

Preston Model Project Committee Meeting

12th October 2021 11-12am

Present:

Ali Al-Assam
Alina Belousova
Freddie Bailey
Shirley Bailey
Andy Birchall
Matthew Brown
Bob Cannell
Garry Cook
Chris Davis
Louise Doswell
Olga Kuznetsova
Julian Manley
Mick Mckeown
Ioannis Prinos
Kate Smyth
Rachel Stringfellow
John Taylor
Ann Vanner
John Wainwright
Phil Whyman
Gaynor Wood

Agenda

1. Julian Manley and Ali Al-Assam: Beginning work on the four challenges (10 minutes)
2. Julian Manley: News on Mondragon visit (10 minutes)
3. Bob Cannell: decision-making and sociocracy for the challenge groups (20 minutes)
4. Mick McKeown: The Preston Model and public health, recruitment ideas and research plans (15 minutes)

Meeting Minutes

Julian: Okay, we'll give it a start to try to finish on time. Thank you very much to everyone for coming. We've got an interesting agenda, I think a packed agenda. For the first 10 minutes or so is me and Ali are going to give a summary of where we are with the four challenges, and the four action groups. Then

I'm just going to say a little word about the visit from Mondragon for the "Preston Meets Mondragon 2". After that, I'm really delighted and grateful to Bob Cannell, who is going to give us a 20 minute presentation or discussion on decision making with a particular focus on the decision making that we might make using the NewsSocial platform. An emphasis perhaps on sociocracy. Bob can tell us all about that. After Bob has spoken, we have 10 to 15 minutes from Mick Mckeown, who's going to talk about the Preston model and research into public health and how the project committee can be connected to the public health impact of the kind of work that we do.

So, thanks everybody for coming, and let's kick off with myself and Ali, saying a little bit to everybody about the four challenges. Some of you know a bit more than others because some of you have already started the process of becoming a member of one of the four circles on the new social platform. So very briefly, there are four challenge circles, each of them connected to a four-year action plan strategy. And these are the results of Ibon Zugasti's and Marta Boixados' work with the project committee, and the two reports that they produced.

And at the end of the second report they produced these four challenges. So, each of the four challenges, has a place on the NewsSocial platform. And anybody is welcome to be a member of one or more of those circles. You don't have to be a member of those four challenge groups to be to take part in the project committee. So, each challenge group requires a moderator, and we're sort of in the process of trying to understand how elect a moderator for each circle, each group. I'm going to ask, Ali to make some comments on that in a minute.

And the groups don't have to limit themselves to the circles on NewsSocial. So, for example, if a particular group decides to meet in the pub or to exchange ideas by email, or via Zoom. Whatever works for each group. Each group should be autonomous and able to do what the members of the group believe is appropriate for the work they want to do. So, the NewsSocial circles are, if you like, an extra added tool. We believe that could be a very interesting tool especially if you're the kind of person who enjoys working with social media type stuff. But of course, everybody's different, and there'll be different ways of working at the challenges. The challenge groups can meet as often or as little as they wish, that's entirely up to the groups. But as the general project committee we intend to meet every quarter, every three months. We're hoping that any decisions taken in each circle can be fed back to the general project committee, and maybe someone in the project committee, some stakeholder with a particular skill or knowledge or ability or way of working, can pick up on the decision taken by a challenge group, and take it forward, and execute an action related to the challenge. Ali, would you like to say something about moderation, and anything that I've missed out about the way the groups could be working with NewsSocial.

Ali: Yes, just a comment that of course you don't have to use it for everything. We have used it over the last 12 months as part of the Google funded project with hot-headed Iraqis. And usually in 40 degrees centigrade with some power cuts. So, it was quite challenging, but it works fairly well, and I hope that we will find it easy and useful for us in Preston. We know that you are all very busy and we appreciate that you probably need to take some time to get used to it. And of course we will be with you, trying to make it as easy as possible.

