

The Church of England is launching an energy rating system similar to those used for household appliances to help monitor the carbon footprint of its almost 40,000 buildings, as General Synod considers a major new proposal to reach 'net zero' CO2 emissions.



Members of Synod, which meets in London next month, will debate a motion calling on all parts of the Church of England - from parishes to national bodies - to aim for ambitious year-on-year reductions in emissions to reach "net zero" by 2045 at the latest.

Synod, which meets at Church House, Westminster, from February 10 to 13, will also debate motions on the legacy of Windrush, the Church's ministry among children and young people and a call for an end to so-called "paupers' funerals".

There will also be a morning dedicated to discussing the Church's response to the recommendations of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA).

The motion on the "climate emergency and carbon reduction target", sets out a commitment to regular updates on the Church's progress.

In a first step, parishes are being offered a new rating tool, which calculates their energy consumption, taking into account factors including the type of power they use, whether they are on 'green' tariffs, the size of the building and usage.

The Bishop of Salisbury, Nicholas Holtam, the Church of England's lead bishop for Environmental Affairs, said: "The Church of England has buildings in every architectural style and material from the past 1,500 years, posing some unique challenges when it comes to energy efficiency.

"However, churches are not museums; they are living buildings which serve their communities every day of the week, and being greener isn't about doing less, it's about equipping parishes to get smarter about energy consumption.

"Setting a 'net zero' target of 2045, five years ahead of the Government's target, would nonetheless represent a significant statement of intent by General Synod, one which will require innovation, faith and dedication from our churches, schools, and communities.

“Christians are called to safeguard God’s creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth. Faced with the reality of catastrophic climate change, which will affect the world’s most vulnerable people the soonest, radical and immediate action is our only option.”

A paper sent to Synod members also outlines the potential impacts of climate change directly affecting the Church. It warns parishes that, as impacts start to accelerate, more churches will need to be prepared to play missional roles in their communities, including offering sanctuary in extreme weather events, as was seen at the church of St Cuthbert, Fishlake, following flooding of the River Don last year.

Notes to editors

[Read the papers](#) for the February 2020 group of sessions for General Synod.

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