

Diocese of Worcester Environmental strategy

Updated statement of environmental policy – Jan/Feb 2023

Background

In 2008 an in-depth strategy, **Caring for the Earth** was written and adopted by the Diocesan Synod and has been the tool from which action has been inspired. However, the world is now a changed place and most timed targets have passed. In addition, the Church of England has also given the Church as a whole, a lead and commitment following the General Synod decision, to achieve Net Zero Carbon by 2030. (GS2159)

The review and updating is overdue but nevertheless the work has continued and the original document remains a useful tool for direction.

Why the Church?

“It becomes ever clearer that climate change is the greatest challenge that we and future generations face. It’s our sacred duty to protect the natural world we’ve so generously been given, as well as our neighbours around the world who will be first and worst affected.”

Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

Bishop John wrote in 2008:

“The first covenant that God makes in the Bible is in Genesis 9 and that this covenant is not just with humanity. It is with all life on earth. Five times in the chapter God insists that the covenant he is making is with all life on earth. The integrity of the created order is crucial to the first covenant in the Bible. It is at the heart of the new covenant, too. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son’ (John 3.16). Too often that verse is interpreted to mean just humanity. God loves the world and the entirety of his creation, but that creation is in our hands.”

It is recognised that the Church can have a prophetic and visionary role in a society that has to find ways to mitigate against environmental degradation and climate change or adapt to it. The challenges we face require a response from everyone. Lifestyle change coupled with community involvement could turn the Church and its members into agents of change and transformation.

Climate change poses significant challenges - for the Church, for the international community but particularly for people in developing countries. It is another aspect of the responsibility we have as Christians and Anglicans to our global church.

The EWG of the Church of England called for a prioritising the fifth mark of mission ‘to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth’, stating that without this being done wholeheartedly the other four marks lack credibility in today’s context.

Diocesan Commitment

- Align our commitment with the - Route map to Net Zero Carbon by 2030 - Carbon Reduction Action Plan (GS2258) presented to the General Synod in July 2022.
- **Enable and give support to the CCTG (Climate Crisis Task Group) to lead on actions and policies to achieve Net Zero Carbon.**
- **Encourage and support all churches to engage in the Eco Church award scheme, which addresses hearts and minds in change.**
- Embed Creation care in all functions of the Diocese and at every level.
- Embed creation care within our worship, teaching and discipleship work.
- Embed creation care in training and IME programmes.
- Prioritise environmental issues in our financial decision-making including divesting from fossil fuel extraction.
- Encourage biodiversity and using land sustainably, including Glebe land.
- Engage and support schools in their targets to become NZC and environmentally sustainable.
- Work with a range of communities and partners on environmental issues.
- Proactively record, celebrate and champion environmental initiatives.
- Proactively seek funding from the Church or other partners to enable change towards NZC in all our buildings and practice.

These objectives will be achieved through the structures and business of CCTG

Climate Crisis Task Group (CCTG)

The function of the task group is to oversee the -

Eco Church Task Group promoting creation care and all aspects of environmental concern in the Diocese as a fundamental part of Christian discipleship, especially through the Eco Diocese and Eco Church scheme (A Rocha)

Net Zero Task Group -co-ordinating the diocesan response to the Church of England’s commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030, as outlined in the motion agreed by General Synod in February 2020, and the Route Map, July 2022

Membership

Members of Net Zero Task Group (NZTG) are selected to ensure coverage of the Diocese and Cathedral, and especially those key areas the WDBF has control of or influence over, with regard to their carbon emissions. This includes:

- Church buildings, including halls and ancillary buildings, surrounding land,
- churchyards and burial grounds
- Clergy housing
- Glebe land and properties
- Diocesan and Bishops' offices
- Voluntary Aided schools under the control of the DBE, and Diocesan Academy Trusts

Where possible the DBF and Cathedral will work in partnership through the group.

Duties

To:

1. Receive and review guidance issued from the National Environment team of the Church of England, helping to determine how this will be put into practice within the relevant parts of the diocese.
2. Oversee the production of action plans for each key area under direct control of the DBF (eg. Clergy housing, glebe land, diocesan offices etc.), and regularly review progress against these.
3. Encourage the production of action plans for each key area under the influence (but not direct control) of the DBF (eg. individual PCCs, Cathedral chapter etc.) Engage with those responsible for energy use within these areas.
4. Research and review best practice and emerging technology in the fields of energy reduction, renewable energy, decarbonisation, green technologies and offsetting.
5. Work with the finance team to provide information on financial implications of proposed actions, to enable decision-makers to act.
6. Encourage an understanding of the theological underpinning of the General Synod motion in order to articulate a shared, hope-filled theological rationale as to the importance of this work.
7. Seek to embed Environmental issues into every aspect of Church and diocesan activity through challenge and awareness raising.
8. Work with the Communications team to provide effective communication throughout the Diocese to enable a wide understanding of the requirement for net zero and the diocesan progress towards this.

In order to keep on task and be accountable the CCTG will provide a report for Diocesan Synod every three years and reports and updates to the Bishops and Bishop's Council as requested.

"Reducing the causes of climate change is essential to the life of faith. It is a way to love our neighbour and to steward the gift of creation."

Justin Welby Archbishop of Canterbury