

DAVID SIMON MATTHEW NUSSBAUM DCL

Mr Chancellor,

Eight days ago a new immigrant couple made their way across the globe to start a new life in a northern outpost of the United Kingdom. Without family or friends, they travelled ‘cattle class’ from rural China, to the City of Edinburgh, which had just received its first winter-dusting of snow. Despite early morning sunshine, the weather on arrival was not good – a dark, gloomy December sky, heavy clouds, and a bracing westerly wind.

Their new home was quite different to their native habitat, but they received a warm welcome. There had been attention to every detail. Unlike most migrants, their home had been carefully constructed at vast expense, incorporating all relevant creature comforts, which included 25 different varieties of their staple diet. Of course, Mr Chancellor, these were no ordinary migrants, being the first Giant Pandas to visit Scotland in nearly a generation.

Like many of us, you may have mixed feelings about their expatriation. Is it right to remove those individuals from their natural habitat, even though the accompanying scientific work will hopefully help preserve their species? However, putting aside the arguments for-and-against, the plight faced by the Giant Pandas

embodies the issue of world sustainability. The World Wildlife Fund, as it was originally called, showed extraordinary foresight when choosing this emblem, decades before climate change and sustainable development became a global priority.

Since 2007, David Nussbaum has been Chief Executive of WWF-UK, as it is now known. With David at the helm, WWF has become one of the main non-Government organisations driving the sustainability agenda, with the aim of building a future in which people live in harmony with nature. Not simply focussed on preserving wildlife in its natural habitat, WWF works with communities worldwide to develop sustainable living that benefits both people and the environment in which they live – be it forests, the sea, deserts or open grassland.

But their work is not all focussed on the developing world. Rather, it begins at home – focussing on the way we live, to develop a respect for natural resources that protect the global environment. Inevitably this involves high-level negotiations with Government or multi-national corporations. It is then that David Nussbaum's extraordinarily diverse background holds the key to progress. He ensures that sustainability is not perceived to be a luxury item at a time when economic uncertainty seems to hold centre stage. Rather, sustainability remains core business, and is the key to all of our futures.

The son of a Classics Scholar, David grew up on the Keele University campus. Not segregated in an academic ivory tower, he spent a gap year as a cleaner in a psychiatric hospital (something that still appears on his CV), before studying Theology at Cambridge. He then travelled north for postgraduate Theological studies in Edinburgh, and became a non-ordained minister in the Baptist Church. However, David is no armchair theologian. Throughout his undergraduate and postgraduate life, David remained committed to a huge amount of voluntary charity work. In Edinburgh, he lived on the Craigmillar Estate, where, as a youth-worker, he became deeply involved in supporting the local community, in what was then widely regarded as one of the worst areas of urban deprivation in Western Europe. Always interested in people, and certainly not afraid of confrontation, he was a regular prison visitor.

Having laid the foundations for a Theological career, it is most intriguing that he then turned full circle, to the secular world of high finance. Whilst working on the Craigmillar Estate, he completed a Diploma in Accounting (with distinction) at Heriot-Watt University, and became a Chartered Accountant with Pricewaterhouse, before spending the next ten years working in the commercial sector. Initially he worked as an Investment Controller with the company 3i, where he managed existing investments and developed the company's high-risk investment portfolio. He then moved to Reedpack, where he had a central role in the Senior Management Team, monitoring capital investment, producing the quarterly review for shareholders, and helping manage the eventual sale of the

company to SCA at considerable profit. Staying within the packaging business, he joined Field Group PLC, where, as Finance Director, he took a leading role in the company floatation, and its subsequent growth and development. Somehow he managed to squeeze a London Business School MSc in Finance into his schedule, on a part-time basis.

At this point David's work was a far cry from the Craigmillar Estate, but I suspect that there was a master plan – having gained a reputation for astute financial management, he returned to his charitable roots, and took up a position as Director of Finance, Information and Planning at Oxfam, second-in-command to the Chief Executive.

Not simply operating as a Finance Director, he set about 'getting under the skin' of the organisation; involving himself in the Strategic Review, and fundamentally changing the way that this global charity looked at its own internal financial situation. He led cost-saving measures that increased the real value of donations, and restored Oxfam's reputation and influence in the charity finance community. A key step was his secondment to India in 2000, where he developed and managed the transition of the Indian sub-organisation, which was run from the London office, towards becoming an independent wing of the charity run by local people, for local people.

David has travelled extensively, but has an almost legendary capacity to remain in email communication, wherever his job takes him even if it is close to an earthquake epicentre, where he has the habit of breaking news before it reaches the BBC. But despite his hectic schedule, he always makes a point of taking time-out to meet ordinary people. He listens and empathises – establishing key relationships before encouraging cultural change. His experience and training in the commercial sector was reaping its rewards both for Oxfam, and those it supported. This was not management theory – but management in practice, with significant humanitarian implications, such as Oxfam’s £5 million response to a major earthquake.

Throughout this period, David was non-executive Director and Chair of Traidcraft, based across the river in Gateshead, and founded by Richard Adams, another honorary graduate of this University. David’s financial and management skills put Traidcraft on a firm footing to fight poverty through trade across the world. He also continued to develop his Theological skills, solidly grounded in ‘real world’ life experience.

After five years with Oxfam, he took over as Chief Executive of Transparency International, or TI for short. TI is the leading global anti-corruption organisation, which works with governments and the private sector to change culture towards a world free of corruption. Commuting to-and-from Berlin every week, whilst his wife and four

children remained in the family home, he led chapters in 100 countries, strengthened the organisation's financial base, and influenced international policies and practices. He also became involved in two other organisations as a non-executive director, each tackling sustainability from a different angle. The Shared Interest Society, based here in Newcastle, continues his work on fair trade; and the private equity fund: Low Carbon Accelerator, invests in companies developing the low-carbon economy.

With this in mind, his move to WWF seems an obvious transition, bringing together several of the earlier themes. Again, using his leadership, management and financial skills, he has moved the organisation through a Strategic Review, reducing its cost base, and placing the organisation on a solid footing in these difficult financial times.

Mr Chancellor, not content to tackle just one global issue, David Nussbaum has had major impact in three. His work with Oxfam focussed on poverty. With Transparency International, he challenged corruption. And now, with WWF, he is also addressing climate change. He is not moving from one agenda to another. Rather, he is building a global sustainability portfolio which is now tackling the largest problems facing humanity. I therefore can think of no one more appropriate to be awarded an Honorary Degree, *honoris causa*, in the year that Newcastle University focuses on sustainability.

Citation by Dr Professor Patrick Chinnery