

COOPERATION UK

Mission Statement

We are a network of towns and cities across the UK, everyday people working together to form a coherent Alternative to the broken politics and institutions of our time.

We will organise a new civilisation - one that is fit for the 21st century and the next Seven Generations* - around 5 key pillars: **Democracy**, **Education**, **Economy**, **Ecology** and **Resilience**.

*A principle based on an ancient Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) philosophy that decisions we make today should result in a sustainable world seven generations from now.

Vision

Each town will reclaim its independence and true agency for its people. It will become an environmentally sustainable place to live, learn and work, where housing is affordable and environmentally effective, people are liberated from unfulfilling work they do just to survive, and food and financial sovereignty are achieved through local food production and the responsible ownership of its own supply chain. People of all ages and walks of life will come together to make decisions that impact their lives, meeting in compassion and solidarity even during disagreement. People with skills will share them, as we learn together how to grow food, what it means to challenge racism and sexism, why modern politics is the way it is and methods of commoning land, property, technology and finance. The tools of civil disobedience will be understood and utilised where appropriate, enabling people and communities to challenge power. And every town will be inspired and supported by the knowledge that they are part of a national and global movement that is changing the world from the ground up.

Background

Our work has been informed largely by Cooperation Jackson in the United States. Our aim is to see if we can put their learnings to work in the UK, by developing a philosophy and program which can connect the countless progressive, independent projects in this country into a coherent power. The Alternative. The Opposition. Time, energy and love is already

being put into many of the solutions proposed here; there are food cooperatives, credit unions, radical schools, community energy projects and direct action groups, and so much more. What is missing is a unifying movement to tie it all together into something that will change the world, and a mandate to do so via People's Assemblies.

Launching Cooperation Hull

1. Local organisations and community leaders in Hull put their heads together with members of Cooperation UK and 'treasure map' what's already happening in the town onto the 5 pillars. Projects that already exist, initiatives already making an impact, any work that is aligned with our vision that we can bolster and support with this strategy
2. Through this network, we form a People's Assembly of approximately 200 local residents, as demographically representative of the wider community as possible
3. The People's Assembly deliberates and approves its own strategy that builds on:
 - a. **The 5 Pillars** (see below)
 - b. **The Election Policies** (see below)

Becoming Cooperation Hull!

4. The People's Assembly appoints a Task Force to get to work enacting the vision of the Cooperation Hull People's Assembly. The Task Force - like the election candidates - are guided by and accountable to the People's Assembly, and will work on the following:
 - a. Continuing to support practical facilitation of the Assembly (so the process is effective & rewarding for all)
 - b. Seeking candidates for election, for the Assembly to approve
 - c. Supporting the candidates in their election campaign
 - d. Consistent outreach in Hull to build support for the Assembly, and increase its size and power
5. Once the Task Force is up and running on these immediate objectives, the People's Assembly zooms out again and explores what the next steps are for Cooperation Hull

What we've done in Hull

1. Rented a house in the city in April and recruited 9 people to live together and work on Cooperation Hull

2. Developing relationships with existing organisers and progressive networks in the city to start developing a coherent alternative network that can provide material resources to the people's assembly process
3. Invited people from 10 different organisations together to start developing the alternative solidarity economy in Hull
4. Started outreach with specific demographics in the city like students, and running small participatory discussions in public spaces to begin practicing local dialogue and decision making
5. Set a one year plan to run two peoples assemblies in each postcode from HU1-HU9, over the next 9 months, culminating in Hull's first city wide people's assembly in summer 2024

The Election Policies* - suggested by Cooperation UK

1. Pilot UBI in our town
2. Pilot a Climate Citizen Service in our town
3. Hold a formal Citizens Assembly on political reform (eg: electoral system, house of lords reform, a written constitution)
4. Continue to attend and develop people's assemblies, and **be guided by the decisions of the assembly**. An alternative forum for the people to talk and listen to each other, and make plans together, outside of mainstream political structures

***These are draft policies, likely to develop as we take advice from more people and organisations**

The elections & policies are a means to an end. We do not want traditional political power for power's sake. This is not about individual success, ego, or because we think we know better.

The objective is to strengthen the community and funnel resources and momentum into Cooperation Hull and Cooperation UK.

The objective will always be to put power back in the hands of the community.

DEMOCRACY

We fight for self-determination for all; the right to participate in how our lives are governed, and how our future is shaped. Participatory democracy empowers our communities, addresses power imbalances caused by the patriarchy, classism & white supremacy, and helps us organise a meaningful & practical Opposition to establishment politics.

We commit to a policy of representing the natural world and a person 7 Generations from today in all our collective decision making.

We take a DUAL POWER approach, led by People's Assemblies, and using Local Elections where strategic

ECOLOGY

We are imagining a new way of living.

A new culture, where humanity takes its place in the ecosystem of life - as a part of, not in competition with or domination over, nature. Where we pledge our allegiance not to a political party or a banner or a flag, but to the rivers, the air, the animals, to each other and to all life 7 Generations from now.

