

Co-operation and Mutuality Scotland Annual Report

Introduction

The last year has been a busy one for Co-operation and Mutuality Scotland (CMS). The effects of the 'credit crunch' have demonstrated that the present capitalist system does not solve all the worlds' problems. It has demonstrated the need to explore alternatives, co-operatives and mutuals offer viable alternatives.

Over the last year there has been a growing

realisation that the economy should be developed in a different way. The mutual sector is not immune from the problems of the capitalist economy but the credit crunch clearly demonstrates the need to examine alternative economic models.

In 2008 CMS was involved in a variety of events and also in policy development and lobbying. For example

CMS has organised a worker co-op event and a co-operative 'village' at the CIVICUS assembly. We have lobbied the Scottish Government on a number of policy issues and even joined co-operative colleagues in the rest of the UK to lobby the UK Government.

Events

CMS organises events to respond to the needs of particular groups in the co-operative movement or to promote the value of co-operative and mutual organisations.

In March CMS organised a one-day event for worker co-operatives. This event was chaired by CMS chair Stephen Kelly. The event heard from the then Chief Executive of Co-operative Development Scotland

(C:DS) Ian Hughes, he outlined the work which C:DS has done and what they can offer to co-operatives. Ian's main point was that the co-op sector needs to demonstrate that it is a



CMS Chair Stephen Kelly charring the Worker Co-op event

success. This was followed by two presentations about legal issues relating to worker co-ops. Over lunch delegates had the opportunity to visit an extensive exhibition from a variety of co-operative organisations. The afternoon saw sessions led by Co-operative and Community Finance and by the Phone Co-op. The event ended with an open discussion where one of the main items which came forward was the need for co-ops to trade with each other. Later in March along with the Association of British Credit Unions (ABCUL) CMS organised a fringe meeting at the Scottish Labour Party conference in Aviemore. The theme of the meeting was 'Credit Unions – Supporting Financial Inclusion'. The speakers were Rev Graham Blount, Marlene

Credit Unions

'Credit Unions are everyone not just for the poor'
 Marlene Shiels
 Capital Credit Union

Shiels from Capital Credit Union and Labour/Co-op MSP Bill Butler, the event was chaired by CMS secretary Jim Lee. Rev Graham Blount who is the chair of Citizen's Advice Scotland and was the Scottish Churches' Parliamentary Officer spoke and asked whether the audience knew the cost of a pint of milk; he then works. Marlene Shiels, asked if that price changed depending on your ability to pay and finally whether some people were excluded from access to milk due to low pay, he pointed out that this was how the credit market works. Marlene Shiels, Chief Executive of Capital Credit Union spoke of her experience in the Credit Union sector. She pointed out that

Robert Owen Anniversary

credit unions are for everyone and not just for the poor. Bill Butler MSP then spoke, he issued a rallying call, he stated that Credit Unions are better than banks and he called for a campaign to end financial exclusion and material poverty. CMS organised a celebration of the life and work of Robert Owen, which took place at New Lanark, this marked the 150th anniversary of his death. The event included entertainment and discussions on Robert Owen's career

CIVICUS Assembly

and legacy. It provided an opportunity for people involved in the co-operative movement to come together to celebrate their contribution to Scottish life.

In June CMS organised the 'Co-operative Village' at the CIVICUS gathering in the SECC. This allowed many of Scotland's co-ops to showcase their work and it also provided an excellent networking opportunity for co-ops. This event demonstrated the work which CMS can do to promote the co-op

sector as a whole.

A Cross-Party Group on Co-operatives in the Scottish Parliament was formed in October. The co-conveners of this group are Willie Coffey SNP MSP, Jim Hume Lib Dem MSP, James Kelly Labour and Co-op MSP

Cross Party Group

and John Scott Conservative MSP. CMS provides the secretariat support for this group and CMS Policy and Information Officer Richard McCreedy is the secretary of this Cross-Party Group. It is hoped that by organising events in the Scottish Parliament CMS will be able to promote the co-operative and mutual sector to Scottish parliamentarians. CMS assisted Whitcomm Co-operative to launch in the Scottish Parliament. This co-operative which has been developed by West Whitlawburn

Housing Co-op aims to reduce digital exclusion. Whitcomm will mean that West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative's new homes will have fibre optic cable installed and will provide next generation broadband. Whitcomm is a communication co-operative and will provide TV, phone and internet services.

Policy Development

CMS worked over 2008 to encourage the Scottish Government to examine co-operative and mutual models in a positive light. It is fair to say that one of the major barriers to the promotion of co-ops is that many politicians and civil servants do not understand how the co-operative model works. CMS's submissions to these policy consultations

can be found in full on the CMS website.



The 150th Anniversary of Robert Owen's death was celebrated at New Lanark.