What the circles allow us to have is a combination of either video events like the one we are having now, or what we call asynchronous discussions, because you are busy and you can't have meetings every two weeks. A facilitator, which we call a moderator, he or she will say: well, this is the challenge we have in this group, these are the action lines we have, how do we go about it and maybe in your spare time over two weeks you start doing some ideation and the system allows that. And of course we could meet in a pub, but when we meet in a pub - this is also an event, so it would be nice to record that event in the circle. The outcome from our meeting at the pub can be recorded later in the circle or during the pub meeting. The idea is that our circles are self-governing circles, so each circle might work differently. And you will find that the way we designed the system is to make it easy to arrive at an outcome.

But let's focus on how do you arrive at an outcome. One of the main conclusions that came up as I read the report several times is a challenge we all face, which is connecting the dots. That means we have so many projects, different initiatives and different stakeholders and the challenge is to bring them all together. So, we hope that NewsSocial can help us do that. And one way it can help us do that is by all of us in different groups agreeing to have a uniform tagging system. We could have tagging for the organization, tagging for the initiatives, tagging for the topic itself, and then tag setting which will enable you to easily find what's happening. Now to do that would be nice for us and the different groups. Going forward one task we have is over the next few months to agree on the system of tagging.

I am not very familiar with your work because I joined the project committee later. But when I see some of the actual lines for one group, like Inter-cooperation - I find it quite overlaps with Culture and Awareness group. And the question is: how will the different groups cooperate together. So, the way we organise it is that these circles have one Mother circle for the whole project, and data could be fed to the Mother circle. And when you are ideating, and you want to refer to a certain document of a certain post, then you could find it anywhere, and this is one way that you could bring it together. We hope that you'll find it easy. The other thing, as Julian said, is that we don't have to be confined to the four circles. Any of the stakeholders in this meeting, who have their own organization can open their own circles, or we might decide to open a circle for a citizen assembly to involve the citizens of Preston into some of the discussions. The system allows us to do that. So, I hope, we can generate valuable content and move rapidly.

I have volunteered to take part in all four groups and I volunteered also to be a facilitator for one of them. So, we hope other members will volunteer to become facilitators too. And all they have to do is just to say - these are the action lines, how should we go about it - and allow the discussion to go forward. I learned so much from last year facilitating for Lebanon and Iraq, and we had the green energy projects, we had IT projects, we had some political stuff. Some of them were quite challenging and hard, some of them were not so, but it was actually quite useful. And we can use it in Preston.

Just to finalize, we had one survey on the moderators' training, that we asked everybody to fill in if you have the time. We'll be very grateful to find your opinion on it and I think Alina has shared that with you. It would be lovely if you could find a couple of minutes to answer that because that enables us to understand really what you think and how we could help better.

Julian: Thank you, Ali. And we also have some ideas in the back burner about NewsSocial becoming a cooperative and becoming part of the Preston system as a cooperative and a cooperative that's owned by the community in Preston. So, that's also very exciting.

Okay so the next item on the agenda is the visit by Mondragon. And I think this is terrifically exciting. Not only do we have Marta Boixados and Ibon Zugasti coming to Preston, of course they are consultants so that's very exciting for us as a project committee, but they're also accompanied by other very distinguished people from Mondragon experts in different areas. So, Marta and Ibon will be accompanied by Iñigo Albizuri, who is the Global Head of Public Affairs for the Mondragon cooperative corporation. So, he's the absolute top guy in public affairs for Mondragon and he's coming to Preston with Marta and Ibon. I think it's very exciting that he is doing that and he's coinciding that visit with a visit to COP 26. They'll also be accompanied by Aitor Lizartza. Aitor is an academic in the business school in the Mondragon University. He's the co-founder of the Mondragon team Academy entrepreneurship unit in Mondragon University, and he's the designer of the degree in entrepreneurial leadership and innovation, which is the work that the Mondragon University do with the BBF in Bilbao.

