



BISHOP'S COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

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Summary

As the Diocese of St Albans, we affirm that:

- caring for God's creation is a Biblical requirement, a gospel imperative, and central to the Missio Dei.
- the Fifth Mark of Mission commits us: "to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the Earth".
- our Diocesan Living God's Love vision commits us to loving care and service to the world which we share with countless other species.
- we recognise that we are living in a time of climate and environmental crisis which affects the whole of God's creation.
- we acknowledge and seek forgiveness for our part in causing the degradation and destruction of our common home.
- as a commitment to action, the Diocese of St Albans has registered with A Rocha and achieved the Bronze Eco Diocese award and will continue to progress to Silver and Gold award levels. As part of this commitment, we will work to achieve the Church of England target of Net Zero carbon emissions across all Diocesan operations by 2030.
- we will embed principles of sustainability across all our operations, seeking to protect and restore the Earth for the benefit of future generations.
- we will listen to and work with young people, acknowledging that the environmental crisis will directly affect health, well-being and quality of life in the future.
- we will set at the heart of our commitment those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, supporting climate mitigation and working for climate justice.

Theological foundations

Fundamental to our faith is the principle of God as Creator of everything, and that this creation is essentially good. Among God's creatures, humankind has a vocation to care for this world, sharing in God's creativity. The book of Genesis also shows how humanity, in its fallenness, has a negative effect on the natural world, as expressed, for instance, in the ancient story of the Flood (Genesis Ch.6). The wellbeing of our world depends therefore on a loving relationship between God, humanity, and our environment.

In the New Testament, God enters creation in the person of Jesus, fully God and fully human. As stated at beginning of John's Gospel, echoing the beginning of Genesis, the Word became flesh and lived among us. This affirms the goodness of creation as the vehicle for God's self-revelation, in which God does not just appear to be a human creature, but actually is so. By extension, the same is true of the Eucharist: by the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ gives himself to us in bread and wine, 'which earth has given and human hands have made' (Common Worship), celebrating earth's fertility and human creativity.

As Christians, we also live in hope, praying and working for God's kingdom to come 'on earth as in heaven', God's new creation, rooted in Christ's death and resurrection. This means that this world contains the very seeds of our hope. However, the Gospel also calls us to a life of repentance, turning away from deep habits of exploitation and, in the power of God's Spirit, restoring that harmony between God, humanity, and the environment. The target of net zero carbon is a clear expression of such repentance, as we seek to live more simply and justly, treading more lightly on this fragile planet.

In the Diocese of St Albans we are called to live God's love, going deeper into God, making new disciples, and transforming communities. This includes a deeper knowledge of God as Creator, who made us and blesses us, who in Christ has entered into creation, and in the Spirit made us part of God's new creation, nurtured in the Eucharist. In response, we invite all to share in this relationship, pointing from the wonder of creation to its Creator. In this way, we become communities of transformation, sharing in God's creation and re-creation, within ourselves and in the world. We also acknowledge that we are connected with sisters and brothers across the world, including our link dioceses in the Caribbean. This brings with it the urgency to respond to the climate crisis as it threatens and harms especially the most vulnerable in our world.

Finally, Christians are called not to fear or despair, but to be a people of hope. We are in an ecological crisis, but in biblical terms, 'crisis' (coming from the Greek word for 'judgement') is an opportunity for decision and change. For this we need generosity in looking outwards, joy in celebrating the world's goodness, imagination to rethink how things could be, and courage to act now.

Response

Our response to the Biblical imperative to care for creation is fundamental to our Diocesan vision, Living God's Love.

We will seek to live in the spirit of Christian joy and fullness of life, celebrating the infinitely complex and beautiful world which we share with countless other species.

We acknowledge and repent of our part in causing the climate and biodiversity crises faced by our world. We seek forgiveness and ask for guidance that we become wise stewards of the Earth. In humility may we learn from and be inspired by the natural world, seeking courage and strength to act with urgency on the causes of climate change and demonstrating that caring

for the Earth is integral to showing love for our neighbour and living faithfully in the light of the Gospel.

