



# member magazine 2015

the co-operative party  
politics for people



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# Welcome

I want to take the opportunity to say a huge thank you and good bye.



It has been a real privilege to lead the Co-operative Party for the last three years. I am particularly proud of our successful 'Keep it Co-op' campaign and the reaffirmation of our historic link between the Party and the Co-operative Group (p4). Now this has been achieved and the relationship assured, it is time to hand over to a new General Secretary to work with you to develop and inspire the co-operative movement's relationship with politics for the future.

In this second member magazine, we've begun to explore what that future could look like. We've included an interview with the new President of the Co-op Group National Membership Council, a great piece about the vital work by the Co-op College by Simon Parkinson, its new Principal (p13), and Gareth Thomas, our Chair, sets out a co-operative agenda for London (p9).

I cannot thank enough the staff team, our National Executive Committee, our dedicated political representatives and in particular you all – our wonderful members. Your energy and commitment has been instrumental in strengthening and rejuvenating the Party in recent years. And while we may not have achieved the outcome we all desperately hoped for in May, we can take a great deal of pride in those co-operators - all women - entering Parliament for the first time, as well as our team of candidates and MPs, whether successfully elected or not.

Most of all, our future will be shaped by your involvement. We've included key dates for your diary, (p19) information about our member networks (p21) becoming a candidate (p20) and how to give your time (p5) or money (p23). Thank you again for all of your kindness and support, and please stay in touch. As a Party member I look forward to celebrating our centenary together in 2017.

*Karin Christiansen*

**Karin Christiansen**  
General Secretary

# Keep it Co-op



The 'Keep it Co-op' campaign successfully made the case for why the Co-operative Group and the Co-operative Party should maintain our historic partnership, but the work goes on says **Karin Christiansen**, General Secretary.

In February the Co-operative Party launched the 'Keep it Co-op' campaign to make the case for maintaining the historic link between the Co-operative Party and the Co-operative Group. The campaign – through campaign films, social media, and via the [www.keepit.coop](http://www.keepit.coop) online hub – set out the history of the relationship and the significant gains for the co-operative movement which have flowed from it.

The campaign tapped into the deeply felt belief that many Co-op members have, that the Society's ethics, values and campaigning history are an intrinsic and important part of its co-operative principles. It also sought to highlight the huge amount of work there is still to do to challenge the dominance of the PLC model in British business and ensure a level-playing field so that more co-operative and mutual businesses can be established and thrive.

The campaign was highly effective in reaching out. Campaign films were watched 180,000 times. The campaign Facebook page had over 10,000 daily

views, rising to 100,000 views on key days. The campaign Twitter 'Thunderclap' reached over 2 million people. More than 12,000 individuals formally signed up to the campaign and the Party recruited many new members.

On the 16th May at the Co-operative Group AGM members voted by 55% to 45% in favour of maintaining the link with the Party. This was a great result achieved through a great deal of hard work by the Party's staff, members and other organisations who supported us from across the labour and co-operative movements. But this is not the end.

With a higher profile and more co-operators now understanding the role of the Party and what we have to offer, the Party now has a real opportunity to build on this momentum.

This year our annual conference, taking place in London on 19th and 20th of September, is been titled 'The Party, the politics, the movement' and will be a key opportunity to begin building our forward agenda with the co-operative movement. The Party will also be working to encourage more co-operative societies to become Co-operative Party members.

To find out more about organisational membership, contact  
**[j.boyle@party.coop](mailto:j.boyle@party.coop)**

## Volunteer

As a co-operative and a political party, we're powered by the time, energy, expertise and skills of individual members.

Activists and volunteers enable us to be a voice for the co-operative movement nationally and locally.

We would love to hear from you if you have skills to share including:

- IT and digital
- Finance
- Media skills
- Organising and campaigns
- Policy expertise

# Shaping the productivity debate



With British workers working harder but producing less, a recent Co-op Party roundtable discussed how a more shared economy can improve productivity. Head of External & Political Affairs **Claire McCarthy** explains more.

Britain has a productivity problem. Although on average we work longer hours than Germany and France, we actually produce less per worker than they do. In 2013, an hour's work in Germany produced 23% more output than an hour's work in the UK. In the United States, an hour's work produced 31% more output. Output per hour worked in France was 27% higher than it was here.

