

## Placecast Episode 18 – Transcript

**00:00:06 Nicola Headlam** Welcome to Placecast, a Local Policy Innovation Partnership Hub production based at the University of Birmingham. Placecast is essential listening for those keen to explore the ins and outs of knowledge mobilisation for influence in central and local government. Based on the view that it's only through animating the power of place-based leadership that the wicked problems of 2026 can become more manageable. Whether you are a researcher, citizen scientist, an activist, professional working in the public sector, civil servant, politician, analyst or entrepreneur, we think that it's through our networks that most solutions can be assembled, tested, and the learning shared before we go again, and that universities can act as the repositories and observatories of these efforts.

**00:00:52 Nicola Headlam** We are based in City-REDI and rooted in the LPIP program funded by the ESRC, Innovate UK and the AHRC. This podcast aims to highlight knowledge and evidence-based ways of working, and the strategies needed to make a real impact on the decisions that shape our society. Our guests are change makers from across the UK, with stories about the ways in which influence can be achieved. We focus in particular on some of the connective tissue within and between sectors for clues as how to animate place-based leadership. As innovating is a team sport best done in the open. Please contact us with feedback on the episodes, or if you would like to be a guest, or have strong views on the processes of advocacy, lobbying, public campaigning and more. Unpacking how research and evidence connects with neighbourhood, local, city, regional and national missions. I am here on a very sunny day with Calvin Jones. Hello, Calvin.

**00:01:53 Calvin Jones** Hi, there. Nicola.

**00:01:55 Nicola Headlam** Is it a sunny day in the valleys?

**00:01:57 Calvin Jones** It is a sunny day. Well, clouding over now, but it's lovely here, so I'm holding on to that memory.

**00:02:02 Nicola Headlam** So, Calvin, you're one of the place fellows like myself in the LPIP programme. Can you tell us how you became associated with this work?

**00:02:12 Calvin Jones** So I was lucky enough to have one of my PhDs end up in City-REDI And I'm very pleased that all my PhD students are working in academia at the moment. Long may that last. And, through that connection, I became aware of City-REDI's role as the aggregator of knowledge around the LPIP programme for the UK. And then when, Matt informed me that there was an environmental strand of some of this work and there was an opportunity to get involved and think about how we can better connect big blocky policies with people on the ground. That's a particular interest of mine. as is just transition and low carbon transition generally. I was really interested, and it also fits with my other work. I'm also on the board of Natural Resources Wales, so I've got a direct interest in making sure that, we manage places sustainably. So, it fits all the boxes for me.

**00:03:04 Nicola Headlam** So essentially, if you're famous for anything, you mainly work in the Welsh context and you mainly work on green, loosely defined sustainability matters. Is that right?

**00:03:15 Calvin Jones** Well, I did also win the People's Choice Award at the International Snow Sculpting Competition in Milwaukee back in 1996, but probably that's a close second to my work in Wales on really place-based, and sustainable regeneration. Yes.

**00:03:30 Nicola Headlam** And I mean, the whole country appears to be looking at Wales, obviously. I'm not quite sure when this will go out, but I watched the debate, the leaders debate last night on channel four. It really feels like the Welsh institutions are mature and it feels like there is a different conversation happening in Wales. do you recognise that there's something else going on?

**00:03:49 Calvin Jones** I think mature from a very low base. So, when we started in 1999, we had nothing. for the first decade the Welsh Government was a big local authority. It was Birmingham, you know, municipal council. You know, writ wider not even larger. So wider Because same sort a number of people. but you can see how now we have tax raising powers in Wales which you are using. So, we have a new visitor levy, which is obviously relevant to business [indistinct] some ways to rural areas and loading on council tax to try and kind of help local people afford houses and so on, and drive down a little bit to sort of second home

ownership. So, you can see how Welsh governments are now stepping into places they would have feared to tread a few years ago, and where the institution of the Senedd now we have ninety-six members instead of sixty. After May seventh, will be a much more a deeper organisation and a more powerful one in terms of its ability to understand problems and address them, I think.

**00:04:45 Nicola Headlam** And I mean, I'd done some work on fiscal devo in the Manchester context. You know, my work's been about Manchester in the north of England, but there's a really quite chunky lot of powers. I mean, certainly the prospectuses of the various parties, some are talking about income tax cutting, some are talking about income tax rises. So, the Lib Dems are talking about specific tax rises for the NHS and reform, talking about tax cuts for more or less everything. That sort of fiscal level of conversation is a long way on isn't it. From, as you say, being a big local authority.

