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The Leading Wellbeing Research Festival in the Lake District, July 2015

Up! up! my Friend, and quit your books; Or surely you'll grow double:

Up! up! my Friend, and clear your looks; Why all this toil and trouble?

...Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife: Come, hear the woodland linnet,

How sweet his music! on my life, There's more of wisdom in it.

These verses from the Lake District poet William Wordsworth, written over two hundred years ago, reflect the spirit of the Festival starting on July 16th in the UK's Lake District, organised by the Brathay Trust and the Institute for Leadership and Sustainability (IFLAS).

Scholarship is great, but immersing in nature and refreshing our creative desires is key for developing practical wisdom. The festival will be an exploration of ideas and also format, by mixing engaged scholars with radical professionals from across sectors and cultures. The aim is for a maximum mix of people, ideas and processes with few frills. Lifeworth has supported the event with IT services. As the academic chair of the Festival, I'm chuffed we will be welcoming scholars presenting over 40 papers, and speakers who are participating without charge, some coming from across continents.

We are aiming for interaction and reflection, with the Open Space, World Cafe, Open Mic and Storytelling sessions, amongst provocative plenaries and interviews. I'm looking forward to hearing philosopher Charles Eisenstein, actor Nandita Das and author Nicole Schwab. Underlying the range of sessions is the deeper question: "How might I lead greater wellbeing?"

It is an important question, because while more people speak of sustainability, the environmental news is really bad. While more people work on wellbeing, austerity bites and few address the power relations that undermine opportunities for collective wellbeing. While more people call for leadership, we risk forgetting the need for us all to lead together.

But tough issues don't have to be explored in a tough or dull way. We can enjoy getting to know people on a deeper level as we explore whether to let go of our old stories of success and wellbeing, and where that will lead our work and life. That kind of fresh thinking likes fresh air, so we have organised a range of outdoor activities for participants... in the forest, on the lake, on the lawn.

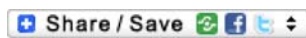
The festival is also a celebration. I love what Brathay Trust does day-to-day in promoting young people's wellbeing. We want to share the beauty of the Lake District, which inspires through the cultural heritage and contours of the landscape. It can be argued that contemporary conservation was born in the Lake District in the 1800s. Today, nearly 3 years after IFLAS was conceived, with around 2000 students from over 100 countries, it is time to share the IFLAS approach to sustainability leadership more widely.

So, Up, Up, friends, come join us for these days of exploration: www.leadingwell.org

Jem Bendell

Professor of Sustainability Leadership, University of Cumbria

Founder of IFLAS (www.iflas.info) and Lifeworth



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