

Supporting community housing associations

As well as assisting many individual green self-builders and renovators, the Ecology also supports a variety of voluntary organisations in their endeavours, working with and on behalf of local communities and those in need. Some of these have been featured in previous newsletters, such as the **Stonesfield Community Trust**, which has built homes for rent to local people in Oxfordshire; **Emmaus**, a community house to help the homeless in Belfast and **Giroscope Ltd**, a workers co-operative providing accommodation for the homeless in Hull.

We are pleased to continue this socially beneficial lending, and have recently agreed a mortgage with **Spotland & Falinge Housing Association** (SFHA), a local community based housing association in Rochdale. In the true spirit of the Rochdale Pioneers, SFHA grew out of a local residents' association in 1979.

Brian Parnell, current chair of SFHA explains that, "Residents were concerned that certain terraces, containing almost all the rented accommodation in the area, were not adequately covered by the local council's urban renewal strategy. They were therefore at significant risk of clearance. Spotland residents have always fought for improvement against unnecessary clearance, both to preserve the local neighbourhood and the continued availability of rented accommodation."

The Housing Association was eventually registered by the Housing Corporation in March 1982 and now has a total of 26 properties of two to three bedrooms. All of the properties were completely rehabilitated

about 15 years ago and have gradually had further energy saving improvements carried out, such as double glazing, draught-proofing and modern central heating systems. The voluntary committee of management have an impressive programme of works to maintain secure and comfortable accommodation.

Vacant houses are let to local people in housing need on affordable rents. Referrals and nominations are considered from the



local council and other agencies, while applications direct to the Association are also possible. "We keep the length of time houses are left empty between tenants to a minimum," says Brian,

"the average gap being just three weeks.

This is a significant indicator of the real need for rented accommodation locally and the pro-active management of our properties."

The Housing Corporation has provided grant funding to enable two more three-bedroom properties to be acquired. The Ecology mortgage is required to fund their refurbishment and we are pleased to be able to support a well-run and voluntarily managed community housing association. With only one part-time employee, Spotland and Falinge Housing Association have achieved a great deal for their local community and we hope to help them achieve even more. Their record of tenant

participation is impressive, with three current and one former tenant being active on the management committee.

The need for urban regeneration, for both environmental and social reasons is becoming increasingly obvious, with government and local politicians talking about it with growing frequency. It is hoped that more community housing associations will be able to develop their services and take a lead in such schemes. We will be pleased to hear from any management committees around the country seeking the possibility of mortgage finance!



Mortgage value

The Ecology strives to maintain a fair balance between the needs of our savers and the needs of our borrowers. We firmly believe that whopping up-front mortgage discounts are always paid for in the long run.

Our aim is to provide long-term protection for the environment and long-term value to our borrowers. We were pleased therefore, that in recent industry wide research, the Ecology appeared in the top ten best value lenders over the past two years.

Source: Network Data

the Ecology is...

... a mutual building society dedicated to improving the environment by promoting sustainable housing and sustainable communities. Your investment funds mortgage lending on:

- energy-efficient housing
- ecological renovation
- derelict and dilapidated properties
- small-scale and ecological enterprise
- low-impact lifestyles

New Eco-60 account launched

We are delighted to announce the launch of our new 60 day notice account, in response to requests from members and prospective members. With improved rates of interest in return for giving 60 days notice of withdrawal, the new Eco-60 account has a minimum opening balance of £500. As your balance rises, so does your rate of interest. The table below gives details of rates as at 31 March 2000.

Eco-60 Interest rates 31 March 2000

	AER/Gross %	Net pa %
£500	4.00	3.20
£2,500	4.25	3.40
£5,000	4.50	3.60
£10,000	4.75	3.80
£25,000	5.00	4.00

AER stands for Annual Equivalent Rate and provides a means of comparing interest rates by showing what the rate would be if interest were paid and added once a year. All rates are variable.

Ideal for lump sums, the account also makes a useful regular savings account, having a direct debit facility for monthly deposits. The 60 day notice period avoids the temptation of dipping into your account before your savings target is reached!

Parents, grandparents and other relatives often want to help secure their children's

future by putting aside funds towards the costs of further education, a gap year or a deposit on a house. Eco-60 makes a secure home for these longer term savings. The account is available on a trustee basis and can be transferred to the name of the beneficiary when required.

