

Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Post FMD Environmental and Health Matters Review/Inquiry
Further Background Papers

1. Conference Report - Voices of Experience Conference.
2. Transcript of Professor Kai Erikson's presentation to Voices of Experience Conference.
3. Transcript of discussion following Professor Erikson's presentation.

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Overview and Scrutiny Manager

November 2003

Voices of Experience: life after FMD
Carlisle Racecourse 14 October 2003
Conference Report to sponsoring organisations

This event was held in order to provide feedback to participants, practitioners and policymakers on the progress of the research project: The Health and Social Consequences of the 2001 Foot & Mouth Disease Epidemic. Interim findings were presented.

The conference was attended by over 130 people, it is difficult to be precise because some people came in by different entrances and the registration desk.

Among bodies represented were:

- Health
- Local government (county, city, parish)
- Regional strategic planners (health, rural affairs and emergency) NWDA, GONW
- local press and television and BBC Radio 4 (Farming Today the following morning devoted the whole programme to the conference and the questions raised by it)
- DEFRA, Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency, Rural Regeneration Cumbria
- Cumbria Community Foundation, Hadfield Trust Voluntary Action Cumbria, Citizens Advice Bureau, MIND,
- Police, Army,
- Newcastle University, St Martins College, Carlisle College of Arts

Among those invited but who did not attend were Cumbria Waste management, Lakeland Waste Management, Capita, Environment Agency, Countryside Agency, Rural Payments Agency, Local strategic Partnerships, MEPs and MPs (it was a busy week at the start of the parliamentary session)

The conference has led to useful contacts with strategic planners in health and we hope to follow these up in the near future.

On the evaluation forms we received only one comment which could be interpreted as negative, referring to the fact that the conference did not put forward practical ideas for community planning and that representation was lacking from some sectors. We take this on board, but it is perhaps worth noting that a number of key strategic level organisations were invited but did not attend.

We had deliberately planned the conference to be simple in outline in order to concentrate on the data collected and to allow time for questions, discussion and comment. The research team had been reading the work of Professor Kai Erikson (Yale University U.S.) on the human impact of disasters and were delighted when he accepted our invitation to speak at the conference. He added a different dimension to the day and we have had positive feedback about his contribution. He in turn was complimentary not only about the panel speakers but also about the quality of the questions and observations from the floor.

The speakers from the standing research panel were all volunteers who had decided individually what they wanted to say and who had elected to have their 'own' Chair for their part of the programme. We felt that their courage and eloquence spoke volumes, it has been a privilege to work with them and with their fellow panel members. 17 respondents were able to attend on the day, together with 3 partners, but unfortunately work commitments precluded many of them.



VOICES OF EXPERIENCE – Life after FMD
Carlisle Racecourse 14/10/03

**Prof Kai Erikson – Presentation, verbatim transcript (23rd
October, 2003)**

Given what we're talking about today, it's going to seem absurd for me to say what a pleasure it is for me to be here today, but given the world I live in, it truly is that.

do. I said, "well I've asked you a lot of questions. Maybe you'd have a question of me." I didn't really think they would but every hand in the room went up and their question, phrased differently, was always the same: "Are we unusual? Is there something about what has just happened to us that makes us different to other people?" One person even said, "am I mad in thinking as I do?" This is a general finding that I would like to share with you, that in one way or another, at one level of consciousness or another, almost everyone who goes through a disaster, shares that experience with the people they live with and then have.....sometimes don't even share their feelings with the people they live with. So the people are sometimes very surprised, to find out how widely felt, something that is deep in their heart is felt by other people and are very surprised to find out that people who've lived other disasters, react in very much the same way as they do here. I think your expression *[? turning to Maggie]* was perfect, which is, 'what happens to people is an absolutely normal reaction to an event that is itself abnormal, it's extraordinary and we don't know enough about.'

What I thought I would do in what's left of my twenty minutes, is to spend just a couple of minutes talking about a few of the places that I've been; for no better reason than to give you some of the range of experience that people like I have on looking at disasters, to talk about four findings that those of us who do disaster research, feel relatively confident about. Then to reflect back on those four findings with the idea in mind of what we heard about this morning.

First the roster of disasters. I'm just going to read through it quickly. This isn't really to impress you with how many frequent flyer miles I've gathered over the years, but truly, to give you a sense of what range of things has been looked at over that time:

A coal mining valley in West Virginia in which a flood did a terrifying amount of damage to the people who lived there.

An Ojibwa Indian Reserve in North West Ontario where a mercury spill contaminated what for the people who lived there, was their ancestral waters; waters that they lived on for all of the history that they knew, leaving them with what a wise elder called, 'a dead culture'.

A nuclear power plant called, 'Three Mile Island', which incidentally, and it has come up in connection here, several times in conversations I've had today, a nuclear power plant in Three Mile Island, Pennsylvania, which I gather is relatively well known outside of Pennsylvania, which had a near melt down in which extraordinary fears were expressed on part of people, mainly by evacuating huge distances from the place where the near melt down took place, which makes it a very extraordinary level of fear because to this day, nobody knows how much radiation left 'Three Mile Island', if any did, at all. Nobody has any idea what the size of the cause was but we certainly know what the size of the effect was. That was pure dread.

A migrant farm worker camp in South Florida which was a gathering of Haitian refugees from across the water to Haiti. This sounds a little different from the others, but all the money that they had ever earned and all the money that their families had ever hoped that anybody would ever earn, by an act of larceny, by a single person in their state of Florida. There is something horrible about this beyond....in order to understand what's so horrible about that, one would need to know a little bit about the culture of Haiti and about the poverty that goes with migrant farm working.

The native villagers who lived along the southern shore of mainland Alaska, whose coastal lands were blackened as far as the eye could see, almost all of the southern coast of Alaska, by the 'Exxon Valdez' oil spill, which endangered not only the native economy in ways that go way beyond, far beyond measuring, but the native way of life as well.

A town in Western Slovenia, I think you did allude to that at some point during the morning, which is a part of Croatia, which is destroyed by tides of civil war that crashed across it, again and again.

I've had some involvement with what everybody in the United States now calls '9/11' and I gather it's an expression that's well known elsewhere in the world too.

