



Hello!

Welcome to the *Radical Routes Investor Newsletter*. You may be a longstanding investor in Radical Routes, brand new to the network, or maybe you are considering making an investment in support of housing and worker co-operatives with a commitment to social change. Whatever has brought this newsletter into your hands, welcome! In this issue, we have information on:

- an appeal for help raising investments
 - an online get-together for RR Investor Members
 - your voice in RR: the Investor Member Group
 - news from RR co-ops
 - the Aims & Principles of RR (plus financial info)
 - the Investment Working Group and Investor Support Worker
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Email switchover

We would be very grateful if you would be willing to receive information from RR by email in future.

Our member communications with you includes info about the RR AGM and the Investor Member Group election, as well as future issues of this newsletter.

If you choose to receive member communications by email, you can request printed copies of information at any time, free of charge.

Please email investors@radicalroutes.org.uk with your name, shareholder number, and this message: 'I prefer to receive Radical Routes member communications by email.'

Thank you!



£200,000 – a new Radical Routes investment target

The Radical Routes network of nearly 40 radical co-ops is calling on its Investor Members to help raise £200,000 of new investments to support Radical Routes member co-ops.

Enclosed with this newsletter is an investment application form which we are urging investors to share with friends, family, fellow activists, neighbours and co-workers.

There is also an online version of the form you can share: <https://www.radicalroutes.org.uk/share-application-form/>

Why this big push?

Some months ago, the Radical Routes Finance Group realised that RR's current income from loan interest and loan repayments, and from expected new investments, is far smaller than the demand for help from RR member co-ops.

In the 10 Gatherings before November 2024, RR approved around £90,000 worth of loans to member co-ops at each quarterly Gathering, on average. However, RR's loan income and new investments have only been bringing in £48,000 per quarter in recent years, on average, meaning that our ability to make loans has been shrinking.

Around a third of the people in the Radical Routes network are currently unhoused, in 13 member co-ops. We want to be able to make loans to them!

The squeeze is so tight that Radical Routes has actually paused new loan applications for a few months.

This is why the Radical Routes Investment & Engagement Working Group has set a target of raising £200,000 in new investment in the next year or so. The Working Group believes this financial boost is needed to bring RR's *capacity to lend* more into balance with *the demand for loans* from RR member co-ops.

Please help RR reach more people willing to invest in social change!

Please join the IMG!



Practice voting, Dayton, Ohio, USA, 1920.

Please consider standing for election to the Radical Routes Investor Member Group. The IMG meets four times a year (online or in person) to be the voice of investors within the Radical Routes network.

At least five candidates need to stand for election to the IMG, otherwise the rules say that there will not be an IMG this year.

Radical Routes encourages investors who are not members of RR co-ops to stand for the Investor Member Group to ensure that the IMG offers a broad perspective of views. The next IMG election will take place in May.

If fewer than 10 people stand for election, they will all become members of the group automatically, without the need for voting.

In order to stand, you must have become an Investor Member of RR by 31 December 2024.

It is only necessary for a *majority* of elected IMG members to attend any meeting, so standing for election does not commit you to going to all four meetings in the year July 2025 – April 2026!

If you are an organisational investor in RR, you can also put forward a candidate for the IMG election. If that person is elected but then leaves the IMG or your group, your organisation will be asked to choose their replacement, if possible, to fill the vacancy on the Investor Member Group.

Ballot papers for the election will be circulated by email and by post in April. As an investor, you will be able to vote by post or by email in April, or in person at the Radical Routes AGM on 10 May in Monmouthshire. More information about the election process, and details of the AGM will be sent to all investors in April.

Candidate information

If you would like to stand for election to the Investor Member Group, please send us:

- your name and your pronouns (optional)
- your postal address, phone number, email address and, your RR shareholder number (none of this information will be circulated – we use these details to verify that you are an investor in RR and to get in touch if we need to check something with you)
- up to 600 words explaining why you want to be on the Investor Member Group
- a short description of yourself, including your experience and skills

The deadline for RR to *receive* nominations is midnight on 28 February 2025.

Organisations

If you are an organisation putting forward a candidate, please also send us a brief description of the organisation to go alongside your candidate's information.

You must also send us formal notification that your governing body has chosen the person you are nominating. This must also arrive by midnight on 28 February.

Please email your candidate information to
investors@radicalroutes.org.uk
or post it to:

**IMG election, c/o the I&E Worker, 29 Gensing Road,
St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex TN38 0HE**

Investors get together

On 12 April, there will be the first online meet-up of Investor Members of Radical Routes.

We will hear updates on the latest Radical Routes investment drive (see page 3), speeches from people standing for election to the Investor Member Group (see pages 4 and 5) as well as speakers from some Radical Routes co-ops.

There will also be a chance to have a chat with other Investor Members from around the UK.

RR Investor Members' Online Gathering
2pm - 5pm, Saturday 12 April 2025
<https://rr.meet.coop/mil-slm-ojr-y3h>



Business meeting, Radical Routes Gathering, Bidston Observatory Artistic Research Centre, Merseyside, England, November 2024. Photo: RR Publicity Group

RR's four loans to Neds

Neds is an urban housing co-op, based 2.5 miles from the city centre in Nottingham. We were established in 2001 by a group brought together by the Rainbow Social Centre and involved in climate activism and animal rights campaigning, although our social change has broadened over the years and currently includes legal observation, migrant solidarity, animal rights campaigning, vegan outreach climate and ecoaction, social centre volunteering, supporting women experiencing domestic violence and union activism.

We have typically housed 10 members in our property which was previously owned by a family bakery business and includes an early Victorian three-storey house, garage (now converted in a two-bedroom flat) and a former pikelet factory (now converted into a multi-purpose space including a flour loft attic room).

We have had four loans from Radical Routes over the years. The first to assist us to buy the property, and one to support our 'sister' Radical Routes co-op Wild Peak in Derbyshire; the other two have been to enable us to carry out repairs and upgrades to the aforementioned Victorian property.

Upgrade and repair

The first of these 'upgrade and repair' loans was for £14,000 to purchase solar panels back in 2011-12.

Since we have had the panels, we have generated an estimated 39,000Kwh of electricity and made around £15,600 for the co-op in terms of feed-in tariff payments. So, a wise move for us and the planet.

Our second loan, for £18,000 over 15 years, was taken out in 2021 and has allowed us to continue further improvements to the property to make it warmer and more energy efficient.

This loan has supported the installation of external insulation on our two-bedroom flat, and insulation and double-glazing of our final bedroom. *(continues on next page)*

Future Neds needs

(continued from previous page)

The concluding part of this work was completed a year ago and means that all our members now have a personal living space which is both double-glazed and insulated.

Our future plans, which we will likely need more finance for, include upgrading the insulation and glazing in our shared spaces, and hopefully installation of an air-source heat pump heating system, which would be more efficient than our current use of plug-in electric heaters, and make the property a bit cosier.

So thank you Radical Routes and Radical Routes investors for your support – we couldn't have done it without you!



A 'New Groups' workshop at the August 2024 RR Gathering just outside Bristol.
Photo: RR Publicity Group

Investment & Engagement Working Group/Worker

Last August, Radical Routes hired a new Investment & Engagement Worker (Milan Rai, front of picture to the right). A group of enthusiastic people also stepped forward to re-start the Radical Routes Investment & Engagement Working Group.



Most of the RR Investment & Engagement Working Group, after a meeting in Wirksworth, Derbyshire, England, on 14 December 2024.

This Working Group oversees the investment side of the network, and has taken on a lot of the work previously done by the Rootstock Committee.

The Working Group has subcommittees or ‘workgroups’ focused on: doing research on the impact of RR loans, raising investments, managing the Investor Member Group elections, sharpening RR policies to be best practice in the field, welcoming new members to the Working Group, and so on.

