



A realistically optimistic APPCCG Session

“A new opportunity out of economic crisis?”

A UK-led Carbon Cycling industry, growing resources to stabilise economies worldwide. Is this the only solution?

Wed 7th March 2012, 4 - 6 pm

Jubilee Room, House of Commons, Palace of Westminster SW1 1AA

MEETING NOTES

Click to view: [1-min Overview](#) | [Proposal](#) | [Event](#) | [Speakers](#) | [Guest List](#) | [Feedback](#) | [Output](#)

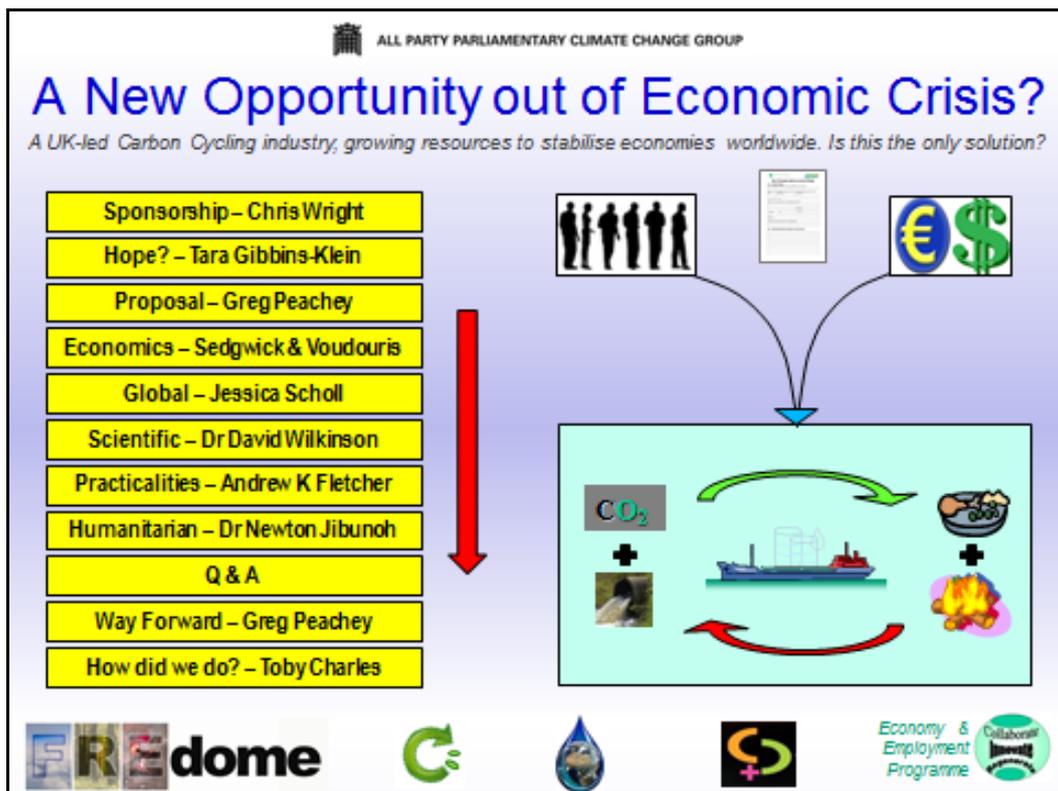
The objectives of the meeting were to provide business leaders with optimism that there is a path to sustainable & beneficial economic growth by presenting the Carbon Cycling - Operation OASIS proposal for action, demonstrating that:

1. It could address many urgent problems.
2. It could provide huge potential benefits.
3. It can be recognised as highly plausible, because of the supporting evidence and the credentials of the figures who are taking it seriously.

The proposal is to utilise skills & resources becoming redundant as the global consume-and-dump system declines, to obtain international funding to re-build the natural processes that convert carbon emissions and waste cyclically into food and fuel.

This would bring foreign investment into the country and put the UK back on the world stage as a leader and shareholder in a new global industry that restores the environment and natural resource base as it grows, instead of depleting and polluting the earth.

An overview of the meeting agenda was as illustrated below:



1. Presentation Outlines



The Chair – Neil Philp, Business Development Director of the CCP Network introduced the aim of the meeting – to help initiate some realistic optimism and action regarding the economy, environment & natural resource base.

[Photo](#)



Chris Wright, Sales & Marketing Director of the CCP Network opened the meeting by explaining why their business supports the Carbon Cycling / Operation OASIS initiative about to be presented.

