

Podcast Episode

**Season 2, Episode 6: Bridget Wilkins, Head of Digital Citizen Engagement,
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (UK)**

From the ULI's New Real Estate Vanguard

Date: March 25, 2025

00:00:02 --> 00:00:03: Hello and welcome.

00:00:03 --> 00:00:05: My name is Robin Marit of Property EU and I'm

00:00:06 --> 00:00:09: delighted to be hosting this second edition of the Urban

00:00:09 --> 00:00:12: Land Institute's Vanguard podcast series.

00:00:13 --> 00:00:15: Now EU and I brings together real estate and land

00:00:15 --> 00:00:18: use experts from around the world with a clear mission

00:00:18 --> 00:00:21: to shape the built environment and have a transformative

00:00:21 --> 00:00:23: impact

00:00:21 --> 00:00:23: on neighborhoods and cities and communities.

00:00:23 --> 00:00:28: And this podcast focuses on that future and that

00:00:28 --> 00:00:28: transformative

00:00:28 --> 00:00:28: impact.

00:00:29 --> 00:00:32: Now, the You Allies Young Leaders Group recently selected

00:00:33 --> 00:00:37: 10

00:00:33 --> 00:00:37: outstanding young professionals already making waves in

00:00:37 --> 00:00:39: the industry, calling

00:00:37 --> 00:00:39: them the new Real Estate Vanguard.

00:00:39 --> 00:00:42: And I'm delighted to welcome one of them today, Bridget

00:00:42 --> 00:00:45: Wilkins, who actually has a very long title, Bridget.

00:00:45 --> 00:00:47: So I'm going to ask you to say it this

00:00:47 --> 00:00:47: time, OK?

00:00:48 --> 00:00:49: Fantastic.

00:00:50 --> 00:00:52: Great to join this discussion, Robin.

00:00:52 --> 00:00:55: My name is Bridget Wilkins, official title Head of Digital

00:00:55 --> 00:00:58: Citizen Engagement at the Department for Levelling Up,

00:00:58 --> 00:00:59: Housing and

00:00:58 --> 00:00:59: Communities.

00:00:59 --> 00:01:00: There we go, We've got it in.

00:01:00 --> 00:01:01: Which is well done.

00:01:01 --> 00:01:02: Which is quite the mouthful.

00:01:02 --> 00:01:05: Now, of course, we're gonna come in this discussion to

00:01:05 --> 00:01:07: what that actually means, what your job entails.

00:01:07 --> 00:01:10: I know you have some some things to say, some

00:01:10 --> 00:01:14: very important things to say about digital engagement, citizen engagement

00:01:14 --> 00:01:16: and how that also effects ESG outcomes.

00:01:17 --> 00:01:20: For example, you have things to say about getting a

00:01:20 --> 00:01:23: more diverse skill set into the real estate industry and

00:01:23 --> 00:01:26: also the role of the UK and Europe when it

00:01:26 --> 00:01:27: comes to proptech.

00:01:27 --> 00:01:30: Proptech So before we get into that though, Bridget, seeing

00:01:31 --> 00:01:34: as you're working in the government, what a year, Let's

00:01:34 --> 00:01:37: let's be honest, what's a year we've had of complete

00:01:37 --> 00:01:38: and utter change?

00:01:39 --> 00:01:41: I mean, I would love to hear, you know, your

00:01:41 --> 00:01:43: perspective on things as they've unfolded so far.

00:01:43 --> 00:01:46: I think it's a very good question.

00:01:46 --> 00:01:48: And I think what what I can say is that

00:01:48 --> 00:01:50: you're right, it has been a huge year of change,

00:01:50 --> 00:01:51: but also opportunity.

00:01:52 --> 00:01:54: And I think both in a government perspective, but also

00:01:54 --> 00:01:58: across the sector, we're seeing an unprecedented level of change,

00:01:58 --> 00:02:02: particularly different driven by digital transformation, prop tech and I

00:02:02 --> 00:02:04: think the evolving skills of the industry.

00:02:05 --> 00:02:07: Change has almost been the one constant in my career.

00:02:08 --> 00:02:10: When I we might, we might get to this later.

00:02:10 --> 00:02:12: But when I actually moved to the UK six years

00:02:13 --> 00:02:15: ago on a one way ticket to work at CBRE

00:02:15 --> 00:02:19: in the development advisory team, I arrived here two days

00:02:19 --> 00:02:22: after Brexit and my job was to essentially convince real

00:02:22 --> 00:02:27: estate developers to build speculative real estate based on assumptions

00:02:27 --> 00:02:27: around growth.

00:02:28 --> 00:02:30: And of course, they all completely dissolved in the first

00:02:30 --> 00:02:32: couple of weeks that I was here.

00:02:32 --> 00:02:34: So that kind of set the tone for me many

00:02:34 --> 00:02:37: years ago around how to operate and still make decisions

00:02:37 --> 00:02:41: and I suppose adapt in an increasingly changing and volatile

00:02:41 --> 00:02:44: environment, whether it's politically or across the sector.

00:02:44 --> 00:02:47: And I think we're only going to see that continue
00:02:47 --> 00:02:49: to to grow as we look at how technology plays
00:02:49 --> 00:02:53: an increasing role across the built environment and wider
sector.
00:02:53 --> 00:02:54: Exactly.
00:02:54 --> 00:02:58: Now I'm sure listeners can already pick up, there's surely
00:02:58 --> 00:03:00: a twang of an Australian accent in there.
00:03:00 --> 00:03:02: Could you just tell us about your where you come
00:03:02 --> 00:03:02: from?
00:03:03 --> 00:03:05: Of course a little bit about your upbringing would be
00:03:05 --> 00:03:06: great.
00:03:06 --> 00:03:07: Great to know.
00:03:08 --> 00:03:09: I do have a twang.
00:03:09 --> 00:03:11: I've tried to soften it over the years, but I'm
00:03:11 --> 00:03:13: still holding on after after being here for six years
00:03:13 --> 00:03:14: or so.
00:03:14 --> 00:03:16: So I grew up in Brisbane and I grew up
00:03:16 --> 00:03:17: in real estate.
00:03:17 --> 00:03:21: It's a family business, quite calm, all beginning beginnings
and
00:03:21 --> 00:03:24: of course, spending many years as a young child in
00:03:24 --> 00:03:29: real estate offices and businesses and stamping envelopes
and handing
00:03:29 --> 00:03:30: out keys and answering phones.
00:03:31 --> 00:03:33: I've vowed never to go into it as a career.
00:03:33 --> 00:03:34: It was all we ever did.
00:03:35 --> 00:03:36: And I was going to go change the world.
00:03:36 --> 00:03:38: I was going to stand in front of bulldozers, in
00:03:38 --> 00:03:40: front of the rainforest and be the first female Prime
00:03:40 --> 00:03:42: Minister of Australia and, you know, take on the take
00:03:42 --> 00:03:44: on the industries and corporations.
00:03:44 --> 00:03:47: And then I realized actually that real estate does offer
00:03:47 --> 00:03:48: a chance to do some of that.
00:03:48 --> 00:03:51: But also it really is, in my opinion, the early
00:03:51 --> 00:03:55: sector where you can drive real change for people and
00:03:55 --> 00:03:57: communities at scale and at pace.
00:03:57 --> 00:04:00: You know, the provision of housing is the fundamental
element
00:04:00 --> 00:04:04: of Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, and it's
fundamentally what
00:04:04 --> 00:04:07: many cultures and civilizations see is that key principle for
00:04:07 --> 00:04:09: community and for social sustainability.
00:04:09 --> 00:04:12: And so I recognize that actually there's a huge opportunity

