

GENERAL SYNOD**Responding to the Climate Emergency (Oxford)****Summary**

The motion from Oxford Diocesan Synod highlights the increasingly rapid rate of climate change and the need to act as expressed in the fifth mark of mission. It seeks to build on the decisions taken with respect to [GS 2159](#), from February 2020, when the General Synod agreed to set out a plan to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

The motion originated from a motion passed by Oxford Diocesan Synod in March 2020, which had been planned before net zero target was passed in February 2020. It has taken until this Synod for the motion to be allocated time on the agenda, so some parts of the motion have already started to be implemented. The later paragraphs (g) and (h) have been added subsequently, and the supporting paper acknowledges that there has been progress since the motion was originally tabled 3 years ago.

The motion is wide-ranging and asks the Church to consider its investments, policies and procedures, training (both lay and ordained), prayer, advocacy, and central support for reducing carbon emissions including advice, guidance, the central procurement of appropriate products to achieve savings, liturgy, and lobbying of HM Government.

Response to the individual parts of the motion

1. Due to the time that has elapsed since the original submission of this motion, many of its sections are already integral to the Routemap to Net Zero Carbon (RNZC), and therefore their inclusion here supports the church taking action and reaching a target which General Synod has already committed itself to. Each part of the motion will be considered in turn below.
 - a) urges the National Investment Bodies of the Church of England to prioritise investment in renewable energy;
 - The NIBs are already investing in climate solutions. The Pension Board's most recent [Stewardship report](#) sets out their approach to investing for a sustainable world. The Church Commissioners' Climate Action Plan (due to be published ahead of Synod) lays out the Church Commissioners' approach to net zero and climate change, including how they invest in climate solutions. An update item on the work of the NIBs in relation to climate change is being dealt with separately on the agenda.
 - b) calls on all parts of the Church of England to review their policies and procedures, in order to ensure that they give due priority to creation care;
 - Whilst the Routemap to Net Zero Carbon and the framework of Eco Diocese call for net zero carbon action plans, travel policies and environmental policies, the accompanying paper to this motion makes it clear that this call is to ensure that the environment is considered in all policies, for example in HR and recruitment policies. It would take some time to review all policies, but this would be a way to integrate creation care into everything we do, and encourage shared ownership of our commitment to net zero carbon and environmental issues more generally.

- The milestone referenced as (*RNZC 4.2.8*) is a proposal to change APCM rules so that carbon emissions are included in annual parish reporting. Reporting would be based on the Energy Footprint Tool, which churches are already encouraged to complete. It is likely that this suggested change can be put forward when there are other amendments to the rules which need to be made.

c) urges the Church of England to further develop pre- and post-ordination and lay training to deepen understanding in how care for the earth is part of our Christian faith and a missional imperative;

- The Routemap already calls on TEIs to do this with regard to pre-ordination training. (*RNZC 4.5.2*). With regard to post-ordination and lay training, this is part of the Silver Eco Diocese criteria, which all Dioceses are encouraged to work towards, and is supported by the Routemap setting silver Eco Diocese level targets for church registrations (*RNZC 4.2.9*).
- The National Environment Officer is on the steering group for the Theological Colleges Environment Network. The TCEN and A Rocha UK are currently working on proposals to adapt the Eco Church criteria so that they are a better fit for TEIs.

d) urges all parts of the Church of England to seek to support, through prayer, advocacy and practical action, the poorest in the world who are suffering the most from the impacts of climate change, in the awareness that our nation has been among those who have benefited most from the emissions that have caused the crisis;

e) commits earnestly and regularly to pray - and to promote prayer - about the climate and wider environmental crisis.

- It is important to highlight that climate change is a global injustice. Though other countries have higher per capita carbon emissions than the UK now, as the birthplace of the industrial revolution, this country has one of the highest historical emissions (see [Carbon map – which countries are responsible for climate change? | Climate crisis | The Guardian](#)). The same interactive map also shows which countries are most vulnerable to climate change. As part of a global church, the Church of England has an opportunity and responsibility to listen to the voices of our siblings in the global South and respond accordingly as a respected voice in the public square.

(f) Calls upon all institutions of the Church of England to make urgent practical preparations for the delivery of substantial reductions in the Church's carbon footprint, including, but not restricted to, the following immediate actions in respect of Church buildings:

- (i) ensuring that the NCIs are adequately resourced to provide DACs, Buildings Departments, Education Departments and others with authoritative national guidance notes, advice and training on key technical and procedural questions relating to adaptation of buildings for the net zero target; and
- (ii) ensuring that Parish Buying and other national-level entities have the capacity to engage with manufacturers and suppliers of products and processes recommended for making our buildings more efficient, with a view to using the scale of the national net zero project to achieve both sympathetic design and economies of scale on cost.