So as some of you may know, Mondragon University is the only cooperative university in the world and its courses are absolutely linked with business, so they constantly feed the education and their academic programs with ideas, needs, necessities and requirements from businesses in Mondragon and Bilbao and in the Basque Country in general. So, this is a really exciting project that Aitor is involved with, so it'll be very interesting to hear what he has to say as well. They will also be accompanied by Oscar Muguerza who some of you may have heard. Oscar is the Head of Business Banking at Laboral Kutxa. Laboral Kutxa is Mondragon cooperative bank, and he is the expert and mentor for the social value initiative of Laboral Kutxa, that's called Gaztenpresa, and we talked about Gaztenpresa in the project committee meetings with Ibon and Marta.

So, Gaztenpresa is a commitment from Laboral Kutxa to encourage other cooperative business' start-ups in Mondragon, in Basque Country and support them financially, of course, but also in terms of creating business plans and supporting the new startups over a 2-3 year period. So, it's been very interesting to hear how their bank does it and also to understand what does banking mean to a co-operative bank, and the value and importance that social commitment is to the Mondragon bank. They have quite a different approach, and quite a different way of working to the normal high street banks. So, all of those people absolutely got their finger on the pulse in the different areas that are directly related to the work that we've been doing.

So, I'm really excited that they're coming over on the first of November. On the 2nd November we hope they will meet the project committee from 9-10:30. We're hoping that this is going to be a face-to-face meeting so we'll book a room at UCLan. At 11:00 they're scheduled to visit Preston City Council in the Town Hall. So that's really great as well. In the afternoon on the second they'll be visiting Rochdale. It's great that we can offer them something. On the 3rd November we have a morning event at UCLan, where they will be giving talks and presentations from their different skill areas, and that will be an event dedicated to a public meeting. On the 3rd November at 4pm they will be meeting Preston Cooperative Education Centre. All of them have something to say to the Cooperative Education Center, whether it's social value in mentoring from the banking point of view, whether it's the creation of courses, such as Aitor is developing with Mondragon University in the BBF in Bilbao. And on the 4th

November they go back to Mondragon having had their COVID test. So, I'll send the details of that when we get them. We're trying to get a flyer together, which you would have thought is easy but it's not that easy at UCLan. And so, I'll give the details out to you as soon as possible. I see that Chris has got a comment, so we'll take one comment, and then we'll go straight on to Bob, if that's okay. Yes, Chris.

Chris: Julian, Thank you. I'm just wondering whether there's any chance that we can get some Mondragon residents over, it would be really good to get their perspective on things.

Julian: I hadn't thought of that. Yeah, I mean, we can only ask and I think that there's a good chance that maybe not for this visit, but maybe we can talk to them when we come to their project committee meeting on the 2nd of November, maybe we can talk to Marta and Ibon in particular and ask them to do that, there are other people in Mondragon who will have maybe closer ties to the residents in Mondragon. People like Ander Exteberria and Mikel Lezamiz. I think that'd be great and in fact we could arrange some kind of exchange. We can get some residents to come here and we can get some people from Preston to go there. That would be great, thanks for that Chris. Okay. I'm rushing through a bit, because of the time and I do think it's great to keep to that one hour so that we don't go over time, could I hand over to Bob. Bob, are you with us?

***Bob** presented guidance on decision-making processes for the four challenge groups, (see separate note in attachment, also published on prestonmodel.net under NewsSocial)*

Julian: Thank you. Thank you very much, Bob. What I intend to do is gather together the points that Bob made, and create a bullet point summary of what he said and I'll pass it to Bob so that he double check that, and we can send it around. Of course, it's up to each group to decide the kind of decision making each group wants to proceed with, but it seems to us that this cooperative and democratic way of working is maybe opposite to the work that we want to do. There's also a sociocracy website, and information elsewhere about that if someone's interested in following that up. We have a question from Matthew.

Matthew: I have a question about trying to change this into a stronger reality on the ground. Obviously, the aim of everything we are doing as a Council is to actually, build more cooperative businesses in our communities, and obviously to do that we need to raise awareness of the model and make sure that people are showing interest in forming these businesses. I am just wondering how this process will actually strengthen that because obviously we launched our strategy earlier this year, which is very good. Everything that we do want to do is to actually get more of these businesses involved with this so I'm just a little conscious how we could actually move that into some kind of reality on the ground where communities are saying: yeah, I want to incubate a worker co-op with support from ourselves. So that's the question.

