



# Learning to be We

Exploring democratic enterprise for the UK Fibreshed movement and beyond

A report commissioned by South West England Fibreshed  
Author: Zoe Gilbertson, [Liflad.co.uk](http://Liflad.co.uk), August 2023

“A proper community, we should remember also, is a commonwealth: a place, a resource, an economy. It answers the needs, practical as well as social and spiritual, of its members - among them the need to need one another. The answer to the present alignment of political power with wealth is the restoration of the identity of community and economy.”

**Wendell Berry**

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# Executive Summary

**The aim of the Fibreshed movement is to develop regional fibre systems that build ecosystem and community health. It is looking to support the decolonisation of soil to skin processes to develop localised fibre production and is working collectively to achieve these aims.**

**Textile & fibre production is all about process. As any grower or textile maker understands, textile creation is a long and difficult progression with multiple steps from seed to fibre and finally cloth. How we organise enterprise to support that process is crucial in weaving together new systems to “transform the economic systems behind the production of material culture to mitigate climate change, improve health, and contribute to racial and economic equity”<sup>1</sup>**

**Pioneer species create the conditions for others to come through. The Fibreshed movement is creating the conditions for others to flourish and this is difficult work. Organising collectively can help share the weight of this burden. This report will help UK Fibreshed Affiliates, members & related enterprise to align their business practices with Fibreshed values in practice.**

## DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Each Fibreshed affiliate has the agency to develop their own **Mission, Values, Aims, Principles and Accountability** within the ethos of the wider Fibershed movement. These statements should be **co-created with stakeholders in the locality**. Whether incorporated or not, set out clear frameworks of governance specific to your group.

Fibresheds may have multiple core directors/convenors and a range of volunteers. Once an organisation moves beyond a single person, thought must be given to **governance, transparency, and methods of knowledge transfer so the organisation is not reliant on a single knowledge holder**.

**Groups working with shared purpose must communicate their purpose clearly and ensure that all members share the same goals** and agree on the methods to achieve these goals. Groups must also **develop effective interpersonal communication and conflict resolution processes** that are easy to access and facilitate.

**Boards should be collaborative and involve both staff and community/members**. There are myriad options for incorporation with consequences for each. Funders may dictate a particular legal structure, but it is generally advised to have at least three directors. **The toolkit at the end of this report will help with this learning journey.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://fibershed.org/mission-vision/>

## KEY FINDINGS

**Community projects are born from a cohesive community and the conditions for these to emerge must be carefully supported and nourished.** Community ownership can come from a sense of place, with people investing in natural, cultural and social capitals more than financial. Community ownership does not always mean the community must manage the business or be heavily involved, it can be symbolic.

It is important to **create an appropriate balance between community and enterprise - developing communication channels appropriate to the scale of the business**, individual skills sets and accountability.

**Infrastructure support is key.** Low-cost buildings are an attribute of many alternative enterprises and efforts to develop built infrastructure through partnerships should be prioritised. Partnerships with farms and local authorities could be considered.

**Affiliates should continue to develop relational infrastructure** with regular interactions with customers and suppliers through events, conferences, and celebrations, **creating a two-way flow of information and feedback.** The UK Grain Lab provides an interesting example to Fibreshed with its **focus on in person gatherings, both regionally and nationally** with dialogical, conference style meet-ups, farm tours and knowledge exchange.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Establishing a relational, regional ecosystem of co-operative support**, involving advice and finance could help small enterprise immensely, particularly in under privileged areas. With appropriate capacity, Fibresheds could instigate wider **regional conversations and partnerships with governments and other values-led organisations** to see what could be progressed.

Affiliates should consider if a **UK Fibreshed could be a fiscal host** for UK Fibreshed affiliates, taking on finance and admin whilst ensuring that decision making is devolved to a local level. Who would do this and how it would happen would require much further consideration.

**A Fibreshed could help farmers could form a co-operative** within a Fibreshed for wool, linen and/or natural dye processing and potential garment production. People may need to give up the specific farm provenance of their wool, linen or dye plants but it could remain bioregional. **A Community Benefit Society would likely be an appropriate container to raise funding for a community venture.**

**A platform co-operative could be created so that those making and selling seeds, fibre, dyes, textiles, and clothing could distribute and sell their produce.** This could be organised by Fibreshed by utilising an existing platform like the Open Food Network. **A UK Fibreshed could create online infrastructure in partnership with Open Food Network to assist those selling fibre & dye products.**

Rather than just catering to producer members, supporters such as fibre professionals, students, fashion and farming **professionals could pay to access the knowledge contained**

**within a Fibreshed.** Creating a fibre resource that people pay a small monthly fee to join could have wide appeal.

**The formation of local Fibreshed affiliates could be more strategic so that the movement is successful over the long term.**

Should a Fibreshed region be based on the bioregional carrying capacity of the land or should it be based on population size? Or should it form along local political lines so that regional funding can be accessed? This could facilitate collaboration and cooperation with other ecological and socially motivated organisations at a local level. We can't change the population that exists in a location and each region/Fibreshed must find ways to operate within the carrying capacity of the land they sit within. It is difficult for volunteer movements to be strategic as the 'Mother' organisation is initially reliant on the good will and drive of volunteers in place. However, over time the movement could find itself under pressure and less effective if it does not organise more strategically. Many similar organisations have historically come up against issues over the long term when they have grown quickly and randomly. Like much in this report, this is a possible topic for further research.

# Introduction

“The exact problem isn’t imagining a world beyond capitalism, but identifying the experiential practices that get you to it”

Kai Heron, Common Wealth

Farmers, growers, makers and everyone involved in an alternative fibre system are operating in a difficult economic paradigm based on growth and ever-increasing GDP. Groups worldwide are struggling to develop new non-extractive ways of being whilst being trapped within existing structures. There are no easy answers in response but working cooperatively and with purpose can provide agency in a world that appears ever more off kilter.

## USING THIS REPORT

This report aims to provide background knowledge, helpful and practical suggestions that will support fibre-based enterprise to organise administration and people in ways that align with regenerative practices. Funded by Fibreshed South West England, it will explore the systems and governance of collective enterprise to provide examples for Fibreshed affiliates and members to reference. It will not make any specific recommendations for incorporation but will provide insights and helpful suggestions for further investigation within a variety of contexts relevant to the UK fibreshed movement. **Text indented in indigo has**

**Fibreshed specific reflection and insight. A quick read should focus on these sections and the conclusion.** The report is information heavy to be used as reference and introduction to various themes and concepts but please use as needed.

Stories of those operating collaboratively in enterprise will be given as examples and inspiration through various case studies. Examples of cooperative infrastructure and ecosystems will be provided alongside a toolkit - a list of resources for those organising small scale, local enterprises aligning with Fibreshed values. There are many online examples of regenerative business systems and handbooks for collective operation, some of which will be referenced in the toolkit.

*The aim is to provide support for a collective learning journey towards holistic ways of working that are compatible with an ecological and socially just future.*

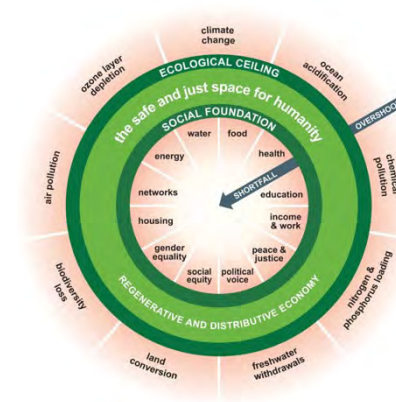


# Democratic Enterprise

Fibreshed is a brilliant example of **land-based regeneration** galvanising change through fibre production. Regenerative values must also be embedded throughout all aspects of a business so that we can transform not just the soil and nature but also people and places. **Transforming economic systems** will require collective action and subsidiarity - the devolution of power and decision making to the lowest level. We cannot continue with the Eurocentric, colonial focus on individual agency and top-down decision making that is driving over consumption and ecological degradation. **Doughnut Economics, Degrowth**, the principles of the **Commons** and **subsidiarity** provide a lens through which to view regenerative ways of organising enterprise compatible with the aims of the Fibreshed movement. What follows is a short introduction to these concepts.

## The New Economy

**Doughnut Economics**<sup>2</sup> was developed by Economist Kate Raworth and provides an intuitive visual graphic supported by extensive theory and practice to provide a guide and compass for humanity. It shows us how to operate within planetary boundaries whilst providing a social foundation for all. It is a great introduction to what is often called the '**New Economy**', a way of operating democratically outside of the standard growth logic and within non extractive dynamics and power structures.



Instead of pursuing endless economic growth, Doughnut Economics presents an alternative balanced perspective. The aim is for humanity to reside within the safe space of the doughnut, not pushing into planetary overshoot and under mining earth's life support systems but also not falling into deprivation and poverty.

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<sup>2</sup> Raworth, Kate. *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think like a 21st Century Economist*. Chelsea Green Publishing, 2017

How does the design of your business block transformative action?



How could a redesign of your business unlock transformative action?



Within business this can be applied through five layers of design - Purpose, Networks, Governance, Ownership, and Finance<sup>3</sup>. All five pillars are essential if business is to become regenerative and distributive in its strategies, operations, and impacts. Designing the right infrastructure and governance is an important part of any enterprise.

There are many parallels with Fibreshed and Doughnut Economic Action Lab (DEAL) and its network of affiliate organisations. Many volunteers who are following the ethos of a larger organisation autonomously, trying to balance time, incorporation, grant funding, etc, all on a shoestring or with no money at all - yet with the high profile of the mother 'brand'/ship making them look bigger than they are. The DEAL website provides a wide range of tools and useful collaborative working methods. <https://doughnuteconomics.org/>

<sup>3</sup> What Doughnut Economics means for business: creating enterprises that are regenerative and distributive by design Executive summary

**Degrowth** envisions a society in which wellbeing does not depend on continual economic growth and its outsourced social and environmental costs<sup>4</sup>. Instead of continual overconsumption, economic activity should focus on promoting care, cooperation and autonomy, which increases wellbeing. Degrowth is profoundly democratic through emphasising direct democracy and citizens participation in decision making. It follows that businesses aligned with the concept of degrowth would also wish to operate in a democratic fashion.

**Subsidiarity** describes the principle of keeping decision making to the smallest possible level or closest to where it will have most effect, i.e. usually at a very local level. It is often used when talking about systems of food production and is an important principle of regenerative systems. Subsidiarity can be applied to politics, systems of production, organisation and enterprise.<sup>5</sup> It follows that better decisions will be made by those affected by and with direct experience of the particular issue.