- This section calls for action to help the Church achieve its net zero carbon target. The Environment Programme has already created a resource of [webinars](#) dealing with technical aspects of carbon emissions reductions, produced the [Practical Path to Net Zero Carbon](#), guidance for [the Net Zero Carbon Church](#) and the [heating guidance](#). Similar [advice exists for schools](#), and the Education Department is developing a national framework for the decarbonisation of church schools and a network of regional support for dioceses. Many more resources can be found on the Resource Hub, accessible by a core group of people in each diocese.
- Reducing our carbon footprint is not just about changing the source of our energy but reducing our energy consumption, which includes how we use our buildings; an understanding of which should be the starting point for any adaptation project.
- The Church Commissioners have set aside £30million for this current triennium and provisionally a further £160m for the following two triennia to support work to reach net zero carbon, and a new Net Zero Carbon Programme Board has been established to oversee delivery of the Routemap. The Board has agreed in principle that some of this funding will be spent on advice and training, and on work to leverage further funding to support this work.
- Capacity and resources are required at all levels of the Church and strengthening the partnerships between the NCIs and dioceses will be key to success. To that end the Net Zero Carbon Programme Team are making capacity building grants available to dioceses to increase their Net Zero capabilities and £6m in Triennium funding has been allocated for this purpose.
- The Net Zero Carbon Programme Team are also working with Parish Buying to develop a number of projects which take advantage of economies of scale – the procurement of energy audits for example, and there is further scope for central procurement to achieve savings on materials/products. There are however practical limits to what will be possible. Parish Buying are already engaged in identifying suitable products and suppliers to support churches in their net zero carbon journey and have just appointed a dedicated Net Zero procurement post within the Parish Buying team,.

(g) requests Bishops and the Liturgical Commission to encourage confirmation services to include an additional question ‘Will you strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth?’

- This addition has already been introduced in the Dioceses of Oxford and Norwich, and in baptism services in Norwich, authorised by the Bishops in the dioceses under Canon B5. With the support of the Chair of the Liturgical Commission, Bishop Graham Usher, in his role as Lead Bishop for the Environment, wrote to all Bishops on 23 June 2022, commending this same addition to them all.

(h) asks that HM Government reviews the weight given to the environmental public benefit in planning regulations to facilitate the installation of renewable technologies, including for buildings that are listed or in conservation areas.

- The Government recently consulted on plans to reduce planning constraints for non-domestic solar installations. Although listed properties and conservation areas were specifically excluded, this suggests there is appetite to consider how planning regulations affect renewable technology. The recent approval of solar panels on the

roof of King's College Cambridge has shifted the debate further towards accepting these kinds of installations on heritage buildings.

- Staff in the Cathedrals and Church Buildings Division of the Church Commissioners also continue to make representations in relation to the VAT rates which apply for retrofit/renewables works as the current rates do not acknowledge the public benefit in terms of emissions reductions.

Progress in Dioceses

1. The Diocese of Oxford has brought these matters to our attention and has led by example in moving forward in its creation care and pathway to net zero carbon. Across the Church of England, every Diocese is making progress in response to the climate emergency but each is at a different point on the journey.
 - a) All 42 Dioceses in the Church of England are registered on the Eco Diocese scheme. 18 have gained the bronze award, and we hope we will have our first silver eco diocese awards soon. A quarter of Church of England churches are registered for the Eco Church award.
 - b) All 42 Dioceses have applied for and received £15k in capacity building funding from the Net Zero triennium funding and a larger capacity building grant scheme is live at the present time. These are beginning to translate into additional members of staff in Dioceses working directly on net zero action plans and project management.
2. Individual Dioceses have made particular progress in particular areas, such as:
 - a) The Diocese of Leeds has developed a lay Eco Missioner Enabler training course, starting with a self-paced e-learning module, progressing to a short, weekly taught model, and graduating to a one-year's taught course.
 - b) The Diocesan Environment Officer in Sheffield has worked with the Chair of the Central Reader's Council to develop a module for the national lay reader training programme.
 - c) The Diocese of Liverpool has developed an imaginative partnership with Faiths For Change to facilitate the delivery of its Net Zero Carbon action plan.
 - d) The Diocese of Truro, working with its land and property agent, is delivering significant improvements in its housing stock, achieving 4 EPC grade A's on existing properties (mostly from D's) through retrofitting in 2023 already. Glebe land suitable to let for specific environmental projects has also been identified. The team is building relationships with local wildlife trusts, as well as encouraging and developing existing farm tenants to enter land into environmental stewardship projects.
3. This motion is a reminder of the commitments the General Synod has already made and outlines some new and some existing ways we must all work together to see our commitments through.

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