As a part of this new culture, this new ecology of communities, we must confront the white-supremacy, classism and prejudice in our past and present. And we absolutely must liberate ourselves - men, women, children and people of all genders - from the systems, structures and mindsets of the patriarchy.

This culture will celebrate art & play; by nurturing creative expression, our diverse and divided communities will be nourished in return.

The times we live in are hard and will get harder. We commit to reminding ourselves, often, that there is joy in being alive - this is why we work.

ECONOMY

Unchecked capitalism destroys nature in our name, whilst leaving us powerless & exploited. A Solidarity Economy will help us lead healthier lives, build more resilient communities, and create alternative systems - starting with food.

A COOPERATIVE FEDERATION & INCUBATOR will:

- Support existing Co-ops & form new ones
- Create a circular supply chain with Co-ops in nearby towns
- Work towards Food Sovereignty and Food Security
- Democratise & utilise sustainable modern technology in local manufacture

A CREDIT UNION will:

- Connect & strengthen existing community financing initiatives
- Allow us to remove our financial support for the existing capitalist system
- Work towards greater wealth & resource equality in our communities

A COMMUNITY LAND TRUST will be the vehicle for:

- Acquiring buildings & land for community use
- Addressing unsafe, unsustainable and unequal housing
- Fighting the gentrification & corporatisation of our towns
- Restoring the Commons
- Establishing health clinics, community centres and other shared spaces

EDUCATION

The education system in this country is broken.

Our institutions no longer serve us or our children.

But together we have access to everything we need to know, as well as new ways of learning. Educating ourselves on the forces that control our lives, and the tools we need to liberate our communities, is an ongoing, emerging & vital process.

A COOPERATIVE EDUCATION CENTRE will focus on things like:

- Practical self sufficiency & practical self defence
- The patriarchy & colonialism
- Politics and the Climate & Ecological Emergency
- Civil resistance & community organising
- Tech Democracy
- Art, music and play!
- Understanding mass media
- + themes relevant to each community

RESILIENCE

The freedom to live in a compassionate, equal and regenerative society is what the majority of us long for. This society is the natural evolution of human consciousness, and it is within reach.

History teaches us that those who benefit from inequality and greed will resist this flow of human progress. They are the dangerous radicals, the minority standing in the way.

In making our movement resilient to these threats we will create communities where everyone feels supported & empowered to utilise the methods of civil disobedience.

Because by building it on the shoulders of those who came before us, guiding it with the hands of those who will inherit it, and defending it with the tools of civil disobedience - we will ensure our movement is unstoppable.



Context

On Ambition

This work requires us to hold a long-term vision in balance with immediate needs and urgency. It invites us to view the world in all its complexity; we are addressing and rebuilding interrelated systems which cannot be viewed in isolation but must be addressed in their fullness. **There is no shortcut to a new world, just as there is no time to waste.**

Cooperation UK is ambitious, and will be bold about the need to **scale** from the beginning. Scale on the micro level - each community bursting with revolutionary power, building a new society for themselves. And the macro level - each community connected with others around the UK, and beyond, to collaborate in building a true alternative to the status quo.

On Theories of Change

The two most prominent climate direct action movements of this moment - Extinction Rebellion and Just Stop Oil - have created progress and sparked extraordinary interventions in the public consciousness. But the fact remains that there is a barrier to entry which is stopping the People, en masse, from joining - in turn meaning they can never truly present a threat to power. These are movements that are making demands of the capitalist political establishment which would be suicidal for them to grant; without huge numbers participating, there is little incentive for the state to negotiate.

This project acknowledges the vital part these groups will have to play in what comes next. What we intend to do is harness our first-hand learnings from these movements and put them to work in the creation of a broad, complex movement for change, fit for this unprecedented moment in time, where **direct action is repositioned as one tool among many.**

On This Moment

This project was formed in late 2022. Russia at war with Ukraine, women leading mass uprisings in Iran, British nurses on strike for the first time and the NHS in crisis. COP27 has been another disgraceful, criminal and deadly failure of leadership. Donald Trump is running for President and the past few years has seen far-right groups gain ground across Europe.

The people of island nations have told us in no uncertain terms that going beyond 1.5°C would be a death sentence for them. The UN has stated there is **“no credible pathway to 1.5°C in place”** and the only way to avert the worst consequences is a **“rapid transformation of societies”**.

On Our Role as Facilitators

This project is grounded in the joyful knowledge that much of the work described here is already happening across the country and all over the world. We do not seek to undermine work already happening, but bolster it, strengthen it, and share and develop together an **overarching philosophy and program** that could **help turn individual efforts into a vast, revolutionary power**.

In this sense, we can see ourselves as facilitators in service to grassroots movements and communities. We are at a pivotal moment in time. The cross section of new, emancipatory/threatening technologies; a shifting social consciousness; disillusionment with and disenfranchisement by existing economic and political systems; increased understanding of our climate/ecological vulnerability; gross inequality; gradual normalisation of civil disobedience; burgeoning networks of informal solidarity economies; global revolutions and uprisings; as well as the emergence of Women in leadership, is a powerful convergence that begs to be recognised, and carefully utilised, in the pursuit of a new world.