



Social Responsibility Review

Table of contents

	Social Responsibility Review	3
	Key Achievements	4-5
	Connected Communities	6-9
	Defending the Environment	10-11
	Developing Young People	12-13
	Connected Members and Colleagues	14-15
	Long Term Aspirations	16



Social Responsibility is one of the Society's four key values and an integral part of being a co-operative enterprise. The Society undertakes a number of actions to ensure it supports its local and global communities and the environment. Supporting local organisations and causes is a key component of our social responsibility strategy, enabling our members, colleagues and community partners to connect, influence and co-operate in joint activities to promote co-operative solutions at a local and national level.

Pete Westall, Chief Values Officer, holds overall accountability for social responsibility to ensure the Society continues to meet its social responsibility objectives.

Certain directors take a lead on matters relating to environment and community: Jean Nunn-Price sits on the Society's Environmental Steering Group, and Clive Booker and Kathy Petersen are the Board's appointed representatives on the Membership Strategy Committee

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.

Connecting Communities is a core focus for our Society, enabling our local members and communities to work together to provide co-operative solutions. Our Regional Community programme enables our members to influence, connect and co-operate. We have 20 Regional Communities now fully established across our trading areas, each with a local Steering Group in place made up of local colleagues, Board members, Executive members and active local members overseen by Regional Ambassadors.

During the year we have made some positive impacts through our social responsibility programme, including providing over 100,000 products to Foodbanks and

engaging 16,000 young people in co-operative activities. 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 third year in a row, with a score of 100%. We also achieved the 'Best Co-operative' award through Co-op UK.

Our Society are also proud holders of the Carbon Trust Standard for our year on year energy savings and carbon reduction activity, and the Fair Tax Mark in recognition of our open and transparent tax affairs.

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



Pete Westall, Chief Values Officer



Key Achievements

Overall Midcounties Communities Highlights

Since establishing our Regional Community programme in 2015 we have achieved the following across our 20 areas:



Engaged with over **35,000** young people through a range of initiatives, working with **50** schools across our trading area

Overall Society Community Highlights

Key achievements in the Community



We received the Queens Award for Sustainable Development in 2015



£ Raised £433,535 for our local charity partners

£875,510 distributed to **1,080** local community groups and good causes through grants and carrier bag monies across our Midcounties Communities

Members, customers and colleagues donated **266,000** products to foodbanks, providing enough meals for over **6,000** families in need

2,000 members have made sustainability pledges

Produced **290** press releases with a potential audience reach of **42,162,430**



We have been accredited with the Fair Tax Mark, awarded to organisations that display a high degree of transparency in their tax affairs



The Society has achieved 5 stars in Business in the Community's Corporate Responsibility (CR) Index



Connected Communities

As a co-operative business we are committed to supporting local good causes chosen by our members, through volunteering and fundraising activity.



Since creating our 'Regional Communities' programme in 2015, over **266,000** products have been donated to our foodbanks, providing enough meals for over **6,000** families in need.



We've engaged **2,000** members in Sustainable Communities activities to help save energy, support community renewable energy and alleviate fuel poverty.



£1.6million

Our investment in community and co-operative initiatives totalled **£1.6 million** in 2018.



Through our Sustainable Communities programme we have developed **23** community partnerships to raise awareness of important environmental issues.



£170,000

Through a range of fundraising initiatives we have raised over **£170,000** for local charity partners.



Our colleagues delivered over **38,000** volunteering hours in 2018 to support their local communities, equivalent to a financial value of over **£550,000**.

We are proud holders of Business in the Communities 'Community Mark'.



Belinda Darby, Manager of Home-Start Wyre Forest, a charity which supports parents with young children, said: "On top of supporting our work with families, Midcounties also helps us reward our volunteers, without whom none of this would be possible. This partnership has made an enormous difference to the support Home-Start is able to provide within the Wyre Forest area. In just four months, we've achieved so much and it's so exciting to think of everything else we'll be able to do over the course of the next two years."

Connected Communities

Regional Communities

Our 20 Regional Community areas continue to thrive, enabling members to work together on causes chosen by them in their local community through volunteering and fundraising activities.

