



scottish
co-operative
party

OWNING^{THE} FUTURE

**A CO-OPERATIVE
AGENDA FOR
SCOTLAND
2021**



INTRODUCTION

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As the Chair of the Scottish Co-operative Party I am proud to present our policy platform for the Scottish Parliament elections.

This will be a very different election taking place in the context of the global pandemic. The pandemic has demonstrated that so much about our society is wrong – we cannot return to business as usual. As a co-operator I believe that creating a more co-operative society will make a real difference.

The people of Scotland agree with me - 65% of Scots think that the economy would be fairer post coronavirus with more co-operatives. The pandemic has made clear that far too many people in Scotland struggle to feed their families, 81% of Scots think that the government should legislate for the Right to Food.

The Scottish Co-operative Party is campaigning for the Right to Food to be part of Scots Law. We are campaigning for a fairer, more democratic, more co-operative economy. We will support more housing co-operatives and also support a Mary Barbour Law to deal with unfair rents.

The Co-operative Party is the only political party to receive the Fair Tax Mark. The Fair Tax Mark is an accreditation scheme which says that an organisation has paid the correct rate of tax, at the correct time, and in the correct jurisdiction. No organisation which is not paying its way in this country should be receiving public funds.

We are also calling on the next Scottish Parliament to create a People's ScotRail. Our railway should be run in the interests of the passengers and the workers.

In the Scottish Parliament our MSPs have worked hard to promote co-operative policies and to make sure that our movement made its voice heard. I know that we have a fantastic team of candidates for the election this year and that they will take up the mantle and make the case in parliament for co-operation. They will demonstrate the co-operative difference and work to deliver a Scotland where wealth and power are shared.



BUILDING A CO-OPERATIVE ECONOMY

We believe in giving power to the people. The people need to exercise real democracy in the economy and no longer be ruled by market forces beyond their control.

We will review the work of Co-operative Development Scotland to ensure that it effectively promotes the whole co-operative sector in a much stronger way, and that it has the resources to do this. This review would be wide-ranging. We want Co-operative Development Scotland to be put on a statutory basis and for a minister to be charged with reporting to parliament on its work. The next government should appoint a minister with a cross-cutting remit to promote co-operatives across government.

Any review of Co-operative Development Scotland must be accompanied by an overall review of all

enterprise support in Scotland especially focused on Scottish Enterprise.

We will look to provide incentives for people to start a business. Local business strategies should support smaller business and a greater diversity of business models including self-employment, employee-ownership, and other co-operative models. Support for a range of co-operative models and social enterprises should be encouraged.

Employee ownership and co-operatives should be facilitated, supported, and encouraged in partnership with trade unions. We will extend the role of Co-operative Development Scotland and promote the co-operative council model where councils can consider developing local employee, consumer, and secondary co-operatives to deliver services.

We will look to promote the worker co-operative model. We will look to ensure that support bodies such as Co-operative Development Scotland and local council economic development departments are able to provide support for the worker co-operative model.

Community Shares Scotland plays an important role in rural Scotland we will look to support it and look to make sure that community ownership is a model which is available across Scotland in rural and urban settings.

We will press for amendments to planning legislation to favour genuinely community owned co-operatives.

We should encourage the creation of local marketing co-operatives by local businesses to better promote and protect our high streets and district shopping centres and ensure that they have the resources required.

We will promote connectivity through a broadband strategy to ensure full internet coverage across all areas of Scotland. We will develop IT co-operatives as a means of overcoming digital exclusion and empowering local people.

As the only political party to have achieved the Fair Tax Mark. We support the Fair Tax Mark and call for it to be used in public procurement. Only companies which pay the correct rate of tax at the correct time and in the correct jurisdiction should be able to provide services paid for by public money.

We recognise that Retail Workers are often on the frontline and believe that they should be given greater protection in law from violence, threats and abuse.

We were delighted that Daniel Johnson's Bill to protect retail workers was successful and we will be keeping a close eye on its implementation to ensure that retail workers are protected. ●

EDUCATION AND CULTURE

We believe that a co-operative approach to education is important both in terms of giving students, parents and carers, teachers and support staff a feeling of ownership and empowerment in their delivery of education but also in creating the circumstances in which people who have been educated in Scotland have the ability to see that a different kind of society is possible – a more co-operative society.