CCP NETWORK LIMITED SUPPORTING CARBON CYCLING & OPERATION OASIS

- CCPN introduction
- CCPN's own environmental/natural resource policy & aspirations
- Why CCPN supports the Carbon Cycling / Operation OASIS initiative

Key points: CCPN – The Contact Centre Plus Network – sponsored gold-embossed invitations, refreshments, and the audio-visual recording, editing & production. They have pledged 1p from every call they handle into the project and are providing the volunteer team with a means of securing an income. They will use the Network to help maintain dialogue with Corporates and SMEs who express an interest in the Project.

[Slides/transcript](#) | [Video footage](#)



Tara Gibbins-Klein told the meeting why the young people she represents see Carbon Cycling through Operation OASIS as heralding the "Age of Global Restoration" and of her hopes for this meeting and for the actions of the generation currently responsible for taking care of the world's environment and resource base.

“NOT OUR PROBLEM, NOT OUR RESPONSIBILITY.”

- An assessment of the ability of young people to influence dialogue about their future world
- Hopes for this meeting
- Why young people see Carbon Cycling as heralding the “Age of Global Restoration”

Key points:

About the Project: “Carbon Cycling is an innovative solution to the ever-growing difficulties facing my generation in the future, from food, water and fuel shortages.”

[Slides/transcript](#) | [Video footage](#)



Greg Peachey BSc, Founder and Chair, FREdome Visionary Trust introduced the main theme of the meeting by explaining how Carbon Cycling through Operation OASIS could be the route, not only to sustainable growth, but to **beneficial** growth. He is becoming known on the speaking circuit as "The Prophet of Boom!"

PROPHET OF BOOM!

- The self-fulfilling nature of economic optimism/pessimism
- Economic dependence on natural resources and an indication of which supplies are showing increasing signs of scarcity
- How we can turn our accumulating outputs back into our depleted inputs
- How we can use redundant resources to build the new, sustainable and beneficial economy
- Evidence of solution credibility; Progress & status – linking to remaining speakers

Key points: Through the Carbon Cycling – OASIS project, the FREdome Visionary Trust proposes to re-ignite skills made redundant by the decline of the old consume-and-dump economy to construct applications for international funding to build a new global industry to convert carbon emissions and waste cyclically into food and fuel.

About the Project: FREdome is driving Operation OASIS forward because it is a beautiful common sense approach that encompasses the facts that (a) rainforests need access to airborne moisture from coastlines and (b) vegetation transforms carbon emissions and waste into food and fuel.

These facts are as obvious, simple and fundamental to our very existence as the facts that we breathe oxygen, drink water, eat food and burn carbohydrates/hydrocarbons. However, because humanity has lost sight of them, vast swathes of the globe have been desertified, photosynthesis no longer occurs on a sufficient scale, there is a build-up of carbon emissions, waste and a serious shortage of natural resources, now causing our primary industries to falter.

Operation OASIS will help restore the carbon, water and nutrient cycles. This restoration needs to be elevated to at least the same level as the mantras of cutting carbon emissions, carbon sequestration and solar/wind/wave power. We need to secure national and international collaboration in order to progress this crucial programme.

[Slides+Voice](#) | [Slides/transcript](#) | [Photo](#) | [Video footage](#)



Because Greg is convinced that the restoration of natural processes is the key to future economic and business growth, he invited **John Sedgwick**, Professor of Film Economics & Head of the Centre for International Business & Sustainability, **London Metropolitan University** & **Dr Vlasios Voudouris**, Deputy Director of the **CIBS** at London Met & CEO-Founder at **ABM Analytics** to present, as a case study, their environmentally and financially beneficial work in Indonesia.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES OUT OF SUSTAINABLE ECONOMICS: THE PROFIT, PLANET, PEOPLE FRAMEWORK

- The role of long-term scenarios for sustainable economic growth and collaborative business models
- Converting environmental physical assets and waste into useful financial assets for businesses and governments: the role of environmental credits and photosynthesis in sustainability
- The attractive and potential benefits of low-carbon economic development, particularly in emerging and developing markets: presenting as a case study the work in Indonesia of ABM Analytics Ltd / the Centre for International Business and Sustainability, London Metropolitan Business School.

Key points: low-carbon economic growth is doable within the people-profit-planet framework assuming that all the Ps are properly addressed. Scenario thinking is a policy tool to help us implement actionable ideas.

