

# FOOD ETHICS COUNCIL

## Reflections on our work 2025/2026



# Welcome

Continuing last year's move towards sharing collective reflections in place of a traditional impact report, we invite you to delve into some of the key shifts, connections, insights and relationships the Food Ethics Council was part of from March 2025 to May 2026.

At a time of increasing turbulence and challenge for food systems everywhere, our work has tempered urgency with steadiness, countered assumptions through questioning, and celebrated a diversity of views, often from marginalised voices.

We aren't doing this work alone. We're hugely grateful for the many partners, funders and allies with whom we collaborate across the sector. Our reflections are for you as much as ourselves, as an invitation to reflect on ripples of change related to your own work.

Speaking of change, after months of careful work, we are delighted to also be able to share here with you fresh insights into new strategic directions for the Food Ethics Council moving forward, alongside an invitation to collaborate with us along the way.

We hope you find value in reading this and reflecting on it. As always, we welcome hearing from you with your own thoughts in response.

Our work is about **transforming** the discussion around **food and farming**, using **ethics** and **values** as our foundation to pave the way towards a **fair food system** that respects people, animals and the planet.



Food Ethics Council



## Our Council members

At the heart of the Food Ethics Council are its [Council members](#), many of whom are pictured above, alongside our staff team at our Away Day in Oxfordshire in May 2026.

Together they represent a broad spectrum of fields spanning the UK food system and beyond, including farming, food enterprise, grassroots community groups and academia.

This year we were delighted to welcome onto our Board and Council [Dr Pam Davis](#), who brings exceptional experience in fundraising and more, whilst also bidding a very fond farewell to longstanding Council member, and former Chair, [Patti Whaley](#).

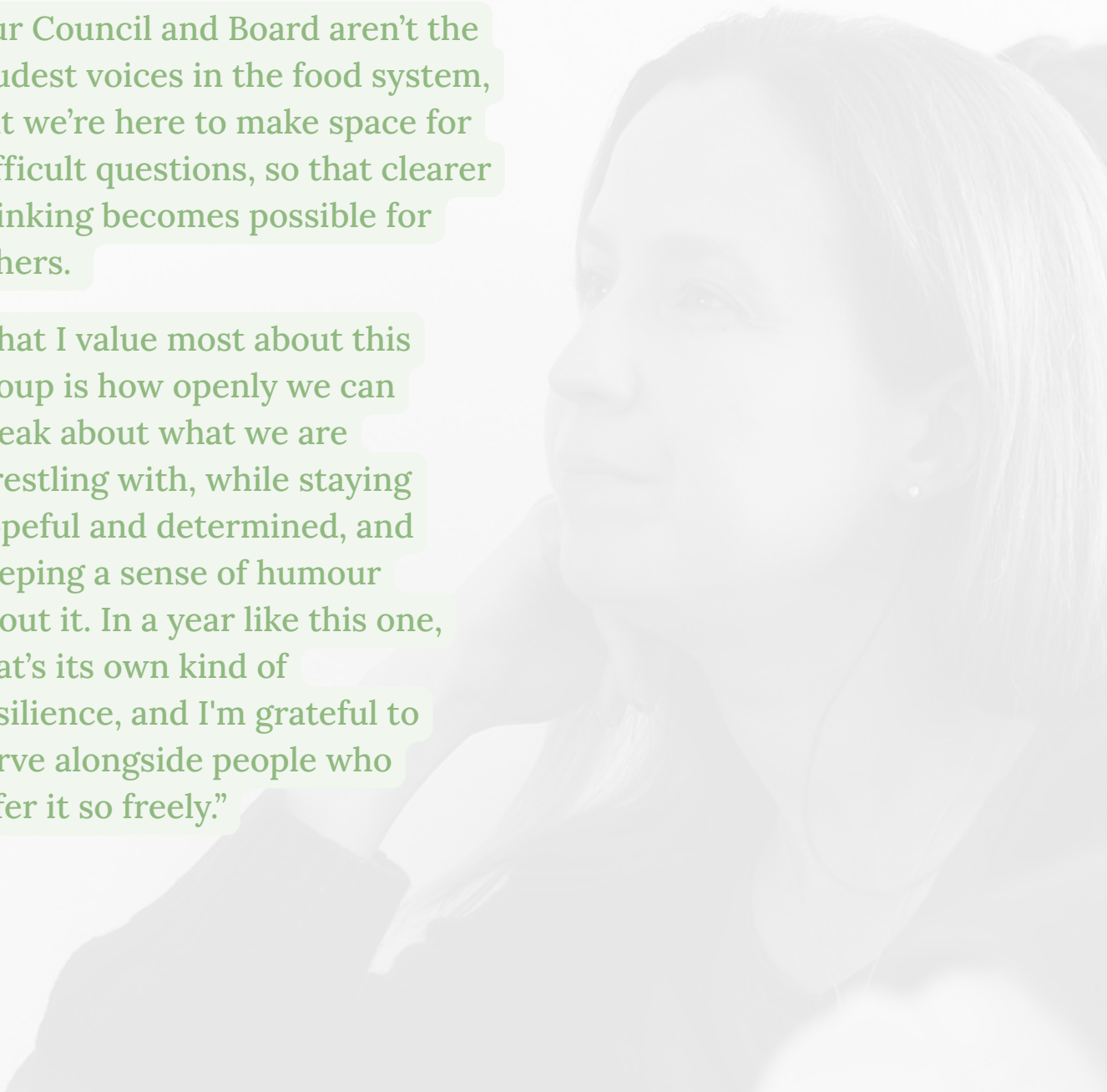
Our Council members represent the Food Ethics Council in a voluntary and personal capacity. They are amongst the leaders in their respective fields, lending their expertise, experience and critical perspectives in ways that sometimes challenge, often stretch, and always strengthen our collective work.

