

# Credit Union News

## Consumer Champion

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Financial Services  
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# Credit unions unite for good

**FOR THIS year's International Credit Union Day, we were able to demonstrate the real global aspect of the credit union movement, thanks to Mark Lawton giving up his time so generously. The Navy Federal Credit Union in itself evidences how credit unions reach into communities around the world, with its 235 branches worldwide. Mark was able to offer inspiration and evidence of the benefits of the credit union model not only to our sector but also to parliamentarians and those working with our armed forces.**

But International Credit Union Day was also very special this year because of the co-ordinated effort by the Church of England to ensure the day was supported in dioceses across the country. Over 40 bishops visited credit unions and signed up as members to mark the day. Many corporate accounts have also been opened and each churchgoer received a message from the Archbishop of Canterbury urging them to support their local credit union. We know that many credit unions have received offers of support and seen increased membership enquiries as a result of the ongoing work of the church. Similar work is happening in Scotland and Wales and we look forward to working with more religious groups to help them spread the word about the benefits of credit unions to communities and individuals.

**“We know that many credit unions have received offers of support and seen increased membership enquiries as a result of the ongoing work of the church.”**

Churches were among the organisations which were responsible for setting up credit unions in the early days of our movement. Another group with a long history of channelling resources and people into credit unions is the trade union movement. Most of our large employee credit unions and many community credit unions have trade unionists to thank for their creation and continuing support. It is good to see this link continuing, with both UNISON and Unite setting up networks of credit unions to ensure their members can access the financial services they need. We know how effective payroll deduction is for members, employers and credit unions alike and I look forward to seeing more payroll agreements happening because of these partnerships.

Other important partners for credit unions, though with a different type of relationship, are the regulators. With a new regulatory framework earlier this year and the move of consumer credit

regulation happening in a few months, there are lots of changes taking place in this arena. One of our most important jobs as a trade association is to make sure we get to know the regulators and understand, and attempt to influence, their thinking. Credit union representatives also sit on panels representing firms to both the Prudential Regulation Authority and the Financial Conduct Authority.

As chair of the Financial Conduct Authority's Consumer Panel, this liaison and scrutiny is almost a full time occupation for Sue Lewis, so it is interesting to read her views in the interview on pages 4 and 5. Sue shares our belief that credit unions can have great benefits for consumers and, like us, is keen to ensure that they operate to high standards.

Sue is among the special guests who we will be welcoming to Manchester in March for our Annual Conference and AGM. So if you want to hear more from her and other national and international speakers such as Brian Branch from the World Council of Credit Unions, Mark Sievwright from FiServ, Grzegorz Biereck from Poland and representatives from HM Treasury, the PRA and the FCA, please put 7th-9th March in your diary and get your booking form in soon. We will also be marking the 50th anniversary of the first credit union in Britain and celebrating the pioneers of our movement who have done so much to get us to where we are today.



Mark Lyonette,  
Chief Executive, ABCUL.

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Conference chair Sally Magnusson facilitated a high level discussion on the future of Scotland's financial services sector.

# Support for growth at Scotland's Credit Union Conference

**DELEGATES AT Scotland's Credit Union Conference in Glasgow heard support for the movement from national and local government, the ways in which credit unions can expand and grow, and what a larger credit union movement might mean for Scotland's financial services sector.**

September's conference – which was organised by ABCUL and supported by CUNA Mutual – was the third annual policy conference for credit unions and stakeholders in Scotland, and delegates enjoyed one of the strongest programmes of speakers ever assembled for a credit union event in Britain.

In his keynote speech, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth John Swinney MSP reiterated the Scottish Government's support for the growth of credit unions and encouraged applications to the new Enterprise Ready Fund. Councillor Paul Rooney – City Treasurer of Glasgow City Council – used his speech to announce continued 100% non-domestic rates relief for all credit unions based in the city, plus a new 50% discount on rent for all credit unions based in council-owned premises.

John Swinney MSP said: "Credit unions have a colossal role to play. They're easily accessible in our communities and they operate in a fashion which is working with people, supporting their needs and their requirements.

"There's every opportunity for credit unions to receive support from the Government and to boost and expand their activities, and the Scottish Government will be full and active supporters in encouraging that process."

Councillor Rooney said: "Glasgow is the credit union capital of the UK and we are very proud of how the sector has grown and flourished over the last decade.

"Our credit unions combat financial



Councillor Paul Rooney.

exclusion in our communities and can also play a key role in tackling the harm caused by the use of predatory, high cost payday lenders. By offering a real discount, we can help put credit unions at the heart of their communities where they will be more accessible to members old and new."

Delegates also heard more details about how the Credit Union Expansion Project will help credit unions in Scotland and across Britain modernise their services and reach out to many more members.

Workshops allowed delegates to find out how credit unions and housing associations can work in partnership to help people adapt to welfare reform, about Scotland's new bankruptcy laws, about ways of tackling the problem of high cost credit, and the opportunities to work with new partners such as churches.

The day ended with conference chair Sally Magnusson facilitating a high level discussion on the future of Scotland's financial services sector with speakers



John Swinney MSP.

including the financial journalist and writer Ian Fraser; Professor Charles Munn, Director of the European Financial Planning Association; Susan Rice CBE, Managing Director of Lloyds Banking Group Scotland and Paul J Walsh, Chief Executive (Europe) of CUNA Mutual Group.

ABCUL Scotland Policy and Relations Manager Frank McKillop said: "Scotland's Credit Union Conference has become firmly established as a must-attend event for credit unions and their supporters and this year's conference was the best yet.

"That this event can attract such high calibre speakers from national government, local government, the financial services sector and the wider third sector is a tribute to the real difference the hard work of credit unions across Scotland is making to people's lives, and to the appetite for our movement to continue to grow and serve even more members."

**SUE LEWIS was appointed Chair of the Financial Services Consumer Panel in July 2013, pledging to fight for a better deal for consumers. In an interview for *Credit Union News*, Sue explains what the Panel does to make a difference and sets out her views on credit unions and the financial services market.**

# Consumer Ch

"It was a big ambition of mine to join the Panel," says Sue Lewis enthusiastically, as we start the interview. "This goes back to my time working for the Treasury, where I had a great interest in consumer issues."

A career civil servant, Sue was involved at the heart of Government policy making for many years, holding senior positions not only at the Treasury, but at the Department for Education and the Cabinet Office. Now, as Chair of the Financial Services Consumer Panel, Sue is in a position to put her years of experience to good effect on behalf of the public.

"I had always wanted to join the Panel," says Sue, "so you can imagine my delight when I was finally appointed not just as a member of the Panel, but as its Chair."

The Panel was established in 1998 to provide advice to the then Financial

**“ We see hundreds of day-to-day issues where people suffer at the hands of financial providers and firms just don't seem to get it. ”**

Services Authority (FSA), after it was created out of the previous regulatory bodies. When the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) was launched earlier this year, the role of the Panel was maintained as part of its governance structure.