00:04:13 --> 00:04:15: in real estate and, and I should pursue it as
00:04:15 --> 00:04:16: a career.
00:04:16 --> 00:04:18: So I went and started the university.
00:04:18 --> 00:04:20: I really didn't like it at the start.
00:04:21 --> 00:04:24: I studied a Bachelor of Urban Development, property
economics, and
00:04:24 --> 00:04:28: it really focused on construction and project management
and town
00:04:28 --> 00:04:28: planning.
00:04:28 --> 00:04:31: And I just wanted to talk to people and that
00:04:31 --> 00:04:33: was kind of how I, how I grew up.
00:04:33 --> 00:04:34: And, and so I thought that was, you know, that's
00:04:34 --> 00:04:35: where I wanted to get back to.
00:04:35 --> 00:04:39: But I recognize that, you know, there's things like planning
00:04:39 --> 00:04:42: law and legal law and commercial realities, and I probably
00:04:42 --> 00:04:44: should learn those things if I want to see how
00:04:44 --> 00:04:46: far I'm like, I can go.
00:04:46 --> 00:04:48: And so I took that and I, I sort of
00:04:48 --> 00:04:52: secured my first role working in evaluation and advisory team
00:04:52 --> 00:04:56: doing a lot of specialist evaluations around land, around
resumption
00:04:56 --> 00:05:00: CP OS as they're called here, around retail leasing and
00:05:00 --> 00:05:04: sort of mediations with, with governments and developers.
00:05:04 --> 00:05:07: And then after a few years sort of learning the
00:05:07 --> 00:05:10: fundamentals of, of that, I wanted to run, run with
00:05:10 --> 00:05:11: the wolves, as I say.
00:05:11 --> 00:05:13: And so I joined the capital markets team at CBRE
00:05:13 --> 00:05:14: in Australia.
00:05:15 --> 00:05:17: And we'll probably touch on this later on a point
00:05:17 --> 00:05:18: around diversity.
00:05:18 --> 00:05:20: You know, I was one of only a few women
00:05:20 --> 00:05:22: across all the firms at that in those days.
00:05:22 --> 00:05:25: That was certainly a, a learning experience and a huge
00:05:25 --> 00:05:26: opportunity for me.
00:05:26 --> 00:05:28: And you know, during that time I, I worked hard
00:05:28 --> 00:05:31: and I, and I was involved in a number of
00:05:31 --> 00:05:35: major transactions of sort of commercial buildings and, and
development
00:05:35 --> 00:05:36: sites, which was fantastic.
00:05:36 --> 00:05:38: And again, a huge learning opportunity.
00:05:38 --> 00:05:42: And then I kind of started to hit whatever we
00:05:42 --> 00:05:45: want to call it, glass ceilings, brick walls, I'm sure
00:05:45 --> 00:05:49: we all define it differently and thought it's time to

00:05:49 --> 00:05:50: jump off a Cliff.

00:05:50 --> 00:05:52: And so I quit my job, bought a one way

00:05:52 --> 00:05:53: ticket.

00:05:53 --> 00:05:56: Somehow I got a job in London, CBR here and

00:05:56 --> 00:05:59: as I mentioned, I, you know, arrived here in in

00:05:59 --> 00:06:00: July 2016.

00:06:01 --> 00:06:04: I might stop there 'cause there's another chapter which we

00:06:04 --> 00:06:06: can go to maybe later on around how that led

00:06:06 --> 00:06:07: me to technology.

00:06:07 --> 00:06:07: Or if you want, I can.

00:06:08 --> 00:06:10: I'm loving it.

00:06:10 --> 00:06:11: I'm loving the detail.

00:06:11 --> 00:06:13: There's just one thing that you, I know that you

00:06:13 --> 00:06:16: mentioned to me before we, you know, started recording this

00:06:16 --> 00:06:19: podcast, but you seem like a very commutative, talkative person.

00:06:19 --> 00:06:22: Well, perhaps this is in the blood because you mentioned

00:06:22 --> 00:06:24: your father, although he's in real estate, you said at

00:06:24 --> 00:06:27: the same time he does something else which might actually

00:06:27 --> 00:06:27: explain.

00:06:28 --> 00:06:30: He's yeah, he he also does community radio.

00:06:30 --> 00:06:32: So both my parents have been in real estate.

00:06:32 --> 00:06:33: They met in real estate.

00:06:35 --> 00:06:37: And so yeah, that's kind of in my blood.

00:06:37 --> 00:06:40: I'm talking to people and, and, and I listening to

00:06:40 --> 00:06:41: people's stories.

00:06:41 --> 00:06:42: That's really what we always say.

00:06:42 --> 00:06:44: It's about, you know, people have a problem with housing

00:06:44 --> 00:06:45: and housing need.

00:06:45 --> 00:06:47: And if we understand what those problems are, we can

00:06:47 --> 00:06:47: solve it.

00:06:47 --> 00:06:50: And yeah, we, when I was growing up, we used

00:06:50 --> 00:06:54: to literally do dialogue of like contract negotiations and

00:06:54 --> 00:06:57: answering

00:06:57 --> 00:07:00: phone calls and by a negotiations and tactics.

00:06:57 --> 00:07:00: So like I really got the full spectrum of, of,

00:07:00 --> 00:07:04: you know, sort of living and breathing it for many

00:07:04 --> 00:07:07: years, hence why I didn't want to go into it,

00:07:07 --> 00:07:08: but but it's great.

00:07:08 --> 00:07:10: And my, my mom and dad both have had very

00:07:10 --> 00:07:14: different careers in real estate and I think it's definitely

00:07:14 --> 00:07:14: influenced.

00:07:15 --> 00:07:17: So do I think the role that that we can

00:07:17 --> 00:07:20: all have in, you know, enabling the provision of housing

00:07:20 --> 00:07:22: and just hit, I think bringing that human element to

00:07:22 --> 00:07:22: it.

00:07:23 --> 00:07:26: I think, you know, working in London and across Europe,

00:07:26 --> 00:07:29: for many of us, we have such a unique opportunity

00:07:29 --> 00:07:32: to work at an amazing level of scale.

00:07:33 --> 00:07:35: And that's obviously brings some great opportunities.

00:07:35 --> 00:07:37: But I think sometimes we might forget that sort of

00:07:37 --> 00:07:40: intrinsic human experience and element of real estate.

00:07:40 --> 00:07:42: You know, the first time you have the keys and

00:07:42 --> 00:07:45: you walk into your own flat, the first time you

00:07:45 --> 00:07:48: get onto the property ladder, being able to downsize and

00:07:48 --> 00:07:51: move into retirement, being able to, you know, upsize when

00:07:51 --> 00:07:52: you're growing a family.

00:07:52 --> 00:07:55: These are all so many key moments in our life

00:07:56 --> 00:07:59: that real estate allows us to do and to shift

00:07:59 --> 00:07:59: and adapt.

00:07:59 --> 00:08:03: And whether we're building, you know, 10,000 built to rent

00:08:03 --> 00:08:06: portfolios across Europe or new industrial and logistics parks

00:08:06 --> 00:08:10: or retail super centers, like there is always that human element

00:08:10 --> 00:08:12: and experience that I think we have to remember.

00:08:12 --> 00:08:16: And I'm certainly hoping to keep grounding myself in through

00:08:16 --> 00:08:18: sort of growing up in in that world for many

00:08:18 --> 00:08:19: years.

00:08:19 --> 00:08:21: Now Bridget, for those people that are listening in and

00:08:21 --> 00:08:23: also thinking of jumping on off a Cliff.

00:08:24 --> 00:08:25: It was a good clip.

00:08:25 --> 00:08:26: It was a good clip.

00:08:26 --> 00:08:26: It was a good.

00:08:26 --> 00:08:28: Clip but just just walk me through this a moment.

00:08:28 --> 00:08:32: There you are in Australia and then you decide, as

00:08:32 --> 00:08:35: you said, to just buy literally a one way ticket

00:08:35 --> 00:08:36: over here to London.

00:08:36 --> 00:08:39: But then you managed to get this job in CBRE.

00:08:39 --> 00:08:41: But so for those people that, you know, think of

00:08:41 --> 00:08:43: taking a risk, how did you go about doing that?

00:08:43 --> 00:08:45: It was quite calculated.

