

NEC Update – Spring 2025

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Introduction

The NEC meets regularly throughout the year, with some of meetings over a full day or weekend in-person and the remainder online.

They met in Manchester in November, when they discussed the Party's Strategic Plan for the next three years and agreed the budget for 2025. You can find a summary of the Strategic Plan 2025-27 in a separate briefing here: [Strategic Plan 2025-27 – Summary – Co-operative Party](#).

Each quarter, the General Secretary reports to the NEC on the Party's activity and progress on the Plan. When the NEC met in February, they received reports on Party's work for the final quarter of 2024, and these were the last reports under the Strategic Plan 2022-24. These are summarised below.



Strategic Objectives





Strategic Objective: Support the election of co-operators at all levels of Government

The work around this strategic objective has significantly changed since the last General Secretary's report and the General Election. However, as detailed below there is important work underway to build ahead of crucial Scottish and Welsh elections, as well as the English Local Elections 2025.

Mayoral selections.

Since the last report, Co-operative Party members have taken part in selection processes for three Metro Mayoral and one directly elected Mayor.

- Hull and East Yorkshire Mayoral selection – Margaret Hinder is now Lab/Co-op.
- Great Lincolnshire Mayoral selection – Jason Stockwood is now Lab/Co-op.
- North Tyneside directly elected Mayor - Karen Clark is now Lab/Co-op
- West of England selection – the Co-operative Party candidate did not achieve the Labour Party selection.

Scottish and Wales selections.

Expressions of interest have been sought for new candidates in both Scotland and Wales and an initial online meeting of potential candidates was held with the General Secretary. Processes for selection (given changes made by the Labour Party) are being agreed, and some early selections have been dealt with by the Scottish Party.

Election Law (Scotland and Wales).

With electoral and ballot paper changes in Wales has come a challenge to the Co-operative Party's activity through the Welsh election regulated period. The Party has engaged with members, the Welsh Executive, the Electoral Commission, Welsh and UK Labour as well as the Welsh Government on the issue. There is currently an open consultation on the wider changes and the Party will continue to make the case for its legitimate election activity.

In Scotland, the Scottish Elections Bill offered an opportunity to correct some ballot paper issues with Scottish Local Government candidates. Amendments were put forward to the Bill that were debated but not successful.

Local Government 2025 candidate build.

Preparations are well underway for the Local Elections 2025. Through this report there will be other aspects of this activity covered including events and policy. However, the Party is on course to hit its 2025 strategic plan target in terms of numbers of candidates. The Party's 'Candidate Development Programme' (CDP) has been particularly active through the reporting period with at least 5 CDP taking place including campaign training, coffee mornings and co-operative policy sessions.

Strategic Objective: Be leaders of co-operative solutions, seeking their delivery locally, regionally and nationally in every sector of society and the economy

As the Party moves on from its activities through the election and adapts to a Labour Westminster Government this strategic objective will take on even further importance. As can be seen, amongst much more, there has been encouraging early work post-election on the pre-election policy priority areas.



Through the reporting period the work the Party conducts in these areas takes many forms including:

- Government stakeholder meetings and briefings
- Events
- Westminster activity
- Partnership work with other organisations
- Local and regional activity with Councillors and Metro Mayors.
- Policy work

Co-op growth/Double the size of the co-operative and mutual sector.

In relation to setting the conditions for co-operative growth the Party has been focused on work surrounding creating an encouraging legislative and regulatory environment for the sector. Since the last report:

- In the Chancellor's first Mansion House Speech Rachel Reeves announced that the Government would:
 - Ask regulators to report to Parliament by the end of 2025 on their work to support the co-operative and mutual sectors.
 - Open a consultation on the reform of the Credit Union common bond with a view to grow credit unions.
 - The Chancellor also welcomed the formation of a new business led Mutual and Co-operative Growth Council. (Early members of this Council included Co-op Group, Nationwide, ARLA and Royal London Mutual).
- This speech was followed up by a statement in Westminster, which provided an opportunity for many Lab/Co-op Parliamentarians to voice further ambition they had for the Sector.
- The Westminster Parliamentary Group wrote an open letter to the Chancellor welcoming the inclusions in the speech.
- Baggy Shankar MP and Alice McDonald MP both asked DBT Oral Questions on the content and the link between co-op growth and local and regional economic development.
- The first Labour budget also contained the first references to co-operatives for some decades. The reference placed co-operative growth as an aim of the Government's Small Business start-up review. The budget also contained Co-operative Party campaign content in relation to retail crime and the continuation of the Household Support Fund.

