St Edmund's Catholic Church

Parish Finance and Fabric Committee

PARISH ETHICAL PURCHASES

Background

Issues around ethical consumption can be complex but there are examples where shopping ethically can make a real difference.

Good for the environment. We are faced with many environmental issues, from global warming to pesticide pollution, that can in part be addressed by shopping more ethically. For example we can help tackle climate change by switching to a green energy provider or help reduce the amount of dangerous pesticides by buying organic products.

Good for society (both local and global). We can help create the type of society we want through buying from companies that take their commitments to our communities seriously. Many of the products we buy may have been produced by companies that pay their workers poverty wages, avoid contributing taxes, support repressive societies and fund military arms production and sales.

Good for animal welfare. Consuming ethically can help improve conditions for animals. This may cover animal testing, factory farming, and animal welfare.

There is something both important and satisfying about purchasing ethically. It's often difficult to define but those who shop ethically feel empowered, knowing that perhaps small changes they are making can lead to big environmental and social impacts. The concept of ethical production and purchasing has deep roots in Catholic Social Teaching and tradition.

Discussion

This parish, like any purchaser, requires goods and services. This can range from general shopping to banking and other services such as broadband. The world is complex and interrelated and it can be difficult to discern the consequences behind these everyday transactions. There are now reliable sources of information about purchases within the UK. One such organisation is 'Ethical Consumer' an independent, not-for-profit, co-operative with open membership, founded in 1989 and based in Manchester. This source produces shopping guides with ethical ratings, campaigns on key ethical issues and carries out research and reports for organisations such as Amnesty International, Christian Aid and Co-op Bank. They produce a subscription based bi-monthly magazine, a website database on over 40,000 companies, brands and products with shopping guides and company profiles. (https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/about-us).

Financial Implications

Ethical purchasing may have implications for parish finances, in that a balance needs to be struck between an item or service cost and ethical implications covering various areas related to the manufacturer or supplier. This requires awareness and judgement in assessing wider issues of value.

Budget Implications

Annual subscription to Ethical Consumer is £39.50. The parish has a budget item for newspapers and magazines of £150 for this year.

Recommendation: *that the parish subscribes to Ethical Consumer and undertakes a review of present suppliers and assessments of future purchases on an ethical basis, in line with Catholic Social Teaching.*

Neil Mayhew (Treasurer)

ethical consumer

£6.50 214 May/Jun 2025
www.ethicalconsumer.org

WHICH BANKS ARE SUPPORTING ISRAEL?

NEW SECTION ON CHALLENGING CORPORATE POWER

Protest is flowering this spring!

BOYCOTTING TRUMP & MUSK

GUIDE TO RETROFIT MORTGAGES

GUIDES TO CURRENT ACCOUNTS & SAVINGS

ISSN 0955-8608

SHOPPING GUIDES TO mortgages current accounts savings accounts

Editorial

WHO'S WHO AT EC

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ABOUT THE ADVERTISERS

ECRA checks out advertisers before accepting their ads and reserves the right to refuse any advert.

COVERED IN PREVIOUS SHOPPING GUIDES:

Ecotricity (201), Energise Africa (177), Kingfisher Toothpaste (206), Naturesave (202), Vegetarian Shoes (208), Zaytoun (178).

RATED AS A BEST BUY: THE PATH

OTHER ADVERTISERS:

Amnesty International, Good Green Money, Investing Ethically, Magic Breakfast, Ripple Effect.

Corporate Power

In our last issue (EC213) we were already reporting on the stirrings of action against the rise of aggressive nationalism in the USA. We are continuing to do this on our boycotts page on page 8 as well as celebrating it on our cover.

But, like many others, we've also been jolted into having a think about what else we can do. Because of this, we've decided to expand our magazine by four pages, and to use these new pages to focus more attention on what we think lies at the heart of the problems around us – a corporate power that has run out of control.

We start, on page 44, by explaining our plan and trying to create a vision of an alternative future. We're hoping to work with our community of readers on this project, so feedback is very welcome. And thanks, as ever, to our investors who have made this kind of swift response possible.

Banks at the centre

The bulk of this magazine is focused on the role of banks, and how the decisions they make shape the wider economies and societies around us.

As we visit this subject every two years or so, we are conscious that many of our reader will know much of the story – like the great alternatives offered by mutuals – already. Readers sometimes tell us that "once you've read the magazine for four years or so, you know enough about how to get most of your ethical choices in shape."

This means that, to keep you interested, we need to drill down into the kind of detail that you won't see elsewhere. This includes UK banks ranked by directors' pay and gender pay gaps (p26-29); the rise of mutuals and EC's own campaign on the Co-op Bank (p19); our independent assessments of banks and building societies' retrofit mortgage offerings; and external articles on credit unions and lending to women. We also look at an emerging trend amongst bigger banks to roll back on earlier promises of environmental action.

It gives us extra pleasure to be frequently using expressions like "climate change" and "diversity" that the new US administration appears to be trying to ban!

Thanks to Tim and Fran

We'd like to end by saying a special thank you to Tim Hunt and Fran Thomas who are moving on from Ethical Consumer in April after 15 years and 7 years on the frontline, respectively.

Tim started as a writer-researcher on our shopping guides and has worked in pretty much every role since then, ending up as a board director and technology specialist. It is his enthusiasm though for commercial publishing and data-driven marketing that has been particularly valuable, and that have helped Ethical Consumer get where it is today. We wish him well on the next stage of his journey with DataContentReach and LocalGov Drupal.

Fran has been a rock at the core of our subscriptions department, helping confused subscribers with their renewals, making sure everyone got their mag on time, and grappling with our complex technical systems daily. Keeping all this running has been critical to our growth. We wish her well with whatever she does next.

We'd like to welcome in two new talented staff too, Sundeep and Sarah, who will be picking up where Fran and Tim left off.

ROB HARRISON
EDITOR

WHAT IS ETHICAL CONSUMER?

We are an independent, not-for-profit, multi-stakeholder co-operative founded in 1989 and based in Manchester. Our primary goal is making global businesses more sustainable through consumer pressure. Our mission is to:

1 Help consumers to challenge corporate power by using their economic vote every time they go shopping.

2 Democratise the market by enabling consumers to assert their own ethical values by using our shopping guides.

3 Have a fully transparent ranking system. All our data is available to subscribers.

4 Engage with companies by telling them why we are buying or not buying their products. We also send them detailed questions about their policy and practice on ethical issues.

5 Push for wider political action and legislative change. Ethical consumerism is not a replacement for other forms of political action. But it is an important additional way for people to exert their influence.

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