how we use our 'voice' as leaders. Voice reveals us, it sets tone, climate and mood. Our voice has power, both by virtue of our role and authority and also our capacity to discern and speak truth. Voice carries responsibility, to speak truth 'to power' and 'from power' – the responsibility to speak our truth into the world and the responsibility for the effect our words have on others.

The 'wisdom' we shall be mining in this Conversation will be the experience of mature leaders in how we exercise this responsibility and the political and practical learning of what it takes to do it well.

'Voice' today of course has so much more dimensionality with the reach of social media and the massive increase in social sensitivity to the words we choose to use. Yet the sheer volume of words and 'positions' that now circulate are equally desensitising and numbing of true discourse. How do we navigate our way through all this as leaders?



AGENDA

Key themes we will explore include:

- Accessing our 'truth' – discerning what wants and needs to be spoken through me, finding clarity and inner alignment with this.
- Expressing our 'truth' – such that it can be received and responded to in constructive ways.
- Speaking truth to power, without 'triggering' power dynamics.
- Surfacing the unspoken and 'unspeakable' in our organisations.
- 'A word in season' - timing, positioning and 'ripple effects'
- Being attentive to where our voice is coming from. Our true motivation? Our 'state' - mature and considered or reactive and hasty?
- 'True voice' and 'considered voice' – how to balance authenticity with consideration.
- How inclusive is our voice?
- How to help leaders around us access and express their voice more effectively.
- Knowing when to speak and when not, when to persist and when to walk away.

If our true voice is not heard why are we here? This is not simply our ability to have voice (although that's hard enough) but to have voice in service of something, and voice that will be heard and listened to - at least equal to the listening that we give to others.



AGENDA

Who is this for?

This is a Conversation for all - in that it is always something we can all get better at!

However, it may be particularly relevant for you if you are experiencing the frustration of not being heard, or finding it difficult to 'exercise voice' in key situations you find yourself in. It could also be a very helpful opportunity to really 'hear yourself in action' in the unique, spacious, generative atmosphere at Windsor. You may come with an enquiry that is of particular relevance to you now. For example:

- Understanding 'your voice' its authenticity and its effect on others
- Developing your capacity to 'speak truth to power'
- Aligning your motives – where are you speaking from?
- Exploring what is, as yet, unspoken in you and what is the cost?
- Tackling the 'distortion' of voice that happens in your organisational culture? Where are the 'elephants in the room'?

As a leadership Conversation rather than a management skills session, this will be both practical and deep.

We will get below the surface to find the inner grounding and alignment to speak truth to, and from, power. We will also be equipping ourselves with practical support and guidance on how to do this. Our primary focus will be on 'what' (do I want to get heard on?). But we will also focus on the 'how' (do I get heard?) in relation to this.



AGENDA

How will it flow?

"The wise speak because they have something to say, the foolish because they have to say something."

Prior to the Conversation, we will invite you to do some reflection and, if you want to, some checking out on how and where your voice is, or is not, having an impact. Specifically:

- Where do you have voice that is heard? How well are you using it?
- Where are you using your voice with limited or even no effect?
- Where are you withholding or not entering the dialogue?
- Which are the 'loudest voices' in your system and which the 'quietest'?
What is that telling you?

This we hope will give you a practical focus for our time together.



AGENDA

Based on this we will invite you to step into your own personal enquiry by sharing it with other Fellows in small groups, recognising this can at times be a sensitive and vulnerable exploration. During the Conversation we will look at how we **'access'** our voice. For example:

- What is it I really want to say?! Do I really believe it?
- How 'aligned' am I in what I want to say – in self (head, heart, gut)? With others?
- Which 'layer of truth' am I accessing to speak from? For example, 'functional' or 'personal', 'values' or 'facts', 'authentic' or 'tempered'
- How is my voice changing with my own life stage and/or position in the system?

We will then look at how we **'express'** our voice. For example?

- Dare I? Is it worth the risk?
- How measured, subtle or patient I may need to be?
- How I sense and work with the 'resonance' and receptivity in those around me.
- How I handle perceived power dynamics – my perceptions of power and those of others.
- How I 'honour' my own voice and the voices of others.

AGENDA

Following our usual flow, the Conversation will proceed through three phases:

- **"This is Me"** – taking stock of where we find ourselves currently in relation to this theme and the questions that are arising from our experience
- **"Tell Us More"** – enquiring more deeply into our learning and insights as we probe into this experience
- **"Yes I can, Yes I will"** – turning wisdom and insight into intention and practice

"THIS IS ME!"

In this opening phase, we will share our stories about what is real and relevant to us now in relation to this theme.

We will share some of the complex or challenging questions we find ourselves facing into and during this start to uncover and examine some of our own self-limiting assumptions about 'the power of our voice'.

As a wise voice once expressed, "If you think *you* are too small, try going to sleep at night with a mosquito in your room!".



“TELL US MORE”

This is the part of the Conversation where we really get beneath the surface, help each other reflect upon and appreciate the power of our different voices.