Most recently, something I'll be talking about tomorrow, on rather a different occasion, a remote island in Micronesia that was visited half a century ago by a thick cloud of radio-active fall out as a result of a nuclear test, conducted by Americans.

I should pause just for a minute to say that specialists make a distinction between disasters that are called, 'technical', which means, 'are the product of human error' and disasters which are called, 'natural', which of course, are thought to be, in law they're described as, 'Acts of God'. Most of these [above] are technical disasters but I don't think for our purposes right now, it's going to matter.

Let me describe to you the four findings that those of us that do that kind of work, feel fairly comfortable in.

One of them is, is the point that Maggie made earlier, that a severe disaster can do a great deal of harm to the tissues of the mind and sometimes to the tissues of the body, of the people who experience it. We call this trauma. But at the same time, a disaster of severe enough consequences, can do real damage to the community of which these people are a part too. I don't know if it's a permissible metaphor to talk about the tissues of community, the tissues of social life, but I really do mean it, almost literally in that way. I did once make a distinction as Maggie pointed out, between what I called 'individual trauma', we've talked about that a little bit this morning, and what might well be called, 'collective trauma', which is what I'm talking about there.

Something that happens to the larger fabric of the community, independent from the damage done in the minds of the particular people who were there.

By individual trauma, I'm talking about the things that many people alluded to this morning. It's a sense of vulnerability; a sense of being out of control; a sense of numbness in the sense of not really feeling everything that's going on around; a sense of despair. The clinical terms for this are depression and anxiety and the oddest expression in the English language, in my opinion, 'post traumatic stress disorder', which is many syllables added together which, to my mind, don't mean very much. In addition to all of that, the strong sense that something is pending, something is going to happen, that the world is organised in such a way that something else that's ruinous, is very likely to happen, which I take it to be, the expression used all over the world, is the 'time-bomb' and another I heard this morning, I hadn't heard before, but it's even better, the world is like 'an unexploded bomb', which is a very common feeling.

The second finding I'll mention is that the level of trauma that people experience after a disaster, is far more severe if some kind of toxicity is involved. This might seem an odd thing for me to bring up now but I'll tell you in a minute why. Toxic disasters are considerably more common now than they have been in the past for obvious reasons. That's not at all hard to understand. Toxins slip quietly and slyly and stealthily into the interior of the body and then they do their work from the inside out. In the way human beings understand danger, that seems to be the almost epitome of perfidy. It's what poisons you. It's what sly people do late at night when you're not watching. How that matters is something I'll bring up in just a moment.

The third point I would want to make, is that the level of trauma that people are likely to experience as a result of a disaster, has a lot to do with the degree to which they feel that other human beings were responsible for what happened to them, or responsible for what happened to them after the disaster took place. It's too obvious for me to even bring up but if some other people who live in your general community, drop toxic fumes under your house, that you're going to be angry at them, so I won't even mention that. It's not that relevant to what I understand about *[what's]* going on here. What's not so obvious but equally important, in my opinion is, that the sense of injury that you get from a disaster is all the sharper if people come to feel, if the survivors come to feel that people around them respond with what seems to them, with a kind of indifference or a kind of denial. If they act as if something, if nothing of consequence really happened, or if they imply, by the way they speak or the way that they behave, that they think the survivors are over-reacting, or a little bit hysterical, or in any event, not responding in the way people ought to. Now that's almost the normal outcome in situations which I've been in, quite a number of, where the disaster is discussed by lawyers on either side. The lawyer representing the company that's responsible for the disaster, if it is a company, has, really has no choice, but to try and belittle the people on the other side, to make the people on the other side, look as little responsible as they can. This is the business that

they're in. You can't blame them for it although it's not nice to be there, when it happens.

This brings me to the fourth point which I'll say very briefly. I should have said a minute ago that what comes with this feeling that other people don't fully appreciate what's happened to you is that it comes very close to feeling a kind of human betrayal; a feeling of been left out of things. That sense of betrayal, now I'm talking about very severe things now, the sense of betrayal can leave a feeling, very deep in the heart, that the rules that govern social life and sometimes, even the rules that govern the natural life, have been somehow suspended for a time being, maybe to be brought back and maybe not, but a sense that the world really isn't held together in quite the same way that one thought that it was. At its worst, this can become a feeling of, on the part of people, of feeling that they are a bit different; feeling that they know things that other people don't know; feeling that they're looking out at the world through a different lens than they did before; a feeling that the world is not regulated so much by order and continuity, as our mothers told us and as our teachers told us, was the case, but a kind of raw chance that works in ways nobody fully understands and sometimes even a kind of natural malice that lurks out there in the world and operates in ways that one does not know.

I wouldn't have had the courage to bring this next statement in if someone hadn't mentioned the 'holocaust' this morning, so you'll understand that we're talking about a very broad metaphor if I say, if I quote a holocaust survivor, who was speaking fifty years after his internment, put what I'm talking about in a very chilling perspective and of course an exaggerated one, for most of the disasters that I've visited. He describes the way he feels:

"It's more a view of the world, a total world view of extreme pessimism, of really knowing the truth about people, about human nature, about death, of really knowing the truth in a way that other people do not know it."

That would be my second point and the third then is to reflect back on these four points on the strength of what we heard this morning. I'm sure you can understand that I spent this lunch hour, hurriedly making marks here, this is what they look like [holds up his notepad for the audience to see] on a pad that otherwise has typed in it so I'm going to have to look carefully at this to see what I meant half an hour ago, when I wrote them down.

The first point I made had to do with the collective trauma and collective trauma can take the form, somebody said this morning, that they had been to (an)other, I think it was over on this side [pointing to audience] was it you, you'd seen other communities in pain and this seemed to you like a community that's hurting. That would be collective trauma in one of the senses that I'm talking about.

Other forms of collective trauma that can take place, are that fault lines open up in the community, that nobody knew were there before. Lines that were brought about by the disaster itself, that are not part of the natural life of the community. I've heard, I'm not going to suggest anything here, but I've heard

someone say that there is a difference now in the community between those who were culled and those who were not. I didn't even know when I flew here the day before yesterday, what the word 'culled' meant.

