



**CO-OPERATIVE &  
COMMUNITY FINANCE**  
supportive lending since 1973



## New enterprise centre for Cornish village

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Residents of Millbrook Village in South East Cornwall celebrate the opening of their new community hub, The Rame Centre.

**NEWSLETTER 34**

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## Rame was not built in a day

**A Cornish community has opened a new village hub after receiving loans from Co-operative & Community Finance and The Co-operative Loan Fund.**

A group of locals from the Rame Peninsula in South East Cornwall came together to found The Peninsula Trust on 19 March 2014, with the aim of supporting their community. Exactly one year later, they are celebrating the opening of their new community hub – The Rame Centre – in Millbrook Village.

& Community Finance and The Co-operative Loan Fund, was used to buy the large semi-derelict building in Millbrook Village. This new hub marks the beginning of their ambitious plan for community development and engagement.

After some renovation and redecoration, the building opened as The Rame Centre on 19 March 2015. Margaret Edwards, the trust's first community investor, was there to cut the ribbon, along with our Investment Manager Ian Taylor.

Simon Ryan, founder of The Peninsula Trust, said: "This project has been so fast paced and people are really excited about it – we've got volunteers and supporters pouring into the building already, which is absolutely unreal. The loans we received from The Co-operative Loan Fund and Co-operative & Community Finance have helped us to create a fully sustainable community hub that will last long term."

The Rame Centre will be home to a variety of community services,

including the local credit union, council-led IT courses, citizens' advice, a retail space and the local food bank. The yard at the rear of the property will house a new Peninsula Trust initiative dubbed 'Made in Rame'; a collection of work units which will be rented to small, local craft businesses. Extra income will be generated through the rental of two flats in the upper floor of the building.

Ian Taylor, said: "We're delighted to support this innovative and highly energetic community resource.

Millbrook Village and the surrounding areas will benefit greatly from the opening of the new centre, as well as the trust's future projects."

This is the third project that we've lent to in this small enterprising community in recent years. In 2012 a disused bank building was bought and refurbished for a local development trust, and in 2013 a new pontoon was installed for the fishermen's organisation.

[thepeninsulatrust.org.uk](http://thepeninsulatrust.org.uk)

"The loans we received have helped us to create a fully sustainable community hub that will last long term."

The trust currently has 350 members – 10% of the area's population. In September 2014, they launched a community share issue which raised £24,400. This money, combined with loans from Co-operative



# Co-op saves pub from demolition



**In December 2014 The Fox and Hounds in Denmead on the outskirts of Portsmouth reopened under co-operative ownership after it had been derelict for over two years.**

The local community raised nearly £500,000 to buy and refurbish the 150 year building. The community share issue attracted £326,000 from 190 investors and the remainder came from loans from Co-operative & Community Finance and The Co-operative Loan Fund and a grant from Solent Local Enterprise Partnership.

Locals were dismayed when the pub closed in April 2012 and the owner applied for planning permission to demolish the building and erect private dwellings. They opposed the plans and eventually succeeded in having the pub registered as an asset of community value. As a result Winchester City Council refused planning permission and the way was clear for the community co-operative to make an offer to purchase. The sale was completed in July 2014 and then the extensive refurbishment began – almost everything had to be replaced.

Rob Stark, one of the directors of the community co-operative, said: "It's been a long haul since we started the campaign to save our pub in April 2012. We didn't decide to be a community co-op until nearly a year later. It's a relatively new idea and it was hard to get advice.

"We've been doing very well since the pub reopened in December, slightly better than predicted. But we had a sad setback in February when one of our founders died. Jon Pocock will be sadly missed in the local community."

The co-operative decided that it would be best to have the pub run by tenants and has engaged an experienced couple who had already run a successful pub and restaurant nearby as tenants. In addition to his skills as a landlord, Stephen Pratt has a reputation as an Elvis impersonator.

The co-operative is run by a voluntary board of five directors and local members also help with specific tasks to improve the venture such as gardening.

Ian Rothwell said: "This community group had to jump a lot of hurdles to get here. The owner was hostile, they received some poor advice and some funding didn't materialise. When they contacted us for a loan they were delighted by how straightforward it was. I think the Fox and Hounds is going to do very well."

[foxandhounds-pub.co.uk](http://foxandhounds-pub.co.uk)

Photos: © Steve Hughes / Retina Photography



# Refurbish and occupy

**A community-based social enterprise in Huddersfield is renovating dozens of empty private houses in a scheme that will provide affordable rented accommodation, training and work for local people, and a sustainable fund for more development. A loan from Co-operative & Community Finance is helping to make this happen.**

Fresh Horizons is firmly rooted in Deighton and the ethnically diverse communities in the north of Huddersfield. The organisation delivers a very wide range of services and activities in pursuit of its mission to 'help people be proud of what they do and where they live'. It guides local people to access support services and to get into training and volunteering. It also invests in housing and community buildings and helps to create local jobs.

Its many activities include managing fourteen community buildings, developing community managed libraries, managing over 60 domestic properties for rent, running the largest sheet music hire service in England, putting on community events, and supporting hundreds of local people back into employment. The organisation employs 70 people and has a turnover of £1.5m.

Co-operative & Community Finance is one of the institutions involved in



funding the innovative empty homes project. The purpose is to make some of the estimated 5,000 empty private sector homes in Kirklees available as affordable properties for rent. Fresh Horizons refurbishes and sublets the properties that have been empty for more than six months. It charges the owner 10% of the rent in fees and a service charge and a contribution towards the cost of refurbishment. Fresh Horizons plans to establish a self-sustaining fund to continue the project.