## The Commons

The Fibreshed movement is often referenced by academics and fashion activists as a fantastic existing example of textile and

fashion commons. Like a Commons, it can be described as a '*socially coherent group of peers managing collective resources (both depletable and replenishable) with minimal reliance on the market or state*'.<sup>6</sup> In "The Commoner's Catalogue for Change Making - tools for the transition ahead" David Bollier, a key writer, strategist and scholar of the Commons defines the Commons as:

**'A system of shared intention designed in ways to steward collective care-wealth in fair, collaborative ways'**

Living processes of Commoning can enable people to co-create a sense of purpose, meaning and belonging while meeting important needs, it creates a container, a framework from which to experiment and build new ways of working together and generates value in ways not easily captured by markets and prices. The biggest challenge of collective enterprise and sharing resources, as many will know, can be working together with other people, particularly with driven personalities. **Elinor Ostrom** was awarded a Nobel prize for her work on the Commons and her **8 principles of the Commons** are used to help groups steward resources fairly, create equitable and harmonious processes together.

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<sup>4</sup> Hickel, Jason. *Less Is More: How Degrowth Will Save the World*. William Heinemann, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> <https://medium.com/age-of-awareness/redesigning-agriculture-for-food-sovereignty-and-subsidiarity-ebf7e5fo3662>

<sup>6</sup> David Bollier, *The Commoner's Toolkit for Changemaking*

## 8 Principles for Managing a Commons:

- 1. Define clear group boundaries.** - a shared purpose and vision must be held by all members of the group. Members must be proud of their membership and enjoy working together.
- 2. Match rules governing use of common goods to local needs and conditions.** - rules must be created by local people in response to local conditions.
- 3. Ensure that those affected by the rules can participate in modifying the rules.** - people will be more invested in the system if they have a hand in creating the rules, ensure that all participating in the group are consulted. Participatory decision making is necessary.
- 4. Make sure the rule-making rights of community members are respected by outside authorities** - once rules have been set, groups need ways of monitoring that the rules are followed
- 5. Develop a system, carried out by community members, for monitoring members' behaviour.** - transparent feedback mechanisms and methods of participation are vital for the health of the group.
- 6. Use graduated sanctions for rule violators - systems that create warnings and fines for over-use of resources** - this rule applies mainly when governing a natural resource but groups may develop rules specific to their own context.

**7. Provide accessible, low-cost means for dispute resolution.** - methods of conflict resolution are extremely important within a group setting, conflict resolution should be easy to access and low cost.

**8. Build responsibility for governing the common resource in nested tiers from the lowest level up to the entire interconnected system.** - groups usually exist within networks of other groups at bioregional and national scales.<sup>7</sup>

It is difficult to operate fairly and competitively within a system that remains extractive and exploitative. All Fibreshed affiliates and members must operate in a world of economic and ecological transition. It is challenging to compete financially and remain positive in the face of those operating in extractive fashion & textile industries who continue outsourcing planetary costs to other parts of the globe. Working with common purpose, sharing knowledge, challenges and successes can go a long way in ameliorating the downsides. The Northern Californian Fibreshed in the USA sets and manages boundaries and rules of participation for the wider network. Within an individual fibreshed there is currently freedom to create principles, values and rules specific to each locality. This offers freedom but can also provide challenge as many groups are finding their way at the same time. Setting out clear frameworks of governance and rules will be important once an organisation is incorporated.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://4returns.commonland.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Principles-for-the-governance-of-sustainable-and-equitable-groups-v2.pdf>

# Ownership & Structure

Deciding on the structure of an organisation or enterprise in the context of the Commons varies depending on the law in the country in which it is situated. One could automatically assume that a cooperative would be the more appropriate container in line with principles of the Commons but there is flexibility and choice in company form.

It is important to understand the consequences of any legal and organisational structure as it can make a big difference to operation. A brief description of various organisational possibilities for a UK enterprise follows.

## Legal form & Organisational Type

**A legal form** decides how the law regards an organisation.

**Organisational type** determines how an organisation presents itself externally and organises internally.

An enterprise can have several organisational types but will have only one legal form. For example, a social enterprise is an organisational type which might use a company, society, community interest company or partnership as its legal form.

## Common organisational types include:

- Social Enterprise - an enterprise with a social purpose
- Community Enterprise – an enterprise owned and run by a geographical community or a community of interest.
- Co-operative – an enterprise owned and run democratically by those who trade with it.
- Worker co-operative – owned and run by its workers
- Housing co-operative – owned and run by its tenants
- Consumer Co-operative – owned and run by its customers
- Community Land Trust – an organisation created to hold land for community use.

## Common incorporated UK legal forms used by the VCSE (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise) sector are:

- Private Limited Company - either limited by Shares or Guarantee
- Community Interest Company (CIC) – either limited by Shares or Guarantee
- Co-operative Society
- Community Benefit Society
- Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) or Scottish CIO
- Limited Liability Partnership (LLP)

## A quick guide to Incorporation

Incorporation means that your business/organisation is registered with the state, creating a separate legal entity. In brief, becoming a 'corporation' removes any personal and financial liability for those running it. If you are looking to raise money, most funders will require an organisation to have a legal form, usually a CIC or a charity. A CIC is essentially a normal company with a stated community purpose and an asset lock that prevents profits from being distributed to its shareholders (Directors).

It is often recommended that a non-profit has more than one Director, to have too few limits the diversity of viewpoints and backgrounds that contribute to decision making. Shared decision making can take more time but usually leads to stronger and more resilient outcomes. An organisation is at risk if any of the Directors leave for whatever reason. Grant funders usually require three unrelated directors, although many recommend having at least five directors and some may accept a sole director.

## Community Interest Company (CIC) or Charity?

The main difference between a Charity and a CIC is that a charity must have a volunteer board and a CIC can pay its directors. A charity has tax advantages but is subject to much more scrutiny and regulation than a CIC. A CIC can convert to becoming a charity, but a charity cannot convert to a CIC. Some grant funders will only support charities. A CIC is usually expected to earn income through trading.

## Company or Cooperative Society?

Put simply, decisions are made by Directors of a company and in a cooperative they are made by all members. Many organisations operating with principles of the New Economy prefer cooperative structures. Cooperatives can help grow democratic and more socially just communities through shared decision making and they are an important aspect of the Commons. Decision making can be fully distributed or have some forms of hierarchy and some co-ops have boards or groups of people tasked with making more strategic, leadership decisions.

**It is possible for a Company Limited by Guarantee or a CIC to operate as a cooperative in practice<sup>8</sup>. Cooperatives are explored in more depth later in this document. There is myriad options with consequences for each and in-depth advice from an expert should be sought before any decisions are made. A Fibreshed will usually be dependent on grant funding and the funders may dictate a particular legal structure. Some funders will provide grants to limited companies with a common ownership clause in their articles that says if they're wound up, any remaining assets aren't shared amongst the members. This allows for more flexibility than the asset lock requirements of a CIC which are usually intended for use with specific larger assets.**

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<sup>8</sup> [https://library.uniteddiversity.coop/Legal\\_Structures\\_etc/CIC/cicmodel.pdf](https://library.uniteddiversity.coop/Legal_Structures_etc/CIC/cicmodel.pdf)



## Buying Co-ops and CSAs

A buying co-op provides economic clout and power when people come together. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) also supports the financial burden of an organisation by sharing the upfront cost with its supporters and consumers.

It would be interesting to investigate if a fibreshed could support the creation of buying co-ops for designers (and others) to come together to purchase local yarn or textiles. Perhaps providing advice on the right enterprise container and creating ways to share the financial burden of risk among all stakeholders. Designers often operate in a precarious financial situation in a similar situation to farmers, having to pay for a product up front without always knowing what will be sold as revenue. This is where the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model appears like a good idea - asking the consumer to invest upfront in the entire process and sharing the burden with all other stakeholders.

CSAs are usually set up as worker co-ops. Growers, processors, dyers, weavers and designers would have to come together with their input, time and costs carefully calculated across the co-op but it could be a rewarding way for people to work together. Any profit in the final garment would be distributed fairly across all stages of production and risks shared. This assumes that a consumer would be willing to pay the upfront costs of such a model, likely to range in the hundreds of pounds for a garment. The business proposition is that the purchasers must value the craft, the artisan and the land

it all comes from. The story is compelling and we should take heart in this.

Tap Root Fibre Lab part of Tap Root Farm, Canada experimented with a CSA model for flax to linen garments but found that their initial enthusiasm didn't match reality and clothing could not be produced due to the complexities involved in linen production. This was perhaps too early in the development of home-grown Canadian linen and should not be discounted as a future option. Amazing things are in progress at Tap Root but it is not an easy journey. As Jay Tompt, lecturer in Regenerative Economics at Schumacher College suggests, pioneer species create the conditions for others to come through. The Fibreshed movement is creating the conditions for others to flourish, this is difficult work and people should not get disheartened by any early failures.

On a more positive note, Wool Circle, Yorkshire successfully created a consortium involving farmers, knitwear designers and an academic. Using community fund raising through Kickstarter to get started, the project has now evolved into an online store. Could fibre & dye farmers form a collective within a Fibreshed for wool, linen and/or natural dye processing? People may need to give up the specific farm provenance of their wool, linen or dye plants but it could remain bioregional. This option could work well for flax and hemp when more people start growing these crops as the fibre source is a less variable in output than wool.

### Community Benefit Society as a vehicle for fundraising

For a business to remain democratic and uninfluenced by the demands of capital and profit seeking investors, fundraising for alternative enterprise often comes from a community who care about the venture. This is a huge topic that requires further investigation but in brief, community shares appear to offer the most promise. A platform like Ethex provides a space for those wishing to make ethical investments to connect with community-based opportunities.

It is likely that if a Fibreshed wanted to support a venture, such as a mill, textile processing facilities & equipment or perhaps a locally grown yarn then community fundraising through shares will be the best vehicle. A Community Benefit Society would likely be an appropriate container to raise funding for a community venture. Wessex Community Assets provide great examples of community fundraising, stating that 'Community-owned enterprises generate more resilient and adaptable societies, economies and environments.' They have used Ethex as the platform for raising finance for various ventures. People are more likely to donate money to a cause they can feel part of, an example from Plaw Hatch Farm follows in the case studies section to demonstrate in more detail.



