

# Recovering Community, episode 5

## **Title:**

The Wellbeing Economy: rethinking traditional economic structures to benefit people and planet

## **Short description:**

Anne Kerr is joined by her colleague Professor Gerry McCartney to discuss the wellbeing economy. They talk to political economist and advocate Dr Katherine Trebeck to explore the wellbeing economy movement, its ethos and vision. And Gerry visits one of Glasgow's longest running workers co-ops: Greencity Wholefoods to meet Leigh and Babs, and see the wellbeing economy in action

## **Medium description:**

What does it take to reconfigure our traditional capitalist economic structures so that people, communities and the environment come before profit? That's the question at the heart of the wellbeing economy movement and the subject of today's episode.

Gerard McCartney practiced as a GP and trained as an economist before his current role as Professor of Wellbeing Economy at the University of Glasgow. Gerry's work explores the connections between health outcomes, community, and our working and living environments.

Gerry and Anne talk to Dr Katherine Trebeck, a political economist and wellbeing economy advocate who co-founded the Wellbeing Economy Alliance. Katherine has been at the heart of the wellbeing economy movement in Scotland and explains the changes that governments and organisations can make to enable a different, more sustainable economic model.

And Gerry travels to the east end to see just how successfully the wellbeing economy can work in practice. He meets Babs and Leigh from Green City Wholefoods, one of Glasgow's longest running workers' co-ops, where each member of staff earns the same salary, shares the profits and decisions are taken collectively.

For more information:

<https://katherinetrebeck.com/>

<https://www.greencity.coop/>

<https://weall.org/scotland>

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/socialpolitical/staff/gerardmccartney/>

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new interview duration is 20:32

## **Anne**

Hello and welcome to Recovering Community, the podcast about community: what it means, how it's formed, and how it can be rebuilt.

I'm Anne Kerr, from School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Glasgow, and today we're talking about the Wellbeing Economy

And to do that, I'd like to introduce you to my colleague Professor Gerry McCartney, hi Gerry, thanks for joining us

**Gerry McCartney** Hi Anne

**Anne:** Gerry you've worked in Public Health and know a lot about how how people's wellbeing; how long they live, how sick they get is not just a matter of genetics, or individual choices or luck, it's to do with the communities they live in, isn't it?

**Gerry McCartney** Absolutely Anne, so we talk about the social determinants of health and wellbeing and that includes things like the economy, how using transport, the jobs that people have, so it all matters when it comes to people's health and wellbeing.

**Anne Kerr:** TWe'll be going into those issues in more depth with you shortly, but first, I'd like to introduce you to Katherine Trebeck.

Katherine is a co-founder of the Wellbeing Economy Alliance. She also set up its Scottish hub, WEALL Scotland and is really at the forefront of changing the conversation about what the economy is for.

I began by asking Katherine, what *is* the wellbeing economy

## **Katherine Trebeck**

So for me, the idea of a well being economy is essentially flipping on its head, how we understand the role of the economy, and its relationship to society and to our planetary health. And traditionally, in the last few years, the last few decades, even, often, when people think about the economy, the objective has been to grow the economy bigger and bigger. And often that's measured by Gross Domestic Product, either seen as an objective in its own right, just automatically assuming that that's a good thing, or out of an assumption that if we grow the economy bigger, all else that we want, will automatically follow from that. And yet, the reality is, we have plenty of evidence that all else doesn't

automatically lead to poverty reduction to dignified lives to quality jobs to planetary health. And so the well being economy is about asking some harder questions about the role of the economy, thinking about perhaps even repositioning it as in service of higher order goals that we've described, perhaps as social justice on a healthy planet and saying the economy should not be seen as a goal in its own right, that is something that needs to be designed, and structured and purposed in a way to deliver what people in Planet really need. It's essentially about making sure the economy serves humanity rather than the other way around.

### **Anne Kerr**

And in terms of community, as you know, this series is about recovering community, recovering the idea of community but also communities in recovery after periods of blight and neglect. What does the well being economy bring to that?