Since the election the Chancellor has stated that addressing the causes of low productivity is high on his agenda for this Parliament; and it is a debate in which the co-operative movement should have a strong voice.

The Co-operative Party's Agenda for Britain document set out our vision of a 'shared economy' where productivity is raised by learning from the experience in particular of the employee owned sector.

The Party drew on strong evidence of the positive impact of ‘shared economy’ (employee ownership, profits sharing, workplace democracy) schemes on factors that tend to influence productivity. In the largest US study of its kind, which surveyed nearly 40,000 employees in 14 companies, employees participating in at least one such scheme reported greater commitment and effort from colleagues, more teamwork, better relations with managers and a more positive workplace culture.

Academic research also suggests that where employees share in company decision-making, this tends to restrain executive pay, meaning that wages of senior managers are less likely to run away from their employees.

The degree to which employee ownership boosts productivity can be seen in the performance of part-employee owned companies, which have consistently outperformed their PLC rivals. In cash terms, an investment of £100 in 2003 in the Index of employee-owned companies would have been worth £754 at the end of September 2014. The same amount invested in the FTSE All-share would have been worth just £280.

Employee ownership and profit sharing gives staff an incentive to raise company performance and rewards them fairly when they are successful. Shared decision making allows employees and managers to work together to resolve problems and raise productivity. Partnership between management and employees can provide the means through which higher returns for both staff and owners can be generated and shared.

The Party convened a roundtable meeting, chaired by Labour & Co-operative MP Jonathan Reynolds, during Co-operatives Fortnight to discuss how we can move this agenda forward.

The event was attended by experts from the TUC, Co-ops UK, Social Enterprise UK, IPA-involve, and employee owned businesses. As the work progresses on this we will keep members updated.

Our Agenda for Britain can be downloaded at  
**2015.party.coop**

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# A co-operative capital



With the 2016 London Mayoral election approaching, we need more power for London and more power for Londoners, argues Co-operative Party Chair and London MP

**Gareth Thomas MP**

We need more power devolved to London and, crucially, more power devolved to Londoners.

London is a great city and the envy of many worldwide, but we face huge challenges as our city grows even bigger. The highest cost of living, stubborn levels of child poverty, and the most severe housing crisis.

As we move, in a very British way, towards federalism, I want London to play its part with the nations of the UK in recasting the union. I believe that Londoners need to be given the power to control London's future now.

I have presented a Bill in Parliament calling for more devolution to London, including a referendum to be held after the Mayoral election on whether more powers should be passed to the London Mayor, Assembly and boroughs.

London has the talent, the imagination and the wealth to confront head-on the issues that hold our city back. But to do this we need more control over the taxes generated in our city, the housing market and the NHS.

Londoners should be able to control the property taxes levied in our city, as recommended by the London Finance Commission. In time London should be able to control income tax in the capital too. At the moment, London retains little more than 7% of all the tax paid by London residents and businesses. In New York, more than 50% is retained by New York's Mayor. Other cities of comparable size can set their own taxes, yet London cannot.

The next Mayor must ensure that our city prospers, and makes London a more affordable and liveable city.

Given the key role the City plays in London's economy, we must find new ways to work with those in our financial services to ensure it works the way we want it too – to benefit all in society. It is not enough simply to be angry with the City's excesses, understandable as this may be.

We should establish a taskforce to help make the City the most trusted financial centre in the world. Key to this would be transparency, and a focus on the contribution the City makes in investing in London's social, economic, cultural, and environmental architecture.

The City should collect and publish its contribution to the building of social and affordable housing. It should outline what support it is providing to modernising and expanding public transport and how it is responding to the needs of London's small business sector.

I would appoint a Deputy Mayor for Social Enterprise, Co-operation and the Third Sector, to champion London wide initiatives for social innovation.

I would want to encourage the expansion of credit unions with a Credit Union 'Bank': credit unions working together to offer London-wide financial services

“ At the moment, London retains little more than 7% of all the tax paid by London residents and businesses. In New York, more than 50% is retained by New York's Mayor.

supported by Mayoral backed advertising on bus, tube and trains and offering new credit union accounts for every young person.