Although Fresh Horizons was set up in 2002 it can trace its history back to the community action support group set up during the 1984/5 miners' strike. This evolved and was formalised as the Deighton and Sheepridge Partnership in 1992. Ten years later it changed its constitution to become Fresh Horizons.

Managing Director Mike McCusker said: "Our big challenge has been to grow the organisation while remaining locally based. That's why we have so many diverse activities. Delivering our mission drives us to deliver any service we can that will benefit the local community."

This is the fourth loan that we've approved for Fresh Horizons. Ian

Taylor explained why he was happy to support the organisation: "Fresh Horizons is run by local people for local people and they are solving local problems. There are a lot of empty houses in the area and the solution that Fresh Horizons has come up with is strategic, well planned and embedded in the local community."

**"It's run by local people for local people and solving local problems"**

Fresh Horizons has also just launched an inspiring scheme to engage young people in volunteering. Called Wheels into Work the scheme gives the incentive of a free driving lesson for every five hours of voluntary work. Mike McCusker said: "This is a great way of engaging young people in volunteering and rewarding them with something they value. We're expecting 200 people to take part over the next six months."

[freshhorizons.org.uk](http://freshhorizons.org.uk)

## Free boiler scheme

**Manchester-based Biomass Energy Cooperative is using loans from Co-operative & Community Finance and The Co-operative Loan Fund to install and maintain biomass boilers in church and community buildings free of charge.**

Two churches, in Birkenhead and Blacon, have used the free boiler scheme. Both were struggling with inefficient oil boilers that they could not afford to replace. Now they benefit from heating provided by boilers fuelled by renewable resources. There is no installation charge and no maintenance costs – the churches will just pay for the heat they use over the next 20 years at an agreed rate, which will be less than they paid in the past.

Biomass Energy Cooperative can afford to do this because it will receive payments from the Renewable Heat Incentive, a government initiative to encourage the use of renewable energy. Our loans provided the initial capital needed to purchase the first two boilers.

Angela Davies, one of the directors of Biomass Energy Cooperative, said: "Our free boiler scheme is of particular interest to churches and community organisations that want the environmental and financial benefits of a biomass system, but who are unwilling or unable to invest capital in a relatively long project.

"It's a great scheme for the customer, the co-op and the environment. I'd like to thank Co-operative & Community Finance for helping."



Biomass Energy Cooperative is a worker co-operative with four members. It was set up in 2011 by people with a commitment to co-operative values and a determination to do something practical to combat climate change. The Co-operative Loan Fund helped to finance some of the start-up costs.

[biomassenergy.coop](http://biomassenergy.coop)

## Wood recycling co-op grows

**Oxford Wood Recycling has moved into much larger premises and is planning to increase the size of its business, employing more people, recycling more wood, developing new products and doubling turnover in the next two years.**

The successful social enterprise, set up in 2005, has moved into a 6,350 sq ft unit on a popular trading estate in Abingdon. Neighbours include a furniture re-use project, a computer recycling company and a microbrewery.

A loan from Co-operative & Community Finance was used to buy wood processing machinery and a new vehicle and to provide working capital for the move and expansion.

Oxford Wood Recycling increases the amount of wood

being reused, while providing employment and work experience for disadvantaged people. It operates a wood waste collection service within 30 miles of Abingdon.

The wood is sorted and de-nailed. Re-useable timber is sold for DIY use or sawn and bagged for firewood. Following the move to larger premises, Oxford Wood Recycling is starting to make and sell a range of wood furniture and shelving.

Richard Snow, Chief Executive Officer of Oxford Wood Recycling, said: "Re-use and recycling is only part of the story. A main aim of the business is to provide work and opportunities for people who find it hard to get jobs. Over the last 10 years we've supported over 60 people, 19 of whom have been employed by us.

[oxfordwoodrecycling.org.uk](http://oxfordwoodrecycling.org.uk)



## A record year!

**2014 was a great year for Co-operative & Community Finance. We released £1.4m to co-operatives, community groups and ethical organisations.**

Highlights included loans to the UK's first co-operatively owned music venue, a student housing co-op, two community pubs, two wood recycling projects, a creative workers' co-op, a video engineering co-op, two renewable energy installers, a wholefoods trader and numerous community shops.

The money has helped these organisations to set up, grow and prosper; creating and securing jobs and making a positive social and environmental impact.

The finance was drawn from the family of funds we manage, including the Co-operative Loan Fund and the Co-operative Community Shares Fund.

One borrower commented: "The finance we received was invaluable to our project. It helped us to successfully complete our share issue and realise a collective dream."

There were 31 loans made in total. The largest was for £180,000 and the smallest £10,000.

Our Investment Manager Ian Taylor said: "Other lenders in the social sector are upscaling and focusing on lending larger amounts. This has opened a gap in the market for us



because we've always been dedicated to supporting the sector at every stage of its development, with loans of all different sizes. Our record year, and the diversity in our recent lending, shows how successful worker co-ops and community groups can be at every level."

### Supportive loan finance to help people take control of their economic lives and create social benefit

If you need accessible, ethical finance to make your enterprising goals a reality, we may be able to help. Loans from £10,000 to £75,000 are readily available, and we are able to lend up to £150,000 using other funds. We do not require personal guarantees, and our profits are reinvested to enable us to continue our work.

We are the oldest community development finance institution (CDFI) in the UK and, we believe, one of the most successful and sustainable. We are also one of the very few CDFIs that is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority in the conduct of investment business.

We've been lending to co-operatives, employee owned businesses and social enterprises for over 40 years. We manage a range of loan funds throughout the UK, and currently have around £4m available to lend.

We raise money primarily by public share issue, and we lend it for social purpose and collective benefit.

Our staff will be glad to advise on the availability of specific funds and the most suitable forms of finance for your business.

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