

From Audit to Action – Step by Step Guidance

Congratulations! Your church has had an energy audit, and your journey to improved energy efficiency and net zero carbon is underway. This short guide is designed to help you get the most out of your report and plan your next steps.

1. Getting a group together

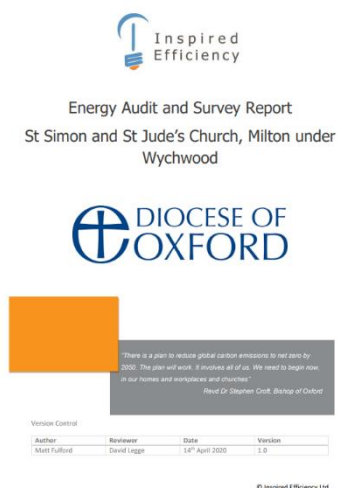


Many churches find that it is very helpful to have a small group who look over the audit together in the first instance and write a summary response and plan for the PCC to discuss. Every church's membership and roles will be different. Some might find it helpful to involve whoever is most responsible for the church building, the treasurer, a churchwarden and a member of clergy. Others might want a group of specialists with experience in buildings to look at the plans first, and then present them to the whole PCC.

2. Making this missional

Your energy-saving journey isn't just about the practical actions you undertake – it is part of your mission as a church to show love of God by caring for creation. Your group should include, or work with, people who lead worship and teaching at your church, so that together you can ensure that people understand the 'why' of what you are doing, as well as the 'what'. For more support and ideas why not look into [becoming an Eco Church?](#)

3. What's in the Report



The summary table at the front contains all the auditor's recommendations. Each recommendation comes with an estimate of the amount of energy it would save, how much it would reduce your carbon footprint, how much it would cost to implement, and, where applicable, how much money it could potentially save you depending on prices.

Below the table, the recommendations are placed on a timeline of arrows, showing you the best sequence for making the changes, so that you can move at a sensible pace and reach net zero by 2035, in line with the Diocese of Oxford's net zero target

The rest of the report gives you a snapshot of where you are now and explains the recommendations in detail.

4. Tips on reading the recommendations table and arrows diagram

The items in the report are divided into two categories: 1) energy-efficiency recommendations and 2) a net-zero (decarbonised) heating strategy. The heating is

separated out because it normally accounts for 80-90% of a church's energy consumption and is the most important part of the report.

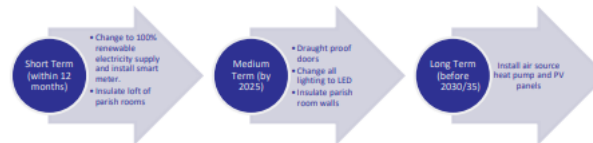
The energy-efficiency recommendations are often 'quick wins' with relatively low capital costs, and relatively short payback times.

The arrows give you a suggestion for the timing of each item, often with quick wins first. These are, however, only a suggestion.

2. The Route to Net Zero Carbon

The General Synod of the Church of England has indicated that the Church of England should be Net Zero Carbon by 2030. Every church, cathedral, church school and vicarage will therefore need to convert to be a net zero building in the next 10 years. Furthermore, the Diocese of Oxford has also declared a climate emergency and has an ambition to be carbon neutral by 2035.

This church has a clear route to become net zero by 2030 or 2035 by undertaking the following steps:



Points to note:

- Energy savings, costs to implement changes and cost savings from them may vary depending on the particular brands, contractors, energy providers and tariffs that you use.
- Costings provided are for basic installation, and are a snapshot based on prices at the time of writing. More detailed costings would need to be done to get an accurate picture, and to take into account other project costs such as consultancy fees, scaffolding, surveys and so on.
- In coming years, it is likely that electricity and gas prices will come closer together. If you are switching from gas to electricity, this means that the operating costs of the new system (versus a like-for-like replacement of the old) are likely to become more attractive over time.
- The government currently aims to decarbonise the whole electricity grid by 2035

5. Quick wins

Most churches will have some quick wins that they can do immediately – and the sooner they do them, the faster they could save energy and money. These include things like switching to a renewable electricity tariff, replacing lightbulbs with LEDs, and basic (black plasticine!) draughtproofing. It is estimated that if every church implemented their quick wins, we could reduce overall carbon emissions by around 20%.