About the Project: The OASIS project seems to be technically feasible in addressing food security while minimising environmental impact. A key challenge is to use scenario thinking to test the socio-economic feasibility of the project in order to receive the funding needed to move it forward from private investors and government programs.

[Slides/transcript](#) | [Photo1](#) [Photo 2](#) | [Video footage](#)



Clearly, a proposal as ambitious and far-reaching as Carbon Cycling through Operation OASIS will require recognition and collaboration from the international community. **Jessica Scholl**, Manager of the **UN Global Compact UK Network Secretariat** and Programme Manager at the **International Business Leaders Forum** introduced the background, aims & processes of the Rio+20 Earth Summit due to take place this June 2012 and the work of the IBLF.

COLLECTIVE ACTION: CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES FROM ECONOMIC CRISIS

How to redefine economic growth to meet both the needs of business and the planet;

- The mechanism through which cross-sector collaboration and collective action can catalyse progress and why this type of action is imperative to the transformation of a consumption based economy to a circular, sustainable economy;
- The role of the Global Compact in catalysing this systems change
- How Rio +20 fits into this transformation and the process for obtaining visibility of any innovative/unique, potentially high-impact proposals

Key points:

- A resource intensive, consumer-based global economy is unsustainable for environmental, socio-economic, and geopolitical reasons.
- Interpreting these realities—not as barriers to growth—but rather as catalysts for positive change, businesses can pursue new and exciting opportunities. Through innovation, they can do more with less and achieve smart growth. Tapping into new markets, creating new products, and appealing to new consumers will give some access to more and lead to inclusive growth. Raising customer awareness and promoting new models for responsible consumption will encourage some to use less or differently, creating an environment for responsible growth.
- IBLF and the Global Compact are catalysing a systems change towards these forms of growth by: seeking to harmonise political, social, and economic systems through cross-sector collaboration; embedding control in participants, empowering visionary leaders, and elevating sustainability to the primary goal.
- Facilitating this process, Global Compact Local Networks, such as the UK Network, provide a space for tangible, local engagement in this global initiative, collective problem solving, and knowledge sharing.
- Systems change takes time, especially when it is necessary to engage highly risk averse and change resistant actors. Rather than cause discouragement, change strategies can be developed in consideration of this fact. Change actors can recognise the value of incremental victories and pursue a diversity of strategies with a variety of stakeholders.
- Rio +20 should be seen in this light. It may not effect the immediate, drastic, and highly visible change needed, but it may foster the connections, spread the ideas, and/or create the environment necessary for smaller or future change.

About the Project: “By aligning the interests of people, the planet and profits, companies will find innovative ways to *do more with less*, achieving Smart Growth. I would argue that Operation OASIS fits into this category. Through innovative thinking and technologies, OASIS redefines a barrier to growth (the destructive impact of carbon emissions) as an opportunity (using carbon to convert arid lands to arable ones.)

The International Negotiations for the U.N. Conference on Sustainable Development will be preceded by the UN Global Compact Corporate Sustainability Forum (CSF): Innovation and Collaboration for The Future We Want. At the CSF, Global Compact Local Networks have been invited to host events. The impact of these events largely depends on two factors:

1. The variety of endorsers or participants engaged in the event.
2. The majority of issues to be covered will have significant cross-sector and cross-industry relevance. Systematic change requires simultaneous and complimentary action within a diversity of sectors and industries. The number of participants involved and committed to further action.

A critical mass of supporters is necessary to disseminate information after the event.

“We would be very happy to work with Operation OASIS on getting the word out there at the Corporate Sustainability Forum, but they need the engagement and support of other actors, including civil society organisation, government departments and big business to have a significant impact.”

[Slides/transcript](#) | [Photo](#) | [Video footage](#)



Carbon Cycling / Operation OASIS could be viewed as natural geo-engineering though terraforming the world's deserts. Dr David Wilkinson, Reader in environmental science in the School of Natural Science and Psychology at Liverpool John Moores University, shared his unique study of the remarkable but as yet insufficiently-known experiment initiated by Darwin, which effectively caused the desert rock that was Ascension Island to green itself exponentially.

THE GREENING OF ASCENSION; A BEST CASE SCENARIO FOR AFFORESTATION AS A CARBON SINK?

- Scientific perspective - why use biology?
- The story of the greening of Ascension Island
- Lessons to be learned from this case study
- The importance and implications of the Ascension Island “experiment”

Key points: Increased afforestation can help reduce the problems of 'climate change' by removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere - however this cannot by itself solve the problem (we can't grow enough trees for this to be the case). There are also several complications with using afforestation which need to be taken into account. For example vegetation can alter the amount of solar radiation absorbed by the land (so in some cases can increase warming) and the effects of trees on the large amount of carbon that can be stored in soils also needs to be considered.

