

# NEW SECTOR

THE MAGAZINE OF COMMUNITY & CO-OPERATIVE ENTERPRISE

ISSUE 40 • MAY/JUNE 2000



## **Rapid growth of social firms** *also this issue*

**News from community projects in UK**

**Positive news for the Co-operative Commission**

**Reaction to neighbourhood renewal strategy**

**Accessible transport in Northern Ireland**

**Community-owned quarries in India**

# NEW SECTOR

New Sector exists to promote the principles of collective enterprise and common ownership.

New Sector is the magazine of co-operatives and community-owned businesses in the UK and tries to establish world-wide links with others involved in local economic development work.

It provides information about community and co-operative enterprise and welcomes articles on related topics. It highlights new economic values, economic activity which is centred on people, and new concepts of economic development and growth.

It is published by a joint venture company on behalf of ICOM, CBS Network, CEW and NICDA. The views expressed in New Sector are not necessarily those of ICOM, CBS Network, CEW or NICDA.

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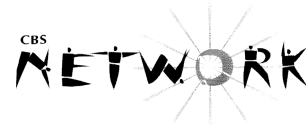
Four democratic not-for-profit organisations work in partnership to produce New Sector. Each has a different structure and operation but all have similar aims and objectives. They exist to support and promote co-operative and community enterprise in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.



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### Published by

Community & Co-operative Enterprise Publishing & Research Ltd.  
ISSN No 09662197

**Subscriptions and registered office:** Society Place, West Calder  
EH55 8EA

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**Website:** www.newsector.co.uk

sponsored by poptel 0800 4589465, info@poptel.net

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**Editing and design:** Alpha Communication, Durham

**Printed by** Russell Press, Nottingham on 100% recycled paper.

## In this issue

Our front cover photograph illustrates a change in attitude to the employment of disabled people. It shows the interior of a smart restaurant, indistinguishable from thousands in town centres throughout the UK. But half the staff at this restaurant have mental health problems. It is one of the growing number of social firms committed to providing well paid, satisfying jobs to disabled people. This issue of



*New Sector* includes a special supplement sponsored by Social Firms UK, a national 'umbrella' organisation formed last year. In the UK workers' co-ops have pioneered new employment practices for disabled people - some 30% of social firms are co-operatives - and the innovation continues. ICOM is working on constitutions that

both protect and include vulnerable people within a co-operative structure (see page 8).

The government has announced several initiatives that will interest *New Sector* readers. The new strategy for neighbourhood renewal contains no surprises, but it does send out a strong signal to funding bodies that community enterprise is an essential part of regeneration (see page 20).

Co-op MP Louise Ellman refers to another initiative, the £30 million Phoenix fund to encourage entrepreneurship in disadvantaged areas, saying that it will welcome applications from community enterprises. She also makes it clear that social enterprise is not a new concept - the co-operative movement has been promoting it for well over a century.

The creation of the Co-operative Commission, with the personal backing of Tony Blair, gives the co-op movement a rare opportunity to influence policy development. The Commission has invited responses from the wider co-op movement, including people involved in co-operative and community enterprise development. They are listening, so we had better start talking (see page 6).

Our international feature describes how community ownership has transformed the dangerous and exploitative work of quarrying in parts of South India (see page 21).

Yours in co-operation

David Parker

**Front cover picture:** Annabelle's restaurant in Twickenham, a social firm that provides good jobs for disabled people.(see pages 9 to 16).

## Mutualism - the solution for councils

The latest in the series of *New Mutualism* pamphlets published by the UK Co-operative Council and the Co-operative Party had a Parliamentary launch in March.

*New mutualism - a new solution for renewed councils?* was written by Paul Gosling and contains a foreword from Lord Harris of Haringey who describes the pamphlet as "a must for all modernising councils."



Lord Graham, Chairman of UK Co-operative Council, with author Paul Gosling

Members of both Houses of Parliament were present at the launch on 8 March which was addressed by Lord Graham of Edmonton, the UKCC Chairman.

In the pamphlet, Paul cites the "four Cs" of the government's 'Best Value' regime - to challenge, compare, consult and compete. To these he adds a fifth - co-operation. He argues that by introducing co-operation, councils can achieve the four other Cs without compromising their principles.

"Co-operatives have a major role to play as part of New Labour's 'modernising local government' agenda" concludes Paul.

Further evidence of this potential link between local government and co-operatives can be found in ICOM's *Enterprising Services Training Materials Guide* (see review page 22).

Contact *The Co-operative Party* 020 7357 0230

## Historic market to be run by co-operative

The 600-year old Kingsland Market in Southampton may soon be run by a co-operative. Final negotiations between the city council and the Southern Market Traders Co-operative were taking place as *New Sector* went to print.

The co-operative has flourished since it was set up with assistance from Southampton Area Co-operative Development Agency (SACDA) in 1996. It now has 400 members and currently operates six markets.

"Market traders are the best people to run markets because we know what the public wants," said general manager Paul Lewis. "We work closely with local shopkeepers in the fight back against out-of-town shopping. We also donate our profits to local charities. Our long term aim is for the co-op to run all the markets in the area."

The co-op commissioned SACDA to help with the tender. This is an example of how local co-ops have continued to support SACDA since the local authority suddenly withdrew its funding last year (as reported in *New Sector* 38). SACDA has survived with a combination of European funding, consultancy work and goodwill. In the last three months it has registered six new co-operatives, and two of the enterprises based at SACDA's 'incubator unit' - a credit union and a dance co-operative - have just been given grants from a Single Regeneration Budget partnership.

"It is amazing what we have achieved without the local authority funding," said Brian Titley, SACDA's general manager. "It has given us a feeling of independence, and I think we are now in a stronger position to discuss the future of co-operative and social enterprise development with the city council."

Contact SACDA 01703 230529

### Healthplan for ICOM members

ICOM is offering its members a low-cost healthcare package which gives cash towards a wide range of treatments including optometry, dentistry, physiotherapy, acupuncture and osteopathy

The Healthplan, developed in association with Leeds Hospital Fund, costs from £1.95 a week, with the added benefit of free cover for children under 17.

The Leeds Hospital Fund has been in business for over 100 years. It is non-profit making and returns virtually all its contributory income, less its administrative costs, to its contributors in the form of benefits.

Contact Christine Boxall,  
ICOM 0113 246 1738

### Social audit training in Scotland

The CBS Network Social Audit Programme is holding training days in Glasgow and Perth.

The course is for staff of development agencies, community development organisations, community enterprises and people from the voluntary and statutory sectors.

The courses will combine taught elements and interactive work exercises. Trainers on the full-day courses are John Pearce and Alan Kay.

Contact CBS Network 01506 871 370

### European self-help network conference

The fourth international conference of the European Network for Economic Self Help and Local Development will be held later this year in Edinburgh.

The conference will focus on Local Regeneration and Social Capital and will explore issues around building capacity and taking action. It follows a pattern of alternating the conference venue from Germany to the UK and will take place on 7 - 9 September.

Keynote international contributions will be given by Rudy Bryant from the Pratt Institute for Community and Environmental Development in the US and by Martine Théveniaut-Müller from the Agence pour le Développement des Services de Proximité in France. Workshops will explore and draw together best practice from the UK, European initiatives and international perspectives.

Contact Claire Lyddall 0131 661 0200  
e-mail [euroconf2000@talk21.com](mailto:euroconf2000@talk21.com)

## Growing CDA becomes Investor in People

Durham Co-operative Development Association has become the first agency specialising in community enterprise in North East England to achieve the Investor in People award.

This achievement has coincided with a period of rapid growth and development of the organisation to cope with a huge increase in demand for its services.

In the last 12 months the CDA's workforce has doubled from 21 to 42. It has moved premises to the centre of Durham and has opened six outlying offices for community enterprise workers. Annual turnover has increased, and the budget for this year is more than £1 million.

It took just over two years for Durham CDA to complete the procedures required for Investors in People which, according to the assessors, is quicker than average. Their report said "The organisation has always believed in the principles of Investors in People. ... What was successfully achieved informally in the past has needed a more formal structure to sustain growth."

Assistant Director Brenda Fulton is delighted with the award. "It shows the high value Durham CDA places on people - both the people we work with in co-operatives and community enterprises, and the staff we rely on to provide the best possible training, development and business services."

"We are recruiting new staff at the moment. I hope that the Investor in People award will help to attract the very best applicants."

Elsewhere in the UK, Leicestershire CDA and Co-operation Black Country have already achieved IiP status, and several other CDAs are working towards it.

Contact Durham CDA 0191 384 9111



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

### A decade of waste



Bradford based recycling company, Waste Chasers celebrated its 10th anniversary in March 2000.

The co-operative business offers a flexible and comprehensive service particularly suited to office-based organisations, large and small.

Waste Chasers largest client is Bradford Metropolitan District Council. Joining in the 10th anniversary celebrations, Councillor Keith Thompson, former chair of the waste management sub-committee, said,

"We hope that Bradford Waste Chasers continue to flourish in their activities and maintain their dedication in the uphill struggle to reduce waste and increase recycling."

Contact Bradford Waste Chasers 01274 720740

# Co-op councils begin to be heard



Euro MP Stephen Hughes at the North of England Co-operative Council launch

Two regional co-operative councils, in the north of England and the south west, had public launches in March.

Both councils reported that they had already had very positive discussions with their regional development agencies.

Around 100 people attended the launch of the North of England Co-operative Council held at the Federation Brewery in Gateshead (which is itself a secondary co-op whose members are local social clubs).

The launch was sponsored by the North Eastern Co-op and all areas of the co-operative movement were represented at the meeting.

