**6A. GLASGOW FOOD AND CLIMATE DECLARATION**

**PROPOSAL (7 MINS MAX)**

I’ve been involved in the food waste movement for almost ten years now, and I have seen some absolutely horrendous examples of just how broken our food system is. Things that have to be seen to be believed. Like the supermarket storage room packed literally floor to ceiling with clementines one Christmas, fruit that wouldn’t ever reach the shop floor. Like the bin bag full of Venezuelan blueberries that we rescued one Friday and, out of interest, decided to calculate the food miles they’d travelled. We soon stopped when we realised quite how far that was. And like the 464 packets of hot cross buns that we had to find something to make with because they would otherwise go to waste. And it wasn’t even Easter, so I still don’t know why the supermarket had them in stock. Even so, a cynical old activist like me is still surprised sometimes when I see the scale of the problem.

As I said, our food system is broken.

Food waste is, if anything, getting worse not better. It can – and does – occur at all four stages of the food supply chain – producers, processors, retailers, and consumers. Just a couple of examples. Fish is held to very high standards by retailers. They like it to look a certain way. Of course, what some of us don’t realise while we are tucking into our seared salmon, is that nearly 2.3 million tonnes of fish are discarded each year and approximately 40 – 60% of all fish caught in Europe are discarded. Just thrown away. And at consumer level, 6.7 million tonnes of food is wasted each year at a total cost of £10.2 billion, representing a cost of £250-£400 per household each year. The numbers are frankly frightening.

And, of course, food waste is a major contributor to climate change. We know from the recently published report of the UN Environment Food Waste Index that if food waste were a country, it would be the third biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions after the USA and China. It is, as the report says, a major factor in ‘the three planetary crises of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste.’

Something ***has*** to change. And it ***is*** changing. There has been some excellent work at national and at local level, including here in Cambridge. I want to particularly highlight the work of Cambridge Sustainable Food, and all their partner organisations – such as the brilliant CoFarm, to name just one – and local businesses who have put in a mammoth effort over the past few years to help our city reach Silver Sustainable Food Place status. We’re now one of only 8 cities to have gained this recognition, and work has already started on our application for gold status.

There is huge will – certainly at local level – to put in the effort needed to start repairing our broken food system. Right down to visitors to the food hubs, who regularly tell us that one of their main reasons for coming along each week is to be able to make those sustainable food choices that we should all be able to make, regardless of income. They ***want*** to fight food waste. They ***want*** to make things better. We have one regular visitor at Cherry Hinton, Bridget. She’s in her nineties, and she comes along towards the end of each session to see what we’ve got left and what she can make with it. This is how Bridget learned to cook as a child back in Ireland. I saw her as she was leaving yesterday, and she merrily brandished some cabbage and spring onions at me. ‘Scallions!’ she called over her shoulder at me. ‘This is fantastic. I’m off to make some champ. I’ll bring you the recipe next week, and you can make it up into some recipe cards for everyone’.

Food, and access to good food, is a gateway to so much more. It builds community. It can bring people together to tackle climate change. This is something they feel they can do. A way for them to make a difference in the face of those huge numbers.

COP-26 this autumn presents a unique opportunity to tackle the impact of our food systems on climate change. And yet, food is nowhere on the agenda. It’s still there though, piled up in supermarket back rooms, hidden out of sight where the international decision makers who’ll be in Glasgow can’t see it and don’t have to think about it. We have an opportunity, by adding our name to the call for action, to put pressure on those governments to act – and to act now, before it’s too late. And that is why I urge Council to support this motion. After all, Bridget knows the score – and if a ninety-two-year-old woman can do it, so can COP-26.