

A special report from Join the Dots Together

# An Economy of Enough

in a time of crisis and opportunity



Enough for people.  
Enough for planet.

22 April 2026  
The Canada Room  
Queen's University Belfast



WHY WE GATHERED

# A gathering for change

On Earth Day 2026, people from faith communities, academia, civil society and local initiatives gathered around one urgent question: **what would an economy designed for people and planet look like?**

The conference was created through a collaboration involving **Join the Dots Together**, Queen's University Belfast's **Centre for Sustainability, Equality and Climate Action (SECA)**, and **REACH '26**, Queen's Art and Sustainability Festival.

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**DATE**

Wednesday 22 April 2026

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**TIME**

9.30am–1pm

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**VENUE**

The Canada Room, QUB

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**FORMAT**

Keynote · World Café · Action

**“It’s critically important that people of diverse faith and beliefs come together on this issue.”**

**Edwin Graham · NI Interfaith Forum**





## INSIDE THIS REPORT

# Ideas, action and possibility

04

## The proposition

Rethinking what we mean by a good life.

05

## Six priorities

A practical agenda emerging from the day.

07

## The keynote

Dr Lorna Gold asks: What is enough?

11

## World Café

Ten tables and multiple perspectives.

13

## What we heard

The themes connecting the room.

14

## At a large scale

The conditions needed for change.

16

## At grassroots scale

What communities can do now.

18

## Two scales, one transition

Why action must advance together.

19

## Acknowledgements

The people behind the gathering.

### THE QUESTION BEHIND THE DAY

What if the answer is not simply to consume differently, but to rethink prosperity, security and a good life?



Dr Lorna Gold addressing the Conference



Dr Amanda Slevin addressing the Conference



Roisin Alexander-Pye, Juanita Majury, Lara Kelly & Jamie Harpur



# A good life within a living planet

**O**n Earth Day 2026, people from across faith communities, academia, civil society and local initiatives gathered at Queen's University Belfast to explore the idea of an **Economy of Enough**: an economy that places human wellbeing, justice and the flourishing of the natural world at its heart.

Inspired by Dr Lorna Gold's challenge to move beyond the assumption that "more" necessarily means "better", participants explored both the systemic changes needed and practical alternatives

already emerging in communities.

Through conversation, shared experience and a World Café approach, the gathering considered how society can move from an economy driven by endless consumption towards one grounded in **sufficiency, solidarity, sustainability and the common good**.

The day did not produce a single blueprint. It revealed something more useful: a shared direction, a network of lived examples and a set of priorities capable of guiding further work.

**"The people here are really committed to a world that ensures that everyone has enough, both the Earth and the people that live on it."**

Roisin Lynch · Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council

**Ensure that everyone has enough to live well — while recognising that the planet has limits.**

An Economy of Enough is not universal austerity. It asks us to value care, relationships, participation, dignity and meaning alongside material production.



## RECOMMENDATIONS · 01-03

# From conversation to action

Six priorities emerged from the discussion and feedback. The first three focus on connection, practical experience and cultural change.

01

## Connect and strengthen what already exists

Build stronger links among community, faith, academic, co-operative and environmental initiatives. Share experience, resources and good practice rather than creating unnecessary new structures.

02

## Support practical local action

Encourage community energy, repair and reuse, local food, gardens, credit unions, co-operatives and shared spaces through which people can experience an Economy of Enough.

03

## Promote education and cultural change

Develop economic and environmental education for young people, schools, faith communities and community organisations. Combine practical skills with new measures of prosperity.



Sara Lynch, Head of Sustainability, Queen's University Belfast

### A USEFUL STARTING POINT

**Map existing initiatives. Make them easier to find. Create routes for mutual learning.**



RECOMMENDATIONS · 04-06

# Make the possible practical

04

## Strengthen advocacy for systemic change

Bring the learning into wider discussion on poverty, inequality, housing, food, care, community ownership, circular economy, renewable energy and wellbeing.

05

## Build intergenerational participation

Create more opportunities for younger and older people to learn from one another and participate together in practical responses.

06

## Continue the conversation

Use a follow-up gathering or network activity to maintain connections, share progress and identify opportunities for collaboration.



