

Communities leading change

A strategic plan for 2023-28



**PEOPLE'S
ECONOMY**

The issues facing our communities, from the escalating climate crisis to housing insecurity, are rooted in and shaped by our current economic systems.

Yet right now, most of us feel excluded and alienated from economic policy and unable to influence the economy around us.

This means that we often don't have the tools we need to address the root causes of some of the biggest and most urgent problems that we face.

We need to come together to develop a shared understanding and analysis of how economic systems work to build the power of communities to change them.

People's Economy works with those at the sharpest end of the economy to shape a fairer, more sustainable alternative together.

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Introducing our new name

As our work has evolved, people and communities have remained central to our strategy and vision. This evolution prompted necessary reflection on everything from our goals and theory of change to internal practices and, ultimately, our public brand.

The move from *Economy* to *People's Economy* is about making those goals transparent. *People's Economy* reflects not just what we're working towards but how we plan to get there — by building power, agency and vision with communities and changemakers across the UK.

PEOPLE'S ECONOMY formerly **economy**

In early 2023 you'll see our new name rolled out publicly across our work.

A note from our Executive Director, Joe Earle

Money. Government. Business. A rigged system. Graphs. Fear. Inevitability. These are some of the things we hear when we ask people what the word economy makes them think and feel. The overriding sensation is of separation and powerlessness. But the economy is just a shorthand for the systems through which the resources that humans need to live are produced, distributed and consumed. Essential goods and services like food, housing, clothes, heating, transport, education, health, care, community spaces, arts activities, sports centres, parks, jobs and money are all mediated through our economies.

Thought of this way, the economy is not something separate, it is part of our communities, society and environment. We are all part of it, every day. Because it's something we are part of, it's something we can influence. Because the economy determines who in society gets power and resources, we can't really meaningfully solve any of our other problems until we change the economic system we live in.

How then can communities across the UK work to build collective power to transform the economy? And how can people be asked to work towards transformational change when for many communities even surviving in the economy is like trying to breathe underwater? The strategy outlined in this document is an attempt to answer some of these questions (and many others that surfaced along the way). It is the result of a year-long process involving over a hundred people who are previous participants of our programmes, community partners, friends, funders and fellow travellers.

We'd like to thank each one of you for helping to shape our new direction and for ensuring it is reflective of the breadth of experiences, ideas and perspectives we know are needed to create a strategy that can move us significantly towards our vision: a democratic, equitable and liveable economy where communities can meet their needs and priorities. We'd particularly like to thank our Community Ambassador Board, your collective wisdom and support over the last fifteen months has been invaluable in shaping this new direction for *People's Economy*.

On diversity, inclusion and anti-oppression

Diversity, inclusion and anti-oppression is central to our work. We have a policy that publicly sets out how we will work towards our aims of diversity of thought, consensus of purpose, challenging injustice and taking an intersectional approach to dismantling structural oppression. We have taken steps throughout the process of creating this strategy to ensure we reflected on what DIAO means for the content, how decisions were made and who was involved in its creation.



How this strategy came about

In 2016 we set out to advance education in economics for the public benefit. Since then society has faced important collective decisions, existential crises and political turmoil.

These events are fundamentally reshaping our economies and shedding light on the deep systemic and historical inequalities that characterise them.

Over the last few years we have been exploring how we can work with communities – particularly those further from power – to build the confidence, knowledge and power to understand, navigate and ultimately shape the economy to achieve what matters to them.



Some of the highlights include:

Over 2 million people have visited ecomy.org for our engaging, accessible and relevant economic news. We've co-produced articles, videos and podcasts with 120 people as part of 'Voices of the Economy' network to transform what stories are told about the economy and how they are told.

We've run courses and workshops across the UK, exploring everything from why housing is so expensive to how economics can help us address the climate crisis. They've aimed to help people move from a sense of alienation and powerlessness to a place of confidence and connection.

