



# Environment and Climate Justice

## November 2021 Diocesan Synod Progress Report

---

### Background

1. Two years ago, in November 2019, Diocesan Synod approved a new Environment and Climate Justice policy and we became the first Diocese in the UK to declare a climate emergency and set a net zero carbon commitment.
2. This policy made seven commitments and marked the start of a journey towards the Diocese becoming carbon net zero by 2030:
  - Embedding creation care within our worship, teaching and discipleship work;
  - Becoming sustainable consumers, limiting our waste, and reducing our carbon footprint;
  - Encouraging biodiversity and using land sustainably;
  - Increasing our use of renewable energy sources and ensuring energy efficient buildings;
  - Prioritising environmental issues in our financial decision-making;
  - Working with a range of communities on environmental issues, including participating in national and global campaigns;
  - Proactively recording, celebrating and championing environmental initiatives.
3. The Church of England General Synod mirrored this commitment to a net zero by 2030 target, when it also declared a climate emergency at its February 2020 meeting. Since then, a number of other dioceses have followed suit and the momentum around environmental action has grown nationwide.

### Progress in 2021

#### *Church engagement*

4. Despite the lingering impact of the pandemic, church engagement and action around creation care has continued to go from strength to strength. To get a sense of the breadth of church action, browse through the Environmental News stories shared online this year: [www.bristol.anglican.org/news?tagid=24](http://www.bristol.anglican.org/news?tagid=24)

Below are some highlights from recent months:

5. **Eco Champions network & briefings**

A network of Eco Champions has been growing across the Diocese since January. These champions, at both church and deanery levels, work to share information and encouragement between the Diocese, Deanery and parishes. They ensure that

creation care is a standing item on their church or deanery's agenda, receive and feed into bi-monthly Diocesan Environment Briefings, ensure that environmental information is shared with both the PCC and the wider church community, and encourage action. Over 60 churches and 5 deaneries have now appointed Eco Champions, and both progress and challenges are being shared across the network. If your church hasn't appointed anyone yet, please do consider it.

6. To support this network, bi-monthly Environment Briefings are circulated to Eco Champions, Area Deans and Lay Chairs. If you'd like to receive these briefings, please contact Clare Fussell ([clare.fussell@bristoldiocese.org](mailto:clare.fussell@bristoldiocese.org))

7. **Eco Church**

EcoChurch is an award scheme for churches who want to demonstrate that the gospel is good news for God's earth, led by A Rocha UK.

To date:

45% of churches (73) have registered.

18 have been awarded bronze level awards.

7 have been awarded silver level awards.

8. We're currently 25 Eco Church awards (including 10 silver awards) away from being the first Diocese in the UK to gain a Silver Eco Diocese award. However, the uptake of Eco Church has slowed significantly during 2021. The wider Diocese has completed all steps in the award scheme to achieve an EcoDiocese Silver level award, but isn't able to apply until 30% of churches in the diocese has achieved an award – and a third of these must be at Silver level.

If your church has not yet engaged with the scheme. [Please find out more here.](#)

9. **Training and webinars**

Creation Care has been a key theme of training across all diocesan channels this year. We've led two seminars for diocesan staff, as well as training sessions for clergy, curates and LLMs, plus Parish Officer webinars for all to join.

10. We supported the *Sustaining Church: Reimagining Communities of Faith in Climate Crisis* conference in July, organised by Hazelnut Community Farm and Trinity College, including leading a workshop specifically aimed at clergy.
11. A series of four sessions for clergy on the Theology of Climate Change are being run this month.

12. **Partnerships**

We continue to contribute to partnerships responding to the Climate Crisis. This includes being a founding member of Bristol Climate Leaders group, and sitting on the steering group of Christian Action Bristol and the National Church Energy Group. We hosted the Youth Christian Climate Network's Relay to COP26 and coordinated a welcome week in July, where Bishop Viv joined 8 other denominational leaders in recognising the climate emergency in an address on College Green. We contributed workshops for partner conferences such as Caring for God's Acre *Churches Count*

on Nature week in June, and fed into the National Church's Environmental Webinar series.