00:08:45 --> 00:08:48: I say it quite clearly now, but I, it's hard,

00:08:48 --> 00:08:52: you know, when you're in comfortable job and life and

00:08:52 --> 00:08:56: relationships and network and security, change is always,

you know,

00:08:56 --> 00:08:57: very scary.

00:08:57 --> 00:08:59: And I'm certain and it certainly was for me.

00:08:59 --> 00:09:01: There's no, there's no denying that.

00:09:01 --> 00:09:03: But I knew I, I travelled to London a few

00:09:03 --> 00:09:06: times and I knew there was just something here for

00:09:06 --> 00:09:06: me.

00:09:06 --> 00:09:08: I didn't know what it was like this invisible cord

00:09:08 --> 00:09:11: just saying like, come back, come back, come and come

00:09:11 --> 00:09:12: and see what's here.

00:09:12 --> 00:09:15: And there was a few sort of signs from the

00:09:15 --> 00:09:18: universe I interpreted and, you know, my, my time at

00:09:18 --> 00:09:21: CBR in Australia was fantastic and, and I really learned

00:09:21 --> 00:09:24: a lot and I'm very grateful for the team there.

00:09:24 --> 00:09:27: I, I just, I just wanted to be in a

00:09:27 --> 00:09:28: different type of pond.

00:09:28 --> 00:09:32: So in terms of how I got here, I literally

00:09:32 --> 00:09:34: picked a date, 21 June 2016.

00:09:34 --> 00:09:36: I had it on my wall, had it as a,

00:09:36 --> 00:09:37: you know, password.

00:09:37 --> 00:09:39: It was like in every way that I could remind

00:09:39 --> 00:09:41: myself I was getting on a plane that day.

00:09:42 --> 00:09:44: I sent like 300 goodbye.

00:09:44 --> 00:09:45: Everyone thinks I'm ridiculous.

00:09:45 --> 00:09:47: I sent everyone goodbye cards.

00:09:47 --> 00:09:49: Like I'm going, I sold everything.

00:09:50 --> 00:09:51: You know it.

00:09:51 --> 00:09:53: I look back and I wonder, like, why did I

00:09:53 --> 00:09:56: micromanage every single part of my life?

00:09:56 --> 00:09:58: Because I could have just gotten a plane.

00:09:58 --> 00:10:00: I didn't have to have an Excel spreadsheet with all

00:10:00 --> 00:10:01: these filters on color codes.

00:10:01 --> 00:10:04: But also like I could have just gotten a plane.

00:10:04 --> 00:10:07: And I think I didn't want to give myself any

00:10:07 --> 00:10:08: excuse to not get on that plane.

00:10:09 --> 00:10:11: I didn't want to make it easy to come back.

00:10:11 --> 00:10:14: Didn't want to have a car or, or anything really

00:10:14 --> 00:10:16: assets that I could just, you know, I kind of

00:10:16 --> 00:10:18: didn't know how hard it would be.

00:10:18 --> 00:10:20: It's like any, any change in your life, you never

00:10:20 --> 00:10:21: know how challenging it's going to be until you're in

00:10:21 --> 00:10:22: it.

00:10:22 --> 00:10:23: And of course, it's been challenging.

00:10:24 --> 00:10:26: It's also been the best thing I've ever done.

00:10:26 --> 00:10:28: And so because I couldn't go back to a security

00:10:28 --> 00:10:30: blanket, that was never an option in my mind.

00:10:32 --> 00:10:34: But yeah, it's funny the things that you think about

00:10:34 --> 00:10:35: after the benefit of hindsight.

00:10:35 --> 00:10:37: OMG I you know, I thought I was a meticulous

00:10:38 --> 00:10:39: planner, but you absolutely.

00:10:39 --> 00:10:40: Take the biscuits ego CD.

00:10:41 --> 00:10:42: With your color coding expert.

00:10:42 --> 00:10:45: So you come to London, you land this job.

00:10:45 --> 00:10:48: What do you do at CBRE in London at this

00:10:48 --> 00:10:48: point?

00:10:48 --> 00:10:52: And just also, I've noticed from your, say, LinkedIn profile

00:10:52 --> 00:10:56: that you, you, you seem to have got so heavily

00:10:56 --> 00:11:00: involved in things like PropTech, for example, and then your

00:11:00 --> 00:11:01: profile began to rise.

00:11:01 --> 00:11:05: You were involved in panel sessions, sometimes sharing

00:11:05 --> 00:11:07: events and

00:11:07 --> 00:11:08: so on and so forth.

00:11:07 --> 00:11:08: That that's what's caught my eye.

00:11:08 --> 00:11:09: But perhaps tell us a little bit about that.

00:11:10 --> 00:11:11: So I had a really interesting role at CBRE.

00:11:12 --> 00:11:15: I was working in the development advisory and management

00:11:15 --> 00:11:19: team

00:11:19 --> 00:11:22: there, so essentially site and land assembly across London

00:11:22 --> 00:11:23: and

00:11:23 --> 00:11:27: taking those sites through that initial pre application and pre

00:11:27 --> 00:11:29: planning stage.

00:11:29 --> 00:11:32: So appointing and working with brilliant architects and MEP

00:11:32 --> 00:11:34: engineers

00:11:34 --> 00:11:37: and structural designers and somehow trying to make it all

00:11:37 --> 00:11:40: stack up with the numbers and go, oh, I was

00:11:40 --> 00:11:43: not really going to know what else can we do?

00:11:43 --> 00:11:45: It was great because, you know, it really allowed me

00:11:45 --> 00:11:48: to understand some of the constraints that we have definitely

00:11:48 --> 00:11:49: in the planning system and then also the opportunities that

00:11:49 --> 00:11:50: that London and the UK has to build some fantastic

00:11:50 --> 00:11:52: real estate and, and sort of outcomes for different users

00:11:52 --> 00:11:55: in that space.

00:11:55 --> 00:11:57: It was great.

00:11:57 --> 00:11:59: I, I learned a lot and you know, my first

00:11:59 --> 00:12:02: project was cross route 2 and I was like, how

00:12:02 --> 00:12:05: do I even catch the tube, let alone like work

00:11:57 --> 00:11:58: on cross route 2?

00:11:58 --> 00:11:59: So has.

00:11:59 --> 00:11:59: That been built yet?

00:12:00 --> 00:12:01: I don't think so.

00:12:01 --> 00:12:03: I still didn't get the cross route, but like, it

00:12:03 --> 00:12:06: was really interesting because I think the thing that I

00:12:06 --> 00:12:09: was just so inspired by when it came, it was

00:12:09 --> 00:12:10: this level of scale.

00:12:10 --> 00:12:12: Like you get to work on the biggest stuff in

00:12:12 --> 00:12:14: London and Europe because there's just so many people

00:12:14 --> 00:12:15: and

00:12:15 --> 00:12:18: you've got to plan for that.

00:12:18 --> 00:12:21: Crossroad 2 is a 2035 timeline.

00:12:21 --> 00:12:24: We've got to do the feasibility five years ago and

00:12:24 --> 00:12:24: even before that, because there's so many stages to go

00:12:24 --> 00:12:26: through.

00:12:26 --> 00:12:27: It's a brilliant project to work on as, as one

00:12:27 --> 00:12:27: of a few.

00:12:28 --> 00:12:30: And so as I was doing that, I, I recognized

00:12:30 --> 00:12:33: that there was some murmurs around technology.

00:12:33 --> 00:12:34: You know, I just could sort of see that there

00:12:34 --> 00:12:35: was.

00:12:35 --> 00:12:38: So there's some opportunities there and I suppose, you

00:12:38 --> 00:12:40: know,

00:12:40 --> 00:12:43: sort of working in, in this world for a while,

00:12:43 --> 00:12:43: you know, you better recognize the role technology has to

00:12:43 --> 00:12:46: play.

00:12:46 --> 00:12:48: And I thought there's, there's, there's some things to

00:12:48 --> 00:12:48: understand

00:12:48 --> 00:12:51: here about what, how much impact it's really going to

00:12:51 --> 00:12:54: have.