Amongst them sit our [Board of Trustees](#), who together steward the work of the Food Ethics Council as a registered charity. [Elta Smith](#) is our current rotating Chair. Elta shares her reflections below on working alongside her fellow Council members and Trustees.

“It has been a turbulent year to be doing this work. What I've valued most as Chair is seeing this Council confront that turbulence with steadiness and a stubborn willingness to keep asking the questions that matter most when the world feels so volatile. That's what being rooted in ethics looks like to me: the discipline of continually returning to asking who decides, who benefits, and who is left out.

Our Council and Board aren't the loudest voices in the food system, but we're here to make space for difficult questions, so that clearer thinking becomes possible for others.

What I value most about this group is how openly we can speak about what we are wrestling with, while staying hopeful and determined, and keeping a sense of humour about it. In a year like this one, that's its own kind of resilience, and I'm grateful to serve alongside people who offer it so freely.”



## Our team

From Northern Ireland to the south of England, our **small yet mighty team** works remotely across the UK, bringing together a dynamic range of experience, skills and interests.

The Food Ethics Council staff grew to four in May 2026, with the addition of a dedicated Communications Lead role alongside our existing Director, Deputy Director and Project and Office Coordinator - all working part-time.

This increase in capacity comes at a critical and exciting juncture, fresh from a recent refresh of organisational strategy and narrative for the Food Ethics Council, bolstered by valuable input from Nadeen Haidar and Anna Cura, as well as our Council members.

We have ambitions to grow our team further, enabling our work to achieve even greater reach and even deeper impact. For now, meet the current team below and read on to explore their individual reflections.



“Our Moving Together ceili and our ORFC 2026 workshop, whilst different, were unified by a collective energy, passion and commitment to develop more relational, human connections between food system funders and grantholders. It’s hard to be optimistic in times of multiple crises, but I’m galvanised by the unofficial motto of the Food Ethics Council that we must have hope with teeth. Not a passive hope for change, but the active hope that our continued, relentless focus on equity and ethics for the wellbeing of people, planet and animals will bear fruit.”

**Beth Bell** Deputy Director

“Having only joined the Food Ethics Council recently, I’m struck by the sheer energy and commitment of our team and Council members alike, steadfastly making the case for food ethics across our food systems through careful listening and incisive invitations towards change. To be able to contribute to this as Communications Lead is both a privilege and a responsibility. It is already clear to me that this is a role and a team that I will cherish.”

**Sophie Paterson**  
Communications Lead

“A key highlight looking back was the chance to see our work unfolding on the ground in Belfast. This was a chance to get to know more of the work that is going on there, part of which included bringing Professor Tim Lang to speak as part of the Imagine Belfast festival. I’m looking forward to more opportunities to learn and engage, with our Council members and all of the inspirational people, organisations and businesses working towards our vision of fairness in the food system.”

