

PREPARING FOR AN EXPO...a report from the Great North Festival Company

Hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are **Anger** and **Courage**: anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they do not remain the way they are. (St Augustine of Hippo)



The Angel of the North contemplating the city of Newcastle (Sasha Taylor)

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Introduction

Over the past year, the Great North Festival Company has been running a series of debates and events in preparation for what it hopes might be an Expo to celebrate the innovation of the North East. This is a report of the year's thoughts and activities.

The underlying purpose of the Great North Festival Company is to encourage the North East to hold an expo or some festival like event to celebrate the region's innovation and to bring new hope especially to the young people of our region. The company was formed in March 2012 to bring together any who, against a tide of disillusion and despair, were concerned for the future of the region.

We are aware of a number of dangers and challenges that lie ahead in achieving economic recovery.

- The recovery of the UK economy that began in 2013 is welcome, however, it is an unbalanced recovery and it disguises some worrying trends.
- Foremost is the inability of the economy to produce enough. The UK can no longer manufacture sufficient goods to satisfy rising consumer demand suppressed by three years of austerity. Nor, alternatively, produce adequate volumes of exports that will help pay for the products that we are increasingly importing.
- The solution lies in ploughing investment into rebuilding the manufacturing base of the economy. Recovery of the manufacturing base is crucial to future prosperity and a decent standard of living for everyone. But since 1961 there has been a rapid and accelerating decline. (see p15, North East Innovation)
- Office of National Statistics (ONS) figures show that in 1961 manufacturing accounted for around 38% of UK jobs. By 2011 that had shrunk to a mere 9%. The economy has become dominated by financial services, which extract wealth from business. Wealth, created by manufacturing, is diminishing.
- In 1997, for example, manufacturing output was worth £197.2 billion, according to the ONS. That represented 18.7% of the economy. By 2012 the contribution had shrunk to £139.3 billion, or a mere 10.1% of total output.
- The present recovery is sucking in increasing amounts of imports, paid for by growing levels of borrowing, adding to the nation's problems of indebtedness. Reliance on imports is having a devastating impact on our balance of payments. The UK's current account deficit was £59.2 billion in 2012, up from £22.5 billion in 2011.

And in the third quarter of last year alone the deficit was £20.3 billion, a rapid rise from £6.2 billion in the previous three months, as the recovery got underway.

- Growing indebtedness cannot be sustained. The collapse of 2008 could become a foretaste of more shocks to come.
- Meanwhile we have growing levels of inequality, as Nobel Prize winning economist Joseph Stiglitz shows in his book, 'The Price of Inequality', and Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett in 'The Spirit Level'. This trend is both unfair and unwise. Both examine the causes, explain how this undermines economic progress, and point towards possible solutions.
- Two other Nobel Prize winners, George Akerlof and Robert Shiller, outline in their book, *Animal Spirits*, how powerful psychological forces are today imperilling the wealth of nations. People believe misleading stories about our economic fortunes.
- We also believe the private sector cannot be relied on to do the rebuilding work alone, because it is averse to many of the high risks involved. So the state must play a key role as a risk partner and investor. How this works, and the benefits it will bring, is set out in *The Entrepreneurial State*, written by Mariana Mazzucato, Professor of Economics at Sussex University.
- Below we give evidence of what we heard about the above, highlighting particular things that we learnt. A series of recommendations – five main and then a number of more specific ones follow. Finally we give a more detailed account of issues raised in our debates and events, some proving more engaged than others – the Berwick debate for example, for whose people the Scottish Referendum was of local interest - but all raising awareness about the challenges facing the North East.
- In the light of that context Great North Festival (GNF) believes that rebuilding the economy on the basis of cutting edge techniques and high value added products will offer hope to a younger generation currently facing poor employment prospects and poverty wages.

Alongside GNF's campaign for the rebuilding of the manufacturing base, we argue about the need for a fairer distribution of the rewards of success. That means, at the very least, a living wage for all workpeople.