One of the aims of the evening was to make people within the North of England co-op movement more aware of what was happening in other parts of the movement locally. There were brief presentations from

- North Eastern Co-op
- Durham CDA
- Hendon 2000, Sunderland
- Northumberland and Durham Machinery Ring
- Jarrow Credit Union Forum
- Summerhill Housing Co-op, Newcastle

Local Euro MP, Stephen Hughes gave his support to the Council and stressed the government's support for the co-operative movement at a regional, national and European level.

At the launch of the South West Co-operative Council in Taunton, Simon Rawlinson of the Plunkett Foundation and Martin Meteyard from CWS described how co-operatives can transform the rural economy.

In both the north east and the south west there is concern about the very patchy distribution of specialist co-operative business support. "One of our first tasks is to work with the regional development agency to ensure that the excellent services that are provided by CDAs in some areas are made available throughout the region," said Tim Pearce, acting secretary of the South West Co-operative Council.

*North of England Co-operative Council 0191 384 9111*

*South West Co-operative Council 01225 463050*

## Best Value through community enterprise

'Best Value' became law on 1 April 2000. On the eve of the introduction of this new approach to local authority service provision, commissioning officers and community entrepreneurs met in Cambridgeshire to explore areas of common interest.

Presenters at the *Best Value Through Community Enterprise* conference in the Fenland market town of March included Tim Pilsbury, Fenland District Council's Best Value officer, and Jenny Archard, community enterprise specialist with the Community Council of Devon.

Tim Pilsbury encouraged community enterprises to seize the opportunities presented by the introduction of 'best value'. "Local authorities must review all service delivery. It may be that community enterprises offer the best value for providing particular services because they also incorporate additional, community-based benefits."

The conference was organised as part of Cambridgeshire ACRE's Fenland Community Enterprise Programme. For a free copy of the conference report, please send a large stamped (40p) SAE to Chris Lee, Community Enterprise Coordinator, Cambridgeshire ACRE, 3 Station Approach, Station Road, March PE15 8SJ (Tel 01354 651188).

## CELEBRATING CO-OPERATION

### Launch of East Midlands Co-operative Council

**Saturday 1 July 2000**  
10.00 - 14.00

The Co-operative College  
Stanford Hall, Nr Loughborough

**Speakers** include: Tyrone O'Sullivan, Tower Colliery; Keith Darwin, Lincoln Co-operative Society; Moira Lees, CWS representative to ICA, plus workers co-ops, housing co-ops and credit unions.

**Live video link** to other co-ops worldwide celebrating International Co-operatives Day

### Barbecue Lunch

**All co-operators welcome**

Contact Membership & Community Affairs at Greater Nottingham Co-op, tel 0115 946 6271

## Dawn of Creation

Creation Community Development is one of Wales' newest community businesses (started 1 April 2000) but it draws on a wealth of community enterprise experience. Creation looks for gaps in community services and helps local people to set up businesses to fill them, eg childcare facilities, building and maintenance service, garden and landscaping services, community catering, waste management and warden service, youth provision and community accommodation.



Creation manages Blaengarw Workmen's Hall which was refurbished a number of years ago and now provides activities and facilities such as a cinema and a live entertainment venue, training and workshops, access to a variety of visual arts and archive collection, darkroom, design and office facilities.

Contact Dawn Davies 01656 871911

## The road to success

The Cambridge Car Co-operative was set up last year by four people to maximise the use of their two vehicles and minimise the environmental effects of their use. The co-op has developed an effective way of working that could easily be copied by other schemes.



Frances Nicholson (left) and Sue Parlbly of Cambridge Car Co-op

In Cambridge, each car is shared between two people with each user having access to the car on pre-arranged days. This arrangement creates consistency and avoids friction.

To determine who pays any expenses (including tax and insurance), the mileage for the year is calculated and attributed to each driver and the expenses are then apportioned.

Existing legislation does not favour car co-ops. As the law stands, a co-operative cannot own the car. It must be registered in an individual's name - the same applies to vehicle insurance.

Contact Cambridge Car Co-operative  
01223 722910

## Time for a positive response

by Helen Seymour  
(writing in a personal capacity)

The establishment of the Co-operative Commission offers all of us who care about the principle of co-operation and the success and continuation of co-operatives (in all their forms) a unique opportunity; an opportunity to show the strength and resilience of co-op businesses, organisations and structures and above all their potential in delivering benefits to members.

It's a unique opportunity in as much as there is unlikely to be another such open invitation, blessed as it is by a Prime Minister (though in his capacity as Leader of the Labour Party). Let's respond and show our strength and ideas.

The work of the Commission focuses on three key themes:

- What is the vision for the Co-operative Movement in terms of commercial objectives and social goals?
- How close to delivering the vision are we?
- What structures do we need to incorporate to close the gap between the vision and the reality
  - to deliver commercial and social objectives whilst ensuring market responsiveness,
  - to protect the assets of the movement?

Also part of the Commission's scope is "to ensure that consumer co-operation brings its support and experience to bear on the development of the wider co-operative sector of the British economy". Given the vibrancy, imagination and wealth of ideas in the so called new co-ops - housing co-ops, employee owned businesses, credit unions etc- this might seem a little patronising. The better question might be how might all wings of the co-operative sector work together to promote the success of all co-operative ventures. That's the way the question should certainly be answered.

What the Commission needs to hear is that co-ops are not part of some vague belief system whose acolytes occupy the moral high ground. Instead they are effective and empowering structures for doing business, offering credit, providing housing or good quality goods. Co-operation is a hard headed economic option with clear social goals in which people are empowered and can help themselves and with clear benefits to members.

Co-operatives need to be better embedded in the British economic framework: this Commission gives us the chance to show how.

The Commission is receiving submissions until 30 June. You can write to The Co-operative Commission, Room 222, Congress House, 23-28 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS or e-mail [comment@co-opcommission.org.uk](mailto:comment@co-opcommission.org.uk). The Commission is also holding regional hearings as follows:

Sat 17 June, Unipart Centre, Oxford

Sat 24 June, Co-operative College, near Loughborough

Sat 8 July, Quayside Centre, Mussleburgh, Edinburgh

Sat 15 July, Manchester, (venue to be confirmed)

More information is available on [www.co-opcommission.org.uk](http://www.co-opcommission.org.uk)



Some of Broadgate Farm's winning team, from left: Mark Allison, Ian Manghan and Stuart Tears



## Care co-op wins flower show

A small co-operative that provides care for people with enduring mental health problems won two awards at a major regional flower show, on the first occasion it had entered. The display by Broadgate Farm, near Durham, won the Best Horticultural College Exhibit and the Silver Gilt Best in Show prize at the Gateshead Spring Flower Show on 8 - 9 April.

The highly imaginative display made use of the artistic resources of the co-operative, which include painting, sculpture and ceramics, as well as the organic gardens.

"We are delighted and a bit surprised since we only decided to enter six weeks ago," said co-op member Ian Manghan. "We beat big horticultural colleges that plan their displays months ahead."

Broadgate Farm, which started in 1996, now provides 65 care places a week. Local social services and health departments use the co-op as an example of good practice.

With help from Durham CDA, Broadgate Farm is currently developing a new co-operative outreach project called Garden Octopus. This involves a team of people with mental health problems providing a garden maintenance service for elderly people.

Contact Broadgate Farm 0191 373 5575

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### Progress on employee share ownership

Stephen Timms, the Treasury Minister responsible for the All Employee Share Scheme, met a delegation which included Pauline Green, Chief Executive of the Co-operative Union (CU), Bob Burlton, Chair of CU, John Tilley and an ICOM representative. Prior to the meeting on 17 February, a joint ICOM/CU paper had been submitted, which had been drafted by ICOM and endorsed by the UKCC.

After the meeting the ICOM representative said "the meeting with the Minister went well. He and the Inland Revenue officials were friendly and receptive to our requests. But it is also clear that we have more work to do to educate the government about co-operatives' different legal and financial structures.

"The delegation raised several issues related to Industrial and Provident Societies. On these issues, we are likely to see changes to the draft legislation. But on issues relating to companies limited by guarantee, we are not likely to see immediate changes.

"This must be followed up. The John Lewis Partnership, the Building Societies Association, Scott Bader, Malcolm Lynch and ICOM have all raised a common issue: the need for an employee investment and ownership mechanism that doesn't use traditional shares or IPS rules." The delegation also raised the issue that the share plan does not include worker investment in company start-ups and buy-outs. The Treasury is working with the CBI on a review of investment tax credits. ICOM was invited to follow-up on the worker co-operative start-up issue as part of this review.

Since ICOM's involvement in lobbying on the All Employee Share Ownership Plan, the one place within the government that employee ownership is being discussed, Worker Co-operatives are explicitly included in the draft legislation for tax credits worth £400 million.

Contact ICOM 0113 246 1738

# ICOM/ICOF conference to focus on inclusion and democracy

Following last year's success, ICOM and ICOF are holding another joint annual conference at the Co-operative College, on 7 - 9 July. Once again the programme will be split along the lines of policy and training.

Day one will focus on the links between democratic participation and social inclusion. Starting from the government's recent Policy Action Team reports into social exclusion, the conference will explore the role of the co-operative movement in promoting social inclusion. The PAT reports of particular relevance to the co-operative sector include

- Neighbourhood Management (PAT 9 & 6)
- Shops (PAT 13)
- Housing (PAT 5 & 7)
- Social Enterprise (PAT 3)
- Financial Services (PAT 14)
- Sports & Arts (PAT 10)
- Enterprise Finance (PAT 3)
- Jobs / Employment (PAT 1)
- Care & Health
- Skills & Education (PAT 2)

Speakers have been invited from across the co-operative movement and from other organisations that support mutual working such as the Development Trusts Association (DTA), UK Social Investment Forum (UKSIF) and the Association of British Credit Unions (ABCUL).

Patricia Hewitt, the minister for small firms, who has expressed support for social enterprise, and Matthew Taylor of the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) have been invited to speak. Other speakers include Peter Hunt, secretary of the Co-operative Party and Peter Couchman, Marketing Manager of Oxford, Swindon and Gloucester Co-operative Society.

