

Community Retailing Network

Annual Report



*meeting local needs through
community ownership*



Retail in Rural Regions (RRR) delegates from eight European regions during a visit to the Kopparledens general store, Norway

Chair's introduction

Thanks to continued support from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Co-operative Fund the Network has been able to grow and develop its programme of support for community shops in Scotland over 2009.

Although activities slowed somewhat in the latter part of the year, with our Co-ordinator off on maternity leave, it has been a year of increasing interest in community retail – with new shops emerging in Lewis, Shetland, Highland, Argyll and Ayrshire. There are currently an estimated ten communities across Scotland in the process of taking over their local shop.

Over the year we have been involved in some interesting pieces of work. The 'Store is the Core' project which involved Uig Community Shop was completed following three years of exploration into the pros and cons of adding new services to an existing shop.

A grant from the Co-operative Fund enabled us to commission a research study into the community-owned shop sector across the UK, the assistance it receives and Co-operative Group support

for the sector. While the final outcomes are yet to be agreed, the study has opened up discussions with the Plunkett Foundation which supports community-owned shops in England, and we look forward to developing a closer working relationship with them in the future.

Finally we also took up the opportunity to become a partner in the 'Retail in Rural Regions' project. The project, which is funded by the EU Northern Periphery Programme and Consumer Focus Scotland, has enabled us to work with partners in Finland, Iceland, Faroe Islands, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Norway and Greenland to look at ways of supporting the survival, development and growth of rural retail shops. Following the launch of the project we hosted a very interesting and productive visit from the partner countries to the Western Isles – updates about the project are available on our website.

I'll close with that and once again would like to thank all those that have supported the Network and make our work possible.

Norman MacDonald

Chair of the Community Retailing Network



Toys and games in the Ollaberry store, Shetland



Activities and achievements

Pairc Community Co-op, Western Isles

Opening the doors to its refurbished store on 13 May 2009 – the new shop offers a much wider range of goods and longer opening hours and forms the first stage of the development of the community-owned Ravenspoint Centre which includes a tearoom, hostel and museum.

Over 2009 we have continued our two-year programme of activities with a focus on three main areas of work:

1 Assisting existing community retailers

In fulfilling our aim of helping community shops to develop their business further and assist them in their long-term viability, we have carried out a number of activities to help our members. These have focussed on providing and sharing information, identifying training for the shops and their committees, and investigating new trading opportunities.

2 Developing and promoting the Network

We have continued to benefit from support from Co-operative Development Scotland which has enabled us to have a presence at a number of events including the HISEZ (Highlands & Islands Social Enterprise Zone) annual conference, S2S social enterprise trade fair and the DTAS (Development Trusts Association Scotland) annual conference as well as continuing to build our web resources.

3 Identifying and supporting emerging retailers

This year we have seen an increase in interest in community ownership of shops, with new shops opened at Hillswick in Shetland and Straiton in Ayrshire, the re-launch of the community co-op at Pairc in Lewis, and a further eight communities considering the option. This is a trend evident across the UK with a record 33 new community owned shops opening over 2009.

One of the most valuable and tangible outputs of having a Network in place is the advice and support that can be shared by the experienced shops with those in the early stages: all the new shops we are working with have visited or been assisted in some way by one or more of our existing members.



Hillswick Community Shop, Shetland

Hillswick shop which closed in February 2009 was bought and completely refurbished by the local community and opened its doors again on 26 November 2009.

Some of our key activities

Best Practice Group

The Best Practice Group (BPG) is our bi-annual meeting to give members the opportunity to meet as a group to discuss difficulties and opportunities facing their shops. It is usually held centrally, but this year with the help of The Co-operative Group we trialled an additional regional meeting in Shetland. This was a success on a number of fronts, including improving accessibility, strengthening the link with the local Co-op 'buddy store' and enabling new community shops in the area to participate.

Training

Two sessions were delivered for members: Marketing and Promotion by the Social Enterprise Academy, and Funding for Community Shops by Rural Direct. However, progress has been limited on our main aim of developing a means of accessing relevant retail and governance training.



Uig Community Co-op, Lewis

With funding from The Store is the Core and LEADER, a logo, marketing materials and internal and external signage have been designed to help celebrate the community's achievement and promote the shop to tourist accommodation and local businesses – an interesting future development under discussion is the development of a range of own-brand products.

Retail in Rural Regions

Launched in 2009 the Retail in Rural Regions (RRR) project will run until the end of 2011 and involves eight Northern European countries/regions (Finland, Iceland, Faroe Islands, Scotland, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Norway and Greenland).

The project came about through concern over the increasing loss of shops and services from rural areas and recognition that it is a common trend across many countries. By developing a package of advice, support and training, RRR aims to stem the loss and aid the survival and growth of rural shops.

The way in which this can be achieved will vary in each country, but in general terms four main potential outputs have been identified:

Retail Roundtable establishment of an informal partnership of interested bodies in each region including retailers, support bodies, local government, education centres and the third sector.

Strategic Retail Centre (SRC) 'one-stop-shop' where the service will be developed, delivered and monitored.

Rural Retail Service managed by SRCs and comprising e-platform for information exchange, networking and consultancy.

Training and Development tailor made programmes for retailers including multi-functional retail entrepreneurship programme for those that wish to diversify and add on new services.

The project is primarily funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) through the Northern Periphery Programme (NPP), with each partner country required to source 40% match funding. Match funding from Consumer Focus Scotland enabled the Network to become a partner in the project. The budget is approximately £21,000 per annum which includes staff time of around one day per week.