GNF has worked on the following principles which are discussed in more detail in the following section.

GNF as catalyst

In the activities it has organized in the last two years, GNF has sought to act as catalyst, bringing people together for debates, raising awareness of the issues, promoting involvement of young people in thinking about the future in film making and exhibitions.

People of the North East working together

Much innovation is going on in the region, but often in separate enterprises/compartments across the North East with little to enable them to relate to one another or contribute to a shared vision for the North East,

The project will only happen if North East institutions are able to work together - local authorities, the five universities, the world of business and industry, the Churches and religious bodies, companies and voluntary organisations.

Collaborating with partners

In setting up the Festival of the North East (June 2013), The Sage, Gateshead, invited many organisations to work with them. GNF worked with Jack Drum Arts, the National Trust and Crisis Skylight to make this event so successful. GNF's collaboration with Jack Drum Arts turned out to be especially fruitful – notably in an evening of films about the North East and its history of innovation.

GNF has worked in partnership with 'The Great Debate, Lodestone (film makers) and NECTER (North East Centre for Transformative Education and Research, affiliated to the United Nations). It has also worked as event partners with many organization listed in the report below and with the Gateshead/Newcastle Initiative, the Sage, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear Museums, and the January Manifesto group.

The GNF Network

Over the past two years, a growing number of people have been made aware of our project and we now have an extensive 'membership', which is kept informed by newsletters and through a facebook page.

Recommendations

- **To campaign for and encourage the region to host a major expo**
- **To persuade North East Bodies to cooperate together in working for the future**
- **To urge the region to build on its spiritual and historical heritage**
- **To urge the region to build on its natural and cultural assets and the range of technological innovation already taking place**
- **To give special attention to the needs of the region's young people.**

Our specific recommendations...

Expo and Cooperation

- GNF believes that an expo will happen if local authorities, universities, religious bodies, business world (sponsors and funders) and voluntary organizations work together to realize the idea.
- GNF's growing conviction was that investment is needed to rebuild the manufacturing base of the economy by developing cutting edge technologies and high value added products already present in the region.
- GNF will continue to advocate the need for all the various lead bodies of the North East to work together on the understanding that only by working together will we together achieve a viable future.
- GNF believes that the North West, Yorkshire and the North East need to cooperate with Scotland for the benefit of the North generally.
- GNF believes with all our witnesses that the region needs one overarching body if a vision for the North East is to be realized.
- GNF will continue to work as closely as possible with the City of Sanctuary, the Festival of the North East organizers, the Great Debate, Crisis Skylight, NECTER and such groups who will work with us.
- GNF sees its role to be that of a catalyst, fostering our expo idea, meeting people, encouraging, networking, liaising with all who will work together to further our aim of celebrating innovation and discovering hope.

Needs of the Young

- The needs of the young are central to our purpose. Young people of Key stage 11 are particularly vulnerable to despair. GNF hopes to help the young maintain their aspirations for the future.
- GNF is concerned that, while believing that all should receive an adequate wage for their labour, young people should find intrinsic reasons for their living and desire to be creative, rather than rely on material success.
- GNF hopes to support those who address the needs of the 24000 young people who are currently unemployed in the North East, with a special concern for those suffering disability and mental ill-health
- GNF supports those working to give young people access to the internet, e-mails etc.

City of Sanctuary

- GNF hopes to work closely with the 'City of Sanctuary' project.

North East's Heritage

The region should build on:

- the beauty and extent of its countryside and the strength of its culture
- And take inspiration from the early history of Northumbria, its architecture, notably Durham Cathedral, its 19th century industrial heritage (the pioneering work of Armstrong, Parsons and the Stephensons – and the innovation of the railways).
- Its festivals - their capacity to counteract a growing individualism with cooperation and all that is creative of community.

