

Co-operative Fortnight - What are you doing? Can we help?



Co-operatives Fortnight is a groundbreaking new initiative to help promote co-operatives as a better alternative. During the fortnight co-operatives up and down the country will be holding events to promote their businesses and co-operation.

Co-operatives South East is offering bursaries to help co-operative enterprises based in the south east region hold open day events during Co-operatives Fortnight in June.

The bursaries will be for up to £100 to help with marketing materials, refreshments and other expenses. All co-operatives in the south east are eligible to apply but priority will be given to members of Co-operatives South East. For more information about the bursaries, for an application form, or to become a member, please contact Kathy O'Keeffe at info@cooperatives-se.coop.

For more information and resources about Co-operatives Fortnight see www.thereisanalternative.coop.



Annual General Meeting

The Co-operatives South
East Annual General
Meeting will take place on

**Wednesday
23rd June 2010**

at Reading Museum
and Town Hall

Please put this date
in your diary.



Hampshire Fare was established in 1991 by a small group of food producers who wanted to actively promote the benefits of buying local produce. There are currently 200 members in businesses from pig farmers and wine makers to farm shops and four star hotels. Any business that produces, sells or serves local produce from Hampshire is entitled to join and benefit from the many services they offer.

Hampshire Fare takes part regularly in the annual Hampshire Food Festival held every July and the annual Great Hampshire Sausage & Pie Competition, which is now the largest county event in the country.

~ Jan Laney ~

It's with great sadness that we have to inform you of the sudden death of our friend and colleague, Jan Laney from the Co-operative Group.

Jan looked after the majority of the administration of Co-operatives South East for a number of years prior to the appointment of a Business and Communications Manager and her friendly nature and efficiency will be missed by all who knew her.

Community owned shop and the Plunkett Foundation on The Archers



The BBC is highlighting ways rural communities can come together to combat village shop closures. Ambridge, the fictional village home of The Archers, has opted for community-ownership to save its shop and post office.

Before airing the radio show, producers worked with the Plunkett Foundation which helps rural residents set up and run community-owned shops. Currently in Ambridge, the only shop and post office is threatened with closure. Following a recent parish council meeting, villagers decided that the best way to keep the outlet open was to turn it into a community-owned shop. In doing so, the fictional community has joined 220 other rural communities which also run their own shop.

Plunkett chief executive Peter Couchman said: "Community-ownership is often the only viable way of saving or reintroducing vital rural services." The Plunkett Foundation could provide the specialist advice and support needed to save or reopen a shop, said Mr Couchman. "We hope The Archers storyline will encourage more people in rural areas to take action," he added.

In the past three years, the foundation has supported 45 community-owned shops to open through its Village Core programme. Some 27 community-owned shops have opened this year - bucking the economic downturn which has seen many retailers forced to close. The programme provides financial start-up packages and advisory support to communities looking to set up a community-owned rural shop. It is run in partnership with the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Co-operative and Community Finance.

For further information on how to set up and run a community-owned shop, please visit <http://www.plunkett.co.uk/whatwedo/rcs/ruralcommunityshops.cfm>



thePhoneCo-op
it's your call

Phone Co-op acquires Avoco



The Phone Co-op has announced that it has acquired Avoco UK Ltd, the County Durham-based telecoms reseller.

As a result nearly 300 business customers across over 400 sites, mainly in the North East, have transferred to The Phone Co-op. These customers will continue to receive first line support from former Avoco staff based in Consett but will now have access to a wider range of services, benefiting from The Phone Co-op's greater buying power. They include a range of SMEs, as well as a large number of local authorities and public sector agencies, an area in which The Phone Co-op also has considerable experience.

Vivian Woodell, chief executive of The Phone Co-op, commented, "The addition of Avoco's customers to our business is an important step in our development. In pursuing this opportunity it was clear that there was a good match between our two organisations, both of which have a strong track record of providing excellent service. At the same time, we're delighted to be able to offer Avoco customers the opportunity to become members of the co-operative and to share in our success as we grow."

