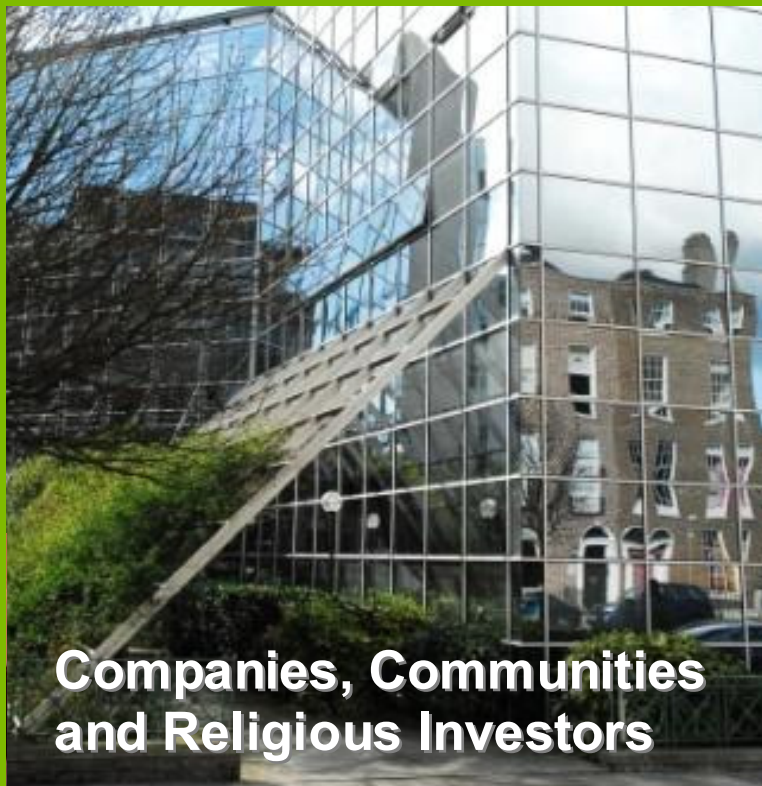




No. 73 – June 2009



# the bulletin



## Companies, Communities and Religious Investors



- Dublin conference report
- Settlement products, a barrier to peace
- BHP Billiton yet to respond to CAFOD
- Aldersgate Group: Green foundations needed

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The *Bulletin* is published quarterly, every March, June, September and December. Contributions are invited for future issues – please contact the editor. The views expressed in the *Bulletin* are not necessarily those of ECCR. Copy deadline for next issue: 30 July 2009

# First things

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Earlier this year ECCR had the privilege of co-organising a conference in Dublin under the title Companies, Communities and Religious Investors. Collaboration with Trócaire, the Inter-Church Committee on Social Issues, the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland, Christian Aid Ireland and others helped make the event both inclusive and fruitful.

We hope that the momentum generated at the conference will continue, and this *Bulletin* features an abridged version of the full conference report that can be found at [www.eccr.org.uk](http://www.eccr.org.uk).

Also in this issue, Suzanne Ismail writes on behalf of Quaker Peace & Social Witness about a new campaign supported by the World Council of Churches. This is to encourage church investors and church members to engage with retailers that sell goods produced in Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Inadvertent economic support for these settlements is surely an obstacle to a peaceful two-state solution in the Middle East.

Our two other articles, from Sonya Maldar of CAFOD and Andrew Raingold of the Aldersgate Group, address issues that have featured before in these pages: mining in the Philippines and the need for imaginative approaches to economic recovery, respectively.

Sonya Maldar highlights key issues of principle at stake in BHP Billiton's joint venture Hallmark nickel project. And Andrew Raingold offers expert advice on what is needed for the UK to begin the transition to a low-carbon, resource-efficient and ultimately more sustainable economy.

We are also very pleased to include a member's letter in this issue. More such letters would be welcome.

*Miles Litvinoff, Co-ordinator*

# News from ECCR

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## ***Vulnerable Migrant Workers: new ECCR report***

ECCR has published *Vulnerable Migrant Workers: The Responsibility of Business*. The report describes the vulnerability of migrant workers in various sectors of the British and Irish domestic economies and assesses the policy and practice towards migrant workers of nine major food production, manufacture and retail (supermarket) companies.