North East's Spiritual Heritage

- Two of the main festivals of 2013 were inspired by the return of 'the Lindisfarne Gospels' to the North East
- GNF argues that any regional recovery should acknowledge and be inspired by the North East's spiritual roots, especially its forbears (the Northumbrian Saints). Paul Collins, the Vicar of Holy Island asked, 'How are we to receive The *Lindisfarne Gospels*? - a work of art but also a work of profound spiritual significance
- GNF believes that Hope is fundamental to regional recovery. Hope is to be a theme of 2014 – Hope 2014 – see: www.hopetogether.org.uk

- GNF hopes that the Churches and Religious bodies will note the number of spiritual themes (secular and religious) which emerged during the 'Northumbria Stories' day, and that they will be at the heart of coming teaching and proclamation:
- GNF believes that cooperation between the secular and religious world is vital for our future, together.. Pope Benedict XVI, in his speech in Westminster Hall (September 2010) argued that 'the world of secular rationality and the world of religious belief need one another and should not be afraid to enter into a profound and ongoing dialogue, for the good of our civilization.' Both must learn more from each other.
- GNF believes that Interfaith conversation is vital. Religious bodies and the Churches have a special responsibility to proclaim and speak of hope, and to tell the spiritual stories which can speak to the region about the theological virtues of faith, **hope** and love.

Arising from the Debates

- GNF will support ongoing education about the use of energy
- GNF urges authorities to work carefully with the people what is best for Berwick upon Tweed and its future being sensitive to its singular position within the United Kingdom.

Reflections on GNF's 2013 events.

2013 Festivals

During 2013 there were three major festivals; The Festival of the North East (June 2013), the Lindisfarne Gospel Network of events which took place during the exhibition of the Gospels (July to October 2013) and the British Science Association Festival. (September 7th-12th, 2013).

Festival of the North East (FNE)

The GNF Craggside debate was an FNE event. Evaluation showed that 89% felt that the FNE had promoted the region, 75% thought that it had celebrated innovation and creativity well and a whopping 98% would like to see such an event repeated.

There was very little negative feedback but a weakness was that while it had many good arts and cultural initiatives, there was less about wider social and economic development. Just as in our own GNF events, the voluntary and community sector were better represented than commercial and political interests.

The festival evaluators recommended that any repeat should have a clear focus with preparations starting early. It was also proposed that the Festival should aim to run every 2 or 3 years and that the programme should have a small number of signature or flagship projects. Alongside these main events, other activities could be staged by festival partners.

Lindisfarne Gospels Network

The focus of the 2013 FNE was the forthcoming Lindisfarne Gospels exhibition. GNF involvement is described below:

The Science Festival

Joanne Coleman, manager of the annual British Science Association Festival, informed us that around 76,000 people had attended the festival and 6,500 were young people. Importantly, especially for our proposed venture, just under two thirds were from the North East. About a third of the participants had not been to such an event before and Joanne noted that the festival helped make people aware of Newcastle and especially the contribution of its universities. It was also clear that people valued the showcasing of the region's strengths, its culture and its countryside.

Making community in festivals in Northumberland.

Niki Black, a research graduate of Newcastle University, who is studying the impact of festivals in Northumberland, reported that, excluding agricultural events, since the 80s – with the impact of increasing tourism, a changing industrial climate and growing interest in heritage - there had been 105 festivals. 62 had been new, 4 ancient revivals and a number

had been one off events - 22 still continue. Each festival was based in the community and was key in bringing the local community together, thus, she speculated, enthusiasm for festival was in part a need to counteract the growing individualism of our culture. Haltwhistle, for example, gains a sense of pride from running its own annual carnival, symbolising for them that they are a community. It exhibited what Niki called 'a sense of consistency', of being part of an ongoing community and its culture, by taking from the past and being creative about the present and for the future.

Discovering Hope

The Northern Saints

As mentioned above, the 'Lindisfarne Gospels', the work of the Northumbrian Saints, has been at the heart of the 2013 events. This was demonstrated by the large mural painting of the Northern Saints and the four paintings of the 'Lindisfarne Gospels' at GNF's 'My North East' exhibition, which exhibited in St Nicholas' cathedral during the last week of November, 2013 ending on Advent Sunday.