### **Katherine Trebeck**

I mean, if you look at the way the economy has treated individuals and communities over the last few decades, it's essentially seen human beings as what I describe as factors of production, you're almost treated as just in time inventory, literally, on demand at the click of an app, as we see with the gig economy jobs. And that has come with a whole lot of damaging effects, we see people feeling disconnected from each other and not feeling hopeful about their futures, feeling stressed, feeling they don't have time to do what's most important to them, feeling anxious about their ability to put food on the table for their, their family. If we look at the root causes of that we can find ourselves facing how the economy is structured, who's winning and who's losing out of it. And so that's about saying, what sort of economy do we need for communities to thrive? So this is questions about what sort of businesses need to operate in localities? How do we design the physical structure of our neighborhoods? What sort of public transport is about, is local services affordable, accessible, designed in a way that people want and need. Is there spaces for people to hang out together just to be communities? Or are they just pushed towards more and more consumption orientated activities? Do people have enough time? So what sort of jobs are they able to get? Are there jobs that they have to work three or four jobs just to put food on the table? Or are there jobs that enable them to balance other priorities in their lives? So all those questions relate to how the economy is structured? And they all impinge on the ability of communities to thrive and to create the sort of futures that they want.

### **Anne Kerr**

And does that change the way that communities engage with economic priorities and development in their locale? Or even, even wider afield? If you think about community in a broader sense, are we asking communities to do more to make the wellbeing economy a success?

### **Katherine Trebeck**

I think it's almost about putting communities at the heart of economic decisions and economic decision making and making sure that the economy serves what communities want, rather than the other way around. So things like participatory budgeting is a really good example of the sort of practical ways of putting people at the forefront of decision making around, around the economy. And so it's really about sort of returning and realigning economies with what people and planet need.

**Anne Kerr**

One of the issues with community involvement at that, at that level is who represents the community? And how to make sure that it's diverse and inclusive, have you got any thoughts on that?

**Katherine Trebeck**

Yes, it's one of the challenges that often when, say consultation, processes or decision making fora opened up and set up, often the people who are at the forefront of those conversations are those who are in a position to be at the front of the queue. So they have spare time, for example, to engage, they have the confidence to make their voice heard, they have the communication style that's familiar to people running a consultation exercise, for example, there's all sorts of hidden barriers as well, you know, if you can't get childcare, if you can't get transport, it's going to be very hard to take part in those dialogues. And, and and let's, you know, there are dialogues out there, but they're often not open enough. And they don't often don't take account of those barriers to participation and engagement. And I think the more that people are attentive to the reality of people's lives, the more they make the effort to go to where people are, rather than passively expecting people to come to them, the more we'll start to close some of those gaps and have a richer variety of voices and ideas and expertise at the heart of those conversations.

**Anne Kerr**

And we do also have a history of initiatives where people probably do feel on balance that they weren't listened to. And that was one of the things I wanted to talk to you about too, the... some communities in some areas where there is an ongoing long term challenge with with poverty or with inequality have been consulted a lot, by lots of different agencies over quite a long period of time, and they've become a bit beleaguered by being asked to be involved in and maybe a bit cynical about what the outcome might be. Do you think there's a danger for wellbeing economy that would repeat itself again?

**Katherine Trebeck**

I mean, I think if consultation is done flippantly, if it's done insincerely, if it's done just to tick a box and to be able to say that consultation happened, if it's done not to actually set the agenda, but just to ask for a bit of input on some of the some of the details, and if it's done in a way that doesn't recognize that people's time is precious. I mean, I think it's it's not good enough to go out and ask people for say, a couple of hours of their time to input into a conversation around a...say an academic research project or a policy dialogue, for example. I mean, two hours of people's time is not an inconsiderable amount of their day. And so I think we should be recognizing the imbalance of resources and power that's inherent in that, I think we should recognize that people giving up that time should be compensated. So perhaps remunerating people are finding other ways to recognise the gift of their time that they've they've contributed. And I think it's those measures, it's how we do it, that I think will matter. I think also people will see through insincere consultation that they know won't make a difference. And I think that one of the key aspects that I think Scotland and the policy world and the academic world can get a lot better at is circling back to communities and saying, Okay, here's what we heard from you. Here's why. And here's the difference that that made,

**Anne Kerr**

and government too have got barriers that they've got to overcome to facilitate this too, I mean government at all sorts of different levels. And one of the criticisms is that they're sometimes too tentative, and they're not prepared to take risks as much as we would perhaps like to see that big, that bigger change and that it's too incremental, and it's too rooted in cost benefit analysis that are, that are based on old economic models. How do, how do we get from there to a more radical, challenging agenda for wellbeing economy?

