



Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

E3M

INNOVATION

E3M working with Oldham Council

Northern Roots & Oldham Alchemy

In July 2018, the E3M partners convened a special Alchemy innovation event to support Oldham Council and its partners in developing ideas for a bold new initiative called 'Northern Roots'. The project involves harnessing the potential of a currently underused 65-hectare site and a new brand centred on food growing and production. Together they will be a catalyst for community health and wellbeing, new leisure opportunities, skills development, employment, enterprise creation and service transformation.

The Oldham Alchemy event brought together 85 participants and sought to ensure that 'Northern Roots' reflects Oldham's ambition to be a productive and cooperative place with healthy, aspirational and sustainable communities. The event:

- shared knowledge about the "art of the possible" with real, successful examples of innovation in social enterprise and service delivery from across the UK.
- explored ideas for large-scale social enterprises, examining how these could contribute to building an inclusive economy and delivering co-operative services.
- examined the social impact and value these ideas could deliver, their financial sustainability and the investment or resources they would need.
- explored how Northern Roots can enable Oldham to develop services which cost less and deliver better outcomes, stimulate local, inclusive, economic growth, and empower and engage local residents in solving problems.

Council representatives and a range of Oldham stakeholders worked intensively for 24 hours alongside members of the E3M Bold Commissioners Club, E3M Social Enterprise Leaders, social investors and the E3M partners

The participants developed a diverse, bold, ambitious, boundary-pushing but realistic set of proposals for co-operative, collaborative and sustainable service delivery by social enterprises in Northern Roots.



Following the event, the E3M partners prepared a special report for Oldham Council and on 28 January 2019, Oldham's Cabinet approved plans to begin development of Alexandra Park Eco Centre, and further develop the Northern Roots project. The inception phase of the project will focus on community, stakeholder and investor engagement.

For more information [Northern Roots and Oldham Alchemy](#)

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