The Roman Catholic 'Year of Faith' ended on November 24th, the last Sunday of the Christian year. Sister Michael, the local coordinator of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle response, told us about the 12 icons of the Northern Saints which they had taken on pilgrimage. There were 7, the icon of St Hilda to Hartlepool, of St Robert of Newminster to Morpeth, of St John Boste of Waterhouses to Esh Winning, St Oswald to Heavenfield, St Benedict Biscop and St Bede to Jarrow - and to the ecumenical pilgrimage on Holy Island - and finally the icon of St Cuthbert to Durham. The pilgrimages emphasized the underlying presence of the Northern Saints in North Eastern culture and spirituality.

The Lindisfarne Gospels

In our final debate Paul Collins, the Vicar of Holy Island, told us the story of Eadfrith, the creator of the 'Lindisfarne Gospels'. For Eadfrith, making the book as a memorial to the Northumbrian Saints (not just Cuthbert) was a spiritual discipline. By prayer, vigil and fasting he saw it as a spiritual combat, struggling as he wrote each letter to battle against spiritual evil. The work was always meant to be special, a work of art in honour of remarkable people; "how", Paul asked, "are we to receive it now?"

The central place of the 'Gospels' was emphasised during the Holy Island ecumenical service by the reading of the opening verses of St John's Gospel in the Latin of the text, then in Anglo-Saxon (the gloss in the 'Gospels' text added when 'The Gospels' were in Chester-le-Street) and finally in modern English.

Northumbria Stories in Chester-le-Street

GNF's flagship event (funded by the County Durham Community Foundation) was the meeting held in St Mary and St Cuthbert, Chester-le-Street, where the Lindisfarne Community had lived from 883 to 1005. It was then part of the old Roman fort of the town. GNF saw it as the right place to reflect about the spiritual stories that underlie our society today.

There were three speakers, one speaking from a secular perspective, a second from a Christian, a third from a Muslim. We would have liked a Jewish presence, but it was the Sabbath and the day after a feast. We followed the standard discipline of inter-faith conversation by listening in a spirit of friendship and respect, on the understanding that if participants listen attentively they can learn from the disciples of other faiths about their own.

Mahmoud and the Ka'aba

Shazad Hassan, Project Director of the York Mosque, told two stories, his son Ali reading the relevant sura from the Koran in Arabic (Shazad interpreting). The story of the Elephant is in Sura 105, 1-5. At about the time of the Prophet's birth Abraha, a king in the Yemen, decided to invade Mecca and destroy the Ka'aba, the great shrine to Allah. The army, led by its elephants, advanced through Arabia with great success and reached the outskirts of Mecca. As one of the Meccan people was escaping, he came up to the lead elephant, called Mahmoud, and whispered in his ear, "kneel down Mahmoud and go back home safe. You are in Allah's sacred town". And Mahmoud obeyed and knelt. Nothing Abraha could do would persuade Mahmoud to budge. He was prepared to go North or go back the way he had come but he would not enter Mecca. As the Meccan emissary had said, "The Ka'aba has its Lord to defend it".

The Angel Gabriel gives the five disciplines

Shazad's second story was of Omah's meeting with the archangel Gabriel, who gave him the five disciplines by which the Islamic Community should live; to worship God alone, to acknowledge Mohammed as his prophet, to pray five times a day, to fast during Ramadan, and at some time during life, to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. Islam, he said is about belonging, believing, and behaving.

Aidan gives away his horse

Alan Bartlett, Vicar of St Giles, Durham and a Cranmer Hall tutor told the story recounted by Bede about Aidan (Bede, History of English People, Book 3, 14) The king had given him a fine horse, to cross rivers and for urgent journeys, though he usually travelled by foot. Not long after, he met a poor man, who asked for alms. Aidan gave him the horse and all its accoutrements. When the king heard of it, he said to Aidan, "Have we not many less valuable which would have been good enough for a poor man? I had specially selected that

horse for your personal use.” Aidan replied, “What are you saying, Your Majesty? Is this foal of a mare more valuable to you than the Son of God?” Alan told us of a modern counterpart, the Church in Durham which is now providing for 1000 people every week through its Food Programme.

