PRESS RELEASE

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Debating looking good vs doing good at the Oxford Union

What makes a happy and thriving society? And how do the individuals in it choose to use their time and money? These are the questions we will ask ourselves at our annual Oxford Union debate.

On Tuesday 10th November, Oxfordshire Community Foundation will host a debate in the historic surroundings of the Oxford Union, the 192-year-old debating chamber in central Oxford. Six speakers will do battle around the motion:

This house believes that there is nothing wrong with spending more on looking good than doing good.

The speakers will be: CCLA Chief Investment Officer James Bevan, Professor Danny Dorling, The Guardian’s Sali Hughes, plastic surgeon Mr Nigel Mercer, author John Nickson and James Partridge of Changing Faces.

There will be 450 guests at the debate, to whom speakers will be invited either to propose or oppose the motion. Each speaker will put their case forward in turn and will be expected to speak for no more than eight minutes. Comments will be taken from the floor, culminating in a vote by audience members on whether the house accepts or rejects the motion.

Sponsored by charity investment managers CCLA, those arguing against the motion will suggest that the amount of money our society spends in the pursuit of beauty would be better spent in support of charitable activity. So much of our 21st century culture and values appear to have resulted from the seemingly unattainable norms that have collectively and subliminally established ‘perfection’ as an elusive benchmark for us to be successful, attractive and happy with our lives. This focus on ourselves could be distracting us from the larger questions about how to make our society better.

Those arguing for the motion will highlight that this is in fact a false dichotomy, and that we are being disingenuous in suggesting that the love of self and the love of mankind are mutually exclusive. We shouldn’t underestimate the power of the beauty industry in bonding us together and giving us the confidence to take on the world – whether it’s through our work or the steps we take to make society better. The beauty industry is worth £17 billion in the UK alone.

Chief Executive of Oxfordshire Community Foundation Jayne Woodley said: “Community foundations are here to inspire local philanthropy by acting as champions of the voluntary sector. But we also like to challenge ourselves and our donors, and I believe this event will be the chance for us to really reflect on the ‘moral imagination’ that drives us to give.”

Preparing to argue against the motion, John Nickson said: “Whilst beauty may play a part in enabling humanity to reproduce and may contribute to personal satisfaction and happiness, sharing and giving have given our species an evolutionary advantage. We are programmed to be social. Those who are generous say that giving time and money leads to personal fulfilment as well as adding to the common good. Altruism plays a significant role in developing and sustaining stable and civil societies.”

Preparing to argue in favour of the motion, Sali Hughes said: “We need to stop conflating beauty with the beauty industry, healthy vanity with selfishness, self-care with self-absorption. The act of grooming is innate, important and for many of us, entirely complementary with the act of doing good. Comparing their respective costs is to compare apples with oranges, and fail to realise that neither can be valued in pounds and pence.”

Interested parties can book seats at the debate by contacting Kate Parrinder at marketing@oxfordshire.org.

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Notes for editors

About Oxfordshire Community Foundation

- Oxfordshire Community Foundation is a charitable organisation that connects donors with dynamic local causes that make change happen.
- Our organisation is one of 48 community foundations across the UK, and over 1,700 similar foundations across the world. We work with our generous donors to provide a permanent, flexible and growing source of local charitable funding that will directly address the needs of Oxfordshire’s most vulnerable.

About the speakers

- **James Bevan** is CCLA’s Chief Investment Officer and is responsible for all of the company’s investment activities, which involve providing a broad range of products and services to more charities in the UK than any other fund manager. He is a frequent commentator on finance, economics and investing for the BBC, Sky, CNBC, Reuters, Bloomberg and a number of journals.
- **Danny Dorling** is Professor of Geography at the University of Oxford. With a group of colleagues he helped create the website www.worldmapper.org, which shows who has most and least in the world. His work concerns issues of housing, health, employment, education and poverty. His recent books include *Inequality and the 1%,* and in 2015 *Injustice: Why social inequality still persists.*
- **Sali Hughes** is a leading journalist and broadcaster with over 15 years’ experience. She is a regular contributing features writer, columnist and interviewer for a variety of publications. Her beauty column in the Guardian Weekend magazine is famed for its straight-talking, no-nonsense style and ‘Delia effect’ on sales. Her first book, *Pretty Honest: The Straight-Talking Beauty Companion,* became the bestselling fashion or beauty book of 2014.
- **Nigel Mercer** is a plastic surgeon with a major interest in cleft lip and palate and aesthetic surgery. He is a lead delegate for the BSI in the European Committee for Standardization on aesthetic surgery services, and President of the European Association of Societies of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery.
- **John Nickson** is one of Britain’s most experienced fundraising directors. He was head of fundraising for The British Council, English National Opera, The Royal Academy of Arts and Tate. He is a donor and has been a trustee of education, arts and development charities for over 35 years. His first book *Giving Is Good For You* was published in 2013 and his next book will be published in 2016.
- **James Partridge** is Founder and Chief Executive of Changing Faces, the leading UK charity supporting and representing people with disfigurements. He launched the charity after the positive response to his book, published by Penguin (1990), *Changing Faces: the Challenge of Facial Disfigurement.* He writes and presents widely on disfigurement, disability, inclusion and social entrepreneurship in the UK and internationally.

About CCLA

- CCLA is one of the UK’s largest charity fund managers according to the latest Charity Finance Survey. The company manages investments for charities, religious organisations and the public sector. Based in the City of London, with an office in Edinburgh, the firm is largely owned by its clients’ funds.
- CCLA’s products and services have a strong long-term performance record, are fairly priced and are managed responsibly. Their investment solutions for clients are flexible and their people understand the particular needs and challenges facing charity investors.

Contact

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