

# A STEADY STATE ECONOMY

## VISION

**A steady state economy is characterized by a stable population and by consumption patterns at or below carry capacity of the environment.**

**It is an economy where development and growth is socially just and not ecologically destructive. It constrains current and future use of non-renewable physical resources, but allows non-physical stocks (e.g. knowledge) to grow indefinitely**

## WHAT HAS TO CHANGE?

- National and global reliance on current economic growth models of maximising GDP. Progress measured by indicators of well being, health and happiness.
- Wealth would be more fairly redistributed locally and globally, the range of income inequality would be limited.
- Social and environmental costs would be included in the market price which will inevitably lead to reduced consumption levels
- Good democratic practices including well financed and effective local government.
- Corporations and financial institutions would be regulated in the interests of stakeholders not shareholders
- Control over our money supply would be returned to governments
- Globalisation, which encourages high growth models and exploitation of natural resources, would be curtailed

## WHAT IS STOPPING CHANGE?

Corporate power including concentrated control of the media

Modern value systems – beliefs that development equates with growth and increased production and consumption

Unequal global development which involves over-consumption of the world's natural non-renewable resources by rich countries and environmental degradation and poverty in the global south.

## WHO HAS TO CHANGE?

Economists need to incorporate environmental costs into their theoretical models

Governments need to make decisions and laws based on indicators of well being

Corporations need to consider alternative models of organization production

People need to reassess their value systems

## ADVOCATES FOR CHANGE

IRELAND:

Feasta [www.feasta.org](http://www.feasta.org).

An Taisce [www.antaisce.org](http://www.antaisce.org).

Transition Town

[transitiontownsireland.ning.com](http://transitiontownsireland.ning.com)

UK:

New economics foundation [www.neweconomics.org](http://www.neweconomics.org)

USA:

Centre for Advancement of the Steady State Economy [www.steadystate.org](http://www.steadystate.org)

Germany: Attac movement

France: Decroissance movement

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# THE COLLAPSE SCENARIO

## VISION

**Our modern religion is based on individualism and consumption; with worship of the gods of technology, money and the markets. The economic system that supports this maximises one measure above all others, Gross Domestic Product. If global GDP doesn't grow by about 1 to 5 % each year the global economy will collapse. This growth in consumption is coupled to a growth in energy use. Our reserves of cheap fossil fuel energy that have powered growth are dwindling. From now on energy; whether it will be fossil fuel, nuclear or renewable; will be increasingly expensive and will not sustain growth.**

## WHAT HAS TO CHANGE?

Nothing: because nothing we do will make the growth society continue. The question is not what we do to achieve change; but how we adapt to the inevitable change, to survive, and to prosper.

In this sense, we must change what we eat, how we stay warm, what we learn, and how we plan for old age.

Rather than reform or revolution, we need a religious reformation, where we change how we measure value, and how we interact socially.

## WHAT IS STOPPING CHANGE?

The problem is that the growth economy is a bubble. If we don't have growth for a couple of years the bubble bursts and the entire system collapses.

Any reform that doesn't affect growth ignores the fundamental problem; while any reform that affects growth is opposed as soon as it is effective.

This raises questions about the feasibility of democratic change: as soon as the bubble is recognised panic will burst it.

## WHO HAS TO CHANGE?

Existing institutions cannot change, so citizens and communities must change their lifestyles and put their faith in some new vision.

## ADVOCATES FOR CHANGE

Anyone who sees the absurdity or injustice of conspicuous consumption.

