

newsletter



Backing a
best-seller



Fund supports
projects with a Twist

Co-operative
consumer



Welcome

Welcome to the third issue of The Co-operative Loan Fund newsletter, which aims to keep you informed about just some of the fund's most recent achievements, and how it is helping to support the growth of the co-operative, mutual and social enterprise sector.

We hope you enjoy this issue

Sarah Lees

Sarah Lees
Chair, The Co-operative Loan Fund

About the fund

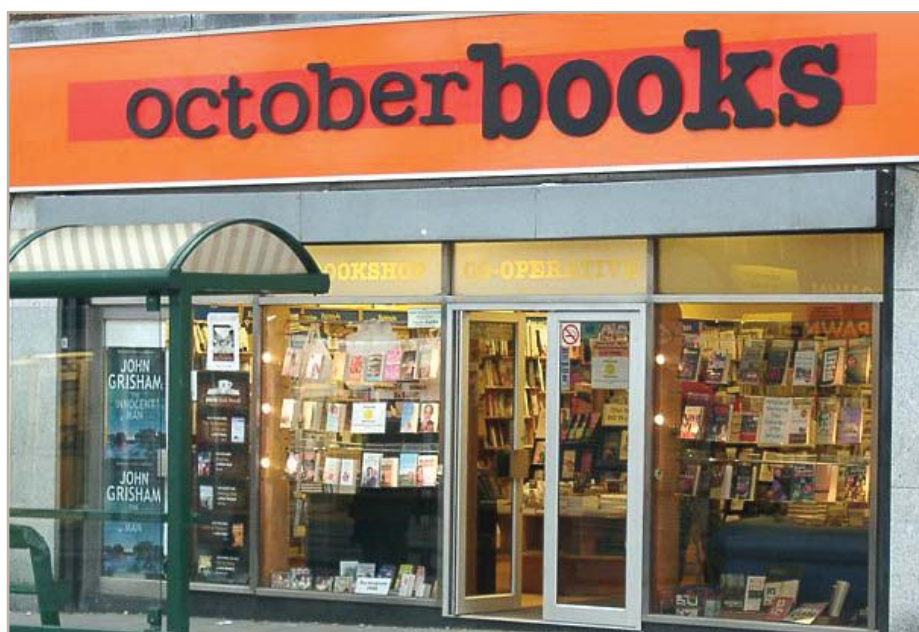
The Co-operative Loan Fund supports co-operatives and social enterprises throughout the UK through the provision of accessible, ethical loan finance. Loan applications are welcome from those that require finance to:

- Set up a new enterprise
- Expand an existing enterprise
- Assist employee buyouts or company successions
- Purchase a property or business
- Purchase capital equipment or create working capital

The Co-operative Loan Fund is funded by three consumer co-operatives: The Co-operative Group, United Co-operatives and Midcounties Co-operative, together with the Co-operative Bank and Co-operative Insurance Society. It is overseen by a board of directors who represent each of the funders.

The fund is managed by Co-operative & Community Finance, which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority (FSA) in the conduct of investment business.

www.co-operativeloanfund.co.uk



Backing a best-seller

A long-established co-operative is booming thanks to support from The Co-operative Loan Fund.

October Books is an independent community bookshop in Southampton that operates as a not-for-profit co-operative. All profits it generates are put back in the business to enable it to continue to stock a wide range of general books for adults and children, as well as specialist publications covering topics such as social issues, adoption, humanities, and political issues.

Prior to 2003, the co-op had begun to struggle financially as its location was preventing it from attracting new custom. Its bank was unsupportive but with a loan from The Co-operative Loan Fund backed by loan stock raised from their customers, the book store was able to relocate to more promising premises – in a shopping centre in the Portswood area of Southampton – and it has now announced that its sales are better than ever.

Ian Lamming, a member of the October Books co-operative, says:

“Geographically, our previous shop site had become rather isolated - the customer parking facilities were poor, the building had seen better days and although the old store was once surrounded by alternative and co-operatively run businesses, many of these businesses and the communities they served moved away.