Members and donor-partners will receive a printed copy of the full report (corporate members and partners) or executive summary (individual members), along with action guides for investors and churches. Report materials and ideas for action are also available at [www.eCCR.org.uk](http://www.eCCR.org.uk), where printed copies of the report can be ordered.

## **New corporate members and Board members**

ECCR is very pleased to welcome two new corporate members: the Apostolic Pastoral Association (full member) and Triodos Bank (associate member).

A warm welcome also to four new Board members: Ian Halstead of L&P Financial Trustees; Rev. Angela Overton-Benge of the Industrial Mission Association; individual associate member Rev. David de Verny; and Victoria Woodbridge of EIRIS.

## **Membership renewals**

Members will have recently received an invitation to renew for 2009/10. We very much hope members will want to continue supporting ECCR and being involved in our work. Your prompt response will help us keep down the cost of sending reminders. Thank you.

# **Companies, Communities and Religious Investors: report of the Dublin conference**

*Tony Weekes and Matt Crossman*

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ECCR and seven partners co-organised the conference at All Hallows College, Dublin, on 5 March 2009.<sup>1</sup> More than 80 delegates from church organisations, NGOs and the responsible investment sector participated. The event – originally planned before the current financial crisis became full-blown - explored theological and moral aspects of the impact of business on human communities and the natural world and the contribution of religious investors to corporate responsibility.

## **Robert Cochran: The time is right**

Robert Cochran, Chair of the Inter-Church Committee on Social Issues, opened by calling for thought, action and research. He suggested that the time is right to see retail banking as too important to be left to bankers. Part of the banking sector, he argued, should be publicly, community- or cooperatively owned.

We may have crossed the line between sensible investment and speculation indistinguishable from gambling, he said. There is a need for greater awareness of the limitations of the market. A more social economy would better respect collective needs and personal integrity.

On corporate responsibility, he asked whether this is not at times little more than a smokescreen. He remarked on the imbalance between government rescue packages for financial institutions and the response to the world's poor and vulnerable.

Further, he said, the time is right for the churches to provide more moral leadership regarding money. We must become the change we want to see.

### **Panel 1 ‘The impact of companies in the global South’**

Chaired by Sr Denise Boyle, Executive Director of Franciscans International.

#### **Fr Patrick Eyinla: Oil and gas extraction in Nigeria**

Fr Patrick Eyinla, former Director for Church and Society, Catholic Secretariat of the Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria, described the social and environmental impacts of oil and gas extraction in the Niger Delta.

Delta communities once enjoyed a pristine environment and self-reliant fishing and agriculture, but the oil and gas industry has had far-reaching consequences: destruction of vegetation, farmlands, human settlements and aquatic life; illness and disease; declining food productivity; a rise in criminal and paramilitary activity.

Despite investments in community development, oil companies are seen by local people as inadequately engaged. The Nigerian state has failed to protect its citizens. But international NGOs have helped focus concern.

Patrick Eyinla advocated well-defined and enforceable resource rights to make companies and the state more accountable, and so that benefits of oil are shared by the majority of the Niger Delta’s inhabitants.

#### **Fr Frank Nally: Mining in the Philippines**

Fr Frank Nally of the Missionary Society of Saint Columban related how large-scale mining of nickel, copper, gold and cobalt

in the Philippines has affected communities and the environment. It has led to deforestation, landslides, pollution and silting of waterways and coral reefs, reductions in rice and marine food production, community displacement, social conflict and human rights abuse. Anti-mining protestors have been murdered.

The Philippines's environmental protection laws are good on paper, he said, but very poorly enforced. Mining imperils the future of the country's people.

Frank Nally endorsed the call by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines for a moratorium on new mining until effective protections are in place. Far higher standards of company consultation with communities are needed, along with independent environmental and social assessments and audits. And companies should issue performance bonds and take out insurance to cover accidents, damage and post-mining decommissioning and rehabilitation.

## **Panel 2 'Why should faith communities engage?'**

Chaired by Tony Weekes, the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland.