Withdrawals without giving 60 days notice are available, but are then subject to a penalty of 60 days interest. The minimum withdrawal is £250. **Why not match your longer term savings to your long term commitment to the environment.** For further details and application form please complete the coupon on the back cover.

Earthwise ISA update

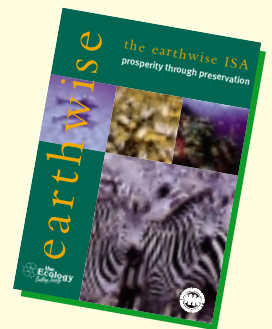
Last year the government introduced a new tax-free savings vehicle, the Individual Savings Account or ISA. The Chancellor announced in his budget that the savings limits for the 2000/2001 tax year remain the same as for 1999/2000.

From 6 April 2000 you can save up to £3,000 in our Earthwise cash mini ISA plus up to £3,000 in the Earthwise equity mini ISA, provided by Family Assurance and investing in the Family Charities Ethical Trust. You can invest in either or both of these mini ISAs. Existing investors in these accounts can simply top them up with further funds, up to the limit of their ISA allowance for the new tax year.

Alternatively, if you do not require a mini ISA (with the Ecology or any other provider), you may invest up to £7,000 in an Earthwise maxi ISA. All of your money would be invested in the Family Charities Ethical Trust. Regulations do not allow you to open both a mini and a maxi ISA in the same tax year.

Please use the reply coupon overleaf to request details and application forms.

Please remember that the value of equity ISAs may fall as well as rise.



AECB Guide to Greener Building

The Association for Environment Conscious Building answers some frequently asked questions on the subject of eco-building and renovation



Here are some replies to a number of questions that we are commonly asked. If you have a specific question on any issue relating to sustainable, healthy building please telephone us on 01559 370908 or e-mail your question to admin@aecb.net

What type of wood preservative is the safest and most acceptable to use?

Generally we suggest that you try to avoid all wood preservatives as most problems can be resolved by establishing and rectifying the cause, then using environmental controls (adjusting temperature and ventilation). If you really must treat then we suggest that boron is used. Boron is effective against wood rot (wet and dry rot) and wood boring beetle.

Where can I go to see real eco-buildings?

The Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) in Machynlleth, mid-Wales would be a good start. They have been building 'alternative' and eco-buildings for over twenty years.

Here you can see exactly how eco-buildings are built, powered and used. A visit to CAT makes an excellent family day, with a wealth of hands-on educational opportunities for all ages. They also stock numerous books on the subject. Contact CAT on 01654 702400 or visit their web: www.cat.org.uk

NATTA, the Network for Alternative Technology and Technology Assessment produce a list of energy efficient buildings in London. You can contact them on 01908 654638 or web: www.tec.open.ac.uk/eeru/natta/rol.html

ECD Energy and Environment (020 7405 3121) has produced a CD (£10) which lists eco buildings across the country.

Where can I get eco-paints in the UK?

Eco-paints are available mail order from a number of companies. The paints range from totally organic and natural to synthetic VOC free. In some situations, such as wall

painting, you could consider limewash as a traditional and inexpensive coating. Our Real Green Book (see below) gives details of a range of suppliers.

My building society insists that I carry out damp proofing to the walls of the house that I wish to buy. Are there any risks associated with this?

The biggest problem with injected damp proof courses is that the system generally uses VOC's. Also there is rarely any real benefit from the process. The Ecology Building Society does not usually insist on a dpc. Certainly it is worth investigating the causes of damp and rectifying these.

Visit our web site at www.aecb.net for lots of useful contacts relating to any of the above or send us an SAE (92p) for a copy of our **Real Green Book 2000** and sample issue of our magazine Building for a Future. AECB, Nant-y-garreg, Saron, Llandysul, Carmarthenshire SA44 5EJ.

Mortgage Round-up

We lend across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, where there is more to the loan than just bricks and mortar



We are keen to help maintain the facilities of small communities, and were pleased to be able to offer a mortgage to support a community village store in **Hampshire**. Finance was required to repay existing borrowing and provide further funds to make improvements to the living accommodation. By supporting the only shop in the village to continue trading, we are helping to sustain the local

community. Business is growing by about 7% a year and visitors to the village of Harting, near Petersfield, are welcome to call in, hopefully to make a purchase!

