A FAIRER FUTURE FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET

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FOREWORD



Co-op has been tackling the impact of running our business and the products we sell on the environment and nature for decades. The business case for doing so has never been clearer.

Quite rightly, given global volatility is now a feature, not a bug, when it comes to doing business, the resilience of our Co-op and every other business is under renewed scrutiny. What has set this trailblazing business apart throughout its history, tracing its roots back to 1844, is its ownership model.

Being owned by millions of members who consistently remind us that acting to protect the environment and nature is one of their top priorities for us is fundamentally why this is an agenda that we have acted on and spoken up about for many years.

At Co-op, we've always been clear that we long to see a fair transition for people and planet. Since 2021, this has been the beating heart of our Climate Justice campaign. With our members, we have taken every opportunity we could to make the case that no community should be left behind or forced to bear the brunt of costs they cannot afford, as we go through this vital period of change.

In this collection of stories of hope – of those people and places where change is happening, is real, and is improving the world we share – we are restating our case. Business can and must step up to the scale of the challenges, and seize the opportunities that come, on the journey to Net Zero.

It's vital that we're supported with the policy framework and political leadership, across the UK and around the world, to deliver a just transition. And in the meantime, families, communities, charities, businesses and others are making a difference. We're proud to support many of them – and to take this opportunity to showcase some of them here.

Kate Allum

Interim Chief Executive Officer
The Co-operative Group

INTRODUCTION



Just as we said at the launch of our Climate Justice campaign, we have to recognise that we're in the grip of a climate crisis. We all need to do our bit and we need co-operation at the heart of our collective response. It has only become clearer since then that as we accelerate the transition to Net Zero, we need to work harder to make sure the costs aren't borne by those who can least afford them.

At Co-op, we've never been afraid to speak up with and for our members on this agenda. As others seek to gamble away the future of a liveable planet, we believe the time has come for citizens across the UK, from the biggest metropolis to the most remote rural spots, to be heard – loud and clear.

We know that knowledge is power. People are eager to know more about the climate and nature crises, the UK's plans to tackle them, and how they can play their part. We also know that fairness is key, and only possible if governments and businesses lead from the front.

There are huge opportunities ahead, from the emergence of new jobs and industries, to better air quality and cleaner rivers and beaches, to greater economic resilience and food security. To seize these opportunities, we need strong leadership from those with power, not platitudes or performative politics.

At Co-op, we have always emphasised the importance of action alongside words. This collection of stories is bursting with hope and full of the art of the possible. Incredible people doing incredible things, supported by a business created to put power and resources back in the hands of the communities it serves and the communities it sources from.

These stories prove that backing Britain is a path we can travel down together, rather than resigning ourselves to a story of a broken Britain. Will you join us?

Andrew Weston

Head of Public Affairs (Food)
The Co-operative Group



In partnership with Soil Association Exchange, Co-op's British Farming Sustainability Fund supports our beef, dairy, pork and lamb farming groups to reduce their environmental impact with dedicated funding on top of the price we pay for produce.

Each farmer works with Soil Association Exchange to baseline their carbon footprint. They can then access funds to implement changes that they believe are right for their farm and for nature. Cath Halhead is a member of the Co-op Dairy Group who has taken advantage of the scheme; she milks 150 cows in Lancashire and has supplied Co-op since the group was first set up.

Cath Halhead,
Dairy farmer

I was always aware of the biodiversity on my farm, but it had never been quantified. This was a great opportunity to get a better understanding of what is happening, both above and below the ground. This can only help us farm better and improve where we need to. It will also encourage us to maintain what we already have.

When our results came in, I was pleasantly surprised. We recorded 20 species of bird on the farm, 10 of which are on the red or amber conservation list. And our worm count was off the scale! Our hedges were all scored well for thickness and species variety. But most surprisingly of all, without really knowing it, 17% of our farm is already set aside for nature.

We didn't score as well for preventing water run-off, so we worked with the Lune Rivers Trust to plant 500m of new hedgerow in November 2025. We are also looking into the possibility of digging a pond and planting more woodland in an area of unproductive land. I'm looking forward to putting a bench near the pond and taking a few minutes every now and again to stop and reset. This will also help support our mental health — something that isn't usually quantified in a farm situation.

Overall, this has been a really positive experience, and I would recommend it to other farmers. The assessment process was simple and required little effort on my part. It was voluntary, so it feels like we are doing it on our terms.

