

The Midcounties Co-operative

Social Responsibility Report 2017/2018



Table of contents

Social responsibility review	3
Key achievements	4-5
Supporting our communities	6-9
Defending the environment	10-11
Developing Young People	12-13
Engaging our members and colleagues	14-15
Long term aspirations	16



Social responsibility review

At its heart a true co-operative organisation is socially responsible and effectively engaged with the communities it serves. We aim to involve members and colleagues in supporting issues that are relevant to where they work, live and learn, and ultimately to help build strong local communities.

During the year we have made some positive impacts through our social responsibility programme, including providing meals for over 1,000 families in need through supporting foodbanks and fundraising over £140,000 for local charity partners.

Expanding on these successes the Society launched our 'Sustainable Communities' programme this year working with the Membership Strategy Committee, engaging with our key community stakeholders to help tackle climate change.

In recognition of the Society's co-operative social responsibility activity we achieved a five-star accreditation in the Business in the Community's Corporate Responsibility Index for the second year in a row, with a score of 100% (the highest score we have ever achieved). Five-stars is the highest level a business can achieve and we were one of only three businesses that have received this accolade in 2017.

The Society was also awarded the 2017 Black Country Chamber of Commerce 'Community Champion' award in recognition of our community achievements in the West Midlands area since introducing our 'Regional Communities' initiative in 2015.

As a result of the Society achieving year-on-year energy savings and increasing recycling from 21% in 2009 to 97% now, the Society was awarded the Carbon Trust Standard Award during the year.

Other accolades in 2017 include re-certification of the Fair Tax Mark, and recognition awards from Business in the Community for Building Strong Local Communities, Responsible Products and Services, and their Education Award.

These achievements build on our prestigious 2015 Queen's Award for Enterprise: Sustainable Development which is valid for five years.



This report has been reviewed by Sustainability West Midlands (SWM)

Sustainability West Midlands is the sustainability adviser for the leaders of the West Midlands. They are the sustainability champion body for the region, designated by the government. They are a not-for-profit company that works with their members in the private, public and third sectors.

SWM has worked with The Midcounties Co-operative to conduct an independent sustainability and resilience review annually for the past seven years. The review covers the key environmental, economic, and social uncertainties that businesses and communities face and

considers the areas where Midcounties can help deliver the most sustainable future in terms of jobs, reduced harmful emissions, and healthy lives.

The review has indicated that The Midcounties Co-operative is continuing to make good progress in building a resilient business that is contributing to a sustainable future where it operates. Further details on the review can be found at www.midcounties.coop.



Key achievements



We have achieved a 5 star rating in the CR Index



The Society was re-certified with the Fair Tax Mark

Awarded the 2017 Black Country Chamber of Commerce 'Community Champion' award

We distributed **£262,000** to over **550** local causes



COMMUNITY **£11m**

We've distributed £11 million back to the community over the last 10 years



Our colleagues and members donated over **73,000** products to Foodbanks helping over **1,000** families in need



We raised **£11,000** for the coop reconstruction for the flood and hurricane victims in South East Asia and the Caribbean



Our colleagues delivered **36,500** volunteer hours at a financial value of **£528,000**

234,000 volunteering hours have been provided by our colleagues in the community over the last 10 years.



The Society's Fun Days in Churchstoke and Gloucestershire raised **£50,000** for local good causes



£44m

We have distributed £44 million to our members through share of profits over the last 10 years

Developing Young

Engaged with 9,000 young



265 students have been

Engaging our co

We engaged with more than **28,800** members across 300 events





g People

n over
people

265



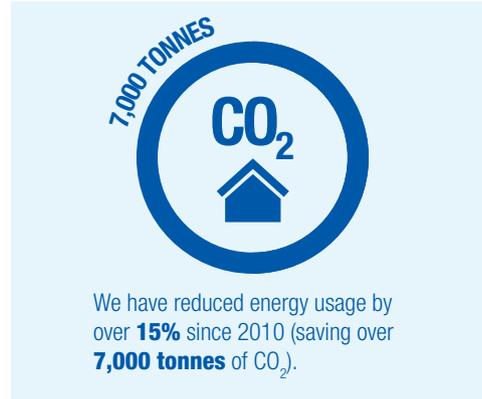
supported with work experience opportunities

leagues and members

28,800



Defending the environment



We have increased recycling levels to 97% from 21% in 2009



The Society was awarded the Carbon Trust Standard Award in 2017

SCORE OF

10,000

We involved 10,000 members in selecting local opportunities across all 20 Regional Community areas



SCORE OF
84

The Society's Colleague Engagement score has increased to 84



Supporting our communities

As a co-operative business we are committed to supporting local good causes by working with our colleagues and members to build strong local communities together.



