

## Swindon Child Carers

Swindon Child Carers started business in 1988, offering a flexible mobile crèche service throughout Swindon.

After years of relying heavily on grant funding, it came as a huge shock when the grant was no longer forthcoming last year. Swindon Child Carers had to quickly respond to their new challenge and replace the income through increased trading activity.

Since then, things have continued to improve. They have gained a permanent crèche room at the University of Bath in Swindon, in which Swindon Child Carers can offer school holiday sessions in addition to their regular mobile crèche facilities.

Co-operative Futures continues to support Child Carers in their aspirations to enhance their governance and democratic participation, which will inevitably strengthen the organisation and contribute to its ongoing success.



## Wiltshire Wood Recycling

Co-operative Futures has provided ongoing assistance to the development of Wiltshire Wood Recycling (WWR), a new social enterprise based near Chippenham, which opened in January 2006. The 3 founding members wanted to set the enterprise up as a business, not reliant on grants. With the support of Co-operative Futures, a business plan was compiled which proved such a scheme could be feasible. The scheme has registered as a Community Interest Company, a new legal structure available for social enterprises and the first in Wiltshire. This suited the business since it gave the founding members overall control, whilst maintaining a social purpose and asset lock. Business is growing as WWR is now paid to make regular collections of waste wood from builders, developers and industrial/manufacturing companies. Plans are afoot to develop the retail side of the business. WWR currently has 2 unpaid employees, plus 5 volunteers, several of whom have found it difficult to access work because of health problems.



Co-operative Futures would like to thank all its funders for their support throughout the year:



Report designed and produced by Isis Design of the Stroud Designers Co-operative Ltd.

## Credit Unions

In August Gloucestershire's credit unions were delighted when the European-funded Alliance of Communities and Enterprise (ACE) project allowed them access to money for marketing. Run overwhelmingly by volunteers, credit unions found it difficult to plan, agree and source new materials. Co-operative Futures liaised with the credit unions, designers and printers to produce an attractive range of printed and promotional materials.

With a new image to promote, by March the credit unions were planning activities for the first Gloucestershire Credit Unions Day on 21 April. Free pens, balloons and car stickers will help to put across their message. Says Jenn Banfield of Stroud Valleys credit union 'The flyers and posters will make us more visible, and the freebies will make sure that more people know what credit unions can offer.'



### CONTACT US

If you would like a copy of our audited accounts please contact us at the office below:

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If you would like this in a different format please let us know.



# ANNUAL REPORT

April 2005 - March 2006

*Enabling Enterprise for Co-operatives and Communities*

## An Exciting Year

**The last year has been an exciting one for Co-operative Futures. The Alliance of Communities and Enterprise (ACE) programme in Gloucestershire ended in November after 4 years. In Oxfordshire the Snakes & Ladders project began providing advice and support to people with mental health issues who want to set up their own businesses or social enterprises. In Swindon and Wiltshire we became partners with the Learning Curve in their EnAct project which is helping the voluntary and community sector work towards a more sustainable future.**

We held several key events across our area including 4 Community Interest Company seminars, and the high profile Routes to Work Conference. Our support for co-operative and community enterprises continues to keep us busy and year on year we see the number of organisations approaching us for advice and support growing. This is due to a combination of Co-operative Futures becoming more widely known for its expertise and experience, the increase in political awareness of the social enterprise sector and what it can deliver, and the shift for some of the voluntary sector away from grants to contracting.

In the past year we have introduced a more comprehensive method of evaluating our services and our thanks go out to those of you who have participated in



Co-operative Futures Team

this. We are pleased to be able to report that 98% of respondents rated the effectiveness of our service as either good or excellent. Over the forthcoming year we will be developing our evaluation system further in order to provide a continuously improving service.

