

## Green & Ethical Student Finance

**If you buy fair trade goods, believe in human rights, or are concerned about the environment and climate change – then opening an ethical bank account is another way of putting your money where your mouth is.**

### **The issues**

Before you open a new student bank account, if you want to find out about your current bank's green and ethical credentials, or if you're getting a credit card or insurance cover you should consider the following:

- ***Who does it lend to?***

Banks don't just lend money to current account-holding customers, they also lend to large corporations, public institutions and even governments. Would you approve if your bank was lending money or providing insurance cover to a company with a poor track record on human rights or one manufacturing arms for use in war zones, for example?

- ***What is its stance on climate change and the environment?***

Financial institutions have an impact in these areas, not just in terms of who they lend to or invest in, but how they run their own operations. Has your bank pledged to go carbon neutral? Does it offer any green products to its customers?

- ***What is in its equal opportunities policy?***

A lot of people believe that equal opportunity in the work place is now the norm, but there is still a massive pay gap between men and women doing the same jobs. Some equal opportunities statements do the bare minimum and don't take key issues like sexuality or disability into consideration. Most financial institutions publish policies online so it can easy to ascertain their equal ops values.

- ***Is financial inclusion on its agenda?***

There are an estimated two million adults in the UK without even the most basic bank account. Is your bank doing anything to address this situation?

- ***Does it treat its customers responsibly?***

Does your bank, credit card provider or insurance company take care in how it targets and markets its products? Does it offer assistance to customers in financial difficulty? Does it provide an advice or educational service to promote financial literacy?

## The green and ethical options

If you're looking for a new financial provider or are dissatisfied with your current one and looking to switch to an ethical option, see below:

### **Banking**

- [The Co-operative Bank & Smile](#): these institutions provide banking, insurance and credit cards facilities and have robust ethical lending, insuring and environment policies that extend across all business operations. The banks invite their customers to take part in shaping these policies.

### **Saving**

- [Triodos](#): this bank offers green and ethical savings accounts. Its commercial lending is primary to green businesses.
- [Ecology](#): this mutual building society offers a range of green savings accounts and mortgage options and its commercial lending is mainly to small green businesses.

### **Insurance**

- [Co-operative Insurance](#): Insurance type: home, motor, life and health

This company offers a wide range of insurance products and has an extensive ethical engagement policy governing who it will provide cover too.

- [Climate Sure](#): Insurance type: travel

Climate Sure calculates the CO2 produced by flying overseas and pays for it to be 'offset' by funding sustainable energy projects.

- [Green Insurance Company](#): Insurance type: motor

This provider aims to offset your car's carbon emissions and offers discounts on greener cars/lower mileage.

- [Naturesave](#): Insurance type: home, travel, personal accident and illness insurance

This company puts 10% of its personal insurance premiums in a fund (Naturesave Trust) to benefit environmental and conservation projects.

**Most people stick for life with the first bank they choose. Make sure your first choice is a green and ethical choice.**