



CO-OPERATIVES
and Mutuels Wales

Co-Forum 2013 Speakers Biographies



Alex Bird

Over the last 4 decades he has been active in the co-operative movement.

He started in 1972, working with the Cardiff People's Paper, and in 1974 he co-founded a printing co-operative in Cardiff specialising in work for labour movement, trades-union, voluntary, charitable and campaigning organisations.

17 years later he took up the position of Community Enterprise Development Officer for Cardiff County Council, during which time he helped to establish Cardiff Central Credit Union, which is now part of Cardiff and the Vale CU.

Alex then moved to Innovate Trust as CEO of a charity which provides a range of services to people with disabilities. Whilst there, he founded Social Firms Wales and co-founded 'Pan-disability Wales', a partnership of leading disability charities in Wales.

He left in 2005 to establish himself as a freelance consultant specialising in co-operatives and social enterprises, and in 2010 co-founded the consultancy.coop, a worker co-operative of specialist social enterprise consultants.

For most of that time has held voluntary positions in the movement, including a long stint as Chair of Cardiff and Vale CDA and 3 years as Vice Chair of Wales Co-operative Centre. He was also a regular volunteer for and Secretary of the Cardiff Peace Shop, as well as Treasurer of Community Enterprise Wales

He is a past member of the Assembly's Social Enterprise Ministerial Advisory Group, Chair of the Advisory Board of Cardiff Institute for Co-operative Studies at Cardiff Metropolitan University, Executive Chair of Co-operatives and Mutuels Wales, a member of the Co-operatives UK Forum. He has a long involvement in homelessness issues and is currently Vice Chair of Cardiff YMCA Housing Association which operates the largest homeless hostel in Wales, and is planning further expansion to cope with the enormous demand as a result of the current housing crisis.

The **co-operative membership**
Cymru/Wales



the coalfields
regeneration trust



CO-OPERATIVES UK



CO-OPERATIVES
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Wales Co-operative Centre
Canolfan Cydweithredol Cymru





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Derek Walker

Derek became Chief Executive of the Wales Co-operative Centre in January 2011. The Wales Co-operative Centre is a co-operative development agency, working across Wales to promote social, financial and digital inclusion through a range of projects.

Prior to working at the Centre, Derek Walker was Head of External Affairs at the Big Lottery Fund in Wales with responsibility for communications and public affairs. From 2004 to 2009 Derek worked as Head of Policy and Campaigns at the Wales TUC. One of his major achievements in this role was establishing the Wales Public Services Workforce Agreement between public sector employers and trade unions. Before that he worked as policy and public affairs officer at Stonewall Cymru, setting up the organisation's first office. Derek has also worked as a local government policy officer in Brussels and London

The **co-operative** membership
Cymru/Wales





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Mick Brown (far right)

Mick has worked within the UK community finance sector for 18 years as a trainer, consultant, innovator and social entrepreneur. He was a member of the National Credit Union Liaison Team, advising on regulatory and legislative reform to HM Treasury and to the FSA. During this time he introduced and championed the call for new permissions to allow credit unions to lend within the micro business and social enterprise sectors, a concession recently secured within the 2011 Legal Reform Orders. Presently Mick is Development Manager for a new CDFI, Robert Owen Community Banking providing financial services to start up and micro businesses and to social enterprises across Wales.

He is a founder member of Community Energy Wales and part of a consortium with DTA Wales recently winning a £620k bid to establish a peer to peer network for community renewable energy support. He is well known within this emerging sector for advocating community based finance as a means to create and develop a new infrastructure of community owned energy assets. He has been a co-founder and director of Robert Owen Renewables to develop a hydro-electric scheme on the river Severn, and leading on the financing package for its construction early in spring 2013.

Mick sits on both Powys Regeneration Partnership and the Regeneration Strategy Board for the county. In 2007 he undertook original research with *the new economics foundation* on the needs of sole traders in Wales. He has also led on numerous evaluation and feasibility studies for local authorities, RDAs and on independent commissions.

With his strong background in training he was responsible for designing a new accredited training course for business management of co-operatives and was on the team to set up the national accredited training course in credit union management. As a national tutor Mick has taught on many courses on financial management, Supervisory and compliance, lending and credit control.





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Cris Tomos

Cris has been heavily involved with community development and has been a volunteer for several years - from Treasurer of Credcer Credit Union to Board Member of 4CG Cooperative – Community owned Retail & Craft Centre who in 2012 also bought the old Police Station and Court House in Cardigan www.4cg.org.uk.