As co-operators we believe that ownership matters, and that staff and service users should have a say in how services which they use are operated. In terms of Scotland's schools, we see little appetite for a change in how they are governed, with the overwhelming majority of schools run directly by councils. We want to encourage councils to listen to staff, pupils and carers when deciding how schools are operated.

What is co-operative education? Children get the best education when schools, parents and communities work together and when they feel their views are taken into account. This approach is at the heart of co-operative education; supporting children to feel valued and to take responsibility for themselves and their communities.

The values, principles and models of co-operation should also be included in the curricula of the UK's

education systems. This can instil the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity within education, and show pupils and students that another way of doing business is possible.

We are very supportive of the work of CETS – the Co-operative Education Trust Scotland. Unfortunately, CETS has not been as well-resourced in recent years as it could have been. CETS is a charitable education trust that promotes co-operative enterprise and co-operation throughout all levels of Scottish education. We will provide funds to deliver the resources to deliver education about the co-operative model in Scotland.

We will ensure that education and training around the co-operative model is available at all levels of school, we would also encourage education and training around the co-operative model in Further and Higher Education. This would build on the work of Co-operative Education Trust Scotland. We would ensure that all economic development agencies are open to developing co-operatives and have the practical knowledge and resources to do so.

We believe that there is a very strong case for a co-operative approach to education. An approach that seeks to include pupils, students, parents and carers, teachers, and other staff in the organisation of the

learning experience.

We believe that the education system in Scotland should introduce pupils to the co-operative model and believe that it should be taught at all levels from primary school up to postgraduate level at university. We also believe that the Scottish Government should provide support for the production and promotion of materials which will facilitate the teaching about co-operatives.

We need to develop the skills and expertise to decarbonise the economy. We will champion green skills within the education sector to ensure that our economy has the skills required for the economy of the twenty-first century.

We believe that the governance of our education system should be open and transparent and have clear democratic controls. We believe that Scotland's councils are best placed to run Scotland's schools.

Childcare is essential to many parents and carers, there is a need to develop more flexible and responsive childcare which meets the needs of modern families. We will promote co-operative and mutual models of wrap-around childcare, which empowers parents and carers and allows them the flexibility to ensure that their needs are met.

We believe that cultural policy is important to Scotland's future and that Scotland's culture belongs to all the people of Scotland. Major cultural institutions should be accountable to the people who finance them, mostly the public. Boards of cultural trusts and quangos should look for ways to include service users and/or workers on their boards. These organisations should act in a way that takes the interests of workers and of service users or customers into account.

We recognise that co-operatives can play a key role in arts and culture. For example, by forming secondary marketing co-operatives for all the cultural bodies in a particular location. Artists may also form their own co-operative in order to secure work. There is a very strong case for a secondary co-operative to deliver back-office services for groups of cultural organisations in a particular location or sectors.

We support fan ownership in football and other sporting clubs. The Scottish Government should support Supporters' Direct Scotland to promote co-operative ownership of sports clubs. Genuinely community owned sports clubs should also receive tax breaks. ●



PEOPLE'S TRANSPORT

We will support a mutually-owned rail operator, delivering a People's ScotRail. This would develop a service run in the interests of passengers and staff and not in the interests of shareholders. The new ScotRail franchise holder must take the views of passengers and workers on board.

The Transport (Scotland) Act gives us the opportunity to run bus services differently. We support co-operatives and mutuals running bus services. We support municipal ownership of bus services and think consideration should be given to forming co-operatives between councils or mutualising the Regional Transport Partnerships to provide public-owned bus services across regions. Whilst recognising the theoretical possibilities given by the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 we recognise that the Act did not will the resources to councils or to communities to make co-operative, mutual or municipal ownership of buses a reality. We call on the next Scottish Government to match rhetoric with resources.

Too often our vital bus routes are being cut, leaving isolated communities more cut off from important family, work, and social links. Our bus services are a critical driver of economic growth and activity. Increasingly Local Authorities struggle to ensure that they are able to provide the service which their communities require. The power within the bus industry is heavily tilted in favour of a small number of large operators. These operators can cherry pick the profitable routes whilst leaving the socially necessary routes alone. In order to arrest the decline in services, falling passenger numbers and raising fares, there is a need to look at this industry in a new way. Co-operative and Social Enterprises successfully operate services across the country – running metropolitan services to socially necessary education and social care networks.

