

Central Co-op and Midcounties Co-operative Members approve new Society

- Merger receives overwhelming support from Members across both Societies
- Most significant development in the UK co-op sector for a generation
- New Society will have more than 13,000 colleagues, a million Members and 500 food stores

Members of the UK's two largest independent co-operatives have given resounding backing to proposals for Central Co-op and the Midcounties Co-operative to come together and create a new Society.

Following Member votes held in recent weeks, both Societies have endorsed the proposals, culminating in formal approval on 2 December.

This decision will create the UK's largest independent co-operative Society, a major milestone for the movement, bringing together two regional powerhouses with the scale and capability to deliver greater value for more than one million Members, 13,000 colleagues and communities nationwide.

The legal completion is expected to conclude in January 2026.

Trading nationally through its Food, Utilities, Childcare, Funeralcare and Travel businesses, the new Society will remain deeply rooted in the communities where both co-operatives were founded.

Its footprint will span Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Wiltshire and Bedfordshire in the South and West, across the Midlands, Staffordshire and Northamptonshire, to Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Yorkshire in the North, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk in the East.

Elaine Dean, President of Central Co-op, said: "We'd like to thank all Members for their support and engagement through this process. Thousands of Members of both Societies have voted, asked questions and considered the proposals we put to them and the strength of the backing we have received gives a groundswell of support to take our new Society forward."

Irene Kirkman, President of Midcounties, said: "This is an historic moment for our two societies and the co-operative movement. The overwhelming proportion of Members that have voted in favour of creating our new Society shows the power of co-operation in action and as one Society, united by shared values and purpose, we can deliver even more for our Members, colleagues and communities."

The new Society has set out a clear commitment to be a beacon for co-operation, championing the growth of co-operatives in the UK and internationally and demonstrating how co-operative models can help address the major challenges of our time.

Debbie Robinson, Central Co-op CEO, said: “Creating a new Society brings together the scale, reach and commercial opportunity to shape the future of co-operation in the UK. This isn’t simply about combining two organisations, it’s about building something new, something distinctly ours. Together, we can drive better value for Members, create career opportunities for colleagues and strengthen the communities we serve. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to redefine what a modern co-operative can achieve.”

Phil Ponsonby, Midcounties Co-operative CEO, said: “The combined strengths of our new Society will allow us to navigate through challenging economic headwinds and invest for the future from a position of strength. As co-operators we know we can achieve more together, and we look forward to working with our Members, colleagues and partners to create a new Society that builds on our shared heritage and delivers real change.”

This development follows the transfer of Chelmsford Star into Central Co-op earlier this year, also supported strongly by Members.

In the coming days, Members will democratically vote on a new legal name for the Society. This name will reflect its values and strategic ambition and will be adopted following the legal completion. Central, Midcounties and Chelmsford Star sites and stores will continue to trade under their existing brands, all of which carry the internationally recognised ‘coop’ identity. The new name will apply to the Society’s legal entity only.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

Both Societies were required to hold Special Member’s Meetings so that Members could consider and vote on the proposals to bring the two Societies together.

Midcounties Co-operative held its Special Members’ Meetings on 17 November and 2 December, and Central Co-op held its meeting on 19 November.

At each meeting, more than 92% of Members attending voted to approve the merger.