



The Church of England has launched an ambitious initiative to help its network of schools reach net zero, as part of the first phase of its multi-million-pound Net Zero Carbon Programme.

The initiative involves the establishment of a National Framework to help schools reduce carbon emissions, save money by improving their energy efficiency, and switch to cheaper, more reliable, renewable energy sources. Funding will initially focus on analysing the option of replacing inefficient, polluting fossil-fuel heating systems, which will also deliver cost savings over the long run.

“Church schools produce almost half of the Church’s carbon emissions and are therefore a fundamental part of the Church’s ambition to reach net zero carbon across the whole estate,” said Nigel Genders, Chief Executive of the National Society. “The National Framework for Schools and Academies will help schools meet the challenge of securing the funds needed to provide sustainable and flourishing Church of England schools for the future.”

The National Framework will be co-ordinated by DBE Services, a company owned by six northern dioceses, ensuring support, advice and inspiration is on hand to engage 3,000 church schools and academies. It will work with Boards of Education and Multi Academy Trusts to identify cost-effective fabric improvements and take full advantage of energy-saving and energy-generating technologies.

“We are delighted to work with schools across the country to assist them in the planning and delivery of decarbonisation projects,” said Dr Sam Johnson, CEO of DBE Services, and a Licensed Lay Minister in Blackburn Diocese. “We’re hoping that all schools and academies will engage with the sustainability and net zero carbon agenda, and that a coordinated approach will help secure funding for schools across the country as they work to lower their emissions.”

Notes

In February 2020, General Synod voted to adopt the ambitious target of achieving net zero carbon by 2030, and following a widespread consultation with parishes, dioceses, cathedrals, and the wider Church, a Routemap to Net Zero Carbon by 2030 was drawn up by members of the Church of England's Environment Working Group.

The Routemap, published in June 2022, encourages cathedrals, churches, schools, clergy housing and theological education institutions to make changes to their day-to-day activities to reduce carbon emissions. Included are explanations of simple changes which can be made, such as fixing basic insulation gaps or switching lightbulbs. It also includes helpful advice on developing decarbonisation plans and decarbonising heat through more complex interventions.

Case studies of churches which have achieved net zero carbon can be found here.

For more details on the Church of England's Net Zero Carbon programme, click here.

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