Certainty is crucial to the success of environmental schemes — as is engagement with farmers. We need Government to support sustainable farming with longer-term commitments to policies that benefit the farm, the farmer and the environment. Three or five years isn't enough to establish anything of substance. Consumers also have the power to make a difference to the sustainability of farm businesses. In a time of uncertainty and rising farm gate costs, it would also be nice to see more promotion around the benefits of sourcing British farmed products.



Photo credit: Boniface Gathura. Founder, G Farm, Kenya

Co-op has pioneered the Fairtrade movement since 1994, supporting trade justice through better prices, working conditions and terms of trade. Fairtrade farms and estates gain certification by meeting high labour and environmental standards. In exchange, the farmers and workers earn a fairer price and an additional Fairtrade Premium, which communities choose to spend as they wish.

Fairtrade also works to strengthen farmers' and workers' resilience to climate, price shocks, crop diseases, food insecurity and natural disasters. Fairtrade's farmer-centric climate programme, Fairtrade Alliance for Climate Smart Supply Chains in Africa (FACSCA), was funded by Co-op to support over 19,430 tea, coffee and flower farmers and workers in Kenya, Ethiopia and Rwanda. FACSCA works with farming communities to adapt to changing weather patterns, protect their livelihoods and build long-term resilience in communities central to Co-op's supply chains.

Boniface Mathenge Gathura,

Mutira Coffee Farmers Association, Kenya

I am an agricultural entrepreneur and the founder of G Farm Kenya. Farming is my business and my day-to-day life.

If there's something that is really affecting crops across all production chains, it is climate. This year alone we've seen a lot of changes in weather, from when to expect rains and dry seasons to the harvest periods for crops like coffee.

Fairtrade Africa provided vigorous training on capacity-building and sustainable land management through FACSCA. I've done a lot of research about coffee and learned a lot through experience. It is a work in progress. But because of Fairtrade Africa, I'm farming in a really modern way.

I'm now growing a hybrid variety of coffee that's higher yielding and less susceptible to disease and pests. I'm also diversifying my farm — intercropping coffee with macadamia and growing some indigenous plants and fruit seedlings as well as avocado. I'm also trying to adapt by reducing my dependence on rain. We have just drilled a borehole to pump water to ensure that there's sustainable production of coffee.

Demand is always there for coffee, but it's outstripping supply. I'm trying to increase the production of coffee within my community, as well as creating job opportunities on my own farm. This begins with the propagation of quality seedlings, that enable more young people and more farmers to grow coffee. The coffee we've planted needs pickers and people who prune. Creating jobs for young people brings a circular flow of income to the community.

I'm also mentoring young people to learn about agriculture; to know what they can grow, how to grow it and how to maximise the opportunities agriculture can offer.

I want to take this opportunity to ask the end users of our coffee: as you wake up and take in a cup of coffee, have you ever asked yourself where does this coffee come from? How does it get to my cup? It's a whole process from the farm to the factory, to the milling and to the processing. And it's an honour to take part in producing one of the most drunk commodities in the world.



Nature Neighbourhoods is a partnership project between the RSPB, WWF and National Trust, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and Co-op, whose members have also provided on-the-ground support. The project has supported 18 communities to co-design action plans that bring nature into their neighbourhoods.

Kelly Robinson,

Easy Come, Easy Grow co-founder

My husband and I set up Easy Come, Easy Grow with fellow residents in Newton Heath after getting a knock on the door from Sow the City, a social enterprise focused on connecting people with nature and Winning Hearts and Minds, a non-profit, multi-agency health and community programme.

The organisations, which were handing out seeds, ended up helping my husband and I set up a pond in the garden of our council house. Our garden was basically sinking, and we had to build it up with decking to try and solve the problem as the council couldn't afford to fix it.

About a year later, Sow the City asked us if we'd be interested in Nature Neighbourhoods. It's all about residents putting together a plan to bring nature back into their area. It's really important for places like ours, which is one of the most deprived areas in Manchester. We used to take our children to more affluent areas to enjoy nature, but why should we? We have all the basics we need right here.

We got started on our plan right away and set up Easy Come, Easy Grow as a community interest company. Now we're growing food with local children and with adults in the high-rise towers. It's giving young people new skills and showing them there are so many more kinds of careers than they might have imagined. We're not ignorant to climate change or growing our own food. We just haven't been taught. When you offer the opportunity, people do turn up.

We'd like to set up a community garden with a hub for events like coffee mornings and children's activities. We've found abandoned land we'd like to access through a community asset transfer. Now, the council are talking about using Pride in Place funding instead. But that would leave us with much higher administrative responsibilities than we can cope with as a small CIC.

