

Principle FIVE

P5

Yorkshire Co-operative Resource Centre

June 2025



<https://mail.coop/>

There are co-operative alternatives to multi-national corporate tech platforms.

Here are two ethical co-operatives which provide email and website hosting.

mail.coop

[Webarchitects](https://webarchitects.coop/)

The link below goes to an article which should be a wake up call for a lot of organisations using corporate US based cloud services: "dependence on American tech infrastructure and financial systems has become a serious strategic vulnerability"

[Civil Societies Tech Stack is in Extreme Danger](#)



Festival of co-operatives in Manchester & Rochdale - July 2-5

During 2025 - the second International Year of Co-operatives proclaimed by the United Nations and 130th anniversary of the International Co-operative Alliance - the team is preparing a very special General Assembly.

The Assembly will be held during a four-day celebration of cooperative activity in Manchester & Rochdale, UK – the place where the modern day co-operative movement was born.

Visits to co-operatives in Manchester and the region

- Tours of the Rochdale Pioneers Museum
- Co-operative Seminars and more

[REGISTER HERE](#)

For more information see:

<https://ica.coop/en/events/festival-cooperatives-manchester-and-rochdale>

A vacancy has arisen for Co-operative Development Worker at [Sheffield Co-operative Development Group](#)

After 30 years in post, Alan Dootson is retiring in September.

Job Advertisement: Co-operative Development Worker

Location: Sheffield

Salary: £35,000 - £40,000 depending on skills and experience

Contract Type: Full time, permanent

Closing Date: **30th June 2025**

Are you passionate about co-operatives, community empowerment, and sustainable development?

We are looking for a dynamic and motivated Co-operative Development Worker to join

our team. In this role, you will be working to support the growth and sustainability of co-operatives and community-owned businesses, contributing to a more equitable and inclusive economy.

You can access the full job description here:

<https://www.principle5.coop/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Job-Advertisement-SCDG-Development-Worker-4.pdf>

Information about Sheffield Co-operative Development Group

[1980s Leaflet](#)

[SCDG Co-operative News 1990](#)

Short paper published in UK Society for Co-operative Studies:

[Sheffield Co-operative Development Group](#)

Sheffield Co-operatives Meet Up: June 2025

- Date: Thursday 12th June 2025
- Time: 5:30pm – 7:00pm
- Location: The Executive Conference Meeting Room
[Aizlewood's Mill](#) Nursery Street, Sheffield S3 8GG
[OpenStreetMap](#)

This informal gathering is a chance to connect, share ideas, and explore opportunities with fellow co-operators, social entrepreneurs, and community-minded individuals.

This meet up is being hosted by [SCDG](#) who are providing a vegetarian buffet.

There will also be a chance to visit the [Principle 5](#) office / co-op library.

The networking will continue in The Harlequin pub, which is next door.

Whether you're already part of a co-op, curious about co-operative ways of working, or looking to network with like-minded people, this event is for you!

Let's come together to celebrate co-operation, inspire action, and spark new collaborations. See you there!