# Governance

The policies and principles of an enterprise will define its ethos, how it is run and who is responsible for managing its activities, otherwise known as its governance. Governance is defined formally as the systems and processes concerned with ensuring the overall direction, supervision and accountability of an organisation. It identifies who has power within an organisation, who is accountable and describes how decisions are made. Even if power is fully distributed in a non-hierarchical organisation, it is still advisable to describe how decisions are made and who can make them. Most organisations once incorporated (or even before incorporation) should have a set of documents outlining how their governance structure operates. These documents will usually describe the organisation's **Mission, Values, Aims, Principles and Accountability**, even at a small scale these are important. As an organisation grows it will become advisable to include policies such as health & safety, equity and diversity, safeguarding, volunteering, any legal or statutory requirements and a risk management register. It is possible to write these documents in a manner suitable for any kind of incorporation or structure. If working with a board **outlining the roles, responsibilities and code of conduct for the board or members** is advisable. The same applies if following processes of the Commons - rules of engagement or entry to the Commons or organisation must be described. For example the activist organisation, Fashion Act Now has created 5 principles of participation as a guide for entry to the Fashion Commons they are creating:

1. WE BUILD COMMUNITY AND SERVE ITS NEEDS *In what ways are you a community and how do you serve its needs?*
2. WE NURTURE OUR CULTURAL IDENTITY, CUSTOMS AND CREATIVITY *In what ways do you nurture creativity, cultures and customs relating to dress, clothing or bodily adornment within your community?*
3. WE SHARE OUR COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE AND WEALTH *In what ways do you share your knowledge, skills, creativity and/or resources with others?*
4. WE RESPECT OTHER PEOPLES, THEIR CULTURES AND LIVELIHOODS *In what ways do you respect and care for other peoples, the significance of their cultural expression and rights to dignified livelihoods?*
5. WE CARE FOR THE PLANET *In what ways do you work with nature to protect and restore the living world?*

Each Fibreshed affiliate has the agency to develop their own Mission, Values, Aims, Principles and Accountability within the ethos of the wider fibershed movement. These statements should be co-created with stakeholders in the locality with regenerative principles relating to people and land-based practices at the fore. There are various processes listed within the Collaborative Methods section of the toolkit that can help with this process. [The Community Canvas framework](#) is recommended as a place to start.

## Forming a Board

Forming a board is a key part of any enterprise, who is involved in decision making and the running of the venture can greatly influence ethos and organisation. It is important to form a board with highly competent people whose **values are fully aligned with the organisation**. Democratically run, non-hierarchical organisations can still form boards, core teams and management committees. The Centre for Community Organizations (COCO) supports community enterprise in Quebec, Canada through organisational development, offering training, disseminating resources, producing research, and strengthening links between non-profit organisations. As experts in forming community boards they have written an excellent article that is also relevant for UK organisations. It describes how they have formed a variety of different boards throughout their 20-year history and the pros and cons of various options. For example, they describe the board they have arrived at now:

“Our Board is still in flux.... But here are some features of our Board of Directors that distinguish it from others:

- **Our executive titles are nominal.** They are used for signing important documents and to report to the REQ, but they offer no additional power or responsibility on the Board.
- **Our retreats involve board and staff.** Strategy and global decision making are something we do together, with our different perspectives and strengths.
- **Staff participate in board meetings.** We rotate who goes, based on availability and need; our finance coordinator goes to budget meetings, and so on.
- **Board-staff collaboration.** Instead of committees, we have “hubs”, which can be Board and staff, or just staff, or just Board – based on need. This allows a wider range of Board members to work with a wider range of staff members.”

[Read the full article here.](https://coco-net.org/the-role-of-a-board-of-directors-flat-org/)

<https://coco-net.org/the-role-of-a-board-of-directors-flat-org/>

# Collaborative Decision Making

**Collaborative decision making** is key to inclusive and distributive enterprise, but it can be a difficult process. There are many organisations trying to help non-hierarchical organisations with democratic decision making. As western modernist society, we are not used to making decisions with others, it takes **time, active listening, and a removal of ego.**

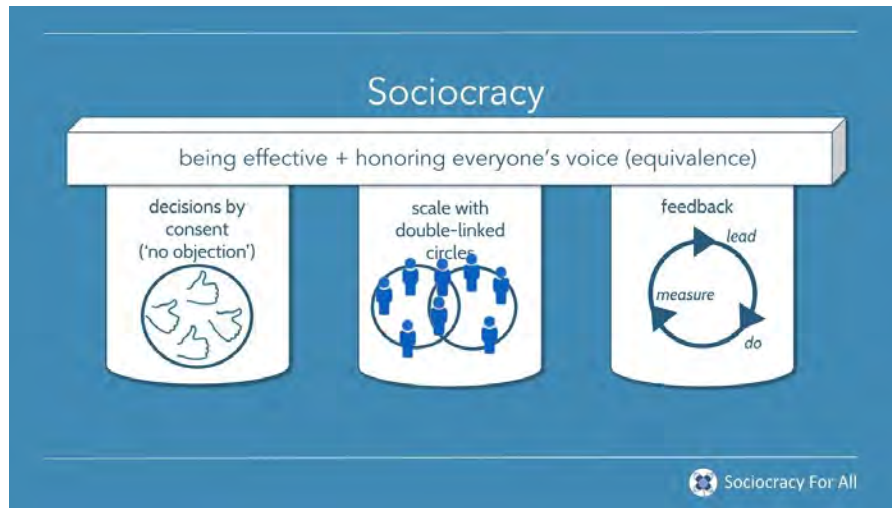
**Practising collaborative decision making can be very rewarding when groups commit, and it can lead to much better outcomes in the long term**

It is important that organisations find a method of decision making they are comfortable with and follow it carefully, especially if they increase in size. Various frameworks and methods are listed in the toolkit but a few key principles are mentioned here.

## Sociocracy

Sociocracy is a peer governance system based on consent that many non-hierarchical organisations use. [Sociocracy For All](#) A good introduction to it can be found here: [A very brief introduction to sociocracy | by Harri Kaloudis | Medium](#)

People work together by forming circles. Every circle has a domain, a defined area of authority and action. Circles make decisions about everything within their domain. Other circles cannot interfere unless their own work is somehow affected by the activities of the other circles. Circles use careful feedback mechanisms to assess how well they have fulfilled their aim. Sociocracy encourages the embedding of systematic methods of capturing meaningful information about important aspects of organisational function. This allows knowledge to be shared through the network rather than held with individual people, i.e. if someone leaves the knowledge stays within the group. Sociocratic processes maybe useful when an organisation is big enough for multiple teams of activity.



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## Consensus

Consensus decision making is an important concept to understand. [A Consensus Handbook - Seeds for Change](#) provides a useful definition:

“Consensus decision making is a creative and dynamic way of reaching agreement between all members of a group. Instead of simply voting for an item and having the majority of the group get their way, a consensus group is committed to finding solutions that everyone actively supports, or at least can live with. All decisions are made with the consent of everyone involved, and this ensures that all opinions, ideas and concerns are taken into account. Through listening closely to each other, the group aims

to come up with proposals that work for everyone. Consensus is neither compromise nor unanimity– it aims to go further by weaving together everyone’s best ideas and key concerns– a process that often results in surprising and creative solutions, inspiring both the individual and the group as a whole.

At the heart of consensus is a respectful dialogue between equals. It’s about how to work with each other rather than for or against each other– it rejects side taking, point scoring and strategic manoeuvring. Consensus is looking for ‘win win’ solutions that are acceptable to all, with the direct benefit that everyone agrees with the final decision, resulting in a greater commitment to actually turning it into reality. Consensus can work in all types of settings– small voluntary groups, local communities, businesses, theoretically even whole nations and territories. The processes may differ depending on the size of the group and other factors, but the basic principle of cooperation between equals remains the same.”

*Any form of organisation may consider using consensus across a board or wider membership, making all participants feel valued. It can take a lot of time however and all members need to be committed to the process. If group members are all working towards the same clearly defined and specific aims, then consensus is easier to achieve. However, if group members are not all aligned to the same values then conflict can emerge. This is why defining entry to a group, via strict boundaries and rules is important particularly when people are involved in leadership activities and decision making.*

Loomio is a collaborative decision-making tool, software developed to help democratic groups make better decisions together. The following quote is from the Loomio Handbook which provides a useful guide for co-operative working:

“Two important principles inform our decision-making processes: **anyone affected by a decision should be able to participate in making it, and a person’s influence over a decision should be in proportion to the degree to which it affects them.** When decisions are made by a smaller group, they will take active steps to maintain their mandate from the wider group, and to operate transparently.”

*Fibresheds may have multiple core directors/convenors and a range of volunteers. Once an organisation moves beyond being organised by one single person, thought must be given to governance, transparency and methods of knowledge exchange.*

## Fiscal Hosts

A **fiscal host** holds money on behalf of a community group, social movement or project that doesn't have the capacity or desire to register as a formal legal entity. The Social Change Agency provides a fiscal host service for unincorporated organisations with the aim to streamline processes, reduce overheads, and increase transparency (all transactions are visible). They will hold and distribute funds and charge around 8-10% of income to do this.

Some Fibresheds use fiscal hosts, for example Pennsylvania in the US is hosted by All Together Now, and Fibreshed Southwest England is hosted by Bristol Textile Quarter. The Fiscal host must be stable, financially secure and have the appropriate capacity and alignment of values to be suitable. Could a theoretical UK Fibreshed become a fiscal host for UK Fibreshed affiliates with one single entity applying for funds, grants, accounting and admin whilst ensuring that decision making is made at a local level,? The UK currently has 6 Fibresheds all trying to work out the right way to incorporate, organise and find time for admin and organising. It is a lot of duplicate work for everyone involved. Is it better for groups to come together via localities, forming regional coalitions like All Together Now rather than via a national body? These are difficult questions that require deep conversation and capacity across all stakeholders.

# Fibreshed Specifics

A Global Fibreshed Affiliate Meeting on the topic of Organisational Structure as part of the research for this report was observed. This provided useful background information and demonstrated that Fibreshed Affiliates operate in many ways, across different territories and countries. Each group and location developing appropriate structures for their location, laws and circumstances.

Some key questions emerged that most groups seemed to be struggling to address, (some amalgamated answers suggested by the various groups are in brackets):

- How much time to give for free? (most think 10 hours a week is the maximum)
- Tracking time and how to prevent burnout? (all suffer with this)
- What is the first paid position in a Fibreshed? (very few have paid positions but those who do said marketing and administrative tasks)
- Should multiple Fibresheds join together to ease their administrative burden?
- How to support non-hierarchical processes and structures? (worth it with the right communication but not many doing this through governance yet)
- How to manage collective ownership structures for proposed mills?
- How to best manage interpersonal conflict?
- Becoming a 501 (a charity) or using a fiscal host?
- Applying for grants (Fibreshed micro grants can help people be paid for specific work)

- How to address any issues with people/volunteers not being accountable or responsible?
- How to manage volunteers and tensions between paid and unpaid work?
- Setting clear boundaries for all involved (a values framework can help)
- Payment for membership directories? (ranges from free to an average of \$40 per year).
- Best platforms to use for connecting with each other, supporters and members. (Slack often used but can be off putting for some)
- When to incorporate?