- We donated **100,000** products to foodbanks, providing meals to over **2,500** families in need (compared to 70,000 products in the previous year)
- We raised over **£170,000** for our local charity partners
- We engaged with over **16,000** young people working with our **50** partner schools and educational establishments
- We distributed over **£240,000** to over **300** local community groups and good causes through grants

Since creating our 'Regional Communities' programme in 2015, we donated in total **266,000** products to foodbanks, providing enough meals for over **6,000** families in need, and engaged with over **35,000** young people through a range of initiatives.



Connected Communities

Enabling our members to influence, connect and co-operate is a key focus for our Society, and in the winter of 2018 we hosted Co-operative Difference Events at Cheltenham Racecourse and Wolverhampton Racecourse. The events, held for the first time, brought together a range of charity partners, local community groups and grant recipients to help them with training and to talk about their partnership work with the Society and its impact on local communities.

During the morning the charities and local good causes received the Go MAD training, a package we provide to all our managers, to help them take action and measure results. During the afternoon there were talks about our Sustainable Communities work across our trading area including our charity work in different Regional Communities and Keeping it Local areas.

Many inspiring community groups attended the two events with partners and local community groups giving presentations on the good work being achieved across our Regional and Keeping it Local teams. Following a networking session and celebration lunch in the afternoon we held our Community Colleague of the Year Awards, each businesses voting for a worthy winner.

The awards recognised local colleagues who had gone above and beyond making a difference in their local communities. The events were attended by over 60 Community partners and over 200 members and colleagues.



“Many thanks for inviting us to attend your Co-op Difference event last week at Cheltenham Racecourse. Not only was the workshop in the morning very interesting and useful but the afternoon was inspirational, seeing how The Midcounties Co-operative has supported local groups like ours and how your colleagues do so much for their communities, wonderful!”

Caroline Jones: Grant Co-ordinator Orchard Trust, a charity supporting people with disabilities

Connected Communities

The August Bank Holiday Weekend saw Midcounties colleagues take on the JET2 TV Allstars in a celebrity football match. The stars of Coronation Street, Emmerdale and Hollyoaks joined players from Midcounties to raise money for local good causes.

The event held at Rushall Olympic Football Club Walsall was attended by over 600 people. The rain did not dampen anybody’s spirits and there was a great turnout in support for both Midcounties and the Allstar teams at Rushall Olympic Football Club Walsall. Coronation Street’s Alan Halsall (Tyrone) captained the Allstar team, with Stuart Newman (Head of Retail Co-op Healthcare) captaining the Midcounties team. The All Stars came from behind to win the tight match 2-1 with all three goals scored in the second half of the game.

There was further entertainment from the SAA Cheerleaders (one of our community grant recipients) performing some high-energy routines, both before the match and during half-time. A penalty shoot-out for spectators against the All Stars was enjoyed by our younger guests.

The event wouldn’t have been possible without the support of over 40 colleague volunteers helping on the day and in the lead up to the match. The local charity partners all attended the event to raise awareness of the work they do in the local community.

The £6,000 raised from the match was shared at the West Midlands Half Yearly Members meeting in October with the charities Street Teams who work with children at risk of exploitation, Alzheimer support groups ALZ Café and MASE (Monthly Alzheimer Support Evenings), Beacon Vision-a blind and sight loss support centre and Codsall Village Hall.



£6,000 raised from JET2 TV Allstars Celebrity Football Match

“This was a fantastic event, well supported by the local community and colleagues. Thanks to the generosity of our colleagues and members alike we raised an amazing £6,000 for our local charity partners” - **Alistair Rowland, Chief Retail Officer, Specialist Business**

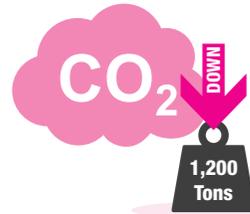
Defending the Environment

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.

99% of our waste is now being recycled (up from 97% in 2017 and 21% in 2009), diverting over **3,000** tonnes of waste from landfill per annum.



We are proud holders of the **Carbon Trust Standard** Award for successfully managing, reporting and reducing our carbon emissions year on year.



The Society has reduced its energy usage by **3%** in 2018 resulting in the business reducing CO₂ emissions by over **1,200** tonnes.



