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**THE GARDEN ORGANIC
GARDENING CONFERENCE 2011**

Sustainable gardening for sustainable lifestyles – the future

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Lessons from another sector

- Working in sustainable buildings for 20 years
- NBT for 12 years – a successful business at last!
- Also involved with policy/ legislation
- However now fear that much of this has been making things worse not better
- Need to radically re-examine what we are doing

NBT - What we sell

- Woodfibre Insulation
- Lime and clay plasters
- Clay Blocks

- Systems
- Consultancy
- Performance

- 20 staff: turnover £3 million pa: growing fast



Sustainable products success?

- NBT 30% year on year growth since 2007
- Renewable energy lift off
 - PVs
 - Bio mass heating
 - Ground/ Air Source Heat Pumps
- Rainwater harvesting, SUDS etc
- Sustainability consultants everywhere!

UK progress in buildings

- Energy use up by 30% in last 30 years
- Huge resource use and huge waste (100m tonnes per annum – 3 x total domestic waste)
- Massive gap between designed and real performance of buildings. Typically 100% more energy used than designed.
- Replacement of old pathologies by new ones in sick buildings: huge increase in asthma.
- No proper funding for research or training for past 30 years. Knowledge base privatised.
- De-skilled, de-motivated and neglected industry and workforce.

Sustainable building stuff?

- Natural building materials sales still very small. Many barriers. Much of it used inappropriately. Green wash everywhere!
- Renewables often inappropriate.
- Rainwater harvesting is nonsense environmentally.
- More sustainability consultants don't necessarily lead to more sustainability.
- Sustainability codes and assessment methods work against simplicity, integrity and learning
- Most sustainability stuff has nothing to do with sustainability

Do we just need to try harder?

- More zero carbon buildings
- More renewable energy
- More testing and monitoring
- More policies and more legislation
- More sustainable product marketing

- Or is this all part of the problem?

Problems are not about products

- In last 40 years population has increased by 9% and housing units by 38%. This has been part of social breakdown.
- Heating energy has gone up by 20% and appliance energy use by 143%
- Vales analysis: social structure and lifestyle – the manufacturing of dissatisfaction
- Take back effect – the more energy efficiency the more energy use: Warm Front and FITS

Sustainable Horticulture?

- Does it have the same problems as sustainable buildings?
- Green wash?
- Driven by consumerism and actually accelerating a consumer culture/ social breakdown?
- Contributing to environmental destruction rather than being part of solution?

We need to get out more

	UK/World	Buildings/horticulture
Futures	Future Sustainable World	Future Sustainable built environment/ horticulture
Now	Current Unsustainable UK	Current state of UK built environment/ horticulture

The diagram illustrates the relationship between current and future states for two categories: UK/World and Buildings/horticulture. It is structured as a 2x2 grid. The top row represents 'Futures' and the bottom row represents 'Now'. The left column represents 'UK/World' and the right column represents 'Buildings/horticulture'. Blue double-headed arrows indicate bidirectional relationships between the 'Now' and 'Futures' states for both categories, and also between the 'UK/World' and 'Buildings/horticulture' states at the 'Now' level.

What kind of sustainable future?

- Continuing economic growth not possible or desirable
 - Tim Jackson: Prosperity without Growth
 - Ehrlich Equation
 - Impossibility of de-coupling
- Debt based, bank created money is driving massive environmental and social destruction
 - Richard Douthwaite (Feasta)
 - Ellen Hodgson Brown
 - The Grip of Death

Visions of sustainability

- Stern
- Brave New World - ecofascism
- nef - The Great Transition
 - No growth or even de-growth economics
 - Sharing work and income
 - Different valuing and measuring of “progress”
 - Craft and small scale local industries
 - Different relationship Man and Nature

Sustainable building/ horticulture impossible outside of sustainable society

- Different aims and values
- Different economics
- Different social organisation
- Different way of working
- Different language and understanding
- It's not really about technologies or products

Transition?

- Managed politically led?
 - UN programmes
 - Contraction and Convergence
 - Political programmes
- Bottom up approach?
 - Transition Towns
 - Local economies, alternative currencies
 - Education
- Incremental or step change?
- What role for businesses?

Shall we give up and go home now?

- Some people in our sector are trying:
- Usable Buildings Trust
- Good Homes Alliance
- Passivhaus Trust
- AECB
- NBT

One Brighton – One Planet Living

- One Brighton: BioRegional Quintain and Crest Nicholson - 172 Flats in 11 storey building

One Brighton

- One Planet inductions
- Local organic site cafe
- Weekly competitions
- Roof top allotments
- Social design – spaces, offices etc
- ESCO energy plan
- Monitoring programmes underway with full feedback loops
- Green building materials and energy systems
- 2 car parking spaces for 172 flats
- *Tackling the social and human elements*

NBT

A high-angle photograph of a construction site on a rooftop. The area is filled with scaffolding and several workers wearing hard hats. In the foreground, there are several large stacks of yellow construction materials, possibly insulation or formwork, arranged on wooden pallets. The background shows a residential area with buildings and trees under a clear sky.

- **Simplicity**
 - **Learning**
 - **Integrity**
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- **Exploring different business models and aims**

Sustainable Gardening – a vital ally

- Has to understand context
- Has to address meaning
- Has vital role to play in changing our culture through hands, head and heart – same as green building, but better!
- However could be part of the problem if it reinforces economic or consumer model.
- Needs to be allied to radical changes as well as incremental changes.
- Must engage with other sectors

Sustainable building/ horticulture means transformation

- Not a product or system. Not a fact.
- A direction of travel
- A human endeavour
- A way to grow