### 13. Run up to COP26

In recent months, dozens of churches have held Climate Sunday services and marked the Season of Creation as we've approached the COP26 summit in Glasgow.

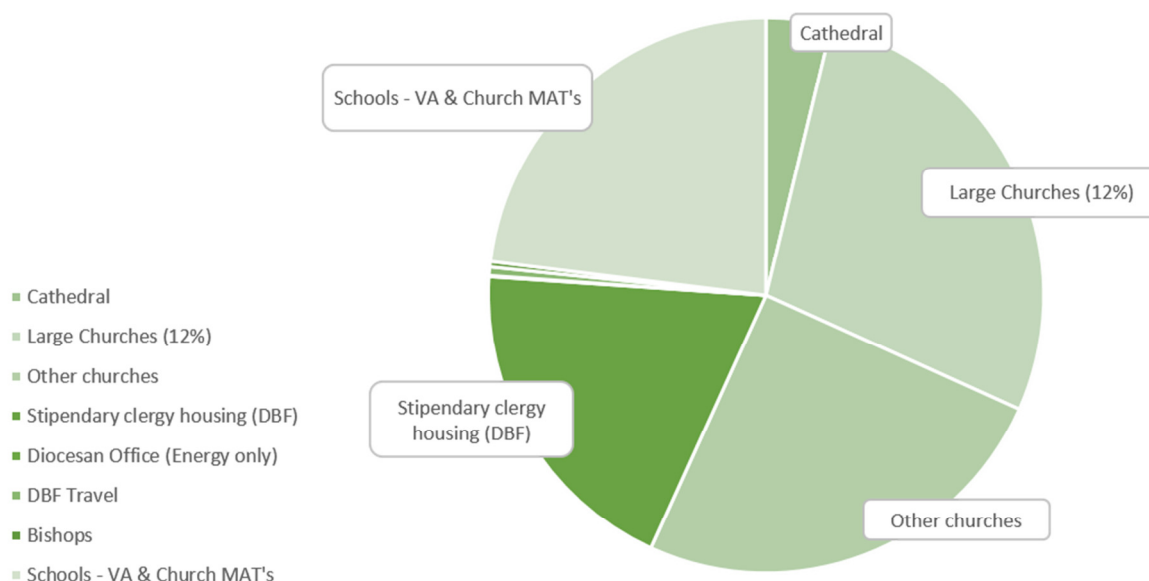
Church activities have ranged from hosting meetings with politicians, prayer pilgrimages, school art exhibitions, churchyard creation care days, climate anxiety workshops, eco bazaars, community gardening, outdoor worship, bike workshops, and much more.

### 14. Diocesan Environmental Advisory Board

This Board, made up of Christian environmental experts and theologians, launched in January, and has met quarterly throughout the year. The group has provided ideas, advice and resources to support the implementation of the Environment and Climate Justice policy.

## Carbon Net Zero by 2030

15. In 2020 our estimated carbon footprint, from in-scope emissions, was calculated to be **4,142 tCO<sub>2</sub> pa**. Informed assumptions have been made within the calculations, and measurement accuracy will improve over time. This constitutes our baseline footprint.
16. Following this work, we've created a 'Pathway to Net Zero' which divides the period to 2030 into 2-year sections with a strategy for each period.
17. The breakdown of emissions is: large emissions churches (28%); all other churches (25%); academy and VA schools (23%); stipendiary clergy housing (DBF owned property) (19%); DBF travel, diocesan office and bishops (5%).



18. We are tracking carbon emissions across each of these categories. Initial findings are that church emissions were down by approximately 70% in 2020, but that is due to the unprecedented impact of Covid 19. We expect emissions to rise again as buildings resume normal service.
19. The strategy for 2021-22 is to focus primarily on reducing the emissions of the two largest categories – schools and large churches – which, between them, represent 63% of in-scope carbon emissions for the Diocese.