00:12:54 --> 00:12:54: This was like 6 years ago alongside this, like I

00:12:54 --> 00:12:57: had no network when I moved here.

00:12:57 --> 00:12:57: I moved here.

00:12:57 --> 00:12:57: I didn't know a single person, like no family, no

00:12:57 --> 00:13:02: friends.

00:13:02 --> 00:13:06: And so I really focused on building my network alongside,

00:13:06 --> 00:13:09: you know, working and, and try and understand what, what

00:13:09 --> 00:13:12: tech could, could, you know, play a part in that.

00:13:12 --> 00:13:14: And so I got started getting involved in the industry

00:13:14 --> 00:13:16: and put my hand up and volunteer for things and

00:13:16 --> 00:13:17: be that, you know, awkward person who says, I'll do

00:13:17 --> 00:13:17: it, I'll do it.

00:13:17 --> 00:13:19: And I just to make some friends really and see
00:13:19 --> 00:13:20: where that goes.
00:13:21 --> 00:13:23: And a friend of mine from CBRE was running a
00:13:23 --> 00:13:27: brilliant program called Pier 20, which I'm going to plug
00:13:27 --> 00:13:28: now the listeners.
00:13:28 --> 00:13:30: And it's a it's a great program where we, you
00:13:30 --> 00:13:33: know, we bring people together across the dinner series and
00:13:33 --> 00:13:35: really try and build different types of relationships across the
00:13:35 --> 00:13:36: industry.
00:13:36 --> 00:13:38: And that definitely helped me almost as a vehicle to
00:13:38 --> 00:13:41: build my own network and also meet some brilliant people,
00:13:41 --> 00:13:43: some of who worked in the prop tech space and
00:13:43 --> 00:13:44: some who didn't.
00:13:45 --> 00:13:47: And so as my time at CBR evolved and I
00:13:47 --> 00:13:50: was becoming more and more more involved in technology, I
00:13:50 --> 00:13:53: got involved in the Urban Land Institute tech tech steering
00:13:53 --> 00:13:56: committee, which again was great really to people around the
00:13:56 --> 00:13:56: table.
00:13:56 --> 00:13:58: And we would say, you know, what are we, what
00:13:58 --> 00:13:59: is prop tech?
00:13:59 --> 00:14:00: Where is it going to go?
00:14:00 --> 00:14:02: What are we going to do having to respond to
00:14:02 --> 00:14:03: it and that kind of pick things off.
00:14:03 --> 00:14:06: And so that, you know, led to another thing where
00:14:06 --> 00:14:09: I got involved in CBR UK innovation board.
00:14:09 --> 00:14:11: I remember the time being around the table.
00:14:11 --> 00:14:14: I think I was the only one there under 30
00:14:14 --> 00:14:16: and I had some questions.
00:14:16 --> 00:14:17: It was great.
00:14:17 --> 00:14:19: But I think there was a definitely a piece around,
00:14:19 --> 00:14:21: you know, that diversity of skills and age trying to
00:14:21 --> 00:14:22: bring to it.
00:14:22 --> 00:14:24: So that for me was a good opportunity, a bit
00:14:24 --> 00:14:27: of horizon scanning of seeing what's coming down down the
00:14:27 --> 00:14:29: pipeline and and where there's real opportunities.
00:14:30 --> 00:14:33: And alongside that I, I met Savannah Discovery, who was
00:14:33 --> 00:14:36: the founder, still is the founder of a prop tech
00:14:36 --> 00:14:40: company called built ID through AP 20 dinner that I
00:14:40 --> 00:14:41: was hosting with, with Lorna.
00:14:42 --> 00:14:44: And I remember she told me about both ID and
00:14:44 --> 00:14:47: give my view the, the platform that she was developing
00:14:47 --> 00:14:48: at the time with the team.

00:14:49 --> 00:14:51: And we had a conversation around it.

00:14:51 --> 00:14:53: She showed me sort of the prototype.

00:14:53 --> 00:14:54: It was yet to launch.

00:14:54 --> 00:14:57: And there I was trying to send the prop tech

00:14:57 --> 00:15:00: sector and see what those real gaps were and see

00:15:00 --> 00:15:04: what role I might play in advising clients and everything.

00:15:04 --> 00:15:06: I'd go work at a startup purely because of the

00:15:06 --> 00:15:07: visa that I had.

00:15:07 --> 00:15:09: I had to sort of be sponsored by a by

00:15:09 --> 00:15:10: a company.

00:15:10 --> 00:15:12: And I just said, well, I'll be involved because I'm

00:15:12 --> 00:15:14: curious and I want to know more.

00:15:14 --> 00:15:15: And they'll never forget.

00:15:16 --> 00:15:18: Savannah showed me the prototype, forgive my view.

00:15:18 --> 00:15:21: And I thought, this is going to change the world.

00:15:22 --> 00:15:25: So what I'm hearing is you had no mates basically

00:15:25 --> 00:15:26: and you volunteered for everything.

00:15:26 --> 00:15:28: It just happened to be prop tech.

00:15:28 --> 00:15:30: And this is, it seems like it's, it's grown on

00:15:30 --> 00:15:30: you.

00:15:30 --> 00:15:33: And then after, out of all of this, your journey

00:15:33 --> 00:15:36: you described so far, you end up, as we've said,

00:15:36 --> 00:15:38: working for the British government, right?

00:15:39 --> 00:15:40: You landed this role.

00:15:40 --> 00:15:42: Now I'm gonna ask you to say your title again

00:15:42 --> 00:15:43: one more time.

00:15:43 --> 00:15:45: And this is the time where you actually get to

00:15:46 --> 00:15:47: explain what this means.

00:15:47 --> 00:15:48: What is the role about?

00:15:48 --> 00:15:48: Fantastic.

00:15:48 --> 00:15:51: So my title is head of digital citizen engagement for

00:15:51 --> 00:15:54: the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

00:15:54 --> 00:15:56: Here we go got it.

00:15:57 --> 00:15:58: It's a bit of a mouthful.

00:15:58 --> 00:15:59: It's a really exciting role.

00:15:59 --> 00:16:02: So I might just do a quick bridge from the

00:16:02 --> 00:16:05: the previous story, but when I was end up working

00:16:05 --> 00:16:08: at built Idi was working with Savannah team to scale

00:16:08 --> 00:16:12: their prop tech platform give my view, which essentially is

00:16:12 --> 00:16:16: a digital citizen engagement tool working with developers,

00:16:16 --> 00:16:20: public and private sector on how we can engage communities in the

00:16:20 --> 00:16:22: plan making and development process.

00:16:22 --> 00:16:24: And that was a brilliant, a brilliant position and a

00:16:24 --> 00:16:25: brilliant team and products.

00:16:25 --> 00:16:28: And we certainly scaled it across the UK and into

00:16:28 --> 00:16:32: Ireland and probably a different story for a different question.

00:16:32 --> 00:16:35: But I sort of recognize that there was a real

00:16:35 --> 00:16:39: opportunity to to drive us even further scale an opportunity.

00:16:39 --> 00:16:42: And there's a role that legislation has to play in

00:16:42 --> 00:16:44: supporting scaling of prop tech across the UK.

00:16:45 --> 00:16:47: And there was a role that government can play in

00:16:48 --> 00:16:51: hopefully stimulating a more diverse and recently an ecosystem of

00:16:51 --> 00:16:55: prop tech supplies, ultimately driven by local government demand.

00:16:56 --> 00:16:58: So that's kind of the the recognition I was having

00:16:58 --> 00:16:59: at the time.

00:16:59 --> 00:17:01: And then this role came up and I thought, wow,

00:17:01 --> 00:17:03: maybe I should go for this.

00:17:03 --> 00:17:06: Like this is this is one of those roles where

00:17:06 --> 00:17:07: it won't happen again.

00:17:07 --> 00:17:08: And it's the first time it's happening.

00:17:08 --> 00:17:11: And then, yeah, I think the curiosity got the better

00:17:11 --> 00:17:13: of me and the ambition I had to see, you

00:17:13 --> 00:17:16: know, what is the real potential for central government and

00:17:16 --> 00:17:19: prop tech to to work together with local authority demand

00:17:19 --> 00:17:22: across, you know, more than 300 councils in the country.