## Passionate

Sue is clearly passionate about her new role getting a better deal for people from financial firms. "This is an exciting time for the Panel. The new regulator has reconfirmed our remit and, since the FSA was split up, the sole focus of the FCA is on consumers and how companies behave towards them – which is a very good thing."

As Chair, Sue provides direction for the Panel and sets its agenda. Sue spends about half of her week working for the Panel, which is the most out of all the members. The other members typically contribute 35 or 45 working days a year to the Panel, whilst holding down their day jobs. Therefore, Sue also has to ensure that the other members stay engaged and have the opportunity to use their expertise to the full in the interests of the Panel's work.

Sue explains that the Panel has two key roles. First of all, to get into FCA policy at ground level, which is the side of its work that people tend not to see – influencing policy at an early stage, "inside the tent" as Sue says, "holding the FCA's feet to the fire." Although there to support and encourage the FCA to put the consumer first, Sue emphasises that the Panel is happy to challenge the FCA "forcefully" when it feels that consumers would be

disadvantaged. The other role of the Panel is to take an interest in consumer issues in financial services outside, but related to, the FCA's remit, where it believes it can make a difference for consumers. Sue gives the example of general insurance, where the Panel did wide ranging research into the problems faced by consumers, and recently published a paper setting out its recommendations and calling on the industry to make improvements.

Sue says: "We want to shine a light on areas which are not working for the consumer, in order to influence the FCA, Government, trade bodies and indeed companies themselves. We are bringing issues out into the open, to help change the landscape and the way firms deal with customers."

Although the Panel does not work directly with consumers, by working with the regulator and the financial services industry, it endeavours to improve things on consumers' behalf. "One of the best things about the new FCA is that it puts consumers at its heart," adds Sue, "unlike the FSA which inevitably focused on prudential regulation and the stability of the system."

This is clearly welcome news for the general public, because there is still a serious lack of trust in the financial services market and many problems yet to be resolved. "Banks and insurance companies, for example, seem to find it difficult to give consumers what they want and need," says Sue. "We see hundreds of day-to-day issues where people suffer at the hands of financial providers and firms just don't seem to get it."

## About Sue Lewis

Sue Lewis has held a variety of senior policy roles in the civil service across a range of departments including HM Treasury, the Department for Education and the Cabinet Office. Most recently, Sue was Head of Savings and Investments at the Treasury, with responsibility for advising Ministers across a broad range of retail financial services issues. Sue also led the team supporting Don Cruickshank in his independent review of competition in UK banking markets, which reported in 2000.



As well as her work for the Panel, Sue is a non-executive director and independent policy consultant. She is a Consumer Advocate Member of the Chartered Insurance Institute's (CII) Professional Standards Board, ensuring the consumer interest is represented in advice to the main CII Board. Sue is also a Trustee of the Personal Finance Education Group (pfeg) and of StepChange debt advice charity.

# champion

## Trust

However, Sue goes on to explain that people do trust credit unions and other mutuals, and these can bring huge benefits to consumers. "The Panel is a great fan of credit unions, and I believe they can play a real role providing an alternative to banks, particularly for straightforward savings and loans. They are rooted in communities which is a major benefit too.

"At the Treasury, I was responsible for much of the credit union modernisation legislation and I believe we made a good deal of progress towards loosening the constraints that credit unions faced. It took far too long, of course, but I am looking forward to seeing the fruits of these changes in years to come."

Sue adds that another good thing about credit unions is their in-built financial education, "providing access to generic financial advice for members, which you can't get with banks as they always want to cross-sell you something – their advice is never impartial."

As an ardent supporter of credit unions, Sue is keen to make sure they all operate to high standards. "The Panel has concerns about credit union governance, for example, which needs to be modernised, especially now that credit unions are gaining a more prominent role.

"We need more credit unions to be well governed, offering a good range of products that meet people's needs, which they are well placed to do, of course, because they are at the heart of communities, close to the people they serve."

Sue also thinks credit unions could do more to promote their services. "It isn't just about money – promoting the credit union difference can be done cost-efficiently, even if it is just word of mouth."

Sue adds that recent changes to common bond regulations should help with this. "Now the common bond rules have been relaxed, we will see credit

unions reaching much more significant scale, and when we see a few of them getting quite big, they will be in the public view much more."

## Influence

One area where the Panel recently had a direct input into influencing public policy on credit unions was in its response to the Treasury's consultation on raising the interest rate cap for credit unions. In its response, the Panel said: "We welcome the Government's aim to help credit unions become more sustainable. We believe that credit unions are an important part of the financial inclusion agenda and offer a vital service to people who may be excluded from accessing mainstream financial services.

"We support the decision to raise the interest rate cap so that credit unions can break even on small short term loans. However, we believe if this change is to have a significant impact in terms of promoting sustainability within the credit union sector, the increase needs to go beyond the proposed 3%. Furthermore, we believe that a static rate does not allow for future social and economic considerations. It would be far better to introduce a flexible rate – tied to the Bank of England interest base rate – that can adapt to market changes as necessary."

Sue also says that she would like to see more credit unions and branches in the south of England. "Outside of London, with its vibrant credit union sector, credit unions seem to be much stronger in the North and Midlands, as well as Scotland, Wales and, especially, Northern Ireland. More credit unions in the south of England would make them accessible to more people, and help a broader understanding of what credit unions have to offer."

We finish the interview by discussing the market for high interest, short term loans and what the Panel thinks should be done to regulate providers more effectively. Sue says: "We



wholeheartedly support the FCA's proposals to restrict the worst excesses of payday lenders, especially when it comes to the affordability of loans. In particular, we want to see a crackdown on rollovers and continuous payment authorities.

"However, we must remember that there are other problems in the credit market too, not just payday loans. For instance, there is the issue of unauthorised overdrafts, where people can end up paying higher interest than for payday loans. It is inevitable that the payday loan market is the most visible area of concern, as it is growing so quickly, but I wouldn't want other problems in the market to be overshadowed."

With Sue Lewis at the helm of the Financial Services Consumer Panel to champion consumer interests, it would seem there is little chance of that happening...

## About the Financial Services Consumer Panel

The Financial Services Consumer Panel was established in 1998 to provide an independent voice for consumers of financial services.

The Panel works to advise and challenge the Financial Conduct Authority from the earliest stages of its policy development to ensure it takes into account the consumer interest. It also takes a keen interest in broader financial services issues where it believes it can help achieve beneficial change for consumers.

The Panel's 13 members are recruited through a process of open competition and encompass a wide range of relevant experience and expertise. They are appointed to serve a maximum of two terms of three years. The Panel meets monthly (except in August) and also splits into two working groups, which meet once a month too.