St Cuthbert and the Otters.

Alan told a second story. Once, when Cuthbert was visiting St Abbs monastery at Coldingham, he left the house very early each morning. One day, a monk followed him and saw him walk into the sea, up to his neck, where he remained in prayer. As the dawn came, he came out of the water, followed by two otters, ‘who stretched themselves out before him, warmed his feet with their breath and tried to dry him on their fur. They finished, received his blessing, and slipped back into the sea, while Cuthbert went back to the monastery to join the others in the morning prayers. (Chapter 10 of Bede’s ‘Life of Cuthbert’)

The Journey of life.

Colin Kirkwood, a psychotherapist from Edinburgh and speaking from a secular perspective, quoted the opening three lines of Dante’s Divine Comedy, where the poet explains that he is at the half way stage of his life, and that he was lost in a dark forest, looking for the right way. It reminded Colin of his own journey when he was half way through his life, finding himself as a son of the manse, no longer believing in God. Through this difficult period, he found help from an analyst and began to make sense of his life in relationships, He came to feel and know that relationship was the heart of personal life.

The nature of Story and Hope

Telling a story is a major way of conveying spiritual truth, each many-layered and patterned story speaking in many different ways. The stories above will convey different truths to different people, but, selected as they were by our speakers, they point to some fundamental truths that they wanted to say about our society, that we need to trust, that we need to live disciplined lives, with a concern for the poor. In these difficult ecologically-challenged days, we need a capacity to live in harmony with nature and to understand that personal relationship is fundamental.

Hope and the North East’s Story

The story the North East currently tells about itself is that we are a peripheral region in decline. So what is hope in this context? Hope is not optimism, it is a spiritual quality which enables persons to believe in a future even when all else seems to be pointing in the opposite direction. Hope is not easy to introduce into a society telling itself a negative story. It needs a new one. Different communities have their own stories, each person has his or her own personal story, witness Colin’s story above. A region (as a country) tends to

have its own dominant story. It is the task of the religious and philosophical, secular and prophetic writers, thinkers, and visionaries to renew the vision and tell a story of hope.

Young people and the future of the North East

Catherine McKinnell, MP for Newcastle North and a speaker at our first event in April presented the dilemma she faced of having to give the facts about the North East while at the same time trying to promote the region. Incontrovertible facts are that there has been massive loss of major engineering, that the coalfields are closed, that shipbuilding is finished, and that major engineering is in decline. Unemployment is high and valuable skills have been lost.

Hannah Underwood, Chief Executive of Keyfund speaking to us in April 2013, highlighted what this means for the young today. Of the 240,000 employable 18-24 year olds in the North East, 24000 are unemployed (many of them NEETS: teenagers neither in employment or education) and of those, 21000 had never worked. 9820 of the unemployed were in work programmes, and of those, 66% were disabled in some way. A further 20% had mental health problems. Only 1% were offenders or ex-offenders. 65% had good qualifications. Of the total group, 66% did not have access to e-mails in their homes, 60% had never had any work experience.

Hannah emphasized that this did not mean that children and young people lacked aspirations, the problem was rather that when pupils reached about the age of 16 (key stage 11) many began to feel they had no future. “What they lack,” she said, “is opportunity, networks and knowledge of how to tap into the world and achieve what they hope for”. “They don’t need”, she said, “extrinsic motivation – the promise of acquiring material goods but intrinsic, motivation, a belief that what they do will actually contribute something. People do not measure their worth by what they can earn, but by what they can do and achieve.” The needs of young people remain of paramount concern.

Celebrating innovation and encouraging confidence.