About the Project: A large number of 'geoengineering' solutions have been proposed to help reduce the problems associated with climate change (for examples see Lovelock (2008) and the recent review by Vaughn and Lenton (2011)). We urgently need to study all plausible looking solutions - including the carbon cycling proposal - to establish which are the most promising. We need to do this now, so we can act quickly if necessary.

[Slides/transcript](#) | [Photo](#) | [Video footage](#)



Andrew K Fletcher, Originator of Operation OASIS, now works with the FRedome Visionary Trust. He illustrated how trees, fertilised with nutrient-rich wastewater can rupture the thermal barrier, access sea mist at the desert coast, and send moisture deep inland in circulating air currents.

OPERATION OASIS

- Origin of Operation OASIS
- How the Ascension Island experiment supports the plausibility of Carbon Cycling & Operation OASIS – i.e. new coastal trees will have access to moisture that [hugs](#) but otherwise [cannot cross over](#) onto arid coastlines
- How cloud cover caused by transpiration by new coastal trees will increase albedo (reflectivity), and how shade from a tree canopy will help decrease land temperatures
- How Operation OASIS can help address the Global Suicide Pact cited by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon

- How Operation OASIS could help transport moisture deep inland via the Hadley Cell and help arrest/reverse inland desert encroachment

“If business as usual continues, and we continue our consume and dump mentality we are indeed destined to go the way of the dinosaurs. Operation OASIS offers a feasible and highly profitable means to convert our waste back into useful renewable resources, food and fuel and in doing so help to restore our planet instead of depleting it.”

[Slides/transcript](#) | [Photo](#) | [Slides+Video](#)



If Andrew is right, then coastal vegetation could help transport rain inland in circulating air currents to the far side of the desert, where the encroaching desertification forces communities to abandon their own land and invade their neighbours' territory. Few people know as much about the deserts as **Dr Newton Jibunoh, Founder of FADE Africa** who has crossed the Sahara single-handedly three times. Dr Jibunoh is also aware that deserts are not just a problem to those who live next to them, but that we are all indirectly affected far more than we realise.

DESERT ENCROACHMENT IN AFRICAN COMMUNITIES AND THE WORLD AS A WHOLE

- The impact of desert encroachment on African communities and on the world as a whole
- Past expeditions across the Sahara and the expedition planned proposed for March this year
- The importance of involving the global community, especially the Mediterranean countries, in the building the Trans Saharan Highway, in order to tackle the advancing desert, which represents a full-blown crisis to countries bordering the Sahara and drives climate change, whose effects know no boundaries.

[Slides/transcript](#) | [Photo](#) | [Video footage](#)

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

There was not sufficient time available during the meeting to receive and respond to all the questions from the room, however these are the first few points that arose at and immediately following the event:

Q: Surely what we need to do is to engage support for this initiative from Governments?

A: The experience of approaching a number of groups in the Community, Third Sector, Charitable, Government, Public Sector and Private Sector has revealed that the business world is the most responsive and has the best resources to support progress at this stage.

Q: Should we all give up beef?

A: Cattle do consume crops and emit methane. There are already many groups advocating greenhouse gas reduction or capture. We are focussing on bringing a third option into the public consciousness – that of recognising carbon emissions as a resource, to be converted back into food and fuel. Order-of-magnitude calculations show that If humanity had conserved trees for agro-forestry rather than inadvertently deforesting and creating deserts: (a) The remaining trees would now have the capacity to sequester almost 10 times our current excess carbon emissions, ignoring soil and other vegetation. (b) Instead of 30% of the world being malnourished - we would have enough edible crops, livestock and dairy produce to feed a further three times the world's current population, with more than twice as much as is required for basic survival. This doesn't include fruit, nuts or leaf fodder, which are bonus by-products from agro-forestry. (c) We would have six times more renewable biodiesel supplies than the current global demand for oil. Add to this

sustainable timber fuel products and the very considerable amount of biogas produced from crop waste, animal slurry, sewage, etc. <http://www.box.com/shared/imocvone77>

Q: Given that you talked about the potential return on investment for the scheme in terms of turning unproductive land into productive land, I wondered why the focus seemed to be on making grant applications rather than approaching investors.

