

# Annual Report

# 2014/15

## Our key performances:

- ✓ At the end of 2014/15 we had 26 Members, fourteen of whom took part in our meetings and events
- ✓ We provided training for our Directors on their roles and responsibilities and on using our website
- ✓ Our Directors notched up 31 attendances at our Board Meetings
- ✓ Of our thirteen Directors, six were women and one was of BAME origin
- ✓ 24 'Community Ambassadors' people took part in our 'Starting up a co-op' workshops with Bolton College
- ✓ 30 people participated in our 'Rural Co-operation: Now!' Annual Conference, organised jointly with Cumbria Social Enterprise Partnership
- ✓ We purchased services from two of our Members services
- ✓ We finalised guidance on 'If it can be co-operative, it will be co-operative!' jointly with the Co-operative Group North West Membership Team
- ✓ We recorded our modes of travel to create a base line for future comparisons of our carbon dioxide emissions
- ✓ We minimised waste by using electronic communication whenever possible

Our Members' contribution to the North West co-operative economy was a total turnover of nearly £11.7m, 166 people employed and Membership of 7,800

# 1 Chair's Foreword

There's nowt new under t'sun, as we say in the North West. Those with long memories will remember that our national body, Co-operatives UK, set up us - and the other Regional Co-operative Councils - to provide a way for the Regional Development Agencies to engage with co-ops. The RDAs were scrapped by the 2010 Coalition Government and replaced by a hotch pot of Local Enterprise Partnerships. Since then, the only engagement we've been aware of is with Cumbria LEP via Cumbria Social Enterprise Network.

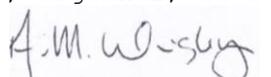
Now, the new Conservative Government is pushing ahead with 'Dev Manc' and devolution to Combined Authorities elsewhere in our region. Devolution - transferring power to people and their businesses, public bodies and voluntary organisations at a more local level - offers us a chance to grow our regional co-op economy. In 2014/15, we decided to set up 'sub-regional' co-operative networks but we've struggled with this. We need our Members and other co-ops in our sub-regions to get together and get on with it (perhaps in partnership with the Social Enterprise Networks).

There is much for co-ops to do. Every place should have its co-operative cafes, creatives, energy, farms, financial services (credit unions), health and social care, homes, leisure facilities, manufacturers, pubs, schools, shops and sports clubs. We have co-op development bodies, business advisors and specialist support organisations among our Members. There are others active in the region that we hope will join us. Can we rise to the challenge?

For Co-operatives North West and our Members that means:

- Every co-operator to be an activist
- Collaboration by our development bodies, business advisors and specialists
- Other co-op organisations inputting
- Being innovative in what we do
- Investing time and money.

I'm stepping down as Chair, this is for my successor to lead on, but I truly believe that, together, we can!



Ann Marie Wrigley

# 2 About us

Co-operatives North West is a 'Regional Co-operative Council', set up by Co-operatives UK but owned and run by co-operatives and co-operative development bodies in the region. Our purpose is to promote, develop and sustain a thriving co-operative regional economy in the North West of England.

We do that by being a good co-op, meeting the needs of our Members and benefiting our communities, as we describe in this Annual Report. Our objectives are to:

- raise the profile of co-ops in our region
- represent the interests of co-ops
- encourage mutual support, inter-trading, sharing of best practice and peer training by co-ops
- work with local, regional, national and international co-op networks.