We also recognise that the work being undertaken now will have to be continued by our successors, and we must be courageous in seeking the generational change necessary to protect and restore the Earth for the benefit of future generations.

As a sign of commitment, this Diocese has registered with A Rocha UK to work towards Eco Diocese status. As part of this work the environmental impact of our activities and use of resources will be fully considered in all our operations, including worship and teaching, study and education, outreach and pastoral care, use of our buildings, management of resources, travel, administration, planning and programmes.

As part of this commitment, we will work to achieve the Church of England target of Net Zero carbon emissions across all Diocesan operations by 2030, in line with the strategy set out in the Church of England Routemap to Net Zero Carbon.

We will strive to adapt to become fully sustainable in all we do, living in harmony with the natural world which God created and accepting our responsibilities to care for other living creatures.

We will respond in loving service to protect our neighbours from the injustice of climate change and to endeavour to take all necessary steps to limit our carbon footprint and actions which threaten biodiversity and pollute and destroy our common home. We will set at the heart of all our actions the needs of those who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and strive to turn this vision into reality for the benefit of future generations, all parts of society and those at most risk of harm.

We acknowledge the impact of the environmental crisis on the health, well-being and quality of life of the young, and will listen and act to address their concerns.

Informed by the experience of Christians in the Anglican communion, we will encourage and support climate mitigation projects to support these communities, to help them recover from disasters and build resilience for the future.

Environmental Policy Aims and Objectives

The Environmental Policy aims to express the theological basis for our Diocese to protect and safeguard the Earth and God's creation through a series of objectives and practical actions (referenced below) in accordance with our shared values and the Diocesan vision of 'Living God's Love'. It presents the response of our Diocese to the environmental crisis in one overarching document, supported by the policy documents and action plans of each constituent part of the Diocese, and following the policies and action plans of the Church of England.

Eco Diocese

A key policy objective is for our Diocese to provide a practical and affordable means by which all its constituent bodies can respond to the climate and biodiversity crises and work towards a more sustainable future. The framework for this response is the Eco Diocese scheme, devised to underpin good work being done at grass-roots level and to provide support, guidance and a structure within which good practice can be communicated, resources shared and by which encouragement can be given to others.

As part of this commitment, we have demonstrated achievement of the standards set for the Bronze level Eco Diocese award and will continue working towards Silver and Gold level awards in the following required areas:

- 1) Ownership: Establish a Diocesan Environmental Group to oversee progress and to coordinate delivery of the Church of England's net zero carbon agenda within the Diocese.
- 2) Relevant Diocesan Office Award: Achieve silver and gold awards for the Diocesan Office and promote an understanding amongst all staff of Eco Diocese goals.
- 3) Eco Church Awards: Achieve 40% of churches registered as Eco Churches; 30% of churches with an award; 10% of churches with silver awards or higher.
- 4) Land: Develop an environmental policy and a land management plan, with an explicit reference to promoting biodiversity and managing the land for carbon reduction across the diocese.
- 5) Training and Development: Include environmental training in standard diocesan training for both lay and ordained ministry, supported by the Board of Mission and Ministry, and opportunities for training and development for other regional staff and volunteers.
- 6) Schools and education: Diocesan Board of Education to establish and maintain an appropriate environmental policy.
- 7) Carbon Reduction Plan: Agree carbon reduction targets and develop an action plan in line with the Church of England Routemap to Net Zero Carbon.
- 8) Finance and Investments: Write an ethical banking and investments policy in line with the ethical investment policies of the Church of England and following good environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) criteria.
- 9) Collaboration: Work with partner church groups both locally and internationally to raise mutual awareness in regard to climate change and species loss mitigation and resilience measures.
- 10) Celebrating creation: Regular and substantial presence of environmental issues on the diocesan website and through wider communication channels.

