

FENWICK SHOWS SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT THE CO-OPERATIVE WAY

Following a Members Debate on the Fenwick Weavers Society, the world's first recorded co-operative; the Scottish Parliament has established a Cross Party Group on Co-operatives.

The Parliament's Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee approved the setting up of the Cross Party Group at its meeting on Tuesday (28 October).

Speaking after the committee's decision, Willie Coffey, MSP for Kilmarnock and Loudoun, which includes Fenwick, and co-convenor of the new group, said

"This is extremely good news for co-operative and mutual organisations in Scotland and couldn't come at a more opportune time.

"The weavers of Fenwick formed their society when times were hard and working together was seen as a means of strengthening the whole community.

"I am pleased to see the message of the Fenwick Weavers being picked up by the Parliament.

"I look forward to the Cross Party Group helping to strengthen the co-operative and mutual sectors right across Scotland."

Work to establish the Cross Party Group was initiated after Mr Coffey led a Members Debate on the role of the Fenwick Weavers Society, founded in 1761, in the development of the co-operative model.

The Cross Party Group quickly attracted support from across the Parliament and an inaugural meeting was held on 8 October. The group has attracted support from over 20 MSPs and a wide range of organisations and individuals from Scotland's co-operative and mutual sector.

Mr Coffey is one of four co-conveners of the group and Secretarial support will be provided by Co-operation and Mutuality Scotland.

In the run up to the Standards Committee meeting, Mr Coffey's fellow co-conveners outlined their support for the proposed Cross Party Group.

Jim Hume MSP of the Scottish Liberal Democrats said

"There are immense benefits to be gained from a group of individuals owning and running their own organisation.

"Mutual ownership is particularly relevant now given the difficult economic circumstances we currently face."

"I congratulate Willie Coffey on getting the Cross Party Group up and running and look forward to the work ahead as one of its co-conveners."

Scottish Labour MSP, James Kelly said

“The Cross Party Group can play an important role in giving profile to the co-operative model and co-operative solutions and reaching out to Scotland's communities.

“There is a range of valuable experience available to the group and I look forward to working with my fellow Co-operators to build on this experience.”

John Scott, Scottish Conservative MSP and a Council member of Scottish Agricultural Organisations Society said

“As someone involved in creating three working co-operatives, I have always believed that, by working together, more can often be achieved than by individuals working alone.

“I was delighted to see the level of interest at the inaugural meeting of the group and look forward to building on this very positive start.”

###Ends###

NOTES

The deed of incorporation of The Fenwick Weavers Society and its early minute book are held in the National Library of Scotland. The Fenwick society precedes the more widely known Rochdale Pioneers (1844) by over 80 years. The modern Fenwick Weavers Society was formed to commemorate the work of the earlier society and to develop a visitor centre in the village of Fenwick.

There are over 60 Cross Party Group's in the Scottish Parliament. Details of all the groups can be found here:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/msp/crossPartyGroups/list.htm>

External bodies supporting the establishment of the Cross Party Group are drawn from; co-operative development agencies and representative bodies, workers co-operatives, housing co-operatives and associations, credit unions, retail co-operatives, agricultural co-operatives