1. I think the notion of belonging has to be more nuanced than from a top down national perspective. People have to first feel that they belong to the place in which they live and then that place is part of something bigger to which they belong. It is not the other way around. People are feeling disengaged from national agendas and politics and thus want to feel purpose at a local level this is where citizenship comes in. We have to address the two but not by top down diktats.

Identity links the sense of belonging with the sense of purpose that gives meaning. It is essential that we support people at the local level and then communicate to show how this builds up to a national sense of being. There is a complexity in the relationships we are trying to manage, it is not a machine, it is emergent and has to be nurtured organically from the bottom up.

Citizenship matters a great deal in the 21st century. We are social beings and need to connect, our culture is undermining these connections and we need to ensure they are strengthened to deal with the ‘wicked’ challenges facing people, communities and nations, issues such as climate change, strains on resources and biodiversity, demographic changes, fragile economies and political systems etc.

2. Identify is not something that can be fostered upon someone. It is something that one has through engagement and participation with others. It is cultural and relates to values, norms and behaviours. We have to give people the opportunities at a local level that bring them together so they themselves share the common values and behaviours that create citizenship.

I do not think citizenship ceremonies would do much to assist with the challenges ahead. I think some events and ceremonies would work, praising the collaboration and engagement at a local level showing what people can achieve together to make their community a better place in which to live. People will only feel part of something big if they feel that they themselves have contributed and participated in shaping and delivering things. The political system and governance structures are failing to achieve this and any top down approach to tell people what it is to be British will fail.

I think there is a role for activities within the educational system. I think out of classroom learning within communities and creative classroom activities with external partners would help. I think the National Citizen Service is not addressing needs or future challenges. It does not embed the ethos of voluntary action or link into necessary local motivation and support that is required to keep young people engaged.

3. I think we have to embed right and responsibilities in all we do. All public service provision should be underpinned by coproduction at the local level. Involve local people in the creation, design, development and delivery of services. This involves supporting voluntary action as a form of responsibility. Not one that is forced upon people but through recognition that the place and services in a locality are the communities and not the governments.
It has to be through reciprocal duties between citizen and state, at a local level and then nationally. Force of law can be invoked to ensure public services are made to engage local people in a more creative manner, one that engages communities and works with them. Too often arms of government want to treat people passively or manipulate them. Any law has to empower people to voluntarily become involved and not empower government to instruct and direct.

They can be monitored and enforced at the local level through agreements between civil society and public sector between community organisations that build and develop social action and social capital and those responsible for public funding and services. We nearly had this with the Local Area Agreements and a few National Indicators 1, 2, 3 and 6. We were responsible for NI6 and could challenge partners on how they were supporting us to deliver it. We were also partners in the other indicators and could help shape and deliver activities.

| NI1 % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area | NI2 % of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood |
| NI3 Civic participation in the local area | NI6 Percentage of residents participating in regular volunteering |

4. The current political structures are outdated and archaic. Yes we can lower the voting age, and also make it easier to register, however there is a shift taking place were passive representation is no longer accepted by many of the population. They want to participate and have active involvement in shaping the community in which they live. We have to develop new models of engagement linking representation and participation and more equitable relationships between the national and the local.

5. As above we have to be more creative in what we do around citizenship. We can be too prescriptive in the planning and delivery of curriculum. Education is more than rote learning of facts; we have to have young people with a sense of purpose and innovative thinking to cope with challenges in an increasingly complex world.

It is not just about teaching citizenship within stage of education but embedding it in mainstream curriculum and leaning outside the classroom. One can deliver learning that links English, maths, humanities, science with the world in which young people find themselves. Engagement involve them in situations that make them aware that they are part of a community etc. Curriculum and qualifications do need amending as we have managed out creativity and the ability to innovate to engage young people at the local level in new and collaborative ways of thinking.

Political participation has to be more than representation people want to be engaged as equals not as passive recipients governed by a distant political and media elite. Participation is about action, about doing things and not just voting as mentioned previously we have to link representation and participation to make people responsible for what happens where they live.
6. No, NCS does not do a good job of creating active citizens. It is a top down structure of engagement that is rigidly managed; to me it is a pet political project and is not value for money. Young people need continuous facilitation and motivation if they are going to continue to be engaged in their community after the structured programme ends. NCS does not do that and is particularly problematic in rural areas. NCS funding should be used to mainstream social action of young people continuously at the local level and not just for short defined programmes.

