



Conference report 2016

"I was blown away by the conference. I went home inspired, motivated and determined to share what I had learned."

Conference delegate on their feedback form

Over 100 delegates attended the CCH's annual conference at the University of Loughborough between 13th and 15th July. What is really clear from the conference, as it is every year, is that it's really important for housing co-ops to have representation at the CCH conference in order to:

- get stacks of important, useful and up to date information that helps with running housing co-ops
- meet up with lots of wonderful members of other housing co-ops
- recharge housing co-op batteries and come away inspired
- shape and influence the housing co-operative movement and what the CCH is doing for our membership

Conference feedback

Don't take our word for it. Three quarters of the delegates rated the conference as excellent. Nearly all rated the accommodation as excellent. Two thirds rated the conference programme, speakers and workshops as excellent.

Some problems were identified, including:

- the distance between the conference venue and the accommodation. This was a problem and a mistake on our part. We apologise for it. It won't happen again.
- on the Friday night, we didn't ensure that everyone was served food before some delegates went up for seconds, and the popular choices ran out.

- a quarter of delegates were not happy with the gala dinner. Some said that the quality of the food at the gala dinner, lack of choice, speed of service and lack of formal entertainment were problems.

We have to take these criticisms on the chin and make sure these problems don't occur next year.

But most importantly, delegates found the speakers interesting and there was universal acknowledgement of the value of the workshops this year. Attendees felt they learned a lot from them.

The conference programme

Three plenaries were held during the conference:

Co-operative Perspectives on the Friday night saw **Claire McCarthy** from the **Co-operative Party** discussing the political landscape facing co-operatives and **Dr Richard Lang** from the **Universities of Birmingham and Linz** comparing the small and large scale co-operative housing developments in Austria with developments in England and Wales.

Following a summary by the **CCH's Nic Bliss** of the co-operative housing policy framework, **State of the Co-operative Housing Nation** on the Saturday morning included **Terrie Alafat** from **Chartered Institute of Housing** and **Alistair MacIntosh** from **HQN Network** discuss the national housing policy framework. **Jennifer Line** from the **Building and Social Housing Foundation** set out their work to promote community-led housing.

The **Co-operative Housing Round Up** session on Saturday afternoon featured several of the schemes included in the CCH's 1,001 Co-op Homes publication (available at www.cch.coop/1001co-ophomes and launched at the conference). **Carl Taylor** from **Redditch Co-operative Homes**, **Vicky Watts** on behalf of **Old Oak Housing Co-op**, John Paul Maytum from Leathermarket JMB and Jill Stringfellow on behalf of Loftus Village Association all discussed their featured schemes.

There were several positive comments about the array of workshops at the conference. The quality of discussion in workshops was high – with lots of practical information shared and ideas discussed.

| Workshop | Facilitor | Discussing ... |
|--|------------------------------|--|
| Managing risk in the real world | CDS Co-operatives | how co-ops assess and deal with risk |
| Murder in the Boardroom | Co-op Homes | governance in housing co-ops |
| The HCA and the future of regulation | Blase Lambert (CCH) | changes being made to the regulatory framework and how they impact on co-ops |
| Regenerating your housing co-op | Simon Underwood (consultant) | work done to re-energise two north east co-ops |
| Growing your co-op | North West Housing Services | work done to help co-ops develop new homes |
| Long term finance planning for beginners | Nic Bliss (CCH) | easy to understand long term finance plans |
| Where have all the co-operators gone? | Ruth Miller (CCH) | how to encourage your members to participate |
| Co-ops and climate change | Charlie Baker (Urbed) | greening your co-op and taking environmental steps |
| Students for Co-operation | Students for Co-operation | work to set up student housing co-ops across the country |

Conclusions

Whilst we hope that the contents and organisation of the conference was as good as normal, the conferences work because of the quality of the delegates from co-ops who attend. We have a few organisational problems we have to make sure do not re-occur, but by and large it was another successful CCH conference.

We are already in the planning of next year's conference – tentatively set for 12th to 14th May 2017 in Liverpool. See you there.