# 3 What we did

Using Co-operatives UK's way of defining its impact, this is what we did in 2014/15 to 'promote, develop and unite' co-ops in the North West. We:

(a) Promoted co-ops by:

- Participating in Co-operatives Fortnight, the annual programme of activities to promote co-ops. We created a 'North West co-ops tombola' stall for Rochdale Hornets RLFC's 'Co-operatives Day' celebration at Spotland Stadium (Thank you to UK Credit Unions for looking after that)
- Improving our website, updating it and linking it with Facebook page and Twitter. (Thanks to software.coop and SECoD, and Alpha Communications, who previously managed our social media)
- Emailing our Newsletter to co-op contacts in the region, providing a monthly summary of, and links to, news uploaded to our website
- Working with Preston Council on a range of initiatives to promote co-ops
- Engaging in the upcoming Greater Manchester European funding programme. The Greater Manchester Strategy identifies a key role for social enterprise in ensuring that jobs are created in communities that conventional businesses fail to reach. We believe that this is a great opportunity for local co-ops and ourselves. We have expressed interest in helping to deliver the programme. (Thanks to Unlimited Potential co-op for keeping us in touch with much of this)

**(b) Developed co-ops by:**

- Delivering workshops about 'Starting up a co-op' to Community Ambassador students at Bolton College
- Producing guidance for local co-ops on working with the Co-operative Group. This was the culmination of our joint 'If it can be co-operative, it will be co-operative!' initiative with the Co-operative North West Membership Team. Unfortunately, the good work was lost in the cut backs on spending on community and co-operative initiatives following the Co-op Bank crisis.
- Providing guidance to our Members on 'commission agreements' for Members to pay commission to other Members finding contacts for them that lead to sales. The good news for us is that the agreements include the 'finder' Members sharing the commission with ourselves. That's a 'win, win, win situation' in our view. (Thanks to Biomass Energy Co-operative for working on this for us)
- Making our Members aware of opportunities to access 'leadership and management' training through the Government's 'growth programme' for businesses. (Thanks to Kaleidoscope Consulting for this advice).

**(c) Uniting co-ops by:**

- Working together through co-op structures, namely the Regional Co-operative Councils, Co-operatives UK and Co-operatives Now! (aka Co-op Congress). One outcome was the proposal for 'co-op activists' to promote co-ops that we are taking forward
- Connecting with the second and third 'Ways Forward' conferences in May 2014 and January 2015 organised by Manchester based Co-operative Business Consultants in response to the 'co-op crisis'. Our January Board Meeting shared the venue of the third conference enabling our Directors and guests to take part in both proceedings. We produced a leaflet promoting the RCCs for conference delegates
- Inviting representatives of co-op organisations based in the North West to our Board Meetings. Frank Nelson, doyen of the Co-operative Group's democratic structures attended in a personal capacity and spoke about changes affecting co-ops. Angela Colebrook attended to promote the Co-operative College newly launched training materials for co-ops

- Deciding to widen and increase our Membership. Our Board decided to propose to our Members at our 2015 AGM that our articles are amended to open Membership to individuals ('natural persons') who are members of a co-op or mutual in the North West and support our objectives, subject to there being a maximum number of 20% or three such Members, whichever less, on the Board. The Board also decided to hold our 2015 membership fee at £25, free for Members of Co-operatives UK and new co-ops registered in the previous twelve months
- Holding our Annual Conference 'Rural Co-operation: Now!' jointly with Cumbria Social Enterprise Partnership in Kendal in September. It included an opening address on 'rebuilding our reputation', showcases from Cumbria co-ops, a choice of three from six workshops and a plenary on the way forward. Thirty people attended and it was rated good/very good by participants. (Thanks to SECoD and Co-operative Business Consultants for their parts in organising and delivering our main event of the year for bringing co-ops together).

## 4 Our Members

As a co-op, we are jointly owned by our Members. They elect the Directors to the Board to run Co-operatives North West from candidates nominated by Members at our AGM. Our Board is accountable to our Members for what it does. We had 31 Members during 2014/15 including four new Members and one who rejoined. Five had ceased to be Members by the end of 2014 meaning that we had 26 Members at the end of 2014/15. The full list of who our Members were is:

- Arts Hub 47 Community Co-operative Ltd
- Biomass Energy Co-operative (1)
- Co-operative and Mutual Solutions
- Co-operative Business Consultants
- Ethecol-The Card Payment Co-op (1)(3)
- Envirolution Network Limited (1)
- Ex-Cell Solutions Ltd (3)
- FC United of Manchester
- First Choice Credit Union
- Florence Paintmakers Ltd
- Greater Manchester Tree Station
- Kaleidoscope Consulting Solutions
- Lakamka t/a The Kitchen on Great Moor Street (2)
- Loop Systems Limited (3)
- Maracuja Limited (3)
- Morecambe Bay Community Renewables Ltd
- New Era Enterprises
- North West Housing Services

- One Planet (Accrington) Limited (1)
  - Rochdale Borough Social Enterprise and Co-operative Forum
  - SECoD - Social Enterprise and Co-operative Development Limited
  - South Manchester Credit Union
  - Sustainable Change Co-operative
  - Tanzeem Co-operative (3)
  - Trafford Media and Communications Limited
  - Turo Technology LLP t/a software.coop
  - UK Credit Unions Ltd
  - UK Society for Co-operative Studies
  - Unicorn Grocery
  - Unlimited Potential
  - Vista Veg
- (1) Became a Member  
 (2) Rejoined  
 (3) Ceased to be a Member

We also had three Associates that were not eligible for Membership but supported our objectives: Adrian Ashton, Preston City Council and UCLan

## 5 Our Board

We have a Board of not less than three and not more than sixteen Directors elected by and from the Membership to run Co-operatives North West. One place on the Board is reserved for the Co-operative Group's appointee (not filled in 2014/15). The Board can co-opt up to two external independent Directors and co-opt Members to fill casual vacancies. In 2014/15 we had twelve Directors elected by Members from candidates nominated by Members, one of whose appointment was terminated, and two Members were co-opted, meaning that we had thirteen Directors at the end of the year.

We had four Board Meetings, in Preston (two), Kendal and Manchester, and a Meeting held by 'electronic means' to consider the financial statements for 2013/14. The list of our Directors in 2014/15 is:

- Lawrence Beadle 1(e)
- Anne Chapman 4(AGM)
- Angela Davies 2(e) – co-opted
- Phil Frampton 0
- Sylvia Howarth 1
- Julie Housby 1 – co-opted

- Andrew Jessop 4(e)(AGM)
- Michael Kaye 3(e)(AGM)
- Bill Knowles 3(e)(AGM)
- John McGuigan 1
- Gareth Nash 3(e)(AGM)
- Michael Taylor\*(0)
- Dawn Vear 4(AGM)
- Ann Marie Wrigley 4(e)(AGM)

\* appointment terminated

(1)(2)(3)(4) Number of Board Meetings attended  
 (e) Participated in electronic Board Meeting  
 (AGM) Attended AGM

At the Board Meeting after the AGM, the Board elected its officials for 2014/15: Chair, Ann Marie Wrigley; Secretary, Andrew Jessop; Treasurer, Dawn Vear, and Vice-Chair, Gareth Nash. The Board also elected Ann Marie Wrigley as Co-operatives North West's nominee to the Board of Social Enterprise North West and Sylvia Howarth as its representative at meetings of the Regional Co-operative Councils. Phil Frampton edited Co-operatives North West's monthly Newsletter to December 2014, since when Michael Kaye has put it together from news uploaded to our website (Thanks go to them all).

Our part-time Project Manager, Barbara Davidson, terminated her contract during 2014/15 for personal reasons. (Special thanks and good wishes to Barbara). To share out her work (and respond to reduced funding from Co-operatives UK), we decided to set up groups of 3-4 Directors/Members to take responsibility for the functions necessary for Co-operatives North West to deliver against its objectives:

- Strategy and co-ordination – Ann Marie Wrigley
- Business and finance – Dawn Vear
- Secretarial and Membership – Andrew Jessop
- Sub-regional groups:
  - Cheshire – Ann Marie Wrigley
  - Cumbria – Bill Knowles
  - Greater Manchester – Andrew Jessop
  - Lancashire – Ann Marie Wrigley
  - Merseyside – John McGuigan
- Communications and marketing – Gareth Nash and Julie Housby.

26/09/15 cnw aj

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