An introductory session will allow new conference delegates to get to know ICOM and ICOF staff.

Day two is an opportunity for training focused on co-operatives and development workers. There will be further exploration of democratic participation as well as interactive workshops on getting the most out of working in a co-op, team-working and collective decision-making.

Democratic participation, along with ownership, singles out co-operative working from minority ESOPs and conventional business. It is therefore crucial that ICOM and ICOF assist co-operatives in developing democratic working.

Further training sessions will cover finance and employment issues for co-operatives and, away from the speeches and debate, there will be a social gathering on the Saturday night.

Contact ICOM 0113 246 1738

## Status of mentally ill co-op members clarified

New research carried out by ICOM's legal department and Charlie Cattell has clarified the legal status of mental health sufferers as directors of companies.

The research was commissioned as part of the Co-opability project which looked into the employment issues and requirements of mental health service users, their participation in the work place and the suitability of the co-operative structure for empowering them.

The report makes clear distinctions between being a member of a co-operative and being a director of it, serving as a director and acting as a director, and of what is normal practice if a director becomes ill. Evaluating this in relation to the Disability Discrimination Act, the findings are that the co-operative structure is flexible and inclusive for any group of vulnerable people who wish to establish a co-operative, and concludes that it is wise to "have available constitutions which exhibit best practice and which reasonably protect participants from falling foul of the law."

ICOM Training has organised a day of workshops on 13 June in Manchester at which an information pack for mental health service users and providers will be available. The theme for the day is *Co-operative working as an empowerment tool for mental health service users and support agencies*.

ICOM Training will also be using the day to report the outcomes of the Co-opability project, currently working with three pilot groups:

- a social services group in Leeds
- an established privately operated social business in need of restructuring in Doncaster
- a Mind initiative in Sheffield to replicate a very successful LETS scheme in Stirling.

Contact Liz Child, ICOM Training Ltd 0113 246 1737

### ICOM/ICOF Conference & AGMs 7 - 9 July 2000

The Co-operative College  
Loughborough

### Democratic Participation and Social Inclusion

#### Friday 7 July - POLICY

Speakers include:

**Peter Hunt**, Secretary of the Co-operative Party; **Pauline Green**, Chief Executive of the Co-operative Union; **Patricia Hewitt**, Minister for Small Firms (invited); **Angela Monaghan**, Director of the Development Trusts Association.

#### Saturday 8 July - TRAINING & AGMs

Focused on co-operatives and development workers. Topics include:

employment rights, social investment, finance for non-finance workers, all-employee share ownership plan, how to get the best out of working in a co-operative, team working, collective decision-making.

Contact Hannah Durrant or Christine Boxall at ICOM: tel 0113 246 1738, email [icom@icom.org.uk](mailto:icom@icom.org.uk)



## Rapidly expanding

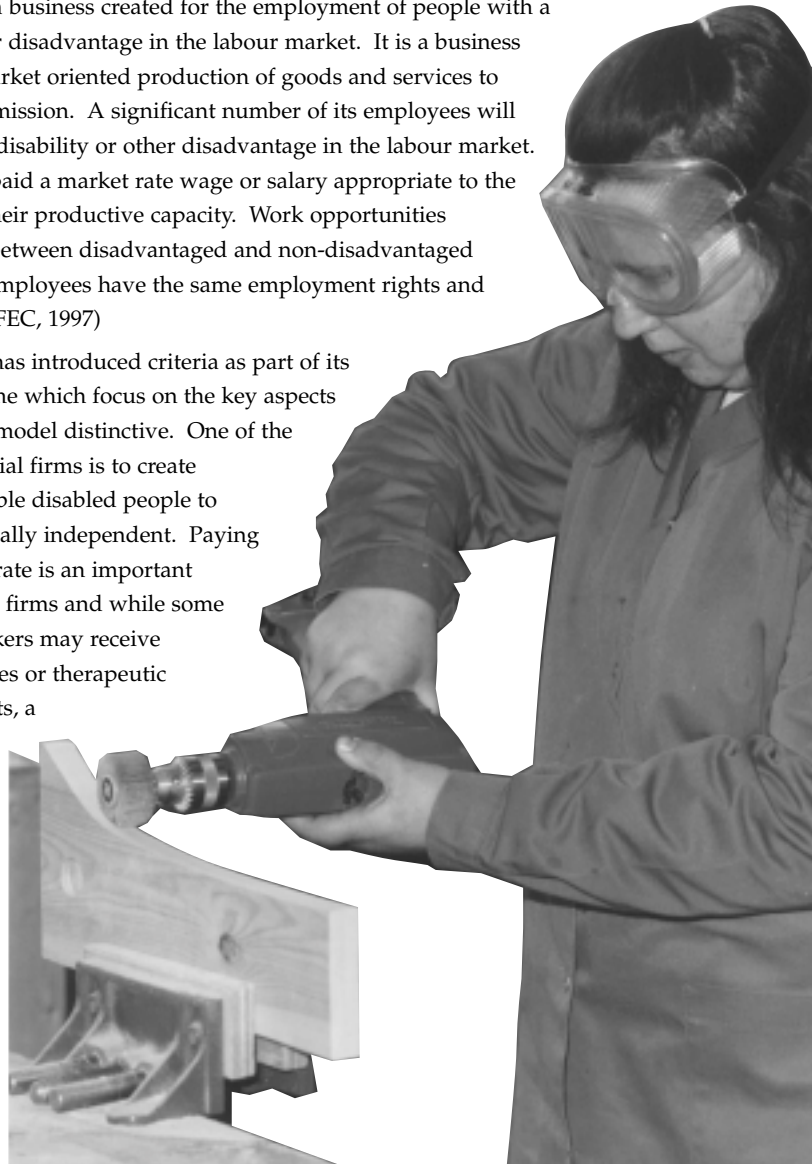
The first social firms in the UK were established in the 1980s although until recently there were only a handful in existence. The UK Social Firm Support Group project introduced a development programme in 1998, and this led to the formation of a national umbrella organisation, Social Firms UK. This company supported and identified 25 social firms and 70 emerging social firms through its membership at the end of 1999, and it is now estimated that there are more than 150 businesses in a rapidly expanding social firm sector.

There is no legal basis for the term 'social firm' and to many people not familiar with the social economy, the term has no clear meaning. Social firms are a form of social enterprise but with a specific target group, disabled people, and a specific

## Social firms, emerging social firms and social co-ops

"A social firm is a business created for the employment of people with a disability or other disadvantage in the labour market. It is a business which uses its market oriented production of goods and services to pursue its social mission. A significant number of its employees will be people with a disability or other disadvantage in the labour market. Every worker is paid a market rate wage or salary appropriate to the work whatever their productive capacity. Work opportunities should be equal between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged employees. All employees have the same employment rights and obligations." (CEFEC, 1997)

Social Firms UK has introduced criteria as part of its registration scheme which focus on the key aspects which make this model distinctive. One of the core values of social firms is to create businesses to enable disabled people to become economically independent. Paying wages at market rate is an important objective in social firms and while some trainees and workers may receive training allowances or therapeutic earnings payments, a minimum of 25% of the employees will be disabled people on



**social firms UK**

purpose of creating employment in viable small businesses. In other European countries social firms are much more widespread, and their introduction into the UK is largely due to progress made in Germany and Italy where 6,000 and 40,000 people respectively are employed in social firms.

market rate salaries. Despite the barriers presented by the social security system which has made this particularly difficult in the UK, there were 370 employees in social firms in the UK at the end of 1998 of which 130 (35%) were disabled people. Social firms aim to create supportive workplaces but in businesses which are sustainable. The registration scheme identifies a minimum sales of products/services to turnover ratio of 50%, so that social firms can be distinguished from projects which have an enterprise element but whose core purpose is care, rehabilitation or training. Social firms have the majority of their income from sales as this makes them more professional as businesses and less dependent on, or vulnerable to, the withdrawal of subsidies and grants linked to disabled workers or trainees.

Employment in social firms in selected European countries, 1999

	Full-time jobs	Social Firms	Disabled Employees
Germany	6,000	300	50%
Austria	200	8	55%
Italy <sup>a</sup>	40,000	1,600	40%
Finland	n/a	0	50%
Spain (Andalucia)	340	8	50%
United Kingdom	300	30 <sup>b</sup>	36%
TOTAL	approx 50,000	approx 2,000	

a Type B social co-operatives

b There are an additional 120 emerging social firms in the UK

### Emerging social firms

The term 'emerging social firm' was adopted for enterprises which are developing their businesses but have not yet met the criteria of the above definition (25% disabled employees, 50% of turnover being from sales).

### Social co-operatives

About 30% of social firms are social co-operatives including some of the longest established social firms in the UK such as Daily Bread Co-operatives (Cambridge and Northampton), Castle Project (Cambridge) and Impress Printing (Durham). Social Firms UK promotes social co-operatives as the ideal model of social firm but recognises that every group faces different circumstances and many will choose the charitable company or other routes.

## European origins

The seeds of the 1960s certainly settled in Italy and Germany with the emergence of social firms. The 'Movement for Democracy in Psychiatry' produced the amazing transformation of psychiatric services in for example, Trieste where a model decentralised low cost service works with some 500 people in small businesses engaged in a variety of commercial activity including catering, farming, fashions, publishing and tourism.

The dynamism of this group has been an inspiration, and the movement has grown throughout Italy. Social firms now account for some 40,000 jobs with a turnover of over 590 million euro.

Equally exciting has been the emergence of social firms in Germany, starting in the early 1980s with an alliance between academia and those that wanted to do something practical for change in mental health services and rehabilitation. Model companies soon emerged as holding companies with a number of social firms under one umbrella (eg Lebenswelten) sometimes trading with each other (eg psycho-social support services). They operate in sectors as diverse as catering, industry (Siemens, Zanussi), recycling, printing and making spaghetti!