**00:05:17 Calvin Jones** Oh, absolutely. For me, one of the issues for that is if I'm writing something this morning about economic and fiscal evidence and the way in which we are making many of these decisions within a kind of unitary government statistical system in the UK. The ONS and HMRC don't really care about regions and nations in quite the same way as they do for Westminster. So, we're doing this really with very sketchy evidence. And I think that's where, things like LPIP can come in. And we have one in Wales, which obviously was very rurally oriented, can come in and sort of fill some of these gaps around what places are like and what good policy looks like and what good fiscal policy looks like. And of course, the problem you have in Wales is we just don't know what would happen if we decrease income tax compared to England. It's so close. I mean, Nicola, I could throw a stone and hit England almost from my house. So, if you want to move across the border to benefit from or avoid being stung by, you know, paying income tax, that's perfectly possible in a way. It's not in Scotland. So, I think this is a really interesting petri dish in many ways.

**00:06:16 Nicola Headlam** Mhm. It's really alive isn't it. And as I say, I think certainly in terms of English fiscal devolution, the sort of displacement argument hasn't really got off the ground as much. But I was quite shocked that, as of the seventh of May, you could have radically different taxation policy in something that feels so close to home. And I don't think anybody knows what the macroeconomic context for that is, let alone the local economic development context.

**00:06:46 Calvin Jones** No, they don't. And of course, we're lucky in Wales that obviously it's several orders of magnitude better than England, so people won't move out, you know, you'd be silly to move to England from Wales, obviously. So, there's that kind of um, you know, cultural kind of Hywl that'll keep people here. Um, but more seriously, I mean making good public policy in a multi-level governed state, if you like. In the same way as, say, Spain very complicated and tacitly kind of organised rather than formally federalised. That's really complicated and it's hard to make good public policy. You see, when you lay a big P politics on top of this, what will the Westminster government think about a reform government in Cardiff or Plaid government in Cardiff when Westminster effectively holds the purse in Cardiff. If there's a really interesting question to ask and we may find that answered, well, it's likely we find that answered after May seventh because Labour is looking on its uppers in Wales.

**00:07:40 Nicola Headlam** I've certainly always known you to do work on a kind of alternative industrial strategy with a bit of a green tinge. That's my understanding.

**00:07:46 Calvin Jones** That's right. Yeah.

**00:07:47 Nicola Headlam** So I wonder then if we're talking about Wales as a place, what would be the potential for that kind of work. So green transition, just transition work reaching maturity within the arrangements that we've described and becoming embedded. And I wonder if you can think in large terms about what might change as a result and what might the size of the prize be.

**00:08:09 Calvin Jones** So I think there's two timescales that we're talking about and two prizes, that we might be talking about. And the ultimate one might be, I mean, I did an interview, um, even, even the Guardian noticed me a couple of years ago and came to me in, in the market in Pontypridd a lovely, lovely coffee with Larry Elliott in the market in Ponty. and I said, look, Wales is crap at capitalism, and we have to find something else to do because we just can't do it. We're not very good at it. And there is certainly, I think, a move in Wales towards what is being called various things like a wellbeing economy or transition economy, post-carbon economy. and that is stronger than it is in England, certainly.