'to increase awareness of the co-operative model and its contribution to Scotland's social and economic development'
Aim of the Cross-Party Group on Co-ops





Houses designed for West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative.

In the course of 2008 CMS responded to six major consultations. Two of these referred to housing. CMS works closely with Co-operative Housing in Scotland (CHiS) to promote the co-operative model of housing provision. The Scottish Government set out their proposals for housing in the document *Firm Foundations: the future of housing in Scotland*. CMS responded pointing out that the Scottish Government should develop a new housing strategy which recognises that co-operative and mutual policy solutions have an important role to play in the future of Scotland's housing. CMS promoted the idea of the Community Land Trust and the Mutual Home Ownership Society as a means of delivering the Scottish Government's objectives. The Scottish

Housing

Housing co-operatives can be 'ambitious and radical'

Government set itself the target of being 'ambitious and radical' in housing policy. CMS pointed out that co-operative solutions would meet this target. Rural Affairs and Environment Committee carried out an inquiry into co-op Rural Housing. CMS responded to that enquiry, pointing out that we believe that co-operative solutions would work equally well in both urban and rural settings. In the context of their inquiry the co-op model works particularly well in the rural context as it would make affordable housing available to local people for housing in rural communities.

The Scottish Parliament's

Mutual NHS

The Scottish Government has spoken of creating a 'mutual NHS' in Scotland. The Scottish Government consulted on its Local Healthcare Bill which would bring in direct elections to health boards. CMS responded pointing out that in many aspects the NHS is like a mutual except in its governance model which is hierarchical. CMS suggested that as well as promoting elections to Health Boards there would also need to be changes in other aspects of the NHS to make it more accountable.

Food

The Scottish Government consulted on food policy in its document *Choosing the Right Ingredients: The Future of Food in Scotland*. Food policy is a particularly good area to promote the co-operative model. Co-ops are involved in every aspect of the food industry from production to retail. We

would argue that co-ops are the only model found in every aspect of the food industry. We would also argue that co-ops are the only model which can deliver every aspect of the Scottish Government's agenda. Co-operatives can play a part in making Scotland's food industry a successful

industry which satisfies customers and promotes concern for the environment; which delivers healthy, quality food which is affordable and which maximises returns back to Scotland.

The UK Government legislated on Dormant Bank and Building Society



A ScotMid Co-op Store

Renewable Energy

accounts and the Scottish Government consulted on how to disburse the funds which will become available as a result. The Scottish Government wishes the money which will become available to be used in regenerating communities. CMS has argued that this money should be given to community based co-operatives. One of the objectives which the Scottish Government seeks to achieve is to empower communities we believe that this is only possible when communities have a real

say in how the money will be spent – this can only be done by community based co-operatives. In this way the delivery model meets the objectives of the Dormant Bank and Building Society Account fund by promoting community involvement and empowerment and putting local people in charge of the way in which their local area is developed.

CMS was delighted to play a part in the response prepared by Co-operatives UK to the UK Government consultation

on *UK Renewable Energy Strategy*. This response recognised that co-operative models were very effective in delivering renewables. It recognised that often rural areas were exploited to provide renewable energy, for example by the placing of wind farms, but that if these projects were community co-operatives and the communities concerned directly benefitted this could alleviate many local concerns.

co-operative models are very effective in delivering renewables

co-operation & mutuality
SCOTLAND



Conclusion



CMS's staff team
Richard McCready,
Susan Small and
Jim Lee.

The full responses to the consultations mentioned, as well as reports on the events listed, along with the latest updates from the co-operative movement can be found on the CMS website www.scotland.coop CMS also issues a email newsletter if you would

like to receive this please email us on cms@scotland.coop .

Conclusion

This is an exciting time for the co-operative movement the apparent failure of other economic models calls for an

examination of the alternatives. CMS believes that co-operative and mutual models can and should be used more extensively than they have been thus far. CMS has organised a number of events which were aimed at raising the profile of the co-operative

'A lot was done to promote co-ops in 2008 there is a great deal more to do in the future.'

movement in Scotland. CMS has made the case to promote co-operatives and mutuals to the Scottish Government and others over the last year and will continue to do so in the future. A lot was done to promote co-ops in

2008 there is a great deal more to do in the future.

About CMS

Co-operation and Mutuality Scotland (CMS) is a membership organisation with a clear and focused purpose and vision. Our purpose is to develop and extend co-operation and mutuality in Scotland's communities. Our vision is to be a strategic voice for co-operation and mutuality; to be a partner, with government and others, in the development and support of new and existing co-operatives and mutual enterprises, and to be an effective forum for co-operative and mutual enterprise.

Contact CMS

Co-operation and Mutuality Scotland,
Robert Owen House, 87 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 2EE
Telephone 0141 304 5465
cms@scotland.coop
www.scotland.coop