Take a look at your table. Are there recommendations that have low capital cost, don't require faculty or List B permissions, and show quick payback times? Your group might want to pick out these quick wins and suggest to the PCC that you move forward with them immediately.

6. Mission Action Plan Check

Next take a look at the larger items of work and the heating strategy proposed. Does the audit report still align with how you hope to use your church building, and your longer-term mission plan? If you have any questions, talk to a member of the Environment Team, particularly if you are considering bigger re-ordering projects that may affect your proposed heating strategy.

7. Finding out more

Mission check positive? Then it is time to look at the technologies proposed for your church. Are they ones with which you are familiar? Or something new? If you would like more information about any particular technology, search the [Eco Hub](#), where there is a bank of information. If you would like to be in touch with other churches that have used the solutions proposed for you, so that you can learn from their experiences, contact the Environment Team.

You may also want to get a more detailed study done, particularly if your church has more complex needs. Discuss with a Building Services Engineer (who you can find at [CIBSE.org](#)), or talk with the Church Buildings Team, who can advise on this option. If you are in Oxfordshire, the Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust does sometimes offer funding for feasibility studies.

When things go wrong....
Members of your church may say “Oh, but they tried that in xxx, and it didn’t work.” Sometimes that’s a helpful warning. But sometimes it isn’t. Heating systems are like anything else... Sometimes a designer doesn’t do a good job and installs the wrong specification of system, or there is a fault with a piece of equipment. The construction type and use pattern of the church need to match the heating system, Just because a solution didn’t work in one church doesn’t mean it won’t work in another.

8. Read the national heating guidance

Once you are happy with the plans for the larger elements of work in your audit, it is vital that you read through the heating guidance from the [Church Buildings Council](#). This will tell you everything you need to consider as part of your plans, and will answer questions you may have. It is important to have read this carefully before approaching the Church Buildings Team, as any information they are likely to be able to share with you will be included in this guidance.

Point to note: due ‘regard’

When the DAC evaluates any proposal, they are legally obligated to make sure that the parish has had ‘due regard’ to the national net zero guidance produced by the Church Buildings Council, and if a project does not follow the advice given in this guidance, you have provided cogent reasons for not doing so. The Church Buildings Team guidance on what to consider when planning a heating project is available on the [diocesan website](#).

9. Step by step? Or a single project?

You have decided on a way forward, and the Church Buildings Tea have indicated that they think it is feasible. Congratulations!

Now you'll want to determine whether you want to do the remaining work as separate projects or as a single project. A key question is what timescale feels realistic. What you decide will depend in part on your strategy for fundraising, the way you want to manage the project, the permissions needed, and the nature of the technology involved.

- On fundraising: What kind of strategy for fundraising do you think would work best? Some people prefer to do a series of smaller projects before they start fundraising for larger works. Others prefer to put all the projects together, cost them, and present them as a single package that might attract larger donations. For more advice and support, visit our [giving and fundraising pages](#).
- On managing the project: Who will manage the work? How would they like to manage it, and what help will they need?
- On permissions: What kind of permissions will be needed to undertake the work? If, for example, you're an unlisted church looking to put in under-pew heating in modern pews, the new faculty rules make this a list B item, so permissions are relatively simple. If you are a Grade 1 listed church seeking to put in underfloor heating, the process will be more complex. Find guidance on permissions on our [church buildings pages](#).
- On the technology: How developed is the technology suggested for your heating solution? If there is a technology that you are happy with, and it is well developed, there is no obstacle to moving ahead at speed. If the best technology for your church is something that is still developing then you might want to take small steps at the outset.

11. Spreading the word

In the course of your journey towards energy efficiency and net zero, your church will have gained invaluable experience. Particularly if you monitor your energy usage and utility bills, you will be able to see what has worked – and what hasn't – and share the impact with your congregation and wider community. Much of what you have learned may also be applicable to other buildings in your community – including people's homes. Consider how you might share the benefits of your learning to help people saving energy and money at home, as well. And don't forget to celebrate your achievements.

Useful resources:

[Church of England net zero case studies](#)

[Net zero fundraising advice](#)

[Church buildings heating and net zero guidance](#)