**00:08:50 Calvin Jones** For lots of reasons, not least that obviously we've failed at capitalism. So, there's other things we need to do. Understanding how you can reorganise a region and cause the region to deliver something radically different within. Nested within UK and the European system, which is fundamentally, inverted commas. Capitalist. It's really difficult, right? So that's a long-term prospect of how we can think about treating our commons very differently, treating private property very differently, treating the role of maybe more decentralised governments very differently. but those are long term discussions which are emerging, I think in the short term, what we've seen is in the last Welsh Government, I say last, meaning the one that Mark Drakeford was in charge of rather than Eluned So the last Labour government. But this one we saw a real refocus on if you like, local wellbeing when set against my latest paper is called *the trying for the place*. That's the last one I wrote before I left Cardiff. And this this kind of idea of placeless agents who kind of inverted commas come into Wales or in many ways move from Cardiff to Pembrokeshire, which has the same sort of thing in this context, and who drive out or, outcompete local communities. They set around having a visitor levy on tourism businesses, having a loading on empty homes or second homes, with up to three hundred percent having a twenty mile an hour speed limit so that people aren't overwhelmed by traffic through their villages, not having a new M4 relief for all those decisions individually have their own rationales and excuses and political trade-offs, as we saw with the twenty mile an hour speed limit. But they speak to a government which is recognising that as a periphery full of people or predominantly filled with people who are economically weak, culturally don't have much connection with the Westminster government. There can be a tendency for local populations to come off worse, whether that's, uh, people want to send their kids to a local school or want their children to be able to buy a local house, or farmers want to be able to sell their products into a functioning market and not have to go into debt to buy a new tractor with some American company or, um, people who feel that, uh, very valid at the moment. Currently, for example, huge um, protests emerging mid Wales around the siting of pylons for renewables, which are being pulled together as part of effectively a private electricity network owned by a company which is not Welsh. So, you can see how there's lots of forces which are inverted commas, non-local forces, which have pressed on embedded communities. And I think the Welsh Government, Mark Drakeford seem to recognise that Lee Waters, a former minister, a big part of this as well, and respond to that in ways which try to shore up and focus on local embedded communities and people towards the lower end of the income scale. Good example of this is Wales was the first country, I think, in the UK to have a pilot for universal basic income (UBI),

**00:11:50 Calvin Jones** albeit just for care leavers and [indistinct] leaving care. But there was a very strong focus on, okay, there are people now leaving care homes going out in the big wide world. What can we do to make their lives better and easier? Let's see what UBI might do. So, I think we saw definite stirrings towards what we might call a wellbeing economy, and a recognition that the UK settled form of mixed economy hadn't done us that many favours. we wanted something slightly different. Now, what will happen after May the seventh is anybody's guess.

**00:12:28 Nicola Headlam** I think what's fascinating and again, as fellow traveller thinking about growth and governance beyond growth after growth is that UK plc hasn't managed to string together, you know, sustained quarters of growth for two decades now. quite a lot of the subnational conversation is just gets more and more boosterist and shrill. Yeah. Um, but, you know, you're asking people, you're taking people for fools. If you continue with a very boosterist set of rhetorics that aren't then reflected in the lived experience of people and certainly people lower down the income scale. I mean, you know, I've got endless frustrations with Northern Powerhouse and all the rest of it, you know, because we have very similar dynamics to those you describe, you know, older, iller people further from the labour market. Yet, this boosterist language, which it doesn't even succeed in its own terms, let alone succeeding in the terms that we've...

**00:13:24 Calvin Jones Calvin Jones** Yeah. Yeah. I mean, it's really interesting that there seems to be nothing but a doubling down on what feels to me like old fashioned language and old-fashioned interventions. I mean, we're not talking about the UK situation here because a lot of places, but when I read the Modern Industrial Strategy came out last year, I thought I could have written that in two thousand and one and Gordon Brown probably did because there doesn't seem to be a way for UK government at least to get off this merry go round of always promising, always using the same tools, always looking at the same again. And you can see how um, you know, the way in which GDP measure which, which ONS briefly took into beyond GDP, which was around income redistribution. It was around green growth. Now is narrowing back to talking just about growth as we would, you know, understood it thirty, forty, fifty years ago. And I think that's really

interesting when I mean, you talk about the obviously, the older and iller populations that you have in suburban Manchester in the same way as you have in the suburbs of Cardiff and the valleys. If you look at Barcelona and all the tourism in Barcelona, the people shooting water pistols, the tourists aren't necessarily those who are economically disadvantaged, the people who feel they...

**00:14:38 Calvin Jones** they they do not have a stake in their city in the way that they did and should have, because they are long standing residents. So, I think there are lots of people, you know, lots of the people arguing are against renewables or renewables infrastructure, at least in Wales, are very well to do. You know, there are people who feel that things are being done to them because the problem with the approach of, you know, let's have an AI cluster here and, you know, let's have a free port there is you do that to people not with people because the tools are so, generic, blocky, not amenable to softening for different places, you know, despite what you might say if you're going to have, an AI cluster, there'll be a bloody big server farm and a load of electricity, water going in. That'll be it. You can't make it place-based. So it's very difficult then to square that circle, isn't it.

