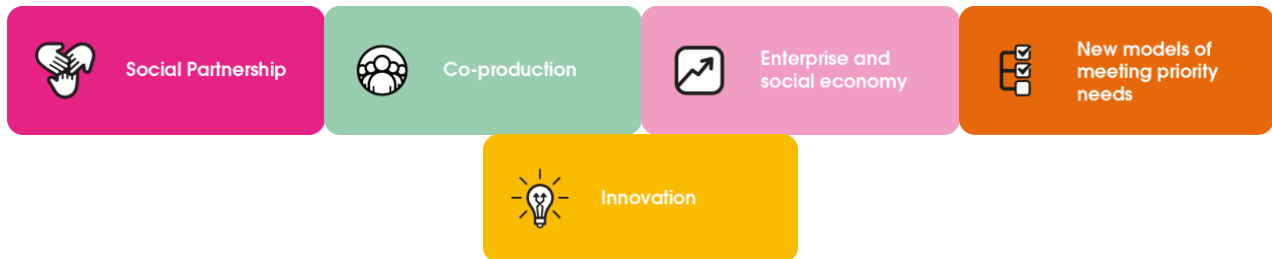


COMMUNITY



South Ribble Council

Leyland Community Greengrocers

Leyland Community Greengrocers is a community-led food cooperative in South Ribble, Lancashire. It was created to improve access to affordable, healthy local produce whilst supporting the borough's goal of building a more sustainable and thriving local economy through a range of community wealth building approaches.

The cooperative has become a practical example of community-powered change, demonstrating how residents can come together and collaborate with partners to build a fairer, more resilient, local food system.

Feedback collected during the delivery of a series of community cooking classes highlighted several challenges that our communities faced, such as:

- rising food costs and increasing pressure on household budgets,
- limited access to fresh and affordable local produce in some neighbourhoods,
- demand for more sustainable, localised food options,
- a need to build both community and economic resilience.

South Ribble Borough Council recognised that traditional retail models were not fully meeting community needs and designed a programme to bring like-minded people together to explore the potential for a food co-operative. Working with our key partners, the Larder (a social enterprise which promotes food that is healthy, local and seasonal) and the Cooperative Mutual Solutions (a worker cooperative which provides specialist business advice and training to cooperatives and social enterprises) we hosted a workshop, 'Farm to Fork' in September 2025.

The session brought together different stakeholders involved in the food industry, including community groups from the VCSE sector, local producers, and residents from across the borough with an interest in the cooperative movement. It highlighted best practices and explored existing models for providing affordable food options through cooperative efforts and community engagement. Attendees heard from other cooperatives from across the UK and Northern Ireland on their journey to set up community greengrocers, enabling them to learn about how a similar cooperative could work in South Ribble, the benefits it would bring and solutions for addressing potential challenges. The leading outcome of the workshop was the identification of a local cohort of 13 people who wanted to form and become part of a food cooperative for South Ribble. The basis for this cooperative was to promote healthy, affordable and locally grown food across communities in Leyland and the surrounding areas.

Supported by Cooperative Mutual Solutions, twice monthly meetings were established for the volunteers who started to bring this vision to life. Governance structures and principles were established based on democratic decision-making and a focus on social value. Roles were assigned to members based not only on their previous experience but also to give people the opportunity to develop new skills and experience while forming the cooperative.



Leyland Community Greengrocers Market Stall

To help establish the Leyland Community Greengrocers, the group were given the opportunity to host a pop-up market stall at Leyland Market on a busy weekend leading up to Christmas and agreed to use this event as a soft launch for the greengrocers. They secured £200 funding from a local business, Progress Housing, which supported community initiatives that benefited the local area through a competitive grant scheme. This provided start-up funding for the initiative and

enabled the group to begin building relationships with local growers and suppliers to establish a hybrid model for sourcing produce.

Promotional activity has been essential in raising the profile of the cooperative and has concentrated on affordable solutions such as social media. The first weekend market was successful, with volunteers assisting at the stall and visitors showing strong interest in reintroducing a fresh fruit and vegetable offer featuring locally sourced produce. Since the soft launch, the cooperative has been planning and taking steps towards establishing a permanent presence at the market.

The cooperative has benefited from additional funding support secured through the local authority's Start-up Business Grant Scheme. This provided the capital to source equipment that can help the cooperative operate more efficiently. They also continue to receive support from Cooperative Mutual Solutions, which advise on administration and legal issues, including regulatory requirements and financial accounts, and assist in identifying further potential sources of grant funding. The cooperatives aim to secure more funding to enable them to expand and establish a full-time market presence. There are also plans to increase membership and community engagement with the goal of boosting both the number of volunteers and paid workers to support the stall and enhance its capacity in the longer term.

Within six months, a group of volunteers with limited experience in cooperative business models has developed a model that can genuinely benefit the community. There is still a long journey ahead, but this appears to be a sustainable cooperative with the potential to make a lasting impact on South Ribble.

For further information contact:

Justina Ma

Transformation and Policy Lead – South Ribble Council

Justina.ma@southribble.gov.uk | 01257 515231 | www.southribble.gov.uk