There is growing interest in earth sheltering and we have recently provided finance for the purchase of land in **Surrey** for the construction of an Earth Shelter designed by David Woods of the British Earth Sheltering Association. Two of the walls will be constructed using Beco-Wallform blocks. These consist of hollow blocks of expanded polystyrene foam (EPS) that are slotted together rather like toy building bricks. Concrete is then poured between the layers to create a solid core with the EPS remaining as thermal insulation. The two other walls will be mostly glass,

consisting of argon filled double glazing units in timber frames. The shelter will also incorporate water saving features and use as many renewable resources as possible.

Two Ecology savers have recently become borrowers, too. They have taken an Ecology mortgage to purchase and renovate an end of terrace Victorian property in **Chester** (below). The house had been



converted into flats but is now being re-instated as a single dwelling. Significant remedial works have also been undertaken, the property having been neglected for a number of years. All being well, moving-in day will be 1 April 2000. We wish them the best of luck!

A run-down timber frame farmhouse in **Cambridgeshire** (above) will shortly be given a new lease of life by borrowers who plan to develop an organic horticultural business once renovations are complete. As well as improving the property in an ecological manner, our borrowers intend to introduce renewable energy and a reed-bed drainage system. Their aim is to operate an organic box scheme within their local area.

The awesome foursome

Senior Ecology staff donned fancy dress at the beginning of March, along with staff from other building societies around the country. The fund-raising day was organised nationally by Shelter, working to help the homeless throughout Britain.



Commis chef chief executive Paul Ellis enjoyed getting rid of his collar and tie, but was upstaged by Pat Pettit who put on a collar to become a thoroughly convincing priest. Masked avenger Zorro, alias senior mortgage administrator David Turner, and Peace-nik assistant general manager John Mason both caused consternation on the streets of Cross Hills, but also managed to raise many a smile and a total of £90 for Shelter, too. Any member who would like to make a donation can send us a cheque or charity voucher payable to Shelter by 2 May 2000 and we will forward them all on.

Brave New Economy

Ed Mayo, Director of the New Economics Foundation, introduces their new campaign and education resource.

For over 15 years the New Economics Foundation (NEF) has worked for social and economic change, attempting to create a human-centred rather than purely profit-centred view of economics and social development. Working with a wide range of economic, social, financial, environmental and development organisations, NEF encourages individuals, organisations and government to take a serious look at the alternatives to the accepted wisdoms of 'old economics'.

But how do you campaign for economic reform? How do you put dry old economics into the hands of ordinary people and inspire them with a host of relevant and exciting opportunities for change? Brave New Economy is a multi media CD-ROM that really engages the viewer and provides a wealth of information through music, graphics and animation, all creatively hosted by Mark Thomas of Channel 4 Television.

It showcases hundreds of UK initiatives and organisations (including Ecology Building Society) striving to balance environmental, social and economic needs and empowers the user with challenging aspirations, action points and policies. Users become aware that they have a powerful role to play in growing this wonderful new economy, the future looks brighter, it could move into safer and more human hands - through their actions and efforts.

The CD is PC and Mac compatible and costs £9, or £18 for three copies from: New Economics Foundation, 6 - 8 Cole Street, London SE1 4YH. Please add 10% to cover post and packing.



Organic Targets

There is widespread agreement that the area of land farmed sustainably in the UK should expand. Organic production is one of the best ways of achieving this. Farmer and consumer interest in organic has never been higher, yet only 1% of UK farmland is organic while we import around 70% of the organic food sold here. This represents a serious environmental cost in transportation as well as lost opportunities for UK growers.

Sustain, the alliance for better food and farming is campaigning for an Organic Targets Bill. This is because an overall strategy and target is needed and a government Bill is the only way to ensure a legal target is set and statutory policies put in place to achieve it. Sustain needs your support in its campaign. Visit their site at www.sustainweb.org or call them on 0207 837 1228.

GMOs in animal feed

The Five Year Freeze campaign brings together individuals and organisations who share a deep concern about genetic engineering in food and farming. Some

believe there is no place for the technology at all, while others think it could bring benefits. What unites them is the immediate need to stop and consider the massive social, economic and environmental effects worldwide. Thus a Five Year Freeze is urgently called for. Their latest campaign focus is the use of GMOs in animal feed. For details see their website at www.dspace.dial.pipex.com/gealliance or send a large SAE to Five Year Freeze, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF.