### **Katherine Trebeck**

I think that's a great question. And I love the original meaning of the word radical was about getting to the root causes of a problem and I think that is where Scotland needs to go. So often, the debate around social policy in Scotland is stuck around what I describe as putting sticking plasters over a problem. We celebrate when we slightly redistribute from richer to poorer. Lately, the big discussion has been around increasing child poverty payments as if that is a success in itself. I think the fact that we're having to pay child poverty payments is a dire indictment of the way the economy is operating.

And so, in a way, I think it's time that Scotland raised its gaze and was more ambitious than just putting sticking plasters on the current problems. What we need to be doing is not just playing whack a mole, but look at the machine that's generating so much of the damage. And that comes back to how the economy is structured, who's winning? And who's losing out of that? It's a question not just about, in a way, servicing the problems of that economy paying to the to treat the collateral damage of the current system, but actually looking at questions of power of ownership of those deep rooted inequalities. And so that conversation requires government to operate in quite different ways. It requires government to team up across departments across silos to recognize the interconnected nature of problems, but also, the multiple benefits that you can achieve. When you really think more broadly, it requires the budgets to be long term and policymaking to be long term, rather than year on year. And it requires us to think very differently about questions of, you know, who is owning the businesses, what sort of business models do we have in an economy? How are they designed? What's even the very measure of progress of the economy? So these are quite fundamental questions. I don't think Scotland is by any means incapable of asking these questions. And it's, I think, really healthy, that there are these discussions happening. I don't think we're seeing yet, enough initiatives going far enough and we're certainly not seeing them joined up in a way. So there's lots of nice practice that we could point to, that illustrate the sort of changes that we would need to build a wellbeing economy. But they're not yet connected up in a way that adds up to a fundamental shift in the way the economy operates. We need a policy regime that orientates towards those sorts of activities, rather than those that are counter to what people and planet need.

### **Anne Kerr**

Gerry it was really inspiring to talk with Katherine about how to make a positive difference to our social and economic lives by focusing on what works for communities and really keeping them at the centre of those discussions and initiatives.

**Gerry McCartney** So another important aspect Anne I think, is about the nature of work and how that's changed over the last 10 or 20 years. Do you have any views about precarious work, for example?

**Anne Kerr** I think it's a running theme in what Katherine was pointing to really about how the kinds of work that's on offer these days doesn't actually give people a decent wage to live on, but it's also...creates an incredible amount of insecurity which makes it difficult for families, individuals and communities to thrive. But there are alternative ways of working it, as we know, so I guess my question to you would be could you give us any examples of better ways of working that are actually part of what a wellbeing economy would look like?

**Gerry McCartney** so there's a great example of the wellbeing economy in action- if you like - in the East End of Glasgow. Green City Wholefoods is a wholesaler co-op that was founded by 4 friends in 1978 any they just wanted to make whole foods available to everyone  
But today it's a thriving, ethical business. Last year indeed, their turnover was £9million  
Everyone at Green City earns the same salary, workers vote on the running of the company and it plays a great part in the lives of many of Scotland's most successful sustainable producers and businesses, from farms to coffee shops

**Babs MacGregor** this is the main warehouse at Green City, and here is where we keep most of our fast moving goods, so as you can see lots of.....

**Gerry McCartney** So I went down to Dennistoun, to meet Leigh Galletly who works in Green City Wholefoods' HR department, and Babs McGregor, who works in the warehouse.

**Babs MacGregor** This is where I work, 4 days a week, as a receiver on good in, but also you'll see around me people picking, so they're be going on goods out

**Gerry McCartney** Babs has been at Green City for 22 years, and I asked her how the co-op has evolved over that time....

**Babs MacGregor** We have, I suppose increased rather organically, I suppose over the years. We started off with four members, and now in 2022, we have 55. So that's maybe not massive growth, but for us, that growth has been organic and it's moved at the pace it's needed to move at to meet the needs of the business, and the individuals considering the members of the business. It's a business that's run and controlled by its members. We have no distant shareholders who basically benefit from the sweat of our labour, and we put back surplus into developing the company.

**Gerry McCartney**

Brilliant. And Leigh you were talking about, you'd worked in other places before. And you've come to work in a worker's co-op now. What's the similarities and differences of working in a place like this?