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# BASIC INCOME

## VISION

**A Basic Income is an income that is granted to every person on an unconditional basis without any means test or work requirement. It recognises the right of every person to a share of the resources in society and that everyone has the right to meaningful work and to have sufficient income to live life with dignity.**

**Basic Income offers an alternative paradigm whose understanding of work recognises a wide range of work that is not paid employment. Basic Income also offers a simple, equitable, fair and transparent income distribution system which would make real progress towards eliminating income poverty.**

## WHAT HAS TO CHANGE?

Income tax credits and social welfare payments would be replaced by a Basic Income payment except for payments made in exceptional situation e.g. disability. A Basic Income removes poverty traps and unemployment traps and ensures that taking up a paid job or working an extra hour is always worthwhile. Assumptions would also have to change. A job alone is no guarantee that a person's income is sufficient to escape poverty for example. Unpaid work would be recognised and supported.

## WHAT IS STOPPING CHANGE?

Basic income requires a sense of solidarity and commitment to the common good. Currently, these are not very strong. The cost of introducing a Basic Income system is viable but many politicians and policy makers ignore the evidence. Officials in the Department of Finance have actively resisted moves in this direction for, apparently, ideological reasons. Claims that Basic Income would impact negatively on work and employment ignore the value of unpaid work done in the home, community and wider society.

## WHO HAS TO CHANGE?

Policy makers, politicians, Government officials and the general public need to analyse the evidence fairly and make evidence-based decisions.

## ADVOCATES FOR CHANGE

**GLOBAL:**  
BIEN and 17 national organisations promoting Basic Income across the world [www.basicincome.org](http://www.basicincome.org)

**LOCAL:**  
BIEN Ireland - Social Justice Ireland [www.socialjustice.ie](http://www.socialjustice.ie)

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# RADICAL REGULATION

## VISION

**Radical regulation involves new tariffs, levies and limits to cut down on pollutants and the use of non-renewable materials.**

**Pollutants include climate-altering gases such as carbon dioxide and methane. Non-renewable resources include packaging made from materials which cannot be recycled. The use of products like steel and aluminium is minimised because they take a lot of energy to manufacture or recycle.**

**The rate of acquisition and disposal (sometimes called product throughput) would fall through higher prices and rationing and the human impact on the environment would lessen.**

**Radical regulation would extend as far as incentives to have smaller families given that the earth cannot sustain its current population with its stock of resources.**

## WHAT HAS TO CHANGE?

Regulatory measures are needed. The plastic bag tax is one example. A charge on aggregates coming from quarries would have helped arrest the housing bubble. There is currently a landfill levy but a charge on material entering incinerators is needed. Water charges are due to be introduced over and above a free household allowance. Rationing is needed. It is arguably a fairer form of regulation as it does not depend on ability to pay. Some cities, for example, already only allow cars with certain number plates access the centre on given days, while other cities charge for access.

All of these measures reduce production and consumption, while making re-use, conservation and recycling more attractive. Radical regulation is sometimes described as a green tax shift. Instead of paying as we earn, we pay as we "burn" or consume.

## WHAT IS STOPPING CHANGE?

Companies that benefit from un-levied pollution and the use of non-renewable resources provide a great deal of employment. They also contribute to political parties and so exercise influence over the decision-making process.

## WHO HAS TO CHANGE?

Greater action on the part of citizens is required. Not enough pressure is currently being placed upon politicians, political parties and administrators so that they impose higher costs on pollutants and non-renewable resources.

## ADVOCATES FOR CHANGE

The environmental organisations and campaign groups that work in this area can be good conduits for change. They need to be renewed with new members. See [www.ien.ie](http://www.ien.ie) to find out more.

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# TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION

## VISION

**New inventions will ease our burden on the planet. Many such advocates believe technological innovation is all we need. Others suggest this element is one part of any new model. Lower resource use can often involve using very simple or even older technologies such as cycling and organic farming for example. Innovations in these like fold-up bikes and herbal treatments for animal ailments can be invaluable but changes tend to stem from workplaces rather than research labs.**

## WHAT HAS TO CHANGE?

Universities need to help industry research new products like electric cars and biofuels. Consumers then take up these new innovations and the environmental burden decreases with mass adoption. However the introduction of new innovations in richer counties often fails to yield any net reduction in the use of resources. The situation is better in poorer countries where simple changes, linked to cooking and lighting in particular, have reduced resource use and improved living standards.