**00:15:26 Nicola Headlam** Absolutely. And I think. Well exactly. Data centres being a necessary evil. Well at the moment they are the economic strategy anyway. So. So let's not have a council of despair. That would be ridiculous. I mean, I've followed the universal basic income pilot with great interest in Wales. Is that being developed further for care leavers as is established.

**00:15:46 Calvin Jones** Well I mean, not at the moment. I mean these things are always constrained by Senedd terms. Parliamentary terms. Um I think the learnings are still being digested. the makeup of the next Senedd will be crucial in where any of this goes. I mean, I'm hopeful because. it looks like we will have a government in Wales, because of the political dynamics, even if Reform are the biggest party, it's much more likely we have a progressive leftish government, whether that's Green / Plaid, Plaid / Labour some kind of rainbow coalition. It's very likely that we'll have something which is in that progressive space, which would mean that interventions like the care leavers, UBI, could progress to a next level and maybe develop into something a little more, um, widely distributed or impactful. the problem will be for us in Wales. the Labour Party will be hurting so much, I think after twenty-seven years in power and not anymore. It, it, it's hard to see how far they will be able to contribute their experiences to developing things which are already in train. And of course, I think none of the Plaid shadow frontbench. have had an experience of government. Their last time of government was twenty ten, I think with Labour officially and they've all gone now. So. So they'll be completely neophyte and i tell my civil service friends, you know, battering down the hatches because you would be really important. You'll be the only people who know anything.

**00:17:13 Calvin Jones** Whoever gets in whether it's Reform or Plaid Most of our Labour frontbenchers are retiring anyway from the Senedd you know. So apart from Lee and Ed, one or two others they're all going anyway. So we will have a bunch of kids running the country for the first six months. And how that shapes. Nobody really knows. And that will really determine how far we'll be able to progress towards a more sophisticated and nuanced policy making, as opposed to baby's bathwater and starting it all again.

**00:17:40 Nicola Headlam** Okay, so let's not have a counsel of despair. Can you describe something that you've been involved in that's worked particularly well in this space that we're describing? And What were the characteristics of this story? Was it about resource people? Was it about the politics being right? Was it about having a longevity or profile? what reasons to be cheerful?

**00:18:00 Calvin Jones** There's two things that come to mind, at either end of Wales really. And they're both Similar in origin, I guess all the different in theme and structure. So, if you go to Northwest Wales you will see quite a lot of um pipes running down the hillsides, um from very high lakes down to the valleys. And those pipes are carrying water which run turbines, which then create electricity through micro-hydro schemes, And quite a lot of those schemes are owned by local community interest companies, social enterprises, because there was an ability to bring investment into community schemes up until twenty fifteen, which was a clear win for places that were maybe economically peripheral, but geologically and topographically interesting.

**00:18:45 Calvin Jones** You know, lots of valleys, lots of hills, a lot of benefit here. And it wasn't grasped by the big energy companies. It was too small. So, lots of people in that those very Cymraeg speaking communities, these are, you know, these are proper heartlands of the Cymru where people speak Welsh. They pull together and have developed a range of social enterprises on the kind of bro Ffestiniog brand, if you

like, which include not just renewable energy, but, um, owning hotels, owning mountain biking trails, doing lots of social interventions, doing work for the council around, um, social care and so on. And that is an example of where you can see that a population that is disparate in many ways, some of these are very leafy, nice green places in northwest Wales. Some are post-industrial slate valleys. Blaenau Ffestiniog being the obvious example there. But, um, the Bethesda are the places which are economically much more challenged.

**00:18:44 Calvin Jones** But there, *laith cymraeg*, the language has pulled together people in a way which is oriented them to thinking, what do we need to do to make sure our families can stay together, and our children can, if they want, stay and have a future in this place. And that has been successful, there are now, I think thirty, thirty-five, forty community enterprises under the umbrella of the kind of Bro Ffestiniog umbrella. And you can see how in the niches. the niches are tourism, niches are energy, niches are social care. The niches are things that larger conglomerates didn't care about. You can build viable enterprises should nonetheless not profit. Very community embedded. first example, which has been really heartening. And whenever I go up there, I'm doubly ashamed. I can't speak Welsh because you feel you can't understand what's going on unless you do it in Welsh. It's genuinely interesting. Totally understandable in a different language, because the way in which it's narrated is integral to how it's understood, which is very interesting.