#### **Churches:**

20. Meetings have been held with the 12% of churches representing over half of in-scope emissions, in order to agree a carbon reduction plan. We are in the process of arranging follow up conversations with these churches to assess progress against the agreed plans. We note that the pandemic has both reduced the capacity of many churches to implement long term carbon reduction projects, whilst having the short term affect of significantly reducing church emissions as buildings have been less used.
21. 44% of churches completed the Energy Footprint Tool with 2020 information. This is a slightly lower rate of return than last year. The 2021 Energy Footprint Tool will open for data submissions in January 2022.
22. From initial data, the proportion of churches reporting being on renewable energy tariffs has increased only marginally, up to 43% from 40% last year. We aim to have reduced emissions from church electricity by 25% for high-emitting churches, and 5% from other churches by the end of 2022, plus a reduction in gas use of 5% across the board, which represents a saving of 106 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e.

#### **Schools:**

23. Schools make up 38% of the Bristol Diocese carbon footprint (1500 tCO<sub>2</sub>e). Of those 1500t, broadly 500t are from electricity and 1000t from gas and oil heating.
24. Energy Efficiency Audits have been completed across two thirds of our in-scope schools this year. This has been partly funded through a government grant, and partly from *pro bono* support from specialist sustainability surveyors, *Inspired Efficiency*.
25. We aim for the remaining schools to receive these audits by the end of the 2021/22 academic year, funded by grants from the Educational Foundation.
26. The Educational Foundation has agreed to reallocate grant funding of £100,000/pa and loans of up to £250,000/pa to decarbonisation projects across our school estates, for at least the next 5 years. This is a fantastic development that will help schools to implement the decarbonisation recommendations from their audits.
27. In February 2021, David Bloomer was contracted on a *pro bono* basis to look into the necessary actions to progress work towards decarbonising in-scope schools' heating and electricity footprint. David's work has been hugely valuable, and he has worked closely with Clare Fussell, the Diocesan Board of Education and DBAT to virtually

meet with all of our in-scope schools, as well as heating and lighting consultants and estates managers, and has produced a paper summarising his findings.

28. A Schools Decarbonisation Taskforce, comprising the CEO of the Diocese of Bristol Academies Trust (DBAT), Director of the Diocesan Board of Education, DBAT Head of Estates, Diocesan Secretary, and Diocesan Environment Adviser meets quarterly to address the challenges in reaching net zero carbon, and put in place plans to mitigate them.
29. Research into and conversations with LED installers for schools have taken place, with a view to switching to low-energy lighting across all schools by the end of 2022. This is a relatively 'easy win', as it involves a cost saving as well as a carbon saving for school estates.
30. **Divestment announcement**  
In April 2021 the DBF publicly committed to remaining divested from fossil fuel companies<sup>1</sup>. While not strictly 'in scope' for our net zero target, Diocesan investments were calculated as having a carbon footprint of 795 tCO<sub>2</sub>e.

### Next Steps

31. Measurement tools are being developed by the National Church and these will be deployed locally to support our measurement and monitoring. We will gradually strengthen our ability to measure our carbon emissions but we will not delay our work where precise data is lacking, adjusting our approach as necessary as more information becomes available to us.
32. A phased approach will be adopted to offsetting any residual emissions, that cannot be removed through direct action or in-house offsetting projects. Phasing begins in 2026 and if no action is taken to reduce emissions from our 2020 baseline, would see the Diocese contribute £48.5k to offsetting projects in 2030.

### Governance

33. Governance and oversight for this work will be aligned to that of other strategic commitments and held by Bishop's Council.
34. A Net Zero Oversight group, sitting between the DBF and Bishops Offices, meets regularly to review progress
35. In October 2021 we recruited a half-time post to support this work. This post has been partially funded by the National Church, and Helen Parker Jervis is now supporting Clare Fussell in the implementation of the Environment and Climate Justice policy.

---

<sup>1</sup> Any company that derives more than 10% of its revenue from the extraction, production and/or refining of coal, oil and gas.