

# DIDCOT – FAIRTRADE TOWN 2008



## A Report for Didcot Town Council

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## 1. An introduction to Fairtrade

The phrase fair trade is used very frequently when talking about international trade. However, many people are still very confused about what it means other than a fairer way of trading with the developing world.

The concept dates from the 1950s when western missionaries, in what was then known as the Third World, sent handicrafts manufactured by the people they were working with back to their home countries. The idea was to work with producer groups and help them find outlets for their products in Western Europe and North America. However, there was no independent certification of products. This changed in 1989 with the establishment of the Max Havelaar Foundation in the Netherlands. (Their logo shown on the cover of this report is displayed on all Fairtrade certified products outside Canada and the USA.) Christian Aid, CAFOD and Oxfam founded the UK Fairtrade Foundation in 1992. The Women's Institute joined them a few years later.

There are international standards that have to be adhered to before a product is certified as 'Fairtrade'. The standards are set by the International Labelling Organisation which is based in Berlin. National organisations such as the UK Fairtrade Foundation apply them to products within their own countries.

In a nutshell the five main principles of Fairtrade are:

- A guaranteed price covering the costs of production. Prices on the international markets can rise and fall, but producers dealing with Fairtrade organisations know they have a guaranteed price.
- Long term contracts enabling producers to plan ahead with confidence.
- Advance payments where necessary. In the West we take for granted our access to credit. It sometimes seems to be the engine of our economy. However, things are different in the developing world where access to credit is rather more limited. By paying in advance Western importers can help provide working capital to those they are buying from.
- Social premiums are paid above and beyond the production price to help fund projects in local communities such as schools and hospitals.
- Protecting the environment. Fairtrade is not the same as organic. However, producers have to try to minimise the use of pesticides. It is, of course, in their interest to do so since they and their

community have to cope with the consequences of pollution. Note: many UK Fairtrade products have been certified organic by organisations such as the Soil Association.

The latest available figures show that less than 1% of items sold in British shops are Fairtrade. However, sales have increased compared to five years ago. The United Kingdom recently overtook Switzerland as the world's number one consumer of Fairtrade goods.

## Criticism of Fairtrade

Some have criticised Fairtrade on the basis that there are ethical organisations working, for various reasons, outside the channels of official Fairtrade certification. Examples include Zaytoun Olive Oil's Palestinian products and the Rainforest Alliance Initiative. Local Fair Trade activists support such ventures through buying Palestinian olive oil from local distributors and South American coffee from the Wallingford Tea & Coffee Co.

Another criticism is price. However, as sales have increased prices have gone down. The Co-op, Sainsbury's and Marks & Spencer have, respectively, converted their own brand chocolate, bananas and coffee to Fairtrade which demonstrates that every day products need not be excessively expensive.

## 2. Fairtrade towns

It may be thought that Fairtrade is rather distant from towns such as Didcot and belongs to the realm of international politics. However, this view was challenged back in 1992 by Oxfam activists in the Lancashire town of Garstang which subsequently became the UK's first Fairtrade town.

The Fairtrade Foundation has since put together five criteria by which a local area is judged to be "Fairtrade". They are as follows:

- The local council must pass a resolution supporting the concept of Fairtrade and committing itself to making Fairtrade tea and coffee available at council meetings and in staff areas.
- A Fairtrade steering group needs to be convened, drawn as widely as possible from the local community and must meet regularly.
- There must be an ongoing campaign in the local media publicising and promoting Fair trade.
- Fairtrade goods should be available in local shops and cafes. The number needed depends on the town's population.
- Local businesses and community groups must commit to the concept of Fairtrade.

So far more than 250 councils in Britain have been certified as Fairtrade under the above criteria. Another 200 are in the process of going for Fairtrade status. Locally, Faringdon was the first town in South East England to be granted Fairtrade status and Abingdon achieved it in February 2007.

### 3. But what about Didcot?

Why would we want to follow the trend?

The main benefit of being a Fairtrade town is that it will further the image of Didcot as an ethical town in which to shop, at very little cost to the Town Council. There is much current debate about the need to support local produce, organic food production, reduction of air miles and Farmers' Markets. Although these campaigns are outside the remit of a Fairtrade campaign they share the common ground of promoting ethical consumerism. Supporting a bid for Didcot to be a Fairtrade town can only help other campaigns to support local farmers, producers and small local businesses.

It is a hugely exciting time for Didcot. Growth and development are key words. Employers are looking to expand their businesses, others are looking to move here and this means more people. People who want to move to, and live in, a positive place.

Already the town is delivering many of the expectations: a cinema, a shopping centre, great sports facilities, fantastic schools, an arts centre etc

The Farmers Market has had a very successful trading time since moving into the Orchard and the people who shop there have shared their views regarding Fairtrade with us. See appendix 1.

Fairtrade is viewed as a positive, caring, ethical stance to take and the public want to see more of it.

Having Didcot recognised as a Fairtrade Town would be a consolidating activity for the town. Striving for the status means reaching out to all sectors of the community and encouraging people to get involved and support the bid. Once secured it will be a prize for all. Following the awarding of the status ongoing encouragement will ensure that individual people and different community groups can make a difference – giving a sense of real community pride.

### 4. Didcot Churches

The following Didcot Churches have been promoting Fairtrade through having stalls once a month after the main Sunday service:

All Saints Church	Didcot Community Church
English Martyrs Catholic Church	Fleet Meadow Baptist
The Ladygrove Church	St Matthews Harwell
St Michaels Blewbury	St Peters Church

Most of the goods come from Traidcraft plc which is an ethical company that makes Fairtrade goods available to local groups, and Zaytoun which is an importer of Palestinian products. Some churches such as All Saints Chilton and Didcot Methodist Church have taken the step of declaring themselves to be Fairtrade churches. This means they have Fairtrade tea and coffee available after their services and promote Fairtrade Fortnight. In addition, Aston Tirrold United Reformed Church organises a Fairtrade Fair at their church hall once a year.