He started his cooperative adventures as a result of a campaign to save the small village school that his children were attending. Having lost a judicial review to save the school, Cris led a campaign to buy the school and develop a community cooperative. Today they Hermon Community Resource Cooperative has built a £500,000 eco venue centre and recently clinched one of the largest Village SOS grants to build a community run bunkhouse to complement courses being run at the centre. www.canolfanhermon.org.uk

His day to day work is that of the Director of the Cardigan Castle Project. The ancient site was bought by Ceredigion County Council and volunteer groups worked hard to develop a social enterprise solution to the derelict site. A community Trust now have a 125 lease to renovate the site with £12m funding clinched from the Heritage Lottery Fund, ERFD, Community Asset Transfer and CADW. www.cardigancastle.com

Cris also assisted his community in Cwm Arian to submit a Low Carbon Community Bid to the Department of Energy and Climate Change. They were successful in clinching £400k to work on a project to building 2 large wind turbines that would be owned by the community. The funds would be used in reducing the carbon footprint and looking to establish new green technology social enterprises employing local people. The community would also look to creating Community Land Trusts for industrial units, also affordable housing for local families to remain in the area. www.cwmarian.org.uk

In December 2012 Cris was presented with the Robert Owen Co-operator of the Year Award.

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Colin Crooks

Colin is the Chief Executive and founder of a new social enterprise called Tree Shepherd, which focuses on promoting and supporting social enterprises in the UK's most marginalised communities. He is also the author of "How to Make a Million Jobs – A Charter for Social Enterprise" <http://amzn.to/P4YhkV>, which was published in September 2012.

Colin also has a successful track record in establishing and running social enterprises. One of those, Green Works, which he established in 2000, employed marginalised groups, including homeless people and ex-offenders, and was the first business to recycle office furniture on an industrial scale.

He is a Trustee of Think Global and a council member at SEUK and he regularly delivers witness sessions for the School for Social Entrepreneurs and for Common Purpose.

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Teej Dew

Katija (Teej) has worked with the Wales Co-operative Centre since 2001 in a variety of roles including training Credit Unions and Co-operative businesses, secondment to the DWP on their Growth Fund initiative and as a Financial Inclusion Champion.

She leads a small all Wales team which works with stakeholders to influence strategy, policy and delivery change supporting people to manage their money better. This can make all the difference between people, for example, having a home and not.

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Keith Fletcher

Keith is currently Chair of Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association and of Smart Money Credit Union. He has been developing the concept of an entrepreneur's cooperative for several months and now chairs a steering group to test the feasibility and robustness of the organisation in practice.

Until retiring from paid work he ran a company which provided research and development in public service management. The company originally specialised in social services but, as many of the key issues concerned leadership governance and commissioning those, rather than specific service focus, were the areas in which the company latterly specialised.

During that period he wrote several books on professional subjects two of which (respectively on negotiation and on partnerships in social care) are still in print

The first half of his career was a public service professional having trained as a social worker. In descending order he was:-

- Deputy Chief Inspector, Social Services Inspectorate Wales.
- A Social Services Inspector in England then in Wales
- An Area Social Services Officer in a London Borough
- An Assistant Area Children's Officer in Lancashire
- A social worker; a youth leader and the deputy warden of a university settlement.





Dr Martin Price

Martin is a founder member of consultancy.coop, a worker co-operative of third sector consultants.

Martin has sixteen years' experience at a senior level in the commercial sector with British Gas plc, acting as an internal consultant on Operational Research projects, Corporate Planning, Business Strategies, Management Buy-Outs and managed the Information Technology Centre for British Gas in Wales.

He also ran the South Wales operation of The Prince's Youth Business Trust over a period of three years, helping some 400 disadvantaged young people into self-employment.

He is an experienced consultant, who has had a number of senior management roles in the voluntary sector in Wales. He is a Chartered Statistician with an MSc and PhD in Statistics and has been a member of the Royal Statistical Society for more than thirty years.

Martin is Chair of The Institute of Fundraising Cymru and a UK Trustee of the Institute. He is Vice Chair of the BBC Wales Charity Advisory Forum, which advises on BBC Children in Need applications and allocates charity broadcasts in Wales. For three years, he was a Trustee of a Cardiff-based charity – ABCD, which helps children and young people from ethnic minorities who have disabilities and was Chair of Governors of a voluntary-aided secondary school in Barry for eight years from 1998.

He is a Board Member of the Development Trusts Association Wales and of Social Firms Wales. He is also a Member of the Institute of Business Consultants and the Operational Research Society, and non-executive Chair of the largest social firm in Wales – Pack-IT Ltd in Cardiff Bay, which employs people with a learning disability. Pack-IT was European Social Firm of the Year 2009.

He contributes regular articles to the Times Education Supplement Cymru and was a member of the Court and Council of Aberystwyth University for six years. He is currently editor for Charitynews-UK, the UK arm of the prestigious US CharityChannel e-mail discussion groups, and has contributed a number of book reviews to CharityChannel.

