

The Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street

24 July 2026

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of the co-operative movement, we offer you congratulations, and partnership in delivering your programme for government. Labour's manifesto pledge to double the size of the co-operative and mutual sector is vital to the vision you set out at the People's History Museum. By building on the strong foundations laid down in the first two years of this Parliament, we can deliver good growth, secure the essentials, empower communities and reindustrialise the UK. When the people of our country work together in solidarity, we help to build a better world.

Good growth: As you know, co-operatives make an outsized contribution to GDP, are more productive, more likely to reinvest, have a greater propensity to expand, and are more resilient than other businesses. All while sharing value, opportunity and power fairly. We do this across the economy, including in foundational sectors where these gains are hardest to achieve. We are also more likely to meet needs and build wealth in the regions, in rural areas and deprived neighbourhoods. This is your vision for good growth made real.

Securing essentials: In the UK and globally, co-operatives demonstrate a powerful way to secure the essentials where extractive models are failing, in housing, retrofit, financial services, care, energy and food. Mutuality can also be incorporated into new models of public control in utilities and other major services, to align citizens, government, professionals and the right kinds of capital, in accountable public-social partnerships. With anticipated legislation

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strengthening legal protections against demutualisation, this accountability and social benefit can be locked-in, which could be particularly important where government has rescued failing services.

Thriving communities: From gaining control of high streets and sustaining amenities in rural areas, to social clubs, grassroots culture and sport, co-operatives are also integral to thriving communities, social cohesion and, therefore, national resilience.

Reindustrialisation: We root capital and decision-making in the UK, so could play an important role in reindustrialisation. Worker ownership in manufacturing already delivers impressive results in the UK and globally. Enabling the mutualisation of more SMEs in these sectors, especially when owners exit, would help sustain our existing industrial base. Co-operation among businesses can also coordinate and amplify investment and innovation, secure inputs and enable exports. The model is also increasingly used to build, share and control renewables and other green infrastructure. And co-operatives are developing across the whole digital stack.

Throughout your career, your understanding and utilisation of the social economy has been admirable, from Supporters Direct, to the Social Enterprise Advisory Group, Co-operative Commission, Our Business, Live Well, and Middleton Co-operative MDC. We implore you to use the insight you have built up, to unlock the potential that you have started to realise in Greater Manchester, nationally.

To enable our true potential, your government will need to do things differently. Policy and practice will need to cater to the distinctive features of co-operatives and utilise their particular strengths. You can build on strong foundations. The Local Power Plan, Pride in Place Strategy, and investment and reform for credit unions, already amount to the UK's biggest ever investment in economic democracy. Here, our sector is a ready delivery partner, already providing guidance, toolkits, investment and development support. But our sector-funded programmes are under-resourced, oversubscribed and unable to meet rising demand.

As you enter office, you have immediate opportunities to ensure ambitious co-operatives can access the business support and raise the capital they need to reach their potential. This requires a modest shift in how existing public resources are used, following a recent Call for Evidence, and the first refresh of co-operative legislation since the Victorian era, following the current Law Commission review. And your government, and devolved authorities across the nation, can start to target the significant opportunities for co-operative impact in the food system, housing, care, foundational sectors, digital and manufacturing.

Please ensure your government acts boldly and decisively on these fronts, working with our national and regional bodies, the Mutual and Co-operative Sector Business Council and the Co-operative Party. If you back us, we will deliver.

Yours sincerely

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Debbie Robinson, Chief Executive
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Paul Dover, UK Agricultural Director
Arla Foods

Karen Scott, Chief Executive
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Simon Willis, Chief Executive
Camgrain

Andy Rigby, Chief Executive
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Suma Wholefoods

Steve Browne, Chief Executive
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James Alcock, Chief Executive
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