The Blue Ridge Mountain Fibreshed is well established and their group provided many answers to the general questions. They are a 501c3 (charity) with two part time paid staff, an extensive membership and volunteer base from which to draw from for support. They explained how it takes time to get to the point of being able to maintain paid staffing and that certain jobs are better in the hands of employees than others. For example, website updates and marketing should be with staff for consistency. Their membership pays for staffing costs plus the commission made from their retail and workshop space. Their retail income is distributed 70% to artists and 30% to the shop costs. The store is entirely run by volunteers so those who sell product must work a shift. This creates a community model that appears to work well, there is workshop space in the back of the unit and this provides income from rental and meeting space.

Grant money helps the operation but they try to keep this separate from general running costs and use grant money to deliver specific projects. They have different levels of membership from basic at \$35 to students at \$25 per year. There are other levels for professionals and they have a conflict of interest policy for board members who might also be operating within the Fibershed. They suggest for volunteers that time and enthusiasm is as important as experience but that a combination of both is perfect.

Fibreshed Dach operating across Germany, Austria, Switzerland provided a very different perspective to some of the other Fibersheds with a group of 10 women coming together with a shared vision. They share tasks and decision making equally. Interestingly their supporters pay \$40 to access a Slack channel full of community knowledge, they enjoy being connected and part of a group and are willing to pay for this. This **platform for professional knowledge exchange** is valuable but there were questions around the accessibility of slack and people having another platform to learn.

The concept of supporters such as fibre professionals, students, fashion and farming professionals paying to access the knowledge contained within a fibreshed is interesting. There is an online resource called [Gitbook](#) which could provide a useful platform for knowledge hosting. [Microsolidarity](#) provides an example. Creating a fibre resource that people pay a small monthly fee to join could have wide appeal.

## Fibreshed Reach and Boundaries

The landmass of California is twice that of the UK and California has only one Fibreshed when the UK have six at the time of writing. The population of California, however, is around half that of the UK. Should we be looking at land mass or population size when it comes to bioregional organising? Dave Snowden, global thought leader and founder of Cynefin, has worked with companies and governments on transformational change around the world. With specific reference to Scandinavia, he suggests that once a population goes over 5 million people it loses cultural coherence and change becomes more difficult<sup>9</sup>. If the long-term goal of any Fibreshed is bioregional regeneration that puts ecological and social economies first, then perhaps looking at the population of a region is an appropriate lens as well as its geographical reach.

Should a Fibreshed region be based on the bioregional carrying capacity of the land? Should it be based on population size? Or should it form along local political lines so that regional funding can be accessed? This could facilitate collaboration and cooperation with other ecological and socially motivated organisations at a local level.

Looking at regional populations some Fibresheds already fit into the 5m population category. For example:

Scotland 5.5m

Wales 3.1m

South West England is 5.7m

South East England is 9.2m

We cannot change the population that exists in a location and each region/Fibreshed must find ways to operate within the carrying capacity of the land they sit within. It is difficult for volunteer movements to be strategic as the 'Mother' organisation is initially reliant on the good will and drive of volunteers in place. However, over time the movement could find itself under pressure and less effective if it does not organise more strategically. Many similar organisations have historically come up against issues over the long term when they have grown quickly and randomly. This is a possible topic for further research.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://accidentalgoods.life/routes-to-political-and-social-transformation/>



# Collective Case Studies

This section explores examples of enterprises working collectively, who are operating under the principles of the Commons, Democracy and the New Economy using various organisational structures across a range of sectors. Some case studies are more detailed than others but what follows provides inspiration for alternative enterprise and organisational structures.

## Plaw Hatch Farm

Organisation: Co-op & Limited Company

Sector: Food/Farming

Contact: Rebecca Hays, <https://www.plawhatchfarm.co.uk/>



Plaw Hatch Farm is a community farm on the edge of the Ashdown Forest near Sharpthorne, West Sussex that is owned by a charitable trust. Rebecca Hays is the Business Manager at Plaw Hatch Farm, she looks after everything that is not farming and retail – bank, insurance, health and safety, governance. Plaw Hatch is a mixed farm with a dairy herd providing raw milk, cheeses, yoghurts and cream. They also keep beef cattle, sheep, pigs and laying hens and manage 12 acres of horticulture to provide a range of seasonally available fruit and vegetables. Operating biodynamically for over forty years, the farm owns 200 acres and stewards almost 500 acres of land in the area. As tenant farmers their main aim is to provide a wide range of produce for the local community using ethical and agroecological values whilst embodying a sacred relationship to the land and care for future generations.

Plaw Hatch Farm can be considered a successful regenerative enterprise in many ways, from the ecological to the financial and the relational. The enterprise has an unusual structure that has evolved over time and may not be directly replicable; however, aspects of this case study will be useful in many contexts. Enterprises like this do not emerge from nowhere, there is usually a seed or spark in place that brings them into being. The community receptivity to the creation of this community farm is in part related to the village having a Steiner School, with its embedded teachings on biodynamic agriculture. Emerson college, an alternative educational institution, is also nearby and used to offer a biodynamic agricultural qualification. **These organisations helped create the cultural conditions within the locality that continue to support a community farm.**

## History

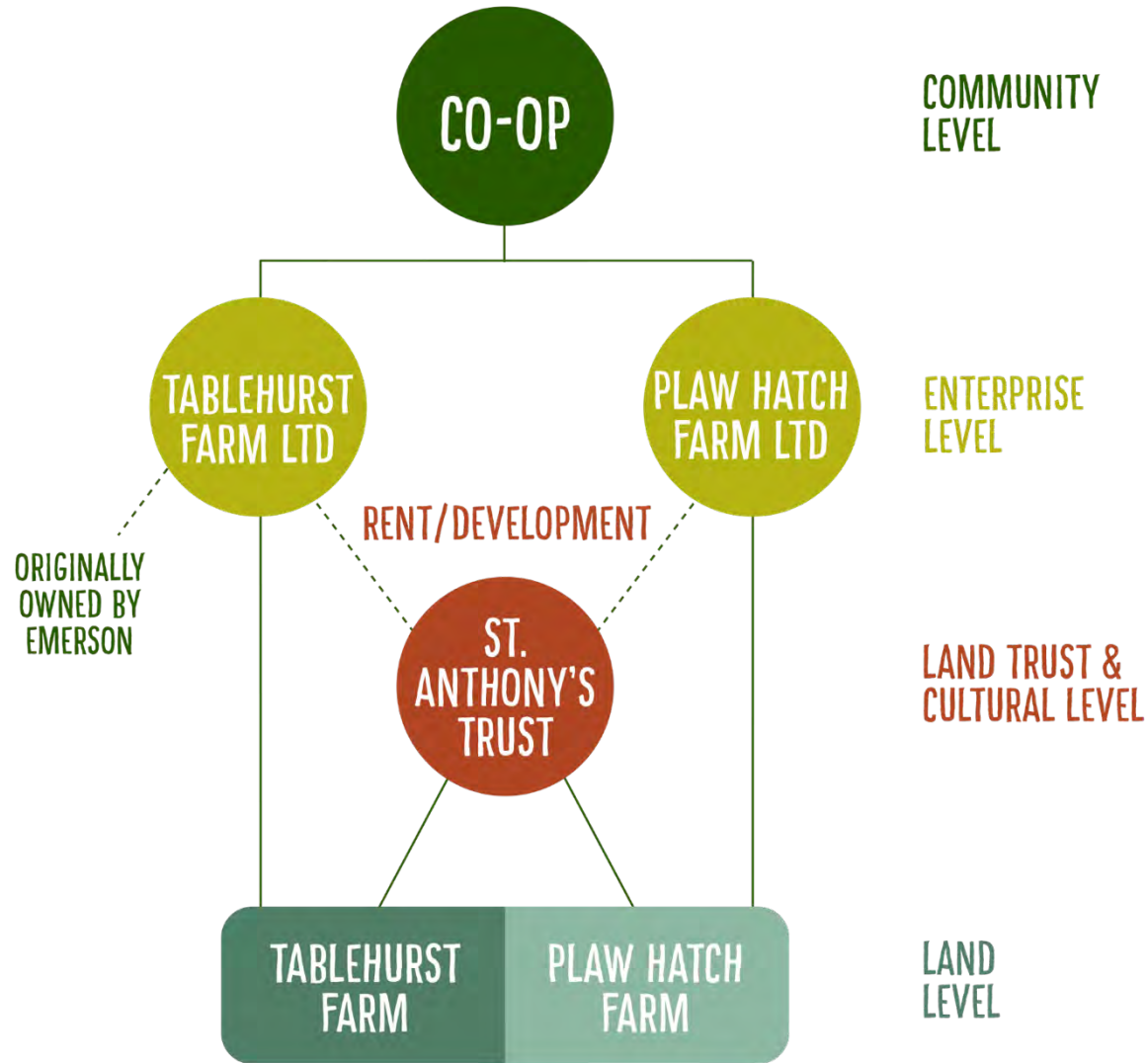
Plaw Hatch has been a dairy farm for over 40 years, it got into financial difficulties and was bought by the community and supported through various stages of purchase of additional parcels of land since 1989. The funding was raised by a few very large donors and many people contributing through buying a share for £100. These shares are essentially treated like a gift from the community with many saying '*it's the best £100 they've ever spent*' to keep such a beautiful biodynamic operation for the benefit of the community.

## Legal Structure

The charity was formed to become the owner of the lands and buildings and owns the land and buildings of both Plaw Hatch and its sister farm Tablehurst. This protected the farms enough to protect the land in perpetuity as much as any legal structure allows. Plaw Hatch as a business feels like they are '*tenant farmers of the land that the community owns*'. They have 40 employees and regular volunteers and students.

The diagram on the next page explains the structure of the entire operation. The community does not act like a shareholder, it's more like a club that facilitates Plaw Hatch to run a successful business that benefits the community. There is no financial benefit to owning a share, the benefits are non-financial and represent cultural and community capital. Any surplus capital goes back into the farm to support farm infrastructure such as repairing buildings creating accommodation for farm workers and machinery.

# TABLEHURST & PLAW HATCH COMMUNITY FARM



## Governance

At the yearly AGM, co-operative members are elected to represent the interests of the community. Plaw Hatch meet with the community representatives monthly to go through governance of the farm, finance, legal, staffing etc. They do not get involved in the day to day running of the business. There's a member of the co-op on the Plaw Hatch Board who meet for monthly management meetings and someone from the farm who attends every Co-op meeting. **Plaw Hatch is a limited company that has autonomy over the running of the farm, this appears an important aspect of the success of the business.** The community can have some influence through who they elect to the farm board but they do not get involved in day to day decision making.

## Differences between the farms

There are two farms in the group but they are separate entities with members of the co-operative on each board. Knowledge exchange happens between the farms and they share some equipment but they operate in slightly differently ways. Tablehurst does not have a flat management structure and relies more heavily on community funding to support projects such as a residential care home for special needs. Plaw Hatch operates more like a typical business. Tablehurst farm developed from Emerson College and has never operated independently. Plaw Hatch is enterprising and financially successful. They are always looking to turn all waste into by-products, for example cheese is a by-product of milk, cow hides are by-products of meat and dairy.

