

Principle FIVE

P5

Yorkshire Co-operative Resource Centre

October 2026

Announcing the new Principle 5 Website!

<https://www.principle5.coop/>

Our Director, Chris Olewicz has redesigned our website, and I think that you will agree, it's much better now and easier to use. Please take a little time to look at it and try it out. Of particular interest is our new page 'Projects'.

This page includes [**Sheffield Co-operator**](#) with the story of this remarkable newspaper which kept Sheffield people informed about the Co-operative Movement in the years between the wars 1922 – 1939 and thereafter through the Bulletins. And from this page you can download all five of the Principle 5 21st Century editions. You also have access to the 170 inter-war editions plus the Bulletins. This for the

first time gives the Sheffield Co-operator its rightful place on a special place on the Website.

You will also see on the 'Projects' page the materials about the Sheffield Educational Settlement

[Upperthorpe History](#) Project which were launched at Zest, Upperthorpe on the 15th September. This Project has been named 'Little Theatre: Big Roots' and will develop into community theatre. Look out for notices of upcoming events.

The five history display boards which are on view at Zest - Upperthorpe Library were designed by Dave Berry and Jane Mason. You will see a much more detailed account about life experience in the area on the same website page.

Also on the Projects page you will be able to download all of the seven Principle 5 [Pamphlets](#).

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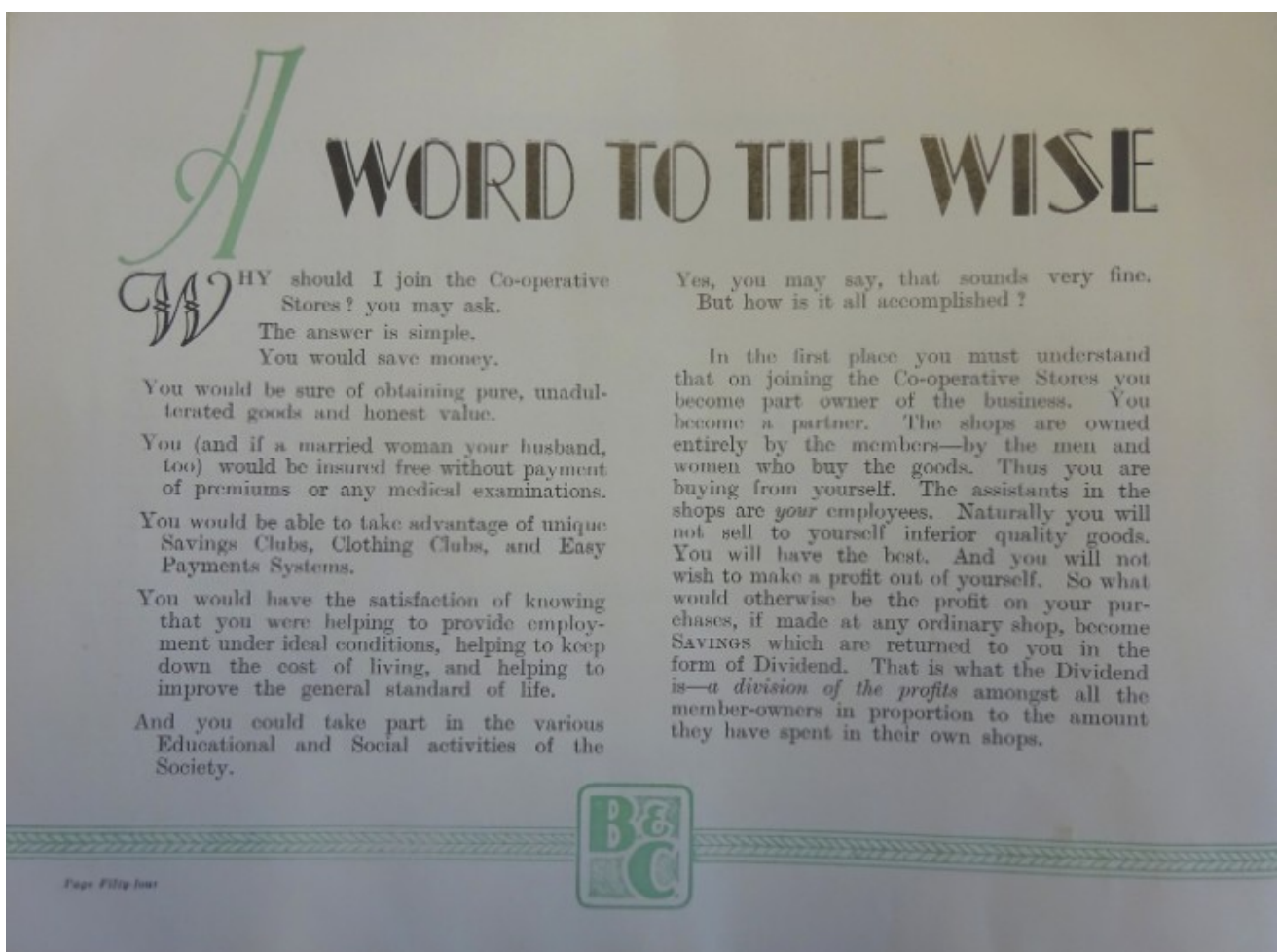


We are delighted to bring back Co-op Maps for Principle 5 Members. This system for mapping co-operatives was designed and developed by one of the Principle 5 Founding members, Steve Wagstaff.