Julian: Okay, thanks, Matthew, that's obviously a massive question. I think that the four challenge groups have specific actions, and the 4-year strategy and actions are directed towards achieving actual progress on the ground. I mean that's the whole point about the four challenges and the strategic actions over a four-year period. So, those different challenges, if they're worked through, and if

decisions are brought back to the project committee, and other people can join the project committee as well, and that the people in the project committee are in a position to put those decisions into action, then I think we're making a lot of progress.

So, for example, if one of the challenges is that there should be some action at a community level. Well maybe Chris here would be a person who could give some indication of how that decision by that particular group could be transformed into an actual action on the ground. For example, if another challenge group decided that we needed some BME or some involvement of people of color, maybe they could go to John Wayne right here, who has his finger on the pulse in that particular area, and John maybe could offer advice or would have contacts of people in the BME committee who could put that particular thought or decision into action. We've got Phil Wyman from the business school, people like Aitor, who's coming over from Mondragon, we have at UCLan Center, an incubation unit, which at the moment is just directed towards the incubation of new startups from UCLan, but there's no reason why we can't have an incubation hub in Preston to develop businesses in Preston. We have Andy Birchall, who is the Secretary of the Preston Cooperative Education Center. The purpose of the Education Center is to develop people's potential for creating cooperative businesses in Preston. It would be great if they could be channeled towards some form of incubation unit along the lines of Propeller, but maybe in Preston as a city. There are many ideas out there.

And the whole point of the project committee and everything that we do is to make ideas a reality, to turn ideas into decisions, to turn decisions into actions on the ground. So, I think that's the absolute focus of what we're doing, and what Bob was talking about was how do we make those decisions so that people are properly participating and represented in a democratic fashion. So, it's not just about doing it, it's about how we do it. And I think the process of doing it is part of what we're truly trying to achieve. So that's a big debate and, you know, there's no time to go on about it now, but maybe we could open that up to further debate in the next general meeting for example which is in three months' time. But thanks for that, Matthew. We have to move through the agenda. Oh, Mick has a question, and then maybe you can continue with your own presentation.

Mick: Okay. I think Ali wanted to come in as well, Julian. Matthew, the way I read your question is how do we make this about action and not just a talking shop. And I think the one leads to the other. And, there's ideally a sort of a virtuous cycle, but I do think that one of the things we need to improve in the whole Preston model is this public engagement, and you're getting more and more people knowledgeable about the possibilities and infused with getting involved in it. I see the creation of various democratic structures as a vehicle for that. And I think Julian's response could be condensed this way: the whole of this project started with the idea of the desirability of an ecosystem. It won't be just strands of people talking to each other in disembodied meetings that are connected to the real world. The whole thing is about perpetually deepening the networked basis of what's going on in the city. So, I think it's going to be really, really valuable. And there will be other benefits to do with the problems that are around in society and our democratic deficits and such like that, that we could be getting to grips with, as a happy byproduct of this sort of thing. So, I'm quite enthused by the possibilities here. And it's up to us to actually put the energy into it, and then obviously, harness the energy and enthusiasm, of all the people that will join.

Julian: We just have one more question or comment from Ali, who's just put his hand up, and then we'll have to move back to Mick for your little presentation on public health. So, Ali, go ahead, please.

Ali: Regarding the democratic discourse and what Bob was saying, we have already tools in the system that we could use, but we could build more on that sociocracy. So, for example, in our design we support what we call the Graham's diagram for decision making, have anybody come across it? Where people are giving negative marks, they do name calling, but they are giving very positive marks, they have a rational discussion even if they disagree. And so, for example now, when you try to judge any comment or post on NewsSocial, you could say how eloquent it is, how relevant it is and how in agreement you are with it.