[www.fs-cp.org.uk](http://www.fs-cp.org.uk)



# Celebrating International

**CELEBRATIONS FOR this year's International Credit Union Day on 17 October took place around the country. The Archbishop of Canterbury joined Instagram with a message urging churches and communities to support credit unions, and over 40 bishops got involved with their local credit union. An All-Party Parliamentary Group on Credit Unions reception played host to the world's largest credit union and the Scottish Parliament marked the day with a call for more employers to offer credit union membership to their staff. Here is a round up of some of the main stories from the day...**

## Archbishop joins Instagram

**THE ARCHBISHOP of Canterbury joined Instagram with a message urging churches and communities to support their local credit union.**

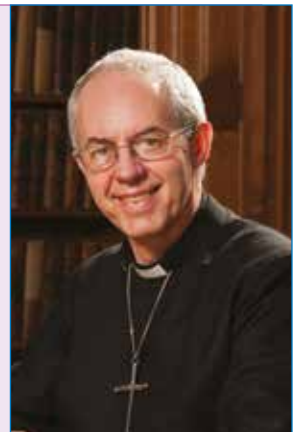
Justin Welby said in his first Instagram message: "Let's begin to make a difference to how families can finance themselves in this country – join and support a credit union."

In a message distributed to all churchgoers, the Archbishop underlined this by saying that

the one million families who take out payday loans every month can end up in a crippling spiral of debt.

"Our faith in Christ calls us to love the poor and vulnerable with our actions. That is why the Church must be actively involved in supporting the development of real lending alternatives, such as credit unions," he said.

[www.instagram.com/p/fhuLWztmlr/#](http://www.instagram.com/p/fhuLWztmlr/#)



## Receptions at UK and Scottish Parliaments

**AN ALL-PARTY Parliamentary Group on Credit Unions (APPG) reception played host to Mark Lawton, Vice-President for Compliance and Public Policy at Navy Federal Credit Union.**

Navy Federal Credit Union serves the US Armed Forces and is the largest credit union in the world (see page 11). Mark Lawton was visiting London at the invitation of ABCUL in order to provide a global perspective on credit union development on International Credit Union Day.

Mark shared his reflections on Navy Federal Credit Union and how its experiences might inform the development of a credit union for armed forces personnel in Britain. The meeting, hosted by APPG Chair Damian Hinds, also heard from Minister for Welfare Reform Lord Freud, who provided

an update on the progress of the Credit Union Expansion Project.

The Scottish Parliament marked the day with a call for more employers to offer credit union membership to their staff. A reception hosted by John Wilson MSP, Convener of the Cross-Party Group on Credit Unions, and organised by ABCUL, gave credit unions, partner organisations and MSPs from across Scotland an opportunity to celebrate the success of Scotland's credit union movement and to look forward to further opportunities for growth.

Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism Fergus Ewing MSP addressed guests with an assurance that the Scottish Government wishes to see a legislative framework within which credit unions can thrive, and will seek to promote credit unions to a wider potential membership.



### New member welcomed at Grampian

Grampian Credit Union Chief Executive Gill Mathieson with new member Chris Kelly, along with posters and balloons to celebrate the day.

### East Anglian credit unions celebrate together

Volunteers from Lincolnshire Credit Union and Norfolk Credit Union visited Rainbow Saver in Peterborough to celebrate ICU Day. Pictured from left to right are Frank Eiel, Chairman of Norfolk Credit Union, Martin Harold, Branch Supervisor at Rainbow Saver Credit Union, Sally Chicken, volunteer Chair of Rainbow Saver and Paul Burgess of Lincolnshire Credit Union.

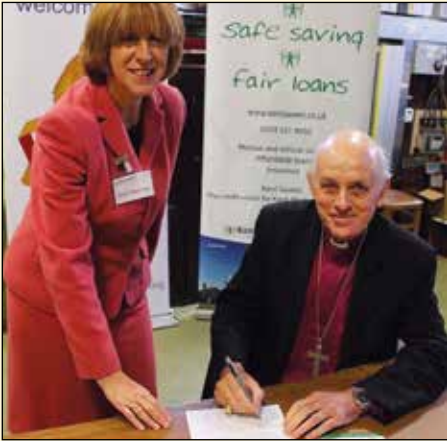


Speakers at the APPG on Credit Unions reception: (from left to right) Paul Walsh, CUNA Mutual Group; Damian Hinds MP, APPG Chair; Mark Lynette; Lord Freud and Mark Lawton of Navy Federal Credit Union.

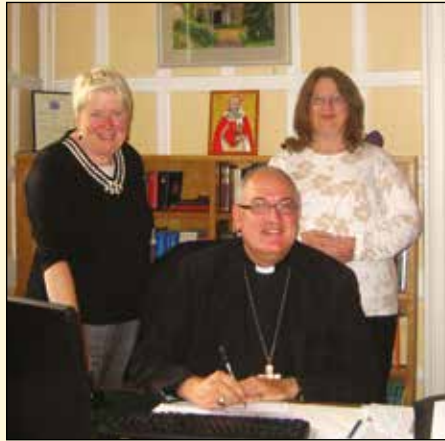
# Credit Union Day 2013

## Bishops support ICU Day

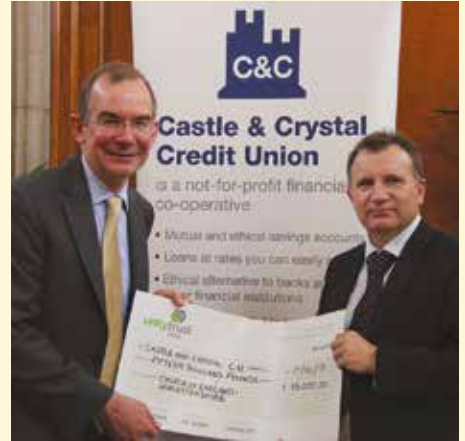
**CHURCHES AROUND** the country supported International Credit Union Day, with bishops taking the lead in signing up to and backing local credit unions.



A partnership between Kent Savers Credit Union and the Diocese of Canterbury was launched at All Saints Church in Maidstone and the Rt Revd Trevor Wilmott, Bishop of Dover, pictured here with President of Kent Savers Credit Union Gail Devries, signed up as a member. Chair of Kent County Council Eric Hotson, Mayor of Maidstone Clive English, and Claire Marsh of Barclays were also at the event to give their support.



The Bishop of Ely, the Rt Revd Stephen Conway, joined Rainbow Saver Anglia Credit Union. Pictured with the bishop are Councillor Virginia Bucknor (left), a District Councillor at Fenland District Council and credit union volunteer in Wisbech, and Sally Chicken, volunteer Chair of Rainbow Saver.



The Church of England in Worcestershire and Dudley showed its support for credit unions by depositing £15,000 with Castle and Crystal Credit Union. Robert Higham, Diocesan Secretary for Worcester Diocese in the Church of England, is pictured (left) with Cllr Peter Lowe, Deputy Leader of Dudley Council and Cabinet Member for Finance.



Visiting EdenSave Credit Union in Penrith, the Rt Revd Robert Freeman, the Bishop of Penrith, said: "I'm delighted to become a member of EdenSave Credit Union and to join over 200 million people around the world who will be marking International Credit Union Day".



The Bishop of Hertford, the Rt Revd Paul Bayes, invested £50 of his own money to join HertSavers Credit Union on International Credit Union Day, during a visit to HertSavers' Hatfield branch. The bishop is pictured with HertSavers' CEO Tony Bailey (standing) and volunteer Geoff Martin.