A third and far most important one and I obviously have no idea how well it reflects what's going on here or not, is the degree to which a line is drawn around the affected community that makes the people in it, feel more different from the people outside the line and the people outside the line, to feel more different than the people in. Now that's partly, that sometimes takes place because the people in it, come to think that they experience life in at least a somewhat different way, than the people outside that line. It's because people within the line, have shared an experience which brings them kind of a feeling of communality that they wouldn't have had otherwise.

I think it was Adam this morning who used the expression, that was striking to me, he said, "the feeling that it's partly our fault", which is a feeling I've heard expressed every place I've ever been. It's hard not to assume, well 'assume' may be too strong a word but at least, to reach into your heart and see if there isn't some reason why it is something that *you* did, that brought this about. there are plenty of people out there in the world who are very glad if you start to think that way because it's important to *them* to think that what happened to the community in question is less likely to happen to them because they act differently, because they are different. The people inside the line help draw that perimeter around them because they begin to feel different to the other people. But the other people outside the line, are very anxious for that line to be drawn too because they think that they're going to be less, they'll be more immune to what happened to the people inside the line, if they see themselves as quite different people, living under quite different circumstances, living quite a different history. To think of themselves as different that the people inside the line, is just simply, makes them feel safer.

Now the second point I mentioned was toxins and all I really want to do here is to see what you think about the following idea. I have for a long time thought that the word 'toxic' should not be defined by its chemical composition. I don't even really know what the word 'toxic' means chemically. If you called those things 'toxic' which act in a toxic way, I think 'virus', would very well belong within the category of 'toxic', because the way viruses work on human communities and on animal communities and on any kind of community, is almost exactly like radioactivity does, almost the way dioxin does and other toxic materials. A plague then or a disease of this kind, comes much closer to being what I would call a technological disaster, than does a storm or a flood or where the agent that hurts you, comes in from the outside in a more direct kind of way.

I was going to end with a very short list of things that people almost never understand. This is the, I'll pause for a second to say that the fourth matter had to do with the feelings of distrust of the outside. I think we've discussed that so much that there isn't much that I could add to that. What does happen in many communities that I've been to, that the sense that people develop a distrust for the institution they've had to deal with, broadens out into a distrust

for human institutions in general and sometimes, a kind of larger distrust than they had before, with the way things work in general, both socially and culturally.

The list of things that people almost never understand in a disaster, begins when people have a strong affection for things that other people do not. For example, animals. I've heard when I came here that the expression was often used by people who live outside that line and who pay attention to that line, is that, "well these animals were going to be killed anyway", which to me, even as a stranger coming a long distance away, made me shudder. There are examples of this that I've seen in other disasters. You may not appreciate the metaphor but I've seen it most when people try to describe to other people, what it's been like to lose a home in which they've invested a great part of themselves. What it is like is that there are ways in which human beings have a sense of themselves which gets broadened by the things that they own, the things they work with, the things that they live with and if those things are taken away, their sense of self itself, is greatly reduced. It's as if a part of themselves, is taken away. This is true if you have brought children up in a house; if you were yourself brought up in a house; if you have spent hours and hours fixing that house, if you have organised your lives around the shape of that house, to lose it, is to lose a large part of yourself. Any people who have gone through that experience, will easily understand, as many other people will not, what it means to say, if you lose a herd, that a part of the self has simply gone.

What makes this difficult are two things. The first is that people out there, are not going to find it easy to understand if you say such a thing as that and the second difficulty is that it is hard for the people inside the line, I don't know if it would be true, how many people here it would be true of, but it's true of people I've met all over, that they themselves did not know, until the day of the disaster, how much the thing that is now missing, was a part of their lives, which is the problem number one. But the problem number two is, how on earth do you explain that loss to somebody else who has not gone through a similar experience? It's not something, we don't grow up learning how to speak of these things. We take them so much for granted. When the day suddenly comes, even with all the eloquence we heard this morning, when the day suddenly comes, when you have to try to explain to a lawyer on the other side, to a solicitor over here, to somebody else *why* it is that this loss matter so much to you, the words don't come easily. They don't come easily if you've seen it for years and I know they don't come easily to the people who are experiencing it, for the first time.

The other two things I would say, of the things you can count on for people never to understand. One is they'll never understand what you mean by an anniversary of an event. They'll never understand how the disaster becomes a dating device itself. They'll never understand if you say, "well that was *before*." They'll need a reference, They'll need to know what you mean when you say, "that was *before*." The other thing that people can be sure not to understand, is, because we *ourselves* don't know how to describe it very well, is what I would like to end with and it is, that the world out there, looks at a

disaster like the one that took place here, or like any of the disasters that I've visited in my time and gives it a date. The beginning date is when the flood began and the ending date is when the flood went down. The beginning date is when the earthquake started and the ending date is when it's over. It's usually a day, two days, three days. If it's a fire, it maybe only an hour or two. Then people talk about a thing called the 'aftermath', that expression was used this morning. But I think the person who talked about the aftermath would feel perfectly comfortable with what I said was, this is not the way disasters are experienced by people who were there. The disaster is not over. The disaster won't be over for a long time. The disease is still upon us. The flood has never abated; the storm has never stopped. The earthquake is still going on. That's a very hard thing to explain to somebody else but in the human terms of having to cope with this, it's been my experience in the places that I've been, that the best way to describe the feeling is, the feeling of suspension, the feeling that things are still there. The feeling that there's something bad may yet happen. The thing isn't over yet and it becomes 'over' when it becomes satisfied, when the mind of those who experience it, comes to deal with it.

I'm almost closed. I have one more thing I'd like to say which is that you've been very generous today; when people finish talking you applaud and I would like, if you do do that, I'll be honoured of course but I would like to applaud in return, for all the reasons I talked about, when I was.....I know that what we heard this morning was beautiful and horrifying in its own terms but I know it reflects a community which I have come, in a very short time to respect greatly. So if I may.....

