



...years of
supporting
progressive,
ethical, equal,
fair, community
focused
co-operatives

CO-OPERATIVE
alternatives

coopalternatives.coop

We are Northern Ireland's leading co-operative development organisation

Supporting a co-operative economy

Co-operative Alternatives is the only specialist organisation with the sole aim of developing and supporting co-operatives on the island of Ireland.

Co-operatives – which are member-owned and democratically run – need a dedicated service to help them to develop, grow and connect with the wider co-operative movement. Co-operative Alternatives enable co-operative enterprises to develop those specific characteristics that make co-operatives unique and embed co-operative principles in their governance, business planning and membership. They differ in so many ways from other enterprises and need more specific advice in order to set up and grow.

We offer high quality support and expert knowledge to existing and emerging co-operatives.

Areas in which we can help include:

- Community Share Offers
- Start Up Support
- Co-op Business Planning
- Co-op Society registration
- Secretarial services
- Member engagement
- Marketing & PR

Co-operatives have had a long, important history here – from the credit unions to the long-established agricultural co-ops. Now there is a new wave of co-operatives forming at an increased pace with the support of Co-operative Alternatives. In the current economic environment with funding cuts prevalent, forming a co-operative can empower communities to provide much needed products and services.

Many groups are forming co-operative enterprises because they present a fairer, more just and ethical way to trade. Others choose the co-operative way because it offers communities the chance to collectively “buy into” a project to help develop their local area, such as Raglan's redevelopment of a disused building in Harryville or Ballymacash Sports Academy building a 4G pitch and community hub.

In the past years, Co-operative Alternatives has made great strides in energising local groups and individuals to come together and create new organisations providing services and products that matter to their communities.



Northern Ireland Community Energy (NICE)

What they do: This Co-op is Northern Ireland's first community-owned solar energy enterprise and provides free installation of PV solar panels on buildings that are owned by third sector organisations such as community groups and charities. NICE has installed panels for a total of 18 organisations from all over Northern Ireland.

Community Share Offer: NICE launched two community share offers in 2015 and in 2016. In total NICE raised £213,900 to finance its installation of solar panels to benefit 18 local community and voluntary organisations and help them to reduce their electricity costs.

How we helped: NICE received development support and advice from our Community Shares Ready project. We worked to strengthen the NICE board, to register as a community benefit society, helped them to identify sites, write the community share offer and prepare a marketing campaign to support the launch of the offers and their success with local member/investors. Co-operative Alternatives is currently supporting NICE by offering a Secretariat and administrative service to the Board and its membership.

Raglan Community Renovation and Development Society

What they do: This Co-op was formed to aid the regeneration of the Harryville area of Ballymena by transforming the old Raglan Bar into a vibrant community/business hub, with ten business units and an exhibition area. The site has already undergone some restoration and the building is currently occupied by Slemish n tha Braid Credit Union.

Community Share Offer: It launched a community share offer to raise £120,000 to begin the first phase of the £1m project. The process raised £110,050 in community shares and will be used to leverage more funding for the £400,000 first construction phase.

How we helped: Co-operative Alternatives provided expert support and advice as part of the Community Shares Ready Project, helping with the setting up of the Raglan as the community benefit society - a form of co-operative. We also assisted with governance, business and marketing planning, writing the community share offer and advice on how to best support and market the offer within their community of interest and the wider public.



Our Impact 5 years of progress

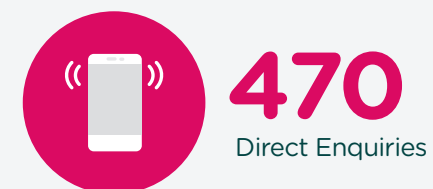
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For every **£1** invested by our funders, **£2.2** were invested by the public in new co-operatives through Community Share Offers by **1,902** co-owners in co-operative enterprises.

