

Diocese of Ely's Net Zero Carbon Action Plan 2023: Statement

Introduction

Our Diocesan Synod in June 2021 voted:

'This Synod endorses the work of the Diocesan Environmental Task Group and their proposal that the Diocese of Ely become carbon neutral by 2030, in line with the decision of General Synod, and requires that work be planned and executed to effect this within the Diocese and parishes.'

The Diocesan Environmental Task Group has been working towards this, but this year the national church provided a first-round capacity-building grant of £15,000 which has been used to pay a part-time consultant. The sole condition of the grant was that the diocesan synod would this year approve a diocesan net zero carbon (NZC) action plan to meet Milestone 4.1.4. of the national NZC Routemap (approved by General Synod in 2022):

All dioceses provide an outline of their decarbonisation plans to Diocesan Synod as a Net Zero Carbon Action Plan, to include estimates of costs for different options, as well as the policy changes and levers for change required. To be reviewed annually by senior staff. The plan should make reference to the Practical Path to Net Zero and actively consider implementation of 'quick wins', how to decarbonise heat, how to reduce energy consumption and how to encourage behaviour change.

Ely's NZC Action Plan consists of three documents.

- This overview statement.
- A financial statement.
- A very detailed spreadsheet of actions against each milestone and point to consider in the national Routemap. This will be a live document, continually developing in the light of experience and opportunities. The Synod's Action Plan commitment is not to each and every proposed action, but to sustain the energy and drive illustrated by the spreadsheet.

These documents come to Synod via the Diocesan Finance Committee and Bishop's Council. **Synod is asked to endorse this NZC Action Plan.**

Context

That there is a climate crisis caused by human emissions into the atmosphere, principally carbon dioxide, is accepted by all but a very few. Not only have the governments of the world accepted this, even the oil industry has. Weather records are eclipsed every year now and many regions around the world, both rich and poor, are adversely affected by them. The science is clear about what we as a global community have to do, but the social will to do it remains at best half-hearted.

Christian churches are motivated not just by the science, but also out of concern for our fellow humans around our planet that are suffering now and will suffer even more in years to come. The poorest communities, those least able to adapt and who have contributed the least emissions, are the ones who will pay the greatest price. We want to act not just out of self-interest, but for our global neighbours, future generations and the natural world.

Perhaps more fundamental still is our accountability to God for our stewardship of the creation that God has pronounced as ‘very good’. The heavenly choir in Revelation 11 sing, “The time has come... for destroying those who destroy the earth.”

There is also a missional imperative to commit to Net Zero Carbon and this will be a key feature of Ely’s Action Plan, based on the Five Marks of Mission:

- **Proclaiming the Gospel:** not only is environmental care integral to the Christian message, in order to be taken seriously we must ‘walk the talk’ – this is particularly important for younger people; but more than this, if we show “the Church” is taking a lead on the environment, that gives us a platform to speak of the faith that motivates us.
- **Nurturing disciples:** environmental care is as integral to the Christian life as prayer, holiness, sharing our faith, and love of neighbour.
- **Loving service:** we care for our neighbours, near and far, by reducing the environmental impact of our individual and collective life as the church.
- **Transforming unjust structures:** the scale of the global challenge requires more effective democracy and the defeat of the ‘vested interests’ the IPCC speaks of.
- **Safeguard creation:** the two great environmental crises of our time, in which negative change is happening at unprecedented rates, are biodiversity loss and global heating. We must act to do our part in reducing these as much as possible.

The church’s journey to NZC will only make a small contribution to the reduction in CO₂ emissions, of course, but every fraction of a degree is worth struggling for. Our journey can be used to inspire others to join us on the path. And in the light of eternity, the scales do not weigh in kilotonnes of carbon.

In solidarity with our whole church and in this context, our diocese commits itself to the Net Zero Carbon Action Plan.

Governance

The responsibility for the Action Plan lies with the Diocesan Environmental Task Group (DETG). This will report to Bishop’s Council via the Delivery Oversight Board. The DETG may establish a NZC Action Group to handle the detail of the work, giving space to the DETG to also work in its two other workstreams, the sustainable gospel and biodiversity.

The DETG will manage the process of reporting progress and of holding to account those named as responsible for actions in the Action Plan. It will adjust the Action Plan, especially the detailed spreadsheet, as we learn more. It will be responsible for the major review at each annual anniversary.