00:17:22 --> 00:17:23: It's huge potential.

00:17:24 --> 00:17:27: And so I started in the role just over 12

00:17:27 --> 00:17:30: months ago and it's been an amazing experience.

00:17:30 --> 00:17:34: Essentially, to come back to your question, my focus is

00:17:34 --> 00:17:38: on how we build a self-sustaining ecosystem in the UK

00:17:38 --> 00:17:39: around prop tech.

00:17:39 --> 00:17:43: Let's focus now on digital citizen engagement because that's

00:17:43 --> 00:17:46: a critical part of the planning system that is, that is

00:17:46 --> 00:17:51: broken often when buildings and roads and hospitals infrastructure is

00:17:51 --> 00:17:51: built.

00:17:51 --> 00:17:53: You know, people living around that are the last to

00:17:53 --> 00:17:54: hear about it.

00:17:54 --> 00:17:55: You might get a letter in the mail.

00:17:56 --> 00:17:59: You might see an advertisement in the in the newspaper,

00:17:59 --> 00:18:00: but often it's in English.

00:18:01 --> 00:18:04: It's designed to tell you what's happening, but not really
00:18:04 --> 00:18:05: for you to engage.
00:18:05 --> 00:18:08: And people have been trying for a long time and
00:18:08 --> 00:18:11: spending a lot of investment in community engagement, but
it's
00:18:11 --> 00:18:13: being in quite an analogue approach.
00:18:13 --> 00:18:17: And so there's a really interesting opportunity for technology
part
00:18:17 --> 00:18:20: of that approach to bring more people into that conversation
00:18:20 --> 00:18:23: around change and to have a more inclusive experience for
00:18:23 --> 00:18:24: the wider community.
00:18:24 --> 00:18:27: Whether they're in the rental market, whether they're in a
00:18:27 --> 00:18:30: different language, whether they're transient, whether they're
in a different
00:18:30 --> 00:18:31: demographic.
00:18:31 --> 00:18:34: You know, we should be hearing from all people around
00:18:34 --> 00:18:37: what change means for them in a planning and housing
00:18:37 --> 00:18:40: context and hopefully use that to not only inform but
00:18:40 --> 00:18:42: de risk that planning process.
00:18:42 --> 00:18:45: And so that's kind of the space that we're playing
00:18:45 --> 00:18:48: in a digital planning where we're looking at how we
00:18:48 --> 00:18:52: can support local authorities to pilot a range of digital
00:18:52 --> 00:18:57: solutions to consulting their residents across a different huge
broad
00:18:57 --> 00:19:00: of huge, huge range of planning projects and see, see
00:19:00 --> 00:19:03: what we learn from that and where it goes.
00:19:03 --> 00:19:06: And so as I mentioned, we're focusing right now on
00:19:06 --> 00:19:08: consultation as it is an engagement, but recognise there are
00:19:09 --> 00:19:11: other opportunities in the wider prop tech ecosystem that we
00:19:11 --> 00:19:13: love to see how we can support as well.
00:19:14 --> 00:19:16: Yes, I was just going to ask you about that,
00:19:16 --> 00:19:18: actually bring it down to the practical level.
00:19:18 --> 00:19:20: You know, what is it that you and your team
00:19:20 --> 00:19:21: are actually doing on the ground?
00:19:22 --> 00:19:24: It's it's, it's about engagement.
00:19:24 --> 00:19:26: So I, I guess I'm just sat here wondering, is
00:19:26 --> 00:19:28: there any engagement out there?
00:19:28 --> 00:19:31: Who are you trying to engage and is that engagement
00:19:31 --> 00:19:33: actually being generated?
00:19:33 --> 00:19:33: Shall we?
00:19:33 --> 00:19:35: Say it's a, it's a good question, something that we're
00:19:35 --> 00:19:36: thinking about all the time.
00:19:36 --> 00:19:39: So at a practical level, in the last 12 months

00:19:39 --> 00:19:42: we've been able to fund 45 local authorities across the

00:19:42 --> 00:19:44: UK to go and invest in a range of prop

00:19:44 --> 00:19:48: tech solutions and services to then engage communities again on

00:19:48 --> 00:19:49: a range of projects.

00:19:49 --> 00:19:53: So whereas S is Plymouth, whereas Plymouth, whereas north of

00:19:53 --> 00:19:57: Liverpool, we're working on public realm and nighttime strategy, infrastructure

00:19:57 --> 00:20:02: development, state regeneration, local plans, strategic master plans, garden communities,

00:20:02 --> 00:20:04: low traffic neighborhoods.

00:20:04 --> 00:20:06: We're kind of trying to touch as many areas of

00:20:06 --> 00:20:09: where planning is involved as possible, both from a that's

00:20:09 --> 00:20:12: a true requirement, but also an opportunity to sort of

00:20:12 --> 00:20:16: reinvent different areas where communities and build environment interact.

00:20:16 --> 00:20:19: And so we've funded 45 local authorities who then have

00:20:19 --> 00:20:21: been on a part of these solutions.

00:20:21 --> 00:20:24: And across these platforms, we've seen a huge increase in

00:20:24 --> 00:20:25: response.

00:20:25 --> 00:20:27: So we worked with Cotswolds Council and they had 6

00:20:27 --> 00:20:31: 1/2 thousand people respond to their local plan consultation, which

00:20:31 --> 00:20:34: completely surpassed their previous benchmarks.

00:20:35 --> 00:20:38: We've had councils get 2-3, four, 100% times higher level

00:20:38 --> 00:20:41: of responses because they're using digital to go to the

00:20:41 --> 00:20:45: people rather than assuring that people will come to them

00:20:45 --> 00:20:47: in in town halls and that sort of stand up

00:20:47 --> 00:20:48: events.

00:20:49 --> 00:20:51: And what's been really interesting is a space of where

00:20:51 --> 00:20:52: digital and physical meet.

00:20:52 --> 00:20:53: It's that hybrid experience.

00:20:53 --> 00:20:56: So you might again go to the people, You might

00:20:56 --> 00:21:00: go to a farmers market or a community networking events,

00:21:00 --> 00:21:03: but you'll take an iPad, you'll take a survey that's

00:21:03 --> 00:21:07: game gamified has virtual reality or to make augmented reality

00:21:07 --> 00:21:09: and you'll change that experience for the user.

00:21:10 --> 00:21:12: You better sell them and show them the visions that

00:21:12 --> 00:21:16: ultimately have a much more positive engagement experience around that

00:21:16 --> 00:21:19: consultation and we hope a more positive response to the

00:21:19 --> 00:21:21: actual proposed changes.