The team would like to create full cow hides (hair on) to sell alongside full sheepskins but finding someone to do this in the UK is proving difficult.

Plaw Hatch Ltd has a flat structure with four directors, one of whom is the Farm Manager, two are Enterprise Managers and the other is the Farm Shop Manager. Alongside additional farm Enterprise Managers they work together as one management team who meet weekly. Enterprise Managers run their areas such as the shop, chickens, sheep and butchery with autonomy as smaller business units within the main business. This appears reflective of a Sociocratic model although this was not referenced directly. Most enterprise managers live on site with their families and decision making affects their lives more deeply. Some conflicts do arise, but these are managed sensitively and with care. When livelihoods are directly dependent on harmony it is crucial that any interpersonal conflict does not affect the business and to date this approach appears to be working.

## Community

Community shareholders get involved in different ways, some just enjoy the badge of ownership, some shop on the farm, others don't, some like to know more about the business. It's an open farm so people can visit at any time, whether you are a shareholder or not. Those who pay £100 for a share, are given an entry into dialogue with the enterprise if they want it. **Being a shareholder is an emotional, rather than a financial transaction that allows people to support what they value in community.**

## Co-op

The Co-op is legally a Community Benefit Society and Plaw Hatch Farm is a Limited Company employed by the Co-op to run the farm business. Most community farms would set themselves up as a Community Interest Company or Community Benefit Society - part business part charity and are probably more governed by the community than Plaw Hatch is. They feel it creates more autonomy for the enterprise and leads to greater economic success. In contrast, TableHurst Farm, their sister organisation is more subject to the whims of the community. For example, the community wanted a café to stay open all year round. This was arranged but it turns out people don't actually use it in winter so the community benefit becomes a financial burden in practice.

Plaw Hatch applies for occasional grant finance but finds that you can rarely get a grant to suit your purpose and it often come with strings attached. One must be on guard against mission creep and compromising values. They are keen to be self-reliant and economically viable however and are currently working hard to improve drought resilience with some grants in alignment. The entire management team recently went on holistic land management training and the business finds support and knowledge exchange through memberships such as the Raw Milk Association and through Biodynamic Association Certification.

**In summary the following insights can be deduced via Plaw Hatch Farm:**

- **Community projects are born from a cohesive community and the conditions for these to emerge must be carefully supported and nourished.**
- **Community ownership can come from a sense of place, with people investing in capitals other than financial such as natural, cultural and social.**
- **Community ownership does not always mean the community must manage the business or be heavily involved.**
- **Being a shareholder can be an emotional, rather than a purely financial transaction that allows people to outwardly support what they value in community.**
- **Economic viability is more likely if the people making business decisions really understand farming and enterprise.**

## Mend Assembly

Organisation: Community Interest Company (CIC)

Sector: Clothing

Contact: Joss Whipple, <https://www.mendassembly.com/>



Mend Assembly is a CIC based in Totnes with a replicable business model and partner enterprises in Kirklee, Yorkshire, Ride, Isle of Wight and Le Mas D'Azil, France. They would like to operate as a cooperative and try to work as democratically as possible. The idea of replicating the business is that for a very small fee, textile repair and alterations businesses can take on the

core concept, branding and structure of the business and apply it to their own context. The core Mend Assembly Operation acts as a container for other textile related enterprises and projects to operate within it.

The business was founded by Joss Whipple, Padouck Fielding and Cat Heraty, three good friends who saw the need to respond to the dire situation of our current clothing system. They started in 2020 with £7000 of start-up capital. The directors are all mothers with children and other jobs, they don't make any income from the main business but can earn revenue if they deliver specific activities such as programmes, events and micro enterprises. They form a group of freelancers making space for local practitioners and micro enterprises, they deliver workshops, collaborations and micro production within localised facilities. The entire structure is designed and conceived to support local clothing, entrepreneurial and collaborative community infrastructure.



Mend assembly is currently registered as a CIC but they are interested in evolving into a cooperative when time and capacity allows. They use an accounting firm in Plymouth who specialise in social enterprise and not-for-profits. Joss Whipple commented that funders don't often understand the alternative economy and that grant applications often do not align with their aims and objectives. It is anticipated that more funders with alternative views are coming online as ecological priorities become more mainstream. The rent for their location is £700 a month all inclusive. The resident practitioners cover most of this with different levels of occupancy. The most prominent is someone with their own brand, making and selling garments from the space. Mend Assembly have 3 pillars of operation see through Services, Programmes and Memberships. They just about manage to break even and cover their costs at this stage (2023).

### **Services - "Creating jobs and upskilling local people"**

An example of local ecosystem support can be seen through a project with local pub restaurant, The Bull in Totnes. The Bull commissioned Mend Assembly, Pigment Organic Dyes and Make Good Prints Co. to make new aprons for their staff. It created the perfect opportunity to develop a meaningful textile product using shared principles of collaboration, locality and sustainability. The "Humbull" linen aprons are simple, hardworking and much admired. Vintage linen from France was used although the ideal would be to grow the linen locally at Riverford, the local organic farm.



Photo credit: Rachel Hoile Photography via Mend Assembly

**This is a brilliant example of the potential of a full circle Fibershed project. The aspect of growing and weaving the local linen is missing but it's easy to see how this could be incorporated once local linen processing is underway.**

### **Programmes - “Create space to preserve craft and knowledge”**

Mend Assembly offer clothing and textile related workshops related to a wide range of skills aimed at all sectors of the community. They have plans to develop a more formal training scheme for clothing alterations and repair. These skills are in short supply and are desperately needed within a degrowth textile economy, extending the lifespan and utility of existing clothing within the system. They also have plans to create a Pattern Bank - a repository of patterns for use by the community, this could be a valuable resource.

### **Memberships: “Creating a Community Studio”**

Mend Assembly offer a variety of memberships that help support the business and pay the rent of the building. Social members pay £7 a month and can join regular ‘stitch & bitch’ sessions and receive discounts on other workshops. Affiliate Members, those who create their own local ‘Mend Assemblies’ pay a very small fee per year to use the branding, concepts and website solutions in their regions. Resident Practitioners pay a fee to use the space part-time and this varies depending on space and use. People can also pay for a Studio Pass - £20 a year to be able to book hourly (£7 or half days £24).

**Mend Assembly provides a space for others to operate in textiles and clothing at a low cost. They are supporting an ecosystem of local clothing repair and production. A Fibreshed affiliate could potentially create something similar with natural fibre products and education as seen by the example of Blue Ridge Mountain Fibreshed in the US.**



## UK Grain Lab

Organisation: UK Grain Lab  
Sector: Food/Farming  
Contact: [www.ukgrainlab.com](http://www.ukgrainlab.com)

UK Grain Lab is an annual gathering of farmers, millers, plant breeders, bakers, cooks, scientists and academics promoting the growing and eating of **non-commodity** grains in the UK. The group was formed in 2017 when Kimberley Bell (Small Food **Bakery**), Josiah Meldrum (Hodmedods), Steven Jacobs (OF&G) and Edward Dicken (Harper Adams) got their heads together to try to imagine ways to support the growing, milling and baking of a more diverse range of cereals in the UK. Through three significant gatherings in November 2017 and 2018 and May 2022 the community has grown to include many farmers, millers, academics, facilitators, scientists, plant breeders, storytellers & bakers. There are offshoots **and regional groups, such as the South West Grains Network** that have grown from the initial meetings. The next big meeting is planned to be held in Nottingham in May 2024.

The UK Grain Lab provides an interesting example to Fibreshed with its focus on in person gatherings, both regionally and nationally with dialogical, conference style meet-ups, farm tours and knowledge exchange. It is run by very busy people and it was not possible to speak to those involved in time for this particular report. However, there are many parallels with the growing UK bast fibre movement and learnings that could be highly useful for flax and hemp growers and processors about how to organise.



Image from [Unsplash](https://unsplash.com)

## The Better Food Shed

Organisation: Better Food Shed

Sector: Food/Farming/Distribution

Contact: <https://growingcommunities.org/better-food-shed>

The Better Food Shed is based in Dagenham and is a new kind of wholesale business designed to support the growth of small-scale local food systems. It works with small local box schemes by providing a hub in Barking where farmers and growers pool their London orders. This means that smaller producers can reach minimum orders and don't have the headache of delivery. Better Food Shed provides the logical support to over 10 community growing schemes within the M25. It was incubated by [Growing Communities](#) in 2020 before becoming its own organisation and is focused on supporting small businesses run in an ecologically sound way to help build a more sustainable food system. The scheme no-for-profit and is run by experienced food systems manager Danny Fisher with warehouse space provided by Growing Communities.

Small successful schemes within an alternative economy are often incubated by larger operations. Could Fibreshed make the case for such support via other charities or not-for-profits? It can be difficult to make the case justifying more textile production when fast fashion is over producing so much. However, the same could be said for industrial food systems. The social case for supporting local textile systems will need to be made and community support is crucial. What can fibre-based enterprise do to help those in most need in society? The Home-grown Home-spun project in with the North-west Fibreshed, Super Slow Way and Community Clothing was a fantastic attempt at community cooperation. Disadvantaged and diverse Blackburn communities were encouraged to become involved in the growing and processing of flax. However, sometimes the glamour of fashion can attract those not necessarily aligned with community values who inadvertently exclude those more in need. There remains much opportunity to find ways to evolve social enterprise, fibre and clothing through innovative practice and not-for-profit collaboration.

## The Open Food Network

Organisation: The Open Food Network

Sector: Food Distribution

Contact: <https://about.openfoodnetwork.org.uk/>

Open Food Network is set up as a CIC and operates as a platform Co-op. A platform co-op is a digital platform (website or mobile app) designed to provide a service or sell a product that is collectively owned and governed by the people who depend on and participate in it. Open Food Network uses open-source software to create an online space that allows food producers to sell their produce online or direct to local people. All the producers they work with have the same aim to develop a better food system using ecological values and supporting food sovereignty within a local context.

Fibre is an important part of the new economy, people within food and farming often forget that local fibre products are produced in similar ways and should not be ignored. Would The Open Food Network consider becoming an Open Food & Fibre Network, promoting local produce made within Fibresheds? Connecting food and fibre products may help promote a wider conversation around fashion, helping those interested in food sovereignty, organic and regenerative systems understand that clothing must also be part of this. Alternatively, **could a UK wide Fibreshed create a similar online infrastructure for those selling local fibre products**, perhaps repackaging the website in partnership with the Open Food Network. **A platform co-op for fibre, dyes and clothing would be an exciting prospect.**

# Key Attributes of Successful Democratic Enterprise

This report has produced a lot of information, not all of it easily digestible. In summary here are some key attributes that appear to be common in successful examples of democratic enterprise and organisation.