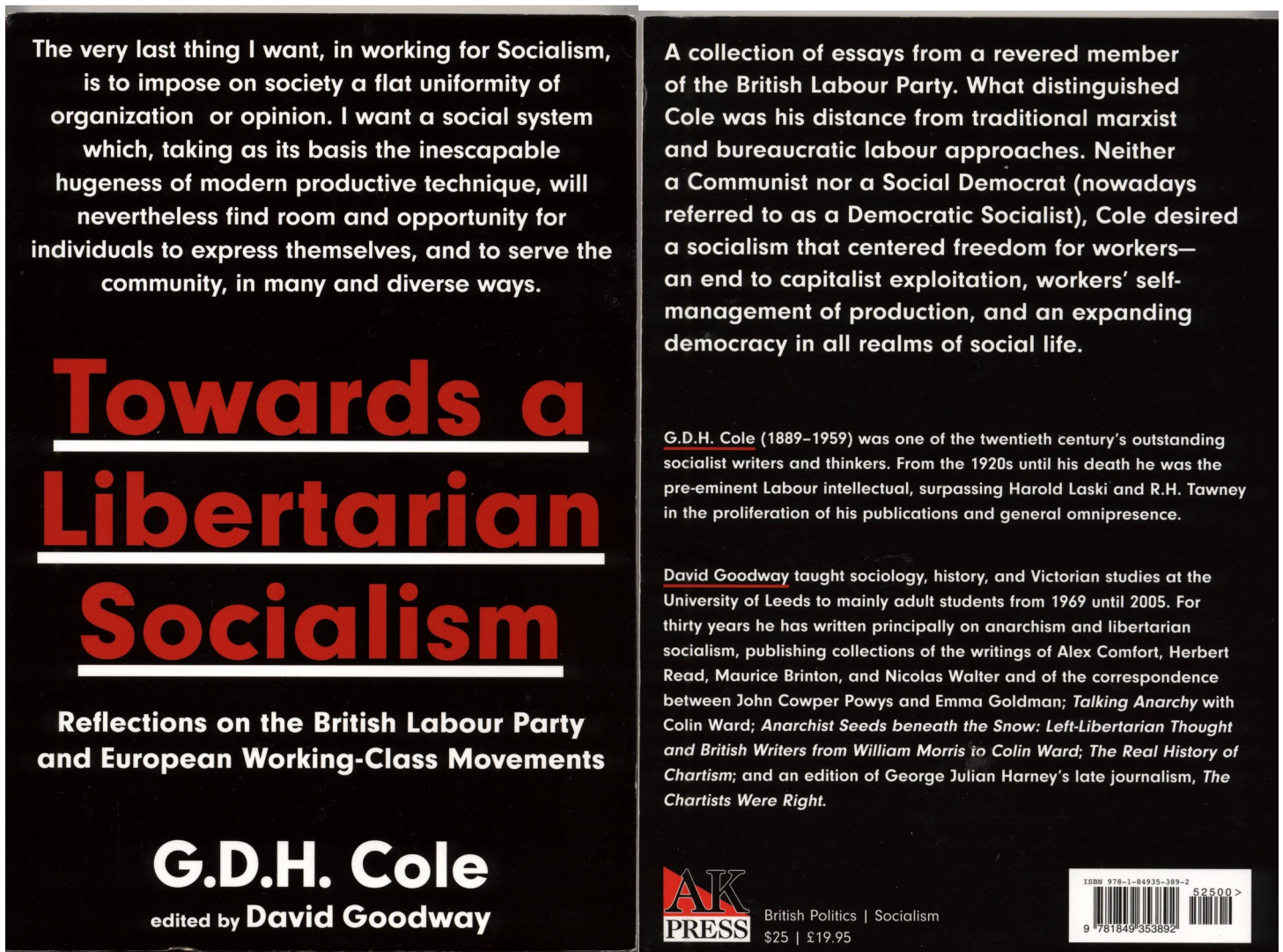
https://sheffield.coop/wiki/12-06-2025_Meetup

For all about Sheffield Co-ops see:

https://sheffield.coop/wiki/Main_Page

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Principle 5 Library book of the month



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The Power in Communities Report from
The Co-operative Party can be

Downloaded [**HERE**](#)

One of the chapters is written by Dave Berry.
See page below.

Winning hearts and minds through community enterprise

**Dave
Berry**

Sheffield Renewables

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Dave Berry

In Greek mythology Sisyphus was punished for offending the Gods. His punishment was to push a huge boulder up a mountainside only to see it roll back down and his task to begin again. Renewable energy policy can sometimes seem a bit like the punishment of Sisyphus with changing policy seeming like the boulder and mountain only to see reverses rolling back progress. Community engagement in energy policy can change that or at least lighten the boulder and flatten the mountainside. Valuing and engaging community support can lighten the political load and speed up the progress we need to make for 2030 and beyond. Here in Sheffield we are trying to do our share.

Sheffield Renewables is a Community Benefit Society operating in the Community Energy sector. We tend to describe ourselves as a co-op to the general public who have little knowledge of the history of Community Benefit Societies or our original form Industrial Provident Society. But there are few who don't know about "the Co-op" and for many it played a huge role in their growing up and is regarded with affection.



Sheffield Renewables was formed in 2008 by a mixed group of students, retired engineers and businessmen and ex public sector workers. Some had been campaigners on environmentalism whilst some just felt they had skills and enthusiasm to offer to renewable energy that just seemed to make sense. We could have just become a private company or a charity but there was a feeling that a business model that had a history of equity, democracy and an ethos of co-operation had attractions away from naked capitalist competition and fitted with the ideas of change. For some the orthodox economic model was part of the problem not the solution. Our motivations were to find a working economic model, but one that offered much more than just profit. To promote change was the aim and with a model that was neither the State or the Market.

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Winning hearts and minds through community enterprise

With the help of Co-ops UK and a grant from the local authority we became constituted and set off on our first project, bringing back hydro power to Sheffield's River Don. However, our first project didn't come to fruition after three years of work, but by then we had grown to a membership of over 250, a solid core of volunteers and capital of £250k raised through a Community Share Offer. Our members were still enthusiastic and charged us with finding alternative projects. The Feed in Tariff offered us an opportunity to look at solar on community buildings and the art of co-operation and networking paid dividends. Contact with Brixton Energy showed us what was possible, even in an urban location, and we were able to follow their progress along with ours.