Since creating our 'Regional Communities' programme in 2015, we have enabled **166,000** products to be donated to foodbanks, providing enough meals for over **4,000** families in need.

Our investment in community and co-operative initiatives totalled **£1.3 million** in 2017.



£1.3 million



We have reached out to 289,826 people through 13 PR articles covering each of the six Sustainable Community pilot areas.

Our colleagues delivered over **36,500** volunteer hours in 2017 to support their local communities, at a financial value of **£528,000**.



36,500



234,000 volunteering hours have been provided by our colleagues in the community over the last 10 years.

We've distributed **£11 million** back into the community over the last 10 years.

£11 million



Supporting our communities

Regional Communities

Our 20 Regional Community areas continue to thrive, working with members to create sustainable partnerships locally. Here are just some of the highlights from the past year:

- **73,000** products have been donated to foodbanks, providing meals to over **1,000** families in need (compared to 70,000 products in the previous year)
- Engaged over **21,000** members in Regional Community events and activities
- We raised over **£140,000** for our local charity partners
- We engaged with over **9,000** young people working with our **50** partner schools and educational establishments
- Distributed over **£262,000** to over **550** local community groups and good causes through grants

Since creating our 'Regional Communities' programme in 2015, we have enabled **166,000** products to be donated to foodbanks, providing enough meals for over **4,000** families in need, and engaged with over **19,000** young people through a range of initiatives.



Supporting our communities - case studies

Sustainable Communities

Expanding on our community partnerships, the Society launched our 'Sustainable Communities' programme working with the Membership Strategy Committee at our Half Yearly meetings in October 2017.

The programme has enabled us to engage our key community stakeholders to help tackle climate change, with a range of positive impacts already achieved through this programme including:

- Promoting the development of community renewable energy
- Helping alleviate fuel poverty through member education

- Rolling out sustainability educational resources to our partner schools
- Promoting Co-op Energy products and services in the community



Central Oxford Regional Community

Central Oxford colleagues and members have forged successful links with The Gatehouse, a drop in café for people aged over 25 in Oxford. The Gatehouse is a charity which works with the homeless and those in poor housing. Colleagues have supported the charity by fundraising, volunteering and providing business advice.

We have also forged links with Aspire, a charity that helps vulnerable members of the community become self-sufficient. Working with Aspire our retail sites in Central Oxford have developed a work experience programme to help suitable

candidates gain experience in a retail environment. Aspire staff completed the programme first to make sure it met their client's needs.

The first person on the programme had three sessions and left with a certificate of competence from the store manager. Encouragingly they gained full time employment shortly after completing the course. We now intend to replicate this model across the Regional Community and explore with Aspire working with single mothers, helping them back into work and supporting their children using our local Childcare businesses.

Paul Roberts, Chief Executive at Aspire, said:

"We are delighted to be working in partnership with Midcounties Co-operative. Aspire works tirelessly to support Oxfordshire's most disadvantaged people into and towards employment; this partnership will be crucial in giving our clients the work experience they need to build their skills and confidence."



Supporting our communities - case studies

Wolverhampton Regional Community

West Midlands colleagues and members have helped raise awareness of dementia by fundraising including over 70 colleagues, members and customers taking part in a sponsored walk in West Park. We also supported Alz Dementia Café which provides a safe welcoming meeting place for people with dementia or memory loss, their family and friends.

We held a 'Dementia Awareness Day' with colleagues from our Food, Post Office, Healthcare and Travel sites attending together with the local manager from Alz Dementia Café. Overall, the team engaged with over 50 members. We have also trained colleagues as dementia friends so

they could provide training to others across the area.

Support has also been provided by our local colleagues and members for 'Recovery Near You', a local charity that supports recovering drug addicts to receive support and counselling during their personal journeys. Local carrier bag funds have been used to provide comfortable furniture at their hub, and to decorate the rooms to enable families to enjoy comfortable and engaging surroundings whilst receiving support and counselling. Colleagues also raised further funds for this charity by selling their calendars in our local trading sites which had been created by recovering addicts.

Angela Zegnani, Service Manager at Recovery Near You, said:

"The support from Midcounties for Recovery Near You has helped us to extend and improve our Recovery Hub for people who use our service. This has provided a significant benefit to our service users. The refurbishment of our 'cosy room' allows us to run more groups including our video club and games club, as well as enabling us to show educational and training DVDs for our peer support and volunteers who help us to deliver such a valuable service to the people of Wolverhampton."



Swindon and White Horse Regional Community

Colleagues from White Horse Regional Community completed the 'Three Peaks Challenge' raising over £3,000 for the 'October Club', a day centre charity caring for people suffering from Alzheimer's and dementia. Local grants have also been given to Highworth football club for a new kit and training jumpers, the local scout group for camping equipment and the Nexus Youth Café to help support young people.