**Clare Stone**  
Project and Office Coordinator

“I loved so much of what we did last year, but particularly memorable was our Business Forum on how businesses can embrace the spirit of social enterprise, emphasising how those with character and values at their heart are likely to be more resilient. Moving forward, I’m excited to dive deeper into our forthcoming Roots and Routes workshop series, with the intent of us holding what’s difficult, so that the coherent becomes possible.”

**Dan Crossley** Executive Director

## Asking questions, posing challenges

From a foundation of ethics flow questions of challenge and accountability. These serve as a foundation for our regular [Business Forums](#), soon to celebrate their twentieth year.

Through in-person dinner meetings and online workshops operating under Chatham House rules, members come together to discuss challenges, share best practice, and support one another to take bold, positive steps forward. Together they represent businesses large and small from across the food and farming sector, as a community of changemakers.

From forging connections outside of their usual business network to encountering a diversity of perspectives, our most recent members' survey confirmed that the forums continue to serve as a safe, trusted, and deeply valued space, offering a unique opportunity to gain insights across the food supply chain.

**“Participants and speakers brought their whole selves, shared candid stories and left with new questions and actions to take back to their businesses. ‘Probably the most fun and interesting conversation I've ever had!’ was one participant's reflection on the discussion.”**

**Dan Crossley**

Executive Director  
Food Ethics Council



Our 2025 Business Forums centred on the role of business in transforming future food environments to be fairer, healthier and more sustainable.

In 2026, we are exploring 'where commercial meets ethical', including embedding sustainability and embracing a social enterprise mindset.

Expert speakers have included representatives from the likes of Yeo Valley, Karma Cola Foundation, Olio, Veg Power and more, alongside leading academics in the field of food systems and policy.

**“If you’re in food sustainability in a business and want to have access to intelligent discussions from leading experts in a convivial and non-masking forum, then I seriously recommend you join. It’s an incredibly good format for learning and exchanging thoughts.”**

**Business Forum Participant**  
April 2026

## Making a case

Questions of challenge and accountability have also been brought to life through the regular writings contributed by staff, Council members and selected guests, both on our [website](#) and via Dan Crossley’s monthly column in major food retail publication [The Grocer](#).

Whether posing [tricky questions](#) or [challenging](#) the status quo, our intention is to stimulate debate *with purpose* that is firmly rooted in ethics.

In actively holding food systems actors to account, we choose not to throw stones, instead serving as facilitators of space and relationships that allow for analysis and reflection.

From there, we make the case for positive change and set out tangible, cross-sector actions to achieve it - our previous work on [The Dairy Project](#) being a case in point. Our ongoing work on the right to food adopts a similar approach, as led by our Deputy Director Beth Bell.

# The right to food

Our work to make the case for enshrining [the right to food](#) in law across the UK continues to build momentum. Often discussed as *the* answer to the wicked problem of hunger, this narrative commonly doesn't articulate whose duty it is to embed the right, nor the levers we need to pull to put it at the heart of our policies and practice.

Our approach places the right to food within philosophical and pragmatic boundaries, exploring ethical tensions and challenges, as well as tangible practicalities.

Building on previous workshops, webinars and writings, we collaborated with academics in a [Long Read](#) designed to inspire government action, while our Chair Elta highlighted the right to food as a missing ingredient in



the UK government's food strategy work to the business sector in this [guest column](#) in The Grocer.

We continue to champion leadership evident in devolved nations - particularly [Scotland](#) - in progressing this work, and aim always to be informed by the [voices](#) of those active at a grassroots level as to [what a right to food truly means](#).

Recognising the indivisibility of the right to food from a wider rights-based approach, we are a proud member of [UK-ESCR](#).

Reflecting all of this, Beth gave evidence in person to [The Right to Food UK Commission's](#) Belfast session, ahead of [our submission](#) to the Commission's call for evidence, which will present its findings later in 2026.



# Countering injustice

The journey to addressing injustice linked to food and farming remains, collectively, a vital issue in our work and society. We remain committed to our own paths being actively anti-racist, and continue to thoughtfully and meaningfully embed diverse voices, stories and practice across everything we do.