**Leigh Galletly**

I think the similarities are obviously, we function, operationally like many other businesses, we have similar departments, we have to make the same types of decisions, the differences: the non hierarchical

nature of our workplace, so people do have to be self managing to a certain degree, we're all accountable to each other. We do have department managers, but they are elected for the co-op by the coop to work for the co-op. So we always say manager is a role, not a status. And they sort of coordinate, speak for each department at meetings and things. But for bigger decisions, we use the full members. But I would say the largest difference, possibly, is a sense of freedom. Freedom over your own working life, freedom to feed into decisions. And even though we have to collectively agree to make our decisions, and it might not always go the way that you want it to go, you've at least had an input into the process and had your voice heard.

### **Gerry McCartney**

So you can probably hear in the background that we're outside the warehouse at the moment. And you were talking earlier on about some of the aspects of working here are quite different from other workplaces. So Bab you were talking about the choice of music, do you want to tell us just a bit about what it's like working in the warehouse.

### **Babs Nee Gregor**

The warehouse is the arts faculty of Green Dity, that's how I would term to the warehouse. It's been a real cultural learning experience actually working in Green City over the past 22 years. For me, I've learned so much just you know, culturally, as well, in the broader sense of culture. In a very physical kind of grinding job that warehousing can sometimes be, music is such a powerful force to keep you going. And it's really important that you've got the right music on for the right kind of work. So yeah, my musical tastes are a lot better. You know, I mean, that's what I think that's wonderful about a worker co-op is it's a way of life. It's a culture, actually. And it's a learning culture. You know, I think that kind of culture generates a lot more empathy and understanding than would necessarily find and more kinds of, shall I say, cutthroat businesses, you know,

### **Gerry McCartney**

So in this episode of the podcast, we're thinking about a wellbeing economy, and what that might mean and how we might get there. So some people describe a wellbeing economy as being about providing work that's fulfilling and people can enjoy and learn through it. But it's also about producing things that are of value and produce, you know, produce social goods, that don't damage the environment. What I'm picking up from you both today is this huge enthusiasm for working here. How do you recruit people? How do people come to work here? Do they stay a long time? What's the worker experience?

### **Babs MacGregor**

Well, maybe you could talk about recruitment?

**Leigh Galletly** Yeah, I mean, recruiting now we made a decision to try not use, we don't use recruitment agencies at all. So now we tend to advertise on our social media. So people who already follow us as a business, will then see that the jobs are available. And so you're attracting people who hopefully will have skills for that job, but are also interested in working in a co-op environment. As for longevity, and how long people stay, majority of people stay a very long time, our turnover is very low. A lot of people have been there for a very long time, which is great, because it's like a family. But then you do have other problems, maybe later on down the line of maybe an aging workforce, you know, once

everyone starts getting a bit older, so we're keen to keep growing, keep attracting people. And we're also keen to retain the people we have, and hopefully just organically, you know, as people retire or dropping hours, or days, maybe a little bit older. So that's enabling us to backfill those positions with other people. So that's creating a more rounded workforce, you know, at this point.

**Gerry McCartney**

So another feature, obviously, of workers co-op is that there isn't a big boss and a big owner, who's extracting profits from the system. So what does that mean for this community?

**Babs MacGregor**

If we make a profit, it would go into the pockets of the workers, if we do have a successful quarter, we get paid a dividend payment on top of our normal salary and additional money from that quarter and will be retained for developing the business itself.

**Gerry McCartney**

The model that you've created at Green City is so impressive, but clearly, the majority of Glasgow's economy is still operating in the traditional capitalist mode. What more could we do to encourage and support the creation of more worker's co-ops in the city?

**Babs MacGregor**

Well, Co-operatives Development Scotland could probably do a lot more than they're actually doing to support that. I think that their focus has been a lot on employee ownership, which isn't quite the same thing as worker co-op, you know, it's kind of worker co-op lite,

**Gerry McCartney**

What would you say the differences are?

