



## COMMISSION ON CO-OPERATIVE & MUTUAL HOUSING

# NEWS RELEASE

### Independent Commission to Study Housing Co-operatives Launched at 'Co-operatives 2008' Conference in Blackpool

**30<sup>th</sup> June 2008**

An independent Commission to explore the role housing co-operatives play in providing democratically accountable housing and communities was launched at the 'Co-operatives 2008' conference in Blackpool on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2008. The Commission on Co-operative and Mutual Housing has been set in motion by the Confederation of Co-operative Housing, Co-operatives UK, the Co-operative Development Society, social housing providers Accord, Matrix, Hanover and Trident, the Housing Associations Charitable Trust (hact), and is supported by the National Housing Federation and the Chartered Institute of Housing.

The Commission's aim is to chart potential mutual futures for this diverse housing sector and to recommend ways in which the work of housing co-operatives can be expanded and sustained in line with their prominence and importance in the housing systems of most other European countries.

Commission Chair Adrian Coles, Director General of the Building Societies Association, outlined the approach: *'A small but flourishing co-operative housing sector has existed in the UK for some time but the Commission aims to move housing co-operatives closer to the centre of national policy debates by gathering evidence to see how best to expand their future role. The Commission, which is impartial and will receive evidence across the political spectrum, is to housing co-operatives what the 'Monks Commission' was to the wider co-operative sector in 2001; we aim to develop a long-term strategic framework for growth and management.'*

The Commission has engaged the Human City Institute (HCI) and the University of Birmingham's Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS) to carry out independent research to provide an up-to-date baseline of activity and achievement of UK housing co-operatives, to hear evidence across the country and to make recommendations about future trajectories.

**The Commission on Co-operative & Mutual Housing**

c/o the Human City Institute  
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The Blackpool launch included the first of a series of 'hearings' to gather evidence. Redditch Co-operative Homes, Birmingham Co-operative Housing Services, the Preston Community Gateway and the Balsall Heath Co-operative all presented their case to the Commission. Chris Handy, Chief Executive of Accord Housing Group and Executive Commissioner who presided over the 'hearing' comments: *'Drawing housing co-operatives and other housing and related sectors into the debate about the future of mutual housing is key to the Commission's approach. We are determined to provide opportunities for all interested parties to contribute to the Commission's work and help shape the future of the co-operative housing sector'*.

All political parties welcomed the Commission's work; Housing Minister Caroline Flint said: *'We need to explore how we can mainstream the excellent work of existing housing co-operatives'*, while Conservative Housing Spokesperson Grant Shapps agreed that: *'Housing Co-operatives are a valuable means of creating new affordable housing'*.

Representatives of the affordable housing sector also pledged their support for the Commission's work. National Housing Federation Chief Executive David Orr said: *'Housing Co-operatives have the potential to play a key role in creating successful and sustainable places which are informed and conditioned by the views of those who live there'*. Chartered Institute of Housing Chief Executive Sarah Webb emphasised the international perspective: *'All around the world people are using co-operative principles to create affordable homes in thriving communities and this new Commission will both explore the reasons behind this international success story and find ways of expanding its reach in the UK'*.

The Commission will sit for 15 months, publish a series of interim reports, findings, and articles, organise a range of events to disseminate findings widely and promote the sector extensively with policy-makers, other sectors, residents and communities. An interim report will be published in Autumn 2008 and a final report in Summer 2009.

**For more information contact Kevin Gulliver (Commission Secretary)**  
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## NOTES TO EDITORS

A fuller explanation of the Commission's scope, remit and initial research findings, plus fuller quotes from key players can be found in the attached summary.

### The Commissioners

Adrian Coles (CHAIR)	Director General Building Societies Association
Professor John Alder	Law Department, Newcastle University
Nic Bliss	Chair - Confederation of Co-operative Housing
Gavin Cansfield	Chief Executive Hanover in Hackney
Terry Edis	Committee Member NFTMO
Dame Pauline Green	Chief Executive Co-operatives UK
Dr. Chris Handy	Chief Executive Accord Housing Group
Blase Lambert	Member - Confederation of Co-operative Housing
John Morris	Chief Executive Trident HA & Chair of HCI
Gunn-Britt Martensson	CECODHAS
Professor Alan Murie	CURS, University of Birmingham
David Orr	Chief Executive National Housing Federation
Ben Reid	Chief Executive Midcounties Co-operative
David Rodgers	Chief Executive CDS Co-operatives
Sarah Webb	Chief Executive Chartered Institute of Housing