For some years it has gone into the background. But recently, Chris Olewicz has re-designed it for use through our new website. It is not yet complete, but is being developed all the time. However we invite you to explore the [Co-op Maps](#) page and have a go at making a map. This might be a subject for a Principle 5 Members meeting in the future. Any feedback about your experience of Co-op Maps would be welcomed.

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There was a time when co-operative societies communicated with their members and the general public in a much easier way for people to understand. These were the days when we had a much more co-operative culture. The Co-op Societies played a big part in this. Here's a page from the Brightside & Carbrook Co-op Society's commemorative souvenir marking the opening of their City Stores in 1929....



A CENTURY OF THE CO-OPERATIVE PARTY AND LABOUR IN SHEFFIELD

The year 2026 marks the one hundredth anniversary of the Co-operative Party and the Labour Party's rise to political victory in Sheffield, which paved the way for a century of success.

In post-war Sheffield, the political climate was dominated by a Liberal and Conservative alliance known as the Citizens' Party. The party benefited from Britain's electoral laws, which gave voting rights to only a limited section of the public — middle- and upper-class men who owned land. In 1918, Parliament passed the Representation of the People Act, which gave the vote to all men over 21, and to women over 30 who met a property qualification, allowing the Labour Party to focus more directly on working-class voters.

This change in Labour's approach went hand in hand with its alliance in Sheffield with the Co-operative Party. Although the first Co-operative MP, Alfred Waterson, was elected in 1918, it was the election of A. V. Alexander as MP for Hillsborough that demonstrated the ability of the Co-operative movement to build a political force.

This achievement also demonstrated the integration between Labour's political inner workings and the Co-operative movement, with their shared belief in municipal socialism. This contrasted with the Citizens' Party's defence of vested interests. The integration became so essential to Labour's functioning that, in 1925, an official agreement gave the Co-operative Party a free run in three wards, allowing Co-operative Party candidates to stand for council with no opposition from Labour.

In 1926, mine owners' proposals for wage cuts and longer working hours brought about the General Strike, which was particularly strong in a heavily unionised Sheffield. The



A.V. ALEXANDER, ASSISTED BY A CAT, ADDRESSES A STREET MEETING

strike increased Labour's support and reinforced solidarity between the trade unions, Labour, and the Co-operative movement.

Co-operative organisations viewed the strike as a moral stand against the proposed wage cuts. It had a significant impact on the political landscape, with the *Sheffield Co-operator* framing the upcoming election as a battle between "reactionary Tory Citizens" and "progressive Labour-Co-operative reformers".

This framing came naturally, as Co-operative ideals were echoed in Labour's Progressive Charter for Sheffield Ratepayers, with proposals

ALSO IN THIS EDITION

How Food Co-ops can Tackle the Far-Right (pg. 2)

New Community Hub for University of Sheffield (pg. 3)

What does Sheffield think about Co-operatives? (pg. 8)

Sheffield and Spain: The Mondragón Co-operatives (pg. 13)

for shared education services, public works for the unemployed, reduced tram fares, expanded municipal enterprise, and support for vulnerable groups — all intended to make Sheffield and its policies more accommodating to the working class.

Labour went on to win a majority on Sheffield City Council, the first Labour majority on a city council in Britain. The Co-operative Party was credited with helping Labour present itself as a community-focused alternative to the Citizens' Party through its organisational discipline and moral authority. With unemployment in Sheffield at an all-time high, the people of the city

were relying on Labour for relief and social policy.

During their six years in office, the Labour and Co-operative partnership delivered substantial and lasting change in Sheffield. One of their most significant achievements was the creation of the National Conciliation Board for the Co-operative Service, which formalised negotiations between Co-operative employers and trade unions and embodied the movement's commitment to fair and dignified labour relations.

Shared leadership from figures such as Ernest George Rowlinson and A. V. Alexander reinforced the partnership's

integrity, ensuring that political action and Co-operative principles moved forward together.

By the end of their term in 1932, the relationship between the two parties had evolved into a confident and durable political alliance. Co-operative councillors and MPs worked seamlessly within Labour's broader movement, offering a unified voice for Sheffield's working-class communities.

The partnership demonstrated how political democracy and economic democracy can strengthen one another — a lesson that continues to shape Sheffield's civic identity a century later.

— *SPENCER KIRK*

All five editions of
the 21st Century Sheffield Co-operator
plus the 170 inter-war editions and Bulletins
and background information can be downloaded at:

<https://www.principle5.coop/projects/the-sheffield-co-operator>

Centenary of the election of the First Labour Administration Sheffield 1926

Look out for the re-print of

‘Six Years of Labour Rule in Sheffield
1926 – 1932’ coming soon.

and the forthcoming event to celebrate this historic
milestone.

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Members are always welcome
to visit Principle 5 library.

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