### **Rev. Prof. Enda McDonagh: The theological basis for socially responsible investment**

Rev. Enda McDonagh, Professor Emeritus of Moral Theology at Maynooth University, said that the financial world can be framed as a series of 'civil disciplines'.

Traditional financial thinking is presented as inherently logical, but danger comes when its assumptions are accepted as self-evident. In reality they have often been differently interpreted, at times to exploit the weak and to justify an insatiable appetite for more. Regulation is also influenced by human views and subject to diverging opinions, he observed.

The Judaeo-Christian tradition shows that we are a people in community. We are always ‘our brother’s keeper’, called to be stewards of what we possess. Now in a time of *kairos* – of opportunity arising out of crisis – we should embrace *kinosis*, outpouring of the self, transformation by surrender.

**Fr Seamus Finn: Socially responsible investment in a time of global financial crisis**

Fr Seamus Finn of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate highlighted the question of how our faith traditions’ core beliefs and wisdom are distilled into principles of practical guidance.

Issues of social and environmental impact are human, moral and religious. Faith communities that exercise active ownership as shareholders have focused on impacts on communities where they live and work.

Globalisation has an internal logic but no inherent guiding ethic, and faith-based investors have addressed predatory lending, derivatives, credit default swaps, faulty risk management, the ethics of compensation and the incentivisation of irrational risk taking. Industry codes and light-touch regulation have proved deficient; a global regulatory framework is required to avoid a ‘race to the bottom’.

Pain and struggle are experienced locally, Seamus Finn concluded. Responsible investment can help alleviate such pain. The costs of environmental and social damage must be accounted for to give a true picture of our economic system’s current sustainability.

**Very Rev. Dr Sam Hutchinson: Presbyterian principles and the ethical use of money**

Very Rev. Dr Sam Hutchinson of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland offered a clear view on churches’ stewardship of money.

Church funds should invest for the interest of the beneficiaries, according to principles derived from the parable of the talents.

Trustees should not act contrary to the basic interest, principles or objectives of the beneficiaries even if this is financially advantageous. Common issues for faith-based investors include the human suffering caused by addictions, he said.

Other issues include whether to invest in monopolistic companies, activities that damage the environment or the community, processes dangerous to employees or others, and companies where wages and conditions fail to provide a reasonable standard of living.

Shareholder and church pressure has achieved beneficial results, and companies and governments now show greater sensitivity.

### **Panel 3 ‘Faith community responses: investment and engagement options’**

Chaired by Lee Coates, Chair of ECCR.

#### **Ian Halstead: The SRI sector in the Republic of Ireland**

Ian Halstead of L&P Financial Trustees interpreted socially responsible investment (SRI) as redirecting financial capital to ethical uses reflecting the investor’s beliefs and seeking to influence company behaviour. It need not have a negative effect on financial performance.

Several banks and fund managers in Ireland offer successful funds for both financial returns and positive social, ethical and environmental outcomes, such as through sustainable forestry. Emerging possibilities include microfinance, clean technology and start-up companies supporting domestic job creation.

He argued that faith-based investors can use their portfolio to spread their ethos. Doing good and achieving a good return are not mutually exclusive, and good options are available in Ireland.

### **Victoria Woodbridge: How to implement an ethical investment policy**

Victoria Woodbridge outlined EIRIS's history from its foundation by churches and charities to its present work on climate change, human rights abuse, corporate governance and other issues.

She highlighted the UN Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI) as an important global framework for incorporating environmental, social and governance issues into analysis and decision-making. PRI members manage \$15 trillion of investments and include the Irish National Reserve Pension Fund.

An ethical investment policy can be developed by deciding on the issues that best reflect mission, remembering fiduciary duty and the law. SRI is more relevant now than ever, especially for faith groups.

### **Patrick Hynes: Oikocredit and mission-consistent social investment**

More than a billion people live on less than 50p per day, Patrick Hynes observed. Oikocredit, founded by the World Council of Churches, addresses this challenge, supporting the poor via microcredit, small and medium enterprises and Fair Trade. With operations valued at €360 million in 68 countries, it reaches 15 million people.