Three part-time staff will be appointed (the two NZC staff will be funded out of the second-round, two-and-a-half-year capacity grant of £131,000): NZC Officer (with a broadly technical remit), Diocesan Environment Officer (DEO) (with a wider remit beyond NZC), and NZC Administrator to support the process. However, the primary responsibility for delivery on the action plan lies with the wider diocesan staff, who will integrate NZC into their normal work. This will make the NZC strategy sustainable once the national grant ends. These staff members have played the central role in the development and adoption of the Action Plan in their areas of responsibility.

Our diocese joined together with the dioceses of Norwich, St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, Chelmsford and St Albans in applying for the second-round capacity grant with the promise of collaboration amongst these eastern regional dioceses. An equal share of the grant money will fund a central network role. This will enable cross-learning and support amongst the five dioceses. The NZC team will particularly benefit from this, but each department from our diocese will benefit from working more closely with colleagues from other dioceses. This networking programme will be governed by the diocesan secretaries.

Focus and Key Actions

As with the national Routemap, the focus is on buildings and transport. It is about using less energy from cleaner sources; decarbonising heat and reducing energy consumption. This is partly about equipment, e.g. how a church is heated, and partly about behaviour and ways of working, e.g. car-sharing. Some of it is not new, and so hardly mentioned in the list of actions; good maintenance is the top example of this. At this stage of the process the main attention is on planning: we need to know more about our buildings and what can be done to make them more sustainable, so that we can then seek the funding and plan the work to achieve this. The Practical Path to Net Zero will be a guide here. Alongside this we need to be alert to opportunities as they arise, such as when building works are being planned for other reasons than NZC, and to quick and easy wins, such as switching to green electricity.

To underpin the practical work, with its challenges, especially the financial one, we need to be changing our hearts and minds; behaviour change. The diocese itself has responsibility for some buildings (about 150 clergy houses and the diocesan office) but churches and schools will be setting their own strategies for the buildings they are responsible for. And there is the wider work of engaging with congregation members, school families and the wider communities in which we are set. This is more than a communications task, this is mission.

Our strategy here reconfirms our choice of EcoChurch as the key tool. Although run independently of the Church of England by A Rocha, there is a great synergy. Several parishes have found its programme engages people to make significant changes across five areas of church life (in addition to buildings these are worship & teaching, community & global engagement, lifestyle and land). The diocese is already registered on the EcoDiocese journey and Milestone 4.2.9 challenges us to reach the gold award. The key criterion is the number of parishes with awards. For Silver Eco Diocese: 40% of local churches registered, 30% of local churches awarded of which at least a third of these awards should be Silver or higher.

The key actions for our diocese are, therefore:

Practicalities

- 1) For the Church Buildings team
 - a) Encourage all parishes to use the Energy Footprint Tool so that we have good data
 - b) Undertake audits of about ten representative churches supported by the NZC grant
 - c) Engage in detail with the top carbon-emitting parishes to explore their options
 - d) Devise more general strategies for assisting other churches to reduce their carbon-emissions
 - e) Work with the DAC and Chancellor to embed the new NZC requirements in the faculty process
 - f) Begin considering embodied carbon in projects that come before the DAC
- 2) For the Clergy Housing team

- a) Undertake special audits of all the properties (supported by the NZC grant) and develop NZC plans for each house
- 3) For the Assets team
 - a) The diocese has already divested from fossil fuel companies
 - b) Plans for glebe land are on hold until the national strategy is clearer
- 4) For the Education team
 - a) Undertake special audits of selected schools using the NZC grant
 - b) Support schools to plan ahead and to look for government funding opportunities
- 5) For the central team
 - a) The new diocesan office is already planned to a very high environmental standard
 - b) Develop a transport policy that can act as a model for others to adopt around the diocese

Mission

- 6) For the Mission and Ministry team and others
 - a) Develop a communications plan that sets NZC in the context of the 5 Marks of Mission
 - b) Promote EcoChurch and the Practical Path to Net Zero
 - c) Develop a support system for parishes
- 7) For the Clergy Housing team
 - a) Encourage clergy and other occupiers to make use of the buildings as sustainably as possible
- 8) For the Education team
 - a) Support schools in their environmental education

Routemap 'Milestones' for dioceses

The national Routemap sets many milestones for different parts of the church with target dates for when each should be reached. This table lists those for dioceses and summarises the actions we plan and by when these actions should be completed. In addition to its own responsibilities, the diocese also has plans on how to communicate the Routemap's milestones to churches and schools and to help them address them. These are set out in the spreadsheet section of the Action Plan.