Net Zero Carbon

Following the resolution of General Synod in February 2020, the Diocese of St Albans developed a Net Zero Carbon Action Plan, approved at the October Synod in 2022, to coordinate efforts across all Diocesan operations to work towards achieving Net Zero Carbon status by 2030. It incorporates Net Zero targets in line with the Church of England Routemap to Net Zero Carbon strategy document and will be reviewed and updated regularly. Once guidance from the national church has been made available, a plan for the appropriate offsetting of residual emissions will be developed, taking into account local conditions, requirements and opportunities, with the expectation that as emissions reductions grow and are sustained the amount of offsetting will decrease.

The individual policies and action plans of all Diocesan operations will contribute to the Diocesan Net Zero Carbon Action Plan, to be reviewed and updated in line with Church of England Routemap to Net Zero Carbon.

Biodiversity

Mindful of the Fifth Mark of Mission, and in response to the environmental emergency, our Diocese will take action to safeguard, sustain and renew the precious eco systems on which all life depends. We recognise that the land and buildings held by our Diocesan bodies including parishes represent a resource which can offer opportunities for management for the benefit of wild species. We acknowledge our responsibilities as custodians of a biodiversity heritage to be found in our churchyards, which may provide a refuge for a wide variety of species at risk in the wider countryside. We will seek to preserve and enhance this heritage, and to inspire wider interest and action by engaging with our local communities through educational activities and events. We will work with others to protect the natural habitats within our Diocesan boundary which contribute to its unique character, including grassland, woodland, heathland, wetlands and globally rare chalk stream habitats. We will work with wildlife trusts, local authorities and others so that individual churchyards, church school grounds and other land holdings can contribute strategically to the wider ecology of the landscape, forming wildlife corridors, and acting as green oases in the urban environment. Through the Living Churchyards scheme, Eco church and Eco schools' programmes we will promote environmental education and sustainable management of all our buildings and green spaces, reducing our consumption of natural resources and taking urgent action to reduce pollution and degradation of the atmosphere, water sources, and soils. In gratitude for the beauty of the earth which sustains us, we will explore ways to offer our churchyards and gardens as a resource for our communities and a source of well-being and good mental health for all.

Implementation

These aims and objectives will be incorporated into our working practices at all levels across the diocese and all boards and committees to embed sustainable principles and a coordinated delivery of our agreed targets.

In support of our Diocesan mission statement 'Living God's Love' we will encourage the principles and priorities of the Eco Church programme to form part of parish Mission Action Plans.

The Diocesan Environment Officer working closely with the Net Zero Carbon Officer and other Diocesan staff and clergy will ensure that Diocesan employees and office holders are familiar with and support the implementation of these objectives and ensure compliance with relevant environmental regulations.

The Diocesan Environment Officer will be supported in the co-ordination and delivery of the Environment Policy by the Diocesan Environment Group, and by liaising with the National Church and other appropriate agencies, provide information and advice needed inform all actions in pursuit of the aims of this policy.

The Diocesan Environment Officer will seek to support the work of church members in our deaneries and parishes, promoting sharing of good practice and resources between churches. Working within the Church Buildings (DAC) and Estates Departments, and with the Diocesan Environment Officer, the Diocesan Net Zero Carbon officer will be responsible for the development of the Diocesan Net Zero Carbon policy, strategy and Action Plan, and the monitoring and reporting of progress towards the implementation of the Diocesan Net Zero Carbon Action Plan.

The Net Zero Carbon Officer will provide practical support and resources for the sustainable management of Church-owned land and buildings, including collaborative working with parishes in all parts of the Diocese, with the Diocesan Environment Officer and Diocesan support staff across departments, and with adjacent Dioceses, the wider Church and other relevant organisations.

We will continue to promote funding opportunities for environmental projects as opportunities arise, to provide both financial support and as an incentive towards imaginative and creative initiatives within the Diocese.

We will encourage wider collaboration on environmental issues, both looking beyond our Diocese with a national and international perspective to linked Dioceses in the Anglican communion and within our Diocese to collaborate with representatives of other Christian denominations, as well as other faiths and secular bodies that actively share our concern for the environment.