The UK had a good infrastructure for building social capital and encouraging social action and it has been undermined by national programmes like NCS and austerity with cuts to local activities. Also silo funded programmes by particular departments are also problematic as citizenship is about place and multifaceted and not about function of government.

It is essential that citizenship is intergenerational and not boxed as activities for young people or retired people. We have to get all people active in their communities understanding their rights and responsibilities.

People need to become active citizens because they want to not because it is compulsory. The commitment has to be due to belief that they are doing the right thing for the right purpose underpinned by a culture of reciprocity. Citizenship has to be lived not just taught.

Locally based social action and social capital infrastructure organisations should be encouraged to join things up between the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector and the public sector. We have been trying to do this in Cornwall for many years and this effort is generally undermined by national campaigns, cuts and silo funding and gaming between institutions. Progress has been made but a long way to go.

7. Central government can set the framework, indicating why civic engagement and social action are important. It can establish systems the embed this ethos is public sector contracts, the Social Value Act has not really be very well implemented, utilised or embedded.

We have to make it the norm that people want to add value to public services by undertaking voluntary action. This means it has to be the local level where the difference is being made. We need infrastructure organisations like Volunteer Cornwall to promote, develop and coordinate activates that link the public realm with the third sector in a more deliberate manner.

8. Values are fundamental in how we develop citizenship and how institutions and organisations encourage and promote it. These organisation need to share common values and challenge each other when they do not follow through, we need continuous encouragement and investment in social action to build social capital (both bonding and bridging).

Trust, honesty, reciprocity are vital values to have. We have to enable and encourage and not expect people just to do things.
Main problem we have is that over the decades the dominant economic paradigm has a purposefully developed a culture of individual consumerism which has distracted from building communities. There is recognition that shallow engagement through material consumption does not give lasting wellbeing or create cohesion, in fact the evidences shows that doing things with others has a lasting benefit to people and communities, NEF’s Five Ways to Wellbeing. There is a strong case to build citizenship and social action which will also improve people’s wellbeing and enhance individual and community resilience.

9. People feel left behind when they believe that they have no control of what is happening in their lives and they see other people speaking on their behalf and what it best for them. We have to encourage and show people that it is their community and their future and facilitate and motivate their engagement.

The only barrier is a willingness to invest in the development of social capital. We spend millions of pounds every year developing the economy but not much at all on social capital. The infrastructure to do this does not cost much as many volunteers help to promote social action and citizenship but it has to be supported. Community Organisers concept did not work as they spoke to people about what they wanted but then expected other organisations to coordinate and facilitate activities. As an organisation we had people community to us to do this at the same time as our infrastructure money was cut so we could not assist.

10. There is a very strong link between citizenship, civic engagement, social cohesion and integration. It is all about people sharing common goals and understanding aspirations, these are generally very similar about family, security undertaking worthwhile and purposeful activities that provide meaning in one’s life. We have to develop such social action that brings people together to address common issues in their community, we have to promote this and encourage participation. It does not happen over night. A number of years ago I gave a presentation to the All Party Parliamentary Committee on Civil Society and met the then Minister Nick Hurd to discuss Big Society. It was clear to me that central government did not understand how local communities function in terms of social action. People’s continuous engagement has to be nurtured, developed and they need to be given feedback on the impact and outcomes being achieved, it will not last unless this is done.

Diversity is a good thing if one wants to generate new ideas and innovation, what matters is what we do at a local level that brings people together to build bridging social capital. At the moment funding to do this has been reduced dramatically due to cuts from central government and then local authorities. Also government is very poor at doing this itself as its perspective can be political, hierarchical and cumbersome when we need lateral emergent engagement as it is complex not complicated.

11. Communication is crucial, the proficiency for people to talk to each other and thus generate understanding is very important. ESOL classes need to be easily available and there has to be some practical engagement built into learning English not just classrooms. We have to encourage people from different cultures and backgrounds to volunteer together to learn at the same time not just language but share common bonds that makes us human.
12. We work with the local authority to pick up and transport Syrian refuges from the airport when they land in the UK and bring them down into our community. Groups and individuals then work together to assist them to settle in and the community to embrace them. It is not a case of having a ‘hero’ to do this but a combined effort across the board, public, voluntary sectors and local volunteers. This combined effort shows what Britain is about, not divisive and unwelcoming but cohesive and supportive.

23 August 2017