Milestone	Actions planned	target
4.1.1. Dioceses: All dioceses to convene a Net Zero Carbon working group, with senior representatives.	The DETG membership has been enlarged and now includes an archdeacon and two members of Bishop's Council.	2023
4.1.2. Dioceses: All dioceses provide an annual carbon emissions report to Diocesan Synod using the results provided by the national Carbon Emissions report from Research and Statistics.	The NZC Administrator will pull this together	2024
4.1.3. Dioceses: All dioceses develop a communication strategy to churches and schools - focus on the 'why', the theology, and make it positive.	Ideas are already being generated. These will be pulled together into an action plan. This is a collaborative effort of the M&M team, the NZC team, the Bishop's Advisers on Climate, and the Comms team	2023
4.1.4. Dioceses: All dioceses provide an outline of their decarbonisation plans to Diocesan Synod as a Net Zero Carbon Action Plan, to include estimates of costs for different options, as well as the policy changes and levers for change required. To be reviewed annually by senior staff. The plan should	This is this Action Plan	2023

make reference to the Practical Path to Net Zero and actively consider implementation of 'quick wins', how to decarbonise heat, how to reduce energy consumption and how to encourage behaviour change.		
4.1.5. Dioceses: All dioceses audit clergy property (where possible) by 2023 and develop a property retrofitting plan by 2024 (see Section 4.4).	An EPC has already been completed for all properties. Specialist audits will be designed and commissioned. Property plans will be developed in the light of results and possible funding.	2024 And 2025
4.1.6. Dioceses: All dioceses audit their landholdings and develop a land management plan.	A plan to audit property using GIS data is being considered. The existing management plan will evolve	2025
4.2.5. Dioceses: Every diocese has a 90%+ completion rate for the Energy Footprint Tool, and 100% of cathedrals complete the Energy Footprint Tool.	Major promotion in 2024	2026
4.2.9. • All dioceses reach Gold Eco Dioceses standard – targets are currently being amended by A Rocha.	A central team is developing several ideas to encourage parishes to engage with the EcoChurch awards. Achieving certain percentages of parishes with awards is the main task for an EcoDiocese. The diocese also needs to have adopted an environmental policy, target date 2024.	2027
4.3.2. Dioceses to identify schools with boilers approaching end-of-life, and support schools through funding feasibility to identify opportunities for a more sustainable solution; develop heat decarbonisation plans and execution plans.	Schools will be identified by enquiry. Special audits will be conducted of selected schools.	2026
4.3.4. DBE to take the lead in the promotion of the Energy Toolkit in their schools to commence data collection from utility bills.	Design a comms package and then start using the ET data.	2024
4.3.6. DBE to take the lead in the promotion of smart meter installations in schools and be undertaking data analysis from the information provided.	This may be difficult to achieve for funding reasons.	
4.4.2. Housing Management: All dioceses and the NCIs to have retrofitting and maintenance plans in place. These should include a Heating Resilience Plan which should consider how to manage heat should the existing system fail to avoid needing a quick like-for-like fossil-fuel replacement.	Maintenance plans already in place. Heating resilience plans will develop.	2025
4.4.3. Dioceses: All dioceses to have commissioned stock surveys such as EPC+ reports for at least a representative sample of clergy housing.	Due to complete this year	2023
4.4.4. Housing Management: All dioceses, the NCIs and the Pensions Board to have run switching campaigns to encourage occupiers to switch to 'green' electricity and, having reviewed options to	Work with the Communications strategy	2024