## 5. Schools

From our on street survey and talking to children, we know that many of the schools undertook activities during Fairtrade Fortnight 2007 to high-light the issues raised and to explore the topics of international trade and trade justice.

We hope to be able to work with schools in the future and to ensure our young people are fully engaged with Didcot's Fairtrade Town status.

## 6. Didcot's Business Community

Didcot Chamber of Commerce has undertaken to back the Fairtrade Town bid and will be working with members to ensure many of them declare themselves to be Fairtrade businesses. The Chamber feels that Fairtrade sits very comfortably with the promotion of local trade.

The Board of Didcot First has unanimously agreed to support a Fairtrade town bid, seeing this as a positive move for Didcot and the surrounding area. Many of the founding member businesses of Didcot First have already made a commitment to providing Fairtrade products in their canteens and staff areas. For example, Soha have recently declared themselves to be a Fairtrade establishment.

## 7. Supermarkets and other stores

The range of Fairtrade goods in local supermarkets has increased enormously over the last few years.

Tesco's, Sainsburys and the Co Op all have a wide range of food products available.

Other local stores have started to sell some Fairtrade goods, for example Holland and Barrett, Woolworths.

Non-food stores are beginning to think about the products they offer and some are offering goods that are 'fairly traded' or 'ethically produced' although not certificated by the Fairtrade Foundation.

These stores are reacting to market forces that say consumers are beginning to question the ethics of where they spend their money.

We are delighted to see that 'World Traid Shop' will be open by the end of June 2007 on the Broadway.

## 8. Community Groups

Many of the local community groups are considering Fairtrade as an option. Especially interested are the youth organisations many of whom also undertook Fairtrade activities during Fairtrade Fortnight 2007.

Parents and Children Together (PACT) who run the South Didcot Children's Centre amongst others, have committed to Fairtrade and support Didcot Fairtrade Group by allowing meetings to be held in the evenings, as well as hosting events that encourage more disaffected families to think about the issue of Fairtrade.

## 9. Restaurants, cafes and catering establishments

Many of Didcot's restaurants, cafes and catering establishments have already begun to serve Fairtrade products, including:

Splitz                  Cibo Pizzeria                  Camara's                  Boswells                  Ritazza

It would be nice to see the ranges extended and more establishments on board, but this is a very good start.

## 10. Meeting the criteria

**Town Council** – We ask that the Town Council passes a resolution stating that it has a commitment to Fairtrade and that it will supply tea and coffee at all its meetings and in its staff areas. This is the minimum requirement.

Additional considerations might be to use additional Fairtrade products e.g. sugar, biscuits, fruit, fruit-juice, wine and non food products as they become available.

We would like a nominated representative of the Town Council to join the Steering Group – see below.

**Steering Group** – A Steering Group has been formed by representatives of Didcot First, Didcot Chamber of Commerce and a number of interested individuals.

We have begun to meet regularly at South Didcot Children's centre and are now in the process of forming Didcot Fairtrade Group by drawing up a constitution and opening an account in that name. We would like to expand the group and invite wider representation including a Councillor. See appendix 2 – minutes of last meeting.

**Media Campaign** – During Fairtrade fortnight we held a public awareness stall in the Orchard, alongside the Farmers Market.

We used a poster campaign to alert people to all our events mentioned above.

We worked with 2 Chamber members and Didcot Casuals Football Club to stage a Fairtrade Football match which attracted good publicity.

We have made press statements in support of Soha's Fairtrade declaration

We are including the recently developed directory of products available in local shops on the Didcot First website.

Didcot Fairtrade Group has been active in canvassing public opinion, has held a successful tasting session / presentation at the Northbourne centre during fair-trade Fortnight and also held a Fairtrade wine tasting event. We are currently planning a Chocolate tasting event for a Saturday in October and a stall at the Christmas Street Fair. All of these events have attracted a small amount of media coverage and an archive book has been started

**Goods available in shops and cafes** – Looking specifically at Didcot with a population of 26,000 we need six shops and three cafes selling two or more brands of Fairtrade goods. Currently, there are five shops and one café selling more than two Fairtrade products (a further two cafes sell Fairtrade coffee) but this list is expanding and Didcot Fairtrade group is committed to working with stores and catering establishments to ensure they consider the option of stocking and serving Fairtrade products.

**Businesses and Community groups** – Already quite a few businesses have indicated their commitment to Fairtrade, including some founding members of Didcot First e.g. Soha, St Birinus School, RM, as well as Chamber of Commerce Members. Both agencies have committed to keeping Fairtrade as a rolling agenda item. Didcot Fairtrade Group has promised to make contact with the towns community groups and organisations and engage them in the debate.

## 11. Summary

Didcot Fairtrade Group is committed to bringing Fairtrade to Didcot.

We are seeking an involvement from Didcot Town Council in order for our bid to be successful:

1. For a resolution to be passed supporting Fairtrade and a commitment to serve tea and coffee at council meetings and in staff areas.
2. For a representative to be appointed to the Didcot Fairtrade Group

We believe such a commitment will only enhance the image of Didcot and bring enhanced economic growth, resident satisfaction, business buy-in and a greater sense of community pride in our town.

Report written by Didcot Fairtrade Group:

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