



THE LUNAR SOCIETY

stimulating ideas broadening debate catalysing action

THE LUNAR CHALLENGE & POST-CARBON SOCIETIES

Discussion Dinner on 2 July 2007

The purpose of this Discussion Dinner is to explore the distinctive contribution that our universities can make, by virtue of their fund of scholarship, knowledge, energy and skills, to the region's aim to be carbon neutral by 2030, and what carbon neutrality will mean for our community and for societies in the wider national and international context.

Background

The Third Lunar Society Annual Lecture in 2006 was delivered by Sir John Lawton, Chairman of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution. He gave a stark, scientifically-based assessment of the likely effects of climate change.

At our invitation, Sir John returned the region on 8 June 2006 to lead a facilitated Discussion Dinner with local decision-makers and influencers, some 40 people invited by the Society from business, academia, local government and regional agencies, including the Leaders and/or Chief Executives of seven of the eight local authorities forming the City Region initiative.

A consensus emerged that the region could and should respond to a Lunar Society challenge to be carbon neutral by 2030. A brief Lunar Society paper was submitted to the City Region Board Meeting on 28 June 2006 at their request. Since then, a considerable amount of work has been done by the regional authorities to begin to put in place robust foundations for the kinds of social and behavioural changes that will be needed.

To reinforce all our aspirations to meet this challenge, David Miliband at the Society's Annual Dinner last October, pledged his department's commitment to being "part of the solution" in meeting it.

Science Panel: A need for scholarship

Regional policy decision-makers are acutely aware they need specialist expertise to help guide their work. To that end, the City Region has asked the Society to help set up a Science Panel of respected scientists from relevant fields. Ideally, Panel members will be scientists of international renown in their field, and also work in the region's academic community.

Future societies: A need for understanding and for action

No one, world-wide, seems to know what a post-carbon society might look like, and what life would be like within such communities. Yet energy-security, locational strategies, food supplies, rapid technological change — among a myriad other factors, no doubt many unforeseen — will create perhaps tumultuous social and geo-political change.

This region was an early leader of the global carbon economy, now ending. There is perhaps therefore a duty on us to pioneer a post-carbon economy and society — and if we have the capacity and boldness to do so, this may also be our best practical response to present difficulties.

Questions to pose in the here & now

The following three sets of questions are for you to explore over dinner this evening. The Society will circulate a draft report of the ensuing conversations, with possible next steps, before the end of July for your comments. A final version will then be published for wider dissemination over the summer.

- ◆ What and how can your institutions contribute to a greater understanding of post-carbon societies? What are you doing now? And what could you be doing?
- ◆ What can *we* (this Society, the regional authorities & the universities together rather than individually) do to place this region at the forefront of global debate and action?
- ◆ As for your current people and resources being available to help inform and shape policy decision-makers in the immediate future, what mechanisms could we propose to further enable communication between those with the scholarship and knowledge and those who need to know?