

Report- Diocesan Synod- Net Zero- March 2023

Issue: Church of England's goal of becoming Carbon Neutral by 2030.

Recommendation: Diocesan Synod is recommended to note this report and pass the following resolution:

This Synod

- Endorses the Church of England's national goal of becoming Carbon Neutral by 2030
- Welcomes the steps undertaken in the Diocese towards this goal to date
- Requests that the Bishop's Council presents a comprehensive decarbonisation plan to Synod by the end of 2023 and oversees its ongoing implementation, reporting to Diocesan Synod annually

Background:

In February 2020, General Synod, "recognising that the global climate emergency is a crisis for God's creation" passed a motion calling on all parts of the Church of England to work year-on-year to reduce carbon emissions and to achieve net zero emissions by 2030 (GS 2159)¹. Included in the scope of this target is the energy use of churches & ancillary buildings, cathedrals, schools, clergy housing and offices, as well as all work-related travel.

This is a highly ambitious goal, complicated by the fact that the Government's own commitments are predominantly on a longer timescale.

National Approach and Developments:

Earlier this year General Synod followed up their original resolution by endorsing the CofE's national Routemap to Net Zero by 2030², which forms an action plan for reaching Net Zero by 2030. The Routemap sets out milestones for each building type and activities. It notes the complex areas of offsetting, church land and embodied carbon, where further work is needed to guide future decision making. The Routemap will be reviewed and updated in 2025 and 2028.

Milestone 4.1.4 of the Routemap, which must be achieved by the end of 2023, and for which dioceses have been offered small financial grants is:

"All dioceses provide an outline of their decarbonisation plans to Diocesan Synod as a Net Zero Carbon Action Plan, to include estimates of costs for different options, as well as the policy changes and levers for change required. To be reviewed annually by senior staff. The plan should make reference to the Practical Path to Net Zero and actively consider implementation of 'quick wins', how to decarbonise heat, how to reduce energy consumption and how to encourage behaviour change".

The motion for Diocesan Synod addresses this requirement.

An Energy Footprint Tool has also been developed in order to measure and monitor the carbon emissions of the Church of England and set a baseline against which reductions can be assessed.

The national church has also provided a short, two-page guidance note offering a 'practical path to net zero carbon' for the local church, setting out where most churches should start as well as more

advanced projects for churches who use more energy. It is based on the findings of the national church energy audit programme and input from a range of professionals.

Diocesan Approach and Developments:

Since the General Synod motion, at Diocesan level, the Net Zero Carbon and Environmental Working Group has been established to progress our work towards the goal. Its members include Diocesan staff representing each of the in-scope areas along with the Diocesan Environment Officer. There are small sub-groups working on major areas such as church buildings and parsonages.

The Working Group has started to draft decarbonisation plans for each in-scope area, which will include milestones from the national Routemap alongside additional targets and will drive action to reduce emissions for the next 8 years. Decisions, including financial ones, will be made with the aim of reducing emissions across the greatest number of buildings, rather than focusing on getting individual buildings to zero emissions. The plans for each in-scope area will be brought together to form the final Net Zero Carbon Action Plan.

Use of the Energy Footprint Tool has been encouraged across the Diocese. Drawing on the data provided, the official estimate shows that in 2021³, Carlisle Diocese had a net carbon footprint of 8,400 tonnes CO₂e.

The national Routemap encourages easy wins for all buildings including replacing all lighting with LEDs. In response to this, we have launched an LED 2023 Challenge which offers funding to switch light bulbs in churches, church halls and vicarages across the Diocese. This is intended not only to achieve substantial carbon (and financial) savings but also to promote the overall goal and work programme.

The principal way in which we expect local churches to work towards the goal is by registering with A Rocha UK's Eco Church award scheme. In 2022 ecumenical events, held alongside Church Together in Cumbria and A Rocha UK, were held to encourage churches to join the scheme. At the end of 2021, there were 19 churches engaged in the scheme in the Diocese. As of 31st December 2022, 55 churches were registered with the scheme. 17 of these had received Bronze awards, 3 achieved Silver awards and 2 were Gold-awarded.

In parallel the Diocese is now registered as an Eco Diocese.

Financial Implications: The Diocesan Budget for 2023-27 includes a line for a half-time role to support, monitor and report on progress towards the goal together with a small budget for programme costs such as events and publicity. The Housing budget includes £250,000 a year to reduce the carbon footprint of parsonages. This is a substantial amount of money but may not be sufficient. We will keep the financial implications under review and report on developments to Synod and Bishop's Council.

Funding is also being made available from the National Church to increase Dioceses' capacity to make progress and we are tentatively exploring a bid across all 6 Dioceses in the North West. Government funding is likely to be forthcoming for some aspects of the work required but the timescales for such support may run later than the CofE's 2030 target.

(Anna Newlove, Pastoral and Net Zero Officer; Derek Hurton, Diocesan Secretary; Vernon Ross, Archdeacon of Westmorland and Furness; Richard Waller, Diocesan Environment Officer)

References:

¹ <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/Business%20Done%20%28February%202020%29%20-%2003.03.20.pdf> (page 19)

² <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/RoutemapToNetZeroCarbonFinal.pdf>

³ https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/Energy%20Toolkit%20Report%202021_final.pdf