00:21:21 --> 00:21:24: And we're certainly seeing that a number of councils who've
00:21:24 --> 00:21:27: piloted virtual reality and augmented reality and, you know,
putting
00:21:28 --> 00:21:30: headsets on kids at schools and, you know, and even
00:21:30 --> 00:21:33: putting on jet packs and flying through high streets in
00:21:33 --> 00:21:36: in Cornwall and Surrey and different areas in the country.
00:21:37 --> 00:21:40: It's completely changed the game of what consultation could
be
00:21:40 --> 00:21:43: useful in terms of that more experiential part of planning
00:21:43 --> 00:21:44: and development.
00:21:44 --> 00:21:47: I think has really brought the vision to life for
00:21:47 --> 00:21:50: a lot of people who normally see APDF document and
00:21:50 --> 00:21:53: say, well, I don't know how this relates to me
00:21:53 --> 00:21:55: and they turn it up.
00:21:55 --> 00:21:57: So we're we're really trying to to to challenge a
00:21:57 --> 00:22:00: lot of thinking and we're certainly seeing a lot of
00:22:00 --> 00:22:01: results in that space.
00:22:01 --> 00:22:03: This is music to my ears, but at the same
00:22:03 --> 00:22:05: time you really got me thinking because let me let
00:22:05 --> 00:22:07: me give a, a, a shout out to my where
00:22:07 --> 00:22:10: I live, it's a London borough, just Lewisham.
00:22:10 --> 00:22:11: I don't know if you've had any dealings.
00:22:11 --> 00:22:12: Have you had some?
00:22:12 --> 00:22:12: Dealings.
00:22:12 --> 00:22:14: They're not, they're not working with us, but there's some
00:22:14 --> 00:22:15: brilliant opportunities.
00:22:15 --> 00:22:16: Well, we should tell them to apply.
00:22:16 --> 00:22:20: Lewisham, if you're listening because, because look, let's,
let's get
00:22:20 --> 00:22:22: real very real for a second.
00:22:22 --> 00:22:24: So here I am as a resident of Lewisham.
00:22:24 --> 00:22:26: There's some very good things in in Lewisham and there's
00:22:26 --> 00:22:27: many things that aren't so good.
00:22:27 --> 00:22:30: Now, being a typical person, I look around and there's
00:22:30 --> 00:22:31: two things.
00:22:31 --> 00:22:34: One, I want to moan about a few things.
00:22:34 --> 00:22:38: Secondly, I may even have some decent ideas about how
00:22:38 --> 00:22:39: to improve things.
00:22:39 --> 00:22:41: You mentioned infrastructure community.
00:22:41 --> 00:22:44: So if I want to do that right now, what
00:22:44 --> 00:22:45: do I do?
00:22:45 --> 00:22:47: Of course I go to the website and you know,

00:22:47 --> 00:22:49: well, doesn't work, does it?

00:22:49 --> 00:22:51: You're, you're shrugging your shoulders because it, it doesn't work.

00:22:51 --> 00:22:53: There's, there's, there's nothing I can do.

00:22:53 --> 00:22:55: There's maybe a form that doesn't even work properly.

00:22:56 --> 00:22:57: Of course, I never hear back.

00:22:57 --> 00:22:58: Where does it go?

00:22:58 --> 00:22:59: Where does it go?

00:22:59 --> 00:23:00: Who's looking at it?

00:23:00 --> 00:23:01: Do they even care?

00:23:01 --> 00:23:02: Is anyone out there this?

00:23:02 --> 00:23:04: Is the thing, this is the thing, people do care

00:23:04 --> 00:23:05: and this is, I think this is where we come

00:23:05 --> 00:23:06: in and try and bridge the gap.

00:23:07 --> 00:23:08: Planners are some of the most.

00:23:09 --> 00:23:10: I've just spent the whole day yesterday at the planning

00:23:10 --> 00:23:11: conference.

00:23:11 --> 00:23:13: Brilliant people but they are under resourced.

00:23:13 --> 00:23:14: Everyone's doing poor people's jobs.

00:23:15 --> 00:23:18: There is a capacity issue particularly for local government in

00:23:18 --> 00:23:19: planning teams and and they do care.

00:23:19 --> 00:23:21: They care because they're there.

00:23:21 --> 00:23:24: But there's a thing around how we can use technology

00:23:24 --> 00:23:26: to almost take that burden off a little bit.

00:23:26 --> 00:23:28: So you know, we can go to you, we can

00:23:28 --> 00:23:30: ask you your opinions about Lewisham.

00:23:30 --> 00:23:32: We can see what matters to you, what are those

00:23:32 --> 00:23:34: priorities and what your ideas are and we can automate

00:23:34 --> 00:23:37: that and we can take that off planners hands and

00:23:37 --> 00:23:38: give them that feedback back.

00:23:38 --> 00:23:40: There's still a long way to go in terms of

00:23:40 --> 00:23:41: the product development.

00:23:41 --> 00:23:43: That's kind of the space we want to play next

00:23:43 --> 00:23:46: of how we can really Co design with industry, what

00:23:46 --> 00:23:49: good looks like for those specific platform solutions led by

00:23:49 --> 00:23:52: the lived experience of planners and local authorities and

00:23:52 --> 00:23:54: also

00:23:52 --> 00:23:54: the development market as well.

00:23:54 --> 00:23:57: It has to work for everyone, but I totally hear,

00:23:57 --> 00:24:00: you know, there's everyone's almost got a story around a

00:24:00 --> 00:24:04: frustration, which is an interesting starting point because it

00:24:04 --> 00:24:07: helps

00:24:04 --> 00:24:07: us sort of relate our program and I think really

00:24:07 --> 00:24:09: drive that wider adoption.

00:24:09 --> 00:24:11: Our key, our key principle is how we can enable

00:24:11 --> 00:24:14: and empower every local authority in the country to use

00:24:14 --> 00:24:18: digital technology in planning and real estate development.

00:24:18 --> 00:24:20: Prop tech obviously is part of that.

00:24:20 --> 00:24:22: Some people call it prop tech, some people call it

00:24:22 --> 00:24:23: plan tech, some people call it tech.

00:24:24 --> 00:24:27: You know, it's all relatable, but there's a piece on

00:24:27 --> 00:24:28: how we really Dr.

00:24:28 --> 00:24:31: Advocacy and and can work with some brilliant local

00:24:31 --> 00:24:33: authorities

00:24:33 --> 00:24:35: who want to be the Champions of change and we're

00:24:35 --> 00:24:36: just lucky enough to be on that journey with them.

00:24:36 --> 00:24:38: And here's a journey.

00:24:38 --> 00:24:40: So just just to give people like me hope, are

00:24:40 --> 00:24:43: we going in the right direction?

00:24:43 --> 00:24:45: Where are we on this journey right at the beginning?

00:24:45 --> 00:24:47: I, I guess I'm not really sure.

00:24:47 --> 00:24:49: And count how fast can we get to our destination.

00:24:49 --> 00:24:51: Depends how you define the destination, I think, I think

00:24:51 --> 00:24:54: we're, I think we're on a good, we're on a

00:24:54 --> 00:24:56: good.

00:24:56 --> 00:24:58: We've got, we've got good momentum.

00:24:58 --> 00:25:00: I think what's what I've been really surprised about is

00:25:00 --> 00:25:04: the level of demand from industry to adopt digital citizen

00:25:04 --> 00:25:06: engagement platforms.

00:25:06 --> 00:25:08: And that's again just one part of the prop tech

00:25:08 --> 00:25:10: ecosystem.

00:25:10 --> 00:25:12: So for example, we did a showcase event in July

00:25:12 --> 00:25:14: this year where we sort of presented back some of

00:25:14 --> 00:25:17: the outcomes of the increased engagement and the more

00:25:17 --> 00:25:20: positive

00:25:20 --> 00:25:22: response and the time saved by planner teams because they

00:25:22 --> 00:25:24: were able to use digital technology.

00:25:24 --> 00:25:26: And there was an online session and I know I

00:25:26 --> 00:25:28: could talk about it all day, but you know, it's

00:25:28 --> 00:25:30: exciting stuff, but it is still one part of the

00:25:30 --> 00:25:32: planning ecosystem.

00:25:32 --> 00:25:34: We had 863 people registered for that event and we

00:25:34 --> 00:25:36: had 650 people turn up on the day.

00:25:36 --> 00:25:38: And I think that's one of many indicators we've seen

00:25:38 --> 00:25:40: in terms of the number of authorities who reached out

00:25:40 --> 00:25:42: to us, who we've been able to work with and

00:25:42 --> 00:25:44:

00:25:44 --> 00:25:47:

00:25:47 --> 00:25:50: fund that shows sort of the growing demand and appetite

00:25:50 --> 00:25:52: and curiosity for the role, the prop tech and planning

00:25:53 --> 00:25:55: and, and our role and, and my role is to

00:25:55 --> 00:25:58: stimulate that demand and keep driving that demand that the

00:25:58 --> 00:26:01: ultimate will drive adoption beyond the length of, of our

00:26:01 --> 00:26:05: funding program and, and the, the length of government intervention.

00:26:05 --> 00:26:07: We'll of course do what we can in this space.