SurreySave Credit Union welcomed the Bishop of Dorking, the Rt Revd Ian Brackley, to their Woking headquarters to join the credit union. The bishop is pictured with SurreySave Chief Executive Michelle Boudy and credit union staff members.



The Bishop of Bolton, the Rt Revd Chris Edmondson, joined Hoot Credit Union, assisted by credit union Chair Steve Botrill.



The Bishop of Wolverhampton, the Rt Revd Clive Gregory, and the Mayor and Mayoress of Wolverhampton, Milkinder and Jasbirjaspal, all visited Wolverhampton City Credit Union to open an account.



The Bishop of Hull, the Rt Revd Richard Frith, signed up with Hull and East Yorkshire Credit Union. Pictured with the bishop is credit union Chief Executive John Smith.



# Trade union members benefit from credit union services

A NUMBER of trade unions in Britain recognise the benefits of credit unions and have either set up their own credit union or work with credit unions to offer a service to their members. In addition, two of the country's largest trade unions have recently set up credit union networks for their members.



The Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU) Credit Union, which recently joined ABCUL, was one of the first national trade union credit unions in Britain.

BFAWU Credit Union was launched in 1998 with the support of the trade union's then President, Dennis Nash, who was already involved in a community credit union. The trade union recognised that a credit union was a way of helping its members to avoid getting into debt and falling into the hands of loan sharks.

BFAWU represents around 30,000 people working in food and related industries. BFAWU Credit Union has over 1,100 members nationally and its head office is in Welwyn Garden City.

Pauline Nazir, Secretary of the credit union and BFAWU Organising Regional Secretary, explains that the trade union is very supportive of the credit union. "They have realised it is a good benefit for members and are keen to support it."

BFAWU had talked about joining ABCUL for a while and were keen to become a member so that they could benefit from the help, advice and information ABCUL provides, as well as being able to take advantage of ABCUL training services.

## New trade union credit union

PCS Credit Union is one of the newest trade union credit unions, established in 2012 for members of the Public and Commercial Services Union and their households. PCS is the sixth largest trade union in the UK and represents civil service and other public sector staff as well as staff in some commercial organisations. The credit union currently has approximately 1,500 members.

A credit union for members of PCS was first proposed in a motion at the union's national conference in 2002. Initially no action was taken on this, until the following year when the new National Executive was looking for new ways to help members and picked the motion up again.

"Wages were not keeping pace with inflation and we were aware of members who had financial problems and were getting into debt, so we believed that a credit union would be a good way to help members manage their money," says

Christine Chorlton, Chair of the Board of Directors of the credit union and a member of the PCS Finance Committee which first started to develop the credit union.

PCS provides the credit union with both financial and in-kind support. As well as providing administrative staff and back office services for the credit union, PCS helps to promote the credit union. The National Executive of the trade union is very supportive and takes every opportunity to tell PCS members about the credit union at meetings and events. PCS recently funded an advert for the credit union in its members' magazine.



Christine Chorlton, Chair of PCS Credit Union.

Christine says: "The credit union works closely with the trade union and it works both ways. If there are credit union members with needs we can't meet, for example with financial support in a crisis, we might refer them to the PCS Benevolent Fund. PCS offers its members a free debt helpline, so we would signpost members to this service if required, and in return the debt advisers recommend our services."

## Trade unions back employee credit unions

Many employee credit unions were set up with the help and support of trade union activists. For instance, Branch Officers of the Transport and General Workers Union (now part of Unite) played an important role in helping to establish Voyager Credit Union (now part of Voyager Alliance Credit Union) in the early 1990s.

Voyager Alliance serves the passenger transport industry in England and Wales

and Voyager Credit Union merged with Alliance Credit Union in 2006. It now has over 8,000 members and recently joined the Unite credit union network (see below).

Barry Duggan, General Manager of Voyager Alliance, explains that the Transport and General Workers Union (T&G) played a vital role from the very beginning.

"Members of the T&G, now Unite, have always been involved with the credit union," says Barry. "They have given us a lot of support over the years and especially when we first started."

At Voyager Credit Union, the local T&G convenors played an important part in persuading Greater Manchester Transport, as it was then, to agree to setting up a credit union for its employees and most of the founder members of the credit union were members of the T&G. Barry adds that the trade union played a similar role at Alliance Credit Union.

Over the years, local trade union representatives have had a huge impact in helping to communicate the credit union's services and bring in new members, as most industry staff are also Unite members.

Barry says: "Trade union stewards have the facilities, such as union offices at bus depots, to reach employees within the industry. This has also allowed them to promote the services of the credit union. The credit union depot representatives have always been, and will continue to be, a major part of Voyager Alliance."

## Changing the common bond

Following the legislation reforms in January 2012, 1st Class Credit Union changed its common bond from serving employees of Royal Mail to serving members of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) and employees of companies where the CWU is a recognised trade union.

Manager of 1st Class Credit Union, Andy Wright, who helped set up the credit union in 1992, explains. "As most people will know, there has been a great deal of uncertainty at Royal Mail over the last few years, in the run up to privatisation. This has led to a significant reduction in the number of Royal Mail employees, so the





Dave Prentis, UNISON  
General Secretary.  
© Marcus Rose

field of membership for our credit union – and the other three credit unions which served the company – was declining.

"As a result, we needed to re-evaluate the future of the credit union, and one of our ideas was to talk to the CWU about serving their members – not only at Royal Mail, but at other communications companies where they are a recognised trade union. I spoke to the Deputy General Secretary of the CWU and he explained that, as it happened, they too were in the process of reviewing the financial services that they offered to their members. Following the credit crunch, it turned out that the CWU was looking to move away from just offering bank based credit cards and member services, to more ethical providers such as credit unions.

Andy explains that since changing the common bond, 1st Class Credit Union membership has increased by about 10% to over 5,500 people, but that its focus is on sustainable growth, not a sudden influx of new members.

"Potential membership for the credit union is now more than double what it was before, at over 250,000 people, but we only have a staff of seven at the credit union. Therefore, we are rolling out our expansion gradually. For example, we are focusing on promoting our services on a region by region basis; we are looking to roll out payroll deduction to the employees of the other companies we now serve – such as BT, O2 and Virgin – one at a time, and early next year we are doing an advertising feature in VOICE, the CWU members' magazine."

### Latest developments

Two of the country's largest trade unions, UNISON and Unite, have recently launched their own credit union networks as a benefit for their members and to provide an alternative to high cost lenders.

Fifty-five credit unions across England, Scotland and Wales, including London Capital Credit Union, North Wales Credit Union, Grampian Credit Union and Manchester Credit Union, have signed up to UNISON's nationwide network of credit unions.

Delivered as part of the trade union's member welfare service, There for You, the credit union scheme aims to improve access to appropriate financial products and services for UNISON members. The trade union wants to work with credit unions to promote responsible lending and encourage saving through payroll deduction as well as raising awareness of the alternatives to payday lending and other high cost lenders.