## WHAT IS STOPPING CHANGE?

Innovations often take many years to come through from prototype to mass adoption. We also don't know if they will deliver. First generation biofuels such as corn ethanol have been proven to cause more greenhouse gas emissions than traditional motor fuels for example. Companies which are dominant in their fields are often hostile to change. Oil exploration firms, for example, don't want to see solar panels capture a big slice of the energy market. The same can be said of car manufacturers in relation to a greater use of bikes or electric bikes.

## WHO HAS TO CHANGE?

Consumers and businesses are expected to embrace these new products. However it is not clear that innovation will reduce resource use and emissions if it is not accompanied by regulatory measures which ensure, first, that new innovations actually reduce resource use and emissions, and second, that new innovations replace rather than supplement existing technologies.

## ADVOCATES FOR CHANGE

Entrepreneurs are the primary advocates for change. Wind energy companies and electric car-makers for example have secured special tariffs or subsidies to enable their products gain a foothold in the market. In poorer countries it is typically NGOs or non-profit initiatives that install low energy, low-polluting cooking and lighting innovations in homes and schools.

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# ESTABLISHING A NEW VALUE BASE

## VISION

**An economy for society can only be developed through decision making, economic strategy and policy making that reflect new values of equality, environmental sustainability and participation. Equality requires a more balanced distribution of the wealth in society. Environmental sustainability demands reduced emissions and resource use and better protection of ecosystems. Participation involves full employment and broad involvement in decision making.**

## WHAT HAS TO CHANGE?

Educational establishments need to operate in a manner that respects equality, environmental sustainability and participation and to enable critical enquiry by students of the implications of these values for the economic system. Reporting on the economy needs to examine issues from the perspective of these values. Research and academic enquiry in the field of economics need to examine and innovate from the perspective of these values. Civil society organisations need to popularise and advocate for these values

## WHAT IS STOPPING CHANGE?

There is an absence of popular support for the values of equality, environmental sustainability and participation. Most people, for example, don't vote for these values. Most politicians do not espouse these values. Such values offer little electoral reward. More specific and immediate concerns dominate political debate and action. Those who hold economic interests, vested in the current economic system, use their influence to prevent significant policy change based on equality, environmental sustainability and participation.

## WHO HAS TO CHANGE?

People need to value and claim an economic system based on equality, environmental sustainability and participation. Civil Society needs to build a united and effective force to promote and advocate for these values. Politicians need to assess all policies for their ability to advance these values.

## ADVOCATES FOR CHANGE

Claiming our Future –  
[www.claimingourfuture.ie](http://www.claimingourfuture.ie)

Feasta – [www.feasta.org](http://www.feasta.org)

Irish Environmental Network –  
[www.ienv.ie](http://www.ienv.ie)

Social Justice Ireland  
[www.socialjustice.ie](http://www.socialjustice.ie)

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# EMPOWERING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

## VISION

**A new localism that empowers communities with control over their own wellbeing, in a world of converging resource and ecological constraints.**

**A new localism involves creating an attractive environment for all generations. It aims to provide meaningful work and community participation for all. It seeks to maximise the level of food, energy and wellbeing services generated by local networks. It is based on taking an equitable share of global resources**

## WHAT HAS TO CHANGE?

- The level of global resource consumption in use of water land and energy
- Inequitable access to nutrition between different parts of the world
- Generation of climate change and other adverse impacts for the next generation
- Social and economic models based on growth in global resource consumption
- The expectation that child and care of older people, health and education can be funded by further economic growth and debt generation
- The political consensus based on delivery of short term economic targets, disregarding long term impacts

## WHAT IS STOPPING CHANGE?

Our individual and collective failure to recognise that current economic growth models are incompatible with an equitable global society or maintaining a stable climate on a finite planet  
Global trade agreements which fuel resource consumption and pass the cost of greenhouse gas and other adverse impacts onto the next generation.