We've worked with the Bank of England and the Welsh government to help them engage with communities and consider how they communicate on the economy. We've partnered with campaigners for Universal Basic Income and audit reform to demystify economic arguments and enable broader and more diverse participation.

We know there is still a long way to go.

In 2021 Opinium conducted representative polling that found that less than one in five of people felt they were able to influence decisions about the economy that affected their lives.

Our new strategy has identified a gap and sets out an ambitious plan for how we can do long-term work to build power directly with people experiencing economic injustice and collectively understand, reimagine and change the economy.

This will support wider economic change work by enabling the conditions for the development of a broad-based movement; one that is legitimate and successful through being rooted in the knowledge and leadership of communities who are experiencing economic injustice.

Our vision

A democratic, equitable and liveable economy where communities can meet their needs and priorities.



Our mission

We work with communities in the UK experiencing economic injustice to reimagine, rebalance, and transform the economy. We do this through direct support for changemakers, community education, and shaping the wider movement conditions for this work to be effective.



How?

We work in solidarity with people facing economic injustice to create a stronger movement for justice and change.

We do this through:

- building shared understanding that enables people to connect their experiences and fights for justice to the economy
- creating opportunities for people to to imagine, understand and plan the economic change they want to see
- connecting communities who can support and reinforce each other's work
- challenging barriers and creating routes into economic change work

What does 'economic injustice' mean?

We believe economic injustice looks like many things but includes:

- 1** Struggling to meet basic needs and access resources to live a secure and decent life. This includes but isn't limited to food, work, housing, utilities, and healthcare.
- 2** Feeling disempowered and disconnected from networks, resources, and decision making. This means not having agency or control over important aspects of one's life.
- 3** Experiencing oppression as a result of your identity. This could be due to historically embedded and structural inequalities between groups.

What we mean by working with 'changemakers'

We will work with people who are from a community experiencing economic injustice or who work in such communities in a deeply embedded way. They will already be aiming to create some form of

positive change that aligns with one or more of our three principles for a 'good economy' but might not yet be connecting their work to the economy or feel able to work on economic change.

Our approach to community education on the economy

We have run courses and workshops across the UK for over a thousand people, supporting and empowering them to understand, reimagine and change the economy.



We work with communities through a supportive learning process. Together, we build a shared analysis of the economic root causes of pressing issues, and develop strategies to shift the economy so that it better meets their needs and priorities.

Our community education builds practical knowledge, skills and confidence around economic concepts that underpin the most pressing social issues of today – from housing to climate change, migration and the cost of living. Through stories and reflection we make economics accessible and relevant to people’s lives.

Participants are encouraged to think about how their own life experiences relate to the wider economy – we recognise this vital knowledge from lived experience is too often ignored in mainstream economic conversation and decision making. Feedback is consistently very positive. For example, on average participants rated our most recent workshops 4.4/5 for increased knowledge and 4.4/5 for enjoyment.

Our work with communities experiencing economic injustice has informed the design and facilitation of our whole approach to community education and the adaptive principles that sit at the heart of it.



“ Economy crash course attendee, Glasgow

The word economy scares me. If you’ve always been skint you do feel excluded from the conversation about money. Throughout the course I got really mad. Talking about money and who holds the power. We spoke about how women still do most of the labour in the house... That lightbulb moment for all of us was that this should be valued. This amazing woman

who is a carer for three children and a parent said I’m unemployed. After I said to her you’re overemployed you’re just not paid for it. If people just had a conversation there are so many more who would feel so much more empowered. They are participating in the economy but the whole way it is set up doesn’t value them. So many people feel excluded.

The economic change we want



We have three principles which we believe a 'good economy' should achieve:



Democracy

Distribute and decentralise economic decision-making power widely, providing mechanisms for participation and accountability.



Equity

Reduce socioeconomic inequality, repair historical harm and dismantle systems of oppression such as racism, sexism and elitism so that everybody can have an equal chance in life.



Liveable

Operate within the natural and environmental limits of the planet while meeting everybody's needs.