Oikocredit generally pays a 2% dividend and offers the satisfaction of clear social benefits. No investor has ever lost money.

He gave the example of microcredit enabling a small-scale craftswoman to borrow inexpensively to buy raw materials - enough to free her from poverty. Mission-consistent social investment helps change what may otherwise be thought of as unchangeable.

### **Miles Litvinoff: ECCR and its work**

Miles Litvinoff quoted the commentator Paul Hawken: ‘Striving to attain the highest rate of financial return is a direct cause of social injustice and environmental degradation ... externalisation of costs on the environment, the future, workers and others.’

A church-based coalition, ECCR’s members control and advise on more than £10 billion of invested assets. Its activities include research, advocacy and dialogue with companies and institutional investors.

Returns on investment in social development, microcredit and renewable energy may seem modest or risky, he said. But the current crisis shows they can perform as well as, if not better than, ‘blue chip’ holdings and bear less long-term risk.

### **Mark Cumming: Ways forward**

Concluding, Mark Cumming of Trócaire summarised issues arising from the day, including:

- Where is the spirit in corporate entities?
- What is enough?
- The crisis we face is an opportunity for transformation.
- Our total interdependence as participants in a system of resources, producers and consumers.
- The challenge of taking responsibility.

- Further conversation and practical steps forward are needed.
- The wider Church as a community of churches can strengthen our impact.

He committed the organisers to take forward the conference's outcomes. Participants' further views and involvement would be welcome.

***Tony Weekes of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland is an ECCR member. Matt Crossman of Rathbone Greenbank Investments is an ECCR Board member.***

#### **Notes**

1. Co-organisers: Christian Aid Ireland, the Inter-Church Committee on Social Issues, the International Interfaith Investment Group, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Missionary Society of St Columban, the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland, and Trócaire.

## **Settlement products: an economic barrier to peace**

*Suzanne Ismail*

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This month, as part of the International Church Action for Peace in Palestine and Israel, the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) is encouraging church investors to engage with retailers that sell goods produced in Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

EAPPI sends volunteers to work with Israeli and Palestinian peace organisations; its UK activities are managed by ECCR member Quaker Peace & Social Witness. EAPPI believes that UK retailers including Tesco, Sainsbury, Argos and B&Q could unwittingly be contributing to the long-running Middle East conflict.

### **Barrier to peace**

A major barrier to peace is the presence of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. There are over 250 settlements, and about 450,000 settlers. The Palestinian population amounts to 2.4 million. Settlements are prohibited under international law and have been denounced by the UN, the EU, the UK and other governments.

How do settlements impede peace? First, with their road network and other infrastructure they take up almost 40% of the West Bank and fragment Palestinian land. This undermines the potential viability of a future Palestinian state under a just two-state solution.

Second, the presence of settlements causes discrimination and hardship for Palestinians and contributes to conflict. Settlements, checkpoints and settler roads block Palestinian access to land, schools, hospitals and workplaces.

UN figures show 715 violent incidents perpetrated by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians in the West Bank, and 155 incidents perpetrated by Palestinians against settlers, since 2006. Settler-committed violence has increased markedly in the last year.

### **Economic independence**

Some settlements have become economically successful through businesses whose products are sold abroad. The more

economically independent they are, the harder it will be to dismantle them and achieve a negotiated peace.

EAPPI wants UK shops to stop selling settlement goods. The Co-operative Group and Marks & Spencer have both announced they will no longer source such products. But most other supermarkets and some other retailers continue to sell them.

EAPPI argues that at a minimum retailers should clearly label settlement products to give consumers an informed choice. Many supermarkets label settlement products ‘West Bank’, which fails to distinguish between illegal settler goods and those produced by legitimate Palestinian enterprises. For greater transparency more specific wording is needed, such as ‘settlement goods’.

Another problem was highlighted in a report from the University of London (details below). Because the economies of the settlements and Israel proper are highly integrated, retailers’ supply chain monitoring may not distinguish between legitimate Israeli goods and settlement products.

Supermarkets may therefore mislabel goods unknowingly. And such goods may unlawfully benefit from the EU’s preferential trade agreement with Israel through lower customs duties. Importers could be subject to a customs investigation.