### Growth

The Germans quickly spawned a network of social firms (FAF) for mutual support, research, training and development. Under the leadership of Meto Salijevec, Erwin Seyfried and others, the movement grew so that now there are more than 300 social firms in Germany, employing 6,000 people, and with total annual turnover of 150 million euro.

The German movement has been able to demonstrate that rehabilitation through work can save the state money because people can earn a living wage

and thus pay taxes. They have pioneered the argument that effective subsidies pay dividends. While subsidies are higher in Germany than in the UK, they are still not generous, are often time limited, but make a real difference!



### Network

The European networking started in the early 1980s bringing in the Netherlands and the UK. This was formalised into the CEFEC network which emerged with a fully-fledged constitution in 1994. This became an important forum for transfer of ideas which lead to the growth of social firms not only in Germany, Italy, the UK and the Netherlands, but also in Portugal, Finland, Greece and Spain.

Each year, social firm activists troop off to a different part of Europe (Greece, Spain, Austria...) for a CEFEC conference which incorporates a trade fair. This brings an injection of fervour which reminds people why they became involved and everybody keeps



Italian delegates from Trieste at the Social Firms UK conference in November 1999

abreast of new developments. Much of the early research and campaigning was organised in this way, through the CEFEC network, often with the help of European funding such as AZIMUT which preceded Horizon and other initiatives.

One important campaign had as its focus an old fashioned mental asylum on the island of Leros in Greece. Conditions were so bad that it led to a public outcry particularly in the British and Dutch press, leading to a steady flow of professionals of all kinds travelling to Leros to help with changing conditions there. Ten years later, after both Greek government and European Union intervention, Leros is almost completely transformed.

The first social firms and support structures too are coming into

existence in other parts of Greece.

PEPSAEE is the national support structure which assisted the development of new social co-operatives including the Avgerinos co-operative in Fokida working in tourism and agriculture.

In 1999 the Greek government passed a new law making it possible to establish co-operatives where 50% of the employees are people who have experienced mental health problems and this has been enthusiastically welcomed by people who have for years been frustrated by barriers to job creation and integration.

### Vision

Mike Freudenberg has been involved in social firms for many years, he

identifies, "keeping the vision afloat has always been a struggle. Everybody wants to create jobs but it has always been difficult to protect the particular vision and management style to provide real work for a real wage. We wanted to meet the challenge of having a thoughtful management style, worker involvement in and worker driven production process AND stay in business. Our

experience, particularly in Europe, has been that supportive management is good for business." This is supported by a business failure rate among social firms in the UK and Europe which is 10 times lower than the small business sector.

## Case Studies

Three very different social firms which represent the progressive thinking and enthusiasm in the social firm sector are profiled here. Annabelle's restaurant is located at the top end of the market. It is creating a sustainable catering business in a good working environment. Acceptable Enterprises has taken the step of buying an existing business to ensure a good supply of profitable work for its workforce, and ITHOS has targeted the booming e-business sector to create modern jobs.



### Annabelle's Restaurant, London

If you were to ask anybody what they know about Twickenham, they will mention the river, rugby and the famous headquarters of the oval ball. However, the newest attraction to hit town is Annabelle's restaurant. Annabelle's may look like any of the other posh eateries in this fashionable West London area. But look again; there is something special about this restaurant.

Annabelle's is a social firm where people with disabilities and non-disabled people work side by side and on an equal footing. The restaurant, with its stripped floorboards, white linen, verdigris light fittings and European style menus has a workforce of which half the employees are people who have experienced mental health problems.

### Horizon

Annabelle's is owned and managed by Twining Enterprise Ltd a charitable company based in Twickenham. It is partly funded by the European Social Fund under the Horizon Employment Initiative. This support has enabled Twining to establish Annabelle's and other social firms.

Carmen Llorente, manager of Twining Enterprise, said "in developing our social firms, Twining has the clear aim of creating businesses that will operate in the real, commercial world. The ultimate success of the business will be achieved by surviving in the market competing with others to provide reliable, quality services."

Annabelle's restaurant is an excellent example of a real business providing real work for real wages for people who have had mental health problems. Equally as important is

the fact that if social firms are successful businesses it provides employees with a credible employment history, provides people with an identity and pride, and, makes the business case for employing disabled people.

When you visit Annabelle's, you are struck by the decor, atmosphere, and the fast, friendly professional service. It is an experience to savour at prices that are extremely attractive. It is open from mid morning for either a breakfast, coffee or pastry or maybe something more substantial from the lunchtime menu. Alternatively you can reserve your table for evening dinner and be impressed by the imaginative menu, the quality of the food and the efficiency of the service. Annabelle's promotes a European feel to its menus, and it is not unusual to find yourself ordering from their specials lists which are designed to give you a taste of France, Spain, Italy and even Scandinavia or Germany. A group of very satisfied French and Italian diners recently remarked, "it is possible after all to get really good food in England."

### Top class

Speaking to the staff involved with Annabelle's, they describe the hard work that has gone into preparing to trade as a restaurant at the top end of the market. The working environment is strikingly different from the 'norm' in the catering industry. Annabelle's has demonstrated that although the risks and pressures associated with establishing a top class restaurant are considerable, it has given a business the opportunity to create top quality jobs, where most social firms in the catering sector struggle to break even. This is true particularly the cafes which depend on sales of low cost produce. Enterprises like Annabelle's reflect the newly found confidence of the social firm sector to create good quality employment and promote a positive message about disabled people.

Annabelle's is open from Tuesday to Saturday from 11.00am to 11.30pm.

*Annabelle's restaurant*  
020 8255 8120

*Twining Enterprise*  
020 8892 6786



## Acceptable Enterprises, Larne, Co Antrim

Acceptable Enterprises was established by a group of business and health professionals who saw a local need for employment opportunities for people recovering from mental illness. Funding was secured with assistance from Action Mental Health/Accept, and the business began trading in August 1999 with one paid employee as manager. His brief was to establish a business specialising in packaging and light assembly

Customers were hard to find as most packaging work was being done by other training organisations, but a few small contracts were secured. Then a small business which made household mops came up for sale. This seemed to be a good opportunity for Acceptable Enterprises.

### Advantages

Acceptable Enterprises carried out a feasibility study which showed that the mop business was in reasonable health despite the fact that the owner had let customers down on occasions. The advantages of buying the business included:

- The business came with an existing customer list, a list of former customers and goodwill to assist the new business.
- The business was profitable, and there was clear potential for expansion.
- Further profitability would depend on increasing production and Acceptable Enterprises had a larger labour force than the previous business.
- All elements of the production process could be completed by Acceptable Enterprises workers following training in operation and health and safety.
- Having an element of core business with regular work supply would add stability to the business development process.

Acceptable Enterprises found that existing customers had complaints about the previous company so a survey was carried out to see how the service could be bettered. By addressing problems of order turnaround Acceptable Enterprises has been able to increase the customer base and improve sales to original customers. The business has now started to export to the South of Ireland and is currently looking for distributors in Britain.

The work force on mop production has increased to six



people, four of whom have a history of mental health problems.

Acceptable Enterprises is the only mop manufacturer in Northern Ireland. For future growth it is looking at new designs of mops, and adding complementary products such as dusters, brushes etc. Acceptable Enterprises also sees opportunities to work with other social firms in joint trading or sales and distribution ventures.

### Results

Acceptable Enterprises has been able to build up the other assembly work with contacts from several large companies in Northern Ireland. Many companies are happy to give initial business on the basis of the ethical mission of Acceptable Enterprises but repeat business is based on quality of service and competitiveness. Without yet having completed a full year of trading the business has achieved the following results.

- The company has exceeded its employment targets and now has a workforce of 11 full time and 5 part time employees with an additional 18 people who come for work experience. Seven full time and two part time employees are people with mental health problems or other disabilities.
- The income projection has trebled from the original targets, mostly due to the purchase of the mop business.
- The cost of the mop business will be paid off in 18 months, and the business will become self-sufficient meeting all salary and operational costs in this timescale.
- The workforce is dedicated to the company, and the success is mainly down to successful integration of disabled and non-disabled people at management and production levels.

David Gilmore, the manager of Acceptable Enterprises, said "I would encourage prospective social firms to consider buying an existing business or a business franchise. Most social firms are established in the traditional way without considering the advantages of taking over a business which is already trading."

Contact David Gilmore 0282 827 0742

## ITHOS Computing, Edinburgh

Ithos Computing is in the fastest growing sector in the UK: information management, web design and maintenance. It is a social firm established by Edinburgh Community Trust, employing people with mental health problems performing real work in a competitive industry.

The service industry, banks and insurance companies dominate employment in Edinburgh. For anyone looking for employment, IT literacy is of great importance. Edinburgh Community Trust recognised this fact, and the effect that this situation was having on its client group in entering mainstream employment. The idea of an IT social firm was born.

A series of IT training courses for people experiencing mental health problems were developed. These proved to be very popular and were usually over-subscribed. Over 50 people attended the courses in a period of 15 months. The courses are now accredited with the Scottish Qualifications Agency as National Certificates. Several people were offered part-time work developing web sites, leaflets, and general IT administration.

### Launched

Ithos was launched on 1 April 2000 with six part-time employees and one experienced IT manager. From its inception all staff have been involved in all aspects of the development of the company including the business planning process and establishing the working conditions. To develop the company and employ more staff, Ithos will move to new premises in autumn 2000. Given regular contractual work, it is envisaged that over 20 part-time employees can be employed by the end of the year - and there are the candidates to fill the posts.

Despite the internet and IT industry being volatile and



overcrowded Edinburgh Community Trust saw clear opportunities in various sectors.

