

CASE STUDY

A LOW COST GOLD ECO CHURCH AND COMMUNITY GARDEN



N.B. This case study considers only one possible approach, which will not be suitable for every church. Always seek professional advice.

Key Points

- St Cuthbert's (Diocese of Liverpool) have led the way in the Croxteth Park community by undertaking a range of steps to reduce their own carbon footprint, as well as to lead and inspire local action.
- They have achieved A Rocha Eco Church Gold Award status, on a budget. The community allotments were created at no cost, with recycled and donated materials.



1 The parish started with an audit, and then implemented a range of steps, such as LED bulbs, water butts, and switching to green energy.

2 The garden engages young people and helps with community mental health, as well as growing fresh food. It was created at no cost, using recycled materials.

3 The focus on small steps has been at the heart of making their goals achievable, and have seen St Cuthbert's awarded an Eco Church Gold Award.

The context

St Cuthbert's sits in the Croxteth suburb of Liverpool, at the centre and heart of Croxteth Park housing estate. It is a modern, unlisted church building, only 35 years old, and was already relatively well insulated.

The church is used regularly throughout the week and at various times of day. It hosts weddings and funerals, community events and groups, and varied activities such as a wellbeing café.

For more information visit the church's [website](#), or its entry on the [Church Heritage Record](#).

The need for change

The team was very concerned about the climate, and wanted to play their part in taking action.

They undertook an audit to establish where they could make effective progress on the environment.

The financial constraints faced by St Cuthbert's led to a focus on smaller, step-by-step changes that would be feasible to implement and make a big difference. Engaging the community has also been central to the aims of the leadership.

Watch the video case study

To find the video case study of St Cuthbert's Croxteth Park, [click here](#), or go to www.churchofengland.org/environment

What were the options?

The team used the [Eco Church framework](#) to identify actions they could take, across the five Eco Church areas: Worship and teaching, Management of church buildings, Management of church land, Community and global engagement, and Lifestyle.

They identified a range of feasible actions (see below). The team also considered bigger ways to reduce their carbon emissions, including solar panels or an air-source heat pump. However, the financial and logistical barriers to these options meant that, for now, they installed a new A-grade condenser boiler.

What was done?

- **Insulation** of the building was improved where possible, including **double glazing** a number of windows.
- Changes were made to cut down on unnecessary use of energy, including **automatic motion sensor switches** in the toilets and **thermostats** to control the temperature.
- **LED lightbulbs** were added to improve the efficiency of the church's lighting.
- A new **efficient A-grade boiler** was installed
- A range of community projects were also undertaken, including making **vegetable beds, birdboxes and hedgehog houses from recycled materials**, sewing **British native wildflower seeds** and **planting over 1000 native bulbs**, and purchasing **environmentally friendly sundries** for day-to-day use in the church.
- Running a **'craftivism' group** and having monthly [Eco Church updates](#) on their website.

How well does it work?

St Cuthbert's monitor their total carbon footprint with [360Carbon](#) and have reduced it considerably year-on-year. They now offset the remainder, so are a net zero carbon church.

Meantime, they have fostered a great deal of community engagement, with parishioners, church staff and clergy all working in small ways towards environmental goals. The community gardens enable them to engage young people, and also help community members with mental health.

They achieved their Gold Eco Church award in March 2021.

How much did it cost?

Buildings: The new boiler was approximately £5000. Installing LED lighting amounted to £5040. Adding double glazing cost £23,460. The portacabin cost £11,000.

Gardens: Materials for garden work were all donated by parishioners and local companies, or recycled.

*"The main thing that I've learnt from this is that the small things make the biggest difference. Sometimes we concentrate, thinking 'oh we want solar panels and we can't get those straight away', but there are so many small things that we **can** do, that have a positive impact. Don't worry too much about the bigger things yet, they will come."*

Rachel Kiel, Eco Officer