[Kai leads the applause and closes]

VOICES OF EXPERIENCE – Life after FMD
Carlisle Racecourse 14/10/03

Floor Discussion following presentation by Professor Kai Erikson –verbatim transcript (31st October, 2003)

Caz Graham, Chair thanks Professor Kai Erikson for his presentation. She says:

...in particular one of the things that he mentioned which I think for so many people here will ring true, is the idea that the world is actually quite a fragile place and a place that perhaps once you thought you could control and you *had* some control over and I think during 2001, a lot of people thought, “well perhaps it isn’t so obvious and so certain and perhaps we don’t have as much control as we thought.” [...] Let’s open the floor and see if anybody else has something to say, either in response or any questions. Anybody like to kick off for us this afternoon?

Peter Tiplady, Retired, Public Health Consultant: [Kai] You were struggling earlier trying to define what an expert was and I remember a colleague in Newcastle who said, “experts were people who came from afar who brought slides.” [general laughter] I felt pretty certain that a professor would have some slides somewhere. What I would like to ask Professor is have you anything to tell us about the adequacy of the response to disasters? How are they characterised because I think we certainly all felt some, resonance I think is the word, with a lot of the disasters you described, particularly ‘Three Mile Island’ which, for other reasons, is well known in Cumbria. Perhaps the ‘Pan Am’ disaster in Lockerbie which we also faced here, is well known in the United States. It seems to me that one of the differences that’s characterised our response locally, to ‘Pan Am’ and Lockerbie and the foot and mouth disease, is that there was an immediate injection of additional support, social service, counselling etc. in Lockerbie because there was an obvious outcome which was, bodies and that’s been absent during the foot and mouth outbreak and the response of national organisations towards helping with resources to help the suffering, has been grossly inadequate, in comparison.

Kai Erikson: The best answer I can give and I have to add that I don’t really know anything about the particular circumstances of the response to this, although I’ve learned a good bit in the short time I’ve been here, but that in general what happens is, that the people who experience a disaster, define it and see it differently from the people who are called upon to do something about it. It’s a long way from Cumbria to London. In the way people look at things, it’s a long way from ‘Three Mile Island’

to Washington DC, in the same way. The example I gave a moment ago, of a helping agency acting as though the event is entirely over and that there just cleaning up after it, is a misunderstanding of what has been experienced by the people who were there. What I would like to see, is what I appealed to earlier in the conversations from the floor, is some kind of way for agencies being responsible for taking care of the people 'out there', to consult with the people 'out there' about their definition of what it is that the problem is. Now that doesn't happen in my country, I gather that it doesn't often happen here. I do agree that it did happen in Lockerbie but in a way, that event was sharp and sweet and over in a particular time although the aftermath went on for a long time and it had political repercussions, which I think, made both your Government and mine, pay more attention than it might otherwise.

Lorraine Rockminster: Eden Mind: You said that the disaster isn't over until the mind comes to deal with it. Have you any pointers about how we can address that? Has it worked in other areas?

Kai Erikson: The best I can do is to tell you what I have told other people in other circumstances, when I understood the situation better than I [. . .] do here. I think it's very helpful to understand what it is that has happened to you and the best way to really understand that is for it to be shared between people within a family, between people within a community. I can't tell you how many places I've visited and somebody earlier today thought this might be a place like it, where people who have thought that the worst pain that they've experience is something eccentric to them and maybe even a little shameful. Therefore they don't go to their friend and they say, "last night I couldn't sleep; last night, I wet my bed; last night. . .", you know something happened that only happens to children. They hold it inside themselves. Other people don't tell them that they had a bad night last night and so they continue to think then, that this is something special to their personality, something special to their weakness. So to share that within the community is very important. For the people in the community to do everything they can to be a witness to what happened, so that people in other communities will understand it, is very helpful.

I think, it's very helpful to know what's happened to other people in similar kinds of situations and to understand that the word 'similar' can be used very widely in this kind of a context. One of the reasons I gave you the list of places I've been [to], is, that some of those people live very different lives than people here do. They come from very different circumstances, live life in a very different way, have very different cultures, worship in a very different way but nonetheless, have responded in a way that other people have. Outside of that, I don't know. I wish that there was money available somewhere. I would love to be able to bring five people here from a place called 'Buffalo Creek', who went through a disaster not even remotely like this in its visual circumstances but who know things that it would be good for *them* to be able to teach other people what they know. I think it would be good for the pupils to be taught by *them*. A network like this should be so easy to do. I don't know if anyone's ever tried to do it. [Pause] I would love to do it for the good it would do both to the teacher and to the student. Incidentally that's not a bad thing to be thinking about here, say I, not knowing anything about it, but that the communal experience here of this awful thing, one of the ways to deal with it *here*, would be for

the community to take some responsibility when you find other people who are going through what look to *you*, like similar experiences.

Diane Steadburn, Milburn School: We did two things. We wrote a book of 'haiku' and did pictures, so that the children could share their experiences. We made two 'real' sheep to replace the ones that were missing. But the children got used to writing about it and when '9/11' happened the children said, could they write to some pupils in an American school in Britain, to share their experiences and they wrote down how they felt. I think they found that very helpful.

Kai Erikson: Yes

Ian Hunter, 'Littoral', Arts Organisation: Your reference to the line between the people who experience the disaster and one of the characteristics, that sense of guilt, that somehow they've brought it upon themselves or they've been led to believe that it's their responsibility. Then you very clearly described the other side of the line, which is the wider community whether it's urban or whatever, who recognise that, that community that had the experience are behaving in an abnormal way or have had abnormal experiences and then proceed to close them out. Can you tell us how we break that line?

Kai Erikson: This is such a corny thing to say, but the clearest way to break it, is to recognise that it's there and then I think to understand *why* it's there. It's there in part, I'm repeating myself, but I think this might be worth doing, it's there in part because the people inside the line have gone through an experience which makes them feel, at least a little bit, different from the people outside the line. Incidentally I don't mean the line between urban and rural so much as I do this county and the one right next to it. The sharpest line is between the people who are most like you, who therefore see that they are in a similar danger to you and hope that by making the difference between you and they more emphatic, that they are warding off the chances of this happening to them too. So *knowing* this is happening is important but going across that line is often impossible to speak about it. I think it would be helpful to. This is not unlike, I think in some ways, taking your wisdom [pause] people who have gone through this are wiser than people who have not. They may be sadder than people who have not but the sadness is something that gets coped with over time. The wisdom is something that stays. I would think almost the same thing there, that the wisdom of helping people who go through a similar experience or the wisdom of making sure that people outside that line at least understand what the experience is like inside it.