### **Growing pressure**

Retailers are under growing pressure from campaigners on this issue. The UK government has signalled concern. Retailers that demonstrate leadership will show they value human rights and international law, make a contribution to peace and be better placed to weather a future political storm.

Settlements’ products sold in the UK include herbs, fruit and vegetables (including supermarket own-brand labels); Ahava

cosmetics; Soda Stream drinks carbonation products (made in both Israeli and settlement factories); Keter Plastics garden storage systems, toolboxes and bathroom accessories (made in both Israeli and settlement factories); and Beigel & Beigel baked goods.

Retailers thought to be selling such goods include B&Q (Keter), Homebase (Keter), John Lewis and Waitrose (Ahava, Beigel & Beigel, fresh produce), Robert Dyas (Soda Stream), Sainsbury (fresh produce, Soda Stream) and Tesco (fresh produce, Beigel & Beigel).

Additional products and retailers are probably involved. The integrated nature of the Israeli and settlement economies makes the provenance of some goods uncertain.

### **What can ECCR members do?**

Investors in the companies mentioned are encouraged to raise this issue with management. Others can write to retailers as consumers or talk to store managers.

Ask about the company's policy on the sourcing of settlement goods. If they stock them, ask them to discontinue on grounds that the settlements are illegal and their presence contributes to hardship for Palestinian communities and frustrates peace-building efforts.

You could also ask what mechanisms the company has to differentiate between settlement and Israeli goods within their supply chain, to ensure that they and their importers pay the correct level of customs duties.

If a retailer will not stop selling settlement goods, ask them to clearly label them so that consumers can make an informed choice.

## **For more information**

- EAPPI: [www.quaker.org.uk/eappi](http://www.quaker.org.uk/eappi)
- World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel: [www.oikoumene.org/en/events-sections/wwppi.html](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/events-sections/wwppi.html)
- *UK Economic Links with Israeli Settlements in Occupied Palestinian Territory*, Profundo Economic Research for the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2009, [www.soas.ac.uk/lawpeacemideast/49531.pdf](http://www.soas.ac.uk/lawpeacemideast/49531.pdf)

*Suzanne Ismail (suzannei@quaker.org.uk) works jointly for Quaker Peace & Social Witness and ECCR. She writes here in her capacity as Programme Manager, Economic Issues, QPSW.*

## **BHP Billiton yet to respond to CAFOD's concerns**

*Sonya Maldar*

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The £13 bn Hallmark nickel project in Macambol on the island of Mindanao in the Philippines is in an area of outstanding natural beauty, home to rare and endangered species. This controversial project is run by BHP Billiton, the world's largest mining company, which is investing £0.8-£1.7 bn in it and has partnered with Philippine company AMCOR.

The mine, due to start production in 2014, has deeply divided the community of Macambol, where most people live by fishing and farming. While some welcome the project, many fear the risks posed and would like to see an alternative form of development for their community.

## Concerns

In October 2008 CAFOD published the findings of research about the Hallmark project. Our report, *Kept in the Dark*,<sup>1</sup> revealed a range of concerns.

Serious flaws in the process to secure community consent mean its results cannot be considered valid. We found that the authority of the indigenous leader who gave community consent for the project is in question, and he was allegedly on the payroll of AMCOR. Others told of being deliberately excluded or prevented from speaking at meetings during the formal consent process.

One community leader was allegedly offered a bribe of a million Philippine pesos (around £12,000) by an AMCOR representative and a government official to support the project. Average family income in Macambol is about £1 a day.

BHP Billiton's lack of transparency about the project's potential impacts has limited the community's ability to make an informed decision and left them easily swayed by promises of 'development'.

The project overlaps with two government-declared protected areas: Mt Hamiguitan and Pujada Bay. BHP Billiton has made a commitment not to mine in the Mt Hamiguitan protected area. But concerns remain about mining's impact in the surrounding area, including on the livelihoods of 65,000 people in nearby coastal communities.

BHP Billiton and AMCOR are locked in a legal dispute over the project start date. Both have used divisive tactics to demonstrate community support, creating tensions and deep unease in this formerly close-knit community.

