

A photograph of construction workers in safety gear (hard hats, high-visibility vests) working on a brick wall. In the background, a modern multi-story building with large windows and balconies is visible. The scene is overlaid with a purple banner at the top and a blue hexagonal graphic in the lower right. A colorful geometric bar is at the bottom of the page.

creating a **more equal society**

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Introduction

Between 2013-14 the Co-operative Party carried out policy process which generated twelve policy papers.

These formed the basis of our 'Agenda for Britain', our platform at the last General Election, as well as our platforms for elections in Scotland, Wales, London and Local government.

The twelve full policy papers are intended to be 'living documents' which can be amended and expanded to take account of changing circumstances and environment. In advance of our 2016 Conference and in response to member feedback, the NEC produced three thematic documents which provide a summary of the Party's key policy positions in each area.

It is hoped that these summary documents will provide a useful starting point for discussion around the Party's policy, suggested changes and additions to the Party's policy platform, as well as for developing new campaigns and activity in the year ahead.



Building a Shared Economy



Creating a More Equal Society



Secure and Confident Communities

Using this document

In the run up to our 2016 Annual Conference, the NEC is keen to ensure that the Party's policy platform is examined by members, local parties and co-operatives.

Using this document, you may wish to consider:

1. What campaigns would you like to see the Co-operative Party take up in relation to the policy proposals contained in the three thematic documents?
2. What campaigning ideas and action can local parties and members engage in within their own areas in relation to the three thematic documents?
3. Are there missing policy asks in the three documents?
4. What areas of policy need to be inserted or expanded upon in the twelve original policy documents agreed upon at conference 2014?

You are encouraged to submit new ideas, feedback and other responses, either as an individual or as a Party by the 15th July 2016. Soon after, a report of responses will be sent back out to members in order to stimulate discussion ahead of Conference. Your responses will also be used to shape conference debate and plenary sessions at the Conference itself.

Email your submissions to policy@party.coop
or online at www.party.coop/policy2016

Policy summary

The following is a summary of current Party policy on the theme 'Creating a More Equal Society', which was agreed at 2013 and 2014 Annual Conference.

Sustainable Development

We propose an approach to development which places future generations at its core and balances environmental, social and economic needs.

Community Energy

The Government should commit to a dramatic increase in community energy, offering a new right for communities to invest in new energy generation projects and to take over ownership of their local electricity grid supply.

Community Energy/Direct supply

The Government should pilot the direct supply of community owned renewable energy to local residents, with a view to making a mainstream form of energy supply by 2020.

Community Energy/defined by motivation

We propose community owned energy should be defined in law by motivation rather than size. In defining schemes by size, the regulatory framework acts as a hand brake on ambition and limit the number of schemes.

Community Energy/Tax incentives

We propose that tax incentives such as SEIS and EIS should be re-instated for community energy schemes thereby recognising their benefit to communities and the environment.

Fair tax

Tax transparency is key to ensuring that UK businesses are paying their fair share of tax. Measures such as the proliferation of the Fair Tax Mark will make it easier to praise firms doing the right thing and identify those who are not.

Rail

The Government should legislate to enable not-for-profit operators, run in adherence to co-operatives principles, to be established on the railway. As a 'guiding mind' for the railway, Network Rail should adopt a genuine mutual structure to become more accountable to passengers and the public.

Bus

Not for profit bus operators currently provide vital community routes. More should be done through local procurement authorities to ensure that a greater percentage of services are run along mutual lines. We propose that social value must also receive higher priority within local procurement processes.

Bus as community assets

We believe communities would benefit from an extension of the Localism Act 2012, so that bus routes can be deemed assets of community value.

Ports

There are currently over 100 Trust Ports around the country. Both publicly and privately owned ports should be opened up to ensure community involvement on the boards and a community dividend from profits is awarded.

Car share schemes

There are examples of successful car share schemes around the country. We propose that these schemes should receive more support and promotion from central government as a mechanism to drive membership and decrease congestion and pollution.

BBC

The BBC is the largest broadcasting corporation in the world and a pillar of Britain's cultural life. Yet with huge sums of money spent annually on services, the public deserve to have more of a say in the package of programmes and services that are delivered.