Achieving these requires fundamental transformation not marginal reform. It requires dismantling structural inequalities of wealth and power which have arisen over many years, often as a result of historical violence and oppression.

We will use these principles to guide who we partner with, identify which economic issues we focus on, communicate the change we're working for and inform the design of our activities. But they are not a blueprint: our principles could form the foundation of a range of economies organised in very different ways.

Our theory of change

We recognise that communities experiencing economic injustice need the resources to build shared vision and understanding and the tools to effect real change.

People's Economy's theory of change is rooted in building relationships, solidarity, analysis, reach, and influence.

If People's Economy

Supports changemakers embedded in communities experiencing economic injustice to:

connect their experiences and fights for justice to the economy

imagine, understand, analyse and plan the economic change they want to see

empower themselves, connect with others, build alternatives and influence dominant institutions



Develops and spreads practice across government, media and new economy organisations that creates routes into economic change work for communities experiencing injustice.



This will mean

The movement for economic change is powerful, broad, diverse and led by communities experiencing economic injustice.



There is infrastructure in place for meaningful and democratic conversation, deliberation and decision-making on the economy.



Ultimately ensuring

The UK economy is democratic, equitable and liveable – signalling a progressive shift for broader global economies.

The world in 2028 – communities leading change

We see the huge potential to build power with people experiencing economic injustice who are working to create social, political and cultural change but *not* connecting it to the economy.

In five years, we aim to have worked with ten thousand people in communities experiencing injustice across the country to connect what matters to them to the need for economic system change.

We want to shift the widespread belief that the economy is something which can only be shaped by government, big business or the very wealthy. We want to build hope and optimism that when communities experiencing injustice come together they have the power to reimagine, rebalance, and transform the economy. To shape a fairer, more sustainable alternative together.

This collective of people will have the knowledge, skills, confidence, resources and networks to support effective economic change work. Together we will have begun to remove the barriers that currently exist to influencing the economy. Collectively, we will take action to shape the economy through the media, government, campaigning and building alternatives in our communities.

People's Economy will have developed the governance and culture it needs to be run by and for the communities it works with. It will be actively addressing the ways our organisation reflects unjust structures of the world we live in. It will be working in a deeply collaborative way with a diverse ecosystem of groups spread right across the UK.





What we will do

Strand One

Build deep, long-term relationships with communities experiencing economic injustice and work together to achieve economic change.

We will work with changemakers to identify how they connect with the broader economy, develop an analysis of the economic root causes and solutions of the issues they are working on and explore what they can do to contribute to achieving systemic economic change.

We aim to work in solidarity with changemakers and communities to empower themselves, build alternatives and influence dominant institutions. We will begin with a regional focus, deepening our existing place-based work in London, Wales and Birmingham.

Outreach and engagement

We will build deep relationships with 'changers', people across the UK who are experiencing economic injustice and working to achieve social, environmental and political change but not currently linking their work to the economy. We will highlight the connections between issues

which matter to them and the economy. We want to support more people to see that economic systems change is necessary to address the root cause of the issues which matter to them and make them feel ready and able to participate in creating economic change.

Facilitating deep learning journeys

We will co-design and facilitate deep learning journeys through which changemakers see that economic systems change is necessary to address the root cause of the issues which matter to them, understand how the economic system currently operates and explore what they can do to transform it, develop practical skills, resources and strategies to participate in and lead

the growing ecosystem of work to build a 'new economy' and are brought together to create a connected community of grassroots economic changemakers. Throughout this learning journey, we will strategically connect changemakers with other grassroots groups, economic campaigns, government and media to mobilise around key system change opportunities.

Building stronger connections

We will use a variety of flexible approaches to support stronger connections between changemakers and others in civil society. We will set up a community of practice for those involved in our deep learning journeys to facilitate ongoing learning between changemakers working in different places and on different social change

issues around a shared agenda for reimagining and transforming the economy. We will support and facilitate regional community and civil society economic justice alliances to build the shared understanding, solidarity and coordination necessary to influence system change.