Lorna Gold (LSM), Jane Corderoy (DAERA), Amanda Slevin (SECA)



Preparing ideas for practical action

**“It’s not just talk about the problems; it’s actually talking about how we can try and solve them as well.”**

Jamie Harpur · Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

### OVERALL RECOMMENDATION

**Solutions already exist. Connect them, support them and scale them.**

## THE KEYNOTE QUESTION

# What is enough?

**Dr Lorna Gold**, Executive Director of the Laudato Si' Movement, invited participants to consider what is sufficient for a person to feel secure, fulfilled and at peace — and who determines that threshold.

**S**he suggested that society faces not only a crisis of scarcity, but a **crisis of definition**. Our economic and cultural systems have largely lost the idea that there can be such a thing as enough.

What was historically a moral question — *How should we live? What is a good life? What constitutes a just share?* — has

also become a scientific necessity.

The Earth has finite limits, yet the dominant economic model remains dependent on continuing growth, extraction and consumption. Can an economy built on perpetual expansion operate within a finite planet?

**“The economy of enough is emerging everywhere. It’s emerging between the cracks... We can come together to bring about a cultural shift and build an economy of enough for our people and for the planet.”**

Dr Lorna Gold · Laudato Si' Movement





## LIMITS, DESIRE AND RELATIONSHIP

# More is not the same as better

**L**orna connected ecological crisis to Pope Francis' insight in *Laudato Si'* that apparently separate problems — climate change, inequality, social anxiety and environmental destruction — have a common root.

At the heart of the problem is a breakdown in relationship: with the Earth, with one another, with ourselves and with the divine.

Our ecological overshoot is accompanied by an overshoot in human desire,

reinforced by a culture that continually tells us what we have is not enough.

Markets, advertising, culture and technology encourage greater consumption and create a sense that satisfaction is always just beyond reach.

The BBC programme *Sort Your Life Out*, in which families confront the volume of possessions accumulated in their homes, offered a vivid picture of an economy of waste.

BUEN VIVIR

UBUNTU

MEITHEAL

SABBATH

JUBILEE

The idea of living within limits is not new. These traditions suggest that limits need not mean deprivation. Chosen and shared wisely, they can create the conditions for freedom, community and wellbeing.



Science can show  
us where the  
limits are.  
Wisdom can help  
us learn how to  
live joyfully  
within them.

KEYNOTE · A DIFFERENT MEASURE OF WEALTH

# Freedom from the pressure to want more

Lorna described working on the film *The Letter* with Pope Francis and visiting Assisi, where she encountered Franciscan friars who possessed very little but appeared to carry a profound sense of peace, lightness and joy.

She understood this not as deprivation, but as freedom from the constant pressure to want more. Enough becomes less a calculation of what we can afford and more a conscious way of living.

**“As people of faith, it is incumbent upon us to act in the interests of climate justice — not only for ourselves, but for people in the developing South, the poor and those suffering.”**

Anne Marie Duffy · Down & Connor Diocesan Laudato Si' Group



Finbarr Keaveney, Anne Marie Duffy & Angela Mc Mullan



Clare Hutchinson

## Could an economy be organised around enoughness?

Lorna drew inspiration from E. F. Schumacher's *Small Is Beautiful* and its challenge to place sufficiency, rather than growth, at the centre of economics. There may be a point beyond which additional consumption no longer increases wellbeing — and may instead undermine it.

### ALREADY EMERGING

**Circular economy · regenerative agriculture · low-energy community living · repair and sharing · local food networks · community energy · co-operative business**





Si Chun Lam, Lorna Gold, Sophie Manaeva, Aisling Quigley & Claire Pentony

#### A CALL FOR CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

## Choosing enough — together

Lorna concluded with hope. The challenge is not simply to create new economic structures, but to redefine what society understands by **prosperity and flourishing**.

An Economy of Enough is not about asking people to accept less. It is about recovering what genuinely

matters: **time, relationships, community and meaning**.

Change is unlikely to come through individual willpower alone. People are more likely to embrace different patterns when they experience the benefits of another way of living within supportive communities.



The conference formed part of REACH '26, Queen's Art and Sustainability Festival.

#### THE QUESTION WE CARRY FORWARD

## “What is enough for a good life for all?”

If “more” is no longer the only measure of success, wellbeing can be pursued through belonging, health, meaningful work, care, participation, creativity and connection with nature. Enoughness becomes not a ceiling on human aspiration, but an invitation to direct aspiration towards what brings life.