UNISON thought carefully about whether to set up its own credit union, but in the end decided that a partnership approach working with a network of credit unions was the best way forward. With positive examples of excellent practice between UNISON at local level and individual credit unions already, as well as established relationships between credit unions and public sector employers, the trade union wanted to help these relationships thrive.

Initially UNISON is working in partnership with credit unions to enable its members to obtain a loan quickly (subject

to status), without having to have either saved first or served any qualifying period. Looking ahead, UNISON envisages building a closer working relationship between their branch network and local credit unions, which could include producing co-branded materials and credit unions attending trade union branch or workplace events. (For further information, email [thereforyou@unison.co.uk](mailto:thereforyou@unison.co.uk))

Dave Prentis, UNISON General Secretary, says: "Credit unions are a vital component in the development of a full wraparound welfare support service for UNISON members and their families. More importantly, credit unions provide an ethical alternative, with customers and shareholders being one-and-the-same. UNISON will be partnering with credit unions to ensure members are fully aware of the benefits of credit union membership."

Manager of London Capital Credit Union Martin Groombridge adds: "As a lifelong trade unionist I have always seen trade unions like UNISON to be natural allies in our task of encouraging people to save and providing low cost credit at times of need. At London Capital, we have worked with many trade unions to establish payroll deduction schemes that make it easier for ordinary working men and women to be able to save money. The UNISON initiative is a welcome one that will strengthen the credit union sector and bring financial help to many of UNISON's members who are struggling to make ends meet."

Unite the union has also launched a credit union service to provide its members and their families with access to affordable finance and competitive savings products.

The new Unite service is open to all 1.4 million Unite members in England, Scotland and Wales and uses a network of 14 existing credit unions, which means that the trade union's members can link up with a credit union that is already established in their region.

Unite General Secretary Len McCluskey says: "Unite's new credit union service ensures our members can access finance without fear and helps keep them out of the clutches of parasitic lenders."

Howard Beckett Unite Director of Legal, Membership and Affiliated Services, adds: "We're proud to launch the credit union service as part of our continued drive to develop membership services that respond to the needs of members."

[www.pcs.org.uk/en/about\\_pcs/pcs\\_credit\\_union/index.cfm](http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/about_pcs/pcs_credit_union/index.cfm)

[www.bfawu.org/bens\\_cu.php](http://www.bfawu.org/bens_cu.php)

[www.voyageralliance.com](http://www.voyageralliance.com)

[www.1stclasscu.co.uk/](http://www.1stclasscu.co.uk/)

[www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk)

[www.unitetheunion.org/CreditUnion](http://www.unitetheunion.org/CreditUnion)



# Mergers and partnerships boost growth at Blantyre & South Lanarkshire Credit Union

**OVER THE past 20 years, Blantyre & South Lanarkshire Credit Union has grown into one of the most successful community credit unions in Britain. Two mergers and a number of partnerships have helped boost its membership and income.**

Located a few miles south east of Glasgow, Blantyre & South Lanarkshire Credit Union was founded in 1991 as Blantyre Credit Union and was originally run from a community hall in the town. In 2001 it became big enough to move into its own premises, as General Manager Ian Burnett explains. "Our Chairman Bart Mclean worked with the local council to purchase one of its old rent collection offices. This was an ideal building for us, as it was already fitted out for office use and was large enough for us to rent out space as well. We are still there today."

In 2006, soon after Ian Burnett joined, the credit union embarked on a programme of renovation and rebranding. With funding from the Scottish Government, it was able to completely revamp its office and shop front as well as redesigning its marketing literature. Ian says: "The relaunch made a huge difference to the credit union, helping to create awareness and interest in our services. For example, many people who regularly passed our office said they noticed us for the first time."

## Mergers

The common bond of the credit union originally only covered those living in Blantyre but, following two mergers, was eventually extended to cover all those who live and work in Lanarkshire, so that around 633,000 people are now eligible to access its services. Ian explains that they consulted the other credit unions in the area first, before extending the common bond, to reassure them that this wasn't a predatory move.

The first merger was with a small local credit union called ML9, which had around 600 members. The second merger, earlier this year, saw the transfer of engagements from Rutherglen Credit Union, which had over 1,800 members. Ian explains that both mergers were the result of approaches from the other credit unions, which believed that their members would be better served if they joined Blantyre & South Lanarkshire CU, because of the wider range of products and services it offers.

Blantyre & South Lanarkshire CU kept open the other credit unions' premises and so now has two branches, in Larkhall and Rutherglen, as well as its head office in Blantyre. The credit union also has two collection points in Blantyre, offers outreach services at three housing associations and, as Ian emphasises, over 60% of its business is electronic transactions.



## Partnerships

As well as working with local agencies such as Citizens Advice, Blantyre & South Lanarkshire CU has worked with a range of other partners.

Initially the credit union got involved with the DWP who supported their Transition into Work project, which involved working with local employment agencies to help jobseekers with their finances and possible financial barriers when seeking employment. This was followed by the Freedom Loan project, working with South Lanarkshire Council to provide financial assistance to those looking for work.

Subsequently, the credit union teamed up with West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative to provide services to its tenants. This highly successful scheme saw an influx of almost 500 new members

– about 75% of the housing co-operative's tenants.

In 2008, the credit union launched savings clubs for schools, with support from the Scottish Government and the local council, and this has been another great success, with over 2,975 children in 37 schools now junior members. Thanks to support from South Lanarkshire Council and the Scottish Government's People and Community Fund, the credit union has secured funding to work with schools until at least 2015.

In 2009, as part of a consortium of credit unions from Glasgow, the credit union secured funding from the Growth Fund to develop its Freedom2 Loan product. "Freedom2 Loan is an instant loan product which took off in a big way," says Ian. "For a while, we were working 12 hours a day processing applications. Aimed at offering an alternative to high interest doorstep lenders, we have to date lent out over £800,000, but the more important thing is that we have saved people well over £600,000 in interest when compared to doorstep lenders. This money has remained in our local economy, so the project has multiple beneficiaries."

The most recent project the credit union has been working on, in partnership with the local council and a number of local housing associations, is a study looking at the effects of Universal Credit, which has now been published.

"In 2006, when I joined the credit union," explains Ian, "it had approximately 2,600 adult members and two or three hundred junior members. Today, thanks in large part to partnerships and mergers, but also because we have always tried to be innovative, never standing still, we now have over 10,000 members, assets of over £10 million, £9 million of savings and £6 million out on loan."

[www.blantyrecreditunion.org.uk](http://www.blantyrecreditunion.org.uk)





# Exploring the potential for an armed forces credit union

**THE IDEA of a credit union for British armed forces is gaining interest among politicians of all parties as well as organisations that support armed forces personnel. On a recent visit to London, Vice-President for Compliance and Public Policy at Navy Federal Credit Union Mark Lawton was able to contribute to the discussion.**

Navy Federal Credit Union is the world's largest credit union, serving the US armed forces, and Mark Lawton was here at the invitation of ABCUL. As well as attending an All-Party Parliamentary Group on Credit Unions (APPG) reception for International Credit Union Day, Mark spoke at a Parliamentary roundtable meeting.