## **Social licence and material risks**

This evidence raises serious questions about BHP Billiton's social licence to operate in Macambol, which could pose material risks to the project. It demonstrates BHP Billiton management's failure to ensure that the highest standards of corporate behaviour are met by its partners.

This is not the first controversy surrounding the company's operations in the Philippines. In October 2007 on the island of Sibuyan, municipal councillor and anti-mining activist Armin R. Marin was shot dead during a protest. His killer was the head of security for Sibuyan Nickel Properties Development Corporation (SNPDC) at a time when BHP Billiton had an agreement to purchase nickel from SNPDC.

CAFOD and its partners in the Philippines - the Legal Rights and Natural Resources Centre and the Interfaith Movement for Peace, Empowerment and Development – have drawn attention to the problems with BHP Billiton's project and supported the Macambol community in getting their voice heard.

## **Dialogue**

CAFOD has been in dialogue with BHP Billiton about the project since July 2008. We attended the company AGM to bring a message from the community to shareholders and to ask the company about the project.

Over 6,000 CAFOD supporters have written to BHP Billiton asking the company to:

- back a new independently monitored consent process so that the community can freely decide in favour or against mining;
- make full information about the project and its potential impacts readily available to those most affected by it;

- show how it will prevent environmental damage in the area and amend its policy to stop mining in all protected areas.

### **Company response**

CAFOD has welcomed the openness of BHP Billiton to meet but has been disappointed by the lack of progress on our recommendations to date.

The company claims to have broad community support in Macambol. While CAFOD does not dispute that some sections of the community support the project, flaws in the consent process invalidate it. This is why we want BHP Billiton to conduct a new consent process jointly with the government.

BHP Billiton maintains that the process was conducted fairly but will not share a copy of an audit of the process, despite claiming to be a leader in corporate social responsibility. In the interests of transparency, CAFOD is calling on the company to make the audit publicly available so that the people of Macambol can read the findings for themselves.

***Sonya Maldar is Extractives Policy Analyst at CAFOD.***

### **Notes**

1. CAFOD, *Kept in the Dark: Why it's time for BHP Billiton to let communities in the Philippines have their say*, 2008, [www.cafod.org.uk/resources](http://www.cafod.org.uk/resources)

# The Budget exposes the need for green foundations

Andrew Raingold

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The 2009 Budget, criticised by City analysts for being wildly optimistic, made grim reading. The UK faces the worst financial crisis since 1945. Public debt will rise to 79% of GDP. Public finances will not return to comfortable levels until 2017-18.

This presents formidable challenges for environmental policy-making in an era of fiscal tightening and a credit squeeze. But there are also opportunities.

## Transition

While attention is rightly focused on short-term economic recovery, it is essential that governments do not take their eye off longer-term challenges such as climate change and resource depletion, whose consequences are likely to be oppressive and irreparable. The recession reinforces the urgent need to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon, resource-efficient economy.

The importance of this transition is the underlying message of *Green Foundations 2009*, published by the Aldersgate Group last December.<sup>1</sup> The Aldersgate Group is a coalition of businesses, environmental groups and individuals who believe good environmental regulation is essential for a healthy economy.

In some quarters there still persists a view of environmental regulation as a cost to industry, a luxury we can ill-afford. By contrast, the Aldersgate Group believes there is a positive causality between high-quality environmental regulation and

economic growth. *Green Foundations* draws on new evidence and research to demonstrate this.

### **Opportunities**

Good environmental regulation creates new business and employment opportunities. Earlier this year Gordon Brown announced that the environmental sector would be at the heart of the government's stimulus package. Public sector investment on the scale of President Obama's green fiscal stimulus of \$100 billion is required to help the UK capitalise on new opportunities in the environmental sector and stimulate employment.

The Aldersgate Group wrote to Alistair Darling in March 2009 to advocate that 20% of the economic stimulus should be green. Bankers HSBC estimate that the true UK figure, in light of the Budget, is 10.6%, considerably below that of international competitors.