Lara Kelly



IDEAS IN MOTION

## PARTICIPATORY BY DESIGN

**Ten tables. Multiple perspectives. One shared question.**

FACILITATED BY DR AMANDA SLEVIN · SECA

# Learning through conversation

The World Café enabled people to move among tables, hear from those involved in practical initiatives, and contribute their own ideas and experience. Participants asked questions, exchanged perspectives and considered how economic alternatives could work in practice.

**“People get a chance to learn about a new topic, discuss that and look at areas for action.”**

Dr Amanda Slevin · SECA

**LISTEN**

to people testing alternatives

**CONNECT**

ideas across sectors

**QUESTION**

assumptions about growth

**IDENTIFY**

actions at two scales

**SHARE**

insights across the room



## A LIVING MAP OF ALTERNATIVES

# Ideas already taking root

- |                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>01 Credit unions</b><br/> <b>Martin Fisher &amp; Sinead McKeown</b><br/>           Community finance, green lending and local value.</p>  | <p><b>02 Doughnut Economics</b><br/> <b>Lara Kelly</b><br/>           Social foundations within ecological ceilings.</p>                       |
| <p><b>03 Drumlin Wind Energy Co-op</b><br/> <b>Anne Ford &amp; Tiziana O'Hara</b><br/>           Renewable energy and democratic ownership.</p> | <p><b>04 Economy of Communion</b><br/> <b>Paul Connolly</b><br/>           Enterprise shaped by reciprocity and inclusion.</p>                 |
| <p><b>05 Economy of Francesco</b><br/> <b>Si Chun Lam</b><br/>           A global movement for people and planet.</p>                           | <p><b>06 Feminist Economics</b><br/> <b>Donal Swan</b><br/>           Recognising care and unequal economic power.</p>                         |
| <p><b>07 Jubilee Farm</b><br/> <b>Mark Dick</b><br/>           Regenerative agriculture and relationship with land.</p>                         | <p><b>08 NI Resource Network</b><br/> <b>Catherine Taylor &amp; Catherine Mullin</b><br/>           Repair, reuse and resource efficiency.</p> |
| <p><b>09 Wellbeing Economy Alliance</b><br/> <b>Peter Doran</b><br/>           Progress through wellbeing, equity and ecology.</p>              | <p><b>10 Westcourt Centre</b><br/> <b>Cormac McArt</b><br/>           Place-based community development.</p>                                   |

**“We are looking to create a different type of economy, one that actually puts people and the planet first rather than profits.”**

Si Chun Lam · Economy of Francesco



## NINE THEMES ACROSS THE ROOM

# Redefining prosperity

## Poverty, inequality and exclusion

Housing, healthy food and the voices of people at the margins.

## Community wealth and ownership

Keeping value and benefit rooted in local places.

## Ecological limits

Doughnut, degrowth, circular and regenerative approaches.

## Care and the value of work

Recognising unpaid and low-paid caring labour.

## Wellbeing and the good life

Belonging, dignity, spirituality and connection with nature.

## Intergenerational collaboration

Combining energy and ideas with experience and practical knowledge.

## Education and culture change

Economic literacy, useful skills and new ideas of success.

## Participation and empowerment

People as citizens and co-creators, not only consumers.

## Barriers to change

Weak political will, poverty, limited resources and infrastructure, low awareness, and established habits and systems.



Economy of Francesco Table



Wellbeing Economy Alliance Table

**“We need to change our economic models to really centre care work and worth.”**

Donal Swan · National Women's Council





Alan Meban interviewing Cormac McCourt



Cormac McCourt &amp; Finbarr Keaveney

## STRUCTURAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE

# Change the conditions

## Lead with justice

Tackle poverty, homelessness, inequality and environmental breakdown together rather than as isolated problems.

## Back community models

Provide sustained support for social, co-operative and community-based projects.

## Transform food systems

Support regenerative agriculture and healthier, more sustainable food, including stronger access to affordable healthy choices.

## Democratise energy

Combine renewable generation with local ownership, shared heating and storage, and better planning and grid access.

## Measure what matters

Use wellbeing indicators and broader measures of social and environmental progress, not growth alone.

## Design out waste

Encourage durable products, repair, reuse and reduced waste through circular-economy policy.

## Treat housing as a right

Invest in community and co-operative housing and recognise that a home is more than a commodity.

**“Together we can build this movement and bring about real change.”**

Anne Ford • Drumlin Wind Energy Co-op

## SYSTEMS THAT ENABLE BETTER CHOICES

# Build the supporting structure



## Expand the role of credit unions

Develop green lending, financial education, shared services and greater consistency across the sector.