Support, Training & Advice



Number of groups engaged by Co-operative Alternatives



Types of support given

- Community Share Offers
- Start Up Support
- Co-op Business Planning
- Co-op Society Registration
- Secretarial Services
- Member Engagement
- Marketing & PR

Co-operative Development & Community Shares



Sectors Reached



Renewable Energy



Community Supported Agriculture



Leisure & Sport



Community Building & Housing

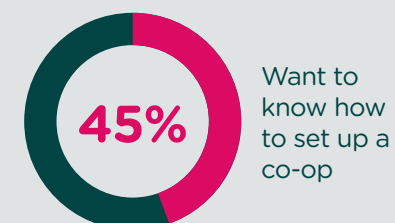
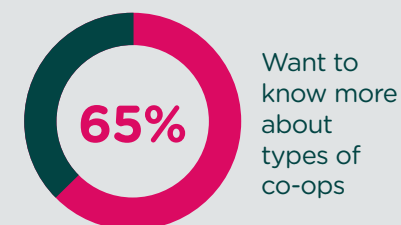
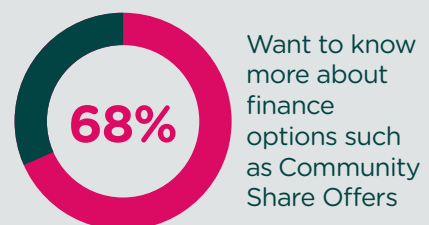


Creative Industry



Craft & Artisan Food & Drink

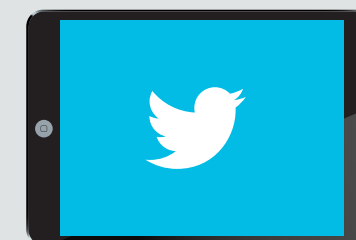
Co-operative Alternatives Survey (Summer 2017)



Raising Awareness



17,282 website user sessions
30,361 website page views



841 Twitter followers
17,400 Twitter impressions during Co-ops Can Do Event (Nov 2017)



120 Newspaper articles published about Co-operative Alternatives and the co-ops we support.

Media Coverage BBC Radio Ulster and radio Foyle, Belfast Telegraph, Irish News, Newsletter, Co-op News, Business Eye, Business First, Farm Week, Farming Life & weekly newspapers

What they've said...

Ed Mayo, Secretary General - Co-operatives UK

"Northern Ireland ranks high in terms of co-operative values. Whenever you have co-ops working and generating economic value to a region it drives greater equality and participation and is a model of an inclusive economy."

Keith Forster from the Department for the Economy's Strategic Policy Division
"Co-ops have an important role to play in Northern Ireland's economic future."

William Millar - Raglan Community Development and Renovation Society

"The team at Co-Operative Alternatives were instrumental in the development of the Raglan Project as with their help we have been able to gather pledges and investments to our Community Share offer, which in turn will release up to £125K of 'matched funding' from Mid & East Antrim Borough Council."

Andrea McKernon - Doggy Dynamos

"Cooperative Alternatives has been wonderful for Doggy Dynamos with meeting rooms supplied, a treasure trove of knowledge and guidance, and a clearly defined start-up business plan so we know where we are going and how to get there."

Laurie Davies - Lacada Brewery Co-operative

"Co-op Alternatives was essential to Lacada Brewery being established. Their advice on governance helped us understand structure. They continue to provide support and knowledge about cooperation - they're always there when we have questions and, when you're involved in business, that is a reassurance."

Nigel McKinney, Director of Operations, Building Change Trust

"The work of Co-operative Alternatives in delivering the Community Shares Ready! Programme on behalf of the Building Change Trust has been one of our true success stories. Over the past five years Co-operative Alternatives has exceeded all expectations and helped foster a new culture of co-operation and collaboration in Northern Ireland."

The figures speak for themselves. We hope that this will have a long-lasting legacy in Northern Ireland, with many other grassroots organisations having the confidence to embrace the co-operative model for the benefit of their communities."

Co-operative Alternatives

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