In an article published by The Journal for the British Science Association Festival – ‘Ignite’ – GNF advanced the propositions we highlighted in the introduction; to encourage confidence, support young people, celebrate innovation, and eventually showcase it in an expo. The following expounds this further:

Supporting Young People : ‘My North East’

There is a need to find new ways of inspiring your people and giving them the education and sustainable skills they will need in the modern world.

Paul Frew, a student from the North East at Newcastle University, contrasted his own education at a school where students had a bright future before them with those of another where the pupils felt they were going nowhere.

Students who exhibited at the 'My North East' exhibition had a vision. Students from Boldon school had made beautiful pieces of jewellery out of scrap metal, one visitor commenting, "What wonderful creations. We have such budding artists in our younger generation. They have so much to offer us."



Dominant symbols among the paintings were of the bridges and the angel. They valued the fact that Newcastle was one of the oldest cities in the country and that old buildings were integrated with the new. They delighted in the city as a bright and colourful place, where people could live healthy lives. Natasha Mohindra painted herself sitting observing the stunning sights of the North East (see front cover).



Lucy Andrews, the station clock with no hands. "I wanted to include it", she said, "to show that time shouldn't restrict your life and there should always be a stopping point where we need to take time out in order to enjoy ourselves and the people around us."

Hannah Underwood, in her presentation, gave two illustrations from her work with young people, one a group of three who kayaked anti-clockwise round the British Isles, and a second, a group of girls excluded from school who produced an anthology of their poetry, pointing out that given the opportunity, young people will always rise to the challenge.

City of Sanctuary.

Not strictly for young people, but for another vulnerable section of our society, asylum seekers. Musa Hassan Ali told us at the first debate that when he first came to Newcastle, it was all too evident that asylum seekers were an unacceptable surprise to the community and they experienced racism. Things have improved since. Now what the immigrant community needs is jobs, he said. It is difficult for qualified immigrants to work at the levels they have been trained for and have been doing in their past and they have to accept work well below their potential. Even applying for new jobs is difficult, they must provide a CV, know how to negotiate the internet, know how things work. A group able to provide such expertise would be invaluable. Ali, together with Councillor McCarty and Sarah Smart also spoke about the project to make Newcastle a City of Sanctuary to address these needs.

Making films

In our opening evening, we showed films, one of them made by young people trained by Jackie Scollen of Lodestone. Our project included training young people (NEETs included) to be film makers, and several got involved in filming our debates. These films are on-line at www.greatnorthfestival.com – follow the links. An edited film will be shown at our AGM on March 12th, 2014 (AGM 6pm, Film 7pm followed by discussion at St John's Kingston Park.

North East Innovation

The Passionate People, Passionate Place campaign flagged up innovation as an emphasis the North East needs to retain. In contrast with today, the campaign juxtaposed a range of images, country and coast, leisure activities, innovation, research, arts and culture. This enthusiasm needs to be recovered.

The region has latent capabilities for generating new and needed innovations. The following are examples: PV (photovoltaics), energy from waste, power from wave, wind and tide being tested at the National Renewable Energy Centre at Blyth (NaREC) (see next paragraph) printable electronics being developed by PETEC of Sedgefield, Biotechnology advances (CPI, Wilton) Stem cell and genetic research being developed at Newcastle, the pathfinder discoveries that will help medical science to defeat many life threatening diseases and physical disabilities.

The Campus for Ageing and Vitality is a hive for innovation. Nanotechnology is being developed in Durham and advanced engineering developments also in Durham and in Sunderland and Newcastle Universities. Virtual Reality and animation is being developed at Teesside University.

We had hoped to hold a debate in Wylam, the home of railways, to discuss innovative transport for today and another about nuclear energy in Hartlepool at St Hilda's Church which stands on the headland opposite the Teesside nuclear plant. Unfortunately, both were beyond our budget.

GNF believes that rebuilding the economy on the basis of these cutting edge technologies and high value added products will offer hope to a younger generation. Our growing conviction was that investment needs to be ploughed in to rebuild this manufacturing base of the economy.