Community energy/The Government's Local Power Plan.

The Local Power Plan aims to generate 8GWs (two and a half nuclear power stations worth) of community owned renewable energy by 2030. Work in this priority area since the last report has included:

- Secretary of State and Ministerial support for the Plan through questions, statements and debate. Including contributions from many Co-operative Party MPs including Gareth Snell, Jayne Kirkham and Emma Foody.
- Community Energy support through the passage of the Great British Energy Bill.
- Co-operative Party support for Joe Morris MP's Ten Min Rule Bill on the topic.
- Chair of GBE's support for the plan at the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero Selection committee



- The Co-operative Party supported Parliamentary Labour Party meetings and drop ins with relevant Ministers.
- A Ministerial roundtable with sector, local government and financing experts to discuss practical implementation of the plan.
- Co-operative Party work with London Councillors on their boroughs' engagement with the Bill.
- Within The House Magazine (politicshome)'s Energy Edition the Co-operative Party and the General Secretary were profiled - a piece which centred upon the Local Power Plan.
- The Co-operative Party also won a special recognition award from Community Energy England for the Party's role in the creation and support for the policy.

Community Ownership and a new 'Community Right to Buy'

Ahead of the election the Party also ran on the implementation of a new 'Community Right to Buy' which would strengthen existing community powers to better allow communities to take on and run community assets. Since the last report:

- The Government (relevant Minister, Party Chair Jim McMahon MP) released a new Devolution White Paper which included the Government's plans to implement the Community Right to Buy. This White Paper is a forerunner to legislation expected through next year.
- When released, The Times newspaper carried Co-operative Party quotes on the topic.
- The Party conducted a visit to a community owned music venue in Birkenhead which resulted in campaign communications and a profile and an in-depth LabourList article on the issue.
- Emma Foody, Jo Platt and other Co-operative Party MPs have asked oral questions at Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government questions through the period on the topic on community power and support.
- The Party has developed and issued new campaigning materials for Local Councillors around the Community Right to Buy. This pack contains a new Council motion which has been passed by Councils including Barnet, Southampton and Stockport.
- The Party has developed and issued new campaigning materials for a new Community Right to Buy to be taken up by the Welsh Government. This has gone to Welsh members.
- The Party conducted a joint Westminster event with Hope not Hate for all members of the Co-operative Party in the Parliamentary Labour Party on the issue of community power as an antidote to extremism.

Policy Advisory Group

In line with the Strategic Plan the Party has been working to ensure that we are as well armed with co-operative sector policy as possible, ensuring strong sectoral policy relationships. As such the Party has:

- Held three well attended Policy Advisory Group open sessions which have brought together policy colleagues from across the movement. The last of these centred on the ability of mutual finance to drive local and regional economic development.



- Held regular and extended range of policy stakeholder meetings with feedback being regularly delivered to relevant policy officers.

Other activity in pursuit of this strategic plan:

- The Party revamped and reissued its 'Build Your Own Manifesto' for Local Government. This was issued ahead of 2025 elections.
- Swindon Council has passed the Party's Retail Crime Motion.
- Delivered an open letter to the Prime Minister on the topic of the UN Year of Co-operatives.
- Party officers attended and supported a Scottish civil sector event with the Scottish Labour Party.
- The Party communicated about the Government taking up a Party ask in relation to the Football Governance Bill which now makes specific reference of democratic methods of fan engagement.
- Oxfordshire Council passed the Party's Fairtax Motion.
- The Party sent an open letter to Education Minister Janet Darby MP welcoming the creation of regional social care procurement co-operative pilots.
- Camden Council passed the Party's Modern Slavery motion.