We're really held back by the amount of red tape we need to follow for a lot of the work we'd like to do. To host events, for example, you need £10 million worth of public liability insurance unless you have a local council member present. We can only get half this as a small CIC, so if council members are busy, we can't host events. Even for small activities like litter picks, we need to do a new risk assessment every time.

But this has all put a real fire in our bellies. We keep pushing. We keep going. Eventually, we'll get somewhere.



Photo credit: Bristol. Productions

Co-op supports global water security within its supply chains and wider regions by contributing from its own-label bottled water sales to The One Foundation. This partnership has raised £25m and helps to fund clean water, sanitation, and hygiene projects, improving access to safe water and supporting better health outcomes for communities in need.

In Malawi, 80% of rural communities depend on groundwater, which is affected by pollution and deforestation. But climate events like droughts and floods are greatly affecting supplies. Cyclone Freddy also damaged many of the country's 30,000 boreholes back in 2023.

Working with implementing partner Baseflow, The One Foundation is supporting the restoration and improvement of boreholes, and strengthening groundwater monitoring to support long-term climate resilience and water security. The organisation is also assisting farmers to adopt new farming techniques that improve climate resilience and increase yields.

Jennifer, 35

Maize farmer, Magagada Village, T/A Mabuka, Mulanje, Malawi

I have been farming for five years. The change of weather has disturbed us due to low rainfall. Again, the heat and worms have been other factors affecting us. Before this new farming practice, our harvest was not much, but since we started growing in beds, we are harvesting more crops than before.

We were introduced through government extension workers and started attending trainings on farming in beds. Deep bed farming helps a lot in having high yields. We dig the ground about 30cm deep, prepare beds, and apply manure. When we have low rainfall, we still have water held in the beds as compared to ridges, and it provides a lot of moisture.

When we were using ridges, we used to harvest about five or seven bags, but since we started using deep bed farming, we harvest more bags, in the range of 20 to 30+ bags. Before we started farming in beds, we used to sleep on empty stomachs for about three days because our harvest was little to sustain us. Now we are able to have surplus and sell some of the crops.

I have benefited a lot from deep bed farming; I bought a goat, I am paying for my child's college fees, and I am using solar-powered electricity.

The future is so promising.





Photo credit: RSPB

Carbon-trapping peatland bogs can make a vibrant home for numerous species. But in the UK, around 80% of peatlands are damaged and degraded. Co-op has partnered with the RSPB to help the organisation ensure that over 800 hectares of restored peatland on its land across Scotland and Wales is kept healthy long into the future.

Emma Robertson,

Senior Programme Manager,
RSPB's Scotland Peatland Programme

I've always been interested in nature. As a scientist, who has also worked in education and outreach, it's hugely rewarding to know that our projects make such an impact for biodiversity and climate change, and it's important that young people and our communities are aware of the role peatlands play in this.

Peatlands are a significant part of the landscape across the country, and they're an incredible natural resource. Right now, we are in the middle of twin climate and nature emergencies. Peatlands can play a critical role in tackling both. In recognition, the RSPB made the commitment to undertake peatland restoration at a landscape scale across the UK.

A healthy peatland provides a home for a wide range of species, many of which are already declining. As the UK is one of the most nature deplete countries in the whole world, with one of the lowest levels of biodiversity, it's extremely important to restore our peatlands. These vast bogs are home to all kinds of plants, butterflies, reptiles, amphibians and mammals, as well as lots of different types of birds.

When healthy, peatlands also capture carbon from the atmosphere and store it. A peatland can hold more than twice the amount of carbon than is stored in a forest. They can also protect against flooding by slowing moving water, and improve our water quality by acting like a giant sponge and filtering rainwater.

Historically, the UK's peatlands have been drained and damaged by poor land management practices. Restoring these bogs means doing what we can to make them wet again, because a wet bog is a healthy bog. That means doing things like building dams, to keep water on the bog, and 'reprofiling,' where we cover areas of exposed peat with vegetation to allow it to recover and become wet again. As well as improving our natural environment, peatland restoration is a huge growth sector right now and can provide lots of jobs.

Co-op's support for the RSPB is critical for the long-term health of peatlands we have restored across the UK, ensuring they stay in the best healthy condition up to 100 years into the future. Some peatland has already improved significantly, with vegetation recovering and frogs spawning in new bog pools at several sites. We're already seeing exciting birds, including Snipe, Hen Harrier, Red Grouse, Golden Plover, Curlew and Dunlin returning to restored sites and hope to see even more priority peatland species thriving there over time.