00:26:07 --> 00:26:10: We'll create policy, we'll create guidance, we'll create some digital

00:26:10 --> 00:26:11: toolkits that enable and support that.

00:26:12 --> 00:26:16: But ultimately the way that this will be supported long

00:26:16 --> 00:26:20: term is when the prop tech sector has consistent demand

00:26:20 --> 00:26:25: and capacity to pay for solutions from local government alongside

00:26:25 --> 00:26:26: the private sector.

00:26:27 --> 00:26:29: And that will in turn foster much more, I think,

00:26:29 --> 00:26:32: developed and diverse ecosystem in the prop tech sector as

00:26:33 --> 00:26:33: well.

00:26:33 --> 00:26:36: And as you look across the world, coming from Australia,

00:26:36 --> 00:26:39: and then of course you'll, you'll probably have peered at

00:26:39 --> 00:26:41: other countries in Europe, for example, to see how they

00:26:41 --> 00:26:43: do this or don't do this.

00:26:43 --> 00:26:45: How is the UK on this?

00:26:45 --> 00:26:47: Please tell me we're not the worst.

00:26:47 --> 00:26:48: I mean, are there?

00:26:48 --> 00:26:49: Are there?

00:26:49 --> 00:26:52: Are there some fantastic examples out there where you've seen

00:26:52 --> 00:26:53: this really working?

00:26:53 --> 00:26:55: Again, I think it depends what this means.

00:26:55 --> 00:27:00: I think there's there's interesting examples in France around participatory

00:27:00 --> 00:27:03: budgeting and of digital democracy.

00:27:03 --> 00:27:05: So essentially government saying we have a pot of money

00:27:05 --> 00:27:08: and citizens decide how it's allocated and where it goes

00:27:08 --> 00:27:08: to.

00:27:08 --> 00:27:10: And we've got a few of those projects in our

00:27:10 --> 00:27:12: latest front of funding, which is great.

00:27:13 --> 00:27:16: Watford's doing that and they've seen an amazing result because

00:27:16 --> 00:27:18: they've literally given power to the people through a prop

00:27:18 --> 00:27:21: tech platform and and they had thousands of people respond

00:27:21 --> 00:27:23: in quite a short period of time.

00:27:23 --> 00:27:26: But I think I think the best case studies, I

00:27:26 --> 00:27:29: know I'm probably biased are in the UK, both inside

00:27:29 --> 00:27:32: the fund that we've been supporting directly and some emerging

00:27:32 --> 00:27:35: ones outside what the UK has all the all the

00:27:35 --> 00:27:38: right ingredients to be a world leader in this space.

00:27:38 --> 00:27:41: We've got a planning system that we know needs to

00:27:41 --> 00:27:42: be radically fixed.

00:27:43 --> 00:27:45: There's a term fix the plumbing like get the basics

00:27:46 --> 00:27:49: right with planning, make it more efficient, make it easier

00:27:49 --> 00:27:52: to engage both for planners and for consultants and for

00:27:52 --> 00:27:53: everyday citizens.

00:27:53 --> 00:27:55: So we've got applying system that we know is broken

00:27:55 --> 00:27:55: into fixed.

00:27:56 --> 00:27:59: We've got local authority scaled 300 plus local authorities in

00:27:59 --> 00:28:02: this country and they've all got demand and and sort

00:28:02 --> 00:28:06: of different levels of requirement for digital transformation and they

00:28:06 --> 00:28:08: want to be part of this.

00:28:09 --> 00:28:12: We've got a prop tech ecosystem and marketplace that I

00:28:12 --> 00:28:13: think is world leading.

00:28:13 --> 00:28:16: I'm sure the others on the program might say other

00:28:16 --> 00:28:18: sectors, but I think the UK has an amazing prop

00:28:18 --> 00:28:21: tech ecosystem and, and peer based network.

00:28:21 --> 00:28:24: Even just going to the UK prop tech awards last

00:28:24 --> 00:28:29: week, fantastic indication of how far the industry's grown in

00:28:29 --> 00:28:30: five or six years.

00:28:30 --> 00:28:33: Six years ago, you know, they weren't 300 people in

00:28:34 --> 00:28:37: a room celebrating awards and focusing on things like ESG

00:28:37 --> 00:28:38: and social impact.

00:28:38 --> 00:28:41: And now we can do that because we have depth

00:28:41 --> 00:28:44: in the marketplace and that will only continue to grow.

00:28:44 --> 00:28:48: So we've got these ingredients that all fit together to

00:28:48 --> 00:28:52: support, I think global leadership in this space to respond

00:28:52 --> 00:28:55: to I think which is the most critical issue of

00:28:55 --> 00:29:00: enabling the delivery of faster homes and infrastructure, because we

00:29:00 --> 00:29:04: know more people need access to housing, whether rental or

00:29:04 --> 00:29:05: permanent.

00:29:05 --> 00:29:07: And and that's the role that I hope Proptec can

00:29:07 --> 00:29:10: play in fast tracking that for many people across the

00:29:10 --> 00:29:10: country.

00:29:11 --> 00:29:13: Well, Bridget, if we are going to make a success
00:29:13 --> 00:29:17: of this, I think we need more Bridget's involved which
00:29:17 --> 00:29:19: which actually brings me to my next question.
00:29:20 --> 00:29:22: I think you, you, you joined this role, perhaps it
00:29:22 --> 00:29:23: was it 2 years ago.
00:29:23 --> 00:29:23: A.
00:29:23 --> 00:29:24: Year ago just.
00:29:24 --> 00:29:25: A year ago.
00:29:25 --> 00:29:28: So I am hoping obviously, that you stay in this
00:29:28 --> 00:29:31: position, but bring it back to your personal story.
00:29:32 --> 00:29:33: So what's, what's the plan?
00:29:33 --> 00:29:36: You told me that you're a meticulous planner.
00:29:36 --> 00:29:39: So you probably, you probably know exactly what you're
00:29:39 --> 00:29:40: going
00:29:40 --> 00:29:41: to do for the next 40 years.
00:29:41 --> 00:29:41: It's on the spreadsheet.
00:29:41 --> 00:29:43: What, what, what, what can people expect?
00:29:43 --> 00:29:44: What do you expect of yourself?
00:29:44 --> 00:29:46: Oh, that's a good question.
00:29:46 --> 00:29:48: It's funny, I used to be a meticulous planner.
00:29:48 --> 00:29:50: I've kind of let it go a little bit.
00:29:50 --> 00:29:52: Maybe because I'm getting older, I got to trust the
00:29:52 --> 00:29:52: process.
00:29:55 --> 00:29:56: I really enjoy my role.
00:29:56 --> 00:29:59: I really enjoy the team I'm working with and the
00:30:00 --> 00:30:03: vision that we have to radically change planning.
00:30:03 --> 00:30:05: Planning is hard, like it's, it's a hard space to
00:30:05 --> 00:30:08: be in, but it's meaning meaningful for me and it's
00:30:08 --> 00:30:11: worthwhile and it's very aligned to the values that I
00:30:11 --> 00:30:13: that I want to lead by and, and work work
00:30:14 --> 00:30:14: by.
00:30:14 --> 00:30:16: So what's next to me?
00:30:16 --> 00:30:17: I mean, I'll do a vision board at the start
00:30:17 --> 00:30:18: of next year.
00:30:18 --> 00:30:20: Of course, that's always important to, to see what the
00:30:20 --> 00:30:21: future holds.
00:30:21 --> 00:30:24: And I encourage every all listeners to sort of manifest
00:30:24 --> 00:30:27: or what what might come up for you.
00:30:28 --> 00:30:31: But I think I really am curious about the role
00:30:31 --> 00:30:35: that communities can play when you combine that with
00:30:35 --> 00:30:39: delivering,
00:30:35 --> 00:30:39: enabling and almost de risking the built environment.

00:30:39 --> 00:30:42: I think a lot of us still see communities as

00:30:42 --> 00:30:46: existing residents who perhaps sometimes are opposed to change.

00:30:46 --> 00:30:48: And that's fine.