Strategic Objective: Inspire and educate our audiences about the achievements and potential of the co-operative movement

This remains a critical area of Party activity to grow the Party and the wider co-operative movement. Through this period of the year conferences and events are a dominate section of work in this area, however, there has been a lot of campaigning work as well. The Party's work to grow its supporter list continued at a pace and has hit the Party's strategic target of topping 100k supporters.

Labour Party Annual Conference

The Party attended Labour Party Conference in Liverpool. In addition to the meetings, recruitment and content generation the Party:

- Delivered its regular sororal greetings
- Held three sponsored fringes with organisations including Power to Change, Younity, and the BSA.
- Ran the Party's stall.
- Held private events on issues such as Rural co-operative growth (sponsored by Arla).
- Spoke on other organisations' panels on priority issues for the Party.

Co-operative Change: Co-operative Showcase event

In November, the Party held a showcase event in the Co-operative Group's Headquarters in Angel Square. This event was well attended and received very positive feedback. It featured speakers including the Deputy Prime Minister, Secretary of State for Business and Trade, Mayor of Greater Manchester among many others. The event received coverage in the Independent newspaper and LabourList as well as a range of online news services as well as an opinion piece in the Manchester Evening News.



Other Labour and Co-operative movement conference and events

The Party has attended and spoke at:

- Responsible Finance conference
- Democratic business summit
- North West Labour Conference
- Welsh Labour Conference
- Employee Ownership Conference

Ticket Touts

The Party continued its campaigning on the issue of ticket touting. Following Co-operative MP Prime Ministers Questions (covered in the Guardian newspaper):

- Emma Foody MP led a Westminster Hall debate on the issue.
- Party officers presented at the All-Party Group on Ticket touting.
- The issue was raised in Business Questions
- Regular campaign content disseminated to members and supporters on the issue.
- The Government announced new measures on curbing the price gouging that touts had been involved in as well as a broader consultation on the sector.

Retail Crime

Retail Crime continues to be an important aspect of Party activity through the reporting period the Party has:

- Conducted a Retail Crime Summit in Central London which was attended by the retail industry, Police and Crime Commissioners, subscribing societies, Parliamentarians, metro mayors and two Home Office Minister. The summit achieved Mirror newspaper and LBC broadcast coverage.
- Through Respect for Shopworkers week a record number of Co-operative Parliamentarians conducted a co-op store visit. This was highlighted through the Party communications channels.
- Co-operative Party MP Kirsteen Sullivan also asked a Business Question on the topic of retail crime.

Co-op Live member events.

The Party has continued to produce a strong number of high-quality online Members events under the banner 'Co-op Live' through the reporting period the Party has produced sessions on:

- Community cohesion with Hope not Hate.
- Local Ownership with Power to Change.
- Access to Food with the Co-operative Group
- Co-operative energy retrofit with People Powered Retrofit.
- Co-operative Catalonia with members of the region's Social Care providers
- Co-op live ticket tout



Local co-op visits.

In order to generate shareable first-hand co-operative stories, the Party has sought to conduct a number of smaller co-operative visits. Through the reporting period these have happened at:

- Future Yard Music Venue
- South Manchester Bike Co-op
- Bannister House Community Energy scheme
- Grimsby community ownership scheme
- The General Secretary spoke at an event of new co-operatives who benefit from West Yorkshire business advice in Leeds.

Co-op education on the curriculum

Working with sector umbrella organisations and the subscribing societies the Party campaigned for co-operative education to be placed on the national curriculum in England while Government consultation was open. This included:

- Having the issue raised in Westminster during Westminster Hall Debates (Gareth Snell MP).
- Asking members to complete the consultation.
- Having co-operative movement organisations share the Party's content.
- And writing to the consultation.