**Rules/boundaries** – Groups working with shared purpose must communicate this purpose clearly and ensure that all members share the same goals and agree on the methods to achieve these goals. Groups must also develop effective interpersonal communication and conflict resolution processes that are easy to access and facilitate.

Consider – If you intend to become a co-op or to operate with democratic values, do you have clear rules of entry for all people who are involved?

**Governance** - A set of documents and processes covering operations and mission, values, aims, principles and accountability should be available for all members to access and view at any time. Regular reviews of governance processes are recommended.

Consider - Are all your business decisions open to view by all stakeholders?

**Transparency** - The importance of transparency around decision making and anything relating to finance is a requirement of collective enterprise. All aspects of operation from wages, distribution of funds to pricing should be visible to everyone within the organisation.

Consider - Are all your financial decisions open to view by others? Can any donors or stakeholders see where and how money was used?

**Built Infrastructure** - Low-cost buildings are a key requirement of many alternative enterprises. Eg Small Food Bakery Nottingham and Better Food Shed, a non-profit food distribution company has warehouse space donated by Everyone Everyday, a much bigger charity.

Consider - Can you apply to councils for support, to other farmers for barn space, to rural charitable organisations?

**Supply Chain Equality** - In the Better Food Shed model farmers are valued and the consumer knows the farmer. It's a relational, reciprocal system. Better Food Shed are supported by Growing Communities who provide free rent in one of their warehouses. This makes a huge difference to the operation.

Consider - Can you partner with a larger organisation with similar aims and goals? Can you form consortiums?

**Relational Infrastructure** - How do you create robust relational infrastructure, regular interactions with anyone within your supply chain from customers to suppliers? Events, conferences, and celebrations can be effective and relational.

Consider - What events can you put on to engage with your supply chain ecosystem? How do you communicate with stakeholders creating a two-way flow of information and feedback?

**Enterprising Environment** – Can the organisation make enterprising operational decisions without needing to consult every community member who may not have the knowledge to make effective choices.

Consider – How to create the appropriate balance between community and enterprise - developing communication channels appropriate to the success of the business, individual skills sets and accountability?

## Creating Co-operative Conditions

This section explores cooperative ecosystems in more depth. Co-ops around the world, represent the nearest legal structure AKA ‘*white man’s papers*’ to Aboriginal and indigenous land rights that were managed in common. Fibresheds are born out of love and respect for the land, nature and all human and beyond-human kin and a desire to regenerate a better future. There is alignment and close association with the growing and vibrant regenerative agriculture movement but within this movement itself there is a surprising lack of discourse around relationality. **Relationality** refers to connectedness and being in relationship with other beings, it is at the heart of the Commons and cooperative movements.

In Western society, the first self-documented worker co-operatives appeared in the weaving industry in Northern France and Lowland Scotland. In Ayrshire 1761, The Fenwick Weavers’ Society formed a clandestine association to defend wage levels and product quality. The industrial revolution was driven by the textile industry’s desire for profit and this is still seen today through fast fashion, overproduction and the degradation of workers’ rights globally. Cooperatives can uphold the values of grassroots communities rather than a mainstream business focus on profit accumulation for the few through shareholding.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.stirtoaction.com/articles/the-future-of-worker-co-operation-in-the-uk>



Image from <https://rainbowfibercoop.org/>

There are very few fibre producing co-ops today but Fibershed member, Rainbow Fiber Coop, provides a US example. Its founding purpose is to support the community of shepherds, artists and weavers working with the remaining flocks of Dibé dits’ozí (Navajo-Churro sheep) on the Navajo Nation. It has a 100% Diné board and is currently dependent on grants and donations. The co-op hopes that online consumer demand for Navajo-Churro wool products sourced ethically and directly from Diné producers will provide a fair and sustainable income for its members over time, changing the dynamic of reliance on grant income. Board members run the business with help from associates who are involved in many ways but do not have official voting rights.



## BIOREGIONAL

Cooperatives in other sectors exist worldwide at many levels and networks of cooperation range from micro/local level enterprises, to mezzo/bioregional and macro/national scale networks. Co-ops inspire other co-ops in place, creating mutual support networks and some regions have developed greater degrees of cooperation than others. A few examples will be briefly explored to compare to the UK context and provide inspiration.

### Emilia Romagna Region, Italy:

In the Emilia Romagna region of Italy unusually high levels of business operate a co-operative model.

This region has the highest concentration of cooperatives in the industrial world operating in most sectors of business. Living standards in Emilia Romagna are among the highest in Europe and this links to the secure social and economic structures that cooperative working can bring. Italian cooperatives detest 'big business' and instead rely on extensive cooperative networks and the 'power of small.'<sup>11</sup> This does not mean that cooperatives are all working with ecological values and putting nature first but they provide an easier starting point for transformative change.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.yesmagazine.org/economy/2016/07/05/the-italian-place-where-co-ops-drive-the-economy-and-most-people-are-members>

### Mondragon Region, Spain:

Mondragon is a **network of co-operative production enterprises** in the Basque Region of Spain<sup>12</sup>. It provides inspiration to co-operatives throughout the world, establishing regional supply chains, worker solidarity, security and a pay ratio of 1:6 from highest to lowest worker. Recently it has been criticised for operating in more capitalist terms, operating businesses outside of Spain in a non-cooperative way and employing a second tier of workers who are not members. However, it remains an inspiration for those trying to establish regional cooperative networks and lessons in the dangers of continuing to operate within a capitalist system. Cooperatives can still chase profit at the expense of others but in general they are more inclusive and distributive than other forms of business.

### Nested Ecosystems of Cooperative Support in the USA:

Inspired by examples in Europe, the **US is also building a cooperative movement** and has more examples of textile related enterprise than the UK. The Cooperative networks are young but appear vibrant and entrepreneurial, their existence borne from a need to support people, often migrants and BIPOC who have suffered long-term deprivation through slavery or colonisation.

<sup>12</sup> For more detailed information please read: <https://www.upstreampodcast.org/workercoops2>

## MICRO/LOCAL



Image from <https://bluetinproduction.com/>

**Blue Tin Production**, based in Chicago USA, provides an example of co-operative production within the fashion industry at a local scale. Unusual within the sector, it is a model for distribution of power and ownership within clothing systems. Members of the co-operative collectively run the daily operations as well as other tasks necessary for garment production.



Image from <https://bluetinproduction.com/>

**Profits are shared & distributed equally among the members** every quarter and most members are stitchers. The production lead for each project rotates among the members based on specialised skill sets most relevant to the production at hand. All decisions—including what designers are accepted, how waste is managed, salaries, hours, events, etc—are decided collectively. The team strives for inclusivity and everyone from members to interns and translators are women of colour, trans, gender non-conforming, intergenerational, queer, working-class, and/or immigrants and refugees. Strong values of sustainability are embedded throughout the organisation.

*It would be interesting to model how a co-op might work in the context of natural fibre cloth production i.e. where labour and profits are distributed between growers and processors. This is more complex than a cut & sew model and will require some planning and ideation.*





Image from <https://www.opportunitythreads.com>

Opportunity Threads is a worker-owned cut and sew factory based in Morganton, North Carolina, who are members of The Carolina Textile District. Many of their workers are from the Guatemalan community and come from rich histories of sewing and weaving. Opportunity Threads specialise in upcycled and sustainable production for clients from their local region and across the United States.

Opportunity Threads are **members of a regional nested ecosystem**. The Carolina Textile District is a member-governed and member-driven network of values-aligned textile manufacturers in North and South Carolina and is an enterprise within the wider The Industrial Commons network. It provides

many services relating to textile and garment production and supports opportunity and knowledge exchange.

At the next level up in the **mutual support network**, the The Industrial Commons in North Carolina<sup>13</sup> is a **network of commons enterprise** operating at a bioregional scale. Evolving from a single immigrant led worker co-op founded in 2008 in the garment production district it has evolved into an ecosystem of co-operatives with hundreds of employees and facilitated the investment of \$15m in grants into the area. It is an inspiring example of community organisation centred around material production.

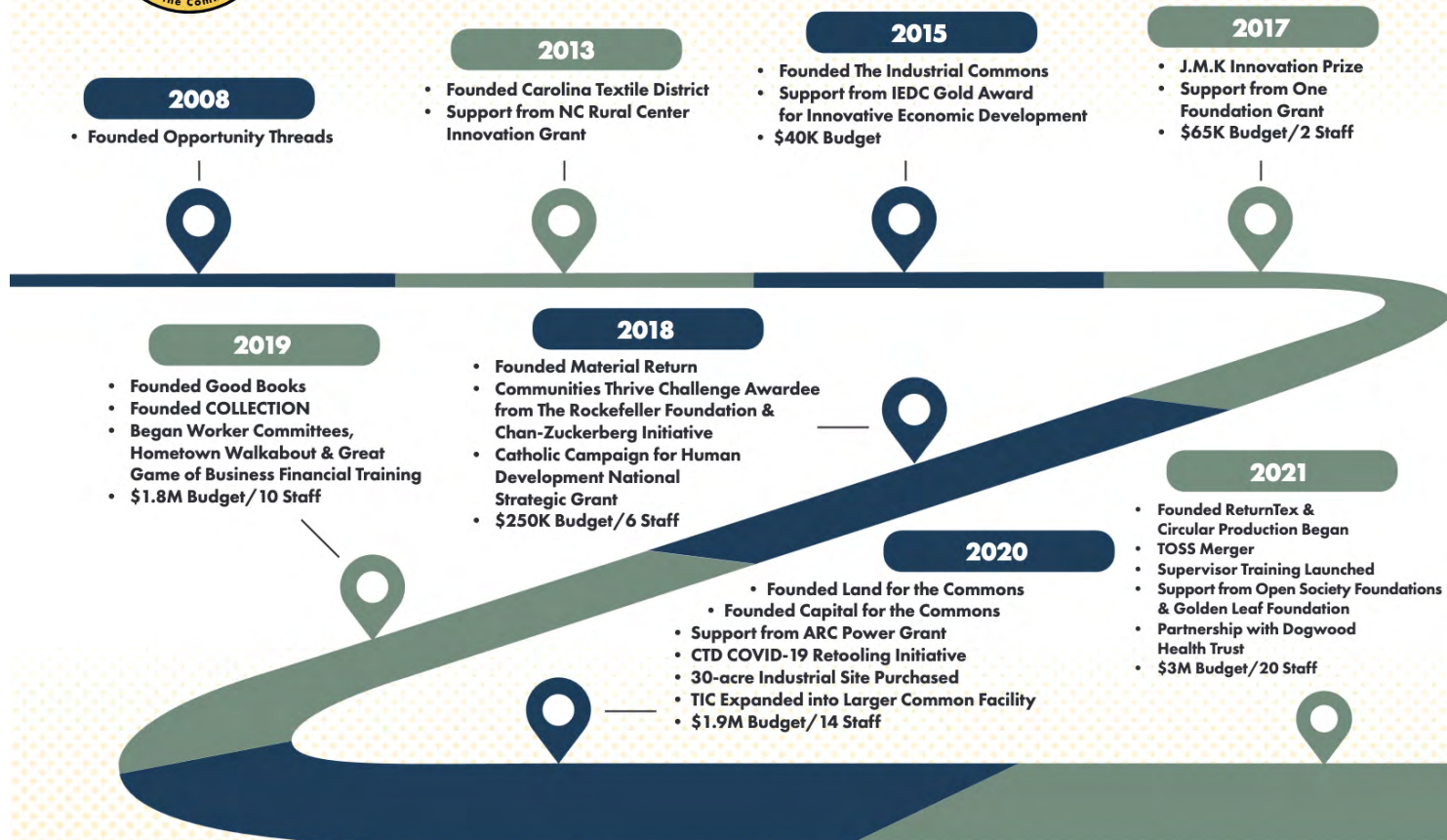
This diagram on the following page shows how the organisation has grown quickly, bringing in larger grants over time. It's interesting to note that the network started as a single co-op which then led to a wider organisation (micro/local) which led to the bioregional level organisation (mezzo) which now establishes and incubates the micro level co-ops. The problems of establishing a new bioregional fibre economy often appear to be quite chicken and egg, i.e. do we need support at bioregional level first to find funding to establish processing facilities or do small scale processing facilities come first that lead to bigger developments.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://theindustrialcommons.org/our-story>



# ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH TIMELINE



<https://theindustrialcommons.org/our-story>





Reviewing the diagram one can see how the system works. The Industrial Commons is a 501c3 (a tax-exempt US legal form similar to a charity) and within that they support and incubate cooperatives (the top half of the pie). They provide business within their ecosystem with a wide range of programs and tools for operation (the bottom half of the pie). The support system also includes a capital loan fund, Capital for the Commons and Land for the Commons. Start-up co-ops are given a loan and then pay it back to start the next co-op. This demonstrates how cooperative ecosystems are mutually supportive both financially and in practice.

At a Bioregional level, another cross cooperative organisation called The Power of the Commons further adds to cooperation with other local cooperative networks such as Poder Emma, an organisation that supports local housing and worker cooperatives in Asheville. They share learning, values and resources to build collective strength.

The Cooperative ecosystems in North Carolina also present an interesting financial model. Some of the cooperatives are financially autonomous and others have a fiscal host where the incorporation and finances are shared. This reduces administrative and governance burdens on those who may not have the time and capacity for this. For example, Colaborativa La Milpa merges multiple grassroots Latinx co-ops into one fiscal organisation. It is creating a model for sharing infrastructure so more energy can go directly to fund raising, programs, strategy, mission-based efforts and to avoid duplicating work and administration.

**The combined Cooperatives of Colaborativa La Milpa exist in the same region so perhaps the Fibreshed question is not for the movement to be hosted by one large overarching nationwide organisation but combining with other values lead organisations at a local level to build strength in the bioregion. This could be worth investigating further.**

## MACRO/NATIONAL



Image from <https://seedcommons.org/>

At the National level US Cooperatives are supported by the Seed Commons - a network of locally-rooted, non-extractive loan funds that brings the power of big finance under community control. They take guidance from the grassroots and share capital and resources to support local cooperative businesses. You can see the support and knowledge exchange through the clear but similar branding, websites and language throughout all levels of the cooperatives. The network is working well and appears to be thriving although it is a very young system.

Could something similar be developed in the UK? Clearly a large amount of funding would be needed at a national level. In the US this is often supported not by government but through philanthropy and impact funding from large corporations. Further research needs to be undertaken to understand the potential for transformative funding in the UK.

## UK COOPERATIVE CONTEXT

The UK has a cooperative system but the strength of this system often depends on the whim of local authority support which appears to vary widely. Co-operatives UK is a network of 7000 UK co-operatives and is the main UK organisation of support. They have a vision to build a better world through cooperation and a mission to empower and grow the UK's co-operative economy. Ecological values however are not a prerequisite to membership and the UK organisation seems less progressive than its US equivalent. For example, there are plenty of agricultural buying co-ops in the UK but they do not operate with ecological principles in mind and are often as extractive as normative forms of business. It is difficult to find any examples of UK fibre, textile or fashion production related worker co-operatives.

Interestingly a new organisation, workers UK, specifically for worker cooperatives has very recently been formed in the UK, following the US Federation of worker Coops example. This could create a more dynamic organisation more aligned with principles of the 'New Economy'.

Networks of support appear to be very important in establishing cooperatives. Co-ops should be created from local need, guided by grassroots support and local context. For these co-ops to thrive they should be part of a bioregional network that is also supported by a national network that can bring in grants and funding to support work at the local level.

Cooperatives are an excellent way to establish good working conditions and fair pay and distributing benefits across a region. However, they may not always address the wider question of material production. For example, should we be making more clothing or material goods on a large scale? What materials are being used? Who are they for? What happens to the clothing/goods once it leaves the production facility? Where does the fibre used in the textiles come from? The drive for employment and good jobs for people may obscure ecological values. How does one balance the current need for people to earn a living and what's right for the planet? This is why Fibreshed values are key to new systems of production.

The first cooperative in Mondragon was formed after a progressive school was established and a similar situation occurred at Plaw Hatch Farm. In the Calder Valley in Yorkshire a cooperative movement is booming due to the creation of community owned pubs and post offices. One village decided to own a pub and then this example leads to others who reference that example in forming their own. **It takes only one cooperative to start an ecosystem.**

**Fibresheds could play a part in bioregional cooperative formation**, most likely through grant funded enterprise and through supporting the formation of cooperative farms and mills. Just one cooperative can establish the conditions that lead to others, and bigger networks of cooperatives could form wider ecosystems of support. For this to happen at scale, top-down support is likely required though local authority or grant funded investment.

It is worth investigating what alternative enterprises and educational establishments in a region might leave fertile ground for cooperative and democratic businesses to emerge. **What organisations and institutions could a Fibreshed partner with to further facilitate this and what intervention is needed at a political level?** Some councils are actively supporting cooperatives, for example Oxford Country Council is currently active as is Kirklees in Yorkshire. Interestingly, Kirklees is home to an affiliate of Mend Assembly featured in the Case studies.



# CONCLUSION

Deciding to incorporate is a big step and it brings different relationships and responsibilities. At present UK Fibreshed Affiliates are made up of small numbers of people, mainly working as volunteers. Each affiliate decides on its own structure, the role of members and the ways in which they are consulted and engaged. An organisation should only incorporate when it has the capacity among its conveyors to take on this responsibility and the commitment to producing and paying for yearly accounts and other administrative costs. As Deborah Barker of Southwest England Fibreshed suggests, once you become official and people start pay for membership, a different relationship immediately comes into play. Something that was relational can become transactional. People who work as volunteers and commit huge amounts of time to the movement need to consider their own well-being as well as the wider world. It's a difficult balance we must all negotiate. Relational, care-centred interactions are extremely valuable and should be cherished at all times.

Those who do take the steps to incorporate sometimes start as CICs to remain agile and return to the idea of membership and cooperative structures as they become more established. It's not easy but it is possible to evolve from one container to another. Sociocratic principles can embed democratic decision making and autonomy. One can retain leadership and dynamic hierarchies as a CIC whilst devolving power and decision making to the level where people are most affected. It is possible to cover regulatory requirements whilst acting democratically in practice and with the spirit of subsidiarity. Each organisation must decide what works best for their specific situation. For example, if a Fibreshed has very small numbers of people at the core it may not be worthwhile creating the more involved structures of a co-op at an early stage, perhaps moving to this when the organisation grows. Creating a **democratic culture** from the offset is the key and there are many tools to support organisations to develop this culture. These ideas will be listed in the toolkit at the end of the document. Working together democratically requires effort and commitment from all parties but the benefits can outweigh many negatives if the culture is carefully nurtured.

## Fibreshed Members

There is a wider conversation needed around the involvement of members – should they have - do they want to have - more involvement in day-to-day decision making? Would this slow down progress and nimble decision making, or would it build long term longevity and resilience over time to increase the scope of what is currently possible? Could member involvement be at the level of Plaw Hatch Farm where the community own the business in theory but are not involved in day-to-day decision making.



### Local Authority Support for Democratic Business

A regional cooperative infrastructure could support enterprises to work together but would require regional or national governmental support. The North of England shows the most progress in this area but is still lagging behind the US and other countries such as Italy, Germany, Spain, South Korea and Canada. The Greater Manchester Combined Authority has a Local Strategy that recognises the role of cooperatives and social enterprises and sets out a principle to create the optimum conditions for these organisations to thrive. The Liverpool City Region supported a CIC named Kindred, co-founded and incubated by Power to Change. It offers 0% interest loans and peer to peer support that is helping establish many pro-social, community businesses in the area. If a Fibreshed were to raise finance to create a mill, processing facility and/or education centre in a region (through community shares, grants, philanthropic or local governmental support etc) the cooperative infrastructure of the North Carolina Region in the US could be a good model to follow to extend the benefits of this further. (Perhaps a community cooperative combined with CIC might work in this scenario because the Mill equipment would provide the asset lock).

### And Finally.....

As you can see by the length of this report, there is much to explore in this exciting space. The following questions provide starting points and ideas to consider for much deeper conversation and exploration among Fibreshed stakeholders:

**What councils and regional funding bodies does a Fibreshed region cover and which of these have a cooperative strategy?**

Could a coordinated strategy to engage with multiple councils have an effect. Support for Co-ops is often the first step a council makes towards supporting a new economy and alternative ways of business.

### **Could Fibreshed seed a cooperative fibre and textile ecosystem?**

Should Fibresheds strategically look to support areas of most need within their locality. For example, Plymouth in the Southwest region or Tees Valley in the North. Or should the focus be on where conditions are more likely to emerge, supported by a friendly council or other local bodies?

### **What is the most appropriate form of incorporation and organisational structure that combines both ecological and social values?**

Mark Simmons of Co-op Culture, a cooperative consultant, believes that CICs can be inflexible and difficult and that a Limited Company with a Cooperative structure stated in its articles are a better model. A common ownership clause needs to be included to reassure grant funders that in the event the business is wound up any assets are not shared among the members. The Asset lock of a CIC can cause unnecessary complications unless you are given a specific asset that needs to be locked.

Co-ops are automatically controlled by their members and set by membership criteria and strict rules. Like entry to a commons, the criteria for membership is very important because a member essentially becomes a director of the company once they join. The members could change the company articles at any time so it is important that membership is carefully assessed. **The principles and values of the organisation need to be clear and embedded within the membership.**

**What is the role of the membership within a Cooperative Fibreshed?** In a Fibreshed cooperative context ‘members’ would be directors of the Affiliate and external members of the Fibreshed could be ‘associates’, meaning they are closely associated but don’t have voting rights. Within this model one could also have ‘supporters’ - those who volunteer or contribute financially but on an occasional, less committed basis. These are important people to consider bringing into a collaborative but flexible framework.