Colleagues from Swindon Regional Community have raised over £2,000 for the charity Wiltshire Tree House. Activities have included completing a 10K run and

a 12 hour cycle and row-a-thon covering the whole 160 mile circumference of Swindon! These funds have enabled the charity to employ a fundraising specialist to help the charity going forward.

Local colleagues have been working with New College Swindon to teach students about the retail environment including visits to our trading sites to learn how our businesses operate.

Colleagues have also participated in several role play and mock interview sessions.

Paul Flynn, Fundraiser at Wiltshire Treehouse said:

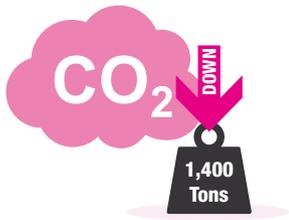
"The partnership will be invaluable for us. We are looking forward to working on exciting initiatives with The Midcounties Co-operative over the next two years which will help us to raise the funds we need to support bereaved children in the area. As a new charity it can be difficult to access the funding needed to provide such important support to young people before, during, and after bereavement, and this support will really help us to do so."



Defending the environment

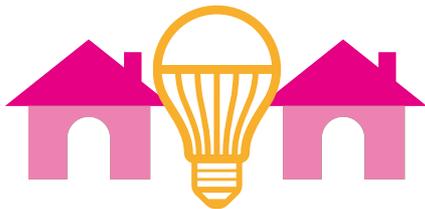
Concern for the environment is a key element of our social responsibility agenda and we believe that being environmentally responsible plays an important part in our Society's overall success.

97% of our waste is now being recycled (up from 91% in 2016, and up from 21% in 2009), diverting over **3,400** tonnes of waste from landfill.



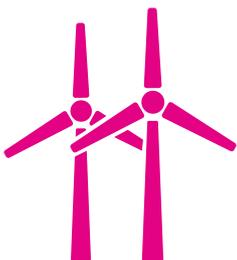
The Society has reduced its energy usage by **3.7%** in 2017 resulting in the business reducing CO₂ emissions by over **1,400** tonnes.

We achieved the Carbon Trust Standard Award for successfully managing, reporting and reducing our carbon emissions year on year.



Our food waste recycling process produces enough renewable energy to power **40** homes a year.

We have reduced energy usage by over **15%** since 2010 (saving over **7,000** tonnes of CO₂).



Our Co-op Energy business has sourced **100%** of its electricity from renewable sources.

Defending the environment - case studies

We continue to save energy in the workplace, and through raising colleague awareness and our eco property projects we reduced our energy usage by 3.7% compared to the previous year, saving 1,400 tonnes of CO₂.

We have an ongoing campaign to increase recycling and reduce the amount of waste we generate. During the year we produced 3,559 tonnes of waste (2016/2017: 3,587 tonnes), a 1% reduction. We recycled 3,481 tonnes of this waste, 97% of the waste generated by the Society (2016/17: 91%). The increase was achieved through improved processes and raising awareness among colleagues.

Co-op Energy – Community Renewable Energy

Co-op Energy released its pioneering Community Energy Strategy in 2017, which sets out its intention of being recognised as the leading supporter of community-owned low carbon energy in the UK. They have continued to support community renewable energy projects by increasing the number of community Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs). These have increased from 32 at the end of 2016 to 42 at the end of 2017. Co-op Energy have hosted the Community Energy Conference for the last five years and sponsored Community Energy Fortnight for the last four years as well as having colleagues speaking at a number of industry events.

Co-op Energy recently released its new Community Power tariff. The tariff, which we believe to be the first of its kind, is exclusively powered by renewable community energy including 15% green gas, which is the current highest percentage in the market. We hope to increase the number of customers using this tariff, and also use it to strengthen our existing affiliations with community energy groups.



Developing Young People

We work with local schools, colleges and youth services across our trading area by offering an extensive activities programme to engage and inform young people about the values and benefits of co-operation.

Engaged with over **9,000** young people through a wide range of interventions within our Regional Communities.

9,000  

 **50+**

Worked with over **50** schools and Higher Education partners across our trading area.

Supported **265** students with work experience opportunities.

  **265**  

 
Co-operative Store
56

Delivered **56** 'stores as classrooms' events (up from **52** that took place in 2016).

Enabled **203** students to complete our Green Pioneers programme since launching the project in 2013, helping them learn and be inspired to protect the environment.

**The Co-operative
Green Pioneers
Programme**

 THE
OUTWARD
BOUND TRUST
Adventures for life



  **19,000**

Since creating our 'Regional Communities' programme in 2015, we have engaged with over **19,000** young people through a range of initiatives.

