

Diocese of Sheffield

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE JUSTICE POLICY STATEMENT

Background

On 28th November 2020 the Diocesan Synod resolved:

“that this Synod, reflecting on our Christian commitment to live as lights for Christ and care for God’s creation,

1. declares a climate and ecological emergency, and

2. supports the 2020 General Synod motion for all parts of the Church to reach ‘Net Zero’ carbon emissions by 2030, and

3. requests the Diocesan Environment Working Group to produce a detailed updated Environment and Climate Justice Policy to submit to the July 2021 Diocesan Synod for approval, and

4. commits to the A Rocha UK Eco Church and Eco Diocese programmes.”

In July 2021, in response to part 3, the Diocesan Synod approved its initial Environment and Climate Justice policy statement. This has now been reviewed and updated to reflect developments and changing circumstances since then.

Our Commitment in Principle: Ecological Conversion

In seeking to live as Lights for Christ, we commit to making the radical changes required to respond to the climate and ecological emergencies and to caring for the created world in a way that brings glory to God and justice for all.

The Emergencies we Face

We recognise that:

- We face multiple environmental crises:
 - global heating, contributing to rising sea levels, threatened water supply, spreading of deserts and more extreme weather events
 - unsustainable levels of pollution of land, air, rivers and oceans
 - depletion and loss of species of animal and plant life
- The human impacts of these crises are increasing:
 - famine and food insecurity
 - danger from storms, floods and wildfires
 - loss of human life and livelihoods
 - mass displacement of people
 - disputes over resources that may erupt into warfare
- The overwhelming evidence is that human activity, especially in industrialised societies, is a major cause of the emergencies and the impacts are borne most by those who have contributed least to the problem.

Our Mission

In the light of these crises we re-affirm the *Five Marks of Mission* of the Anglican Communion and recognise their implications for our relationship with God's world.

1. As we *proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom* we declare that God made the world, and it tells us of God's glory.
2. As we *teach, baptise and nurture new believers* we affirm that:
 - the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it
 - we are God's creatures
 - disconnection from God affects relationships with each other and with the natural world
 - following Christ means becoming content with enough and entering into a new relationship with our environment
 - Christ's death and resurrection are the beginning of a renewed creation.
3. As we *respond to human need by loving service* we will:
 - contribute towards relief of suffering due to climate change
 - support our global neighbours adapting to the climate and ecological emergencies.
4. As we *seek to transform unjust structures of society, challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation*, we join in challenging structures, systems and enterprises, including those of which we are a part, that perpetuate the injustices of climate change and conflict between peoples.
5. As we *strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth*, we delight in and wonder at the natural world and seek to live sustainably as fellow creatures within it.

Our intention flows from and enhances our Diocesan strategy:

- In seeking to be a church that is *renewed* we also work towards the renewal of the earth
- In seeking to be a church that is *released* we find increasing freedom from lifestyles that abuse the natural world
- In seeking to be a church that is *rejuvenated* we stand by succeeding generations, who will be most impacted by the climate and ecological emergencies.

Our Commitment to Action

As a Diocese, we acknowledge the part that our society, our Christian heritage and we as individuals have played in climate injustice and in the neglect and abuse of the natural world. We lament the environmental

destruction this has caused, we acknowledge that our response will require sacrifices and we now commit to:

- turning from our past neglect and indifference to the natural world
- expressing our gratitude, wonder and awe at creation in our public worship
- making creation and the natural world a more integral aspect of our prayer, preaching, teaching, groups and communication
- adopting more Christ-like lifestyles and attitudes to wealth and consumption
- making creation care an issue for our giving, stewardship and financial policy, including ethical management of Diocesan investments in line with national church policy
- promoting environmental care across schools in the Diocese
- working to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030, as outlined in the national Net Zero Routemap presented to Diocesan Synod in July 2023 and the Diocesan Net Zero Action Plan adopted by Diocesan Synod in November 2023. This includes churches, clergy housing, church schools, theological education, work-related travel and Church House, including through for example:
 - energy savings
 - more energy-efficient buildings and use of buildings
 - replacing fossil fuelled heating systems with electric heating
 - the use of renewable energy
 - sustainable management of land
 - offsetting net emissions that we are unable to eliminate, through a sound and appropriate scheme
- purchasing goods, where possible, that are sustainably grown, sourced or produced and are fairly traded
- minimising use of plastics and other substances that cause pollution
- using water carefully and efficiently, minimising wasteful use
- using recycled products and reusing goods and materials, where possible
- minimising waste, and recycling wherever facilities exist
- reducing emissions from transport, as per the Routemap by:
 - avoidance of unnecessary travel
 - use of public transport
 - car sharing
 - travel by bicycle and on foot
 - use of more energy efficient vehicles
 - switching to electric cars using renewably generated electricity

- increasing availability of charging points as appropriate.
- supporting wildlife and encouraging biodiversity in churchyards, green spaces and gardens
- promoting Eco Diocese and Eco Church and recording and celebrating local and individual environmental initiatives
- embedding environmental issues in training of ordained and lay ministers
- working in partnership with other Dioceses, denominations, faiths and secular organisations that are caring for the natural world and its plant and animal life, both locally and globally
- learning from the experiences of our companion Dioceses
- working to align with the national Church of England Environmental Programme initiatives and related General Synod resolutions
- being active in national and global campaigns to tackle the causes of the climate and ecological emergencies and to promote climate justice
- seeking God's help and guidance in putting our commitment into action.

Making it Happen

To implement this policy:

- the Diocesan Net Zero Carbon Steering Group, chaired by the Bishop of Doncaster and supported by the Net Zero Programme Manager and Diocesan Environment Project support administrator, will continue to work with churches, diocesan departments, schools, property managers and other relevant bodies to:
 - prepare, monitor and review its Net Zero Carbon Action Plan 2023-2030
 - co-ordinate and facilitate delivery of the Action Plan's proposals by all diocesan agencies
 - record progress in achieving its goals including independent verification
 - support churches in completing their Energy Footprint Tools
 - take part in national pilots or initiatives and work with other dioceses.
- the Diocesan Environment Officer, supported by the Diocesan Environment Project Support Role and the Diocesan Environment Working Group, will:
 - promote awareness of the policy and support churches in implementing it locally encourage churches to register as Eco Churches
 - support registered churches seeking to achieve Eco Church awards and the Diocese working towards an Eco Diocese Silver Award
 - work with providers to embed environmental issues in ongoing training in the Diocese
- the Diocesan Environment Officer will develop partnerships with a wide range of local and national like-minded organisations
- the Bishop's Council and Bishop's Senior Staff Team will receive an annual progress report on implementation of the policy from the Bishop of Doncaster

- the Diocesan Synod will:
 - recommend PCCs, deanery synods and other agencies in the Diocese to adopt this policy and commend it to their members and staff
 - receive a progress report from the Bishop of Doncaster and the Diocesan Environment Officer at least every two years and recommend changes accordingly.

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In consultation with the Diocesan Environment Working Group and Net Zero Steering Group.