These operations run in true partnership with commissioning authorities, reinvest profits back into the services and infrastructure and often are

employee led. These models of bus service delivery require support and promotion by the Scottish Government to ensure that procuring authorities are aware of the options available to them. The Scottish Government should work with the co-operative and social enterprise movements to ensure a task force is created to drive forward the advancement of these public transport models. In addition to the taskforce consideration should be given to whether new procurement regulations should be extended to ensure that Local Authorities have a duty to consider sourcing services from these sectors when delivering bus services.

We will look to the Scottish Government and local authorities to promote community transport including the running of regulated bus services, dial a bus services, taxi services and demand responsive transport. We will also look at ways in which community transport could support other co-operatives or community schemes such as being used as delivery vehicles for food poverty projects.

We will look to make government support for transport reliant on conditions around air quality, environmental protection and decarbonisation. We will look to support more electric and hydrogen buses and especially to support the use of renewably powered vehicles by the community transport sector.

We will support active travel and promote walking, wheeling and cycling. We will look to create mutual bike sharing schemes that reach into all of our communities.

We will support the creation of electric car sharing co-operatives which empower their members to deliver the type of vehicles that communities need in the locations that they need them.

We will look at ways of developing co-operative models for lifeline ferry and air services. People in remote and island communities should be given more of a say in the services which they rely upon. ●



ENERGY

All policies in transport, energy and housing should be evaluated against their contribution to lowering emissions in the climate and nature emergencies.

We strongly support community-owned energy. Local government and communities should be encouraged to develop energy buying deals which use co-operative models. We support plans for community co-operatively-owned energy producers. We would encourage local government and others to look at the examples from Edinburgh of local hydro-electric schemes and also photo-voltaic co-operatives on public and other buildings. We also think that there should be consideration for co-operative models of communal and district heating systems. We believe that the planning and taxation system should look favourably upon schemes which are genuinely community or co-operatively owned.

We will promote energy co-operatives in local areas to provide cost-effective energy efficiency actions as well as local micro-renewable generation and by bulk-buying to reduce the cost of fuel. This will go some way to combatting fuel poverty.

We will look to develop energy buying co-operatives that will tackle fuel poverty by buying in bulk.

We will work with local communities and with local government to develop local renewable energy and heat co-operatives

We will look to reduce waste as much as possible, where this is not possible we will look to develop co-operative solutions to recycling and re-use.

HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

We must build an NHS fit for the 21st century, which is able to meet the demands of an ageing population and be able to support all people of Scotland at any stage in life. We will strengthen the openness and transparency of NHS governance.

There is a need for a National Care Service. Such a service must set national standards. However, care should be delivered locally and be responsive to the needs of local people.

In terms of social care we believe that social care services could be provided via co-operatives. There is scope for the promotion of workers' co-operatives in social care. This would empower the workforce and give them greater control over their lives. We also believe that people with long-term care issues could be encouraged to set-up co-operatives to meet their care needs. ●

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

The Scottish Co-operative Party strongly believes in empowering communities; we think that the promotion of co-operatives and community ownership does that. We agree that public services should be user centred and directed, not driven by profits or price. We are very clear that co-operative and mutual policy solutions provide one way of delivering that. We believe that if we are serious about services being user centred and directed, there needs to be a large increase in the number of services which are delivered co-operatively. As a result of this, we support the efforts of Edinburgh and Glasgow City Councils in promoting the Co-operative Council model. We think that more councils should look at this model of service delivery and work with their staff, trade unions and citizens to find more co-operative ways of working.

The SNP Government's centralising agenda is hurting communities across Scotland. We believe that co-operatives provide a means of empowering local communities and combating the centralisation of services by the Scottish Government. Co-operative models can empower people in their communities and influence the decisions which impact on their lives.

Community wealth building is a place-based approach to economic regeneration which empowers local government and enables communities to create and retain wealth locally.

For too long, local economic policy has followed a "trickle down" path. Rather than waiting for investment from a new shopping centre or factory, community wealth building shifts the focus to harnessing existing local wealth.

Anchor institutions, such as the local authority, hospitals, football clubs and universities, spend millions of pounds annually on goods and services – but much of that spend results in limited additional benefit for the local economy. We support the pioneering work being done in North Ayrshire to promote Community Wealth Building and we support the further use of this model across Scotland.