William Little, Chair of Great Orton Parish Council: I'm a retired farmer, that is, I retired from farming *after* foot and mouth, about a year ago. I'm also on the Liaison Committee of the Watchtree Nature Reserve. Now a lot of you are perhaps wondering, where on earth is Watchtree. Well Watchtree was Great Orton burial site [for disposal of animals culled during the FMD outbreak] and as most of you know, we've turned it into a nature reserve. But I'll start, just briefly, about one or two of my experiences. We didn't go down with foot and mouth. All our neighbours did. I think one of the worst days of my life was sitting in our house listening to them killing our neighbour's stock, just across the road. We thought, "well this is us in a day or two", but unfortunately there was fifteen other farms went down round about us that day. And so they left us, because we hadn't a neighbour for two miles. This is the first time I've really spoken about this in public before but the way it affected me was, every morning about three o'clock I woke up in a sweat and dreaming of two cows coming at me with frothing mouths. Then you used to have to go out in the yard in a morning, full of smoke [?from neighbouring animal pyres], smelling and then when you went to the cubicle shed door to open the door up, for to milk the cows, your hands were virtually shaking because you didn't know what you were going to find at the other side. But out of all that, one of the things that I will *never, never, ever forget* is my neighbours because people I hardly knew ringing us up, we had a bucket at the gate, there was a newspaper in every morning, there was an evening paper at night: "We're going down town. Is there anything you want brought back?" That is something which you cannot forget.

Now as far as me Parish Council goes, as I say I'm Orton Parish Council. We represent part of the site which was the burial site [for the animals culled during FMD]. Only two people rang me up during the whole of the epidemic and said, "what are you doing about it?; why are you allowing this to happen?" And I simply explained to them, "well there are cattle and sheep lying in field and farm all over the place, had been for days and this can't carry on." Something draconian had to happen and it did. The rest of the parishioners knew this and so there was no complaints at all from the people round about because they *knew* it had to happen. Otherwise we could have had a different epidemic and it could have been more serious, if those carcasses of animals hadn't been removed.

Now Watchtree. After the epidemic was over, because obviously because I had stock at home, I couldn't leave the farm, I couldn't go. But because I was on the parish Council, I was asked to go up to Watchtree and I was invited to join the Liaison Committee, which I'm very, very glad I did, because as you know, we have created a nature reserve up there on what was the burial site. It is called Watchtree now. We've reverted to the old name which was a farm that was on the site. To me it has been tremendous therapy. I've enjoyed working up there because I feel that we are creating something positive out of all they mayhem that's gone before.

To sum it up, I think it's just over a year ago now, we wanted a logo to go on the top of our stationery and so we asked the primary schools round about if they would design a logo that we can put on the top of our stationery. The winner was a little girl from a primary school and what she drew was a tree. In the tree she put leaves, birds, butterflies and a squirrel running up the trunk. Round the bottom she had a hare and a

rabbit and then she drew a line and she had roots going down into the ground. And through the roots she wrote the words, 'New Life'. And that I think, sums it up.

Up at Watchtree, it is owned by Defra and will be owned by Defra, because Defra have a responsibility up there for the foreseeable future, for everything that's happens below ground. But we hope that within the next year that a 'Trust' will be taking over the site, a local Trust, which will run the site. We hope it will be an educational site. We hope that people will be able to visit it, and anyone here, if they wish to visit it as a group or individuals who have a keen interest in it, can do so (pause) I hope I'm not speaking out of turn. . . [turns to Grant Webberley, Defra personnel with input to Watchtree, who is sitting next to William and who assents approval]. . .are able to visit the site, see what is happening up there. We have built, for want of a better word, it's an Exhibition Centre, an educational centre at the entrance to the Watchtree site which will be used for educational purposes. So hopefully, that in the future we've created old meadows, where we are hoping to encourage traditional, old wildlife that we used to see on our farms. . .

[change of tape here]

[Mr Little had been speaking about the memorial service that had been held at Watchtree, in May 2003 to commemorate and bless the animals buried there and to officially open the new nature reserve. He recalled a particular incident that happened during a moment's silence . . .]. . . and while we were having that silence, there was two skylarks twittering up above and that summed it up.

Now I hope that when this report is written [of the study's findings], I hope it leaks down to Westminster and I hope that two words come out of it that the Government will latch on to. I hope those words are, 'listen' and 'learn'. Thank you

(resounding applause)

Penny Vowles, Northern Rock Foundation: I've been listening to what you've said [Kai Erikson] and what everybody else has said today and I wonder if you could tell me what's the difference between 'trauma' and 'grief' or 'personal grief' because all the things that you're talking about and all the ways of recovering, seem to be things that people use individually when they suffer the death of someone.

Kai Erikson: That's a good question and I don't know if I can answer it in a way that's grammatically correct. 'Trauma' would be a condition of which grief is a very prominent symptom, the way I use it. So that you can be traumatised without grieving but I think it would be hard to grieve without being described as having at least some of the, of being traumatised up to a point. So grieving would mean [pause], grief can lead to trauma in the sense that it can lead to the other things that I've been talking about, the sense of numbness. . .[pause]. . .incidentally one of the symptoms of trauma is dreaming about the thing that happened to you or waking up late at night in a cold sweat because of it. What happens is, this is part of what I was saying before

about, giving the place its proper location in history. A traumatised person doesn't let go of the thing that happened to them, because it isn't over yet. It reappears in dreams. It reappears in kind of thoughts of the day. It reappears in the strangest kinds of time because one is still working one's way through it. Grief is a particular form that is a sense of mourning over something that's lost. It maybe not inappropriate for me to say that a very interesting paper written by a psychiatrist in the United States, is called, 'Grieving for a Lost Home', in which he raises the point that I was making too, that sometimes you can grieve for things that the rest of the world doesn't understand as an object worth grieving about. But the grief is just as strong whether they understand it or not and the measure of it, is the feeling inside and not the value of the thing.