Photo credit: Câr-y-Môr

Câr-y-Môr is a regenerative seaweed and shellfish farm in Pembrokeshire. It was set up as a community benefit society in 2019 with the goal of providing sustainable, local jobs. Co-op Foundation's Carbon Innovation Fund supported the organisation to test a seaweed-derived biostimulant that can help reduce the need for synthetic fertilisers on farms by almost one-third.

Tracey Gilbert-Falconer,

Funding Director

Câr-y-Môr means for the love of the sea in Welsh. Our farm was founded with the goal of setting up a new sector in Wales that is sustainable, supports fishermen and provides year-round employment for local people. It's for the people who live here, rather than shareholders. I've been involved for four years now in fundraising and communications.

We grow sugar kelp and other seaweeds in abundance. We decided to turn this into a biostimulant as we're surrounded by farms trying to reduce their use of fertiliser and operate more sustainably.

We've been testing our biostimulant over the last two years at several local farms to try and find the sweet spot and have found that reducing synthetic fertiliser seems to be optimal when using our product. We looked at things like soil quality and yield and found that, in some cases, it actually boosted crop yield.

Other local farmers were so impressed, they joined our trial in the second year. Generations of farmers have used seaweed on their land, so it wasn't a big jump to introduce seaweed biostimulant. If we're able to do it for a third and fourth year, I think even the most cynical farmers will start to take us seriously.

Over the next year we'll finish off tweaking the biostimulant processing to make sure we've got the concentration right, start batch testing and really starting to understand our product.

The biggest hurdles we face at the moment are regulatory. In our spot, we have to go through Natural Resources Wales, Pembrokeshire National Park, the Crown Estate and the Welsh Government to get marine licences. We understand that it has to be regulated, but this process can take years and cost a huge amount of money. We're lucky to have barristers and marine biologists on board, but that's not an option for everyone. A more joined-up approach to licensing would really help.



Photo credit: John Gilliland

ARC Zero is a group of seven farms in Northern Ireland on a journey towards Net Zero. They marry cutting-edge carbon measurement technology and nature-based solutions to land management. Funded by Co-op's Carbon Innovation Fund, Co-op Foundation supported the group's research into the impact of growing legumes as a feed for both animal and soil health.

Prof. John Gilliland,

Farmer and ARC Zero chair

I'm a fifth-generation farmer from Derry/Londonderry in Northern Ireland, farming cattle and growing short-rotation willow trees for renewable heat. I've been interested in agricultural politics for most of my career and have been researching how to take a livestock farm to Net Zero since 2013. People tend to think of livestock farming as bad for the planet, but it doesn't have to be.

To understand how to manage a farm well, you first need to be able to measure it accurately. We measured the organic carbon in our soil down to one metre and we surveyed our landscape with LIDAR laser technology to see how much carbon is already being stored in the land. We'll repeat this after five years to see how much carbon has been removed from the atmosphere.

We are very keen to find nature-based solutions to climate problems at ARC Zero. Take the methane released by cattle. On my own farm, we allow cows to graze the leaves from our willow trees, rather than on plain grass, and this helps reduce the amount of methane they release.

Co-op supported a project to reduce our use of soya bean as a feed. Growing alternative legumes improves our soil health and reduce our use of nitrogen fertilisers. It helps our animals, who are eating better protein. Herbs like chicory also contribute to a diverse diet for our livestock. If we graze cattle and sheep on swards of diverse plant species, we can make dramatic improvements in both productivity and carbon footprint.

The single biggest issue facing farmers is weather volatility. We go from floods to drought to floods. Complex, mixed-use landscapes provide far better drainage. Similarly, soil organic carbon content, holds moisture during droughts. In periods of heavy rain or intense sun, trees provide shelter for our animals.

Not only can livestock farming be Net Zero, it can support food resilience. Buying food grown here in the UK supports the farmers leading this shift. I would invite anyone, including members of parliament, to come to my farm and see the progress we've made.



Photo credit: Mikaela Loach

AWETHU is a school of organising for the intersections of climate justice and Black liberation. It empowers young Black organisers to ensure their voices are heard in climate action. Co-op Foundation supported AWETHU as part of its Roots and Routes funding.