Developing Young People - case studies

Developing Young People in the West Midlands

We continue to develop our relationship with Walsall College increasing the variety and number of activities that we support. We have delivered a digital marketing workshop, careers in Healthcare event and we are now developing a customer service workshop to underpin knowledge for the NVQ qualification. Travel goes from strength to strength supporting a cohort of students each year that study Travel and Tourism. Student Jade Ashworth has recently joined Co-operative Travel as a Personal Travel Agent. Jade said "I love being able to please people. When a customer comes back and thanks you for the work you put in, this is really rewarding." Alex Breeze who is employed at our Haslucks Green Food store has recently completed two weeks in Central Operations to support his Business and Management Degree.

Alex says, "This opportunity has widened my knowledge of the business and provided me with a real insight into the operation beyond that of store level. The overall experience has been very positive and enjoyable and I would be very interested in applying for the Graduate scheme"



Green Pioneers

We have been working in partnership with The Outward Bound Trust to deliver the Green Pioneers programme since 2013. To date 203 students from our 'Partner Schools' have participated on the week long residential in Aberdovey, Wales. Here pupils developed an action plan for a green life at school and at home. A further 42 students attended our 2017 Green Pioneers Conference at The Chateau Impney, Droitwich Spa. The theme was entitled "Lead the Scene, Keep it Green" raising student awareness of sustainability.



Engaging our colleagues and members

Engaging with our colleagues and members helps us to achieve our social responsibility goals.



We engaged with more than **28,800** members during the year, across 300 events in 2017.

693 members attended our AGM, compared to 663 in 2016.



We again increased our colleague engagement by achieving a score of **84** (compared to 82 in the previous year, and 76 in 2011).

Over **9,000** members have downloaded our member app at the end of 2017, with 82% return users, and 77% rating the app 3-5 stars.



The Society's Fun Days in Churchstoke and Gloucestershire raised **£50,000** for local good causes and almost 30,000 people attended across the two events during the summer.

During the Sustainable Community pilots we engaged with over 500 students, colleagues and members educating them on renewable energy, energy efficiency products and services and funding schemes.



849 members attended our member days in 2017, compared to 743 in the previous year.

We have distributed **£44 million** to our members through share of profits over the last 10 years.

£44 million

Engaging our colleagues and members - case studies

Gloucestershire Fun Day

Local colleagues and members in Gloucestershire organise an annual Fun Day raising money for a variety of local charity partners including Cotswold Riding for the Disabled, The Children's Opportunity Centre, Longfield Hospice, Newlands Trust and Gloucestershire Young Carers. The Fun Days have been held since 2015 at Newlands Park in Bishops Cleeve, Cheltenham.

- **2015** - 7,500 people attended raising £17,500 which bought a tractor, trailer and corn topper for Cotswold Riding for the Disabled

- **2016** - 12,500 people attended raising £36,000 which bought a stable block for Cotswold Riding for the Disabled, equipment/training for The Children's Opportunity Centre and provided end of life services at Longfield Hospice

- **2017** - 16,000 people attended raising £26,400 which provided a multi-use games arena at the Newlands Trust and extended the contract for a support worker at Gloucestershire Young Carers



Member and colleague engagement

Our Membership Strategy Committee continues to drive member engagement across the Society, specifically with the successful development of member days. Our membership continues to grow, and we had 667,000 members at the end of 2017. We engaged with over 28,800 members across 300 events focusing on Fairtrade, local produce, health and history. Our newly launched history events showcased the legacy and evolution of what is now The Midcounties Co-operative.

We have also launched our young member network, with 49 young members attending a network event during the year to discuss co-operation and further ways to engage young members.

From a 'people perspective' the Society's colleague engagement score has increased to 84 in this reporting year.

We have placed a strong focus on enhancing the Society's colleague development programme, including the introduction of an updated Performance and Progression Review, enabling colleagues to assess their knowledge, skills and behaviours against what is expected of a Midcounties colleague. In 2017 we published our Society Modern Slavery statement, setting out the steps that the Society has taken and is continuing to take to ensure that modern slavery or human trafficking is not taking place within our business or supply chain. We have also produced a Gender Pay Gap Report which can be found on our website.



Long term aspirations

Our long term Co-operative Social Responsibility aspirations include the following (from 2016 benchmark levels)

- To enable our colleagues to deliver **200,000** volunteering hours to support the community by 2026
- To continuously identify opportunities to positively affect local communities where we trade, and make a positive difference against these opportunities
- To engage **10,000** young people in co-operative values by 2026
- To improve the overall energy efficiency of our business by **20%** by 2026
- To ensure that our trading businesses are sending **zero waste** to landfill by 2026
- To ensure that the Society's colleague engagement score is maintained in the upper quartile (through independent benchmarking) year on year

Keep in touch 

We are happy to provide publications in alternative formats

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