Lesley Armitage, Public Health: What I'd be interested to know is some of the examples you've given us have been from different cultures. Do you find there are cultural differences in dealing with these major events? I know there are similarities in what's happened, from the list you gave us at the beginning, but are there cultural differences in the way they respond, so therefore perhaps differences in the rate of healing?

Kai Erikson: That's a good question. There are several cultural differences. I spoke of an 'Ojibwa Indian' band in North West Ontario; Indian villagers who are mainly fishing people in the South of Alaska; Haitian migrant workers [pause] those are the three that come to mind right now anyway. I would say that those three groups belong to the general synthesis that I was talking about, as well as any of the other groups do too. There may be differences in the way those things are expressed and there are clear differences in the degree to which people think they can do anything about it. Some of these groups are more powerful than others. So the Haitian migrant workers never thought for a second that if they organised to do something, they never thought for a second, that if they protested widely to some agency, that it would make a particle of difference because they're simply not used to thinking of themselves as having that kind of force. But the trauma to them, I would describe as being very similar to the ones felt in Alaska, felt in 'Three Mile Island' and other places that I visited. So I would think much of that, and I should add that the town in Yugoslavia involves two other cultures, because they were warring with each other over it and I would think the same thing is true of them. Much of what I'm talking about seems to me, I won't be so elegant as to call it 'human nature' but things I would think fit with the human condition more generally. What I've spent a lot of my time doing is to find ways to express to other people, things that seem improbable to them. We've talked about some of them today. I'll just mention one that I was going to use in my talk and forgot which is how easy it is to be a refugee without ever leaving home, if what's happened is the familiar environment gets swept away by a flood say, or something like that and you haven't gone an inch. How do you explain, feeling like a refugee, when you haven't gone anywhere? And yet, I think people in any culture, would understand the meaning of that, even (if) the words seemed to them, awkward.

Phil Thomas, Chair of 'Cumbria Inquiry': Could I first thank you for explaining something I've been struggling to understand for months and that's to get some sense of understanding of what the basic issue in relation to this continuing feeling is. As I understand from what you've said, the big issue in some ways is people feeling that they've lost control, that there is something that is beyond their control, that seems to be the common feature. Putting that into a wider context, there are lots and lots and lots of training schemes and courses for teaching people to be in control. Have you any experience at all of having taken a group of people that have been out of control, control that has been taken away and those people, having gone through some of those training schemes, to see if they can re-establish a sense of control.

Kai Erikson: It's a very interesting point and I'm going to answer it in two different ways. One, many of the people who think for a while that the world is out of control, think that they are learning something about the world that they didn't know before. And it's very hard to explain to them that the world really is in control if, once you've developed this view that this is the way governments really act, this is the way nature really does things, this is the way chemicals really work. To *know* those things. It's very hard to take such people and to take them back to the first grade and say, "no, we really are in control", because they think they know better and I basically think they're correct. Now you know there was an old joke making the rounds when I was a young man, that paranoids are the only people who truly understand what's going on [*general laughter*] but many of the people in disaster scenes I've gone to, tell that joke, but for them it's not a joke. It really is a statement that they do have access to information that they think other people don't have.

Now I don't want to overdo this because obviously the feeling of vulnerability disappears over time but the feeling that the world is not as tightly organised a place as we thought it was, may stay and that may not be a bad thing. I'm putting this poorly and I'm angry at myself for doing it but what pops into my mind is 'Three Mile Island'. The President of the United States, came to 'Three Mile Island'. He himself was a nuclear engineer and he put on the padded shoes that you need and you know, he almost looked like President Bush going on an aircraft carrier, but he was dressed in a different suit and he walked in and he looked around, to prove to people that this was not dangerous. And he said, everything is in control and the people of 'Three Mile Island', I'll quote one if you'll excuse the expression, I'm only being an honest ethnographer by repeating directly, it's not a word I would ever use myself, but he said, "In control, bullshit, nothing is in control." And the fact of the matter is that this person who knew a little bit about nuclear engineering, was more correct than the President of the United States. He had a better sense of what the dangers actually had been, than the President did, if he meant what he was doing. He may have just meant to have been reassuring at that time.

There are ways in which people can get a better sense of control over themselves, control over their feelings that are vulnerable. There are ways that they can become less vulnerable by training. So I don't mean to demean them in any way whatsoever but I am saying that sometime the wisdom people get from that feeling that things are out of control, is a wisdom that stays with them and sometimes their knowing that, is

very helpful. I fear that I've talked more about one side of that equation than the other but clearly the sense that things are out of control, doesn't necessarily mean that people themselves feel weak and vulnerable, knowing that. Having somebody help you understand that that's at least in part so, is itself, it reduces vulnerability and the sense of frailty.

Paul Shorrock, Community Police Officer, Carlisle: I'm the local police Office for this area [ward, south of Carlisle] and also out in Willy Little's village [Great Orton] so I was quite closely involved with the disaster when it happened. An observation really. I wondered how this disaster might affect our relationship with the community because being a rural police force, we do have very close relationships with our communities and them with us. We support them, they support us. On the other hand, at times in the disaster, we were seen as being part of the Government machine, enforcing regulations and I wondered what effect that would have had, long term, with our communities. I don't think it's had a negative effect but I think the need to blame someone or something was still there and I think poor old Defra, has come out as the whipping boy. I think they were hostage to fortune in many ways, overtaken by a disaster far bigger than they ever dreamt, I would imagine and just as much a victim as the community.

Caz Graham, Conference Chair: Any other comments? Would anyone like to respond to that?

Male Delegate—Many of the events that you've described, have closed, they're at an end. My deepest worry is that the people who allowed this to get out of proportion here and we have to blame our Government for that, because there's nobody else in line for it, is that they keep saying is that it's going to happen again. I think the worry here is that whilst we may have arrived at a point where we can come to terms with what has happened in 2001, I still think there is an ongoing concern of a lot of other people that it's going to happen again. We can't now effectively bring about a closure of our and that's the difficulty. Everything seems to be balanced on a knife edge. Everything seems to be largely ephemeral because it doesn't matter: "Shall we run the insurance up? No, let's not bother. Are we going to move? No let's leave it alone." There's a lot of that around, a lot of feeling, a huge uncertainty, a huge worry. And I wonder if you have a view how we can even come to terms with that, apart from shooting the Government, which is probably a good idea? [some laughter here]

Kai Erikson: Well the only way I can respond to that would be, almost just to add to what you said. That I think it's fair to say that people who have gone through a disaster, calculate the odds of things happening, differently to people who have not.