A: We are not quite at the stage of being able to offer a mutually equitable Return on Investment as yet. We need the grant funding to run a pilot demonstration first. Once Proof of Concept has been achieved then we will be able to point at, for example, a projected million-fold increase in the value of desert land after development and an ongoing revenue from the food & energy produce.

Q: Concerning the Oasis project, it was heartening to learn about the scheme. It is an example of lots of new thinking that is taking place in this Schumpeterian moment of accelerated change. In terms of bidding for money, we think perhaps one of the first things you need to do is produce a feasibility study based on a full economic costing. Once completed such a study would take the project away from being Utopian in nature towards a more hard-nosed social investment, in which various high profile bodies might wish to be associated.

A: Initiatives launched from grass-roots always encounter this Catch-22: You need a peer-reviewed article in a scientific journal, a feasibility study, financial plan and risk/systems analysis, all of which cost money - but you need the outputs from those activities in order to obtain the funds to finance them. We hope to break this Catch-22 using modestly-funded communications and low-cost pilot demonstrations, e.g. through our first EU bid with our UK & Spanish partners and/or through our East Anglian / Andalucian community-planting of coastal tree-belts. If we can demonstrate & publicise the empirical meteorological impacts, then the potential for multiplying the value of arid wasteland and the revenue from the resulting carbon credits & food/energy produce suddenly become more tangible. An alternative is a "lucky break", where we catch the attention of someone with authority, profile, status or resources, and the vision to see past Step 1.



Greg Peachey summarised the Carbon Cycling / OASIS proposal in a sentence, identified next steps and invited the businesses represented in the room to get involved for shared benefit.

SUM-UP/WAY FORWARD

- The Carbon Cycling - OASIS proposal in a sentence
- Progress since last meeting (See <http://bit.ly/cchandout>)
- Potential business participation
- Next steps

Key points: See below

[Slides+Voice](#) | [Slides/transcript](#) | [Photo](#)



Finally, as a young person, **Toby Charles** summed up how he thought the adults did today as stewards of the world that his generation will inherit and of his hopes for this project in the future.

YOUTH CONCLUSIONS

- How did the adults do?
- What a young person hopes to see for this project in the near future

Key points: Toby stressed the need for actual forward thinking solutions to the problems facing his generation, and generations to come. He very strongly encouraged an active response from those

in the room.

About the Project: “Carbon Cycling is a realistic and pioneering alternative to current proposals.”

[Video footage](#)

Final refreshments (sponsored by CCPN) & networking – in Jubilee Room and afterwards in the Red Lion

2. Achievements

- The event brought the world recovery proposal to the attention of 30 corporate executives and 50 SMEs.
- It generated optimism that there is a path to sustainable growth and raised awareness that utilising CO₂ as a resource is a constructive alternative to cutting or sequestering carbon emissions.
- A clearly discernible momentum has been created and evidenced through positive follow-on dialogue with a number of those who attended.
- It demonstrated commercial support from the CCP Network and their commitment to helping address employment, economic, environmental and natural resource issues.
- 20 further executives and business owners pledged involvement in the project.
- The importance that the youth place on the environment was brought into stark focus by the youth representatives, Toby and Tara, and they were provided with an opportunity to start to influence their generation’s future.
- A platform was shared with representatives from Africa, who are key stakeholders and potential collaborators in the international arena.
- Many new connections were formed between organisations who share common ground relating to their corporate responsibility.
- A task force has been formed to help drive the next project phase.

3. Plans

Three principal phases are envisaged:

1. Plant community gathered and nurtured saplings in a line from the East Anglian coast to an inland reservoir to help stabilise the landscape, correct rainfall patterns, provide proof of concept and communicate the project.
2. Use domestic wastewater in Spain, towed along the Andalucian coast, and community-planted saplings to conserve coastal forest, whilst conducting the detailed analysis & planning for the final phase, which is to...
3. Tanker wastewater to Africa to create new rainforests, reduce global CO₂ levels and grow food & energy crops.

4. What is happening now?

Immediately following the presentation we were approached by businesses who attended to see how they could help to begin this important work and as a direct result of these initial enquiries we are working with them to forge partnerships in order to initiate local Pocket Full of Acorns projects, notably including Suffolk County and East Anglia (where the Sizewell nuclear power station is sited). These areas suffer from coastal retreat by up to 12 metres per year and alternate drought / flash-floods that wash away desiccated topsoil.