Mikaela Loach,
AWETHU co-founder

I have been organising in the climate justice space for about the last decade, and I've often been the only Black person in most of the organisations I've worked with. That really impacts the sort of campaigns groups take on, as well as their messages, strategies and asks. This can result in a fundamental misunderstanding of climate justice and impact who benefits from change.

AWETHU co-founder Jess Mally has had similar frustrations in anti-racist groups. I'd written about more inclusive climate action in my book, It's Not That Radical. We thought one day, why don't we turn it into a practical curriculum?

The name AWETHU comes from the anti-apartheid chant *amandla awethu*, which means the power is ours. Everything we've done is rooted in giving people the practical skills and practical knowledge to transform our world.

We started off with an eight-week pilot programme with a small group of 12 young Black people. We wanted a relational and practical curriculum, because if we can empower and equip one organiser, they can empower and equip so many more. We've now run a second cohort, which Co-op Foundation supported. This enabled us to cover costs like transport and lunch, as well as some lost income for working students.

We've also run an online version of our programme - open for anyone to attend - and partnered with and ran workshops at international climate justice camps in Tanzania, Lebanon and Martinique.

The long-term plan is to train alumni and others in the wider community to deliver our programme in other areas. We already involve alumni in delivery. First-year alumni Christevie, for example, helped with co-facilitation and logistics for the second cohort, and shared her experiences setting up her own organisation, Congolese Roots.

Other alumni have set up or joined a range of diaspora groups organising around things like the war in Sudan and exploitation in the Niger Delta. They've secured funding and other forms of support from organisations like Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and the Social Change Nest.

It'd be great if there was more support to increase the visibility of programmes like ours. But really, what we're doing shouldn't need to exist. We're filling a gap in the wider education system. Widening the scope of school history lessons to teach on the reality of historical and present colonial violence, resistance movements, Black British history and how grassroots organising has led to so many of the freedoms we have today would be transformative.



The Green is a lively and inclusive community centre in Nunhead, South East London. Set up by local community group and charity Nunhead's Voice, it offers a space for free and donation-based activities, classes, events and fairs. It also hosts a community café, a community garden and monthly repair sessions. Co-op supported The Green to run Nature Club, a weekly session to get young children gardening through its Local Cause scheme.

Nikola Duncanova,

Nature Club at The Green, Nunhead

My name is Niky and I co-ordinate Nature Club at the Green, a weekly nature connection session for children and their parents in the local community.

This is a dream role for me. I left behind a corporate career in the city to follow a path more aligned with my values. I use my skills in organic food growing and gardening to connect people to the wonders of the natural world.

My sessions teach children about nature in creative and accessible ways. We learn how seeds germinate and observe nature's magic as they grow into juicy fruits and vegetables we can eat. We feed the worms and watch them wriggle as we hold them gently in our hands. This year, we have also raised frogs from eggs to tadpoles, bringing learning about the frog lifecycle out of the classroom and into the pond.

I know from my experiences at the Green and beyond, the positive impact that nature connection has on holistic health and wellbeing. The calming effect of being in nature benefits our physical and mental health. Interacting with others in your community reduces loneliness and builds local resilience through stronger connections.

It's important to have Government support to keep initiatives like Nature Club thriving. I'd encourage Government to:

- Include nature connection as part of the national education curriculum, giving children an opportunity to learn practical skills by having their hands in the soil and reducing time spent on screens.
- Empower GPs to socially prescribe participation in local community gardens and access green spaces, to support physical and mental health.
- Commission research into how policy could support nature connection for adults and children to improve overall health and wellbeing.

Lastly, I'd invite any MP to come to the Green to see for themselves the fantastic impact the centre has on the local community.



Photo credit: Doug Brown

Torrs Hydro is a community owned and operated hydroelectric generator in New Mills, Derbyshire. Commissioned in 2008, the converted Victorian water mill has supplied power to the town's Co-op Food store via a small substation for 18 years.

Doug Brown,
Director at Torrs Hydro

I've been involved in Torrs Hydro as a community shareholder since the beginning. In the early days we faced a lot of challenges, from lifting its 2.4m diameter Archimedes screw into place with a crane back in 2008, to cutting through all sorts of red tape.

I became a director at Torrs Hydro about seven years ago, and over the years, I've seen the way it's really pulled our community together. It's this big visible project that locals are very proud of. If people have family or friends to visit, they take them to go and see the scheme. Torrs Hydro shows how communities can work together for something that's good. The company I work for is Finnish, and the Finns have a great word for this sense of togetherness: *vi-känsla*, which means "the feeling of 'we'."