Energy from Water

We held a debate about energy at Craggside. Cat Button spoke about the Freeman's Reach project in Durham, a micro-hydro-electric scheme powered by an Archimedes Screw. Craggside is to introduce one too. The idea is to develop sites that while producing some electricity, will also enhance the beauty of the surroundings without damaging its ecology. It will also teach people about the making and prudent use of energy.

Richard Murray, who is in charge of the various Northumbrian Water sludge treatment works told us that European Union regulations meant that the company could no longer dump its sludge in the North Sea. They have built two plants, one at Bran Sands on Teesside, and a second at Howden, (described in a Discovery Museum display, 'Power from Poo') to generate enough electricity to power at least one of the plants.

At NaREC (The National Renewable Energy Centre at Blyth) Jonathan Hughes told us that they test large scale tidal and wave turbines. Again, the amount of electricity generated is small, but it is part of the overall process of developing initiatives so that more clean electricity can be generated.

Insulation material from waste plastic

During the British Science Association Festival there was a competition for local entrepreneurs; one developing a technology to enable the blind to see, another making insulation boards out of waste plastic.

Showcasing Innovation

It had been GNFs intention to hold an expo in association with the British Science Association Festival but minimal response from industry, led us to the conclusion that such an undertaking would need to be much larger than was possible within the festival orbit.

Armstrong's admirable speech

GNF was able to cooperate with Henrietta Heald's presentation of William Armstrong's 'Admirable Speech', proved to be very successful. In 1863 Newcastle had hosted an earlier annual meeting of the same festival, and William Armstrong, the great North Eastern entrepreneur had been that year's president. He had spoken to the assembly about the history of industrial development, especially in the North East. This is described in Henrietta Heald's biography of Armstrong (William Armstrong, Magician of the North, Newcastle, Northumbria Press 2010) and was re-enacted at the festival – see also <http://williamarmstrong.info>

In 1887 Newcastle organised the Royal Mining, Engineering and Industrial Exhibition to demonstrate the city's achievements at the time of the Queen's Jubilee. Each in their way was showcasing all that the North East was contributing to the country. These events are behind our idea for something similar today.

Leadership

Georgina Stephenson.

All reports, the Adonis report being the most recent, emphasize the importance of leadership in the North East. If we are to return our region to the top, Catherine McKinnel argued, we need not a George Stephenson only, but a Georgina Stephenson. Or perhaps, we might suggest, a (T) Danielle Smith. A recent biographer speaking of Dan Smith at Newcastle University last year spoke of new evidence suggesting that a reappraisal of Dan Smith's leadership in the North East was due. He had a vision of Newcastle as a city of learning, a vision which has largely been realized. One unusual feature was his decision to give his full attention to the region. He was never tempted to move into national politics.

Scotland and the North East

Our debate in Berwick upon Tweed raised the question of leadership in relationship to the Scottish Referendum. Joyce McMillan, Theatre Critic of The Scotsman emphasized that Scotland like England is a modern mixed society. The vote is not just for ethnic Scots, it is for everyone living in the country at the time of the referendum. Just like any other modern country, Scotland is a trading nation and will look to trade and relate in a convivial way with its neighbour, in particular with the North East.

Fred Robinson, Professional Fellow of St Chad's Durham and an authority on economic and social development in the North East, agreed that whichever way the vote goes, the effect on the North East will be profound. He feared that the region might miss the opportunity because it neither has an Alex Salmond, nor the institutions which might take up the challenge. In place of ONE North East, the North East now has two LEPs (Local Enterprise Partnerships), one in the North of the region, the second in the South. We lack the regional structure to take the situation forward. Nonetheless, he said, if the vote is a NO, then the North East has a large responsibility to help Scotland rebuilt itself.

Berwick upon Tweed – a British Andorra?

Hannah Moses, the head girl at the Berwick Academy which draws pupils from both Scotland and England, echoed the concern of a town which has so often been pulled in different directions by the two countries. She wondered what the effect would be on students going to university and what bearing border controls would have on movement between the countries.