- Web page design and consultancy to small businesses and voluntary organisations.
- Web development and maintenance to the public sector.
- Customised IT training - office skills, internet, e-commerce - to small businesses and voluntary sector.
- Database and data entry to help realise small business marketing potential.



www.shopethic.com

To maintain economic viability, a large contract is currently under negotiation. This is seen as essential to the success of the business, since the pace of change in the internet makes it difficult to forecast future prospects.

Malcolm MacKinnon who formed and manages Ithos identifies, "as a member of the Scottish chapter of the Internet Society we are well informed and up to date with industry changes. As our customer profile shows, the IT market for Ithos is not confined to Edinburgh or Scotland. The nature of much of our work means that there aren't geographic barriers to securing customers and delivering a quality service in this sector." Malcolm added, "having recently purchased a web server we are now in the fortunate position to host our own web sites. The Edinburgh

Chamber of Commerce has agreed to let us use their internet connection to connect the server to the internet."

Ithos offers Scottish National Certificates in Information Technology and Internet. Each employee will have the opportunity to have an individual development plan tailored to his or her needs. This will vary according to the individual, but may take the form of steps needed to return to full time work, or developing personal interests.

Contact [ithos@socialfirms.org.uk](mailto:ithos@socialfirms.org.uk)



Ithos Computing

### Customers

**shopethic.com** Pan-European shopping mall for not for profit organisations. All such organisations with goods or services that can be sold via the internet are encouraged to join. Free or low cost web space. [www.shopethic.com](http://www.shopethic.com).

**Access Tourism Network** Travel and tourism businesses which provide training and employment for disabled people. [www.access-tourism.com](http://www.access-tourism.com)

**6 Mary's Place** Vegetarian guesthouse in the heart of Edinburgh and one of the UK's best known social firms. [www.socialfirms.org.uk/guesthouse](http://www.socialfirms.org.uk/guesthouse)

**Social Firms UK** [www.socialfirms.co.uk](http://www.socialfirms.co.uk)

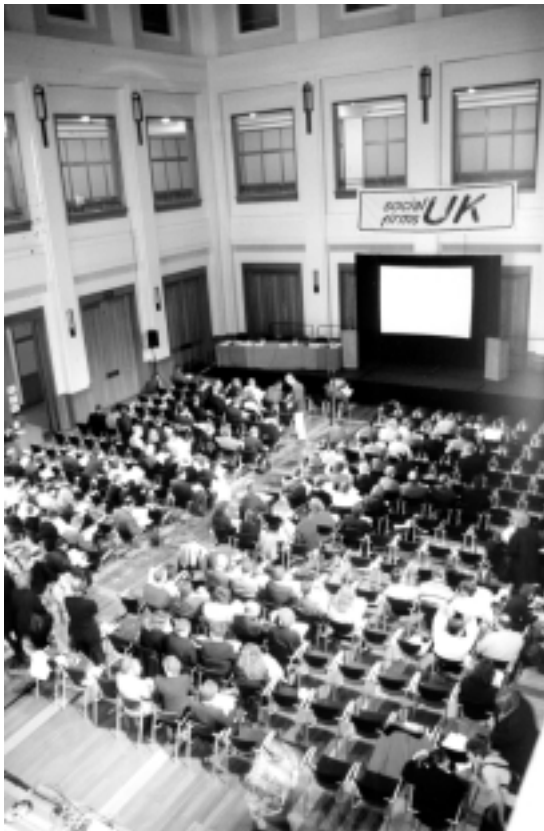
**Edinburgh Community Trust** [www.socialfirms.org.uk](http://www.socialfirms.org.uk)



6 Mary's Place

## Social Firms UK Programme

Social Firms UK was established in 1999 by a consortium of organisations interested in social firms. This followed the successful introduction of an ESF Horizon project 'UK Social Firm Support Group'. Once established, the project found that there was an interest in social firms and that a development programme could have a major impact. A charitable company was formed to formalise and continue supporting the social firm sector. The project was supported in 1998 and 1999 by a grant from the Horizon



The Social Firms UK conference in Canary Wharf, London, in November 1999

Initiative, which has now been extended to the end of June 2000. Additional funding from EU Initiatives, feasibility studies and national projects has been (or is in the process of being) secured for 2000/2001. In 1998/99 the Horizon project identified three core elements:

- 1 The level of awareness about social firms had to be increased throughout the UK especially in the training, employment and

disability sectors. This was accomplished by

- a) creating the Social Firm Resource Centre which collects, compiles and distributes all available material on social firms, including the Social Firms Directory.
  - b) organising one international and seven national conferences, and one summer school for social firm managers.
- 2 Lobbying and policy development was a key element of the programme as the social firm sector will benefit if national and regional policies recognise the potential of social firms. The Social Firms UK programme is now supported by national and regional authorities and social partners.
  - 3 The sector needed practical help to expand from 6 business to the current level of 150. This involved two components;
    - a) Capacity building and delivering a programme of support to social firms. The major component of the Social Firms UK programme in 2000 is to expand the technical assistance services to have people available to support social firm development in each region.
    - b) The conferences enabled Social Firms UK to launch regional social firm support networks as only one network (West Midlands) had existed previously. These networks allow Social Firms UK to support social firms at a local level with local partners.

## Activity programme, 2000-2001

**Membership and Registration scheme** - company membership and social firm/emerging social firm registration is available from April 2000.

**Social Firms Summer School** - 3 day residential event to be held in the Co-operative College,



Margaret Hodge, parliamentary under secretary of state for employment and equal opportunities, addressing the Social Firms UK conference in November 1999

Loughborough on 2 - 4 May 2000.

**Social Firms UK Annual Conference** - currently proposed for Glasgow, October 2000.

**Financial Support** - sectoral bids to acquire development funds for social firms throughout the UK are being planned with a focus on Objectives 2 & 3 of the European Social Fund and the new European Community Initiative - Equal. Regional networks are being supported to develop regional programmes.

**Technical Assistance** - each of the regional social firm networks is being funded by Social Firms UK in 2000 to run programmes including, business support to social firms and emerging social firms, regional conferences, training days, dissemination events, production of catalogues and resource material.

**The Social Firms Resource Centre** - will continue to deal with social firm queries, distribute resource material, produce research reports and act as secretariat for events in 2000.



The first UK Social Firms Directory was launched in 1999

## Regional networks

There are currently six regional social firm networks. Each elects a representative to the board of Social Firms UK so that the national support structure is owned and controlled by the social firms from each region. The social firm networks are, in some cases, informal consortia of organisations with a common interest, others such as Social Firms Scotland and the Social Firm Development Network have formed charitable companies.

The networks have formed around clusters of social firm activity, taking a bottom-up approach rather than imposing a regional structure following Government Office or other regional boundaries. As a consequence areas such as Wales and the East Midlands are not covered but discussions are now taking place with interested parties.

### The Social Firm Development Network (West Midlands)

This is the oldest and one of the largest of the regional networks. Its purpose is to promote and support the businesses of members. This involves collaboration to meet orders with parts of manufacturing or service processes being undertaken by various members and centralised business support and marketing expertise.

Contact John Beard 0121 2482553

### The Northern Ireland Social Firms Network

The Social Firms Conference in Belfast in September 1998 brought together 100 people interested in social firms. A second event in Autumn of 1999 saw the launch of a social firms network. A number of social firms have recently been established in Northern Ireland, and 24 organisations are collaborating to introduce a development programme for social firms looking to funding initiatives which will come on stream later in 2000.

Contact Cecil Graham 02890 403726

### The South West Social Firms Network

This network was formed as a support group for emerging social firms. With a large catchment area from Penzance to Bristol, there is a lot of social firm activity in the South West, and the sector is set to expand considerably over the coming years. An international conference in Exeter in September 2000 will give the opportunity to advance social firm development in the region.

Contact Penny Robertson 01726 850565

### The North of England Social Firms Network

This network has had three meetings following the Social Firms Conference in Durham in September 1999. Delegates at the conference included social co-operatives and emerging social firms from throughout the North of England. Activities in 2000 include the delivery of a programme of business advice for organisations wishing to start social firms. The network is holding an awareness day on 18 May

for organisations and local authorities interested in social firms

Contact Margaret Wilson 0191 384 9111

### The South East Social Firms Network

This is an active network established in 1999 with approximately 50 members, most of whom are running businesses and attend regular meetings across the region.

The network is looking at membership criteria and promotional and training events are planned for 2000. A catalogue of member services is being compiled to advertise the products and services to potential purchasers across the social economy and public sector.

The network is in the process of registration as a voluntary organisation. A business adviser has been engaged to support the member businesses and capacity building will take place under programmes funded through Objective 2 of ESF and SRB.

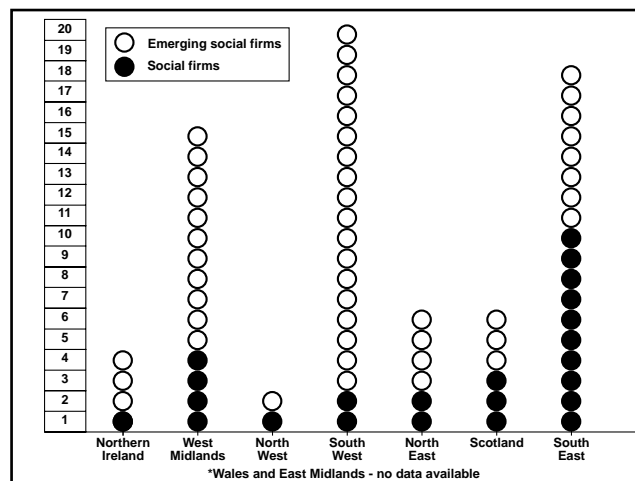
Contact Sally Reynolds 01737 281020

## Regional Network Profile - Social Firms Scotland

Social Firms Scotland (SFS) was launched at a conference in Glasgow in November 1998. Over 120 people attended, from a range of voluntary, statutory and private sector organisations. Leading up to the conference, a number of local initiatives had been undertaken by

Edinburgh Community Trust in conjunction with the UK Social Firm Support Group. The aim was to use the Trust's experience over eight years of developing social firms, to encourage more organisations to get involved.