00:30:48 --> 00:30:50: But also communities could be your occupier, They could be

00:30:50 --> 00:30:51: your end user.

00:30:51 --> 00:30:55: They could actually help inform how you're designing space and

00:30:55 --> 00:30:56: how you're delivering it.

00:30:56 --> 00:30:59: And I think they could bring a lot more value

00:30:59 --> 00:31:01: into that process that perhaps we perceive.

00:31:02 --> 00:31:05: And to me, that's a really exciting space to keep

00:31:05 --> 00:31:08: thinking about how we use technology, but also how we

00:31:08 --> 00:31:11: use common sense in communication and engagement and inclusion and

00:31:12 --> 00:31:15: and we ultimately create a more inclusive built environment around

00:31:15 --> 00:31:17: us with with those key principles.

00:31:18 --> 00:31:20: Now you talked about a vision boards that is something

00:31:20 --> 00:31:21: that you will do.

00:31:21 --> 00:31:23: We like to help people on this podcast.

00:31:24 --> 00:31:26: So we're now onto the subject of tips.

00:31:27 --> 00:31:29: Those that are looking perhaps to enter into the real

00:31:29 --> 00:31:30: estate industry.

00:31:30 --> 00:31:33: Can you think of one or two things that you

00:31:33 --> 00:31:36: can advise people the do's and don'ts of getting into

00:31:36 --> 00:31:37: the industry?

00:31:38 --> 00:31:39: Getting into the industry.

00:31:39 --> 00:31:42: And being a success while you're in it.

00:31:43 --> 00:31:43: OK.

00:31:43 --> 00:31:46: In terms of getting into the industry, my advice would

00:31:47 --> 00:31:50: be there's no path before you that isn't your own.

00:31:50 --> 00:31:52: That kind of like the role that I have now

00:31:52 --> 00:31:54: didn't exist 12 months ago, the role before that didn't

00:31:54 --> 00:31:55: exist 12 months ago.

00:31:56 --> 00:31:58: And even the role I had before that, OK, CBRE

00:31:58 --> 00:32:00: had a development team, but there was no one kind

00:32:00 --> 00:32:01: of doing that and prop tech.

00:32:01 --> 00:32:03: And then even in Australia there was no rule of

00:32:03 --> 00:32:03: woman.

00:32:03 --> 00:32:05: It was only a few women in capital markets.

00:32:05 --> 00:32:07: So, you know, if I'd sat there 15 years ago

00:32:07 --> 00:32:10: and thought, oh, I'll go down this path that I

00:32:10 --> 00:32:13: can see all that path would be eroding before me.

00:32:13 --> 00:32:16: So I think there is a role to have a

00:32:16 --> 00:32:20: vision of, of, of walking your own path, even if

00:32:20 --> 00:32:22: you can't see it ahead of you.

00:32:22 --> 00:32:25: And that vision and that what allows you to keep

00:32:25 --> 00:32:26: walking down that path.

00:32:26 --> 00:32:29: I really key understanding and alignment of your values to

00:32:29 --> 00:32:32: what you're doing in terms of the work you're doing,

00:32:32 --> 00:32:35: the behaviour you're creating for you and your team, and

00:32:35 --> 00:32:38: the change that you want to influence around you.

00:32:39 --> 00:32:42: I made quite a conscious choice a number of years

00:32:42 --> 00:32:45: ago to to be very values LED in the work

00:32:45 --> 00:32:46: that I do.

00:32:46 --> 00:32:49: And I think having having values sort of instill in

00:32:49 --> 00:32:52: in how you approach problems and and solutions is often

00:32:52 --> 00:32:55: what gets us out of bed in the morning, isn't

00:32:55 --> 00:32:57: it on a cold, cold, rainy Friday?

00:32:57 --> 00:32:58: I guess like today.

00:32:58 --> 00:33:00: Why, why, why are we doing if we don't, if

00:33:00 --> 00:33:02: we're not there because we care about it and we

00:33:02 --> 00:33:05: want to drive change, then like what's the point?

00:33:05 --> 00:33:06: Life's too short, it's too precious.

00:33:06 --> 00:33:07: Like absolutely.

00:33:07 --> 00:33:10: So I think real estate is a challenging and complicated

00:33:10 --> 00:33:13: and complex industry, but it's absolutely brilliant.

00:33:13 --> 00:33:15: And the thing that makes it brilliant is the people,

00:33:15 --> 00:33:17: the people that you get to meet and, and become

00:33:17 --> 00:33:19: friends with, the people that you get to work with

00:33:19 --> 00:33:21: and the ideas and the inspiration and the people that

00:33:21 --> 00:33:24: ultimately we're serving, the people who have access to

00:33:24 --> 00:33:27: homes

00:33:27 --> 00:33:28: and different, you know, experiences and different types of

00:33:28 --> 00:33:31: real

00:33:31 --> 00:33:32: estate infrastructure.

00:33:32 --> 00:33:36: And we can touch so many different people digitally and

00:33:36 --> 00:33:38: physically in, in this sector.

00:33:38 --> 00:33:41: But if we're not driven by our, our core values

00:33:41 --> 00:33:44: in that space, it's a very long and it's a

00:33:44 --> 00:33:45: very hard and often it's a very lonely game.

00:33:45 --> 00:33:48: And our values give us our ability to tap into

00:33:48 --> 00:33:50: our superpowers.

00:33:50 --> 00:33:50: So I think my advice would be for anyone listening,

00:33:50 --> 00:33:50: you know, take the time sit down, whether with an

00:33:50 --> 00:33:53: Excel spreadsheet or not, and, and really be honest with
00:33:53 --> 00:33:56: yourself and what your true values are and hold them
00:33:56 --> 00:33:59: as your North star and guiding light in decisions that
00:33:59 --> 00:34:03: you make both personally and professionally that hopefully
can align
00:34:03 --> 00:34:04: them throughout your career.
00:34:05 --> 00:34:08: And finally, finally, what about things that you read or
00:34:08 --> 00:34:12: maybe even podcasts that you listen to that you think
00:34:12 --> 00:34:16: and would be helpful to other people to also listen
00:34:16 --> 00:34:16: to?
00:34:17 --> 00:34:20: I read a great book recently, it's called Black Box
00:34:20 --> 00:34:23: Thinking by Matthew Saeed, and it was about the science
00:34:23 --> 00:34:26: of diversity, the science of cognitive diversity.
00:34:26 --> 00:34:28: And I think diversity is still a key issue in
00:34:28 --> 00:34:31: the built environment and prop tech sector.
00:34:32 --> 00:34:33: We've got a long way to go.
00:34:33 --> 00:34:36: We have made some strides recently and what Matthew talks
00:34:36 --> 00:34:39: about is the real science behind it, which I think
00:34:39 --> 00:34:40: is quite fascinating.
00:34:40 --> 00:34:41: It's hard to argue with science.
00:34:41 --> 00:34:44: Some people still do, but it's harder to argue with
00:34:44 --> 00:34:44: science.
00:34:45 --> 00:34:49: And he talks about how diversity literally saves lives and
00:34:49 --> 00:34:52: saves teams and programs at NASA and you know, the
00:34:52 --> 00:34:54: FBI and different areas.
00:34:54 --> 00:34:57: So I think it's a really good challenge on thinking
00:34:57 --> 00:35:00: about the conscious and unconscious bias we have as
humans
00:35:00 --> 00:35:03: when we're looking to create more diverse environments.
00:35:03 --> 00:35:06: And really challenge that thinking to ensure that we are
00:35:06 --> 00:35:11: bringing different perspectives to conversations, to the table,
to consultations,
00:35:11 --> 00:35:14: to planning for the future and see how we really
00:35:14 --> 00:35:18: validate the role that sort of disruptive and different thinking
00:35:18 --> 00:35:20: can have in that space.
00:35:20 --> 00:35:22: Bridget, thank you very much for joining us.
00:35:23 --> 00:35:23: Fantastic.
00:35:23 --> 00:35:24: Great to be here.
00:35:24 --> 00:35:24: Thanks for having me.

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