**Babs MacGregor**

Well, I mean, an employee ownership, some place, say like, well, I'm thinking of maybe John Lewis and partners, partnerships, but it's not one member, one vote. This is a thing, every member at Green City has a vote. And most decision, you know, you need to have members, a certain majority a Green City has to pass before you know decisions are actually approved and can go ahead, whereas I think was employee ownership, employees will have certain rights. And I think that's far better than your usual capitalist model. But there's still not sufficient for me, still not enough. And I do think what's interesting, now, actually, on the ground, as you're seeing, actually coming through COVID, there are a lot of younger people starting off businesses, we've had a lot of wee bakeries coming on, on our customer base. You've got young people with vision and you've got young people with a desire to work but on their terms, so I do think that this is time we're really more help should be there from both Co-Ops, UK, the apex organisation, and Co-Op development Scotland,

**Leigh Galletly**

I'd like to... especially Babs was saying there about young people setting up their businesses. I've certainly noticed in some of the younger people, we have at Green City, they have moved so far away from sort of, if you want to call it a Thatcher model of work really hard, work really hard, get lots of



money, buy a house, do this, keep progressing, keep getting promoted to: yes, everyone needs a certain amount of money to live and money is still important. But that money is much less of a driving factor than their life and how they want to live their life. They would rather say for instance, work four days a week as opposed to five to have an extra day or flexibility, which does not mean they bring less to their work. In some ways. I think it means they bring more, because they are happy in their life. And they're happy with the balance that they've had. And I think that's really admirable. And something certainly that my generation and generations above, were not really told about those values. You know, the worker co-op model is still so alien to most people. Most people I speak to you don't know what it is they don't understand it. And when you try and explain it to them, they go well, how does that work? Well, how do you progress? How do you how do you move on, and they don't understand progressing unless it's in terms of a pay rise or, or a vertical, vertical promotion?

### **Gerry McCartney**

And obviously, it's a competitive global environment and global economy that we're working on and some people are very sceptical of workers co-ops Or different ways of running their economy. How do you manage to compete and find this niche to thrive as a business?

### **Babs MacGregor**

I think it's because, you know, over the years, we've really prioritised relationships with our customers. So it's not just we're not just talking about transactions here, we're talking about Green City as a relational business. So all these businesses, usually small wee independents initially, our initial customers were small independent health food stores. And basically the one of the main aims of Green City in the initially was basically to improve people's access to whole foods because they were quite hard to come by. Our business demographic has changed over the years. So now it incorporates restaurants, hotels, cafe bars, the growing plant based vegan movement. Glasgow's, I think we're the leading city in the UK for vegan food. So yeah, it's relationships building. That's what we're about and that's what our customers know about us. And you know, we're loved and we're trusted

### **Anne Kerr**

Gerry it sounds like you had a really terrific visit to Green City Wholefoods, could you just tell us about how felt when you came away from that visit?

### **Gerry McCartney**

You're right Anne, it was a truly inspiring visit, what Green City do is the embodiment of what we're thinking about in terms of a wellbeing economy. They provide fulfilling, happy work for people, good wages, they are the embodiment of economic democracy in action. They also have a supply chain that feeds Glasgow with healthy foods, they support ethical and ecological suppliers. And they frankly, hugely involved with the local community of Glasgow. They have links to existing campaigns and community organisations, they've got an active Gaelic learning set within they warehouse. And it just seemed to be a great fun place to be and to work. People were listening to their own music, there was lots of banter across the warehouse, people clearly got on and stayed there for a long time. So yeah, an awe inspiring example.

**Anne Kerr**

So it is a really good example of what the wellbeing economy can mean because it's about work and the nature of work, but it's also about planetary health and sustainability given that it's whole foods that is being produced and sold by the co-op. Do you think that means it's a really good example of this sort of radical hope that Katherine was talking about in her discussion of wellbeing economy?

**Gerry McCartney**

Absolutely, it's literally the embodiment of what, the kind of economy we need to build for the future. So it does achieve social outcomes, it is supporting people's health. It is achieving that move toward living within our planetary boundaries. But, on a more human level, it was just such a fun place to be around. People were chatting, people were having fun at work, there was great music playing in the warehouse, the sights and the smells and the banter that was present within the co-op was obvious for everybody to see. And it just looked like a great place to work and be, and it's also really connected into the local community to they have been building artist's studios for people to come and do recordings in some of the spare space that they had, they're involved in local community action, they're involved in other voluntary networks across the city like GalGael and so it's a real asset for the city that's built on community action and built on people making things as good as they can for themselves.