Tapestries on display at Co-Chomunn na Hearadh

RRR visit to Uig Community Shop





Tor, Elaine and Sheila formed the CRN Scottish Partner participants on a study visit to Norway

Main activities in 2009

Scottish Roundtable

A successful introductory meeting was held in August 2009 with a view to setting up a Scottish Roundtable. It was attended by 18 representatives of agencies ranging from the Institute for Retail Studies to Co-operative Development Scotland, and discussion focused on the perceived support required by rural retailers and good practice in relation to multi-service stores. Further Roundtable meetings will be held in 2010, and a sub-group will be set up to provide recommendations for a support/advisory service for rural retailers.

Mapping

The first phase of the project has involved establishing the difficulties faced by rural retailers as well as looking for examples of best practice. A survey was circulated to a sample of five rural community-owned shops in Scotland.

Study visit

The project allows for two study visits each year, and in 2009 we welcomed the partner countries to Uig Community Co-operative on Lewis for a very interesting couple of days.

A particular focus of RRR has been the potential for multi-functional stores providing a range of services in addition to groceries. The Uig shop, which has added on a number of services, is a good example of this. The group was very impressed with the quality, range and number of services provided though the shop, including a coffee bar, laundrette and fuel sales with an out of hours payment facility.

Planned activity for 2010 includes further meetings of the Scottish Roundtable, meetings and study visits to Norway and the Faroe Islands, and continuing development of the RRR through the work packages.

In 2011 there will be a final study visit followed by a final conference in Iceland in November.

Tor Justad

NPP Project Co-ordinator



Innovatively investing in Europe's Northern Periphery for a sustainable and prosperous future



European Union European Regional Development Fund

Fòcas Luchd-Caitheimh Alba
Comhairle Luchd-caitheimh ùr na h-Alba



Consumer Focus Scotland
Scotland's new Consumer Council



Healthy Living Programme

This national scheme which is funded by the Scottish Government is run by the Scottish Grocers Federation and aims to help small independent shops to promote healthier choices such as fruit, vegetables, brown bread, porridge etc. Following an interesting and enthusiastic discussion with Ross Kerr and Hugh McLanachan of SGF at one of our Best Practice Group meetings, all of our members have signed up to the programme.

Community Retailing Start-up Guide

Although delayed somewhat due to our Co-ordinator's maternity leave, the start-up guide has developed into a collaborative process involving help and advice from a wide range of community shops and support agencies as well as some specialist input. Getting it online and readily available in 2010 is eagerly anticipated.



Straiton Community Co-op, Ayrshire

The village shop in Straiton was re-opened in January 2009 as a community co-operative following its closure in December 2008.

The Store is the Core

Funded by the Carnegie UK Trust, The Store is the Core project arose out of the recognition that a growing number of communities are taking ownership of their local shops, petrol station, pubs, post offices and other services. The project aimed to be able to pass on learning about the benefits and difficulties involved in developing a community-owned multi-service outlet.

Uig Community Shop was one of three community enterprises selected for the project, and used seed corn funding towards the cost of marketing materials and specialist advice on layout, fixtures and fittings for its new extension.

Completed in 2009, the project concluded that the key elements for success include a clear local need, support and substantial sustained voluntary commitment. The lessons learned are documented in the final report which can be downloaded from the website.

The Co-operative Group

In 2009 we commissioned a research study into the community shop sector across the UK and the support offered by The Co-operative Group. This support is key to the viability of a number of community shops in Scotland. The recommendations of the report will be finalised in 2010.



Paintings and prints on sale at Co-Chomunn na Hearadh

Fairtrade goods sourced through the Co-operative Group





Shopping at
Eid Community
Co-op

Summary of 2009 accounts

2009 was another busy year for Community Retailing Network Ltd., and we gratefully acknowledge grant support from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Co-operative Fund which allowed us to continue employing a Co-ordinator as well as developing other activities.

The grant from the Co-operative Fund allowed us in particular to employ a consultant to conduct an overview of community-owned shops in the UK and make recommendations on how future support might be structured.

We also gratefully acknowledge a contribution from Co-operative Development Scotland towards marketing costs.

As our Co-ordinator was on maternity leave from the beginning of August until the end of the year, a significant amount of grant income has been treated (with the agreement of our funders) as a prepayment to cover expenses over the next year.

An investment of £1,000 in withdrawable share capital was made during the year in our telecoms provider, The Phone Co-op.

Income and expenditure

Income

Grants received	54,979
Membership fees	800
Miscellaneous income	4,430
Bank interest	94
Total	60,303

Expenditure

Salary & consultancy costs	44,094
Board/Best Practice Group expenses	2,935
Travel/accommodation	1,429
Office/telephone/postage	938
Marketing	4,695
Professional fees	587
Miscellaneous expenses	903
Total	55,581
Surplus for the year	4,722

Balance sheet

Assets	
Bank account	39,291
Debtors (maternity pay)	4,179
Investments	1,000
Liabilities	
Accrued expenses	3,132
Prepayments	35,000
Net assets	6,338

Community Retailing Network

The Network aims to support and promote sustainable community-owned shops, with particular emphasis on the co-operative business model.

We do this by helping new shops to set up and existing ones to grow. The Network enables community retailers to share ideas and resources as well as offering practical support.

We are a Company Limited by Guarantee with one part-time member of staff and a Board of voluntary directors elected by our membership.

Our members are successful enterprises that are:

- Owned and run by the community
- Meeting local needs by providing a shop, post office, fuel or other services
- Providing jobs for local people
- Improving access to good quality, fresh food
- Offering outlets for local produce
- Acting as a focal point for the community
- Viable through trading income
- Able to buy directly from The Co-operative Group



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The **co-operative**

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Fairbairn
FOUNDATION