Standards and accountability

We will comply with all applicable statutory requirements, seeking to match our performance to the highest relevant standards of good practice.

A report on progress towards the objectives of this policy will be prepared annually for Diocesan Synod, with interim reports to Bishop's Council, and in addition necessary data to enable Diocesan Synod to complete the biannual report for General Synod on emission reductions will be provided on an annual basis.

This policy will be reviewed as a minimum every three years, according to national and international information and standards, based on the best available scientific evidence, and national policy of the Church of England, and report to the next available Diocesan Synod meeting in accordance with the above.

Strategy

The practical outworking of the aims and objectives above form a strategy for environmental actions which will align with the A Rocha Eco Diocese programme and the strategy set out in the Church of England Routemap to Net Zero Carbon.

Each operational area of the Diocese is expected to produce its own strategic plan to meet the relevant aims and objectives outlined above, which are appropriate across their areas of operation. This will include, but not be limited to

- Parishes
- Deaneries
- The Cathedral
- Board of Mission and Ministry
- Diocesan Board of Education
- Diocesan Advisory Committee
- Diocesan Board of Finance
- Property Team (to include both Property Committee and Glebe Committee)
- Verulam House Fund Trust

These plans will inform and interpret the Diocesan strategy, providing a means to deliver positive change through objectives which are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely (SMART).

We will seek to work collaboratively across our Diocese and with others in our communities, incorporating environmental principles into all our actions. In this we will demonstrate our commitment to urgent action, making opportunities to influence, to be credible and missional through caring for creation, working for climate justice and the end of poverty, and a just and equitable future for all.

Examples of strategic actions at Diocesan level include:

- 1) **Switching to Green Energy**
Switching to Green Energy as soon as reasonably practical across the whole diocesan portfolio to reduce our environmental impact, as a demonstration of our faith in action and our commitment to a more sustainable and just future.
- 2) **Eco Church Registration and Eco Diocese award**
Churches are encouraged to register for the Eco Church award scheme under the umbrella of the Eco Diocese scheme (with progression to Silver and Gold awards). Develop resources and support through the Mentor scheme, ecumenical 'Clusters' within geographical locations, Deanery Eco Champions, and 'Beacon churches' to share good practice and inspire action.
- 3) **Contribution to, and use of the Energy Footprint Tool**
Encourage all parishes to input data to the Energy Footprint Tool to improve their management of energy through better understanding of their energy performance as part of the national as well as diocesan picture, and to provide guidance on practical steps towards achieving greater energy efficiency and lowering carbon footprints.
- 4) **Biodiversity – Parish and Community engagement**
Encourage the appropriate management of churchyards and gardens to enhance biodiversity and collaborate with local communities to support biodiversity conservation as part of outreach activities.
- 5) **Sharing resources and experience across the Diocese**
Sharing of experience and resources across the activities of the diocese which encourage one another in exploring and expanding the ways in which we enjoy and take care of the God-given natural environment. This includes use of social media, mentoring and proclaiming experience.
- 6) **Training and skills development**
Incorporate environmental training and creation care theology into the training of ordained and lay ministers, Diocesan staff and Eco champions. Provide advice and support for parishes including carbon literacy and identify further training needs.
- 7) **Application of engineering technology**
Pursue opportunities to achieve greater sustainability across the diocesan estate, where feasible, appropriate, and cost effective, applying knowledge gained from Demonstrator projects, practical experience from the Estates team, and following best practice as advised by the DAC. Encourage the adoption of renewable and

reduced carbon energy and include solutions such as insulation, energy saving lighting, generation of green energy, including in parishes.

8) **Sequestration (capturing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide)**

The identification of options for carbon sequestration which offer practical, reliable, and auditable opportunities for carbon offsetting, both among our diocesan assets (renewable energy generation, management of churchyards, glebe land, etc.) and elsewhere.