The first SFS meeting took place in February 1999 with 40 representatives, including a number of workers/service users. Four meetings were held during 1999 in different locations, and there are now more than 100 organisations and individuals on the mailing list. *(continued overleaf)*



*(continued from previous page)*

A survey of members was done to identify what they needed from a social firms network. The priorities were awareness raising, dissemination of information, capacity building in business development and gaining political support and funding.

A management committee was formed to work on company registration, publicity and fundraising and to develop a joint bid across Scotland for the new European Equal funding. The committee represents different geographical areas in Scotland, and has one worker/service user representative at present. The company should be incorporated soon and then a proper membership application process will be established.

During 2000, SFS is organising four capacity building days. The first will start the process of building the Equal funding bid. The second will aim to inform a health and social services audience about social firms. The third will be a development day run by and for workers/service users, and the fourth will tie in with the final stages of the Equal bid development.

Behind this has been activity to research and establish social firms in Scotland. There are probably 15 social firms in Scotland at the moment. The newest, Evergreen Furniture in Stirling, was launched in February 2000. Business planning is well under way on the Isle of Skye to set up a wood recycling social firm, with support from Skye and Lochalsh Enterprise. A group from Skye recently spent some time with the Fur Clap Co-operative in a rural area in North Eastern Italy to examine the possibility of operating a restaurant and hotel. Another 10 organisations in the Highlands are investigating social firms.

In Aberdeen, groups of workers/service users are actively involved in establishing a range of user-led social firms in printing and collating, gardening, computer and office work and in other areas. Many of the new initiatives are aimed at employing people with mental health problems.

At Scottish policy level, work has been undertaken over the last two years with many task groups, committees and MSPs to inform them about social firms, and the role that the model can play in addressing issues of social exclusion, social entrepreneurship and in the provision of community care services. There are signs that this work has been successful, and the task for SFS now is to build on this through the opportunity presented by European and national funding initiatives, and to create good partnerships with the private sector and the business advisory services delivered through Scottish Enterprise.

Contact Margaret Pressland [margaret@socialfirms.org.uk](mailto:margaret@socialfirms.org.uk)



Fur Clap Co-operative in rural Italy may prove an inspiration for a social firm in Skye

Contributors to this supplement include: Sheila Durie, Social Firms Scotland; Michael Freudenberg, Social Firms UK; David Gilmore, Acceptable Enterprises; Gerard Higgins, Social Firms UK; Carmen Llorente, Twining Enterprises/Annabelle's; Malcolm MacKinnon, ITHOS.

This supplement has been sponsored by the Network for Social Change.

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## Moving forward

While regular businesses will always need to be encouraged to recognise the value of employing more disabled people, social firms have grown from the failure of mainstream business to realise this potential. Some people may need a supportive work environment which is not available in the open labour market. Others, for instance the employees of social co-operatives who own their own businesses, may consider that moving to the open labour market is not necessarily a 'progression' in terms of job satisfaction because working conditions are so much better.

Organisations involved in establishing social firms do so because this model is the best for them. Social firms are now part of a menu that can include supported employment, vocational training, sheltered work and other services. Each service and model has its own appropriate circumstances, each has its unique features and advantages, and the expansion of the social firm sector has broadened the choice and options available.

Recent developments including expansion of New Deal for disabled people, and bringing the social economy into the remit of the new Small Business Service are very positive and improve the climate for social firm creation. There are many more sources of support and fewer barriers to employment in social firms than existed in the past and social firms will expand further if supported by job creation and economic development programmes. Establishing and sustaining social firms is a difficult and complex task but it results in rewarding and good quality employment for many people. Social Firms UK is committed to work with the social entrepreneurs who are driving this movement, to increase the number of jobs and businesses in this exciting and challenging sector.

# A Dividend for the Community

Are you involved in a community project? If so the Co-operative Wholesale Society (CWS) may be able to help you.

February 1998 heralded CWS's national roll-out of the Dividend Card loyalty scheme throughout its food stores.

In addition to giving shoppers the chance to earn 5% 'dividend' from Co-op brand goods, this 'loyalty card with a conscience' gave them the option to donate any odd pence accumulated at the end of the twice yearly (December and June) payout periods to a Community Dividend fund.

In actual terms, this meant that card holders would never be giving more than £1.98 in a year to the fund. In December 1999 alone, CWS customers nationally donated £322,000 to the scheme.

Community groups operating within the CWS trading area were encouraged to apply for grants of between £100 and £5,000. The administration of the fund is handled by CWS Regional Offices, with the actual decision on funding being made by democratically elected committees made up of CWS members living in the area local to the project.

If a project is to be supported, it must adhere to judging criteria which include gauging whether it fulfils a need in the community, provides a long term benefit,



Mansfield Food Co-op awarded £2,500 to purchase equipment

targets disadvantaged groups and/or areas, addresses issues like health, safety or poverty, operates on a co-operative basis and shows imagination.

**If you are involved with a project which fits the above criteria, please contact your nearest CWS Regional Office (contact details on right) for an application form or further details of the scheme. There is no closing date - applications are considered on an ongoing basis.**



Mencap Willow Tree Allotment Group awarded £900. This group, which hopes eventually to operate as a co-op, used the award to purchase tools.

## CWS REGIONAL OFFICES

### Greater Nottingham Co-op

Swiney Way  
Toton  
Nottingham  
NG9 6GZ

Telephone 0115 9463343

### North Eastern & Cumbrian Co-op

Jackson Street  
Gateshead  
Tyne & Wear  
NE5 1HR

Telephone 0191 477 0291

### Northern Ireland Co-op

75 Belfast Road  
Carrickfergus  
Belfast  
BT38 8PH

Telephone 01960 357500

### Scottish Co-op

Robert Owen House  
87 Bath Street  
Glasgow  
G2 2EE

Telephone 0141 304 5400

### South East Co-op

40 Orchard Street  
Dartford  
Kent  
DA1 2DG

Telephone 01322 321200

### South Midlands Co-op

Stanier House  
Stanier Square  
Bletchley  
Milton Keynes MK2 2DU

Telephone 01908 843200

# FOOD

## THE COMMUNITY

## AND THE FUTURE

self-help food initiatives and their potential

A key seminar for policy makers and practitioners grappling with issues of poverty, empowerment and access to healthy food.

**Thursday 25 May 2000**  
**Chadburn House**  
**Mansfield**  
**Nottinghamshire**

Findings of **new research** into self-help food initiatives conducted by the Policy Research Institute at Leeds Metropolitan University.

**Policy background** by Professor Tim Lang from the Centre for Food Policy at Thames Valley University.

**Co-op initiatives** against social exclusion by Iain MacDonald, CWS. Four **case studies** of local food initiatives.

Contact Sarah Verdon, Co-operative College, Stanford Hall, Loughborough LE12 5QR

tel 01509 857222 fax 01509 857263

Sponsored by the Co-operative College, CWS, Nottinghamshire County Council and the European Social Fund

# Radical but sustainable

## Why joined up thinking should lead to joined up spending

by Kath Beaudette, Community Enterprise Wales

Two issues have dominated strategic thinking about community enterprise development in Wales for the past year: the creation of the National Assembly for Wales and the prospect of spending £1.2 billion worth of Objective One funding from Europe.

Community Enterprise Wales has gathered together an all-Wales perspective which included innovative thinking by Assembly Members, local authority approaches, the private sector, health, housing and, of course, the ubiquitous impact of the new information technologies. All have the potential to contribute to the economic regeneration of Wales and all have the potential to increase the contribution of community enterprises in all their forms to the mainstream economy.

### Proper jobs

Dafydd Wigley, AM and President of Plaid Cymru the Party of Wales, makes the point forcefully:

“... a ‘warning to Wales’ tag should be attached to the EC and UK government views of community-based enterprise as something separate from the ‘real economy’. All economies can be divided into wealth-creating and wealth-distributing parts ... Creating a formal distinction between the ‘wealth generating’ and the ‘labour soak-up’ sectors would almost certainly lead to people working in the latter being stigmatised as inferior to ‘real workers’ Community based enterprises were not set up as ‘second class’ employers, but rather to create proper jobs where the normal market system failed to provide any.”

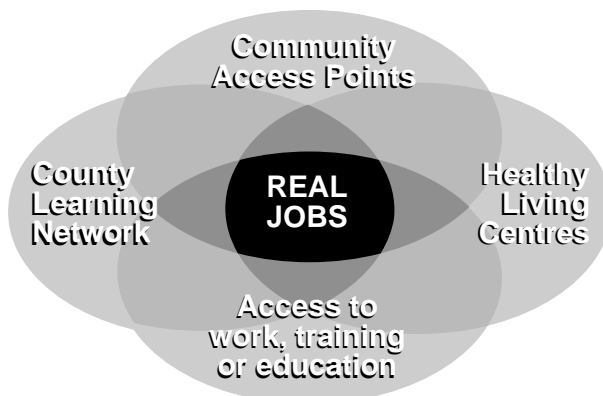
Michael German, Leader of the Liberal Democrats in the National Assembly, has suggested two proposals

“... specifically designed to ensure direct access by those at the cusp of commercial and community development to the European funds that have been allocated to help them.

“Firstly, an Enterprise Development Bank, which would serve to bridge the finance gap that for so long has cut Wales off from the mainstream of capital flow, centred in London. It would provide a source of venture capital for entrepreneurial activity independent of risk-averse High Street Banks ...

“The second proposal is for a Community Investment Authority which would fulfil a similar role in fostering the community economy to that played by the Development Bank ... encouraging investment in social capital.”