Let's assume we have over a week of discussions between us and there are various comments and their facilitator projects various things. If everybody writes what everybody else has done, we could immediately say, I've discovered that contribution is actually most relevant, even if you disagree with, and which comment everybody's in agreement with, so you could have a more comprehensive idea into what the discussions are and then you could add to it some of the things that Bob has mentioned that could be very, very useful. Now, if we are just 20 of us discussing that usefulness, all right, but if we open it to the community, then you have 100s and 1000s writing comments, then you have people who will rise in the community as masters, and we have learned this from something that developers call Stack Overflow, where 10s of 1000s of people on a daily basis very, very passionately discuss topics, and then the system automatically democratically raises the people, who are most rational in the way they discuss coding approaches. So, there is a democratic way of actually objecting people and we might employ some of it as we go along. Some of it we already have in the system in terms of eloquence, relevance and agreement, but we could expand on it on some of Bob's recommendations and that could make it very useful. Thank you.

Julian: Thank you, Ali. So, we'll move back to Mick now, because we only have 12 to 13 minutes or so, and, Mick, you have some feedback for us on the Preston model and public health.

Mick: Okay, so I'll try to be as brief as possible and maybe take questions. So, the National Institute for Health Research, which is basically the organization that distributes NHS research monies, has funded a project that we bid for led by a fella called Ben Barr. He is a public health scholar in Liverpool University. The bid includes UCLan with myself, Julian and Giannis, who are on this meeting, and other good colleagues up in Lancaster, and in total, it's over half a million pounds worth of research monies, the proposal, has three strands to it as an idea, they're not separate they interweave. There are some quantitative elements - number crunching around economic analysis, and the analysis of available indices or indicators of health, deprivation, and other things, and looking at whether there's a correlation between those. The bit that the UCLan staff are most involved in is the qualitative wing of the study, which is looking at a more network-based analysis of the various groups and anchor institutions that are involved in the cluster model of community wealth building and how they interact with each other and with things like policy as well.

So, we'll be looking particularly at cooperative and democratic matters and the ambition is to produce what we call a logic model - more sophisticated way of explaining how a health benefit might be

achieved because community wealth building exists. So, it's not just a simple linear relationship - how can we make sense of it in a more nuanced way in terms of if something happens here, how does that affect something else happening over there. So, we think this is the first such study of its kind in the UK. And because we've lived through extraordinary times in the last 18 months we're going to try and factor the impact of the COVID pandemic and how that can be played into the logic model.

And I suppose that gives more appeal to the funders because everyone's interested in how communities and cities can bounce back after the pandemic. And before I take questions, I wanted to say that it's quite a big project, it's quite a bit of a coup to get this money away from London so most NIHR money is spent in London in the southeast. And so it's really heartening that people are both aware of the Preston model, and are actually interested in the possibility of generating wider social benefits other than just raising people's material advantages. I think this money is part of the Preston model as well, in that it has created some decent jobs in the locality and elsewhere in the region. So, it's not an insignificant amount of research funding. It's in its own small way contributing to the employment benefit aspects of the of the Preston model.

Julian: Going back to what Ali said, one of the challenges and one of the exciting things about the Preston model is joining the dots. And so although we're interested in creating cooperative businesses we are also interested in the public health impacts. And we have here Kate from the NHS. One of the chief features of the Preston model is precisely the ability to join the dots, and the ability to see that cooperation is about health, it's about education, it's about finances, about new businesses, it's about equality, inclusivity and diversity etc. It is about joining all those dots together. So I see our public health research as being part of that. And I know that Kate too is very interested in that aspect as well in how the NHS in Preston and Preston's hospital can introduce social value into the way they work in the NHS. I don't know Katie if you want to say a couple of words about that.

Kate: Yes, just to say that we're in the beginning of our journey, but we've got a board approval for what we're doing. We spend 800 million pounds a year. We've got 8000 staff. So, it's really important that we feed as much back into the local community to bring benefit, than spreading it all over the world. So, we're working on it, and as I say we've got approval, so hopefully we'll go from strength to strength now.

Julian: Thanks, Kate. I think I think Bob wants to come in.

