

GENERAL SYNOD**Update on London/Truro DSM: Environmental Programmes****Summary**

GS 2094A explained the original London/Truro environment motion. This paper does not repeat the earlier material for which GS 2094A should be consulted. It gives a brief summary of the need for and the provisions of the motion, refers to the General Synod debate in July 2018, provides an update on developments since then and comments on some of the issues raised in the earlier debate. It concludes with reasons why the motion should be agreed.

The Motion

1. Rapid increase in the earth's temperature since the industrial revolution, caused primarily by human activity, is seriously damaging God's creation with much worse to come. Damage already includes loss of species and death to human beings.
2. Care of creation is the Anglican Church's fifth Mark of Mission. While some excellent work is being done at different levels, the Church needs to make a demonstrable and urgent effort across the board to reduce its carbon emissions in accordance with published targets.
3. The motion provides for:
 - a plan of action;
 - measuring and reporting progress;
 - every diocese to have an environment programme headed by a member of the Bishop's staff team.

It requests extra funding to achieve this.

Debate in July 2018

4. In debate two amendments to the original motion were passed to:
 - adopt a flexible approach to tools for measuring CO₂ emissions, (d) ii;
 - allow the Archbishops' Council time to assess the human and financial resource required to enable the work, (e).

Developments Since July 2018

5. It has become clear that action on climate change is more urgent than ever. In its report in October 2018 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued the most urgent and far-reaching call yet for world governments to cut their greenhouse gas emissions¹.

¹ <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

This effort needs to be rapidly ramped up worldwide, to avoid severe impacts on human and non-human life, especially on the poor and vulnerable. Love for God and love for our neighbour compel us to act.

6. Staff from Church House in Westminster in conjunction with the Environmental Working Group have been considering the human and financial resources they would require to put the provisions of the motion into effect, including giving some support to dioceses. These proposals have also been discussed with the proposers of the motion and are being presented to the Archbishops' Council so that it can make the assessment required. Its formal response is awaited.

7. There has been an investigation centrally into the feasibility of developing a tool for measuring the carbon emissions from cathedrals, churches and church halls, which will be straightforward for parishes and churches to use. It appears that this **can be achieved without setting up a new system**. Rather, with some modification, the present Statistics for Mission Annual Returns could be used with cross referencing to other data such as parish buying through the Energy Basket scheme which is already collected centrally. This has the benefits of:

- being much cheaper than earlier estimates for the cost of measuring;
- removing the burden to parishes of having to complete another return;
- chiming in with the spirit of the amended version of (d) (ii) of the motion;
- making use of existing resources within Church House.

It should be possible to use such a system to give helpful feedback to parishes, as well as to measure national total and trends.

8. Increased awareness of, and opportunities for, environmental action at all levels in the Church will strengthen outreach and engagement, in parallel to action on climate change. These include:

- development of green health schemes, as exemplified in the Green Health Awards², providing a great opportunity to work with others and to benefit individuals and communities;
- participation and co-operation with others in work to implement aspects of the government's 25 year Environment Plan³. This provides great opportunities for the Church to shine, grow, celebrate creation and assist government on one of the major issues of our time, protecting our natural capital.

The provisions at (c) and (d) iii of the motion would in particular greatly improve the Church's ability to make use of these opportunities.

9. In November 2018, Truro Diocese conducted a trial data collection exercise. The Truro DEO wrote to all parish treasurers to request details of energy use from their church bills for 2017. There was a 43% response rate. The most frequently occurring time people took to complete the survey was 5 minutes. The request for the energy information was also very useful in sparking interest in taking action to reduce carbon emissions and other environmental improvements.

² <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/green-health-awards>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

Some Issues Raised in the July 2018 Debate

10. As the debate in York was adjourned there was no opportunity to comment on points made. Below are some of the main ones and comments on them.

a) Missional opportunity.

It is agreed that caring for the environment can help to grow the Church, a point made by a representative from Leeds Diocese who told of the way that environmental projects at her church enthused young people. She spoke also of making connections 'necessary for pre-evangelism' and said that 'our social capital in our community is sky high'.

b) The motion is misguided, risking displacing preaching the Gospel as a priority.

This is not accepted. Creation care is not an alternative to preaching the Gospel; it is deeply rooted in Biblical teaching. We must of course tackle consumerism and the other evils which are harming God's creation. However dealing with climate change and environmental degradation is a complex matter meriting a multi – faceted approach not an either-or choice. We need to use all the tools available and the Church should set an example to individuals by putting its own house in order including reducing its CO₂ emissions.

c) Providing information for measuring carbon emissions is too great a burden especially for rural churches.

The national system being considered would use the current annual return system, with some modification, so would not add the burden of another return. Further, the trial carried out in Truro confirms that supplying this data is neither difficult nor time consuming – even for a predominantly rural diocese.

d) The motion means closing churches which are not energy efficient.

The motion is emphatically **not about closing churches**. Putting its provisions into effect should be good news providing evangelistic opportunities and reducing running costs. Our previous paper (GS 2094A) drew attention to compelling evidence that an open church and a busy church can also be an energy-efficient church: these things go hand in hand.



An open church and a busy church

Conclusions

11. Climate change is widely recognised as the most serious environmental issue facing God's people, and the whole earth, today. Providing additional resources both financial and human for the Church of England's response to this challenge is essential.

12. Creation care is the Fifth Mark of Mission of the Anglican Communion, and supports the other four. As Christians we should be honouring God by caring properly for his creation not continuing to destroy it. We must show love for our neighbours by doing all we can to protect them and the places where they live from the destruction that climate change is bringing. This includes leaving the planet in good order for generations to come as well as protecting today's inhabitants.

13. The Church along with other faith groups is able to influence hearts and minds in a way not open to other organizations. In order to continue to give a credible lead, we should show that we are doing all we can to protect God's creation and that we have some means of measuring the effectiveness of our actions. The provisions of the motion provide ways by which the Church can expand and accelerate its environmental action at a relatively modest cost.

14. Engaging with environmental action of all types and at all levels promotes outreach and engagement visibly bringing the power of God to the people of God. The provisions of the motion by reducing wasteful expenditure and encouraging mission and growth are consistent with the reform and renewal agenda.

15. In the debate on Climate Change and Investment last July General Synod showed its eagerness to exert pressure on major companies to take action on climate change by moving towards a low carbon economy. By passing this motion with a substantial majority Synod will show that the Church is equally eager to take action itself to sustain and renew the life of the earth.

16. The Environment Working Group strongly supports this motion. There is an urgent need for the C of E's missional and parochial actions to be aligned with the globally respected Transition Pathway Initiative. Much has already been achieved with very limited resources. But given the urgency of the challenges which face us and the missional opportunities, the EWG hopes that Synod will recognise the need for additional funding – in the short term, to ensure that the measurement tool is robust, and to phase in better support for dioceses and parishes.

17. Doing 'the right thing' environmentally is good news for the Church, providing missional opportunities and financial benefits. We must not lose time in cutting emissions and, measuring and verifying that we are achieving these cuts. To delay would risk serious risk of damage to the Church's reputation, and more importantly would mean dishonouring our Creator and failing our brothers and sisters across the world in this generation and in those to come. But there is no need for that. Synod members are urged to vote to accept the London/Truro Synod motion.

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