At local authority level, Conwy County Borough Council view community enterprise in general and CEW in particular as a source of expertise to link their four-pronged social inclusion infrastructure to the creation of real jobs:



### Health

The importance attached to pro-active community health strategies is obvious here and, according to the Community Health Drafting Group,

“incorporates all of the cross cutting policy issues including social inclusion, sustainability, equal opportunities and the environment. Long term policies to address the root causes, i.e., poverty, unemployment, poor housing, transport, polluted environment and unhealthy lifestyles ... form the focus of a new public health strategy for Wales.”

At the same time, the strategy looks at the effects of poor health on the Welsh economy and the effects of the Welsh economy upon the health of the Welsh people.

Not only does health impact on the social economy. Another important sector will continue to be housing - and one private sector developer argues:

“support for enterprise activity must not be restricted to local authorities or registered social landlords as part of community and housing regeneration schemes. Business must take an equal seat at the table and commit to community development and enterprise projects in their own long term interests. In return they need to be welcomed as equal partners with special skills and a strong motivation to succeed.”

However, Dr Dave Adamson, Head of the Regional Research Programme at the University of Glamorgan, argues all this effort will be in vain without a commitment to build a social infrastructure to achieve or accompany the economic regeneration required.

*The above contributions are taken from the latest of CEW's Think Tank Community Economic Regeneration documents, Objective Enterprise.*

Contact CEW 01685 376490

## Northern Irish communities promote accessible transport

*Conal McFeely of NICDA reports on two initiatives, one from a protestant community and the other from a catholic one, that have brought convenient accessible transport to disabled people.*

### On the move in Newtownabbey

Mobility Plus is a community business that provides an empowering service to elderly and disabled people and which



uses profits to further benefit the community. It was set up by Newtownabbey Community Development Agency, a voluntary organisation that promotes community development in this Greater Belfast locality.

Mobility Plus extends the concept of shopmobility schemes where scooters, wheelchairs and other mobility aids are made available to visitors to a particular shopping centre. Mobility Plus has its own stock of scooters and wheelchairs and an accessible minibus and trailer. This means that people with mobility difficulties in

Newtownabbey can hire the equipment and the vehicle and go anywhere and do anything - not just shopping.

All users of the service are asked to pay a one-off £5 registration fee, and they are of course given full instruction in the use of the equipment.

NICDA Social Economy Agency helped the Newtownabbey Community Development Agency to conduct a feasibility study and draw up a business plan. Funding was secured from the National Lottery Charities Board and from the local community.

Mobility Plus generates income by hiring the equipment, minibus and trailer and by selling sponsorship opportunities to businesses based in Northern Ireland. Any profits are used to fund the expansion of the service or to help Newtownabbey Community Development Agency to progress new initiatives.

### Wheelchair Accessible Taxis

One of Northern Ireland's most enduring community businesses - Derry Taxi Association (DTA) - has made its service more inclusive by purchasing a wheelchair accessible taxi.

The new acquisition was made possible by funding from Derry District Partnership. Remarkably this was the first official funding the association had received. It started in 1984 with four drivers and one part-time manager and today it employs 40 drivers and one

full-time manager.

"We see this funding secured as a major breakthrough and recognition of what we have achieved over the past 16 years as a community owned transport initiative," said Andrew McCartney, the manager. "I think we can be proud of our achievements, especially when it is remembered we have never received any official support."



The community service operates seven days a week. As well as being for the wheelchair users, it is also designed for the partially sighted and those with walking difficulties.

By providing low cost community transport for the unemployed, families on low incomes and people with disabilities DTA ensures equality of access for all.

NICDA Social Economy Agency assisted DTA with the proposal to the Derry District Partnership Board for funding under the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation.

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# Government strategy begins to catch up with community reality

## Patrick Kearney from the Lion Farm Action Centre in Sandwell, West Midlands, gives his reaction to the government's recently published National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal

The Lion Farm Action Centre (LFAC) welcomes this strategy believing that such a strategy is not too soon in coming. At last, community enterprise is identified as playing a crucial and viable role in the renewal of communities.

Numerous community enterprises are already involved in, and at times, spearheading community renewal all over Britain. Such organisations have in the past largely been left to struggle on, undertaking this vital work by developing community regeneration projects, through a mish-mash of various funding - not always enabling such projects to realise their full 'community renewal' potential.

Many funders see community enterprise as the 'poor relation' of social and economic regeneration. Hopefully, all is about to change.

### Thumbs-up

This government strategy gives a 'thumbs-up' to the diverse, dynamic and enterprising opportunities that LFAC is providing to the people of the Lion Farm estate - opportunities that the community has itself determined through the process of social auditing. The key benefit to this is that, having been 'engaged' in the process of determining community renewal, local people will rally and participate in self-enterprising initiatives - directly benefitting themselves and the community as a whole.

After conducting its social audit, the Centre took the results to the funders



The children of Lion Farm Estate are fully involved in the social audit. Their completed questionnaires, which identified a need for homework support and access to computers, helped to secure £12,000 of funding.

and demanded the money it needed to provide 'what people really need.' And they got it!

This new funding has been used for a number of arts projects as well as health and environmental initiatives.

One of many positive spin-offs is the plan to open a community cafe which will also act as an arts and entertainment venue.

### Housing

Local housing problems and 'anti-social behaviour' can be tackled by local people, involving the disenfranchised in a real and meaningful way.

Successful community enterprises, armed with the real means to build local communities have the experience, knowledge, 'get-up-and-go mentality' and more importantly, the empathy to involve all people within their communities. They can work for the advancement of their communities in a way that outside agencies have been unable to, regardless of their spending power.

Non-expedient, non-party political and non-pseudo community enterprises are not purely in the business of pursuing the economic regeneration of such communities. The Lion Farm social audit clearly demonstrates that people living in a deprived area of the West Midlands have not only economic concerns, but real and urgent needs.

Contact Lion Farm Action Centre  
0121 544 3094

### Brief summary of the government's strategy

The government's consultation document on its National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal includes a number of ideas to revive local communities.

It suggests that before a deprived area can be turned round, local threats need to be tackled. This could include:

- tackling anti-social behaviour (including racist crime and harassment),
- introducing neighbourhood wardens,
- improving housing lettings policies (to give needy people access to social housing),
- reducing neighbourhood abandonment.

Once the threats to a community have been tackled, the strategy suggests that community confidence needs to be raised by encouraging residents to help themselves. Measures to help this include :

- promoting arts and sports in deprived neighbourhoods,
- building community capacity,
- making it easier for local organisations to get funding,
- involving community and voluntary sector organisations in service delivery.

The strategy outlines the potential for projects that would not require any change in government policy or legislation. These include setting up community credit unions, LETS, community shops and community associations.

[www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/seu](http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/seu)

# This business is dynamite

by John Pearce

A rumble in the dry, sun-baked hills above the town of Perambalur in Tamil Nadu, South India and, as the smoke clears and the dust settles, the workers of the Chencheri Independent Quarry return to their work of prising stone from the ground, cutting and shaping it to size and breaking it into various grades of aggregate. These are Dalith people, the 'untouchable' caste whom Gandhi christened the children of God (Harijans). They are traditionally stone-quarriers and cutters and originated from the neighbouring state of Andhra Pradesh. Now they are to be found all over India, wherever there is quarry work.

The work is still mostly done by hand. Harsh, back-breaking work done under a relentless, hot sun in dusty, sweaty conditions. Most of the stone-workers work for contractors from the upper castes who lease the quarries from the Government and pay their workers on a piece-rate basis. To earn enough to survive the workers have to work all hours, and often all members of the family work as well - children, adults and the elderly - anybody who can carry a basket of stone or wield a hammer. Many have to take loans from their employers and become entrapped as bonded labourers, unable to pay off the debt and until they do they remain bonded to the contractor.

## No child labour

But the people of the Chencheri Quarry own their own business, have their own lease from the Government and have some control over their own affairs. The work is just as hard and tough, but no children work in this quarry and the infirm elderly do not need to work. Over 100 people take their livelihood from this community-owned and operated enterprise, they pay fair wages and use the surplus to pay for education for their children, to establish a loan fund for members and to retain what they will need to secure the quarry lease for next year.

The quarry business grew from the work of the READ (Rehabilitation, Education and Development) centre based in Bangalore. READ works with groups of women, helping them establish a savings group and assisting them to face up to their exploitative employers. Eventually the idea of a community-owned quarry business seemed the obvious solution and READ was able to lend the initial 40,000 rupees needed to secure the lease for this pilot project. Now the people work for themselves, demonstrating a truly other way of doing things.

## Release bonded labourers

In Bangalore is the headquarters of the Quarry Workers and Rural Integrated Development Society working to release bonded labourers, improve the working conditions of the quarriers and helping them organise self-help educational,



health and development initiatives. Seven co-operatively owned quarry businesses have been established so far in Karnataka state, further examples of how the traditional pattern of exploitative contract work can be broken.

In Udaipur in Rajasthan two NGOs, Astha and Raguram, have been working in forest villages with the women who pick the tendru leaves which are used in rolling bidi cigarettes. This work has traditionally been done by tribal women, who have to work excessive hours to earn barely enough on which to survive. Strikes and agitation, confrontation with the contractors over the years had limited success in raising the piece rates but it is only since the tendru picking community co-operative enterprises were established that the people have begun to feel in control of their own affairs. Now, 15 years on, the women involved in the action groups and the co-operatives have established local savings and loan schemes, health and education programmes, and are also beginning to take part in political life and stand for elective office.

This is explosive work, happening at local level in rural India and supported by the staff of small NGOs. It is about ordinary people challenging the persistence of the caste system, challenging the traditional structure of business ownership and exploitation, entering the political process to press for more change and live democracy. Communities and workers taking control. Dynamite indeed.