Bob: Thanks. Yeah. Health traditionally keeps on reverting to ordinary people having things done to them by professionals. And there are examples of collective and cooperative health initiatives around the country and in primary health, not so much hospital based, and in community health, and public health. Even though it absolutely desperately needs to be done with community involvement it tends to be done by professionals telling people what to do and telling people how they can interact with institutions and organizations. In my experience (I personally am very much in favor of community involvement) you always need a professional with standing and authority who can protect the community involvement from the hierarchy in the NHS or in local authorities, who find the involvement of ordinary people frightening and unsettling because it means that they can't operate the way that they prefer to operate, which is a lot of forward planning and carrying out programs, and then they can report

that progress to their superiors, as doing a good job. Because when users get involved, it all gets messy. And it's difficult to work out what's going on sometimes. So, one of the things we could do is to look for those sympathetic professionals, GPs, environmental health officers, managers, and other people, but particularly people who have an independent standing and, in my experience, GPs are very good at that, because they've got authority, and they really aren't answerable to anybody, so they can carry out what they want to happen, if they get the support. So that's my advice, if we can find some nice cooperative GPs in Preston. Okay, thanks.

Julian: Thanks, Bob. And you're preaching to the converted here as well, so great idea. I think Chris wanted to come in.

Chris: Yeah, just to say: Mick, if you need some help connecting, we'd be happy to try and facilitate that. I think, ultimately, we talk about health a lot in our project. And at this point a few people are contacting us about research and research is great, and it's important to develop understanding but we're trying to be a solution-based organization. And so, we would welcome an arm that is looking at the things not just to find out the information and the understanding, but actually asks what we're gonna do about it, and then does something about it.

More to the point. At the moment we are looking at the question of how long do we want to be an area of deprivation. It's not something we're proud of. So, we welcome that kind of attitude to the work that you're doing, because employment and culture and whatever economics plays out in health, in that people get ill and people are not feeling well and people die too young, and we watch that, which is a bit tough. So yeah, we would welcome some support with.

Mick: Thanks Chris, and I want to reassure you that we share that concern about the things you're talking about. And I definitely want to be clear that even though this is a substantial research project, we don't in any way feel that the research tails would be wagging the dog of the Preston model, but we think there's a happy symbiosis. My hopes for this is that once you secure this sort of blue chip research money like NIHR, it can be a lever on other funding sources as well. And we definitely find out things that we think we've got potential solutions for. We can then work with people to look for funds for those things as well.

But I also think that the qualitative research that we've got planned is very network based. And I'm convinced that doing that work will strengthen those networks, not because that's the point of doing the research, but because they will be unavoidably connecting local people in the process. And this isn't your bog-standard research project where the academics are sort of beamed in from outside, and they've got no interest, or they're claiming some sort of dispassionate objectivity about the thing. Now, we will be rigorous and objective, but we've got to stay in this horse race to the moon. And myself, Julian and Giannis will be active in the context.

Julian: Can I interrupt you there, Mick, please. We're running out of time. And I just want to give John, the last word because he's had his hand up for a while, so we'll have you John, and then we'll call it a day. Thank you.

John: Okay, Mick. I'm just thinking about the development of the social prescribing model within Greater Preston, apparently not so effective so far between health and community activity that itself will be health beneficial. So, there are some links already to look at and see whether that particular model is actually working effectively.

And the second thing is just if you need help. I'm a member of a long-standing group established in Manchester initially, but now a national transport and health science group that's looking at the components between transport and health. And obviously that is a small component, that is one of the components that you'll be facing.

Mick: Fantastic. Thanks John. Much appreciated.

Julian: That's really great. Thank you very much. There's lots of links between social value in social prescribing and there's a new social prescribing unit in UCLan as well, that can be weaved into the mix. I'm going to call it a day. We're two minutes past 12. I'm keen on keeping boundaries. Thank you very much everybody for coming to the meeting. I know that Alina will be sending options or dates for the quarterly meetings for the general project committee, and more information and stuff, by email. So, thanks very much, bye everybody.