**Anne Kerr** well thanks so much Gerry for joining me today to talk about this. I think it's been a great set of discussions really about what a positive, community led or worker led recovery would mean. So certainly very clearly within the core theme of our podcast series Recovering Community.

**Gerry McCartney**

It's been my pleasure Anne, and thanks to Katherine Trebeck for her help with the podcast, and Babs and Leigh from Greencity who took time out to show us around Green City and to make this episode possible

**Anne Kerr**

Thanks Gerry, if you have any thoughts or feedback about this or any of our other episodes, you can find us on twitter @ U of G S P S, or you can find the School of Social and Political Sciences via the University of Glasgow website

And if you're enjoying the series, please do subscribe and share

I'm Anne Kerr, many thanks for listening to Recovering Community

**Gerry McCartney**

And I'm Gerry McCartney, you can find me on Twitter or on the University of Glasgow website

**Anne Kerr**

Thanks also to the staff in the School of Social and Political Sciences and the College of Social Sciences who helped with this project.

Recovering Community is produced by Freya Hellier.

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Save for later

**Gerry McCartney** 00:00

I want to introduce you to my colleague and friend Katherine Trebek. Katherine set up the well being economy Alliance many years ago and now works for the wellbeing, economy alliance's global arm; Katherine has been a leader in changing the conversation in Scotland about what the purpose of the economy is for, and how that affects the people and the planet that we live on.

**Katherine Trebeck** 00:24

I'm Katherine Trebek, I'm one of the cofounders of the well being economy Alliance, global organization. And also weall Scotland and I'm an advocate and I guess an agitator for economic system change.

**Anne Kerr** 00:36

Katherine, can you tell us what you mean by a well being economy.

**Gerry McCartney** 12:05

My name is Gerry McCartney, I'm a professor of wellbeing economy at the University of Glasgow. And we're here today in my home village of Lochwinnoch. Lochinnoch's about 20 miles southwest of Glasgow. It's mixed a village with a large council housing scheme and a very affluent are too; it was originally built as a as a weaving town. But today, it's more of a commuting town with people traveling in and out of Paisley and Glasgow, mostly to their work. We're here today to talk to my neighbor and friend, who we're going to call Jim today about his experience of living on social security within the West of Scotland context, and also about some of the responses that have happened in the village to help people through the financial crisis that we've seen over the last 10 years, including the creation of a community larder, which seeks to help people who are experiencing food poverty. Just like to introduce my neighbor and friend Jim who lives just down the road from me. So Jim, what what's changed over the last year or so, where the benefit system

**Jim** 13:05

The way it is now, if you miss appointments or if you even be cheeky to a member of staff, they can hit you with sanctions. It's no right the way they can do it.

**Gerry McCartney** 13:16

What happened to you?

**Jim** 13:18

The first one was an appointment, I got and I forgot all about it. And I phoned up and they were like that: NO NO, no listening. So I end up, I did, I get a bit angry back to them, shouting at them. And that was me. My second one that was when I got my second one.

**Gerry McCartney** 13:35

When you say your second one, your second what?

**Jim** 13:37

sanction.

**Gerry McCartney** 13:38

Okay.

**Jim** 13:39

And then the third one was ..., a letter got sent to that house and it actually went to a neighbour

**Gerry McCartney** 13:45

Okay,

**Jim** 13:46

and by the time I got it, it was a time after the appointment was meant to be anyway and I phoned up, they just weren't interested in listening, saying no, you just ignored it, you didn't think you were entitled to come. And that was me. I got another one.

**Gerry McCartney** 13:58

So what does that mean then for your money recently?

**Jim** 14:04

They keep most of it

**Gerry McCartney** 14:05

Okay, so do you get any money through the system now?

**Jim** 14:08

Yeah, we basically almost half of what you used to get

**Gerry McCartney** 14:12

Okay. And how long have they put you on this sanction for Jim?

**Jim** 14:17

six months but I thought it was only, I did think it was only 3 but it was 6. We've got six more weeks left.

**Gerry McCartney** 14:24

Okay, okay, good.

**Jim** 14:27

Trying my hardest not to lose the rag or anything. Because it's no a thing I'd wantae to go through again

**Gerry McCartney** 14:33

yeah, absolutely. So I know this is hard to talk about. But what's that mean then for making ends meet? Like since you've been sanctioned?

