

A photograph of a construction site with a purple overlay. In the foreground, several construction workers wearing hard hats and high-visibility vests are working on a brick wall. One worker in the center has 'DRINKWATER' written on their vest. In the background, a multi-story building is under construction, with its wooden frame visible. The overall scene is set against a purple gradient background with geometric shapes.

creating a more equal society

the co-operative party

A horizontal bar at the bottom of the page, divided into seven colored segments: red, orange, yellow, green, light blue, dark blue, and purple.

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Introduction

In advance of our 2016 Conference and in response to member feedback, the NEC policy subcommittee produced three thematic documents which provided a summary of the Party's key policy positions in all areas.

Individual members, party branches and co-operatives were then asked by the NEC subcommittee to suggest changes and additions to these summary documents, and to consider campaigns that may be developed over the year ahead.

In response to this request, many local branches around the country held policy discussions to gather feedback from party members, and a wide range of co-operative movement organisations and individual members submitted responses. The policies within this document have been edited to reflect these submissions.

This builds upon the policy process conducted between 2013-14, through which the Co-operative Party generated twelve policy papers. Those 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.

Those twelve full policy papers are 'living documents' which can be amended and expanded to take account of changing circumstances and environment. They are available to view and download at www.party.coop/type/policy-papers

Yours in co-operation,



James Scott

Policy Officer

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Using this document

The policies within this documents have been edited to reflect the submissions made by individual members, local parties and co-operatives prior to the 2016 Conference.

This document provides the focus of the **Creating a More Equal Society** debate at Party Conference. The NEC recommends considering four questions when using this document to engage in policy debates at Conference:

1. National campaigns

What campaigns would you like to see the Co-operative Party take up in relation to the policy proposals contained in this policy document?

2. Local campaigns

What campaigning ideas and action can local parties and members engage in within their own areas in relation to this document?

3. Missing policies

Are there missing policy asks in this document?

4. Future policy

What areas of policy need to be inserted or expanded upon in the twelve original policy documents agreed upon at conference 2014?

We hope you find the policies within this summary document stimulating and engaging.

🕒 Sunday 11th September 9:00

Policy Debate **Creating a More Equal Society**

📍 Main Hall

Policy Summary

The following is a summary of current Party policy on the theme of 'Building a shared economy', which was agreed at 2013 and 2014 Annual Conference, and has been edited to reflect submissions received from party members, branches and co-operatives prior to Conference 2016.

1. Sustainable Development

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

2. Community Energy

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

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. Community Energy/Tax incentives

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

6. 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.

7. Bus

Not for profit bus operators currently provide vital community routes. More should be done through local procurement authorities processes 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.

8. Buses as community assets

We believe communities would also benefit from an extension on the Localism Act 2012, which would enable bus routes to be deemed assets of community value.

9. Ports

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

10. Car share schemes

There are examples of successfully 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.

11. 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.

12. Sport

We propose the Government legislate to give fans the right to appoint a minimum of two board directors for all football and rugby clubs.

Supporter's 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.

13. 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.

14. Consumer right to access their own data

Consumers should have the right to access their data in a meaningful format, and to 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.

15. 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.

16. 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.

17. 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.

18. Fairtrade

In line with its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, 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.

19. 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.

20. 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.

21. International co-operative development

Given the fact that 80%-90% of all farmers within the Fairtrade system work within co-operatives, the UK's Government must not seek to give preference to other forms of Fairtrade production and must focus on International Development policy aiding the expansion and development of co-operatives.

22. 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.

23. 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.

24. 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.

25. 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.

26. Mixed stakeholder models in education

Parent teacher associations should become mandatory in 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.

27. Food security

Food banks have spread throughout the UK in recent years, and are a symptom of a broken economy. The Co-operative Party is clear: food banks should not exist and the government must take action to tackle food insecurity and poverty.

politics for people

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