Transport for London should be reformed to give Londoners a greater say, with customers allowed to 'join' TfL, hold senior management to account at annual meetings and places on the Board. I'd cut tube, train, and bus fares by 10% in the first year of a Mayoral term, freeze them for the remaining three years – an almost 20% cut in real terms by 2020.

We also need more powers if we are to tackle London's housing crisis. The Mayor needs to be able to introduce a rent cap, and must have new powers to bring down the cost of land to get developments started, including reformed compulsory purchase powers.

A Mayoral Housing Company should be set up, using publicly-owned land, and attracting private finance to get building more affordable homes, and particularly more co-op housing.

My inspiration for London can be found at the iconic Oxo Tower on the South Bank. In between the glitzy restaurant at the top, and the cafes at the bottom, are five levels of social housing. They are managed by the tenants, with some of lowest rents in London in one of the most sought after locations. Most importantly of all, a sense of community has been created, with tenants actively involved in shaping the decisions that affect them.

We should be championing a new drive to expand community energy. I support the grassroots campaign to make London the world's first National Park City.

Those of us in the cooperative movement know that it is by giving Londoners more power we will be better able to tackle the challenges our city faces.

Learn more about Gareth Thoma's Campaign to be London's next mayor at [gareththomasforlondon.com](http://gareththomasforlondon.com)

# Looking forward....

With a busy few months of campaigning in the General Election and 'Keep it Co-op' behind us, Political and Parliamentary Officer **Joe Fortune** looks at what's in store.

To encapsulate all activities, campaigning and policy priorities of the Party and membership would take many more column inches than available. The below briefly looks at some of the key issues we'll be working on over the next few months.



## Fair Tax Mark

The world of business continues to grapple with the best way of building trust with us the consumer the Co-operative Party will be pleased to promote the Fair Tax Mark. The Fair Tax Mark is something businesses can look to achieve if they can demonstrate they are open, fair and transparent in their approach to tax. This mark is new but important and already co-operative societies have shown a willingness to be at the vanguard of this campaign. Our Parliamentarians have already heard from key members of the campaign and much more activity is planned.



## Community Energy

Co-operators central involvement within Community Energy has been critical in its development and success. However as those involved in schemes new and old look to the future it is clouded with uncertainty as a result of Government support ebbing away. The Co-operative Party and its members must ensure that the sector is not forgotten and its momentum lost. This will be an important focus in the months to come.



## Mutual Bus Services

Our values, principles and approach to business can provide great rejuvenation within sectors previously struggling. For many years local bus routes and ridership outside of London have been decreasing, the number of communities whether rural or urban are increasingly being left isolated. Community Transport, mutual and social enterprise approaches to bus services work and need more promotion. Within the context of a changing industry, devolution and monopolistic behaviour our values are in need here more than ever.



## A People's BBC

The BBC is another area of focus for the Party. Under plans developed by the Co-operative Party, the BBC Trust – created in 2006 as the voice of license-fee payers and widely seen to have failed – would be re-established as a Members Council. The current appointed trustees would be replaced with ones elected by the country's 25m license fee payers. They would be joined on the Council by representatives of BBC staff and other stakeholders and a limited number of government-nominated members. This model would ensure that that all key interests are taken into account and give us a real voice in its future governance.

If you would like any information on the above or any of the other aspect of the Party's campaigning and policy work email [mail@party.coop](mailto:mail@party.coop)

# Co-operative College



A new legal status creates new opportunities for the Co-operative College to grow and strengthen its links with the rest of the movement, says its new Principal, **Simon Parkinson**

Here at the Co-operative College we believe that great things happen when people co-operate. Through learning, we empower and inspire individuals, co-operatives and communities, to use co-operative values and principles to build a fairer world.

As we approach our centenary year in 2019 we are focusing on four main areas of work:

1. To develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours to enable people to be effective co-operators
2. To build capacity in new, emerging and existing co-operatives through embedding co-operative values and principles
3. To advance a policy context where co-operatives can flourish.
4. To progress global understanding of the co-operative ethos.

We currently deliver a diverse range of services and programmes which help us to achieve the areas above and more information about our current work can be found at [www.co-op.ac.uk/shapingtheco-operativefuture/](http://www.co-op.ac.uk/shapingtheco-operativefuture/)

We know that we cannot achieve all we want to without working closely with other members of the Co-operative movement, including the Co-operative Party, Co-operatives UK and a wide range of co-operative organisations both nationally and internationally.