“We are very grateful to The Co-operative Loan Fund for its support, as it has helped us to relocate to a new store - almost twice the size - and expand our stock so that we now sell general books as well our traditional radical stock range. This expansion and the move to a more popular area has helped us to increase our core sales and in the last two years we've made a steady and healthy profit.”

As well as selling a wide and wonderful range of books, the store also stocks audio books, fair-trade goods, alternative magazines, alternative t-shirts, and a range of environmental cleaning products.

For more information go to www.octoberbooks.org

Inspiring, encouraging, empowering

Finance from The Co-operative Loan Fund has enabled a range of exciting and innovative projects to be developed by the Twist Partnership.

Twist Partnership is a not-for-profit company based in London that aims to find new ways to develop enterprise, leadership and active citizenship. It designs and delivers a range of training programmes for ethnic minority groups in the business, community, housing, education and refugee sectors, and is involved in teacher development, enterprise workshops and active citizenship in primary and secondary schools.

Shankara Angad, founder of Twist Partnership says: "We have achieved many things in the last year since receiving finance from The Co-operative Loan Fund. The loan helped enormously relax the squeeze that was preventing us from developing our resources."

Twist's most recent projects include:

The Supplier Diversity Project - which aims to improve the representation of minority-run businesses in the supply chains of corporate companies. Commissioned originally by Business in the Community, Twist has been working with a number of minority networks including the African Caribbean Business Network to bridge the gap between large and small organisations. It has involved a series of meetings with corporate clients and also the key campaigning organisation, Supplier Diversity Europe. The long term objective is to:

- i) compile an accurate database of small, ethnic minority businesses
- ii) match-make small and large organisations
- iii) provide training for small businesses to meet the tendering and quality assurance requirements of the Procurement departments.



Shpresa Youth Project - a project conceived by the Twist Partnership and developed in conjunction with Shpresa, an organisation that provides support for Albanian Refugees. The project is designed help young people aged between 11 and 16 that fled Kosovo and Albania during the 1990s. It aims to fire their ambition to become leaders and wealth creators, and introduces them to people active in London's political and economic life to explore the keys to achievement in British Society.

In the Driving Seat - a course designed by Twist for young people with the potential to be tomorrow's leaders. Shankara explains: "It's a leadership course that doesn't just teach about leadership but actually gives participants the chance to test their problem-solving and decision-making skills in practical ways. We take them to meet senior people in a wide range of businesses and public and community organisations who present them with a challenge. What would they do if they were 'in the driving seat'? How would they deal with real issues facing these organisations? How they would act

if they were in charge? In between these discovery days, we meet up on seminar days to analyse the experience, do some problem-solving exercises and argue about leadership and empowerment. Currently we are running this as a cross-community project in Bradford with funding from the Bradford Community Housing Trust."

Shared Experience - a leadership development programme commissioned by HMPS for selected prison staff as part of their management training and career development.

Sarah Lees, Chair of The Co-operative Loan Fund says: "The training that Twist Partnership designs and delivers is extremely positive, innovative and responsive to community needs, so we were delighted to be able to support the company and help it to develop some of its projects further. By inspiring, encouraging and empowering its course participants, Twist Partnership is creating benefits for communities today and generations to come".

For more information go to www.twist.org.uk

Co-operative consumer

Co-operatives offer products and services varying from breakfast cereal to bed frames, so why not support the sector by indulging in a little ethical retail therapy? In this regular feature we highlight just some of the excellent co-operatives that the Loan Fund has supported and what they have to offer.

Good to glow

BrightKidz - an award-winning enterprise based in Kettering - provides fluorescent, reflective products that help children to be seen day, dusk and night. Its range aims to encourage kids and their parents to walk and cycle to school instead of travel by car to promote active lifestyles.

Its huge product range includes waistcoats, tabards, fleeces, coats, sashes, baseball caps, fleecy beanie hats, golf umbrellas, kids umbrellas and badges - which means that there's something to suit everybody!