Ecocide

Scottish members took part in campaign actions to contact MSPs asking them to support Monica Lennon MSP's private members bill on ecocide. In all 126 of the 129 MSPs were contacted by members.

Strategic Objective: Have an engaged, diverse and growing individual and organisational membership that values the Party and its work

Membership recruitment

The team worked incredibly hard on recruitment through the year, but the Party did not reach its membership growth goal. This was because of a larger attrition rate than previous years combined with slower recruitment. The year ended with the Party slightly up on the 2023 individual membership figure.

Scottish and Welsh member-led policy processes

Both the Scottish Members and Welsh members policy processes have been agreed and begun ahead of future manifestos and elections. These processes have already had open members sessions and stimulus questions and papers have been sent out.

The Pioneer

Through the reporting period the second **The Pioneer** Members' Magazine of the year was delivered. This edition was the second 'election special'. The Party sought to refresh the look of the magazine, and it contained articles on the election and subsequent Government activity. The magazine also contained an article from the Prime Minister.



Subscribing Societies

In addition to events and campaigns previously reported upon such as the Retail Crime Summit the Party also:

- Welcomed the Co-operative Group CEO to the Westminster Parliamentary Group.
- Attended and spoke at the Midlands Half Yearly event.
- Attended and had a stall at Co-operative UK's Practitioner Forum.
- Co-ordinated a response to the Government's Planning consultation.
- Conducted the latest Subscribing Society meeting in Edinburgh.
- Attended and spoke at the Co-operative Group's National Member Council.
- Worked with Midlands to produce a Westminster event which centred on Modern Slavery and the Bright Futures co-operative.

Local events with elected representatives

The Party has sought to better ensure that local members' meetings featured new or returning Westminster elected representatives. Whilst the below is not a complete list of this work through the reporting period there has been:

- North West and Northern Ireland members with Jo Platt MP
- East Midlands event with Alex Norris MP
- South West event with Luke Pollard MP
- South Yorkshire members with Oli Coppard the Metro Mayor.

Equalities

The below will not be an exhaustive list of the activities the Party has undertaken through the reporting period:

- The Party conducted the elections for all network committees which, given the rules surrounding them takes a significant amount of staff time and resource.
- Equalities Conference - The Party held its Annual Equalities conference, which was addressed by the Government's Equality Minister Anneliese Dodds MP.
- The Chris Herries scheme for Women's leadership is open for applications. The scheme has been revamped, and the Party has a new delivery partner for it, the Co-operative College.
- There has also been network led events including with the BAME network.

Strategic Objective: Ensure the Party is organisationally and financially sustainable

In addition to activity previously noted in the report such as the equality network committee elections and work surrounding the election legislation and regulation in Wales, the Party has conducted a large amount of work around this strategic objective.

Election returns and audit

One of the most significant pieces of activity in this area was the General Election return. This return covers financial reporting for all regulated campaign activity spend through the regulated period of the election (dating back 12 months prior to polling day). As a result of the Party's increased expenditure when compared to previous elections this return required independent auditing. This report is now with the Electoral Commission.



Equalities Review

The Party concluded its information gathering surrounding the equalities network review. This information will now be used within the wider membership review the Party is launching.

Donations

Changes to electoral law and donations has meant the Party has needed to put in place new work and systems to ensure compliance with electoral law.

Training

In addition to the Candidate Development Programme the Party has conducted training sessions:

- New Officers
- New Treasurers
- Anti Islamophobia
- Anti Semitism

Membership survey

Ahead of the membership review the Party has conducted a range of membership survey work to better understand membership experience and expectations of membership. Further surveying work is planned for Q1.

