

Appendix 7:

Community Engagement

We recognise the importance of the Church of England's declaration of Climate Emergency, and the 2030 Carbon Neutral commitment as a means of influencing a widespread and often harder to reach audience. Church buildings are one of the most visible symbols of the Church of England, offering an opportunity to spread the message of sustainability whilst implementing the Church's commitment to environmental sustainability.

Framland Deanery Synod (which includes representatives from the 64 churches in the Deanery) recognised the need for the Church community to take action in response to the climate emergency. It set up a group 'Greening Framland' under the leadership of Rev John Barr, and prior to the COVID-19 pandemic organised a number of meetings to explore different aspects of improving environmental practice. The Rural Community Energy Fund provided the opportunity to undertake a concerted review of energy issues within churches. It was hoped this would establish the feasibility of generating energy both to reduce carbon emissions and potentially to generate a small income.

The Deanery established a steering group to prepare a bid, and following a successful application, to oversee the project. This group includes a representative from the Diocese of Leicester

In February 2020 the Church of England Synod declared its intention to reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2030; consequentially this project rose in profile across the Church community.

In the context of this project, the community refers primarily to the Church of England community. Although active engagement with the wider Church community has been inhibited by the COVID-19 restrictions, at each church a dialogue has been established with the churchwardens and local clergy.

Engagement within the Church Community

At the top levels of the Church of England's hierarchy, a clear commitment has been shown to act in response to Climate Change. Engagement throughout the Church community will involve the structures of management of the Church (ranging from the General Synod, who were responsible for the Church of England's declaration of Climate Emergency, down to the Parochial Church Councils). In order to achieve the Church's aim of Carbon Neutrality by 2030, a widespread and comprehensive programme of energy reduction supported at all levels of administration and across geographic locations will be critical. There will be several key components to achieving this:

- Stakeholder Engagement: ensuring that stakeholders at all levels of the Church administration and wider Church community are committed to pursuing and enabling programmes to reduce Church carbon emissions.
- Availability of funding: all organisations currently funding church maintenance need to be aware of and encouraged to support low carbon retrofit options. This includes independent charities, national funding organisations (in particular Historic England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund), as well as central and local church organisations. The Church at all levels has a role in promoting such a policy with their funding organisations. A central Church funding source would demonstrate a sincere commitment to achieving the 2030 deadline for zero carbon emissions. Dependent upon the proposed financing model, there may also be an element of engaging stakeholders from outside the Church community (e.g. local people) to invest financially in the programme.
- Awareness within the Diocesan Advisory Committee: permissions for many retrofit measures will be subject to faculty jurisdiction administered by the relevant Diocese. It is vital that those responsible are well versed in relevant retrofit materials, processes, and technologies, and how these interact with historic buildings, as well as being prepared to support individual PCCs in obtaining faculties for projects that will improve the buildings sustainability. PCCs will only be able to pursue retrofit options if encouraged by the Diocese and in particular the DAC's, therefore the DAC's should positively be encouraging retrofit options. This report will show that unless retrofit options are put in place churches will not be able to function and meet the 2030 Carbon Neutrality declaration.
- Information: those responsible for buildings and maintenance must receive accessible and unbiased information to allow them to make informed decisions. This information is currently generated from the Quinquennial inspections; most churches will have at most two inspections between now and 2030. The Quinquennial reports for each church give a good statement of the current state of the church building and provide a good basis for understanding the structure and condition. These should,

with the assistance of the Assessment tool and church architect, allow each church to work out its potential for retrofitting and consequently develop a strategy for achieving this. Training sessions on the use of the assessment tool and the quinquennial may be needed. Churches should then be well informed and able to engage their own community in the project.

- Support: if PCCs are responsible for raising funds and co-ordinating retrofit programmes within the churches, support must be made available to assist this process and ensure that any works are suitable, carried out to a high standard, and completed in the most efficient and sympathetic way.
- Particularly in rural areas, churches represent landmarks and community buildings as well as religious institutions. In future, there will need to be a level of engagement with wider communities and external stakeholders, particularly where measures involve changes to the exterior of the church buildings. Depending on the financial model used to fund the retrofits, there may be an element of engaging stakeholders from the wider local community to invest financially in the programme.

Whilst the Church of England will be responsible for designing and enacting an appropriate engagement process, it is clear that the greater the level of advocacy for climate action provided by members of the clergy and high-level Church administration, the stronger the message disseminated to parishioners, others within the Church and the wider community. The Church must take a moral lead. The openness and visibility of the retrofit programme could itself act as an engagement tool; if possible, the physical works should be enacted alongside information and education to allow those involved to understand the links between their actions and related environmental impacts.

Inevitably clashes between conservation and sustainability will arise. It is vital however that due weight is given to the need to reduce carbon emissions to net zero promptly, in order to minimise our ongoing contribution to the Climate and Ecological Emergency, and those people, species and habitats that are already under direct and immediate threat.

Strategies for Engagement

Below are some recommendations for strategies to engage the congregation and wider community:

- Newsletters: including information and updates about the works being undertaken, with reference to energy and carbon emissions reduction and links to climate change.
- Involvement of youth groups / Sunday schools: Fun activities and education around the retrofit programme and its relationship with the environment and the Church of England's 2030 zero carbon commitment could be incorporated into Sunday School or other church group activities
- Exhibitions: Small exhibitions explaining the works and the relationship to the church's Carbon Emissions Reduction commitments could be displayed in entrance halls or on information boards around the building, and on any hoardings erected for the purpose of the works
- Church open days: An explanation of the works and their environmental significance could be incorporated into any open days and tours of the church (for schools, parishioners, or any interested groups)

Engagement with the wider Community

In addition to engaging members of the wider community through the measures above, there may be a more formal level of engagement required for any proposed works requiring Planning Permission, which will necessitate consultation with the wider community. Equally, measures involving faculty jurisdiction are required to undergo a consultation process where appropriate.

The Eco-church Scheme

A Rocha UK's Eco-church scheme, based around an online survey and awards programme, suggests a far broader programme of strategies to reduce the carbon footprint of a church. Online resources⁶ and case studies provide detailed information grouped into five key areas:

- Worship and teaching
- Management of church buildings
- Management of church land
- Community and global engagement
- Lifestyle

The survey (which can be found on the eco-church website) provides a useful checklist for churches, including low and no-cost carbon reduction strategies, as well as suggesting methods to bring about behaviour change and to increase community engagement with environmental issues.

⁶ <https://ecoChurch.arocha.org.uk/>