**00:20:42 Calvin Jones** And the other one is much closer to home. It's in the Rhondda Valley, so it's what I call the posh one. There are two. Rhondda. Rhondda Fach, Rhondda Fawr, The little Rhondda and big Rhondda. I'm from. Ronda Fach is little, and the big Rhondda had the train line, had a leisure centre and all sorts of amenities and incentives when I was growing up in the Rhondda Fawr, There's a place called Treherbert right at the top and there's a social enterprise called *welcome to our woods*. And they have been agitating for the economic, social wellbeing future of Treherbert, um, for fifteen years, initially by getting people back onto the mountainside to just walk, just be in touch with nature, to deal with the social prescribing, dealing with their, Um, you know, again, very post-industrial community, very poor community dealing with that stress by getting out and retaking the landscape. And eventually from that has emerged through, again, a raft of, of different organisations and, interventions, not only people who are walking much more using and fishing in their countryside. Uh, this is largely public owned forestry estate. there is now a joint management plan between Natural Resources Wales, which I'm involved in and the local community. So that landscape will be managed jointly, by the community for the next thirty years, fifty years.

**00:21:55 Calvin Jones** There's a sawmill, a community owned sawmill in Treherbert, which will be, making wood products for sale locally from hopefully eventually from the local wood. there's a new education establishment there. brand new college called Black mountains College based in mid Wales, has opened a campus in Treherbert to deliver socially responsible, interesting craft and other education, sustainable food, uh, growing all sorts of interesting future oriented post-carbon, local embedded education up to degree level in a valleys community, which is what, six thousand people strong. there is a real buzz and a real, feel that this is, this is something interesting. So Treherbert, it's the last valleys village before you get into effectively mid-Wales and what we call waterfall country, which is um sort of Brecon. up towards then the great expanses, very recreationally interesting. There is however an electric train which are four trains an hour from Cardiff to Treherbert. It's the obvious jumping off point for things like mountain biking, walking. They're talking about trying to reopen, um, a railway tunnel through the hillside for cycle recreation as a cycle path So you can see how in that case, a very deprived community can again, look around and say, what are our resources? What do we have?

**00:23:20 Calvin Jones** Beautiful landscape. Land we can have some influence over it because it's publicly owned, um, community which is engaged in doing the right thing. Bring in interested, wider organisations I was up there, a few weeks ago talking to rewilding UK about what rewilding UK can do in this area, nature investment zones, all that kind of stuff. So, you can see how when you've got genuinely enthused and engaged, local people who have a good set of people around them and are well engaged with wider interest in interesting organisations, stuff can happen in very small, very out of the way places.

**00:23:55 Nicola Headlam** So asset-based community development I guess.

**00:24:00 Calvin Jones** Yeah, I guess so. But assets in the wider sense, you know, I mean, I mean really these are the landscape is the asset, the geographic position is the asset. You know, the fact it's far enough away from Cardiff to feel really different and really wild. But at the same time, it's, I think forty-five minutes on a train, you know, so all that stuff comes together And that's the thing. And Treherbert is unique. You wouldn't

do that in the same way in a different place, a different set of assets, different overlapping set of assets that you would use to build a different future in the same way as Hay-on-Wye can be a book town. You can only have one in Wales, really, you know.

**00:24:45 Nicola Headlam** And you mentioned already the complex devolution settlements in Spain, in Catalonia, Spain, Barcelona. Can you think of a good international lesson that you'd like to import or steal for Wales?

**00:24:58 Calvin Jones** Well, I mean, I mean that's really interesting. I'll answer it in a bit of a strange way. So I've done a lot of work in the Basque Country, which is a very autonomous, the most autonomous region of Spain. It doesn't have any financial dependency on Madrid, keeps all its own tax. It raises all its own taxes, keeps all its own taxes. It pays a little stipend for diplomatic services. I think Madrid one or two other bits and pieces. Um it's moved from being one of the poorest regions in Spain in the nineteen seventies, post-franco to being the second richest behind only Madrid in the last fifty years. Going fantastically well. I go there a lot. As much as I can, I can get over there to see and understand. I'm very good friends with lots of people who work in public policy and in research, innovation strategy there. And when I came back a few years ago and I did a presentation, somebody said to me what the lessons are for the from the Basque Country, for Wales. I said 'Be Basque' because I mean, these people were chasing Whales. W h a l e s across the Atlantic five hundred years ago, you know, when we were still, very much, an insular set of communities across Wales, the Basques were outward looking and in fact, a Basque person was the first person to sail all the way around the world, because I think Magellan was it. He died before he got back with the cap, the Basque cap and the ship didn't. So he's actually the person who got the way around first.