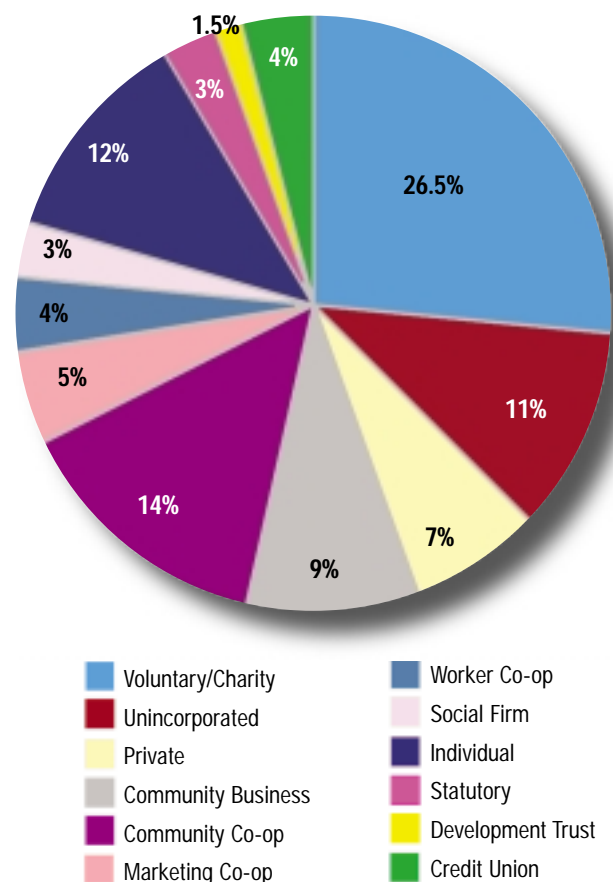
We have also been busy looking at our own legal structure and how we can improve our governance and the way we engage with the sector. As a result we have been through a process of changing our membership criteria from one where the membership of Co-operative Futures was made up of local forums, to one of direct membership by co-operative and community owned enterprises. We are now in the process of recruiting new members and improving our membership activities.

### Board Members

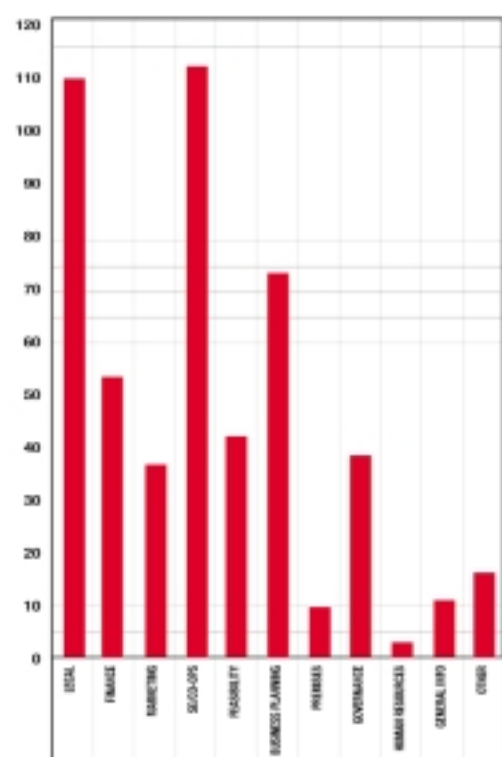
**GLOUCESTERSHIRE** - Mark Gale (Chair),  
Suzy Jacoby (resigned April 05), John Down  
**OXFORDSHIRE** - Stephen Yeo, Quintin Fox (resigned Dec 05),  
Vacancy  
**SWINDON/WILTS** - Dorothy Brown, Steve Allsopp, Phil Reade

**SOUTHAMPTON** - Brian Titley, Vacancy, Vacancy  
**MIDCOUNTRIES CO-OPERATIVE** - Kat Luddecke  
**CO-OPERATIVE FUTURES** - Jo White  
**COMPANY SECRETARY** - Lyn Young

### Type of organisation seeking advice



### Type of advice given



## Aardvark

Aardvark Gardeners Co-operative has come into being through the work of the Snakes & Ladders project based in Oxford. Co-operative Futures, as a partner organisation, is supporting the group of six gardeners, who wish to run their own business after having experienced mental health problems. Advice has centered around organising as a workers co-operative and all aspects of business planning towards start-up.