Beyond this we want to connect directly with individual co-operators and our new legal status of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), means that for the first time in the College's 97 year history we can offer membership to individuals and organisations. We are currently developing our membership offer and will be ready to launch this at the end of 2015 ready for the CIO's inaugural Conference and AGM in April 2016.

We have strong relationships with the Co-operative Party and have actively worked together over the past few years, particularly with regards to influencing education policy.

The rapid growth of Co-operative Trust schools in England (there are currently over 850) has demonstrated an appetite from both schools and the communities they serve to embrace the Co-operative values and principles and use these to provide a high quality educational experience for our young people.

We are grateful to the Co-operative Party for their work at Westminster which saw Meg Munn MP lead an adjournment debate on Co-operative schools at the end of the last Parliament and look forward to continue to work with the party on this important and ever changing policy area.

A number of the College team, including myself, will be at the Co-operative Party Conference and I look forward to seeing you there.

You can register your interest in becoming a member of the Co-operative College by emailing [membership@co-op.ac.uk](mailto:membership@co-op.ac.uk)

# Q&A Nick Crofts

President, Co-operative Group National Membership Council

Former National Executive Committee member **Nick Crofts** speaks to us about his background in the co-op movement, and his new role as President of the Co-operative Group's National Membership Council



## What inspired you to get involved in the co-operative movement?

I first joined the Co-op Party in 2001. Liverpool has always been a hotbed of co-operative politics, with an active local party and at least one Co-op MP. It was through the Party that I learned of the extraordinary heritage of the wider Movement. It's no exaggeration that Co-operation has changed the world.

Be it votes for women, unadulterated food or democracy and economic participation for ordinary people in commerce, our Movement has led the way. We should be very proud.

## What will your priorities be during your term of office as President?

The Co-operative Group is now well into its 'Rebuild' phase after the near-death experience two years ago. I want the National Members' Council to be a strong and vital part of the Co-operative Group's renaissance. We need to demonstrate that the voice of members – the owners of our Society – are heard and heard loudly at every level.

The governance reforms have provided a new form of member participation. Embedding it so as to maximise the influence of the Council is going to be key. There is much to be done.



We need to demonstrate that the voice of members – the owners of our Society – are heard and heard loudly at every level.

## What role do you see for members in rebuilding and strengthening the Group?

A vital one. The fact that the Group has millions of members can and should be the key to its Rebuild. If we can redefine the way a member-owned retail Society engages with its members in the digital age, we can revolutionise co-operation and the role of members.

This is hugely ambitious. But Richard Pennycook's Executive Team have precisely the ambition to deliver that revolution in the role of members. After the trauma of the recent past, it's an exciting period to be involved. I'm hugely privileged to serve as President at such a time.

## Do you think the Group need to choose between being a different type of business with a strong social voice and succeeding financially?

No – the Group need not choose. The two can and must go together. Socially responsible, ethical, values-driven businesses can and do succeed. The Group must build on its reputation for being an ethical retailer. I think we don't get the credit for much of the great work we do – environmental, ethical, in the community. We can 'leverage' this part of the co-operative difference, we will gain real commercial advantage – for doing the right thing.

## How do you think the Group can deliver its purpose of 'championing a better way of doing business for you and your communities'?

As I just mentioned, leveraging the good we do is the way for us as a responsible business to optimise – not maximise – our profits. We can then utilise these surpluses we generate to do real good locally.

Having more than 3000 outlets means we are deeply embedded in communities up and down the country. We can invest our surplus – in a divi, of course – but also into a huge range of community projects. This can be the modern realisation of the virtuous circle – because it will lead to further commercial success, and further profit to invest. It's our values in action.

To find out more about the role of the National Membership Council or to join the Co-operative Group, visit [www.co-operative.coop/membership](http://www.co-operative.coop/membership)

# Scotland



As we look towards next year's Scottish elections, Political Officer **Richard McCready** updates us with the latest from the Scottish Co-operative Party in local government and Holyrood

There is a strong tradition of co-operation in Scotland from the Fenwick Weavers', to new Lanark, to Mary Barbour and to the present day with both Edinburgh and Glasgow being co-operative councils. As we look forward to the 2016 Scottish elections we hope to increase our number of MSPs and build upon the excellent work being done by Kezia Dugdale (recently elected Leader of Scottish Labour) Johann Lamont, , Claudia Beamish and James Kelly.