Fewer cars more car sharing...

This is the aim of the Community Car Share Network, recently established to promote and aid the development of car share ownership schemes around the UK. Development Manager Antonia Roberts says, 'Car sharing is far more advanced in places like Germany. The development of more schemes in the UK would help us to reduce the environmental impact of cars, create a community resource and provide an extra transport option in more rural areas.' Their website is at www.carshareclubs.org.uk or telephone 0113 234 9299.

Green growth

The Ecology had an exceptional year in 1999 with record lending figures and record inflows of savers funds. New lending touched £6 million, with all-time monthly records being established on four occasions. Inflow of savers funds was double that of 1998 and the highest ever recorded.

For us, this provides confirmation that the Society has an important role to play in ethical and environment-conscious savings and mortgages. Our increased size brings us an improved capacity to aid in the quest for a sustainable economy, where the environment and the needs of individuals are not made secondary to the pursuit of growth at all costs.

Our lending policy stresses these positive goals, but equally important to achieving our aims is avoiding lending where on balance we consider that more harm than good will ensue in environmental terms. This is often a difficult judgement to make and there are no environmental credit scoring systems available to aid our decisions! Our own lives are full of similar decisions - does it make sense for instance to buy organic when the item has been transported from say, Kenya? Following this logic we do not as a rule lend on holiday homes, but accept that people do take holidays and therefore lend support to innovative ideas such as earth-sheltered replacements for static caravans.

The good results we have achieved in 1999 are down to the hard work of our office staff and you the members, both savers and borrowers. With your support we look forward to an equally successful year in 2000.

PAUL ELLIS, Chief Executive

Further information

For further information about our services please e-mail us on: info@ecology.co.uk or return this coupon to:

Ecology Building Society
FREEPOST, 18 Station Road, Cross Hills
Keighley BD20 5BR

Eco-60 savings account	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mortgages: general	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eco-Instant savings account	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mortgages: self-build	<input type="checkbox"/>
Earthwise tax-free cash and equity mini ISA	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mortgages: buy-to-let	<input type="checkbox"/>
Earthwise tax-free equity maxi ISA	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mortgages for housing co-ops	<input type="checkbox"/>
Charity Deposit account	<input type="checkbox"/>	25 Ecology leaflets to display/distribute	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you an existing Ecology member?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	

Name

Address

..... Postcode

NL19

Web links

Anyone visiting our website recently will have noticed the addition of a new links section, giving surfers the opportunity to visit the sites of quite a range of organisations. As an environmental and socially aware building society, our concerns span a pretty wide spectrum! We hope users find the links useful. If you know of other organisations that we could consider adding, please let us know at info@ecology.co.uk.

Christmas card donations

Our Winter newsletter asked members to nominate a charity to which we may make a donation rather than send out corporate Christmas cards. We have now sent £100 to both the Farm and Food Society and Bradford City Farm, and thank all members who sent in nominations.

Feedback

Thank you to all our members who write to us, we are pleased our efforts on your behalf are appreciated. Saver **Hara Davis** writes: *We asked you to close our joint account at the end of last year (my husband's idea) but now I feel bereft without you!! and would like to re-open the account.*

While borrower **Andrew Miller** says: *Thanks again for all your help and for making everything possible. Other mortgage lenders turn their back on properties like ours, but we've now got the home we dreamed of... We are another statistic to add to your 'satisfied customer' newsletter!*

Ecology Building Society is an Introducer Firm for Family Equity Plan Limited (Co. No. 2208249) in respect of investment business, who is regulated by IMRO and the Personal Investment Authority.

YOUR HOME IS AT RISK IF YOU DO NOT KEEP UP REPAYMENTS ON A MORTGAGE OR OTHER LOAN SECURED ON IT.

Further details and written quotations on request. All mortgages subject to status, first charge on the property and satisfactory valuation.

The Society does not necessarily endorse any service or product mentioned herein.

 Printed on 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper

Designed and Printed by Kay Jay Print, Brigg Mount, Park Road, Cross Hills, Keighley