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

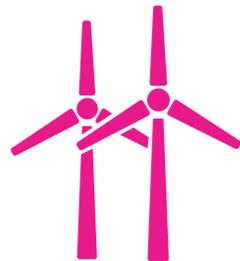


All of our Co-operative Childcare nurseries have achieved **eco school** status.



We have launched our **1 Change** Campaign to engage and inspire members and the next generation to help tackle single use plastics.

Our Co-operative Energy's Community Renewable Energy programme is helping power over **8,000** houses and saving **30,000** tonnes of CO₂ per annum.



"We are delighted to be a part of The Midcounties Co-operative's 'Sustainable Communities' programme, as all of our pupils are really interested in learning about climate change, what it means for the environment and how we can all work together to tackle it." - **Paul Holroyd, Headteacher, The Forest High School, Forest of Dean.**

1 Change – Helping to Tackle Single Use Plastics - Case Studies

Our research showed that 94% of our members agreed that reducing plastics usage is a high priority. Building on our strong track record of increasing recycling levels across our operations, we therefore introduced our 1 Change Campaign to focus on helping tackle single use plastics.

Single-use plastics, or disposable plastics, are used only once before they are thrown away or recycled. These items are things like plastic bags, straws, water bottles and packaging.

Plastics and their byproducts are littering our communities, oceans, and waterways, and causing damage to our ecosystems.

We believe there is a co-operative solution to help tackle this issue, based on the concept that small changes made by many members will have a big effect making a difference regionally and nationally. 1 Change' aims to engage members and the next generation to tackle single-use plastics, and is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including the following:

- Responsible Consumption and Production
- Climate action
- Life below water
- Life on land
- Sustainable Cities and Communities

We are asking our members to think about 1 Change they could make in their day-to-day lives to help tackle the impact of single-use plastics, examples could include using a carrier 'bag for life' or switching to paper straws. Members can make their pledge by visiting our website, www.midcounties.coop



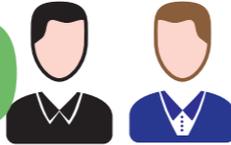
Our Aim

Our Society aims to reduce the overall waste we produce across our operations, products and services, whilst providing co-operative solutions working with members and the next generation of co-operators to help tackle single-use plastics. Through the 1 Change Campaign we aim to reduce the overall waste that we produce across our operations, reduce 400,000 single use carrier bags that we give away per annum, and engage our 50 partner schools and education establishments in our 'plastic is not fantastic' campaigns. Learn more about our campaign by visiting our web site www.midcounties.coop

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 **16,000** young people through a wide range of interventions within our Regional Communities.

16,000 

 **50+**

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

Supported **186** students with work experience opportunities.

 **186**

 **58**
Co-operative Store

Delivered **58** 'stores as classrooms' events (up from 56 last year and from 52 in 2016).

Enabled **227** students to complete our Green Pioneers programme since its launch in 2013, helping them to learn and be inspired to protect the environment.

The Co-operative Green Pioneers Programme
 

 **35,000**

Since creating our 'Regional Communities' programme in 2015, we have engaged with over **35,000** young people through a range of initiatives.

Developing Young People - Case Studies

Sustainable Education

Expanding on our community partnerships, the Society launched the 'Sustainable Communities' programme in 2017. The programme has enabled us to engage our key community stakeholders to help tackle climate change, with a range of positive impacts. This included delivering a portfolio of educational workshops to our partner schools. Colleague volunteers from each Regional Community delivered a variety of sessions including topics such as renewable and community energy, plastic pollution and energy supply and demand. We also educated children on Earth Hour, a global movement inspiring people from all over the world to take action for our planet and nature. To contribute people switched off their lights for one hour. Pupils also made lanterns from upcycled plastic bottles to raise awareness of this event.