We will look for ways to further promote credit unions, including providing assistance for

credit unions to be prominently located in our communities. We will promote local initiatives to encourage young people to join credit unions and ensure that financial literacy is included in all levels in schools. We will develop and promote campaigns to encourage credit unions.

We believe in supporting our town centres. Local marketing co-operatives can play an important role in reinvigorating our town centres by pooling the resources of the local shops and the local community to promote their area.

We recognise the important role that co-operatives play in our rural and farming communities and believe that the co-operative model has much more to offer in our rural communities.

Previous Co-operative and Labour-led Scottish Executives were at the forefront of ground-breaking land reform legislation which has led to radical change in our communities; we aim to build upon this and tackle inequalities in both urban and rural communities. Mutual and co-operative models should play a key role in the land reform agenda. There are a number of ways in which land can be mutually owned and bought we need the reformed Co-operative Development Scotland to have the resources and skills to make this a reality across Scotland.

We support the promotion of local produce and the greater use of locally sourced food, including supporting food co-operatives which can make a real difference to Scotland's communities.

We will legislate for the right to food in Scots Law.

The Scottish Government should review its support for community ownership and community empowerment and consider as part of our proposed review whether Co-operative Development Scotland should provide that support and whether it is adequately resourced to provide such support.

We will support and encourage the employee co-ownership model of working, which helps distribute wealth to employees and encourages long service. ●



CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING

The Scottish Co-operative Party supports plans to double the size of the co-operative economy, this must include at least doubling the size of the housing co-operative sector.

We fully support the conclusions drawn by the report for the Cross-Party Group on Co-operatives in the Scottish Parliament on Co-operative Housing Shared Space – How Scottish housing co-ops build communities.

We were happy to play a full role in Scottish Labour's Housing Commission and we support the recommendations in that paper Improving People's Lives through Radical Change and Reform.

The Co-operative Party believes that everyone should have access to a home that is decent, safe, offers security and is affordable to buy or rent and to maintain and run. Co-operation can help achieve this vision.

Co-operative housing is defined by the Confederation of Co-operative Housing as housing that is 'developed by, with and usually for, a democratic community membership organisation; and is controlled (and in some cases owned)

by a local democratic community membership organisation'.

Housing co-operatives, whether they are Registered Social Landlords or not, empower tenants and members. They give local people a say over the housing that they live in. We believe in an economy where wealth and power are shared. Housing providers should not be doing things to tenants; rather tenants should have a clear means of making their views known and acted upon. The best way to do this is in a fully mutual housing co-operative, owned and run by the people who live there.

Housing co-operatives reflect the views of their members (the tenants) and can act accordingly. This means that they are not constrained by a solely housing outlook. For example, they can see that security, support for older tenants, fuel poverty or shared communications technology would improve the quality of life for all tenants and deliver on these priorities.

West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative is an example of what can be achieved. Its success in promoting a different model of housing and of taking a holistic approach to housing, not just

looking after bricks and mortar, has saved the public purse a huge amount of money probably running into millions of pounds. This was shown by their social accounting audit undertaken a few years ago.

Housing co-operatives have the ability to provide an effective vehicle for types of change that the Christie Commission envisaged recognising that there is one public purse and that it is perverse that decisions by one part of the public sector can cost other parts of the public sector money.

As the recent Co-operatives UK report says, 'Why Co-ops?' The benefits of housing co-ops are:

- **Affordability:** Co-ops are an affordable place to live at a time when house prices and rents are increasing. The affordability of co-ops in the private rental sector, including shared housing and student accommodation, is particularly significant, as rents are increasingly expensive, especially in major cities.
- **Empowerment:** Housing co-ops in the social and private rental sectors give residents unparalleled agency, ownership and control in matters that fundamentally affect their lives.
- **Community:** The three very different housing co-ops featured in the CPG report have all highlighted the greater sense of community delivered by a housing co-operative. This can help to address issues of isolation, loneliness, and mental ill-health.
- **Stronger social housing:** West Whitlawburn demonstrates how housing co-ops can deliver a more attractive, warmer, and safer homes than some more traditional social housing solutions. This is starkly illustrated by the success of West Whitlawburn and the failure of neighbouring East Whitlawburn, where more than 350 homes are due to be demolished.

