

Co-ops are the way forward

Surging interest in co-operative business models, such as consortium co-operatives and employee-owned businesses, is fuelling record levels of enquiries for specialist advice from [Co-operative Development Scotland](#) (CDS).

The Scottish Enterprise subsidiary has seen a 350% jump in enquiries during the last two years, and is set to advise 250 potential new co-operative or employee-owned businesses in the current year.

During the last six months alone, CDS has helped establish 15 new co-operative businesses – a record since the agency was set up in 2006 to increase the contribution of co-operative and employee owned businesses to Scotland's economy.

Newly formed co-operative businesses include Scottish Bee Services, a Perthshire-based consortium of beekeepers, Skiach Hydro, an energy co-operative based in the Highlands and Such and Such, an Edinburgh-based consortium of designers and artists. Consortium co-operatives enable their individual members to buy, procure and sell more effectively.

Such and Such is based in a studio and gallery space on Brunswick Street and you can read more about them [here](#).

Recently-formed employee-owned businesses advised by CDS include Clansman Dynamics, the East Kilbride based robotic handling specialist, and West Highland Free Press, the campaigning Isle of Skye newspaper. CDS is also advising a healthy pipeline of prospective employee buyouts as a growing number of business owners elect to safeguard the independence and future of their business by selling to the employees.

Sarah Deas, the CDS Chief Executive, said: "There is growing awareness of the benefits of co-operative business models, in particular their reputation for being more productive,

profitable and sustainable. Scotland's economy has much to gain by increasing the numbers of these types of businesses. We are delighted that there is so much interest."

CDS has advised over 500 existing and potential co-operative or employee-owned businesses to date.