

Diocese of Coventry

Environmental Policy 2020

The Diocesan Environment Group (DEG) developed an Environmental Policy for the Diocese of Coventry, which was adopted by the Coventry Diocesan Synod on 14 November 2009. The policy has been reviewed and updated in 2019, in the light of the growing crisis in God's creation and in the light of progress that has been made since 2009, and this is set out overleaf.

The role of the DEG in implementing this policy includes:

- 1) Promoting a programme among Churches in the Diocese and their congregations to aid understanding of and effective response to key environmental issues. Since 2016, the mechanism which has been found to be most effective in achieving this is to encourage churches to sign up for Eco Church¹, supported by the Diocese, now registered as a Bronze Award Eco Diocese
- 2) Providing a lead within this Diocese in addressing climate change
- 3) Undertaking a carbon audit throughout the diocese for all church and diocesan buildings to facilitate carbon reduction as soon as possible. To facilitate this, we are soon to roll out the Green Journey scheme, pioneered by the Diocese of Leeds.²
- 4) Promoting churches who will act as models of best practice and encouraging those signed up for Eco Church to network with others, including local Diocesan Church Schools³, to share good practice and to encourage one another
- 5) To produce up-to-date resources and news on the Diocesan website at <http://www.dioceseofcoventry.org/DEG> and to encourage their use.

¹ <https://ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk/how-eco-church-works/>

² We have initiated this in autumn 2019 with a pilot project in Rugby Deanery

³ We encourage them to register for the Eco Schools programme (<https://www.eco-schools.org.uk/>)

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Theological basis

The biblical story shows creation to be God's gift and, so, inherently good. God delegates a share of responsibility to care for the earth to humanity. The actions of humankind have led to the abuse of the earth and a fracturing of the relationship that humanity has with all that provides security and truth. The continuing biblical narrative demonstrates the hope of that relationship restored and creation renewed through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, 'the image of the invisible God', for and through whom 'all things have been created', in whom 'all things hold together' and through whom 'God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things' (Colossians 1: 15-20).

As Christian people we lament over the damage done to our fragile planet but do not despair because our hope is in Christ. We have a faith imperative under God to share in the care and nurture of creation through the power of the Holy Spirit. God has appointed us as stewards. We are called to celebrate the presence of God in creation and to protect the gift we have so that all can contribute in the diversity and rhythm of birth, growth and death. We do this in the experience of God's grace and the knowledge that our first accountability is not to governments or pressure groups but to God.

We therefore strive to take seriously and responsibly our God-given vocation to care for the earth and to demonstrate that care among those with whom we share our lives:

Our intention:

1. We affirm the diocesan strategy to 'transform communities' and thereby 'to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth' as central to our worship, life, work and mission.
2. We take environmental concerns fully into account in our mission, worship, study, education, training, pastoral, administrative and other programmes and projects.
3. We encourage our Diocesan Environment Group to raise environmental concerns and opportunities through the communication structures of the diocese, and on behalf of the church with other partner organisations.
4. We ask all members of the Coventry diocese to consider their personal impact on the environment in their daily lives, and to bring about change as a mission imperative.

Our practice:

1. We will identify environmental concerns and projects in our local and wider community and participate in appropriate action in response to them.
2. We will undertake an environmental audit of our churches and buildings, asking churches to use the Eco Survey programme⁴ or the services of Green Journey⁵. We will devise appropriate responses to lessen environmental damage and abuse and seek to reduce our carbon footprint, both of our churches and of our congregations.
3. We will monitor the environmental impact of our policies and plans, accepting that additional costs may be incurred in any resulting revisions.
4. We will promote locally sourced foods and produce and simpler life styles.

⁴ e.g. <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/eco-survey-non-saving-example/>

⁵ See <https://greenjourney.org/>

Our learning:

1. We will seek appropriate information from Christian environmental groups and keep abreast of current thinking.
2. We will support and promote the work of local, national and international environmental agencies⁶.
3. We will engage in an environmental debate and discussion as required, and model that principle in deanery synods and parochial church councils.
4. We will promote Christian environmental education, both in our congregations and in our Continuing Ministerial Development.

Having adopted this policy, we shall not be afraid to publish it and to be held accountable to it by other agencies and partners, our families and colleagues, and all those who contribute to diocesan life and witness.

A Carbon Action Checklist for churches in the Diocese of Coventry

Please note the checklist is neither comprehensive nor prescriptive and will depend upon your particular situation. The key action is the first

1. Measure your church's carbon footprint and plan the most cost-effective way of reducing it in *your* situation. This includes church halls and vicarages.
2. Install energy saving bulbs, time and activity-sensor switches throughout church buildings
3. Ensure the heating system is governed by a time switch so that it is used only when necessary and introducing zoning system where appropriate
4. Introduce car sharing schemes and promote cycling and walking to get people to and from church
5. Celebrate Creation Tide in September/October using international (<http://seasonofcreation.org/>) and Church of England (<https://creationtide.com/>) resources.
6. Establish a church allotment and promote cooking classes for the produce.
7. Introduce lagging and cavity wall insulation where appropriate
8. Host parish, benefice or deanery events, with speakers, discussion groups and/or films e.g. *An Inconvenient Sequel* or *Scarred Lands and Wounded Lives*
9. Sign on for an energy audit with Green Journey and switch to a green energy supplier

⁶ In particular, we promote the work of A Rocha UK (<https://arocha.org.uk/>), Operation Noah (<https://operationnoah.org/>) and the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (<https://www.warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/>)

10. Replace boiler if more than 15 years old. Take measures to improve the efficiency of church heating system and/or consider alternative methods of heating in consultation with the DAC.
11. Circulate information to build understanding of climate change starting with the Environmental Resources page of the Diocesan Environment Group website (<http://www.dioceseofcoventry.org/DEG>)
12. Sign up for Eco Church (<https://ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk/register/>) to monitor your progress

A Carbon Action Checklist for schools in the Diocese of Coventry

- Food eaten: local sustainable, organic, animal-friendly and Fairtrade produce.
- Help children to grow and prepare their own.
- The school run: a dedicated bus scheme or, better still, 'walking buses'.
- Save energy, use renewables.
- Reduce waste.

Appendix

Measuring and Reducing your 'Carbon Footprint'

Your carbon footprint is the measure of the detrimental impact you (a person or a building) are having on global warming, by measuring the amount of carbon dioxide you produce. By becoming more energy efficient, or by using renewable sources of energy, you can reduce your carbon footprint. In many cases, becoming energy efficient will also reduce your fuel bills too.

Reducing your carbon footprint doesn't have to be expensive. There are many small activities that you can do that can be very effective. Your first step would be to identify how big your carbon footprint currently is. You can do this by: -

- 1) *Undertaking an energy audit*: calculate how much energy is used in your church using existing fuel bills. To calculate your carbon footprint: <https://www.carbontrust.com/client-services/advice/footprinting/carbon-footprint-software/>. You may prefer to go to the free Climate Stewards website (<https://www.climatestewards.org/offset/>) through whom you can also offset your church's footprint or the carbon footprints of members of the congregation. This also allows you to include the footprint of your travel.
- 2) *Commissioning an energy survey of the church*:⁷ The Diocese recommends churches to ask Green Journey to do an energy audit for them. If any church decides to switch to an energy provider recommended by Green Journey, the provider gives them a commission, and this is why Green Journey can provide the service free.

⁷ Conditional on a successful trial of Green Journey in October 2019 in the Rugby Deanery