As well as cohesion, the project provides more tangible benefits for the community. We've improved Torrs Hydro over the years and now it generates more energy than it used to over the course of a year. It's less dependent on rainfall and river flow, enabling us to set up a community fund. We want to use it to invest in more renewables and Net Zero activities for our town, be that solar panels on community buildings or electric carpooling for local people.

Mills have long gone, but weirs like the one Torrs Hydro is built on have stayed. This put us at loggerheads with the Environment Agency at the beginning, whose policy is to allow them to collapse. We're very glad to have been able to use this resource that's been sitting untapped for a very long time. But if the weir ever needs repairing, this might be a challenge.

There's a huge industrial heritage sitting in the UK, especially in the north of the country. More joined-up thinking in Government could help other hydro projects get off the ground.

It's also taken us a long time to be able to give back financially to our community. Like many community energy projects, we're working in a system built for much larger players. Policy changes that recognise the value of community energy would help more projects like ours grow.



Photo credit: Hubbub

Co-op partnered with Your Local Pantry and Hubbub to enable them to open hundreds of community pantries and fridges across the country, redistributing surplus food to reduce food waste — which is critical to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and slowing the advance of climate change.

Crucially open to all, these community hubs offer vital support to people trying to make ends meet during the cost-of-living crisis. In many areas, they've become the heart of their local community, offering workshops and activities, as well as a place to connect with others and find out about wider support services.

Erol,

Volunteer at a Hubbub/ Sustainable Merton community fridge

I was forced to seek asylum in the UK from Cyprus in 2024. This meant leaving behind my home, my family and my career — everyone I had known and the life I had built over 29 years. I was a teacher in Cyprus, but I had to give this up.

I spent a very difficult year in an asylum hotel, waiting for a decision on my refugee status. I didn't know anyone, I was unable to work. I really felt like a fish out of water. During this period, I became lonely for the first time in my life. The experience really affected my mental health — particularly one day when I realised I didn't have anyone to write down as an emergency contact on a form.

When I moved to Merton in 2025, I couldn't afford to eat. I found the local Community Fridge on a Citizens Advice list, and visited to see if I could get some fresh produce. In the end, I found so much more than food.

I met so many people from all walks of life at the Community Fridge, which helped me feel less alone. I met kind people who offered answers to problems before I even had to ask. People I could write down as emergency contacts. I felt immense gratitude to the community for this support, so as soon as I got my refugee status, I decided to volunteer at the fridge. I started my first shift that very afternoon.

Today, I am still trudging along in many ways, but the Community Fridge means so much to me. I am glad to be able to give back, and I hope it will help people change their perception of refugees.





Co-op is trialling dozens of sustainability technologies and processes through its innovative 'Sustainability Showcase' stores. These include everything from solar panels to biodiversity gardens to water-efficient toilet systems. Successful measures will be rolled out across future stores and refits across Co-op's 2,000+ store estate. So far, the energy measures installed at our Earls Barton store have shown a near 50% reduction in store energy consumption and considerably reduced our operational carbon emissions.

Kieran Pollard,

Store Manager, Earls Barton's Co-op

I've been at the Co-op for 14 years, starting out as a baker after leaving university and working all the way up to store manager. I've been a manager for 10 years now, four of which have been at the Earls Barton store.

Our store was retrofitted over seven weeks last Autumn. It's had lots of improvements, including energy-efficient lighting, natural refrigerants and a new heating system. There's a big heat pump out the back that takes excess heat from the refrigerators to heat the store. It looks like something out of a sci-fi film.

Most of the changes aren't really noticeable, so they haven't affected our operations at all. For customers, the only thing that's really different are the fridges, which now have motion-activated lighting. This means they only light up when someone's actually nearby. We had a few questions at first, with customers asking if the fridges were broken! But now everyone's used to it. And it saves a huge amount of electricity.

We still have more improvements planned for the store, including solar panels on the roof. We already have a massive voltage unit that will eventually switch the power source it uses to be most sustainable throughout the day. We'll also get car chargers so people can plug in their electric vehicles while they shop.

It's exciting to be at the forefront of this trial. Co-op has thousands of food stores, and we were one of only a handful chosen to test out these technologies. The learnings from our experience will go on to inform what happens across the whole estate. It's great to be part of this internal process to become more self-sustaining.

But really, this is something that should be happening country-wide, not just left to businesses and individuals to do if they have the opportunity. It would be great if there was more support from Government to make more sustainable use of the natural resources we have and reduce our reliance on fossil fuels from across the world.

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