replace fossil fuels, any building remaining with gas heating should be encouraged to switch to green gas tariffs at the point of contract renewal, based on national advice about the criteria to apply.		
4.4.5. Dioceses: All dioceses to have stock improvement plans in place, having regard to the timing of when properties become vacant. The plan should make reference to the Practical Path to Net Zero for Clergy Housing (Milestone 4.4.1) and actively consider implementation of 'quick wins', how to decarbonise heat and how to reduce energy consumption.	Housing Committee will need to agree a performance standard for its properties	2025
4.4.8. Housing Management: At change of occupancy, and no later than 2030, install smart meters to assist with monitoring and management of energy consumption.	This has to be done during an occupancy and to be led by the occupant. Will be part of communications.	
4.6.1. Office Management: All offices to register for Eco Church during 2022 and aim to achieve a bronze Eco Church award by 2023 and silver by 2026.	This will be done when the new diocesan office is complete	2025
4.6.2. Office Management: All offices to measure and report on their carbon emissions by inputting utility bill information and floor area into the Energy Footprint Tool.	This will be done when the new diocesan office is complete	2025
4.6.3. Office Management: All offices have at least a high-level Net Zero Carbon Action Plan, including some consideration of space availability and needs. The plan should actively consider implementation of 'quick wins', how to decarbonise heat and how to reduce energy consumption. The Action Plan should also contain a Heating Resilience Plan which should consider how to manage heat should the existing system fail to avoid needing a quick like-for-like fossil-fuel replacement.	All these points have been incorporated into the plans for the new office building	2023
4.6.4. Office Management: Offices to review the potential for installation of electric vehicle charging points and the provision of dedicated car parking spaces for electric cars. If appropriate, then move ahead to installation.	Four will be provided with the new office	2025
4.6.5. Office Management: From 2023 onwards, all offices not already on one to switch to a green electricity tariff at the point of contract renewal.	The new roof will have PV. We shall look for the optimal contract to make most use of this.	2025
4.6.6. Office Management: From 2024 onwards*, and having reviewed options to replace fossil fuels, all offices that remain on gas heating switch to a 'green' gas tariff at the point of contract renewal, based on national advice about the criteria to apply.	Will not be using gas	

4.6.7. Office Management: No new or replacement oil boilers to be installed in offices after this date.	Will not be using oil	
4.6.8. Office Management: All owned offices to deliver the actions in their Net Zero Carbon Action Plans.		2030
5.1.3. Dioceses: Dioceses to create a Routemap to Net Zero Carbon by 2030 Communications Strategy. Net Zero Carbon messages to be incorporated in ongoing communications by Diocesan Communications Officers, Schools communications teams and Church communications, throughout the decade, with interest groups (e.g. DEOs) providing feedback.	See 4.1.3	
5.2.10. Dioceses: Individually, or in regional groups, all dioceses to review their capacity to respond to the Routemap and identify gaps. The review should cover (i) the capacity to engage schools, archdeacons, deaneries, and churches across the diocese, (ii) the project management skills needed to initiate and support local action, (iii) the technical input needed and (iv) the local fundraising capacity needed.	This will be reviewed once the regional group is up and running	2024
5.3.3. Institutions: All dioceses, and where applicable TEIs, schools, offices and the NCIs, to develop or update a Travel Plan that includes 'no travel' options.	We hope to use a travel plan adapted from one of the HR consultants that the diocese uses	2024
5.3.4. Institutions: All dioceses, and where applicable TEIs, schools, offices and the NCIs, to review and update travel and expenses policies to encourage sustainable transport.	This will be included in the travel plan	2024
6.1.4. Dioceses and Institutions: Implement carbon offsetting with an approved supplier to offset those emissions that have been impossible to eliminate.	The DEO will investigate local offsetting possibilities	2028
6.2.2. Dioceses to review with their land agents the terms of tenancy agreements to include net zero and biodiversity ambitions.	Wait for model agreements to be developed at national or regional level	2025
6.2.6. Dioceses: All dioceses to align land management agreements going forward with the diocesan environmental policy objectives.	The diocesan objectives will become clearer once national and regional bodies develop their strategies and objectives	2025
7.1.3. Dioceses: Dioceses to prepare a report on progress on the milestones detailing the successes and explaining the reasons for any delays to progress. To be submitted to the National Environment Team in Q1 that year to allow incorporation into the national report to General Synod in July.	Report to be prepared by NZC team after consultation with action holders	2024

Conclusion

The national church is asking us to undertake a complex and demanding programme of work over the next seven years. This action plan is 'work in progress' and it is planned to develop as we learn, and new challenges and opportunities come along. By adopting this action plan, diocesan synod is

- committing to a direction of travel and to supporting this with funding and staff time.
- holding people to account and requiring reports of progress on the actions and of carbon emissions.
- challenging and supporting parishes, schools and others to join the diocese on this journey towards Net Zero Carbon with the motivational target of 2030.