“ The workshop was awesome. It left me feeling that there is a part of life that I have been indifferent to because I believed I didn't contribute much to it or need to know much about it – that's the economy.

Workshop attendee

The type of training and support we plan to offer:

Learning, analysing and planning

Learning sessions to build knowledge and confidence around economic analysis of issues and how they relate to the broader economy.

Strategy sessions to develop a shared economic analysis, consider what alternatives the group wants to advocate for and how it can work effectively to contribute to economic change.

Skills sessions to develop skills to make effective economic change. Including: influencing decision-makers; analysing data, having a public voice on the economy, and content production.

Taking action

Connecting changemakers with economic decision makers to facilitate practical, focused engagement with decision makers.

Media work to co-produce and place content in local, regional and national media to centre voices of changemakers in public conversation and build their case for change.

Connecting changemakers with others creating change to build practical engagement with new economy organisations and explore opportunities for long-term collaboration.

Strand Two

Remove barriers and create routes into economic change work for communities experiencing injustice.

We will work to remove barriers and create routes into economic change work for communities experiencing injustice by changing the way society thinks, talks and makes decisions about the economy.

We will focus on reforming a) new economy organisations and campaigns, b) government economic institutions and decision-making and c) the media to better enable changemakers from communities experiencing economic injustice to access and influence them.

We will be led by the priorities of the changemakers we work with, the places they are in, and the focus issues they are working on.

Developing demonstration examples of the change we want to see

We will begin with 'how' work, working with willing partners in our target sectors to develop and test practices which create opportunities for increased and more diverse public participation, deliberation and leadership in economic analysis, conversation, decision-making and distribution of resources.

In doing this we will build on learnings from work we have begun over the last three years with economic decision-makers including the Bank of England, Government Economic Service and Welsh Government; with economic campaigns including for universal basic income and audit reform, and with media organisations including the Manchester Evening News and Birmingham Live.

Building a decentralised community media infrastructure

We will continue to develop our 'Voices of the Economy' network, whom our editorial team work with to co-produce written and video content (comment, analysis, local news) for social, local and national media.

We will work with media partners to develop, test and scale the network into a flexible and sustainable infrastructure which facilitates changemakers creating multimedia content to become an authentic and trusted public voice on the economy.

Barriers

In our experience, the barriers to doing economic change work faced by communities experiencing injustice broadly fall into three categories, all of which our Strand Two work will aim to address:

- 1 Resources** Communities experiencing economic injustice often have to focus on meeting basic needs while control of economic resources is highly concentrated
- 2 Power** Economic policy making is highly centralised in Westminster and economics is viewed as an expert subject meaning that most people have little opportunity to influence or have a voice on decisions which affect them, contributing to a deep sense of powerlessness for many around the possibility of changing the economy
- 3 Relationships** Communities experiencing economic injustice often have less social capital and networks while others (politicians, businesses, think tanks) are networked in economic policymaking communities.

Strand Three

Invest in the sustainable development of People's Economy to scale our impact and live our values.

We will build the infrastructure and culture we need to deliver our strategy with effectiveness and impact, and in full alignment with our values. We will prioritise organisational development in the following areas:

Participatory governance

We are committed to building a more participatory approach to our governance that will make People's Economy more accessible, inclusive and accountable to the communities it works with, leading to greater power sharing, connection and trust. We will continue to develop our Community Ambassador Board, which resources people with direct experience of economic injustice to participate in the governance, strategy and delivery of our work.

Ultimately, we want People's Economy to be run by and for communities experiencing injustice in the UK and know this requires deep organisational and cultural shifts.