## WHO HAS TO CHANGE?

Each of us need to recognise that our lives and lifestyles should not create adverse impacts on others across the world, or on all of us in the future.

## ADVOCATES FOR CHANGE

Individuals and communities working to create a new localism in managing food, energy and care

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# JOB GUARANTEE: TOWARDS FULL EMPLOYMENT

## VISION

**An economy geared towards broader society needs to provide sufficient employment. Unemployment, underemployment and youth unemployment are threatening to undermine our economic future and destroy the livelihoods of a generation.**

**The government needs to step in and plug the gap as the private sector is unable to hire due to a shortfall of spending power in the economy. Government works projects can target various needs that the private sector has been unable to address. This government employment will boost domestic spending power and help get the private sector competitive and back on its feet.**

## WHAT HAS TO CHANGE?

The public debate - Austerity is not the way forward. Sluggish growth and high unemployment over the past three years has shown austerity to be ineffective.

Government attitude - Policymakers must realise that they are not impotent in the face of these problems.

Ireland's vision of itself - The country needs to think in new terms. We can no longer rely wholly on the private and foreign sectors to achieve our collective goals.

## WHAT IS STOPPING CHANGE?

Ireland still operates in a stagnant economic paradigm. The neoliberal model of restricting government intervention in the economy in order to facilitate a 'hands off' attitude to the private sector has failed. Many in media and policy-circles realise this but are unaware of alternative approaches to promoting economic growth.

Innovative policy measures like the Jobs Guarantee will show that the power to push Ireland forward already rests in the hands of the Irish government. They simply need to discover what they can do.

## WHO HAS TO CHANGE?

Economics commentators that missed the bubble and have not re-examined their thinking have no business in lecturing us on the way forward.

Politicians need to shake off the idea that their role in society is simply to facilitate the 'free market' operating. They need to play an active role in channelling Ireland's economic potential.

## ADVOCATES FOR CHANGE

Feasta – [www.feasta.org](http://www.feasta.org)  
Irish Environmental Network – [www.ienn.ie](http://www.ienn.ie)

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# BAIL OUT THE PUBLIC NOT THE BANKS

## VISION

Central banks would create non-debt money by giving every adult a voucher equal to the average amount of household debt. This voucher can be used either to pay down debts or, for those not in debt, to pay for energy efficiency or other green investment.

The latter element is to 'pay down our ecological debts'. Otherwise today's children will pay with climate change and the hardship of living in a society that has exhausted its cheap fossil fuel reserves without developing alternatives.

## WHAT HAS TO CHANGE?

The monetary policies of the EU, the European Central Bank and Ireland would have to change in order to prioritise the welfare of current and future citizens hit by financial crisis now and to be hit by climate change later.

This change needs to be implemented in place of pursuing the interests of their banks. It would require an acknowledgement that these policy tools are valid and are required to avert economic depression and to prevent climate catastrophe.

## WHAT IS BLOCKING CHANGE?

The European Central Bank is constitutionally prohibited from pursuing these policies.

Cancelling personal debts and paying for green investment would be seen as the ultimate heresy of 'monetizing' failed assets (loans). This would be deemed to threaten inflation in order to rescue debtors and paying for political purposes. However, current arrangements are breaking down anyway and the danger is economic depression not inflation.

## WHO HAS TO CHANGE?

The media, public and academics need to understand the issues, become active and press change on governments.

## ADVOCATES FOR CHANGE

The emerging global "Occupy" movement

Alternative thinkers in the blogosphere, for example

[http://www.feasta.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Deficit\\_easing\\_RD.pdf](http://www.feasta.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Deficit_easing_RD.pdf)

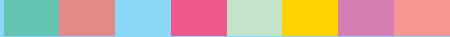
and <http://www.feasta.org/2011/10/16/debt-cancellation-without-chaos-a-programme-for-the-occupy-movement/>

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# OTHER KEY ELEMENTS



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