Young Co-operators Conference

Our fourth Young Co-operators Conference attracted over 80 pupils from seven of our partner schools at The Chateau Impney in Droitwich. Students from Grace Academy in Darlaston, Cannock Chase High School, Bishops Castle Shropshire, Codsall Community High School, The Forest High School Cinderford, Walsall Academy and Myton School Leamington focussed on the theme of protecting our planet. During the morning pupils took part in outdoor challenges put on by our Charity Partner The Outward Bound Trust. Our keynote speaker for this event was Cal Major, a vet who is a passionate Ocean Advocate and the founder of "Paddle against Plastic". This year Cal paddle boarded the length of Britain paddling over 800 miles of ocean and 200 miles of canals to highlight the problem of plastic pollution. Cal talked to the pupils and Head Teachers about simple things we can all do to cut down on the amount of plastic entering our seas and rivers such as not flushing plastic cotton buds down the toilet. The students made plastic pledges about what actions they will take to reduce the use of plastics in their lives.



Connected Members and Colleagues

We aim to involve members and colleagues in supporting issues that are relevant to where they work, live and learn. As a Co-operative Society, we are stronger when our members, influence, connect and co-operate in joint activities that benefit us, them and our communities.



ENGAGED WITH
35,000 MEMBERS
DURING THE YEAR

We engaged with more than **35,000** members during the year, through a range of co-operative events.



570 members attended our AGM in 2018.



SCORE OF
85

Our Colleague Engagement reached a record high this year, with a score of **85** (compared to 84 in the previous year, and 76 in 2011).



2,620 members attended our member days in 2018, compared to 849 in the previous year.

Over **21,000** members have downloaded our member app at the end of 2018. With **82%** return users, and **76%** rating the app **3-5 stars**, we have now launched our **Total Member Reward Statement** providing members with information on their points earned from each trading group and additional member benefits.



700,000

We now have over **700,000** Members, a **22%** increase in our membership base in just under three years.



We've launched a new colleague website called **Colleagues Connect** to introduce new ways of working and more open channels to allow even greater two-way feedback.



To raise awareness of **Modern Slavery** we supported the Bright Future programme which provides a pathway to permanent employment for victims of Modern Slavery.

Engaging our Colleagues and Members - Case Studies

700,000th Member

During the year we recruited our 700,000th member. The milestone represents a 22% increase in our membership base in just under three years. Led by a commitment to democracy, openness, equality and social responsibility, as well as a growing desire from consumers to buy from businesses which operate responsibly, we've increasingly attracted members from across the UK, as well as from our traditional core trading areas.

The 700,000th member, Mr Tom Waggett, is a Co-op Energy customer. Mr Waggett, from Somerset, said: "We were really drawn to Co-op Energy's environmental policies and

commitment to green energy, and more widely the charity work the Society does. I look forward to being part of these initiatives and making a real difference within local communities in the future."

More than 333,000 customers have now chosen Co-op Energy over other market suppliers.

To mark the milestone - and the Society's commitment to local sourcing and efficient energy use - Mr Waggett was presented with a luxury gift hamper, containing a selection of local produce from Midcounties' 'Best of Our Counties' range and an energy-saving pack.



Member and Colleague Engagement

Our Membership Strategy Committee are responsible for the strategic direction of member engagement within the Society. The Committee looks at ways to best recruit, engage, develop, educate and involve members in the Society, as well as monitoring key membership activity. Through the Membership Strategy Committee we continue to drive member engagement across the Society, specifically with the successful development of member days.

In 2018, we held 20 members days across our Regional Community teams. The celebration events enabled members to meet their local store colleagues, Regional ambassadors, Board members and members of the Member Strategy Committee.

We engaged with over 35,000 members at events throughout the year.

Our Colleague Engagement reached a record high this year, the annual colleague survey reflecting their commitment to both the Society and the role we all play in our communities. We achieved a colleague engagement score of 85, a 1 point increase on last year and 5 points ahead of the industry threshold for highly engaged teams. We've also launched a new colleague website called Colleagues Connect to introduce new ways of working and more open channels to allow even greater two-way feedback.

To raise awareness of Modern Slavery we supported the Bright Future

programme which provides a pathway to permanent employment for victims of Modern Slavery, offering placements at our food stores. At our 2018 AGM, members received an update on the wider campaign on Modern Slavery, and colleagues in our HR team completed an awareness training course to help them identify the signs of Modern Slavery.

Also, during the year our members donated a record 100,000 items to foodbanks, providing enough meals for over 2,500 families in need. Compared to last year's donations, this is a 30% year on year increase and demonstrates the ongoing commitment of our colleagues, members, customers and community organisations.

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 using 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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