



2030 can be a beacon for communities and others to follow, says Net

“The buildings in our care are some of the most important, historically significant and culturally sensitive buildings in our nation,” says Julian, “so if we can show what is possible in terms of reducing our carbon emissions, then we can be a beacon for communities and others to follow.”

The ambitious Net Zero Programme aims to equip, resource and support all parts of the Church of England to reduce carbon emissions from the energy used in its buildings, schools and through work-related transport by 2030.

**In an interview, first featured in the new Net Zero Impact Report, Julian talks about how likely the target of 2030 will be reached; the missional aspects of the programme and his prayers as the work gathers momentum.**

**The target of 2030 is an ambitious one. Realistically, will we get to net zero by 2030? Shouldn't we shift out the target like other companies/governments have done?**

Our 2030 ambition to be net zero is deliberately ambitious and will definitely stretch us as a Church, but General Synod set that date because of the urgency of the climate crisis we find ourselves in. Without it I am convinced we would not have made the progress we have already, and we would not have had the resources which are now at our disposal.

Our key aim in this development phase has been to get going and to begin to build momentum and it's important that we hold our nerve and see just how far we can go having only just started. As a church and as an organisation we are at the forefront of net zero action in terms of how you implement, fund and coordinate a large programme of practical net zero projects across multiple building types - that's an exciting place to be and we want to share what we learn with others.

And it's important to understand that we are on a journey – 2030 is the ambition of this Programme but it is just one of the waypoints along a longer road towards meeting the UK's national target of being net zero by 2050. What comes after still needs to be decided but we need to ensure we are able to respond to any changes in government policy following the recent election.

**Isn't this a distraction from mission, acting on climate change isn't missional?**

Our work is absolutely missional as it bears witness to our concern and care for God's creation. It is a key expression of our commitment as Christians to the Fifth Mark of Mission. And we know already the impact that climate change is having on those least well placed to adapt to it both at home and around the world. Doing our bit to reduce our impact upon this planet as a church is part of us responding through our own actions to the needs of people around the world, and at home, while also contributing towards the transition to more just social structures which respect the planet and the natural processes which sustain us – the earth is the Lord's and everything in it.

**The Church of England's contribution to climate change is small compared to the footprint of the UK, and then globally. We're only a small part of the problem, so wouldn't the Programme cost of £190M be better spent elsewhere in the Church?**

We can't ignore climate change and the longer we don't act with seriousness, the more damaging the impacts are on the natural processes which sustain life. We have to start somewhere – climate change is real and it is happening. But small changes, when aggregated up do make a difference and they can create ripple effects when we all do them together. The buildings in our care are some of the most important, historically significant and culturally sensitive buildings in our nation so if we can show what is possible in terms of reducing our carbon emissions then we can be a beacon for communities and others to follow.

**The cost of transition is too high, why don't we wait for the cost of technology to drop?**

We are only just starting our work and the more net zero projects that can be progressed the more that generates competition across the technologies available. And while the cost of technology may fall, every year we delay action is another year where the impacts from greenhouse gases are baked into the earth's response to our behaviour.

In this phase of the programme, we are testing approaches and we want to learn what is cost effective and what isn't. Not every church needs to invest in large scale or more costly net zero solutions and it's important that net zero proposals are proportionate to the size and usage of the building so a key part of our work is to share what gets learnt from each of the projects and to apply our funding wisely so that it has the best impact.

**What should a small church do who can't afford a heat pump?**

Two great starting points are to register with Eco Church and begin the journey towards achieving the bronze award and then to make sure you complete an energy usage return annually using the Energy Footprint Tool.

Our Practical Path to Net Zero provides a handy checklist for thinking about how to approach your building's energy consumption and there is a wealth of information and advice available via our website. Often for smaller churches which are perhaps just open once or twice a week you don't need to spend huge sums of money. Think about the simple interventions and changes you can make such as changing to LED light bulbs, or how and when you switch the heating and the lights on, as these can achieve quick results.

For those that are a little bit further down the road, building good links with your diocesan environment, net zero and church building support officers will help to open up possibilities about how to scope your project and what sources of funding are available.

**And finally, what is your one prayer for the Net Zero Programme as we work together over the coming years to reach our ambition?**

My prayer would be three-fold. Firstly, that people realise that all of us making a few small changes can collectively make a big difference which in turn galvanises more ambitious actions.

Secondly, that the contribution our work is making to the Church's core priorities around growing discipleship, ensuring every person in England has access to an enriching and compelling community of faith, and ensuring the Church remains relevant to young people, helps to build the momentum which is needed to help the planet heal but also to safeguard our brothers and sisters around the globe.

And finally, that many years hence, the work we are doing now, will be regarded with appreciation and thanks by those who will come after us.

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*Julian Atkins, Net Zero Programme Director*

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