*For more information about or to contact READ, the Quarry Workers Society, Astha or Raguram contact the COMMACT UK office on 01506 871370 or e-mail: [office@newsector.co.uk](mailto:office@newsector.co.uk)*



## Externalisation and the Democratic Enterprise

*Hannah Durrant of ICOM reviews the Enterprising Services Training Materials Guide*

This comprehensive guide to the contracting out of local authority services to co-operatives and community businesses is very timely. The latest *New Mutualism* pamphlet published in March 2000 (see page 3) argued that enlightened local authorities would increasingly use co-operative structures to provide accountable Best Value services. Now this guide, packed with case studies and check lists, shows exactly how co-operative externalisations can be achieved. It also explains the process for co-operative and community businesses looking at contracting to local authorities.

The guide is the culmination of a two year European funded Adapt project. It was compiled by Mick Taylor and Sipi Hämeenaho from materials provided by the project partners. The partnership includes co-operative and community business development workers who have been at the cutting edge of conversions, externalisations and contracting.

It will be very useful for trainers in co-operative and mutual businesses or in local authorities who want to know more about the contracting process and about the implications of externalising. Greenwich Leisure is a well-known externalisation. In 1993 Greenwich Council faced rate capping, which threatened closure of 2.5 leisure centres. The staff of Greenwich Leisure Management worked with Greenwich CDA to come up with a better solution. They ended by converting to an Industrial and Provident Society (IPS) - and the rest is history! They have decreased costs while managing to add two additional centres - as well as greatly increasing staff motivation and involvement in service provision. There are now 13 leisure services in the

UK that operate as IPSs.

In the context of the increasing outsourcing of public services, this guide offers a rare opportunity to grasp the processes involved in assisting democratically managed enterprises to provide these services.

The guide outlines the various structures that could operate in the provision of services. It describes the process of externalising large and small public service departments and the importance of involving all groups (local authorities, trade unions, employees, service users, members of the community).

It also gives numerous case studies of democratic and mutual businesses working successfully with local authorities.

The guide provides frameworks for training programmes and highlights key issues such as Best Value and TUPE. Lastly, there is a comprehensive listing of reference works and advisors.

*The Enterprising Services Training Materials Guide costs £25.00 (plus p&post of £3.80 per copy) and can be ordered through ICOM (see inside cover). Orders for 10 or more copies are discounted to £20 per copy.*

## Community Tourism

*John Pearce reviews a guide written by Mark Mann for Tourism Concern*

"Exciting Holidays for Responsible Travellers" is the by-line for this interesting and useful guide. Community tourism is defined as tourist projects which benefit local communities and which are environmentally 'light-footed'. It provides a holiday directory organised country by country and an especially useful listing of "responsible tourism organisations and resources". It does not claim to be comprehensive, but armed with the contacts listed one would be well able to discover holiday possibilities which at least ensure that local people will derive some benefit from your visit and that your tour will

have been organised sensitively. There is a quirkily interesting opening section which sets out to define community tourism and responsible tourism and which succeeds in identifying some of the key issues. It is an area which should be of great interest in the social economy, not only abroad (which is the focus of this guide), but also at home where there may be scope for the growth of community or eco-tours.

*Community Tourism Guide, Mark Mann, Earthscan; 2000 pp208, £9.99. Available from Tourism Concern, Stapleton House, 277-281 Holloway Road, London N7 8HN tel: 020 7753 3330 e-mail info@tourismconcern.org.uk*

## Community Recycling

*Kevin McGrother reviews this practical guide to setting up waste reduction, reuse or recycling projects*

Now in its 4th edition, this is a very practical guide, designed to inform and inspire.

Since it was first published in the late 1980s much has changed in recycling. Local authorities have introduced more recycling facilities for the public (bottle banks etc) and it could be argued that there is less need and fewer opportunities for community schemes.

This guide gives a different impression however, firing the imagination with a range of possible projects for community groups, including kerbside collections, furniture renovation and composting.

The legal implications of premises, transport and insurance are dealt with in detail, and there are suggestions for sources of funding. There is an up-to-date guide to recyclable materials.

Throughout the guide there are case studies of successful community projects and a large number of invaluable contact names and numbers.

*Community Recycling - How to set up a local waste reduction, reuse or recycling project, 4th Edition. ISBN 1 898026 82 3 Contact Waste Watch 020 7253 6266*

# Enterprise in the Community

by Louise Ellman MP

Enterprise is a term that encourages change, new ideas and endeavour. Enterprise will become a defining feature of the new millennium. Individuals and companies will need to promote enterprise to survive. However, co-ops had already been 'enterprising' long before the last century was out. The co-operative movement should be proud that one of the leading internet companies in the country - Poptel - is a co-operative. There is even now an internet co-operative bank in the form of Smile UK.

The co-operative movement has long been combining the importance of 'enterprise' with the equally important belief in the community. The result is a commitment to 'social enterprise' where social justice works alongside a strong business ethos to benefit the community.

Social enterprise in my own constituency of Liverpool Riverside comes in many different forms. One of the most successful is the Furniture Resource Centre which is a charity which supports and trains economically disadvantaged people to manufacture quality upholstered furniture, collect unwanted furniture and white goods and refurbish them to a high standard and carry out research into the development of new recycling businesses. Such is its success that the Furniture Resource Centre now employs 50 staff, 13 salaried trainees and 8 unsalaried trainees and offers excellent and

meaningful training schemes. Its service is a beacon of enterprise in my local community.

The government is promoting enterprise in the community and social firms. A new national Phoenix fund worth £30 million has been set up by the Department of Trade and Industry to encourage entrepreneurship in disadvantaged areas. The fund will welcome applications from both new and existing community finance initiatives. The new fund will offer innovative ways of supporting enterprise in deprived areas, such as business incubator units and loan guarantee support.

Enterprise in the community will be an extremely effective way of tackling social exclusion across the country. The co-operative movement will play a leading role in promoting such social enterprise. It continues to develop new ideas and adapt to changing circumstances and it will continue to thrive in the new millennium. The prime minister continues to acknowledge the important role the co-operative movement plays in our society and personally supported the creation of the new Co-operative Commission which will help identify new opportunities to foster a strong and successful co-operative movement for future generations. This presents a major opportunity for social enterprise.

With such innovations and willingness to develop new ideas the co-operative movement can face the future with confidence.



parliament

## CALLING ALL TRAINERS

Following the responses from last year's market research.

ICOM is seeking to recruit freelance trainers to work on its national training programme.

We are also interested in co-operating with co-operative support organisations in providing training to member businesses and other organisations.

Particular areas of interest among ICOM member businesses include

- Bookkeeping
- Budgeting
- Business planning
- Team building
- Co-operative structures
- Employment law

We would be very interested to hear from trainers in any of these areas and other areas that relate to co-operative and democratic businesses.

If you are interested in working on ICOM's training programme, please send a capability statement, including details of fees and previous work (references would be appreciated) to

Hannah Durrant, ICOM, 74 Kirkgate, Leeds, LS2 7DJ  
tel 0113 246 1738, fax 0113 244 0002, email [icom@icom.org.uk](mailto:icom@icom.org.uk)



## C·O·M·M·A·C·T

### EXCHANGE VISIT TO INDIA

COMMACT UK and COMMACT India (the Commonwealth Association for Local Action and Economic Development) are working together to organise an exchange for two members from the UK to travel to India in November 2000 and two from India to come to the UK in May 2001. The aim of the exchange is to give the opportunity to visit India/UK particularly to people who are active at local level in development work and who otherwise would be unlikely to get such a chance to learn about development practice in the other country.

The exchange programme will be for 28 days and will include visits to a range of local development projects run by COMMACT members in West and South India and the chance to share ideas with Indian colleagues. The opportunity to take part in this exchange is open to people in the UK who

- are or will become members of COMMACT (subscription £15 per year),
- are active at local community level with a development organisation or project,
- have never before travelled to India,
- are able to contribute/raise £250 towards their costs.

For further details and an application form contact Vera Steele at COMMACT UK (01506 871370 or e-mail: [office@newsector.co.uk](mailto:office@newsector.co.uk))

opportunities

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Contact Hannah Durrant, ICOM  
0113 246 1738

22 - 23 May 2000

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Contact Hannah Durrant, ICOM  
0113 246 1738

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**Social Accounting and Audit**

Glasgow

Training day as part of the CBS Network Social Audit Programme

Contact CBS Network  
01506 871 370

24 May 2000

**Marketing the Co-operative Advantage**

Co-op College, Loughborough

Workshop for workers' co-ops led by Tom Webb of Global Co-operation, Canada

Contact Jenny de Villiers  
01509 857223

25 May 2000

**Food - the Community and the Future**

Chadburn House, Mansfield

Seminar for policy makers and practitioners

see advertisement on page 17

Contact Sarah Verdon  
01509 857222

26 - 27 May 2000

**Co-operative Congress**

Manchester

Contact 0161 872 2991

13 - 14 June 2000

**Co-operative Values and Principles**

Co-op College, Loughborough

Workshop for workers' co-ops

Contact Jenny de Villiers  
01509 857223

15 - 16 June 2000

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Workshop for workers' co-ops

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01509 857223

15 June 2000

**Finance for the Local Community**

4 Hamilton Place, London

Conference for professionals involved in community initiatives

Contact Landor Conferences  
020 7582 0128

20 June 2000

**Social Accounting and Audit**

Perth

Training day as part of the CBS Network Social Audit Programme

Contact CBS Network  
01506 871 370

1 July 2000

**International Co-operatives Day**

1 July 2000

**Celebrating Co-operation**

Co-op College, Loughborough

Launch of East Midlands Co-operative Council

see advertisement on page 5

Contact Membership & Community Affairs 0115 946 6271

7 - 9 July 2000

**ICOM/ICOF Conference**

Co-op College, Loughborough

Social Inclusion and Democratic Participation

Day 1 policy and strategy

Day 2 training and AGMs

see advertisement on page 8

Contact ICOM 0113 246 1738

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