Recruitment & Membership

- **On 31 December 2024**, our total individual membership stood at **13,430**.
- **Our affiliate membership** stood at **14**.
- **Together**, our total membership stood at **13,444**.
- **Total new recruitment** (both new joiners and those who re-joined after being lapsed) for 2024 was **1,361**.
- **North West region** had the highest number of new members, followed by London, the South East and then the Eastern region.
- **Upward spikes** in membership recruitment tend to come in with election cycles – our highest months have been March (local government recruitment), May (local government election success) and July (general election success).
- **May** was the highest month for recruitment, with 156 new members.
- **Unison Labour Link** voted to affiliate to the Party in November 2023, commencing in 2024.
- **Throughout 2024** we continued to look at ways increase both local recruitment & retention, and expand our national email supporter list, which is by far the biggest source of new member recruitment. This included involving the co-operation of local parties and branches in pro-actively recruiting, using text messages to remind members that they are in arrears and localising the new member journey so that new members received immediate information from their region. This continued and built on the work from 2023.
- **Our total number of supporters** who receive our national emails (both members and non-members) at the end of 2024 was around **135,000**.



- **Local recruitment** was boosted in Q1 through Local Government candidate recruitment.
- **Our biggest source of new members** was the targeted Join Asks.
- **Recruitment into 2025** will continue to be challenging, and we will continue to devote considerable attention and time to retention and to improving the member experience and journey. The July general election also provided opportunities for this in conjunction with member mobilisation.
- **While funding from the Co-op Group** in recent years has fallen or remained static, income from individual members continues to grow each year and reached more than 40.3% in 2024.
- **Increases in membership income** should see a record amount of the Party's subscriptions come from sources other than the Co-op Group this year. Twelve years ago, Co-op Group funding amounted to 75.5% of the total. In 2024, we saw less than half, or around 47.7% of funding come from the Co-op Group.
- **Around 12% of all income** was derived from the non-Co-op Group societies.
- **Increases in membership income** have been driven by consistent recruitment and retention, and the small annual inflationary rises.
- **Individual Membership income** to the end of 2024 was just over **£506,000**.
- **February's figure** of over **£128,500** was the highest ever for that month.
- **About 15% of members** now give an 'additional amount' either per month or per year on top of their chosen rate, either through a Club rate or effective donation with a regular rate. For new 2024 members this rises to 18.6%, mainly through the Higher rate.
- **These additional donations** help subsidise lower reduced income rate, while also allowing the Party to invest in delivering our campaigns and strategy.
- **Equality questions** are now part of our core forms, including the ones for new members, member updates and council candidate applications, giving us accurate data on new members, and building data on existing members.
- **Our recruitment** has improved significantly across all equalities groups since we first reported in 2020, building a more representative Party.
- **Proportions of all the demographics** (except female) have increased since the last quarter as we gain more data from new members and existing members.
- **The percentage of women** joining has levelled back to nearer the percentage of all members, but the percentage of members in the Youth category continues to increase, as do the (dis)Ability, BAME & LGTBQ+ categories.
- **Making meetings accessible:** For members applying to the local government candidate development programme, we introduced a 'caring responsibilities for young children' tab to the questionnaire so we can help with accessibility issues for potential candidates and meetings in terms of Zoom times, etc.
- **In 2025** we had just over 2.1% of all members who have declared this. **For new members 2024** this rises to 2.6% of all new members.



Contacting the NEC

[See here for members of the NEC and contact details](#). You can contact your NEC representative via the link on that page or by emailing Karen Wilkie, Board Secretary at board@party.coop.

Inviting NEC members to meetings

Following the change to structure of the NEC from 2023, each local party and branch has two regional NEC representatives, in addition to those elected to represent BAME, (dis)Able, LGBTQ+, Youth and elected members.

In England, both regional NEC members represent the whole of your section so you can invite either to your Party Council or branch meetings, particularly if the meeting is to take place on line. For in-person meetings, please bear in mind the travel time and costs - the [party council or branch](#) should meet the travel expenses of any NEC member they invite.

For regional parties, both NEC members should always receive notice of meetings.

Elections to the NEC

The NEC is elected by and from members every three years, with the next elections in early 2026. If you would like to know more about seeking election to the NEC, contact Karen Wilkie, Board Secretary, at board@party.coop.