The full selection can be purchased online via the enterprise's website, which also features information on how to set up 'Walking Bus' walk-to-school schemes.

www.brightkidz.co.uk



Sleep soundly

Alphabeds - an employee co-operative in Carmarthenshire - is committed to using natural and organic products to produce its wide range of beds which means that it can help ethical consumers to get a better night's sleep.

The co-op, which has an online store and retail outlet in central London, is quickly approaching its busiest time of the year so get your orders in now! As well as manufacturing handmade mattresses and timber frame beds, Alphabeds also offers bunkbeds, cots, futons, bedside cabinets and storage boxes which are all produced to the same high standard. The co-op is so confident about the quality of its products, it offers a 15 year guarantee on all bed frames and a five year guarantee on its luxurious mattresses.

www.alphabeds.co.uk

alphabeds

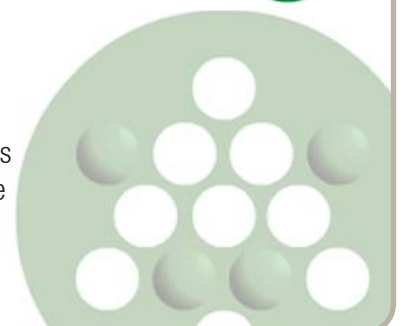


Alternative warmth

Although it's only September, the non-existent British summer may mean that you're already thinking of ways to warm up. If that's the case, check out the range of pellet baskets available from Welsh Biofuels - a leading biomass fuel enterprise offering a viable and sustainable alternative to the rapidly diminishing supply of fossil fuels.

As well as supplying its products to corporate clients, the enterprise also provides pellet baskets that can be used in open fire places, on terraces or in the garden to provide a more sustainable heating solution - a great alternative to electric garden heaters.

www.welsh-biofuels.co.uk



Co-operative events

13 - 15 September 2007

Co-operative Party Annual Conference London

The conference will mark the 90th anniversary of the Co-operative Party, and will feature events including panel debates, workshops and keynote addresses.

For further information go to www.party.coop

26 - 27 September 2007

Beyond engagement: Inclusion, sport and popular culture Manchester

This conference, organised by co-operative Substance, aims to tackle difficult questions about the 'far side' of engagement including what happens when sport and popular culture fail to engage? What role can the arts, fishing and other activities play? Do government initiatives, sports organisations and major events help or hinder engagement? How can we realise the value of engagement for young people? How can we make community consultation work better?

What can we learn from international engagement strategies?

For further information go to

www.substance.coop

5 December 2007

Ethical Shopping at the Crossroads London

This even will look at the implications of ethical shopping becoming mainstream and discuss whether the adoption of ethical trading by corporate companies is a success or a sell-out. It will also explore the issues of fair trade, ethical trade, local purchasing and sustainability.

Chaired by Ed Mayo, CEO of the National Consumer Council, this conference features a rich mix of eminent speakers and practitioners including David Anderson - CEO of Co-operative Financial Services, Harriet Lamb of the Fairtrade Foundation, Patrick Holden from The Soil Association, Kate Byron from Women Working worldwide, and Tim Lang - Professor of Food Policy at City University.

The event, which is aimed at anyone who has ever thought about what they put in their shopping basket, is jointly promoted by Co-operatives UK, The Co-operative Group, Ethical Consumer, and the Co-operative College.

For further information go to www.cooperatives-uk.coop



Apply for a loan

If you would like to apply for a loan from The Co-operative Loan Fund, please go to www.co-operativeloanfund.co.uk to download and print an application form, or contact the fund managers, Co-operative & Community Finance, on 01179 166750.

Complete the form, and send it along with two copies of your most recent business plan to:
The Co-operative Loan Fund, c/o Co-operative & Community Finance, Head Office, Brunswick Court,
Brunswick Square, Bristol, BS2 8PE

Further details about the fund, loan security, and lending terms are available online at www.co-operativeloanfund.co.uk