## Put literacy into education

Develop economic understanding, ecological awareness and practical skills from an early age.

## Work across institutions

Strengthen partnerships among government, councils, civil society, communities and business.

## Recognise and support care

Improve provision for carers, flexible work and recognition of traditionally unpaid labour.

## Give young people a real voice

Include young people in decision-making with stronger intergenerational representation.

## Replicate what works

Share, adapt and expand successful initiatives rather than repeatedly reinventing them.

**Individual action must be matched by system change.**

Public policy can make healthier, fairer and lower-impact ways of living easier through infrastructure, regulation, investment, education and democratic participation.





## PRACTICAL ACTION NOW

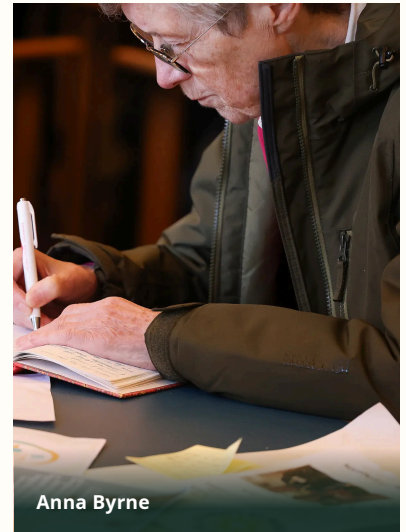
# Start where people live



Tiziana O'Hara



Valerio Gentile



Anna Byrne

- 1 **Strengthen existing networks**  
Participate locally, volunteer and build mutual support rather than always starting from scratch.
- 2 **Create shared spaces**  
Community fridges, gardens, cafés and other shared places reduce waste and strengthen connection.
- 3 **Repair, reuse and share**  
Second-hand goods, sewing and practical repair skills extend product life and everyday capability.
- 4 **Consume more consciously**  
Buy less; ask where goods come from, how they are made and who benefits.
- 5 **Support local food and enterprise**  
Choose local food networks, co-operatives and community businesses where possible.

**“Repair is great, recycle is good, but repair is better... think about using less and buying less, and valuing what we have in front of us.”**

Catherine Taylor · NI Resource Network

Small-scale action allows people to experience an alternative economy in practice. It builds trust, relationships, skills and confidence — and shows that different ways of living are already possible.

## CAPACITY, CONNECTION AND IMAGINATION

# Grow the alternative



World Café Table Hosts



Ed Petersen &amp; Aidan ffrench



Economy of Francesco Table

- 1 **Develop community energy**  
Explore solar, micro-generation and shared heating or storage with active local participation.
- 2 **Shape co-operatives and credit unions**  
Participate, vote and help member-owned institutions respond to emerging needs.
- 3 **Exchange skills across generations**  
Combine older people's practical knowledge with younger people's ideas and energy.
- 4 **Make learning tangible**  
Use school gardens, food growing, cycling, sewing, repair and sustainable living.
- 5 **Support local champions**  
Trusted convenors can raise awareness and help new participants take a first step.
- 6 **Use culture to enlarge the possible**  
Story, music, literature and art can make alternative futures imaginable.
- 7 **Act as citizens, not only consumers**  
Pair everyday choices with participation, advocacy, collective ownership and care.

**“We’ve been able to bring together all the different issues... the economy, but also the planet and community and all the other things that make up a good life.”**

Chris McCartney · Repair Café



## TWO SCALES · ONE TRANSITION

# Change the system. Live the alternative.

An Economy of Enough must operate at two levels simultaneously: structural change creates a fairer and more sustainable system; local action enables people to experience and build that system within their communities.



## At the system scale

Policy, investment, education, regulation and democratic reform reshape the conditions in which decisions are made — from housing and care to food, energy, waste and ownership.



## At community scale

Repair, sharing, local food, co-operative finance, community energy, practical learning and mutual support allow people to practise another economy now.

**Networks, evidence, storytelling and participation form the bridge.** Community initiatives demonstrate what is possible; policy can remove barriers, provide resources and expand access.

## Solutions already exist. Connect them. Support them. Scale them.

The vision emerging from the day was of an economy based less on competition, excess and accumulation, and more on sufficiency, care, co-operation, wellbeing, participation and respect for planetary limits.