At the APPG, Mark shared his reflections on Navy Federal Credit Union and how its experiences might inform similar services in Britain. The meeting was hosted by APPG Chair Damian Hinds MP and also heard from Minister for Welfare Reform Lord Freud.

The Parliamentary roundtable, which was called by the APPG to explore the potential for a British armed forces credit union in more detail, brought together politicians and representatives from the Ministry of Defence and armed forces support organisations. At the roundtable, Rt Hon Mark Francois MP, Minister for the Armed Forces, expressed the Government's interest in exploring the idea of a credit union for the British armed forces and the meeting agreed the formation of a working group to set the terms of reference for feasibility research into the proposal and its likely reception from the armed forces. There was also a discussion about how a credit union for the armed forces could potentially fit into the infrastructure being developed by the Credit Union Expansion Project.

Mark Lawton said: "I'm honoured to have had the opportunity to discuss Navy Federal's organisation model with the APPG and ABCUL. We're proud to be providing valuable, specialised service and products to countless members of the US armed forces and their families.



Rt Hon Mark Francois MP (left) with Mark Lawton.

It's exciting to think that a similar model could be developed abroad in Britain."

ABCUL Chief Executive Mark Lyonette added: "We are very grateful to Mark Lawton for giving up his time to come and share his experiences with us. Hearing about the success of Navy Federal Credit Union was inspiring and summed up the enormous potential of the credit union model, particularly in a military context. This came across most clearly where Mark explained the level of tailored products and services that Navy Federal offers.

"As a credit union with only its members in mind, Navy Federal is able to concentrate all its effort on providing services which meet the needs of service personnel at every stage of their lives and careers. It also plays a vital role in providing financial education."

According to research by the Royal British Legion, around a third of veterans in this country, including almost half of the recently injured, have experienced financial difficulties. A credit union for armed forces personnel would help tackle



Mark Lawton speaking at the APPG reception.

the financial problems faced by British service men and women and protect them from payday and other high cost lenders.

In the United States, as well as Navy Federal, there are a number of other credit unions serving the nation's 1.4 million military personnel, including Air Force Federal Credit Union and Pentagon Federal Credit Union. In Australia, over 46,000 defence personnel are members of the Australian Defence Credit Union.

## About Navy Federal Credit Union



**NAVY FEDERAL Credit Union is the world's largest credit union, with \$54 billion in assets, 4.5 million members, 235 branches, and a workforce of over 11,000 employees worldwide. It serves all US Department of Defense and Coast Guard active duty, retired, civilian and contractor personnel and their families.**

Navy Federal, established in 1933, is headquartered in Vienna, Virginia. In 2013, it was listed as one of Fortune magazine's 100 Best Companies to Work For. The credit union has branches worldwide and a third of its employees work outside the United States.

Its mission is "to operate a federal credit union serving a Department of Defense and Coast Guard field of membership to meet the financial needs of the members." Its vision is "to be the world's most admired and preferred credit union serving the military and their families. By providing outstanding value and service that inspires trust, we make members into true believers and advocates who tell others about the benefits of Navy Federal Credit Union."

Navy Federal offers a full range of financial products and services, including savings and bank accounts, home and car loans, as well as credit

cards. The credit union also offers internet and mobile banking services, 24-hour telephone access and a network of over 50,000 free ATMs. Its subsidiary, Navy Federal Financial Group, offers complementary products and services including investments, insurance and financial planning.

"We are dedicated to providing our members with financial products and services to help fit their unique needs," said Navy Federal President/CEO Cutler Dawson. "Our members are our top priority and we're honoured to be able to serve them."

In autumn 2013, when the US Government shutdown threatened the non-payment of personnel, Navy Federal Credit Union, along with a number of other military-oriented banks and credit unions, pledged to cover the direct deposits for its active duty members.

[www.navyfederal.org](http://www.navyfederal.org)

# Young Director makes an impact

**WHEN EVIE Bamigbade became a Director of Plane Saver Credit Union, at 19 years old she was one of the youngest – if not the youngest – credit union Director in Britain. *Credit Union News* spoke to Evie about why she got involved and what more credit unions can do to attract young people.**



Evie Bamigbade.

Evie Bamigbade was inspired to take an active role in helping to run Plane Saver Credit Union after attending her first members' meeting in 2012.

"My Dad, who works for British Airways, had opened savings accounts with the credit union for me and my brother, and he thought it would

be a good idea if we went along to the annual meeting to find out more about the credit union," explains Evie. "I was really impressed and interested by what I saw and, as they were looking for volunteers, I decided to get involved."

After six months' volunteering as a committee member, Evie took the opportunity to put herself forward for a vacancy as a Director and was approved as a Board member by the PRA and FCA in August 2013. Evie has now also taken on

the duties of Board Secretary.

"I thought becoming a Director would be a good way for me to learn a lot more about the credit union and how it works, as well as giving me the chance to play a more active role in helping to run it," says Evie.

Evie's responsibilities involve a range of administrative duties including co-ordinating Board meetings, liaison between staff and Board, communicating with the credit union about ABCUL training courses and other events, preparing briefing papers and business planning. Evie says she can do up ten hours' work or more in some weeks, when there is a lot going on, but it varies a good deal and can often be much less.

Evie is currently a student at London Metropolitan University, where she is in her second year studying International Relations and International Development. She also works part time in The Body Shop. In June, Evie completed the credit union Development Education course.

As well as gaining valuable experience, Evie says she is very supportive of credit union values and principles and is keen

to help make a difference to people. As a student, she says, she has witnessed first hand the financial difficulties that young people get into, and wants more young people to know about credit unions.

To attract more young people into credit union volunteer roles, Evie says credit unions need to make sure they let young people know they're welcome. "At first, I thought what benefits can I bring to the credit union as the youngest, most inexperienced person here? I lacked in confidence and felt I had nothing new to give. It was only when I went along to the AGM and spoke to people there that I thought I had something to offer."

Evie says she hopes she has brought a fresh perspective to the credit union and the way it works. As an example of this, she cites a campaign she is currently co-ordinating to make Plane Saver Board meetings 'paperless'. "We have the technology, so I'm trying to help ensure that we use it more and cut down on paper. This saves the credit union money, but above all it is good for the environment."

[www.planesavercu.co.uk](http://www.planesavercu.co.uk)

## Successful launch of young leaders' network

**23 YOUNG people from credit unions across the country attended the launch of the National Young Leaders Forum, which was hosted by No1 CopperPot Credit Union in Cheshire and supported by ABCUL.**

The event was organised and led by Caroline Domanski, Finance and Development Manager at No1 CopperPot Credit Union, and James Marshall, formerly of Plane Saver Credit Union and now Leader of The Cooperative Trust.

This first meeting enabled delegates to get to know one another, share their experiences and decide what they wanted to achieve from the new network. As well as setting the network's objectives, proposals for a mentoring programme were discussed.