Perhaps, if there is a YES vote, Fred Robinson suggested, Berwick should become an 'Andorra' between the two nations.

North and Scotland to claim equal standing

One thought was the growing disparity between North and South, A few years ago there was the 'Northern Way' initiative, a plan to bring the North West, Yorkshire and the North

East into a partnership to develop the whole of the North. Its main emphasis was transport. The subject came up again in our Berwick debate when we were reflecting on Scotland either as an independent nation trading with the North or as a partner with the Northern counties of England, especially the cities, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, Hull, Teesside and Newcastle. Scotland and the North of England need to make common cause, if they are to become strong enough to claim equal standing with the South.

Effecting Change

How, we asked in the Sunderland debate is change to be brought about? The debate was our contribution to the Morpeth centenary celebrations of the suffragette, Emily Davison which we coupled with a celebration of the first North East woman MP, Ellen Wilkinson, to think about the ways in which change comes about.

Direct Action and Imaginative Symbolism

Emily Davison was adept at the use of symbolism in her protests. There is a brass plaque in the Houses of Parliament, recording the moment when she hid in a broom cupboard on Census day to demonstrate her right to be in the Houses of Parliament. The idea of her Derby day protest, which led to her death, was to attach a poster to the King's horse, to draw the King's attention to the suffragette campaign. She and her friends had practised in Morpeth, but had failed to take into account the speed and power of a Derby day horse at full gallop.

Tamsin Omond, a modern day direct activist, who has protested against the third runway at Heathrow, emphasized that the first purpose of direct action was to draw the attention of the Press and therefore the Public to issues of importance, to make people aware of vital concerns. We are living in critical times, she said, and good things will only happen if we are prepared to struggle for them.

Representative politics

Julie Elliott, MP for Sunderland North, said she had become an MP because as a politician in Parliament she could pass laws to make things happen. Direct action might make people aware, she thought, but only being part of the legislative process can you take the necessary steps.

Miranda Threlfall-Holmes, a Durham diocesan priest and former member of the Church of England Synod, reflected on the political way and its tedious nature - writing position papers, studying league tables, amassing statistics. The politician, she said, had to be prepared to be bored to win through.

There are two major problems, she observed, if you want change; the first is that those in power like the status quo as it is, and they are the ones who have to make the changes. The

second is that people wanting change tend to be too nice and give way too soon. If there is something that is needed, there is no alternative but to campaign for it.

GNF Preparatory Events were:

November 20th, 2012 – ‘Made in the North East’ an evening of short films at the ‘Star and Shadow’, Ouseburn, Newcastle upon Tyne

April 13th, 2013 – ‘Embracing the Future’ two debates on the future of the North East at the Civic Centre, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne

June 19th, 2013 – ‘Energy from Water’, a debate at Craggside, Rothbury, Northumberland

September 8th, 2013 – ‘Armstrong’s Admirable Speech’, a re-enactment of William Armstrong’s 1863 speech, organised by Henrietta Heald at the British Association Science Festival in the Armstrong Building in Newcastle University

September 21st, 2013 – ‘Northumbria Stories’, a morning of debates on the stories which make for a compassionate society today at St Mary and St Cuthbert Church, Chester-le-Street, county Durham

October 18th, 2013 – ‘Waking the Dawn’, an evening debate in memory of Emily Davison and Ellen Wilkinson, effecting change in the Murray Library at Sunderland University

November 13th, 2013 – ‘On the Edge’, an evening debate on the effect of the Scottish Referendum on the North East of England, at ‘the Maltings’, Berwick upon Tweed, Northumberland

November 24th to December 1st, 2013 – ‘My North East’, an exhibition of art works by students from three schools and Crisis Skylight in St Nicholas Cathedral, Newcastle upon Tyne

November 30th, 2013 – ‘Identity and Change’, a morning of debate and discussion about the significance of the 2013 festivals at the Life Centre, Newcastle upon Tyne

GNF is grateful to the County Durham Community Foundation for part funding of its work:

