

## Modern Slavery Statement

This statement is made pursuant to s.54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and sets out the steps that the East of England Co-operative Society has taken and is continuing to take to ensure that modern slavery or human trafficking is not taking place within our business or supply chain.

Modern slavery encompasses slavery, servitude, human trafficking and forced labour. The East of England Co-operative Society has a zero tolerance approach to any form of modern slavery. We are committed to acting ethically and with integrity and transparency in all business dealings and to putting effective systems and controls in place to safeguard against any form of modern slavery taking place within the business or our supply chain.

### Our business

The Society's principal business activities are Food retailing, Funeral services and management of its Investment Property portfolio. In addition, the Society has interests in Petrol Forecourts, Travel, Events and conferencing, Security and Stonemasonry.

The Society is incorporated in England under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 and its registered address is Wherstead Park, The Street, Wherstead, Ipswich, IP9 2BJ.

None of our turnover is generated by overseas operations. We do acquire some of our products direct from overseas suppliers, but this is largely isolated to the purchase of stone for our masonry business, H.L. Perfitt Ltd.

Within the last 12 months the Society has used around 1,500 individual suppliers. A significant majority of our turnover is generated from goods purchased through a buying group which comprises the Co-operative Group and a number of other independent co-operative societies. The Co-operative Group has published its own Modern Slavery Statement outlining the steps it takes to ensure fundamental labour standards are applied throughout its supply chains and we are confident that we can place reliance on their procedures and policies.

### Our high-risk areas

The signs of modern slavery can often be very subtle and difficult to identify; we are improving our understanding of where the risks are greatest and prioritising our activity accordingly.

During our due diligence we identified that our highest areas of risk were our local suppliers and the masonry stone suppliers to H.L. Perfitt Ltd.

### Local suppliers

Local suppliers tend to have a less formal structure and more fluid worker arrangements, often relying on migrant, seasonal and agency workers, which may carry a higher risk of human rights abuses.

Local suppliers are often less aware of the circumstances surrounding modern slavery. We will, where necessary, educate our suppliers and make full enquiries regarding their processes and procedures as part of our ongoing audit of our local suppliers.

## **H.L. Perfitt Ltd**

H.L. Perfitt Ltd currently sources stone from China and India which are deemed higher risk due to the varying human rights from country to country. We have made all reasonable efforts, including enquiries through supplier agents, to ensure that modern slavery does not exist within this supply chain.

### **Our suppliers**

The East of England Co-operative Society operates a supplier policy. We conduct due diligence on all suppliers before allowing them to become a preferred supplier. Since 29 January 2017 this due diligence includes an online search to ensure that the organisation has never been convicted of offences relating to modern slavery, on-site audits which include a review of working conditions for relevant suppliers, and inclusion of a section within our supplier manual which asks suppliers to report any issues or concerns that they may have. Our anti-slavery policy forms part of our bond with relevant suppliers and they are required to confirm that no part of their business operations contradicts this policy.

In addition to the above, as part of our bond with our suppliers, we require that they confirm to us that:

- They ensure that their employees have the right to work in the UK
- They meet the requirements of UK employment legislation, which is assumed to include the requirement to pay the National Minimum Wage
- They have systems in place to ensure that their employees are not enslaved or forced to work contrary to the Modern Slavery Act 2015

We may terminate the contract at any time should any instances of modern slavery come to light.

### **Our policies**

We operate a number of other internal policies to ensure that we are conducting business in an ethical and transparent manner.

These include:

- Recruitment policy
- Whistleblowing policy
- Dignity at work policy
- Equal opportunities policy

In partnership with the charity City Hearts, we are proud to be part of the Bright Future programme, which offers a pathway to paid employment for survivors of modern slavery.

### **Training**

We conduct training for our procurement/buying teams so that they understand the signs of modern slavery and what to do if they suspect that it is taking place within our supply chain.

### **Our performance indicators**

We will know the effectiveness of the steps that we are taking to ensure that slavery and/or human trafficking are not taking place within our business or supply chain if:

- No reports are received from colleagues, the public or law enforcement agencies to indicate that modern slavery practices have been identified
- All suppliers deemed by the Society to be at a higher risk of human rights abuses have been subject to the Society's audit procedures and no concerns have been highlighted

On behalf of the Board:

Frank Moxon

**President**

25 April 2023