

His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales
Clarence House
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16 July 2018

Your Royal Highness,

I write on the occasion of your 70th birthday to reflect on progress since you set up your Accounting for Sustainability Project (A4S). The original inspiration for my becoming involved in this agenda was your clear articulation of a challenge to the accountancy profession – how to account for sustainability in the same way that we account for finance. This resonated well with me given my role at the global professional accountancy body, ACCA, at that time, where sustainability was established as an active policy agenda, but ‘green accounting’ more generally was regarded as a niche topic.

I subsequently served on the communications group that supported the work of your A4S Project and took part in meetings you hosted for the accountancy profession. These fora undoubtedly benefited from your message that urgent action is needed and provided direct opportunities to translate that message into action and wider impact. Indeed, I believe that your insight has played a major role in making accounting for sustainability a central topic in the finance community.

A lasting legacy has been set through the work of the International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC), which you played a central role in establishing, and hosted its work in the early days. Since you convened the inception meeting, organisations in over 65 countries are now adopting a more holistic approach to thinking and communicating on value creation, placing natural capital at the core of their strategy and business model in a way that encourages better outcomes for business, investors, society and the planet.

A further direct personal impact was my own decision to join the IIRC team, under the then CEO, Paul Druckman. The IIRC has developed the International Integrated Reporting Framework as a practical approach that is aimed to enhance transparency and change corporate behaviours around the world. In doing this, the IIRC has maintained the core importance of integrated thinking – the belief that reporting must act as a driver to enhance action in the organisation, and translate into long-term investment horizons, with outcomes serving to enhance natural capital, among other capitals. This concept draws significantly on the insights and projects of A4S itself and emphasises the importance of the close partnership both organisations enjoy.

For the future, I believe there are two areas where further action can scale up your vision. The first is to promote the concept of ‘multi-capitals’ thinking in all areas of the economy – the idea that we are richer for seeing natural and social capitals as of intrinsic value in the same way that we think about financial capital. By seeing all resources used to create value as ‘stocks’ that should be preserved and increased, business can make better decisions that embrace positive outcomes for the environment and societies. Second, this concept should be at the core of all training and development for accounting and finance professionals, so that this thinking becomes the way we do business naturally.

Thank you for your vision and commitment to this vital agenda. I wish you a very happy 70th birthday and many happy and healthy years to come.

Yours sincerely

Neil Stevenson

Neil Stevenson
Managing Director, Global Implementation