If, I don't mean this as a personal comment, but I live in a family that has been visited twice by cancer. The people in my family, if you go to somebody in my family and say, "the odds are 10,000 : 1 that something is going to happen", people in my family will just look at you with complete blank, slack jawed look because those odds

don't mean a thing to someone to whom, an unusual event has already happened. So the unusual doesn't seem as unusual to people who have experienced the unusual. There are those who would say, being alert to the possibility of something happening again is a very good spot to be in. At least you're alert for when it does happen. At least your eyes are open for the thing happening but at the same time, to be alert all the time is a strain on the human nervous system, which I wouldn't wish on anybody. So finding that balance would be [pause], people who have gone through this disease are more likely to think about the fact that it will happen again, exactly as is true of any other disease [disaster?] that has taken place. People of 'Three Mile Island' can be told that melt downs only take place once every 500,000 nuclear hour, reactor, I've lost the, I don't even know what the unit is, but they too will just stare at you, because it already has happened to them. So they're much more likely to think it's going to happen again. But what happens to people who have gone through a serious disaster is that it becomes a wider probability because the people of 'Three Mile Island' aren't just afraid that it will happen at 'Three Mile Island', and if they were, they might be more likely to leave than in fact they are. What they fear now is it's more likely to happen to the nuclear reactor which is near where they move (to) the second time and then the third time. I don't know if people here think there's any reason to suppose that the disease is more likely to strike here again than in some other part of England or some other part of the world. But the calculation that people make is made different by the experience that precedes it. I would think, if I were in such a position myself, I would say and I can tell that you're going to agree with this, don't ever let anyone tell me that I'm over reacting by insisting that my Government pay attention to this as a possibility and to help protect us from it. Because their measurement of what the odds are, are less realistic, even though they are more accurate from a rational point of view, they are much less accurate from a human point of view and to insist on it is not to be hysterical. It's to be practical.

Caz Graham, Conference Chair: Any other comments from the floor or questions?

Timothy Heslop, County Councillor and Farmer: I think the one difference between foot and mouth and a lot of the other tragedies you've talked about, was the difficulty of actually, the medication people actually getting into the community. There was no way of actually travelling about and treating people. Your 'Three Mile

Island' and 'Lockerbie' were over and done with and then you could go and pick the pieces up. I think the nearest thing to that was the Jewish Holocaust, that sort of incident.

Thinking back to what a Chief Constable said after Lockerbie, that there were policemen there who had to sit outside on the Fells overnight, with bodies, who went back to work perfectly normally but 6, 9 months or a year later, then had the effects and had to take time of work and you know, nervous break down. I'm just wondering with your wide experience of these sort of things, how long people can bottle these feelings up and then have breakdowns, which really relate back to that? I'm also thinking that a lot of these people, being a farmer, the analogy with animals, the hardier the breed, if they do catch something, the more difficult it is, to actually get them to recover. So I was just wondering how long the Health Authorities ought to be

looking for signs of people breaking down or whatever, in the future and seeing if there is any relation back to this foot and mouth disease?

Kai Erikson: I'm very glad that you brought that up because I should have. One of the things that happens in all the disaster sites that I've ever visited, or at least the ones that I've followed long enough, to speak of in the sense that you're talking about, is that, there are large numbers of people who put off the worst of their own reactions to what's happening, partly because of the excitement of the event itself, partly because the neighbours do come in and bring newspapers and provide an important source of support. But the day does come when the newspapers (*media*) go away and no longer interview anybody and when meetings like this are less and less likely. When people find to their great surprise, maybe during an anniversary or some other event that reminds them of it, that there are great residues of pain which come out. There's nothing unusual about that and the best way to handle it is to know that it might happen and for the whole community to know that it might happen. I hope you don't mind if I use the example of the newspaper but there are people who will need a newspaper a year after the event, five years after the event, or an anniversary that is only meaningful in their own family, that reminds them of something [pause] I'll stop in the middle of a sentence in order to use an analogy. This is very common among people who grieve in other ways that we were talking about a moment ago. That you lose a spouse, you lose a parent, you lose a child, you lose somebody very dear to you and for the time being, the grief is horrible but there are people who come around and they're very solicitous and they take care of things. But their grief is not going to last as long as your own and they have a life to return to. So after a period of mourning they're going to go back to, they have no choice but to go back to other things, it isn't that they don't care. And sometimes that grief is much stronger after those momentary sources of support go away and sometimes they reappear at the oddest times and there's no answer to that, that I know of, except for mental health authorities on the one hand, but for the community in general to know that this is so and it is the most natural thing on earth. There is kind of a general assumption that we're all taught in school, or at least I was, that time heals the worst of trauma and that's probably true. That means we draw a line that the trauma gets better and better and better as time goes on. It's not a line that goes like this [perhaps drawing a straight line with his hand], it's a line that wiggles all over the place and to know that's so it to know something very important.

Caz Graham, Conference Chair: Any other points?

Ian Hunter, 'Littoral', Arts Organisation: Somebody said 'where are the bodies' as though foot and mouth could be explained away as if it was a temporary disaster. We shouldn't forget we've also had BSE and we have bodies. So my point is one about governance. I think the series of disasters that you've quoted, natural, man-made, or whatever you want to call them are increasing. It's a condition of late modern living. The question I think is, the nature of governance in its ability to help

the victims, the people who have to deal with this increasingly turbulent world, the consequences of that, to deal with it properly and also to better manage the situation and put in place, policies that reflect the experiences of what is becoming a disaster culture.