We believe that in order for the BBC to become truly accountable, all television licence holders should be given real say over how the BBC Trust is run.

Sport

We propose the Government legislate to give fans the right to appoint a minimum of two board directors for all football clubs. Supporters' trust should be guaranteed the option to buy up to 10 per cent of the shares of a club at the point of transfer of ownership.

The Government should also legislate to protect club names and club colours from change without the approval of a legally constituted supporters' trust. Consideration must be given

to create favourable tax incentives to community investment in supporter trust and community run sports clubs.

Consumer information

We believe that current legislation should go further and ensure consumers are given access to accurate and portable information. Too many companies are opaque in their dealings, obscuring charges and costs to hold on to customers or to overcharge them.

Consumer right to access their own data

Consumers should have the right to access their data in a meaningful format, and be allowed to share it. The government should bring forward legislation which would allow consumers to give permission to a third party to access data and negotiate services on their behalf.

Statutory duty on consumer advice

A new duty should be placed on statutory regulators to report annually on the provision of free independent advice available to consumers purchasing services in their sector.

Consumer Ombudsman services

There are at least 17 different Ombudsman services and 14 different recognised complaint handling services. This creates confusion making the system hard to navigate, in order to get justice.

We propose that there should be a single Consumer Ombudsman with US-style powers. This ombudsman would also have the power to take up class actions on behalf of consumers against companies.

Competition and Markets Authorities (CMA)

Whilst the Co-operative Party welcomes the creation of the CMA, it is vital that it remains responsive to consumer concerns, acts on the priorities of consumers and works closely with other consumer champions.

There needs to be an annual 'Competition Health Check'; led jointly by consumers and the competition authorities, to ensure regulators and politicians act where markets do not work in the public interest.

Fairtrade

The UK Government should continue to champion an end to trade distorting subsidies and tariffs which stop developing countries from being able to sell their goods at fair prices in more economically developed markets.

Fairtrade/tariff regimes

The Government should campaign for lower, or no, EU tariffs for fairly traded products and a change in international trade rules to create favourable tariff regimes for sustainability produced products.

Fossil fuels

Our continuing reliance in fossil fuels places an unsustainable and dangerous burden on our environment, aggravates international tensions and jeopardises progress toward social justice. We believe that the government should continue to advance international action on climate change, playing a leading role in pressing for and delivering international agreement.

International co-operative development

The Co-operative movement is one of the largest organised segments of civil society with over 800 million members and plays a crucial role across a wide spectrum of human aspiration and need. The Government should work with the co-operative Agency for International Development, which will provide support and build international co-operative capacity.

Human rights

The Co-operative Party believes that human rights are universal, and that it is the job of strong and mature democracies to support the development of free societies. The Government should legislate to provide victims of human rights abuses with access to the British courts for remedy, compensation and criminal prosecution. When these are found to have been committed by, or in collusion with, UK based multi-national companies.

Co-operative schools

We believe that an amendment to the 2006 Education and Inspections Act 2006 should be made so that Co-operative Schools are able to legally form under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Society Act 2014. It should also allow nursery schools to become co-operative trusts and join co-operative clusters.

Co-operative schools

We propose that collaboration for school improvement via co-operative models should be encouraged. This can be through allowing co-operative trust schools to become academy sponsors – thereby enabling them to formally support other co-operative schools – and by supporting

the development of school improvement co-operatives like the ones created in Leeds and Manchester.

Co-operative education

A failure to educate students and pupils in co-operative action and governance continues throughout the education system, this holds back co-operative development and a new generation of co-operators. This must be addressed through co-operative studies where appropriate on business courses and syllabuses.

Mixed stakeholder models in education

Parent teacher associations should become mandatory in mainstream schools and should each have responsibility for appointing at least one third of school governors. Every school should also be required to have an elected body for students, which will play an important role in setting its ethos and overall direction.

Email your submissions to policy@party.coop
or online at www.party.coop/policy2016

politics for people

65 St John Street, London EC1M 4AN

020 7367 4150

info@party.coop

 [CoopParty](#)



www.party.coop

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