We will look at the voice we exercise by virtue of the three P's – 'purpose', 'position' and 'person' – where maybe these voices need of necessity to be different but are none the less 'authentic' and 'true' because of that, most obviously in the competing realms of the 'public' and the 'private'.

We will explore the nature of power and the notion of 'rightsizing' our voice, remembering that as one senior leader put it, "I realise that what is a 5-minute conversation for me, may be weeks or months for someone else".

We will explore not only the power of our voice to move things forwards but also the power of our voice to set culture, tone and atmosphere. In particular our role as leaders in bringing clarity, whether at a strategic or values-level.



As we probe more deeply into these specific aspects of the enquiry, allowing a degree of 'streaming' in the group since people will inevitably have different aspects of this that they wish to explore more deeply, we will each 'harvest' the wisdom that is most relevant to us in our particular situation and help each other see what may be of benefit and how.

“YES I CAN!”

In the closing stage of the Conversation, we will focus on the actions and commitments that emerge from this process.

These will relate to what we want to get heard on more clearly and by implication what we can stop giving so much airtime to.

It will also concern who we may want to engage differently with and how we may choose to do so. It will help us embody the new clarity of intention that has emerged from the retreat.

There will be the opportunity to support each other in these commitments after the Conversation and to come back together to review our progress and learning in a follow up call a couple of months after the Conversation.





Timings: Wednesday 12th November

- 1430** You are welcome to check in to your room in St George's House.
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- 1630** Tea/ Coffee available in the Sitting Room of the House.
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- 1705** Evening Prayer in the Chapel. (*Optional*).
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- 1750** **Vicars' Hall.** Gathering together. Refreshments, then start of the Conversation at 6.00pm. Introduction to the Guiding Principles and then on to Stage One: ***This is me!*** We share our personal stories as leaders in small groups, then any themes emerging – with the wider group. In light of the themes, we agree on our question to consider during discussions over dinner.
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- 1945** Drinks followed by dinner in the House Dining Room at 8pm.
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- 2115** Tea/coffee and after dinner drinks in No. 25 The Cloisters.
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- 2145** Private floodlit tour of St George's Chapel, departing the Sitting Room (optional).
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Thursday 13th November

- 0745** Breakfast in the Dining Room of St George's House.
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- 0845** We start again promptly in the Vicars' Hall, exploring in more depth some of the themes that emerged yesterday evening and identifying the most fruitful lines of enquiry in this for each of us.
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- 1000** We move on to Stage 2: ***Tell us more*** where we work more intentionally on the aspects that are most relevant to us, supporting and challenging each other in the process. This may be 'inner work' on our own leadership or 'outer work' on how we shape and transform our team and organisations – or both.
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Thursday 13th November cont...

- 1100** Refreshments and personal reflection time.
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- 1130** We draw out key messages from our reflection time and take our particular challenges into another round of small groups.
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- 1300** A hot buffet lunch in the Vicars' Hall.
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- 1355** Team photo on the West Steps of the Chapel. Then back together as one group in the Vicars' Hall to continue in the 'tell us more' enquiry into the issues that have most resonance and significance for us.
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- 1515** We pause to take stock and notice what is really moving for us and take some personal reflection time, with team and refreshments served.
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- 1600** Back together in the Vicar's Hall, we move onto Stage 3: **Yes I can!** As we go through this stretch stage, where we start to ground our learning and self-awareness in our own specific context, we encourage more feedback. We also focus energy on any 'stuckness' amongst us, where anyone may appreciate group support to help to unlock their thinking and move forward.
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- 1705** Evensong in the Chapel. (*Optional*).
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- 1800** The Conversation resumes, as we start to crystallise and 'step into' the wisdom and insights that are speaking directly to us in our own leadership.
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- 1930** Drinks in No. 25 followed by dinner in the Dining Room.
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- 2130** Tea/coffee and after dinner drinks in No. 25 The Cloisters.
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Friday 14th November

- 0730** Breakfast in the Dining Room of St George's House. Please clear your luggage from your bedroom because the House team needs to service the rooms. You are welcome to leave bags in the Sitting Room or bring them down to the Vicars' Hall.
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- 0845** Vicars' Hall. We start again promptly and take a moment to notice what is starting to become clear to us as we begin our final day together. From this we then we help each other focus and firm up our intentions. Where is the invitation for each of us more fully to embody the wisdom we are accessing?
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- 1045** We invite each of you to work in pairs or trios over tea or coffee to sharpen up your personal resolves and commitments in the light of your intentions.
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- 1140** Closing words and a whole group 'gathering up' of the wisdom that has flowed, both major insights and smaller practical tips.
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- 1200** Close of the Conversation.
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Video link-up:

At the end of the Conversation, we will confirm the arrangements for our follow-up zoom call to check in on the progress we have each made in progressing our resolves.

The key to us making the best possible use of our time in this is for Fellows to post a brief Whatsapp beforehand updating the rest of us on how you have been getting on, and especially which ones you found the most challenging. We then take it from there!

Suggested date and time: tbc