

Environment Policy Briefing for Synod 16th March 2019

That this Synod adopt a new Diocesan Environment Policy to bring our carbon reduction targets in line with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recommendations.

Why do we need to raise our carbon emissions targets?

The impacts of climate change are evident to the global Anglican Communion and felt locally in our changing seasons and more extreme weather.

There is clear scientific evidence collated in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) [Report for Policymakers](#), published in October 2018, that a faster rate of carbon emissions reduction is needed to prevent global average temperatures rising above the tipping point of 2°C and runaway climate change which could leave the earth uninhabitable.

This report makes clear that there are significant differences in the impact of global warming of 1.5°C and 2°C, including: less sea level rise; less extreme weather events; less ocean temperature rise and ocean acidity and loss of marine species eg coral; lower climate-related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth; lower adaptation needs; and therefore a better chance of eradicating global poverty and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals.

Clearly, loving our neighbours requires us to love God's creation too.

To achieve staying below 1.5°C will require "rapid, far reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society" (IPCC Report 2018) equating to 45% reduction in carbon emissions from 2010 levels by 2030 and to net zero emissions by 2050. The report also highlights that achieving this ambitious target will require every global citizen and not just government engagement.

Our current diocesan targets, in the 2017 Diocesan Environment Policy, are aligned with the National Church of England Environment Campaign targets, which are drawn from the government targets, namely a 42% reduction in carbon emissions by 2020 and an 80% reduction by 2050 from a 1990 baseline (2008 the Climate Change Act).

There is an opportunity to show moral leadership and integrity, both within the national church and for wider society, in raising our ambition and bringing about societal change.

This is about loving our neighbours including our local, global or generational neighbours. It a matter of compassion and justice. Often those who have least contributed to global warming are those that suffer most.

Action on emissions reductions enacts a gospel of hope that provides opportunities to share the good news of Christ's redemption for the whole of creation. This is urgently needed to address the fear and fatalism that the reality of the climate crisis can bring. Future generations may well question the integrity of the church, as some already do, for its lack of action and leadership in what can be seen as humanity's "abuse" of creation.

Why do we need a new Diocesan Environment Policy (See Appendix 1)?

Firstly, we are seeking to increase the level of ambition in carbon emissions as discussed above.

Secondly, the 2017 Environment Policy is long winded and has not been easy for parishes to digest and adopt. We would like a more focused policy that aligns to the new Diocesan Strategy and is mirrored in a simple “model” parish environment policy (see Appendix 1) that can be adopted across the Diocese.

Thirdly, as the impacts of climate change are being felt, not by all, but by a significant number of churches we would like to include climate resilience into the policy. Adaptation is important to prepare and protect churches for forthcoming extreme weather events and allow them to be effective community centres in times of crisis.

What will be the implications for Parishes?

Most parishes are already frugal in their energy use and transitioning to renewable electricity and heating systems to come off fossil fuels may be costly in the short term.

Perhaps more challenging will be effecting behavioural change among the congregation and staff, for example in food choices, means of travel, financial investments and other purchasing choices, all of which contribute to the church’s carbon footprint.

Adopting a Parish Environment Policy, appointing a Parish Environment Officer, joining the Eco Church Programme and calculating the carbon footprint of the church would be good starting points for all churches.

How will we measure our carbon emissions?

The Diocese of Leeds is in a unique position of having a Church Carbon Calculator for parishes to analyse their carbon footprint. While we do not have data from the 2010 baseline, we will be able to estimate our diocesan emissions from 2018 onwards. Additionally we have energy use data from our Green Journey Scheme from 2015.

Can these higher targets be met?

Raising the level of ambition on carbon reduction for the Diocese will undoubtedly be challenging.

The Diocesan Environment Group have already developed a 5 year plan to effect the Environment Policy and within this there are numerous initiatives, many of which are underway already, which will provide training, guidance, finance and support for parishes. The draft 5 year plan can be found in Appendix 2.

Please note that it is not possible to achieve a zero carbon church, only to reach a *net* zero carbon state. In order to achieve this carbon offsetting through tree planting will be necessary with increasing urgency, for example Bradford Cathedral’s woodland creation scheme.

Theological Underpinning

Caring for creation is an integral Biblical theme that has lost prominence in a post-industrial, individualistic, consumerist age. Environmental engagement can be based on any or all of the following:

- Genesis: God's creation is good. We are created in the image of God to be Christ like servant "rulers" of Christ's creation
- Old Testament: The people's relationship with the land reflected their relationship with God
- Jesus: The light of the whole world, shows his authority over nature and he recommissions his disciples to "preach the gospel to all creation". He teaches us to love our neighbour as ourselves.
- Paul: Christ is creator, worshipped by all creation and brings redemption for all of creation through His death and resurrection (Colossians 1). Creation is waiting for the children of God, the Church, to bring about this renewal (Romans 8).
- Revelation: Jesus will lovingly renew creation and come to be with us again on earth.

We are both completely dependent on creation for our survival, but also have a God given responsibility to steward Christ's creation. This theological perspective contributes to our purpose and mission, giving the church a good news message of love, hope and renewal where there is often fear and despair around climate breakdown.

Please see the table below for a comparison of the 2017 and proposed 2019 Environment Policies.

Diocesan Environment Policies Compared

The proposed new Diocesan Environment Policy is a rewrite rather than just a makeover of the existing policy. The chart below aims to highlight the differences.

	Existing 2017 Policy	New Proposed Policy	Rational for change
Theological Base	Emphasis on stewardship and the 5th Anglican Mark of Mission	Emphasis on proclaiming the Good News of Jesus' renewal for all creation	To stress the centrality of Christ in bringing divine love and hope in the current environmental crisis
Content	Largely consisting of a set of practical guidelines	Setting out a vision, mission and goals for this area of mission within the Diocesan Strategy	To be fully aligned to the vision, goals and objectives set out in the Diocesan Strategy
Length	10 sides of A4	3 sides of A4	Existing policy is too long for parishes and diocesan staff to engage with
Carbon emissions reductions target	42% reduction by 2020 and 80% reduction by 2050 (from a 1990 baseline) Taken from 2008 Climate Change Act	45% reduction by 2030 and net zero by 2050 (from a 2010 baseline). Taken from the 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report	The advice from Climate Scientists to policy makers has changed in the last 10 years. Inadequate de-carbonisation to date means that more rapid action is required to avoid reaching "tipping point" in 2030.
Implementation	Through a 5 year environment plan devised by the Diocesan Environment Group and DEO	Through a 5 year environment plan with objectives and initiatives that sit under the Diocesan Strategy	Close alignment to the Diocesan Strategy allows for implementation in conjunction with other areas of mission
Responsibility for implementation	<i>Diocesan Level:</i> Diocesan Secretary, with relevant Diocesan personnel <i>Parish Level:</i> Incumbents, Churchwardens and PCC's encouraged to take responsibility	Unchanged	
Monitoring	Annual carbon emission reporting to the Diocesan Board	Unchanged	
Policy Review	At least every 3 years	Unchanged	