As an Investor Member, you are very welcome to join the Working Group. It meets at RR Gatherings and also between Gatherings. Intergathering meetings are currently scheduled for 15 March, 14 June and 13 September 2025.

If you'd like to join the I&E Working Group, please email investors@radicalroutes.org.uk

The new I&E Worker, Milan Rai, helped set up Walden Pond Housing Co-op in 1998 and has been coming to RR Gatherings ever since. A former editor of *Peace News*, Mil helps co-ordinate the People of Colour Huddles at RR Gatherings.

Gratitude from Kettle

Kettle Housing Co-operative wouldn't be possible without Radical Routes! We are currently 6.5 adults and three children, soon to be joined by another family in the Spring. We believe in access to land for all people, to good, affordable food, clean water, medicine grown and taken at home in the garden, resilience through community, sharing resources and working together, and reclaiming old skills and sharing them with others, amongst many other things!

In April 2023, Kettle finally realised our dream by buying a smallholding in South Devon with outbuildings, polytunnel, off-grid electricity, spring-fed, with residential, agricultural and commercial (for the running of educational activities) planning permission.

We had been trying to buy land for five years previous to this but kept getting outbid at the last moment, COVID saw land prices soar and we thought we were priced out but somehow, fortuitously, we were offered first purchase on Oakwood before it went to market.

It was a chance in a million, and very much more money than we had previously expected to pay for land! We managed to raise all the capital very last minute, with mostly long- and some short-term loanstock and a lot of gratitude.

Most of us had been part of Radical Routes from a previous land-based housing co-op we set up and lived in for between five and seven years, and knew we needed to be part of the Radical Routes network again.

We were so grateful when RR agreed our loan of £100,000 at an interest rate on 3.5% over 20 years, with the rare combination of a low interest rate and the long-term, home becomes possible – and we don't even have to sell out to the banks.

If you want to know more about us, or you'd like to come and visit, please email kettlecooperative@gmail.com. You can also join the list for our newsletters, or see a backlog of previous newsletters.

A Commune in the North



A Commune in the North is an associate member of Radical Routes. These photos come from a series taken by Sofia Aginis, a photography student, in December 2024.



A Commune in the North is based in Bentley, just north of Doncaster. They're also involved with Bentley Urban Farm, where they have a work day on Wednesdays. To visit, send an email with the subject 'Visit' to ACommuneInTheNorth@riseup.net, or come to their next gathering on 8 – 9 March.

www.acommuneinthenorth.org.uk

The Aims & Principles of Radical Routes



RR Gathering, Talamh, S Lanarkshire, Scotland, August 2024

Here we are in twenty-first-century Britain, in a world not of our making but one that has been molded over thousands of years of exploitation and injustice.

Our world is shaped by the forces of greed, capitalism and materialism, where maximum production and optimum profits are vigorously pursued, making life a misery for many and putting us and the environment at risk.

The system is ultimately controlled by the rich and powerful, the capitalists and bureaucrats, through the use of many mechanisms such as ownership of the economy (making people slaves to a job) and control of the media (creating a passive culture).

Radical Routes is a network of co-ops and individuals seeking to change all this.

We want to see a world based on equality and co-operation, where people give according to their ability and receive according to their needs, where work is fulfilling and useful and creativity is encouraged, where decision making is open to everyone with no hierarchies, where the environment is valued and respected in its own right rather than exploited.

We want to take control over all aspects of our lives. However, as we are not all in a position of control we are forced to compromise in order to exist.

We are working towards taking control over our housing, education and work through setting up housing and worker co-ops, and co-operating as a network.

Through gaining collective control over these areas we aim to reduce reliance on exploitative structures and build secure bases from which to challenge the system and encourage others to do so.

Radical Routes has developed from an idea in the mid '80s to a secondary co-op registered in April 1992. In 1986, New Education Housing Co-op was loaned £7,000 by supporters to put down a deposit on a house in Birmingham.

From that housing co-op, Radical Routes has grown via staging educational events, the spreading of information, a will to seek like-minded people and investment from supporters into an expanding nationwide network of like-minded co-ops and individuals.

The formation of the secondary co-op provided a structure to pursue our collective aims in a more efficient way, by promoting and raising funds for its member co-ops.

Radical Routes has limited resources and recognises that its particular work towards the above aims are only some of many valid activities.

The specific means it is pursuing are:

- The setting up of housing co-ops to house people and projects with the above aims.
- The setting up of workers co-ops which operate with the above aims.
- The promotion and organisation of participatory education through skills- and knowledge-sharing events, 'Taking Control' events, informative material and workshops.
- The raising of finance to take control over resources (property, technology, land...) through co-operation and economic interlocking of the co-ops.
- The support of like-minded projects.

The RR Loan Fund – investing in social change

Radical Routes' loan fund provides capital to starting or existing co-ops (housing co-ops, workers' co-ops or social centres), while providing investors with a stable return and ensuring that their money is being used to change the world for the better.

It is a **not-for-profit** fund controlled by its members (investors and borrowers). Investors can choose a rate of return on their investment and the interest charged to borrowers is used only to cover cost, build healthy reserves and further our aims. This approach allows us to be isolated from the broader market and to **offer lending on very competitive terms to keep it affordable for projects**. We currently lend to our member co-ops at a interest rate of between 3.5% and 6% and over periods of up to 35 years.

Currently, over **£1.2 million** of investment is actively working to support co-ops engaged in radical social change, spread across **20 projects**. Since 1991, Radical Routes has lent over **£1.5mn**. In 2024 alone, RR lent over **£270,000** to three member co-ops (one of them Kindling, with results described on p7-p8).

With the ongoing housing crisis compounded with the cost of living crisis, and the ever-increasing desire to change the world, many more projects are wanting to borrow from us, which is why we always need more investment! (See p3.)

Why invest with Radical Routes?

- *No bad loans in Radical Routes history:* Since we incorporated in 1991, Radical Routes is proud to say that no loans have gone bad throughout our history. We believe this is a testament to the rigorous joining and loan application process coupled with the support and guidance provided by the network.
- *100% Impactful:* Your entire investment funds co-ops striving for radical social change. Member co-ops pay for the day-to-day operations of Radical Routes through regular service payments. This means that 100% of funds invested are provided for a variety of projects.
- *Build community:* Investor Members can attend all Radical Routes' business meetings and regular Gatherings providing

access to both the projects they are funding but are also able to have a transparent view of the organisation. Investors can also benefit from networking with a diverse range of people and building a community dedicated to social change.

Some financial information:

Around £1.28 million is currently invested by 289 investors. (On 1 January 2024, £1.21mn was invested by 282 investors.)

During 2024, there was £104,550 of new investment and £53,094 investment was withdrawn.

Radical Routes maintains a fully-provided reserves policy amounting to 10% of total assets.

(A comprehensive financial report is available from investors@radicalroutes.org.uk)

Investors can choose to receive interest on their investment:

- at the maximum rate, currently 3%
- at the half-rate, currently 1.5%
- or choose to receive no interest (0%)

During 2024, the average interest rate paid on shares was 1.92%.

Investments are in the form of 'withdrawable shares' meaning that investors can request their money back at any time.

Withdrawal requests are subject to a maximum 13 weeks' notice, although we aim to pay withdrawals within four weeks for sums less than £20,000.

What will your investment support?

Our funding has empowered co-operatives to make a lasting impact. Here's how some co-ops have used the money:

Purchasing properties as Community Assets:

- Taking properties off the private sector and converting them into long-term community assets.

Supporting people and projects with the cost of living crisis and escalating mortgage costs:

- Paying off mortgages and restructuring their finances
- Repairs, maintenance and energy efficiency / ecological improvements

Join us!

For contact information, please see the back cover.

Radical Routes Ltd.

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Disclaimer

Nothing in this newsletter is intended as financial advice.

Please contact an Independent Financial Advisor if you require financial advice.

Radical Routes offers withdrawable shares as a means of supporting co-operatives working for social change rather than as a financial investment.



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