Martin Oswell, founder and chief executive of Avoco, added, 'We had established a strong business but to serve our customers' interests in the longer term we needed greater scale. The Phone Co-op will enable them to keep their telecoms costs down and enjoy high levels of service, whilst taking full advantage of a wider product portfolio.'

Most successful year ever is the icing on the cake at anniversary party



Co-operative Futures, a business development agency that encourages the formation of new co-operatives and other community owned enterprises in Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Oxfordshire celebrated its 10th anniversary at the end of January with the news that it had experienced its most successful year ever.

Jo White, director of Co-operative Futures, told delegates the company had registered, or was in the process of registering, 30 co-operative start-ups – about the same number that it registered during the entire period from 2000 to 2009.

The company celebrated its anniversary at the Alexandra House conference centre in Swindon with a cake made by the Oxford Bread Group, a co-operative set up with the help of Co-operative Futures. It makes bread from ancient forms of grain, which are grown organically.

The following day, Co-operative Futures hosted its third annual conference – Think, Walk, Talk Co-operatives – which attracted delegates from across the country.

Co-operative Charity Fun day

Saturday 29th May

Help the Hospices

event – promoting and fundraising for The Midcounties Co-operative Charity Partner with fun activities for the family. Find out more about the charity we support in a fun atmosphere.

at

The Co-operative Food
Black Bourton Road
Carterton OX18 3HQ

Total Coverage designs accessible pdfs



The internet has been a dream come true for anyone involved in marketing a product or service. You put it online, and it's there for anyone to see. At least, that's the theory. But how easy would it be for someone with colour blindness to read your website, do you think? Or, someone with a visual impairment to 'experience' the images you have posted?

By 2020, half of the adult population in the UK will be aged 50+. As we age, one or more of our abilities will usually decline, such as our eyesight, hearing, dexterity, mobility and memory.

Total Coverage have responded to these changes by creating accessible PDFs by adding 'tags' to the file which contain information about the structure of the document. This shows assistive technologies which areas are headers, lists, tables or hyperlinks, and displays an additional text description of any images. The tagging also gives the person reading the PDF a sense of the natural order that the document should be read in, making it easier to navigate and understand.

The tagging can be applied from the start in new accessible PDFs, or retrospectively to existing information in a PDF format that you want to 'make accessible' to a wider audience.

If you would like to talk to someone about designing or converting accessible PDFs for your organisation please contact Kingsley Brown on 023 8067 8330 or email kingsley@totalcoverage.coop

Stop Press...

Total Coverage in the running for Sustainable Business Award



Total Coverage, the Southampton based graphic design worker co-operative, is through to the finals of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Sustainable Business Awards 2010.

The Business Awards celebrate the best of local business and seek to recognise and reward companies in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight which are taking positive steps to improve their social, environmental and economic impacts.

Co-director, Kim Robbins says: "We've just been informed that we've been shortlisted for the finals in the Leadership category and we're really excited! At the last ceremony we won two awards, including the overall title, so we're thrilled that our continued efforts are once again being recognised by the judges, proving that sustainability is still at the heart of our business as it has been for 22 years."

The winners will be announced on 20 May 2010 at the awards ceremony at the De Vere Grand Harbour Hotel in Southampton.

What can Co-operatives South East do for your co-operative?

Co-operatives South East is the Co-operative Council for the south east region and it's role is to:

- represent and promote Co-operative values and principles
- raise the profile of the Co-operative Sector in the region
- represent the Co-operative Sector within regional forums and regional media
- facilitate the provision of services to members that will assist them to develop as co-operatives, sustainable enterprises and contributors to the well-being of communities in the region
- involve members and potential members in the wider Co-operative Movement and in particular in active membership of Co-operatives UK
- build partnership structures and arrangements with organisations who have similar objectives.

For more information contact:

Kathy O'Keeffe info@cooperatives-se.coop

Co-operatives South East is supported by:

The **co-operative**
enterprise hub

The Midcounties **Co-operative**

For more information

visit our website at

www.cooperatives-se.coop

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