

The Diocese of Leeds Environmental Policy Statement

Background

Jesus commissioned His disciples to take the good news of his death and resurrection to all of creation, reiterating the original purpose of humanity to act as rulers over creation. Rulers who are made in God's image; loving, Christlike rulers, servant kings within the natural world, not only the climate but all living things and the land entrusted to our care.

Climate change and its impacts on people is one of the biggest issues confronting our world today. People of all ages, backgrounds and experience are finding that taking action on climate change is at the very heart of what it means to be a Christian for them. Each of the Anglican five marks of mission demand protection of creation and challenges to injustice as part of the mission of the church.

The church is called to share a narrative of hope and action, something especially relevant in light of the climate emergency. We see caring for creation as integral to the whole ministry and mission of our churches and church schools. Across our diocese, churchyards, glebe land and school grounds offer opportunities to nurture biodiversity, restore habitats and model sustainable land use.

The diocese's ambition to become net zero carbon is a symbol, and by itself will not prevent global climate change. However, it stands in a long and biblical tradition of prophetic action, drawing attention to all that runs counter to God's will and the common good. The kingdom of God is characterised by justice, peace and ecological wholeness. The vocation of the church is to be sign, a sacrament, and a foretaste of Christ's kingdom - a kingdom that brings the renewal of the whole of creation.

Our net zero carbon work is a significant and costly act of sacrificial love, which tells the next generation and the world's most vulnerable that they are heard, and we are alongside them. We are called to stand in solidarity with our global sisters and brothers across the Anglican Communion. We know the injustice of climate change, which is impacting most deeply on the poorest in society, both locally and globally, and future generations, who have historically done the least to cause it. The ecological crisis is also a humanitarian crisis, and addressing it is as much about how we love one another as how we care for God's creation.

Commitments

The Diocese of Leeds is striving to be net zero carbon by 2030. Our vision for 2030 for our clergy properties, schools and churches to be warm, bright and welcoming buildings that are well maintained, powered by renewable energy and more energy efficient, with lower energy costs.

Investing in the future of our buildings will enable them to be sustainable signs of the kingdom, better serving the needs of the worshipping congregation and community and acting as beacons of excellence in the transition away from fossil fuels. By making changes to our buildings we contribute to the wellbeing of creation through our stewardship of land and resources, we are making a statement that we are taking climate change seriously and we are campaigning for our church community to come on the journey with us.

Alongside buildings, we envision our churchyards, glebe land and school grounds as flourishing spaces for biodiversity, community engagement and spiritual reflection, places where nature is nurtured and creation celebrated.

The Diocese of Leeds continues to be at the forefront of eco mission nationally. We are acting in response and support of the General Synod's call in February 2020, to be net zero carbon by 2030.

The key principles which underpin our Environmental Policy Statement are that it is:

- Rooted in a strong theological foundation
- Urgent, relevant and widely understood
- Data driven and focused
- Embedded in all we do

Our diocesan rapid decarbonisation work is not our only response to climate change, nor the only way we express our mission to care for all creation. We continue to promote and engage with the Eco Church Award scheme, a tool to assist creation care being threaded through the life of a church. Our net zero programme provides opportunities for all Christians, including our Bishops and senior clergy, to advocate with credibility about this work in the public square, using our voice to support campaigns that protect nature and those that are vulnerable. We aim to build resilient communities that are able to work together to respond to the climate crisis.

Implementation

In 2021 the Leeds Diocesan Board of Finance approved and Diocesan Synod welcomed the diocese's strategic decarbonisation plan - Saving Creation: Strategic Action to Combat Climate Change.

The plan was introduced to Synod in October 2021 and built on both the General Synod motion in 2020 and a previous Diocesan synod motion in March 2019 committing the Diocese of Leeds to carbon reduction targets (50% reduction by 2030 and zero by 2050). The plan ensures that care for creation is embedded across the whole diocese, including not only buildings but also the stewardship of diocesan land, encouraging communities to come on this journey with us. As a diocese we have a huge potential to make change.

Having a net zero action and climate resilience plan is part of the longer term strategic planning for the diocese. This allows us to be relevant and inspirational, and also gives the buildings our communities use a firm footing for many years to come. Continued engagement and communication with a wide range of stakeholders is essential. We acknowledge that not all PCCs, schools or clergy property occupants will be in a position to move at the same speed, and careful support and guidance will be needed as we journey together.

While there is a long tradition of scripturally-based Christian relationship with creation, decarbonisation brings new challenges where the body of Christ does not have prior expertise. As we learn together, training and upskilling will be vital to help meet our ambition of net zero. Several training strands are already underway for clergy, lay people and diocesan staff, including us developing a groundbreaking Eco Mission Enabler Ministry Pathway on behalf of the national church. Adaptability will be required through the phases of this programme to meet the needs of learners at different stages. We want to create confident Christians who can help to transform communities for the climate emergency context.

This work will be firmly embedded in our work and mission, as part of our broader Barnabas: Encouraging Confidence programme. Various specific roles have been created to support parts of this work, including a Property Development Officer, a School Buildings Support Officer, a Net Zero Churches Technical Consultant and a Net Zero Funding Officer. Funding our net zero ambition will be challenging. We value the partners we are already working within and will be open to working with other organisations.

Our diocesan teams are working on a variety of initiatives to implement our vision. Work continues towards becoming a Silver Eco Diocese, with the diocese achieving an Eco Office Silver Award. We have many churches with Eco Church Awards, including five Gold Awards (correct as of November 2025). Diocesan staff have undertaken Carbon Literacy training, encouraging them to think about how their work can have an environmental impact.

Our Children, Young People and Families Team have produced a resource containing case studies and ideas for Outdoor Worship and mission with children, young people and families, as well as hosted Engage Worship's training for Outdoor Worship. The team have also collated research and guidance for Forest Church in schools. This helps to reconnect communities with the natural world, fostering spiritual connection rooted in creation and encouraging care for creation.

Our Education Team have created and shared a toolkit for schools, helping them to reduce their carbon footprints. The team are encouraging engagement with Eco Schools and Let's Go Zero initiatives to empower students, effect behavioural change and integrate learning and equipping on climate action into the curriculum. Schools are encouraged to take action for quick wins, as well as to create climate action plans, which include actions that a school can take to teach students why caring for creation is important, and to improve biodiversity in the spaces that they have. We will continue to provide tailored support to schools to help them recognise what action they can take in their different contexts in their mission to take climate action and to encourage their students.

Our Property Team know the requirements to work towards Net Zero Carbon and the improvements needed. Interventions, including insulation, solar PV and a heat pump have been piloted at a vicarage. Learning from this will inform future projects.

We are working to ensure our land estate management is in line with our net zero strategy and supports high levels of biodiversity and climate change mitigations. We are working with agricultural tenants to ensure high levels of environmental management and best practice for sustainable agriculture. We are undertaking a planting programme of new woodland on our glebe land to increase biodiversity and sequester carbon. We are working with other partners to identify biodiversity enhancements and flood mitigation schemes within our portfolio. We are also working with renewable developers to identify wind, solar and battery storage opportunities on our land.

We will continue to advocate for environmental justice, supporting national and local campaigns, using our voice to speak prophetically into ecological issues. Our [diocesan website](#) has lots of opportunities and practical resources for individuals, churches and schools to learn more about our work and how they can respond.