There were two main sessions during the day. The first, led by Management and Leadership trainer Martin Craven, examined 'The Leader's Mindset' and focused on encouraging delegates to consider their aspirations and identify practical steps to achieve them. The



second, led by James Marshall, was about the need for credit unions to attract more young people – both as members and as staff and Directors. This session introduced the 'Filene Method' for innovation and design, which encourages people to act on their own ideas and try and implement new processes and products within their credit unions.

Those who attended the meet-up said there was a very good atmosphere, with lots of positive attitudes and enthusiasm for the network, and plans for future events are now being developed.

[www.uk.trust.coop](http://www.uk.trust.coop)



# Launch of credit union service for MPs and Parliamentary staff

**MPS FROM all the main political parties attended the launch at the Palace of Westminster of a new credit union service for Parliamentary staff.**

Following agreement with the Parliamentary authorities, anyone working in the Palace of Westminster can now become a member of London Mutual Credit Union (LMCU). This means that MPs and Parliamentary staff can benefit from the credit union's payroll deduction scheme and save or repay loans direct from their wages.

The initiative was launched at an event hosted by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Credit Unions (APPG) and London Mutual Credit Union. Over 20 MPs and Lords attended, including Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP, Lord Freud, Simon Hughes MP and Harriet Harman MP, as well as Chair of the APPG Damian Hinds MP and Lord Kennedy of Southwark, a Vice Chair of the Group. In addition, money saving expert Martin Lewis spoke at the launch and became a member of the credit union.

Martin Lewis said: "With the growth scourge of payday lending across the UK – credit unions are a viable, cheaper, non-profit local alternative and should be encouraged. Therefore today I hope to be excited at the launch event to see senior MPs and even Government Ministers giving the London Mutual their backing by joining up and making use of the deduction facility. It'll be interesting to see who puts their money where their mouth is."

Damian Hinds MP added: "I am delighted to see London Mutual Credit Union extend its services to all of those working in and around Parliament. Partnering with employers and payroll deduction arrangements can have enormous benefits for credit union development while providing a valuable financial service to workers and employers."

Lucky Chandrasekera, London Mutual Credit Union Chief Executive, said: "It is fantastic to be launching our Parliamentary service today which is a goal we set ourselves some years ago. We hope by launching this service for Parliament that we can demonstrate the value of credit union membership on a daily basis to MPs and the wider Parliamentary staff."

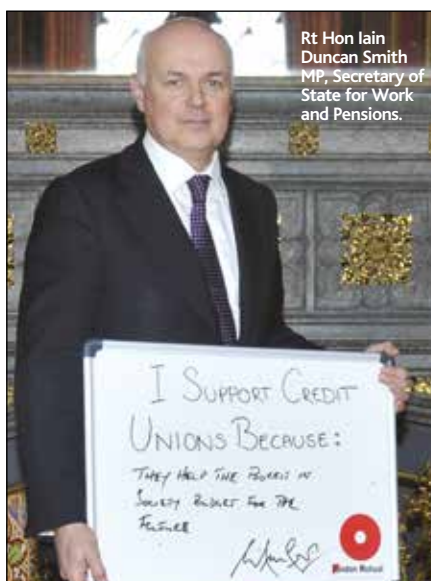
Within a week of the launch, 15 Parliamentary and MPs' staff had joined the payroll deduction scheme. MPs' staff are eligible whether they are based in the Palace of Westminster or a constituency office, as long as they are paid by the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA). However, because Lords are paid a daily allowance rather than a salary, they cannot join the payroll facility, although they can still become LMCU members.

London Mutual Credit Union has since opened a payroll deduction facility for staff at Clarence House, the official London residence of The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall, and is looking to open a branch in the City of Westminster soon.

[www.creditunion.co.uk](http://www.creditunion.co.uk)



Celebrating the launch of the new credit union service for Parliamentary staff.



Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.



Martin Lewis speaking at the launch.

## Camper van delivered

**HI-SCOT CREDIT union has taken delivery of a specially converted camper van.**

As reported in the last issue of *Credit Union News*, HI-Scot Credit Union was awarded £42,000 from the Barclays Community Finance Fund to purchase a camper van. The camper van is set to become a familiar sight at community events, places of work and markets and fairs throughout the Highlands and Islands to help increase the credit union's membership.

Based in Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis, HI-Scot Credit Union has been serving the Western Isles of Scotland since 2006. In 2010 it extended its reach to cover the Highlands and Islands, and now serves an area larger than Belgium.

The credit union expects the camper van to travel throughout The Western Isles and the Orkney Islands as well as much of Caithness, Sutherland, Easter Ross and Inverness by the end of 2013, with the rest of the Highlands and Islands covered in early 2014.

[www.hi-scot.com](http://www.hi-scot.com)





# CUNA MUTUAL

## Loan Protection and Life Savings (LPLS)

### Supporting Credit Unions Now and into the Future

The future stability and long term affordability of our Loan Protection and Life Savings (LPLS) programmes is very important to CUNA Mutual. It is our commitment and priority to continue to provide credit unions with sustainable protection programmes into the future, which support the growth of credit unions and provide protection to their members.

We are delighted to have delivered on our commitment to ABCUL and its members during the recent LPLS renewal period when we implemented, with the support of ABCUL, a new pooled pricing structure.

We created a programme which delivers on the commitment to:

- Guarantee, regardless of size or claims history, that all ABCUL credit unions are able to obtain Loan Protection and Life Savings protection
- Simplify the benefit structure and rates applicable
- Increase the stability of premiums ensuring they remain affordable over the long term.

### Low Claim Discounts

An additional benefit of the programme is that when actual claims experience is lower than expected, for any year, the savings are returned to all credit unions participating in the Pool by way of discounted premium rates for subsequent years.

If you do have any queries on the Pool or the LPLS renewal we would be delighted to hear from you.

Below are the contact details of your account managers.

Account manager	Contact telephone number	Email address
Lucy Shardlow	07919 887 376	lucy.shardlow@cunamutual.co.uk
Richard Boreham	07989 305 564	richard.boreham@cunamutual.co.uk
Bobby Gould	07901 852 625	bobby.gould@cunamutual.co.uk

## CUNA Mutual Group – Online Discovery Conference

Gain insights from some of the industry's most innovative thinkers

A copy of information is available for you until 27 June 2014

### We are now into our fourth year of our free online Discovery Conference.

This year's subject was **Strategy, Culture and Leadership Alignment - Crucial for Credit Unions' Success**; this was presented by our Parent Company CUNA Mutual Group – John Lass, Senior Vice President of the Strategy and Business Development unit.

If you register at [www.cunamutual.com](http://www.cunamutual.com) and follow the simple online instructions, you can discover some of the industry leaders' thoughts on topics such as:

- The Power of Three: Leadership + Culture + Strategy
- Growing Your Investment Programme To Increase Non-Interest Income & Member Loyalty
- Linking Member Satisfaction to Share of Deposits with the New Wallet Allocation Rule
- Trends in Lending and Member-Friendly Income
- and there are many more discussions available to view.