**Jim** 14:42

It's hard because you've got kids and they're asking to dae things. I've got tae dae withoot something else to let them get it. And as long as the weans get tae dae it, I don't really care.

**Gerry McCartney** 14:54

Yeah. So what other things have you done to cope at the moment? Is there anything in the village that...

**Jim** 15:02

Aye the food bank, that's been really, really good

**Gerry McCartney** 15:07

So how does that work? Down at the food bank

**Jim** 15:10

you just go round and they let you, you take whatever, certain things. I think it's up to 10 things or something and if you've got any money you can put a donation in

**Gerry McCartney** 15:21

is it been okay like dae folk look doon at you at all?

**Jim** 15:24

no, they're brilliant people doon there. Always come away fae it wi a laugh, they're really nice

**Gerry McCartney** 15:33

So just thinking about the system. So you talked about how the benefit system you thought it was wasn't working particularly well. What would you do to change things? And what about the policy around sanctions? I mean what what do you

**Jim** 15:48

I'd dae away wi it and try and find a different way of working with people. Where they actually had people that that actually knew who they were speaking about, and no somebody that had read it in a book that had never lived anything, and done anything

**Gerry McCartney** 16:06

You've obviously a really difficult time the last few months not having the money that you need. What's that meant for your ain health?

**Jim 16:15**

It's bad on you, it is, it's really bad on you. The toll that it does take on you, and it's they way you are... even, see myself sometimes, going to snap, like at the kid, and wee silly things, and it's nothing tae dae wi that, it's just cause of everything you're going through. You're thinking where am I gonnae get this from, where am I gonnae get that? How am I gonna dae this? How am I gonna dae that? And then you're getting what? Letters fae schools and trips are hundreds and hundreds of pounds. You just feel like breakin doon

**Gerry McCartney 16:46**

it's difficult to...are able to, like allow the kids to participate in all the things that their pals are doing?

**Jim 16:54**

sometimes, other times you gotta ask them what d'you wantae do? I know sometimes they say tae us, no dad I don't want to do that, can I do this? . But I know they're only saying that because they know I've no got any money tae dae it.

**Gerry McCartney 17:08**

yeah. Yeah. I remember you mentioning previously as well that sometimes the teachers have been a wee bit helpful. Some of the trips, do you wanna say a word about that?

**Jim 17:17**

Aye they're brilliant. There's a trip coming up and they're going away for a few days and one of my kids has actually been put on it, to participate. That really helped

**Gerry McCartney 17:29**

and that they're not having to pay for it, is that right? So so the the teachers are finding ways of subsidizing, kind of bending the rules a wee bit

**Jim 17:36**

And basically, it's a really good help. But it does take up a lot of pressure aff you aswell, wi things like that.

**Gerry McCartney 17:44**

Is there anything else apart from increasing the benefits or changing the sanctions that might help? You talked about food banks, Is there any other kind of practical help that people could offer?

**Jim 17:54**

If you can get help wi transport, help wi going places and dain things, whatever

**Gerry McCartney 17:59**

And what's the experience of transport, living here?

**Jim 18:02**

Oh it's bad, you've got one bus an hour. One bus an hour to go for your messages, everywhere you've got tae travel for miles

**Gerry McCartney** 18:10

Yeah. Why don't you get the messages, like in the village?

**Jim** 18:15

You'd need a bank loan

**Gerry McCartney** 18:18

So the prices are, different?

**Jim** 18:20

Aye, you dae use it because you don't want to end up sitting on the bus for half an hour there and half an hour back, just tae get milk

**Gerry McCartney** 18:26

So the the buses are only once an hour, are they expensive as well.

**Jim** 18:31

4.20 or something for a return

**Gerry McCartney** 18:35

So it's a big chunk o your benefit int it? So there's been some policies have been introduced recently to give youngsters free bus travel, has that made a difference.

**Jim** 18:47

Aye, I looked intae it, but you need to apply for it... they need a passport to apply. So you need tae buy a passport an a that first, tae apply for it

**Gerry McCartney** 18:58

Okay, so there's a barrier there, to...

**Jim** 19:01

There's always a catch to everything

**Gerry McCartney** 19:04

So sometimes even well intentioned policy, too many to actually get that in your hand. Yeah. Okay. Thank you, Jim. Yeah, I hope the end of the sanction will come soon for you and give you a bit of a steadier income soon enough. So thanks very much for the interview.