Over the past year we have ensured that the Community Empowerment Act adequately addresses the needs of co-operatives within the Scottish government's strategy for community organisations. Our MSPs will be working hard over the next few months to ensure that co-operative and mutual solutions are at the heart of land reform policy.

We are developing a policy platform which will create a fairer, better more co-operative Scotland. We want to build on the great work being done to promote co-ops by Glasgow and Edinburgh City Councils and ensure that the Scottish Government promotes co-operatives. We want to strengthen

the Scottish Government's co-operative development unit, Co-operative Development Scotland, and ensure that no one leaves the Scottish education system without an understanding of the co-operative business model. The Scottish Co-operative Party will be campaigning to ensure that there are co-operative and mutual solutions at the centre of Scottish Government policy.

Stay updated with the latest from the Scottish Co-operative Party.  
Follow [🐦 ScotCoopParty](#) and [📘 fb.me/Scottish.Cooperative.Party](#)

## Dates for your diary

### UK Society for Co-operative Studies Annual Conference 2015

Leicester 5-6<sup>th</sup> Sept

### Community Energy Conference

Oxford 5<sup>th</sup> Sept

### Labour Party Annual Conference

Brighton 27-30<sup>th</sup> Sept

### Co-operative Party Conference

London 19-20<sup>th</sup> Sept

### Scottish Party Weekend School

Culross 19-20<sup>th</sup> Sept

### Hampshire & Isle of Wight Party Day School

Portsmouth 17<sup>th</sup> Oct

### Towards 2020, Global Conference

Antalya, Turkey 10-13<sup>th</sup> Nov

### South West Party Weekend School

Torquay 23-24<sup>th</sup> Jan



## WHAT'S GOING ON?

If you or your local party are planning an event or activity, let us know. We can help by listing the event on the Party website, emailing members in the area, and promoting it via social media.

Email [membership@party.coop](mailto:membership@party.coop)

# A co-operative agenda for Wales 2016



AMs, MPs, local parties and key figures in the co-operative movement have been taking part in forums and branch discussions to debate the policies that would bring us closer to a Co-operative Wales in 2016, reports Deputy General Secretary **Karen Wilkie**

The Welsh Assembly Government has done fantastic work to develop co-operation, in legislation and through the Co-operative & Mutuals Commission, but we will aspire to even more in 2016.

At Annual Conference this year, we will publish the recommendations highlighted in *A Co-operative Agenda for Wales 2016*. The full document will be launched in the Autumn and will be available to download. These policies will also be fed into Welsh Labour's policy process, *The Wales You Want*.

## Co-operative Candidates

Throughout 2015 new potential candidates have been accepted to the Co-operative Party's Assembly panel, and going through to the Co-operative and Labour Parties' selection processes.

Women are still underrepresented on the Co-operative Party's panel though, and in the Labour selections. If you could be a fantastic advocate for the co-op movement in the Assembly, or you know someone else who should, talk to us now before it's too late!

# Join a network



Our networks provide a space for Party members to share experiences and support, particularly among groups who are under-represented in politics.

Current networks include:

- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Network
- Co-operative Party Youth
- Councillor Network
- Women's Network

To join an existing network or if you are interested in starting one, email [membership@party.coop](mailto:membership@party.coop)

## CO-OPERATIVE PARTY YOUTH

Co-operative Party Youth is for all members aged 30 or under and works to ensure that younger members become active in the Party.

Activities include training and development, campaigning for Labour & Co-operative candidates, issue based campaigns and socials at Conference.

For more information and to get involved email [youth@party.coop](mailto:youth@party.coop)



## DO WE HAVE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS?

We'd love to keep you up to date throughout the year with news about upcoming events, campaigns, policy developments and opportunities to get involved - but to do it, we need your email address.

Drop us a line at **mail@party.coop** to let us know what address we can reach you on, or sign up at **party.coop**

## Campaign shop

Our range of gifts, posters, campaigning materials and other merchandise is now available to buy on the Party website.

This includes our official 2015 campaign t-shirt, (priced at £18) which features a vintage-style Co-operative Party logo. All proceeds will go to support the party's work.

**party.coop/shop**



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