## You work hard for your members and we work hard to support you – Then, Now, Always

For more information please contact your CUNA Mutual Key Account Manager or email us on [info@cunamutual.co.uk](mailto:info@cunamutual.co.uk)

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# Annual Conference celebrates 50 years of British credit unions

**THE 2014 ABCUL AGM and Annual Conference will be held in Manchester for the first time since 1992 and will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first credit union in Britain.**

The event takes place at The Midland Hotel, a Grade II\* Listed Building in the city centre, from Friday 7 to Sunday 9 March. In a central location, Manchester has good transport links from all over the country and offers a wide range of accommodation and amenities.

At the conference, there will be many national and international speakers from the world of credit unions and financial services. This includes: Brian Branch, President and Chief Executive Officer of World Council of Credit Unions; Grzegorz Bierecki, Chair of World Council of Credit Unions, and Mark Sievwright, President of Credit Union Solutions and international financial services technology company Fiserv.

There will be representatives from governments and regulators, as well

as special guests to be announced. Workshops on a number of operational and governance issues will take place and there will be opportunities to book in for surgery sessions with a range of experts.

The Friday night welcome reception will be held in Manchester Art Gallery and, on the Saturday evening, a Special Gala Dinner commemorating the 50th anniversary of the first credit union in Britain will celebrate credit union pioneers from around the country.

The conference is supported by The Co-operative Group / The Co-operative Hub and CUNA Mutual Group. To find out more and to book your place please visit [www.abcul.coop](http://www.abcul.coop) or contact [conferences@abcul.coop](mailto:conferences@abcul.coop)



## Scottish Government campaign urges people to join credit unions

**A NEW Scottish Government campaign urging people to get on top of their money by joining a credit union and warning of the dangers of using payday loans was launched at Grampian Credit Union in November.**

Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism Fergus Ewing MSP travelled to Aberdeen to launch the '12 days of debtmas' campaign which is running online, through radio advertising and in Scottish and regional newspapers.

Visitors to [www.12daysofdebtmas.com](http://www.12daysofdebtmas.com) are directed towards [www.findyourcreditunion.co.uk](http://www.findyourcreditunion.co.uk) to help them find a credit union they can join. People are also directed towards the loan calculator at [www.abcul.coop](http://www.abcul.coop) so they can work out how much they would repay to a credit union over time to suit them – something that may not be available through a payday loan.

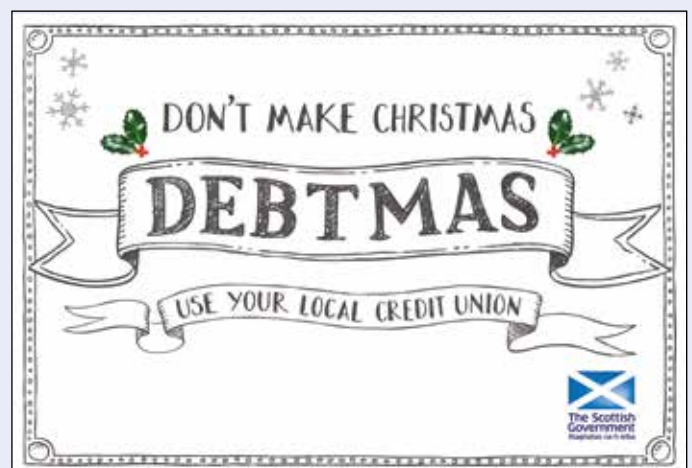
Over 3,000 visits to the two websites were made in the first two weeks of the campaign and credit unions in Scotland have reported an increase in membership enquiries as a result.

Speaking at the launch, Fergus Ewing said: "The Scottish Government is very concerned about the growth of payday lending and the impact that high interest borrowing, especially in the run up to Christmas, has on people in Scotland. This campaign raises awareness of credit unions and also promotes their affordable lending solutions to people in the lead up to Christmas, and after the festive period, when bills start to arrive.

"People across Scotland can join credit unions and not just for hard pressed communities – all sorts of people could use credit unions to save and to take out loans at manageable interest rates."

Grampian Credit Union formed 20 years ago to serve local council employees but now serves anyone living or working in the region. It offers

a range of loan products including a flexi-loan which provides a credit limit of between £500 and £3,000 which can be drawn on at any time. If a member with a flexi-loan account doesn't have an outstanding balance then the regular monthly repayments are put into their savings account. This is just one way that credit unions offer members a responsible alternative to a payday loan.



# Businesses benefit from The Co-operative Enterprise Hub

**THE CO-OPERATIVE has a long standing relationship of working together with the credit union sector. This is important because a core value of the Group is to help the development of member-owned organisations.**

One of the other many ways it provides support to foster such development is through its innovative Co-operative Enterprise Hub programme. The initiative is a UK-wide advice and training programme offering a variety of services for new and existing co-operatives, to assist in setting up or growing a sustainable, co-operative business.

It began in response to the economic downturn, to provide business skills and finance to support co-operative development and community-led regeneration.

The top five sectors that attract Hub support are community groups, arts and media, retail, education and training, and food.

The scheme provides free, tailored advice and training from experienced co-operative development advisers, who often live in the communities they assist.

This typically includes business planning and support with financial, legal and governance matters – whatever is needed to create a successful co-operative enterprise.

Since 2009, the Hub has supported

over 1,000 enterprises, 76% of which are new enterprises. This includes support to more than 30 credit unions. It is investing a further £1 million in 2013 to stimulate the creation of new co-operatives.

Anyone interested in finding out more about The Co-operative Enterprise Hub can visit <http://www.co-operative.coop/enterprise-hub/>

The **co-operative** bank  
good with money

Here are some examples of businesses that have received support from The Co-operative Enterprise Hub:

## Belfast Cleaning Society

This brought together women from both sides of the divided community in the Springfield Road area of the city. The co-operative was formed by women who had been meeting regularly in a cross-community women's group. They had been talking about starting a co-operative for a couple of months when the opportunity arose to clean up after a music festival. In a few hours they assembled a workforce, agreed a contract and started work.

After this successful first job, they contacted the Hub for help in setting up a sustainable co-operative business. Since Belfast Cleaning Society was registered in April 2012 it has gained several regular office cleaning contracts and some more festival work. The six members aim to create a successful business and to invite others to join the co-operative and earn a decent wage so that they are not reliant on benefits.



## Saith Seren

Welsh co-operative Canolfan Gymraeg Wrecsam (CGW) reopened local pub Saith Seren (Welsh for Seven Stars) as a community-operated venture. The co-operative raised enough capital to take out a 21-year lease on the listed building in Wrexham, which had been closed for eight months.

The Hub provided advice on setting up a co-operative pub and also looked at the options for generating other sources of income from the building.

Saith Seren employs six staff and has a team of volunteers who organise the centre's regular live

music nights. The pub pays homage to its music hall roots with a busy entertainment schedule and eventually hopes to host a live act every night.



## Local Food (& More!)

In just 12 months, Local Food (& More!) has grown into a thriving co-operative that runs a weekend café and a monthly market in the village of Little Canfield, near Stansted Airport in Essex, and has plans to develop further facilities.

Local Food (& More!) was set up with the aim of creating a multi-functional hub for the village, harnessing the skills of local people and providing employment and volunteering opportunities.