



# SUSTAINABILITY AND NET ZERO CARBON BEST PRACTICE NOTE QUINQUENNIAL INSPECTION REPORTS

## General introduction

Over recent years, many of us have become increasingly aware of the climate crisis and the urgent need to reduce our carbon footprint. In February 2020, Church of England General Synod recognised this crisis and called on all parts of the Church to plan towards ‘net zero carbon’ by 2030.

Quinquennial inspectors have a pivotal role to play in advising church communities. Through the quinquennial inspection (QI) programme every church receives a QI Report, and we are also heavily involved in major change projects. We are therefore very well placed to guide and encourage church communities to make their buildings more sustainable while not compromising their heritage integrity. This guidance aims to encourage and equip inspectors to be sustainability champions.

This note is intended for building professionals. It has been approved jointly by the Church of England’s Church Buildings Council and the committee of the Ecclesiastical Architects and Surveyors Association, to capture and share best practice on environmental sustainability. It has been produced by a working group comprising EASA members, representatives of the Church of England’s Cathedral and Church Buildings Division (CCB) and others; a list of working group members can be found on the [EASA webpage](#).

Your attention is drawn to the sister document on [Church Project work](#), and both should be read in conjunction with the CCB’s [Practical Path to Net Zero Carbon](#) (PPNZC) document which provides a helpful guidance framework for churches. While this document in places refers to Church of England documents and terminology (PCC, faculty, etc.), it is hoped it will be of benefit across all denominations

## Introduction—Quinquennial inspections

As part of an inspector’s established role in assessing the condition and maintenance priorities for church buildings, a quinquennial inspection also presents a key opportunity to support churches to reduce their carbon footprint. We are the only professionals who visit and guide every single church. Between now and the 2030 target, inspectors will visit every church twice.

The aim is that every church will be made aware of sustainability issues; and many suggested actions also provide opportunities for churches to save money by reducing their running costs, sometimes significantly. The approach taken by the inspector will vary, depending on the complexity and age of the church, and also on the pattern of usage, factors which are well covered in the PPNZC. Where options for significant change are proposed, the level and range of professional fees will be important to discuss before proposals are developed.

While the inspection process provides an ideal opportunity to draw attention to sustainability issues, it is not envisaged that this will involve substantial additional work for the inspector. Rather, the hope is simply to keep sustainability issues in mind while on site and to highlight them in the Report. This is more about how we structure our thinking and writing, than about additional tasks or longer reports.

## Preparation for the quinquennial inspection

- Be familiar with the [PPNZC](#) and the [Energy Footprint Tool](#), both produced by CCB.
- Encourage the church to engage with these tools *prior* to the visit; this can be done as part of our instructions to churches sent in advance, along with provision of access, etc. The CCB has a [tick-box version of the PPNZC](#) which is ideal for this purpose.
- Use the PPNZC to prepare a list of relevant areas to consider during the inspection, and to discuss with the church representative, as appropriate.

## The inspection itself

A quinquennial inspection is a review by a professional of the fabric and systems of a church building, resulting in a prioritised list of maintenance actions. While undertaking this inspection—which we are tasked with doing anyway—we should ask whether there is a sustainability dimension to each presenting issue, specifically in terms of heat loss, energy use, and/or adaptation. Familiarity with PPNZC should mean that this increasingly becomes second nature.

It should be stressed that this is not intended to add further tasks to an already long list, but rather to add a sustainability awareness to the reading we already undertake of the building in question. The aim is to spot opportunities to enhance the sustainability of the building, and to help the parish engage with these. This should not be confused with an energy audit, a distinct piece of work which churches can purchase through Parish Buying.

## Report format

The presentation of the report is an ideal opportunity to raise sustainability issues for discussion with the PCC. While there will be different ways of achieving this, we offer the following suggestions.

- Include within your preamble a section to introduce sustainability issues. The following text is suggested:

*On 12 February 2020 General Synod recognised that we are in a climate emergency and committed to an ambitious carbon reduction target of Net Zero by 2030. The culture is changing fast, both outside and within the Church; questions of sustainability should inform all our buildings-related decisions from now on, and this report highlights opportunities for action. See also the Practical Path to Net Zero Carbon (PPNZC) document in the appendix, and the Sustainability Countdown to 2030 section below.*

*The Church of England Research and Statistics Team has created an [Energy Footprint Tool](#). This will tell your church what your 'carbon footprint' is, based on the energy you use to heat and light your buildings, and is part of the Online Parish Returns System. You will need to input the data from the most recent year's electricity and gas/oil etc. bills, and the tool will then tell you the amount of carbon produced annually by heating and lighting your church building; it will also offer some helpful tips to reduce your carbon emissions. As you use the tool each year, you will be able to see how your church improves as you take steps to cut your carbon footprint. Most dioceses now have a [Diocesan Environmental Officer](#) in post, who may be able to offer support, including on questions of ecology and biodiversity, and signpost you to [further resources](#).*

- Throughout the report, highlight sustainability items, perhaps with a different colour, and summarise at the end.
- Also consider a timeline or 'Countdown to 2030'. The following text is suggested:

*Sustainability Countdown to 2030: It will be for the PCC to set its priorities for sustainability improvements, and I would encourage you to use the Practical Path to Net Zero Carbon (PPNZC) appended to this Report to help set these. The following gives you a suggested timetable to address in the next five years, as we prepare for 2030 (references relate to the PPNZC): [List follows, combining items from the report with non-condition items from the PPNZC, such as renewable electrical tariff.]*

- In all cases we suggest adding the PPNZC as an appendix, cross referencing by item (A1, C3 etc.).

## Other resources

For a list of useful links please refer to the [Church Projects document](#), and to the [EASA website](#). Please also refer to the [wider CCB QI guidance](#) where needed.



*This guidance is issued by the Church Buildings Council pursuant to its powers under section 55(1)(d) of the Dioceses, Mission and Pastoral Measure 2007, jointly with the Ecclesiastical Architects and Surveyors Association. As it is statutory guidance, it must be considered with great care. The standards of good practice set out in the guidance should not be departed from unless the departure is justified by reasons that are spelled out clearly, logically and convincingly.*

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