Our [relationship](#) with Blueprint Architects evolved this year. Their wisdom and care was foundational as we co-designed and delivered our [Moving Together](#) event, and we deeply value their practice and friendship.

In the first half of 2026, Dan joined a cohort of civil society leaders wanting to radically accelerate the integration of justice, equity, diversity and inclusion into work involving food systems. The [JEDI leadership course](#) is hosted by Sustain and Eating Better, facilitated by Letesia Gibson of [New Ways](#) and funded by Farming the Future. We look forward to continuing the momentum and acting on the rich insights learned over the coming months.

“JEDI work asks us to ensure that food systems are not designed, governed or narrated by a narrow group of people, but shaped with and accountable to the many communities whose lives, work, health and futures are impacted by them.”

**Letesia Gibson**  
Founder  
New Ways



## Fresh perspectives

Committed to intersectional equity and diversity, we continue to bring fresh voices to the fore.

We launched a new series of Long Reads, offering diverse perspectives which challenge and seek to expand the debate on current research, narratives and ways of thinking. The series began with [two articles](#) from Council member Lucy Aphramor, in which they raise the enduring impact of colonialism as a force that continues to shape our food systems.

We also remain committed to championing the voices of young people - through our own blog [as here](#) and by sharing our guest column space in The Grocer with members of the UK Youth Food and Farming Forum in 2026.

“The youth agenda for food systems transformation is complex and context-specific, shaped by highly individualised experiences with food and diverse identities and backgrounds. It’s important not to generalise the needs and wants of ‘youth’ as a collective but instead consider intersecting identities and needs specific to different contexts.”

**Belinda Ng**

Youth Leader Alumni  
Act4Food



## Power in place

The past year saw a flourishing of our work linking practice and place - most notably in Belfast, home to our Deputy Director Beth and ripe for collaboration in tandem with the Belfast Food Partnership.

May 2025 saw our UK-wide Food Issues Census 2024-2025 launch, including [an event](#) in Belfast, bringing together changemakers from across Northern Ireland to explore a bold vision for their future food system.

Hosted by [Brink!](#) in an outdoor space with a large canopy, surrounded by street art, heritage plants and a city orchard, it was a refreshing reminder that *where* we choose to host events is a vital part of designing them. A conducive space for conversation and debate can create the environments we need to facilitate change.

“Events like this one are more than just meetings – they’re catalysts. They spark ideas, build relationships, and create momentum. The launch event in Belfast was a reminder that place-based approaches can unlock capacity and inspire innovation.”

**Beth Bell**

Deputy Director  
Food Ethics Council



# Policy meets practice meets people

A stand-out moment of our work in Belfast came [hosting Professor Tim Lang](#) - leading food policy expert and author of the UK's National Preparedness Commission's [Just in Case report](#) - alongside Belfast Food Partnership, as part of the city's Imagine! Festival in March 2026.

The lecture and audience discussion took place in a busy hall at Queen Mary's University. The significance of Tim speaking in Belfast for the first time in two decades, just as many of the food shocks he has been warning about were coming to pass, cannot be overstated. It set a decisive tone for a co-hosted food strategy workshop with Eating Better the following day.

**“The urgency and interest in the room was electric. It was a great example of how the Food Ethics Council creates connections that would not otherwise have been made, sparking conversations and bringing people and issues together in a very inclusive and engaging way.”**

**Clare Stone**

Project and Office Coordinator  
Food Ethics Council



# Building resilience

In line with increasing global turbulence, it is no surprise that resilience - and, crucially, how we build it - has been a constant thread in much of our work over this period.

**“Family farms find themselves on a knife-edge. But there is hope in regenerative farming methods... a sense of belonging within a new tribe of farmers across the world, with an insatiable appetite to learn and share”**

**Ian Pigott**

Regenerative Farmer &  
Food Ethics Council Member

From our Council member Ian Pigott's [blog](#) about a farming sector on a knife-edge, or our Executive Director exploring the [Barefood](#) strategy game as a partner in the [BAFR-UK](#) project (and then writing about it in [The Grocer](#)), questions as to how to adapt to increasingly complex food system vulnerabilities remain front and centre.