Assistance to secure modest funding was essential at an early stage in order to begin a feasibility study into providing gardening services around Oxford. The main elements of the feasibility study to date have been to devise and deliver face to face questionnaires with potential customers; to visit LEAVES gardening co-operative in Swindon; and to hold sessions on personal and group aims, skills base and training requirements. Further work is planned to assess the feasibility of contracting to local authority and non-government organisations such as housing co-operatives. Aardvark Gardeners Cooperative aims to begin trading later in the year.



## Gloucestershire Contracting Partnership

Co-operative Futures was quick to respond when painting and decorating businesses in Stroud needed advice on a legal structure to allow them to bid jointly for new, larger-scale maintenance contracts introduced by the District Council.

At an open meeting in early February we explained to the businesses and the council the advantages a co-operative could offer. The legal structure became one of the group's urgent tasks, and after a series of meetings they registered their co-operative at the end of March.

Gloucestershire Contracting Partnership is in the process of tendering for work with the council, we believe this is the first time a new business has set up to bid for local public sector work

– what councils etc call 'procurement'. The co-operative allows businesses to bid jointly for much bigger contracts than they could manage on their own. With so much emphasis now being placed on keeping money in the local economy, this may well be the shape of businesses to come.



Signing up: Gloucestershire Contracting Partnership

## Just Trading

In 2005, Co-operative Futures worked with a group of people living in Wallingford who wanted to open a shop selling organic wholefood and fairly traded goods. With some of the group still working and others retired, they wanted a flexible model for the business and decided that the best way to achieve this was through a co-operative. Our Oxfordshire advisor worked with the group to help them set up a worker co-operative as this model best suited their needs. The legal model chosen would allow people to invest in the business and receive a return on their capital. It would also allow people working in the shop to become fully participating members of the co-operative and to earn a dividend on profits made by the business.

Just Trading of Wallingford opened for business in October. The members of the co-operative each work in the shop on a rota basis.



Just Trading, Wallingford

## Turning Over New Leaves

LEAVES is a workers' co-operative and its name is a clever acronym for Local Enterprise And Vocational Employment Schemes. Some of their ongoing projects include regularly maintaining domestic gardens for elderly customers, composting green waste and conservation. One particular area of conservation is in Bruddel Woods, in Swindon. Chipped bark has been applied to reinforce pathways, and a muddy slope has been replaced with a flight of steps made from natural materials.

employment, but who have identified their own personal need for a period of transition to build up their work skills and confidence levels.



Bruddel Woods, Swindon

Since its inception in June 2002, LEAVES demonstrates the potential for offering services in and around the community, but also provides satisfying work and employment for people disadvantaged in the labour market by virtue of their mental health. Until a recent change in local authority policy, LEAVES was offering a kerb-side collection of garden waste and turning it into compost for residents in Wroughton. LEAVES has 19 members, many of whom are people who aspire to mainstream

## Pound Arts Centre

With the support of Co-operative Futures, the arts organisation responsible for running The Pound Arts Centre in Corsham was successful in securing £1.2m from North Wiltshire District Council for the redevelopment of the building. In 3 months, a detailed business plan was drawn up with staff and trustees working in partnership with Council staff. The plan focused on developing the arts centre as a district-wide facility offering on-site and outreach arts provision, which fitted with the objectives of the local arts strategy.

to review its current legal structure. Originally the centre involved 3 separate arts organisations working together; these have now merged to form one registered charity and company limited by guarantee.

Originally a primary school, the site owned by the District Council was taken over as an arts centre 10 years ago. The funding will allow the arts organisation to upgrade the facilities available for use by all of the community. Physical improvement works have now begun and will take 12 months to complete. In addition, Co-operative Futures worked with the arts organisation



The Pound Arts Centre, Corsham