Kai Erikson: That's a very good point and it doesn't need a comment but I hope you won't mind if I do anyway. Among the very important reasons for studying disasters are that they are increasing in number and that they are increasing in their consequences. The reason that they are increasing in their consequences has something to do with the larger concentrations of people, in the life people live. You can say about natural disasters, of which this in one sense would be called a natural disaster. There are many ways in which that becomes an odd expression to describe anything. Natural disasters, we maybe have reached kind of a mean. They can do more harm when they arrive but we are more able to see them coming, which wasn't much of a consolation here but it is with say, hurricanes in Florida, or something like that. But what I've called technological disasters are on the increase. They're built into the very nature of the way modern industry is developed and especially, when it comes, I would say, definitely for chemistry and then I have my own, I think modern weaponry too. But that'll be another subject for another time. But I think it is quite correct to say, don't remember what your expression was, but I like it immensely, that we live now in a disaster culture and any government that isn't prepared for it, is not doing its job.

Mike Christian, Vet: To follow on that talk about governance, one of the things that I think is often forgotten, is that Defra or the Government or whoever, is carrying out the control, the regulations, for the good of the whole farming community. Now we may have views about how they're carrying that out but that should be the ethos. That they are working, whether it be in the controls, whether it be in managing foot and mouth virus when it comes or whatever, on behalf of the whole farming community. And I think that's where the governance has fallen down. There doesn't seem to be the view from the farmers that that's what Defra and the Government are doing and there is also that view, from Defra and Government, 'this is what we are doing for, you know, the good of the tax payer', and I think it comes back to the trust thing. And I think there is still that issue of governance there that comes through.

Caz Graham, Conference Chair: We've probably room for maybe a couple of comments. I have a couple of concluding questions that I think it maybe useful to ask Professor Erikson as well. Anybody else got any comments from the floor?

Anne Barnes, Eden CAB: I was trying to decide what the objectives to today were and I feel it maybe to understand better the cause and effect of the trauma of foot and mouth. But one thing I would like to say is one the research work has been completed, and the results and recommendations are published, how can we ensure that the Government in power uses that data to prepare an effective, workable plan, both to prevent foot and mouth in the future and also to eradicate any foot and mouth outbreak, quickly, efficiently and effectively and with the least possible devastation to farms and communities? I should feel that the best de-traumatisation technique would be, to have a clear vision that the Government has taken heed of these events and have a workable plan for the future because I'm just a bit afraid that all the results of these conferences are going to be wasted. There's going to be wonderful exhibitions and I commend that and I think it's been a fabulous day today, I've learned a lot today. I can't say I've enjoyed listening to the stories but it certainly moved me today. But we must get towards a workable plan where the Government take notice and do something to prevent foot and mouth happening again in the future and if and when it does happen, to make sure that it's dealt with efficiently and effectively, using the tools and the knowledge gained from events such as this and from the farmers and other people concerned.

[general applause]

Caz Graham, Conference Chair: Do you want to respond to that Maggie. I think we'll take your response and I think it will be useful to talk to Professor Erikson about examples in other countries where there have been other disasters, after that

Maggie Mort , Lancaster University, Project Manger: Well just a quick response to that. Actually this is the only government funded research project into anything to do with foot and mouth because of the inquiries that have been held. So we have quite a heavy responsibility in trying to track what happens to our report and we're going to try our damndest to make sure that it's heard and read and exhibited and seen and pushed into every space we can possibly do that. I mean, I actually have a question for Phil Thomas which is very much about that because Phil chaired the Cumbria Inquiry and maybe we can come back to this later, but you know, that inquiry contained many, many recommendations and heard a lot of evidence. There were meetings held all over North Cumbria about it. I'm interested to know what his experience of following that report into, you know, erm, what responses he got from Government and agencies that should have been acting on the recommendations in that report. He has experience of struggling with that and maybe he could share that with us. I don't know if now is a good time but I think it is a very, very important question.

Phil Thomas, Chair, Cumbria Inquiry: It's partly what I was referring to this morning. I can't say I've been watching what's happening in Cumbria every minute of the day but I do watch the newspapers and I do occasionally visit and see what's going on. I think there has been a number of things where there has been positive

movements. Firstly I think, the County Council set up a committee based on the foot and mouth disease committee, which in effect was acting, or is acting, like an audit committee on the report. They have been tracking some of the recommendations. There's no doubt that some of the recommendations for things that could happen locally, have actually taken place. Things that I'm aware of, that I was particularly pleased about. For example the recommendation we made about the higher education institutions coming together with the colleges and getting Higher Education more organised throughout the area, more organised. They haven't used the model we recommended but I don't have any difficulty with that. The general thrust of things like that are going ahead. Secondly the County Council implemented several of the recommendations that we made, which really were recommendations to them, so they did those directly.

There are other recommendations I think, where they really have fallen on stony ground and in some cases, I've done what I can personally to advance them and I know the County Council has done as much as *it* can do to advance it and I suppose the one that I can identify pretty quickly is the, from memory I think, about £5m that was owed by Defra to the County Council and I think we made a recommendation that this was an issue that was cleared up, in fact all the debts were cleared up, resolved one way or another, before the, I think, six months after we reported. My impression is that little of that has taken place but nothing very substantial. The reasons for that are complex and if I can say, as an aside, I'm delighted to know that the law enforcement officials, take a balanced view of life, but I wouldn't want them to take a view that was too balanced. I think the issue about Defra was, that Defra has some excellent people, lots of people who are very, very good indeed. A lot of their systems at the time of the foot and mouth outbreak were actually failing and they still have some difficulties in my view, with putting those systems right. I think there were some of those aspects of the report haven't really been implemented at all.

The other area which I have been disappointed in, is the one that I guess is closest to your own work Maggie, and that is, we made a very clear recommendation that there should be a greater emphasis on research, particularly in relation to children, because it seemed to us, that if you were picking up the effects that you were reporting in adults, then the likelihood was that there would be an effect in children and nobody was looking at that. Now as far as I'm aware, I don't think anybody, certainly I've not seen any developments in that area that would encourage me to think that there has been very much movement. So it's a bit of a mixed bag. Some of the things have gone forward, something have struggled and some of them have just not been implemented at all I think.

[Caz Graham uses this point to move into final session of conference which considers new initiatives, future planning and moving forward. Transcription of this part of the conference will be available, shortly]