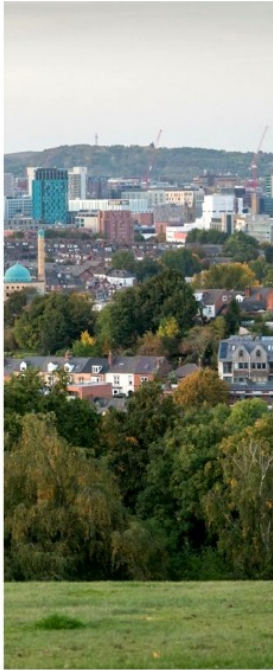
Now, ten years later, we own, have funded and operate five solar schemes across South Yorkshire. Four benefit from some element of the Feed in Tariff and our most recent a commercial model made possible as fossil fuel prices spiked. Our sites range from a school, a police station, a workers co-op selling whole foods, a community centre and a co-housing scheme. After ten years we have now generated over a million and a half kilowatt hours of renewable electricity, our investors receive their interest annually of 3% and our partners receive electricity at below market rate. We are currently working with the NHS helping GP Surgeries with sustainability and a large-scale renewable project looking to decarbonise agriculture.

We recognise that even a million and half hours of "green" electricity won't halt climate change, 3% interest won't stop austerity and neither have we defeated the fossil fuel economy. The answer has to be that under the current economic measurements we accept in the world the answer is a resounding No. So how do we measure the value we have brought to South Yorkshire and beyond as a group of co-operators? How does it add to the aims of the Green Deal? We believe our projects have multiplier effects that can be replicated everywhere and add benefits that the market and the State cannot replicate in the current economic and political climate.

Our projects have multiplier effects that can be replicated everywhere and add benefits

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All our schemes are different and have benefitted differently. Our scheme with South Yorkshire Police proved the viability of solar on their buildings and they funded more schemes themselves, for the school the educational value of sustainability was shared with staff and pupils, for the community centre and the workers co-op cheaper utilities has been vital to their success as community businesses as well as adding sustainability to their outcomes and for the co-housing group our small project helped share the load for a group of volunteers managing a construction project of 12 flats and 10 houses.



Over the years our Board and volunteers have needed renewal and we have seen volunteers go on to careers in renewable energy, our first General Manager is now CEO of Community Energy England based in Sheffield. Like South Yorkshire police our feasibility studies have convinced other organisations to fund schemes themselves and our original co-operation with Brixton Energy has been replicated with mentoring other newer community energy groups. Our partnership with our local installer has seen a strong reliable service as well as helping to provide jobs in an industry that has seen difficult times. Our record has attracted local attention, and we currently are consulted for advice by individuals and groups.

As well as our investors receiving their interest of 3% our Community Benefit Fund has distributed almost £40k to local community groups working in fuel poverty areas, energy efficiency in refugee housing and internationally solar schemes in Africa and SE Asia and tree planting in Malawi.

Our greatest asset at this time is our positioning between the State and the Market and the opportunity to build trust in a sector that has seen market and State schemes come and go with mixed if not disastrous results. Trust in both are low and technological solutions and modern online communications only seemed to have heightened the distrust. The failure of the Conservative Green New Deal and problems in the Eco 4 sector has shown that communities are looking for local and trusted organisations working to a different agenda and that are based and known locally. Outsourcing and procurement by local authorities has also added to alienation of communities to projects, however well intentioned.

Rebuilding that trust and winning hearts and minds, as well as demonstrating delivery of real local projects, can help rebuild that trust. Valuing volunteer experience and commitment has to be recognised and valued.

In the 1960s Garrett Hardin wrote "The Tragedy of the Commons" claiming that only the State could manage resources in the world sustainably above the market. Unfortunately, today the State appears to have invested its trust in the market.

Hardin was answered by Elinor Ostrom – the first woman winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics – for her work showing that with the different economic and governance systems, communities can and had managed their resources for thousands of years to mutual benefit of the environment and humanity. Her book Rules for Radicals is a guide book for social change still being put into practice in initiatives like the Preston Model and other Community Wealth Building models.

At a time when winning hearts and minds is difficult in the face of the fossil fuel opposition and media hostility, co-ops and community energy can play a vital role in advancing the cause of sustainability and economic renewal by showing the value of community enterprise.

Winning hearts and minds, as well as demonstrating delivery of real local projects, can help rebuild that trust.

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Principle 5 members are encouraged to make use of the Library and resource centre.

Contact steve@sheffield.coop for appointment

Tel: 0114 282 3132
www.principle5.coop

Principle 5 Yorkshire Co-operative Resource Centre
Aizlewood's Mill, Nursery Street, Sheffield, S3 8GG