Diversity, inclusion and anti-oppression (DIAO)

We will achieve these deep organisational and cultural shifts through our [DIAO policy](#), vision, goals and action plan which we will continue to review and update annually. This work outlines and holds us accountable to how we aim to

change internally across areas including the staff team, leadership, the Board, how we work with the communities we exist for, how we make partnerships, and how we are funded.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

We will design a framework to inform our test and learn approach, capture and share examples of successful practice, inform our reporting, and influence periodic reviews of our strategy.

We will endeavour to be non-extractive, monitoring only what is important and essential for learning, providing different ways for people to provide feedback and consider what resources people need to engage meaningfully in evaluation activities.

Capacity, resilience and financial sustainability

We will conduct business planning, reviewing the skills, capacity and resources the organisation needs to be able to deliver this strategy. We have identified a need to sustainably and intentionally scale in order to deliver our strategy.

This will require us building our fundraising and income generating capacity.



A five year roadmap

This roadmap outlines practically the work we will do to achieve the change we want to see over the next five years.

We expect that it will evolve as we learn, respond to the external context, and as the communities we work with play more of a role in our governance. We are sharing it now to communicate our current thinking about how our work will build cumulatively over the next five years, what we think it will take to create the change we want to see, and the level of ambition we have for the work. We will regularly hold space to reflect on this roadmap and update it so that it captures our latest collective thinking.

	2023-24 Launch and connect	2024-26 Scale, refine and evidence	2026-28 Deepen and spread
Strand One & Two	<p>Develop new connections and community partnerships, with a regional focus of deepening our place-based work in London, Wales and Birmingham.</p> <p>Support 400 changemakers to connect their experiences and change work to the economy</p> <p>Deliver in-depth learning journeys for 100 changemakers new to economic change work.</p> <p>Develop infrastructure to signpost and support changemakers to take action on the economy.</p> <p>Support regional community and civil society economic justice alliances in Birmingham and Wales.</p> <p>Scope opportunities for Strand Two work influencing government, media and the new economy movement.</p>	<p>Continue our work in London, Wales and Birmingham. Establish strategic connections in new regions.</p> <p>Scale support for changemakers to connect their experiences and change work to the economy.</p> <p>Scale delivery of in-depth learning journeys for changemakers new to economic change work.</p> <p>Develop infrastructure to connect changemakers who can support each other to create economic change across different regions and issues.</p> <p>Support the launch of a regional community and civil society economic justice alliance in London and continue to support ongoing alliances in Birmingham and Wales.</p> <p>Agree priorities and begin Strand Two work.</p>	<p>Deliver place-based work in at least six regions across the UK.</p> <p>Offer national programmes for changemakers based in regions we aren't working in.</p> <p>By the end of five years, have supported 9,000 changemakers to connect their experiences and change work to the economy.</p> <p>By the end of five years, have delivered in-depth learning journeys for 1,000 changemakers new to economic change work.</p> <p>Support the launching of regional community and civil society economic justice alliances in new regions and support ongoing alliances in Birmingham, London and Wales.</p> <p>Deepen Strand Two work, review learning, communicate change as examples of what is possible.</p>
Strand Three	<p>Launch our new name and strategy.</p> <p>Expand the core staff team and build a pool of supportive freelancers.</p> <p>Experiment with governance arrangements that are accessible, inclusive and accountable to the communities we work with.</p> <p>Update diversity, inclusion and anti-oppression vision, goals and action plan.</p> <p>Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for our programmes and Theory of Change.</p>	<p>Continue to expand the core staff team, build access points to become staff for communities the organisation works with.</p> <p>Agree governance arrangements that ensure the organisation is run by and for the communities it works with.</p> <p>Review progress on and update the diversity, inclusion and anti-oppression action plan.</p> <p>Refine, build and share evidence for our Theory of Change.</p>	<p>Consolidate the core staff team, deepening representation and connection with the communities our organisation works with.</p> <p>Review our governance arrangements and culture to deepen the ways in which the organisation is run by and for the communities it works with.</p> <p>Review progress on and update diversity, inclusion and anti-oppression action plan.</p> <p>Refine and share evidence for our Theory of Change.</p>



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