Jude Stephens & Finbarr Keaveney



Irene Jovaras, Joy Ryan, Tracey Tsang & Mhairi Clare Lynch

## THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE GATHERING

# With thanks

### KEYNOTE, FACILITATION AND ORGANISATION

**Dr Lorna Gold**, Executive Director, Laudato Si' Movement  
**Professor John Barry**, School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics; Co-Director, SECA  
**Dr Amanda Slevin**, Lecturer in Climate Policy, Politics and Sustainability; Co-Director, SECA  
**Sara Lynch**, Head of Sustainability, Queen's University Belfast  
**Siobhan Purnell**, Sustainability Programme Officer, Queen's University Belfast  
**Claire Pentony**, Master of Ceremonies  
**Alan Meban**, video  
**Martin Spackman**, photos  
**Westcourt Centre**, "Our Common Home" Photo Exhibition

### WORLD CAFÉ TABLE HOSTS

Martin Fisher & Sinead McKeown — Credit Unions  
 Lara Kelly — Doughnut Economics  
 Anne Ford & Tiziana O'Hara — Drumlin Wind Energy Co-op  
 Paul Connolly — Economy of Communion  
 Si Chun Lam — Economy of Francesco  
 Donal Swan — National Women's Council  
 Mark Dick — Jubilee Farm  
 Catherine Taylor & Catherine Mullin — NI Resource Network  
 Peter Doran — Wellbeing Economy Alliance  
 Cormac McArt — Westcourt Centre

### JOIN THE DOTS TOGETHER STEERING GROUP

**A Rocha** — Bertie Stirling  
**Belfast Jesuit Centre** — Fr Gerry Clarke and Fr Piaras Jackson  
**Clonard Peace Ministry** — Ed Petersen  
**Corrymeela** — Jonny Clark  
**Down & Connor Diocesan Laudato Si' Group** — Anne Marie Duffy  
**Focolare** — Juanita Majury  
**NI Interfaith Forum** — Edwin Graham  
**Redemptorist Youth Ministry** — Colm Marks  
**Trócaire** — Nick Hanrahan  
**Ulster University** — Fr Gerry Clarke

### SHARED PURPOSE

**Faith, research, public service and community action — connected by care for people and planet.**



**LAUDATO SI'**  
**MOVEMENT**  
 Catholics for Our Common Home



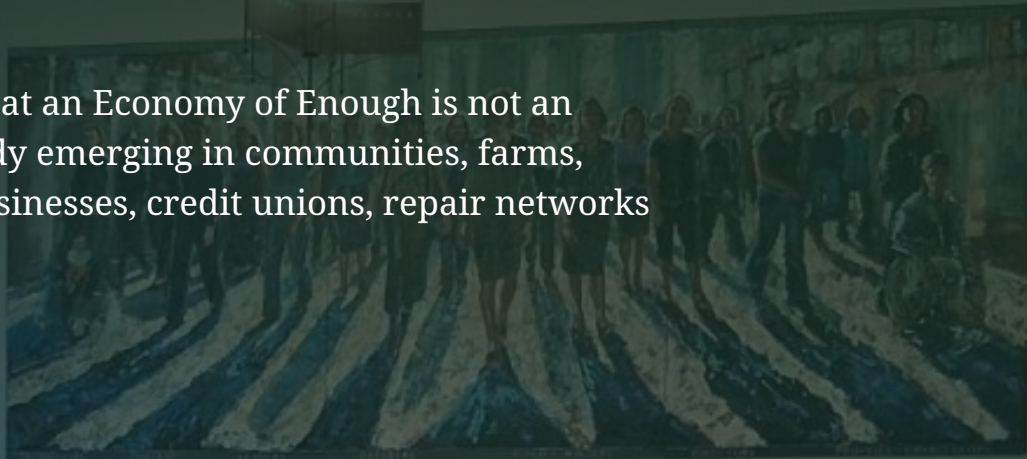
**Trócaire**  
 TOGETHER FOR A JUST WORLD



THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES

# What brings life?

The gathering showed that an Economy of Enough is not an abstract ideal. It is already emerging in communities, farms, energy co-operatives, businesses, credit unions, repair networks and faith groups.



Beyond a certain point, more does not bring more life. The task now is to discover what does — and build an economy around it.

CONNECT

SUPPORT

LEARN

ADVOCATE

PARTICIPATE

An Earth Day 2026 report produced from the conference *An Economy of Enough in a Time of Crisis and Opportunity*, held at Queen's University Belfast as part of REACH '26.

FURTHER INFORMATION

[www.jointhedotstogether.org](http://www.jointhedotstogether.org)

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