Before we can continue the much-needed work of building resilience, however, it is crucial to gain a deep understanding of the sector that we wish to support. How to do this? Enter the Food Issues Census.





From fuelling chronic disease that costs the UK £268 billion a year, to being the second-largest driver of climate change and the leading cause of biodiversity loss, food shapes everything from health to the environment. With over 4 million jobs tied to food, and 1 in 5 people in the UK facing food insecurity, transforming food systems means transforming lives, livelihoods, and the planet.

## Listening first

A key privilege and responsibility in our work supporting food systems organisations, the third iteration of our [Food Issues Census](#) was published in May 2025. In it we shone a spotlight on the critical work being done by 128 organisations and communities tackling the UK's most urgent food and farming challenges.

“For Sustainable Food Places, the report both validates and energises our work. We’re proud to be recognised as one of the UK’s most notable networks in this space. The findings also reinforce what we see across our network of 120+ local food partnerships.”

**Sustainable Food Places**

The Census makes information about the sector accessible and actionable for everyone involved or interested in food and farming work. It highlights shared priorities and points to practical solutions to sustain and amplify our collective efforts.

By gathering these powerful insights, we paint a vivid picture of the sector, amplifying the voices of those driving real transformation and providing vital data to inform the decisions shaping its future.

# Funding through an agroecological lens

The Food Issues Census helped us to understand the funding and resources gap in food systems transformation - understanding put to effective use in our [advisory role](#) with The National Lottery Community Fund as it developed a new Food Systems strand via its Climate Action Fund.

We also threw ourselves into hosting relational events, built on trust, expertise and movement. Our [Moving at the Speed of Trust](#) workshop at ORFC 2026 brought together diverse perspectives around the conditions needed to transform funding. Meanwhile, our [Moving Together](#) food systems Ceili event the following month served as a metaphor

for how complex things become possible when we listen to one another and allow ourselves to move in sync.

“Brilliantly conceived - the format meant people turned up as individuals, rather than 'funder' or 'fundraiser'. Instead, you treated everyone in the room as people who want to work together to improve food systems.”

“I think about 'networking' differently now. It was great being in a space organised 'horizontally' - where different levels of experience can coexist and complement each other.”

**Participant feedback**  
Moving Together event



# A renewed strategy

Our currently dominant industrial food systems are shaped by unequal power, short-term incentives, and decision-making that excludes those most affected - but a future where food systems are fair for people, animals and the planet is possible.

The Food Ethics Council has a vital and distinctive role to play by connecting ethics, systems thinking and collective action across the food system. Alongside shifts in food policy and business, we need a shift in funding, to enable civil society to become more resilient and better-resourced.

The need for these shifts has directly informed our recent strategy renewal. For 2026 - 2030, we will focus on the three strategic pillars outlined below.

## HOW WE MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN



Food Ethics Council

### A fairer food system is possible

Systems change requires shifts in both resources and power

### We work across three key pillars for change

1. Advocating for fair, inclusive food policymaking

2. Catalysing funding for ethical food systems

3. Strengthening coherence across the food movement

### The future we're working towards

Farmers and others working in the food system can thrive

Food systems protect and restore the natural world

Everyone can access and enjoy good food with dignity

Farmed animals have a life worth living

# Inviting collaboration

We can only deliver our strategy by working with others as our partners, allies and supporters. We are already part of some amazing [networks](#), [alliances](#) and [coalitions](#) but we need to work more effectively together.

“The best time to start funding, collaborating and working differently was 20 or more years ago. The next best time is now.”

**Food Issues Census 2024-2025**  
Food Ethics Council

We invite you to join our new *Roots and Routes* series, where we'll work together to unlock root causes and fairer routes forward for joined-up, resilient UK food systems. That's part of our desire to hold what's difficult, so that coherence in the sector becomes possible and positive change becomes ever more tangible.

**Join us on the journey and let's start some ripples of change together.**

Stay tuned to our [events page](#) and sign up to our [mailing list](#) to receive our regular newsletter. You can find and follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#) too.

Help to transform the food system by [donating](#) to support our vital work, if you're in a position to do so. We welcome donations of any size from donors who share our vision and values.

If you work for a food or farming business, join our Business Forum. Learn more [here](#) and contact [Dan Crossley](#) if you're interested.

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# Credits & acknowledgements

## Images

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