The Shared Space Report contained eight policy asks and we support these

Policy recommendations:

This is our eight-point plan to help deliver more housing co-ops in Scotland. We believe the Scottish Government should:

1. Fund a three-year pilot programme providing expert facilitation and advice to aid the development of more housing co-ops in the social and private rental sectors.
2. Consult Scotland's social tenants to better understand their appetite for increased involvement in decisions regarding their homes and neighbourhoods.
3. Lower costs and increase scale by working with sector bodies to create a 'Co-operative Foundation' that helps finance larger community-led projects through a co-investment and leasing arrangement.

4. Examine whether the regulatory framework for social housing responds appropriately to the distinct characteristics of co-ops.
5. Guarantee support for social housing co-ops to undertake urgent safety improvements post-Grenfell.
6. Help non-registered housing co-ops to expand, by granting a carefully targeted relief from Land and Buildings Transaction Tax on additional property purchases made by fully mutual housing co-operatives with non-distributable assets.
7. Guide local authorities to be supportive of the social value created by housing co-ops, when applying planning legislation to their planning applications.
8. Designate appropriately-purposed housing co-ops with non-distributable assets as 'community transfer bodies', to allow them to make asset transfer requests under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

There needs to be a greater understanding by national and local government about the role of the different types of co-operative housing. There is a growing body of evidence to show that housing cooperatives are good for people and good for society. The studies show that:

- Co-operatives outperform all other types of social landlord on all measures of performance.
- They create housing neighbourhoods that are socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable.
- Housing remains community owned and affordable for future generations.
- Because of their 'grass roots' nature co-operatives help to create community 'buy-in' and local consent for housing development.
- Co-operative ownership has a unique capacity to attract new sources of institutional investment into the provision of affordable homes. This means that the homes built will be in addition to what can be currently achieved.
- Co-operatives help maintain the independence of older residents through mutual aid and support, reducing the demand on the state.

To realise this potential, the Co-operative Party has proposed a range of policies. If co-operative housing sector is to grow, it must be able to access appropriate finance to support new developments.

As advocated within the 'New Foundations' model of co-operative housing, Government should work with the Co-operative Movement to develop a financial intermediary to raise and manage institutional investment in developing co-operative and mutual housing.

The Scottish Government should work with existing housing co-operatives that would be

interested in using their assets to develop new homes. This has the potential to enable the growth of housing co-operatives particularly on smaller sites which are currently not being developed quickly enough.

As private ownership and social housing becomes ever more difficult to access; the private rented sector will continue to grow. Rogue landlords and estate agent fees for lettings continue to disadvantage those seeking rented accommodation. There should be a ban on unfair estate agent fees and work developed to create a Landlords co-operative which helps manage and market properties outside of the private sector.

With the housing market and student finance broken, students across the UK are doing away with landlords and setting up their own student housing co-operatives, with Edinburgh Student Housing Co-operative being the biggest in the UK. The Co-operative Party believes this model of student housing provides an alternative that can be expanded across the Scotland.

Co-operative Development Scotland is a major achievement of the previous Cooperative and Labour-led Scottish Executive. The time has come to have a review of how well it has worked and whether it has sufficient resources to fulfil its remit. It is wrong that housing is an area which Co-operative Development Scotland is currently excluded from. Scotland needs a strong champion for housing

cooperatives.

The Scottish Co-operative Party will promote housing co-operatives and ensure that the co-operative model is included in any discussion of registered social landlords.

We recognise that we need to decarbonise energy use in our homes, we will promote co-operative and mutual means of renewable energy production for all new properties and look to develop ways to retrofit renewable energy use into existing properties.

The party will also look to promote housing co-operatives in other sectors of the market, for example student housing co-operatives.

As part of the review of Co-operative Development Scotland which the Scottish Co-operative Party is calling for there should be a review support for housing co-operatives, including whether Co-operative Development Scotland's remit should be expanded to include promoting housing co-operatives.

Housing co-operatives should be supported, this rationale behind housing co-operatives fits in with where Scottish Labour is with its support for democratising the economy. If we believe in giving workers more of a say in their place of work, then why would we not give them more say in their home. ●

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PAY OUR
FAIR SHARE**

*We are a
**Living
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