We have a feasible, low-cost immediate-to-long term plan to help stabilise the landscape, whilst helping correct rainfall patterns, piloting a method of tackling wider environmental & economic problems in the medium term, and actually combatting climate change & rising sea levels in the long term. We are aware of concerns that preventing erosion of a given section of coastline may adversely affect other sections that receive that eroded sediment. We therefore urgently propose an initial project demonstration along a narrow strip of coastline, in parallel with researching case studies from other parts of the world (esp. New Zealand) and analysis of the sediment flow around the British coast in order to determine the suitability and an appropriate sequence for application in the UK. The resulting recommendations should take full account of factors such as the importance of the related human issues, the effect of the loss of coastal land on the local tourism industry and the impact of the loss of agricultural land on national food security.

5. Challenges

In moving forward, the project will need to overcome hurdles, such as:

- When applying for a particular grant, because of the level of competition, the probability of success is typically 1-in-30. That means that we need to build a significant number of teams identifying funding sources and constructing applications that meet the fund objectives.
- During that activity, those volunteers will still need to sustain themselves and their dependents.
- Funders typically provide 50-75% of a project cost – doubling or quadrupling the applicant's match funding – in order to be eligible for grant-funding, therefore, a pot of match funding must first be built.

6. Next Steps

In order to overcome the above challenges, we invite business participants to help improve trading conditions and attract the custom of those whose policy it is to purchase from companies who implement their Corporate Social Responsibility most effectively, by performing or helping refine the business case for one or more of the following actions:

- Publicly call for grant-funding to be allocated to exploring this option
- Donate a small regular sum to help offset the volunteer expenses or help create a match fund (new tax legislation to encourage environmental action may make it possible for this to be achieved at no cost to the commercial donor)
- Consider suitably-qualified team members for any part-time/temporary vacancies that arise from time-to-time (a searchable databank of volunteer CVs will be made available shortly)
- Evaluate whether the offerings that indirectly help fund the project would also benefit your business
- Consider bringing your call centre operations back to the UK. That would create employment; reduce pressure on the benefit system; put money in the pockets of consumers; stimulate spending on British business; support UK customers with speakers of their own language...

- Encourage your staff to nurture saplings to help prove the project concept, correct rainfall patterns and stabilise landscapes. The most vulnerable coastline, at Happisburgh, is receding at a rate of [40ft/year](#). This is potentially a high-priority project as one of the locations under threat from coastal erosion and flooding is the [Sizewell](#) nuclear reactor. (See photograph below.)

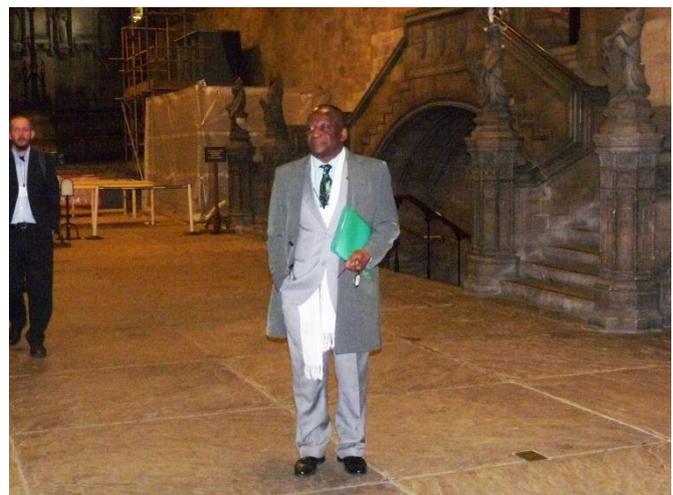


7. Lessons Learned & Feedback

In order to cater for the volume of interest in this subject, delivered using appropriate technology, future meetings will be scaled up to the Portcullis House Parliamentary building.

Feedback included:

- A fascinating insight into how people power can convert a crisis - climate change - into a solution - better economic prosperity for all - *Professor MJC Crabbe (Dean of Faculty, Professor of Biochemistry, Faculty of Creative Arts, Technologies and Science – University of Bedfordshire).*
- The case in support of Operation OASIS was fully explained on Wednesday at the House of Commons by a range of speakers, from the theoretical model as described by engineers and scientists, through to the visual proof as demonstrated by Dr Newton Jibunoh. We now need to find a way of communicating to and convincing government and big business that this is a feasible solution – *Mark Lay (Director – OxTreeGen Ltd)* [More...](#)



More photographs by Andrew K Fletcher [here](#).