



Young Co-operators 2023 Conference

Date: Wed the 11th October 2023

Time 9.30 – 1.30

Venue: Girdwood Community Hub, Belfast

Conference Aims

The aims of this conference are:

- To raise awareness and understanding of the co-operative model and its benefits for society and young people.
- To inspire and empower young people to become co-operators, leaders and change-makers in their communities and beyond.
- To showcase and celebrate the achievements and innovations of co-operatives involving young people and addressing issues important to them.
- To facilitate networking and collaboration among young co-operators and other stakeholders from different sectors and backgrounds.
- To identify and address the challenges and opportunities for co-operatives in the current and future context.

Programme/Agenda

9.30 Registration with Tea and Coffee

10.15 Welcome by Co-op Alternatives (Tony, Chair)

10.20 Co-operative Alternatives: The next Ten Years (Tiziana)

10.30 Co-operatives solutions to issues of our time:

10.30 Housing crisis and a local solution – Jess and Scott, Belfast Students Housing Co-op

10.50 Tech Co-ops as Disrupters – Dessie, Rabble Co-op

11.10 Continued relevance of Co-ops to Young People – Bridget, Society of Co-operative Studies Ireland

11.30 Q&A

11.45 Coffee & Tea Break

12.00 Testimonials of young co-operators in Northern Ireland:

- Carrickfergus Community Greengrocer

12.15 Table discussions on

Challenges/opportunities for young people and the co-op movement in 2023

13.00 Plenary discussion

13.20 Conclusions

13.30 Lunch

Speakers Bios

Jess Craig - “Hi, I’m Jessica Craig and I’ve been a member of the student housing co-op since February this year and I was previously the president of Belfast Met’s Student Union and have been involved in lots of other activism in the Belfast area specifically within environmental and social justice issues. I would like to be involved with finding a co-operative, sustainable student housing solution in Belfast and hope that we will be able to find a property in the next few years so that this can happen”.

Dr Scott Jennings is an NHS Doctor and founded the Nottingham Student Housing Co-op – later the Inter Campus Co-operative Notts. He was Project Manager during creation of Student Co-op Homes the Federation of UK Student Housing Co-operatives, and acts as the current Society Chair. He is also also a Director of the Confederation of Co-operative Housing (CCH) and Co-operative Housing International (CHI). Alongside these roles he is also an active participant in the formation of a Pan-European Association of Student Housing Co-operatives. Scott was initially inspired by the then establishing Co-operatives in Edinburgh and Birmingham and their drives to address exploitative student rental markets and develop supportive student communities that are integrated with local communities.

Dessie Donnelly - Founder member of Rabble Co-op, Dessie has first-hand experience on what it means to set up a worker co-operative in recent years. Dessie is a campaigner and an activist who only recently developed an interest in tech. Rabble Co-op provides specialised technological services to voluntary, public and private organisations fulfilling a social purpose. The co-operative also promotes the use of technology, which respects, protects and progresses fundamental human rights.

Dr. Bridget Carroll is attached to the Centre for Co-operative Studies and Cork University Business School, University College Cork. Bridget is also the Chair of the Society of Co-operative Studies in Ireland. In recent years, the Society has embarked in a project to introduce co-operative studies in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools in Ireland. This resulted in a resource pack for teachers and educators who may want to introduce co-operatives enterprises in their course of studies to students. As an academic, her research interests include co-operative organisation and development, co-operative legislation, worker co-operatives and employee ownership. She lectures on the MSc Sustainable Development, Agri-food & Co-operatives, the BComm, BSc International Development and the MBA.

Sponsors/Supporters

This event is supported by the Social Enterprises and Co-operatives Programme of the Belfast City Council. The organisers are Co-operative Alternatives.



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