The regulatory framework can also help business systematically address environmental performance, one of the most cost-effective measures companies can undertake to reduce expenditure. Competitive advantage will increasingly depend on resource efficiency, innovation and energy security.

### **Appraisal**

A prerequisite for the transition to a low-carbon and resource-efficient economy is an appraisal process that accurately assesses environmental costs and benefits. National policy objectives will only be achieved if they are adequately reflected in market price signals and values in policy formation.

Current official policy appraisal routinely focuses on a narrow range of mainly short-term costs to industry while downplaying benefits derived from setting high environmental standards.

Costs tend to focus on static assessments, overlooking innovation potential. Estimates may also be based on exaggerated industry figures. For example, new EU vehicle energy efficiency legislation has been severely weakened after pressure from the car lobby. The supplementary cost per vehicle was initially estimated at 577 Euros, but the final estimate was over six times higher based on secondary analysis influenced by car makers.

By contrast, environmental benefits are complex to monetarise and rarely assessed rigorously. Well-designed regulations can produce comprehensive economic benefits, such as improved health, amenity and ecosystems, which are commonly neglected. Environmental issues are consequently undervalued and overlooked in policy making.

### **Shadow price of carbon**

The Climate Change Act will present further challenges. The requirement for a successful carbon budget strategy will demand vigorous analysis. The government uses a shadow price of carbon (SPC) to determine the positive or negative net benefits of large infrastructure projects and policies.

The SPC – currently under review – has tended to severely underestimate costs, excluding social costs that are too complex to monetarise, such as those arising from increased flooding and droughts. It assumes that the world is already on a low emissions trajectory, helping justify high-carbon developments that will ensure this trajectory cannot be achieved.

In the economic analysis of the third runway at Heathrow Airport, for example, a low value for the SPC helped justify a net financial benefit of £5.5 bn identified. The New Economics Foundation called this ‘fantasy economics’. To address such flaws, the SPC must be based on scientific evidence and carbon

reduction targets, not on opaque political and economic considerations.

The recession is an ideal opportunity to reform unsustainable business practices and correct systemic market failures. With the new carbon budgets of the Climate Change Act presented alongside the fiscal Budget in April, the policy process must align economic, environmental and societal impacts. Policy that does not accurately address long-term challenges or negative externalities will undermine our future economic growth and stability.

*Andrew Raingold is Deputy Director of the Aldersgate Group and the author of 'Green Foundations 2009'.*

#### **Notes**

1. [www.aldersgategroup.org.uk/reports](http://www.aldersgategroup.org.uk/reports)

## **Letter to the editor**

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### **Addressing the crisis**

It is encouraging that the churches are active in discussions about the financial crisis. Will they also address the deep-rooted social legacy of past and present economic problems? What role can the churches play at parish level to ameliorate low pay and poor working conditions, the very limited offer of temporary unpaid tasks and work placements for unemployed people, and abusive working conditions for sex workers and those employed by gangmasters? Will the churches encourage and participate in multi-sector partnerships to increase decent-quality UK-based paid work?

For a resource that may help parishioners, see 'Generating faith in communities', [www.calemcal.demon.co.uk/GFiC.html](http://www.calemcal.demon.co.uk/GFiC.html)

*Ro Pengelly, Exwin Collection*

## **ECCR's mission statement:**

The Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility works for justice in and through economic structures and for responsible stewardship of the earth and its resources.

ECCR contributes to the Kingdom-oriented mission of the British and Irish churches to establish wholeness in society.

ECCR's work reflects the principles that faith communities and their members have a responsibility to:

- encourage companies to adopt and maintain the highest standards of corporate responsibility in all aspects of their business, and express concern when they do not;
- uphold these same high standards through responsible investment and use of their own resources.

## **ECCR's strategic objectives:**

1. To influence the policies and practice of companies, particularly those based in Britain and Ireland.
2. To work with others to develop international co-operation in the corporate responsibility and responsible investment movements.
3. To foster corporate responsibility and responsible investment within the economic life of the Church through education and awareness raising.
4. To strengthen ECCR's own membership and organisational base.

ECCR encourages the way of dialogue with companies and their workforces, and with communities and groups affected by companies' operations, wherever possible.