**Can an organisation operate as a Worker Coop if it exists on grants and donations?** An organisation that delivers on grant funding can become a worker coop because essentially the workers are contracted to deliver the work that the grant funders want to happen but can’t deliver themselves. A cooperative organisation should ensure they have an accountant who understands how the income should appear on the balance sheet. (see list of people in toolkit).

**How many Directors can a Coop have?** The Unicorn Cooperative in Manchester has 60 directors but this is highly unusual and leads to some internal problems. With 150 employees, Suma Cooperative is the largest equal pay cooperative in the world but they elect a management committee and have a membership council who manage the organisation. Sociocratic principles work well in coops, as many committees, working groups and circles can be set up as required to distribute tasks and delegate decision making. People working within a coop can be paid the same or have different salaries in the same way as a standard business operates, members can also be volunteers. If a climate of mutual trust and support is nurtured within the organisation, a Cooperative structure can be the most ethical and distributive

way of organising an enterprise around principles of a New Economy. There are many different ways of organising a coop, a Fibreshed could register as a Cooperative Society with coop rules or it could be a Limited Company or CIC with cooperative articles.

**What if a Fibreshed were a UK charity?** It is possible for a charity to have cooperative status but a charity has a specific remit and cannot operate commercially so it’s not ideal. For example, if a Fibreshed Mill was formed to operate commercially or a local Fibreshed branded product was made, selling any product could be problematic. A project like a textile processing mill may consider Community Benefit Society status as it is easier to raise funding through community donations. This would perhaps be created as a separate organisation to a main Fibreshed Affiliate. A potential Fibreshed Education Centre may wish to become a charity to take advantage of tax breaks but this could be organised at the point of need.

**What about Fibreshed member businesses operating as Co-ops?** Fibreshed members (ie those who operate enterprise, fibre activity and education within a Fibreshed boundary) could also create cooperative enterprise if that suited their objectives. If a local support network were developed through local authorities it may be advantageous for members to consider a different way of operating. Many members are sole traders and until such time that multiple people work together this is probably most suitable.

With all these examples it is important to **engage an accountant or advisor who understands the workings of cooperatives, the specific enterprise and how to manage grants**. The toolkit on the following pages contains a range of helpful tools and links to accountants and advisors who are experts in this area.

# Toolkit

Democratic Enterprise and related governance is a huge topic that I've tried to summarise throughout this report. Please follow these links for further in-depth exploration, interesting examples and useful tools. Test them out to find what resonates with you.

## Collaborative Methods

Guides, Frameworks & Resources for democratic groups working with low or no hierarchy:

Dark Matter Labs have created a portal to collaboratively and openly build operational structures, tools, practices, networks and crafts to make systemic governance possible in the everyday <https://darkmatterlabs.notion.site/Beyond-the-Rules-19e692bf98f54b44971ca34700e246fd>

Community Canvas is a brilliant resource for those starting a community group or enterprise, remodelled from standard start-up methodology it's a very helpful planning framework. <https://community-canvas.org/>

**Loomio** is a digital resource that helps teams communicate and make decisions collaboratively. The Loomio handbook is written

by open source, collaborative pioneers [Alanna Irving](#) and [Richard Bartlett](#). It is written for New Zealand business but remains helpful for UK co-ops. <https://www.loomio.coop/>

**Microsolidarity**, also created by Richard Bartlett, provides advice and methods for groups wishing to work collaboratively, creatively and in an atmosphere of high-trust. It provides practices on how to create tight knit 'crews' or 'congregations'. <https://www.microsolidarity.cc/>

**The Social Change Agency** offers consulting and fiscal hosting for social change they also provide a wide range of visually focused practical but simple tools to help organise a business/community. <https://thesocialchangeagency.org/resources/>

The Commons Library provides a good range of advice and information for social activism, much of the theory behind collective organising can be explored here <https://commonslibrary.org/about/>

**The Enspiral Collective** have inspired a number of open source, collective enterprises such as Loomio and Microsolidarity, and their handbook is based on years of experience. <https://handbook.enspiral.com/>

## Incorporation

This website provides extensive information on setting up different forms of companies and the legal implications. Start here: [Community Companies: Limited by Shares or Guarantee?](#)

## Social Enterprise

UK Social Enterprise [All about Social Enterprise](#)

## Employee Owned

Farm & Food Distribution - [Employee Ownership / Riverford Textile Mill](#) - [About us – Melin Tregwynt](#)

## Community Benefit Society

Why and How to set up a CBS - [The rise of the Community Benefit Society](#)

## Co-operatives

What kind of Co-operative? - [Choosing between society types | Co-operatives UK](#)

Platform Co-ops is US organisation but provides training and resources, eg platforms for agricultural co-ops. [Platform Cooperativism Consortium](#)

Workers Coop has a brilliant list of resources, many of which are duplicated here (after this list was discovered!)

<https://hackmd.io/yo7rEDORR46RlV-RN7LVhA?view>

United Diversity has some excellent guidance in setting up the right kind of Co-op <https://uniteddiversity.coop/develop-co-ops/>

As does Coops UK.

<https://www.uk.coop/start-new-co-op>

There are many possibilities and options. The Do-cra-cy Handbook, written by Mark Simmons for The REconomy Project also provides excellent information. <http://reconomy.org/do-ocracy-handbook/>

## Collaborative Food

Grain growers, mills and bakeries can provide a great example of collaborative working to fibre and dye businesses:

Bakery Worker Coop - [The Handmade Bakery | About Us](#)

Example of sociocracy and work circles - [Governance of Blue Scorcher Coop](#)

Running a Food Coop - [Governance, policies & principles | Sustain](#)

## Collaborative Farms

Ecological Land Coop guides to community farms, these contain a wealth of information on land ownership and governance:

<https://communityfarm.land/>  
<https://communityfarm.land/business-models-for-agroecology/>  
<https://communityfarm.land/governance-structure/>

## Finance

Funding and Mentoring Food & Farming Businesses - <https://realfarming.org/programmes/leap/>

New Bank run by Tony Greenham seeking to offer ethical loan funds - <https://southwestmutual.co.uk/about-us>

Ethex - Peer to peer capital raising platform  
<https://www.ethex.org.uk/>

Common Wealth designs ownership institutions for the new economy, institutions that are democratic by design, inclusive in action, and social in purpose - [About Common Wealth](#)

Plunkett Foundation provides support for Community run business - [How we help - Plunkett Foundation](#)

## Forms of capital

Capital does not mean just finance. There are multiple forms of value that can be articulated in many ways to provide value and give importance to things that cannot be measured using money.

<http://www.appleseedpermaculture.com/8-forms-of-capital/>  
<https://www.wealthworks.org/basics/explore-regional-wealth-building/wealth-eight-capitals>

## Fiscal Host

UK Fiscal Hosts provide incorporation and admin for a low cost - [The Social Change Nest](#)

## Economics

There are many resources that can guide economic thinking for business but Doughnut Economics is a good starting part as it is an amalgamation of many theories and is easily applicable and practicable.

[Introduction to redesigning business through Doughnut Economics](#)

[Doughnut Design for Business - Core Tool | DEAL](#)

[Public policies to foster regenerative businesses | DEAL](#)

## Accountants & Advisors

There are many Coop advisors listed on COOPs UK who will provide some free support and advice. For example Hilary Sudbury is a recommended advisor for the South West & South East. You can search for others through the link.

<https://www.uk.coop/start-new-co-op/find-adviser/hilary-sudbury>

Coops UK will also be able to advise on co-operative accounts in your area, for example:

Alanbrookes - Stroud  
Chartered Accountants & Registered Auditor. The co-op specialist is Andrew Fisher.  
[www.alanbrookes.co.uk](http://www.alanbrookes.co.uk) | 01934 863386 | [andrewfisher@alanbrookes.co.uk](mailto:andrewfisher@alanbrookes.co.uk)

Catalyst Collective  
Accounting services and financial planning advice for co-ops.  
[www.catalystcollective.org](http://www.catalystcollective.org) | 0845 223 5254 | [hayley@catalystcollective.org](mailto:hayley@catalystcollective.org)

Co-operative Assistance Network - Bristol, Chelmsford & Southampton

Provides bookkeeping, payroll and accounts to coops registered as both companies and societies. CAN are not chartered accountants but have a close working relationship with chartered accountants Alanbrookes.

[www.can.coop](http://www.can.coop) | 0845 3733616 | [info@assist.coop](mailto:info@assist.coop)

Third Sector Accountancy - Manchester

Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors specialising in cooperatives, community benefit societies (charitable or otherwise), and regular charities. [www.manchesteraccountancy.org](http://www.manchesteraccountancy.org) | 0161 2110879 | [info@manchesteraccountancy.org](mailto:info@manchesteraccountancy.org)

Thomas Wescott - Barnstaple, Devon

Advising charities and benefit societies across the South West and beyond.

[www.thomaswestcott.co.uk](http://www.thomaswestcott.co.uk) | 01271 374138 |

Thank you!

I am grateful to all those who gave up time to be interviewed, sharing their knowledge and insights:

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Mark Simmonds, Coop Culture

Paul Pizola, Ethex

Rebecca Hays, Plaw Hatch Farm

Tim Crabtree, Wessex Community Assets

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Many references are contained within the toolkit and within the document. The following listed below provided foundational information for this report.

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Bollier, David, et al. *The Commoner's Catalog for Changemaking: Tools for the Transitions Ahead*. Schumacher Center for a New Economics, 2022.

[http://base.socioeco.org/docs/2012\\_tablehurst3.pdf](http://base.socioeco.org/docs/2012_tablehurst3.pdf)

Case Study from a Series on Access to Land for Community Connected Farming, Dr Neil Ravenscroft, Professor of Land Economy, University of Brighton, Ms Rachel Hanney, Tablehurst Community Farm Management Group, November 2011

United Diversity are a community of enterprises and organisations who pool 1% of their income to organise  
<https://uniteddiversity.coop/develop-co-ops/>

CIC co-operative articles: [Co-operative Community Interest Company Model Rules For a company limited by guarantee.](#)

Excellent resource for those wanting to work in the democratic economy written by Mark Simmonds <http://reconomy.org/do-ocracy-handbook/>

Community shares resource by Co-operatives UK <https://www.uk.coop/resources/community-shares-handbook/2-society-legislation/21-bona-fide-co-operative-societies/213>

Social Enterprise UK (SEUK) is the UK's membership body for social enterprises <https://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/all-about-social-enterprise/>



*Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much*