**00:26:21 Calvin Jones** Um, and you can't adopt the lessons. You've seen other places for here. because they are culturally specific. So as I said, I'm writing something in the moment, on, better fiscal evidence, better economic evidence and, and better policy making. if you look at how the Basque, for example, do their research. So the, so the city region version in the Basque Country Orkestra is a competitiveness and innovation institute. And they serve the Basque Country, which is two point two million people. So a similar size as Birmingham if you like, you know, um and that organisation has been going for twenty years rather than the ten or so of city ready. But what it benefits from is a coherence around economic strategy, long term economic strategy, and a second view of. I guess leaving the streams aside, what the Basque Country should look like. That simply doesn't really exist in the UK or in its constituent parts. So you couldn't reinvent Orkestra in Birmingham or Cardiff or for Wales, because there isn't that.

**00:27:25 Calvin Jones** I come back to the maturity of the polity. The Basques, you know, were an autonomous region, and even the Romans, I think, didn't really manage to fully conquer them. And Napoleon left them alone, you know, so so they've been on their own doing their thing and inventing their own laws for a thousand years in ways we lost our laws. However, um, a thousand years ago. So we are building back and I think it's dangerous to look at international structures and think you can import them. What you can do, I think, is look at behaviours and think about how they might fit. So, what I would say is if you look at places like the Basque Country or maybe Quebec to some regard, you might see a focus on long-term. plan making strategising which doesn't exist in the UK or in Wales. You might see, certainly in the Canadian case, a focus on foundational data and evidence and cementing the importance of data and evidence and research into policy making in a way that I really bemoan in the UK. I mean, ministers can announce anything irrespective of whether it's actually measurable or not, and that drives me absolutely nuts. And that tends to happen less in other places. I think you can take behaviours from other places and adopt or adapt them for our contexts, rather than thinking that the way in which things are done can simply be plonked here and will work.

**00:28:53 Nicola Headlam** It's a very good lesson against simple policy mobility. But you're right, sort of a deep understanding of culture and you know, a mere thousand years of Basque dynamics, I'm sure would help us.

**00:29:07 Calvin Jones** That's right. Yeah. We'll be there straight away.

**00:29:15 Nicola Headlam:** So we've spoken quite a lot about you are a freelance gentleman these days.

**00:29:16 Calvin Jones:** I am, yes.

**00:29:17 Nicola Headlam:** What are you working on? Next?

**00:29:19 Calvin Jones** Next? Well, I have to finish my LPIP fellowship work for the rest of this year. Certainly. So I'll be working with talking to people about the Welsh marches. Interesting region between Wales and England for the next few months and understanding people's views on its resilience, its future, what that place should look like. That would be really interesting. Beyond that, there's the possibility of a bid to a large, foundation, looking at what well-being measurement looks like in a place like Wales. Again, this would be Wales based because we have a wellbeing act in Wales, the Future Generations Act, we call it, which talks about our need to husband and steward Wales to make sure that wellbeing of future generations is protected. And how we measure that is very interesting, I think. I'll be thinking about that quite a lot. If we manage to win this project. So those, those are two things that I think um, are very interesting. The other thing I'm doing, which is a little more, um,

**00:30:15 Calvin Jones** out there, I'll be looking at the economic impact of the, the half marathon in Cardiff in October. I may even be tempted to do it myself, but that would require a hell of a lot of training in the next six months. Um, so yes, I'll be I have my PhD. People are surprised to find out I've got PhD in sports economics. Um, so I try and keep my hand in a little bit of sports economics and now and then so that'll be coming up later this year. But the best thing about being freelance, of course, I'll do interest me when opportunities arise. you know, there's something futures oriented about the way I work. or would like to work which which always stays so I, you know, I'm pressing at the moment and I will press after the election for future generations lab for Wales. We don't have any way of envisioning the future in Wales. We don't have any idea where we want to go, how we get there. What levers we pull now to make that thing happen in twenty years' time.

**00:31:01 Calvin Jones** So I think in the longer term, my focus around not just future skills which is often kind of narrowed down but the futures, appropriate orientations, futures, appropriate structures, futures, appropriate behaviours, and making sure that when we make policy, we do it with an eye on what will happen generations down the line rather than now. That's what I'd like to carry on being involved in really.

