

In the market for...



soap

IT HAS BEEN ONE OF MY MORE PLEASURABLE requests to spend an afternoon bathing myself for the purposes of writing a review of the virtues of a new range of smellies from the newly formed social enterprise The Soap Co (Edinburgh).

We know that buying products from The Soap Co will help deliver positive social outcomes. But such is the confidence of the social enterprise in its own products, it does not feel the need to splash this over the packaging. The products' quality will be measured against that of its competitors.

So how does it stack up?

On first appearance the Soap Co is not going to appeal to your Hoxton trendies. It does not attempt the youthful style of competing brands, such as The Body Shop or Clinique.

But what does it feel like? Great!

I started off with the **Strawberry Bubble Bath (£3.99)**. Lots of lather and no artificial fruity smell put me in the mood. While the **Apple Shower Gel**

(£3.99) has a synthetic smell, the **Mango, Lime and Apricot Shampoo (£2.50)** is suitably fresh and zingy. My favourite was the **Oatmeal and Honey Soap (£2.95)**: earthy, simple and packaged sparingly.

My only criticism is the other products follow the pattern of so many other toiletries on the market by using too much plastic in a country that hasn't yet got to grips with recycling.

This aside, my afternoon was a real treat. I know it may sound a little early (or, perhaps, late), but this would make an ideal Christmas present for many members of my family – probably ending up in the stockings of grandma or aunty rather than the slinky fishnets of my 19-year-old cousin.

It's not just because I know where the profits from the sales are going that I would choose this over other well-known brands. Molton Brown and Boots' – watch your backs!

Clare Parkinson

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Opening hours:
Mon - Wed - Sat
10.00-18.00
Thurs 10.00-19.30
Sun 12.00-16.00

Products will also
be available for
sale through the
website:
[www.thesoapco
edinburgh.co.uk/](http://www.thesoapco.edinburgh.co.uk/)

Events

Building partnerships & procuring social enterprise 3 February at The Gulbenkian Room, Park Crescent Conference Centre, London W1W 5PN.

London Community Recycling Network's Building Partnerships project has brought together experts on social enterprise procurement for this morning seminar. Contact: Jude on 020 7324 4690; jude@lcrn.org.uk

Housing at the heart of sustainable communities 24 February at Somerset County Cricket Club, Taunton.

Organised by RISE (the 'voice for South West social enterprise') and supported by the Co-operative Group and the South West Co-operative and Mutual Council. Aims to showcase affordable social enterprise solutions to housing problems and wider community issues. Includes sessions on obtaining finance, mutual home ownership and co-operative housing. Contact: 01633 413102; housingconference@rise-sw.co.uk

The social economy in rural Scotland – leading the way? 16 March at Browne House, Dumfries/17 March at Tweed Horizons Conference Centre, Newton St Boswells, near Melrose.

Looks at the support necessary to further develop the social economy in rural Scotland. Contact: EA O'Neill, Equal, 0141 225 8000; equal@scvo.org.uk

CAN Conference 17 March at the Royal Society of Arts, London. Explore CAN's vision for the future of social entrepreneurs. Contact: www.can-online.org.uk

Paths to health – promoting social enterprise in health and social care 23 March at The Conference Centre at Church House, London.

How does a health or social care organisation improve access for the disabled, protect London's environment, help young and old in the community, strengthen the voluntary sector *and* generate a profit? Social enterprise! Organised by Social Enterprise London. Contact: Deborah Smookler, 020 7704 5634; www.sel.org.uk

The Skoll World Forum on Social Entrepreneurship 30 March – 1 April, Saïd Business School, Oxford.

Aims to provide a dynamic annual gathering which will shed new light on the work of social entrepreneurs around the globe. This year it will focus on networks and their impacts for social entrepreneurs, and on Europe. For information on speakers and how to register see: www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/html/faculty_skoll_world_forum_2005.asp