

Event Evaluation

Event: Sustainability & Co-operation Conference
Date: 15th March 2011

What are the two key things that you will take away from this event?

Transition

- Great to see transitions and co-operatives at the same conference
- The opportunity for working with Transition Town movement
- Transition knowledge
- Useful networking and ideas for our transition group
- Transition towns and possibilities
- Opportunities for synergy between co-ops and transition

Energy

- Buy my energy from co-op energy
- To do a carbon impact analysis of Eddington Transport Review
- Info about renewable and wind farm co-ops
- Urgency of lobbying for energy bill amendment
- More understanding of the variety of energy co-ops in the UK

Community

- Information of how to set up a community pledge event
- To make community green deal happen in next 12 months
- Urbed – co-operative retrofit opportunities
- Idea of shared ownership
- Ideas for planlocal
- Community – acting together and awareness of co-operatives
- Greater optimism re localism and communities
- Engagement with local community

Co-op

- Opportunities co-ops provide
- Co-operation tends to preach to the converted
- Need for co-operatives to talk to local government
- Co-operative opportunities for many local and environmental activities
- Inspired by co-operative model will think about how to use it and apply it in my community
- Strong commitment of co-op
- Broader knowledge of co-op group as a whole and of individual case studies
- Opportunities for working together to develop a system which adds values to the individual co-op
- Many ideas of things to press for in the Co-operative Group
- Co-op structure
- A greater understanding of co-operative ideals
- Look more into mutual ownership co-operating
- Looking at how local groups could set themselves up
- Need for more co-operation between co-ops with an interest in this
- Co-operation is the best way forward

Sustainability

- Information re sustainability
- A positive outlook on both sustainability and co-operation
- Need to make arguments as to why co-operatives may be best placed to deliver on sustainability
- Linking co-operatives to sustainability

Sustainable Travel

- Ideas for sustainable travel
- Issues/challenges around green travel
- Passion for green travel and wanting to bike everywhere

General

- Contact details to follow up for future partnership working
- Contacts/networking with others
- Contacts to discuss coop development
- How to run a successful discussion group
- A need to communicate benefits
- Wish to start saying 'sustainers' and stop saying 'consumers'!
- 'oral history' as means of bringing generations together
- Biggest challenge is not engaging with what is important to audience
- The opportunities offered by current developments
- Opportunities for gaining further information
- Without central government support the time for action is too short

What, if anything, could have been improved?

Workshop Content

- More time in 'open space' type informal networking 'discussion opportunities'
- More presentations to everyone and fewer workshops
- Not enough discussion time for first workshop
- Split sessions up between 'how to make a co-operative sustainable' and 'how to set up new co-operatives in areas of sustainability'
- I wanted to attend both the afternoon sessions so timetabling
- Basic background of each topic on a display board
- Workshops quite difficult to pin down things – suggest it would have been better to focus them on speakers talks and solutions – the travel one was particularly rambling
- More time for discussion group or more opportunity to question/discuss with speakers (better than a little bit of both)
- Discussion Groups
- Better feedback on workshop conclusions

Key Note speaker

- Questions/answers with local/national government
- More time for questions to Alok Sharma MP

Conference Outcomes

- An idea of where our deliberations would go ie what now? Probably up to me/my co-operative
- Joined thinking between goals and how to deliver them in an appropriate way for wider policy

Co-op

- More basic definitions of what a co-operative is, how it works, more awareness of local community groups and advertising the event to them – they were strangely absent! I heard about the event by chance.
- Need more attendees outside the cosy 'co-op' umbrella

Was there anything covered that you would like to explore in more detail, maybe for a future conference?

Getting people involved

- How to make these ideas attractive to a larger sector of the community
- The potential for spreading the word outside the movement – sharing info/raising awareness
- Ways of involving more people in alternative energy and in ways of investing or being part of it
- More ideas of engagement

Case Studies/Success Stories

- Success stories eg True Food Coop
- Case studies in co-ops in novel areas
- Some case studies as examples of the topics covered today eg community energy co-op for retrofit

About Co-ops

- How to set up a co-operative
- I guess most people attending are very knowledgeable of co-op and setting them up, where appropriate, etc. I would have liked a bit more detail on this, especially as a comparison with social enterprises, CICs, etc
- Establishment of co-ops. Lots on sustainability, less on co-ops
- Setting up a co-operative. Can an existing CIC become a co-op? Can a marriage of the two be supported?
- Social issues – more about engagement
- Technology transfer including to outside UK

Green Energy

- Green energy
- How co-op can help with sustainable energy projects
- Community energy co-operatives
- Practical workshops on detail of setting up these projects
- Co-ops tackling fuel poverty
- Energy co-ops

General

- More step by step 'how to do things' by people who have been involved in project
- All the topics could easily be covered individually
- Retrofit options and information sharing
- Community meetings co-op meets environment and getting the non-converted converted!
- Also, making existing co-ops greener, in addition to co-ops that are fundamentally green
- Transition
- More detail on technical stuff

Was there anything not included in the event which you would have liked to see as the topic for a future conference?

Co-op

- Alternative types of co-op
- Difference between co-op and social enterprise
- How to allow co-ops to grow
- Co-ops/transition as a means of re-rooting soulless communities
- Celebrating recent successes ie last few years
- Localisation of business activities; challenging the economy of scale
- Waste (RRR)
- Lobbying
- Political possibilities
- Wave power
- An opportunity for Reading community groups to talk about what they're already doing
- A business based application
- 'holistic sustainability' or 'balanced development' - would be good to promote this concept a bit more.
- More about changing beliefs
- More about how to market
- More about engaging volunteers
- Reaching schools
- Role of universities, student unions
- Need list of actions at end of day?

Any additional comments:

- I think there's a lot of potential to raise awareness through education, in particular teachers' training which magnifies the effects to 30 children and their families. What does the co-op do at local level?
- I am studying an MSc in climate change policy at Sussex University and after today am now considering researching the role of energy co-ops to tackle fuel poverty. Also interested in researching a Co-operative Green Deal.
- The two topics which seemed to be more of a pair – energy and sustainable communities, were run concurrently, meaning we could only go to one.
- The workshops were seminars, not workshops (housing one am). Would have been good to have had a workshop
- The day seemed very focused on energy, could other issues be covered at a future event?