**00:31:29 Nicola Headlam** I think that's sounds like enough to keep you occupied. as you know, in LPIP we work with decision makers, with researchers. So I'm going to ask now if you can think of someone who's a really good broker. And in that sense, I really mean that is great at taking knowledge, data, evidence and translating it for another audience. So obviously, you do get some political leaders who are good brokers, but they're more the place leaders into whom a good broker might dock with evidence. Yeah. So in my sort of formulation, can you think of somebody specific who's a really good broker of new knowledge and data and ideas

**00:32:07 Calvin Jones** I'm going to be a little bit, self-serving here because this gentleman once interviewed me for a television programme. Um, I'm going to say Michael Sheen. Because Michael Sheen is somebody who is interested enough to look into ... What is often a complicated, cultural or social issue. And he doesn't have to do this. Man's a millionaire. He can do what likes, you know, and wander round with his, family he has. And this has a bit of an edge case in how we talking. But he understands that where a problem exists, you have to. Look into that problem, understand its nuances where the dysfunction originates. Think about how you might translate that into, in his case, a very, very wide audience.

**00:32:45 Calvin Jones** So when you look at the two things he's been involved in, which are more recent, I guess the work he's done on indebtedness and trying to address indebtedness of, people who are on a treadmill they can't get off and then making a TV program, to expose the structures which lead to this indebtedness. Very interesting. Um and required that translation of, if you like, misery into hope. You know, this is a terrible problem. You know, we can do things about it. These, people who are people just like us can be helped if only X, Y, and Z. That was what was really interesting. Um, and of course his new endeavour, which is slightly different, but again, that is his understanding that there was a, a lack of English language theatre in Wales that needed addressing. And he's addressed it, I think, you know, it's just not necessarily brokered in that case. It's just doing, but sometimes being a pure broker isn't enough. You have to have skin in the game. The word entrepreneur means enter and take, which is interesting given how positively we kind of deem entrepreneurs in the UK. and I think broking can sometimes be similarly problematic skin in the game. So I think whenever you are thinking about broking, you have to think about whether that.

**00:34:03 Calvin Jones** The decisions made or the of the interactions made or the processes undergone have consequences for the broker. Another example would be Lee Waters, a minister in the former of government who the twenty mile per hour speed limit. Saw the evidence that it would work and it has worked in terms of

saving lives, reducing serious injuries, reducing insurance premiums and took that and actually in his vision, made a decision and effectively ruined his political career. I think probably his mental health as well along the way, I would imagine, given the trouble that he got into that. But I think there's something about broking which requires either an intrinsic desire to see things be better or some sort of extrinsic skin in the game, which means you're not going to do it badly. And that's not a very good answer. It's only when I've got for you, Nicola.

**00:34:52 Nicola Headlam** It's brilliant. Right. So we've had a place leader who, as you say, really suffered with the implementation of the twenty mile an hour speed limit. And although that is definitely part of the ongoing conversation. Like to roll it back would be quite hard, So who else from your experience is a really good place leader.

**00:35:15 Calvin Jones** I'm going back to the example I gave you earlier, which is, um, my mate Ian, who leads *welcome to our woods*, the community enterprise I talked about in Treherbert, in the Rhondda valleys, but he was born in the valleys, uh, moved away um to, I think Luton or somewhere north of London when he was about three. So he has a frankly, if he listens to this, I'm sorry, but he's got a horrific accent. Right. Awful. Came back as an adult and thought, oh, this place needs a bit of work. I think I could help. And for the last fifteen years has worked. Not from a position of being professionally well connected. not from a position of having loads and loads of capacities and skills and orientations towards bringing people together and being, you know, this kind of broker mover and shaker

**00:36:02 Calvin Jones** starting from a very low base of, you know, um, just want to do something to make the place better. So people like Ian, I think, Would would be our best case scenario because they are clearly immune to the sorts of criticisms of people from populist parties who might say, well, this is just either people coming, doing things to us or this is gentrification of Hastings or these people coming down from London and they're only here for the weekend, you know? So, there's that kind of being of the place when you're place leader, I think gives you an in in a way which is difficult to have if you are, you know, a bit more remote. So I mean, Ian, um, who's also a lovely guy, would be my number one, I think. I mean, there are other people who have, there's a gentleman called Chris Blake who's also been involved, but he's, he's way up the road, um, in Talgarth who's involved in the community owned bakery in Talgarth. He's installed a lot of Micro-hydro schemes, and he's now involved in thinking about how we kind of retake the Commons for better use of the Commons of Wales.

**00:37:03 Calvin Jones** And Chris, again, worked in finance for decades. realised what he was doing was maybe not necessarily the most um socially useful thing and has no need to do what he does, but does it and what he does is and like Ian was very place embedded. Chris will look for where he can make improvements. He's very involved in Black Mountains College. He looked for where he can take his skill set and adopt it and address it, and use it, with other people in different scenarios to make things better. He just, he just does stuff where he thinks he make the most difference.

**00:37:47 Nicola Headlam** Thank you very much. I'm going to let you, before we leave, let you have a wave of my place-based innovation magic wand, I want you to be careful with it. It can grant you a powerful wish to do one of these things, but you must use your powers to make a tangible change to a specific place. Your change will be specific, measurable, actionable, recordable, and transferable. S.M.A.R.T. magic is hard to get hold of at the moment and is subject to a twenty percent reducing multi-year budget settlement. Calvin, you can have ten million pounds in a project fund. You can have half an hour with the cabinet and a slide deck. It seems like you've got your links into the Senedd Well well sorted. So that's the UK level. Translating your Welsh example to the UK cabinet, you can have editorial control of the front page of a tabloid newspaper,

**00:38:37 Nicola Headlam** a clause to insert into a bill. And again, that can be a Senedd bill or a Westminster bill. You can have a simple message to go viral on TikTok. You can have anyone as an advocate for your work or. And this was just for the for the real pure nerds out there. The answer to a question that's bothered you forever, which would you like?

**00:39:00 Calvin Jones** Um, so until about a year ago, I would have said a half hour the cabinet to talk about HM Treasury discount rate and how bad it is for for future investment. But they're sorting that now, so I can leave that to one side because they're raising the discount rate. So so that's one one magic tick I've got for nothing. So I'm going to insert a clause into a bill and I'm going to have a brand new, um well, I'm gonna have

two bills then, I'll have a planning bill for Wales and one for England because I'm doing work in the marches. So I need both of them. Yeah. And there would be a clause that we don't make any decisions about places without a up-to-date, fully fleshed out, multi-layered, holistic land use map and plan. Because we are so bad, so bad in Britain and probably in Northern Ireland and elsewhere, about putting things in the right places, next to the right people, and then putting the people where they should be to make use of those things, then ensure that the animals aren't in the way and that the flora aren't trampled over and that the emissions go in the right place and the water spread. The water runs cleanly through these places, and it drives me absolutely nuts we make decisions with very limited information on how it affects catchments, landscapes, places. So my wish would be a bloody fantastic land use map and hence plan for Wales and England. And why not Scotland and Northern Ireland as well?

**00:40:35 Nicola Headlam** You're really preaching to the choir. I have thought from every angle why it is that we sort of disdain planning in this country. I do not I do not understand it because obviously my you know, I used to teach planners and all the rest of it and got a great respect for it, but it just does it just somehow that wider piece around resources widest, you know, natural resources management, it just never connects to land use.

**00:41:08 Calvin Jones:** I think that's absolutely right.

**00:41:09 Nicola Headlam:** It's the sort of the queasiness maybe about ownership. I don't know what it is.

**00:41:11 Calvin Jones:** it's interesting because there's a new land use plan for England, rural England, which will leave eighty percent of the land alone. Yeah. And you think, why bother? You know, if farmers are going to carry on farming, why waste your time? So yes, there's definitely a queasiness there for some reason about putting your fingers into things, isn't it?

**00:41:32 Nicola Headlam** We're certainly not a nation of planners, are we?

**00:41:33 Calvin Jones** Definitely not. No.

**00:41:34 Nicola Headlam** Well, I've thoroughly enjoyed that. I will be making you King of the world forthwith.

**00:41:40 Calvin Jones** Hey! Hooray! I'll look forward to that.

**00:41:45 Nicola Headlam** It's been lovely to... It was a phrase that you used in the Michael Sheen example. You take, um, you know, a whole series of miseries and woes and you turn them into hope. And that we all need a bit of that, I think.

**00:41:55 Calvin Jones** Absolutely. We get it.