

CHURCH IN SOCIETY COMMITTEE

Action plan on Climate Change to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030

“We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth up to the present time.” (Romans 8:22)

Introduction

In response to the call of General Synod 2020, the Church in Society Committee presents a programme of actions and useful resources, aimed to equip the whole church for the urgent response that is needed towards achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

General Synod 2020 motion

That this Synod, expressing the need for urgent action in relation to the global climate emergency, call on the Church in Society Committee, working in conjunction with other appropriate bodies, to bring forward a programme of actions to General Synod 2021 to resource the Scottish Episcopal Church in working towards achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

We set out below

- 10 points of overall guidance
- a programme of actions for different levels of the SEC to pursue - congregations, dioceses, at provincial level, and as individuals
- more detailed action on buildings (the biggest part of our carbon footprints)
- suggested useful resources
- further work to be carried out by the Church in Society Committee.

We will supplement this with a Toolkit providing a more detailed set of resources, which we aim to have available in hard copy and on-line from summer 2021 containing practical recommendations to churches, clergy, staff, congregations, dioceses and you, the individual members of our churches. Our aim is to ‘resize’ a daunting task into manageable steps, which we can then build upon progressively and realistically. In November, the world’s governments come to Glasgow to take forward the urgent process of reducing emissions to a level that would be tolerable rather than catastrophic. Scotland’s response to the climate emergency will also be in the spotlight, including its churches. We repeat the statement in the 2017 Synod report that “On no conceivable ethical grounds can we simply continue ‘business as usual’”.

The changes we need to make encompass almost all aspects of our life as a church; not only our buildings, but in every area where we burn coal, oil, or gas. We need to transition to renewable alternatives as far as we possibly can, and where this is not reasonably practicable, we need to reduce, save and offset. We do not underestimate the challenge! But there are many steps we can already take which

will make a difference and we need to plan now for how and when the bigger challenges could be met. It has to be done step by step. Each church's (including church building, halls, offices, and rectories) plan of action will be unique to their situation, but some **points of guidance** can be recommended to all:

10 Points of Guidance

1. Seeking to reduce energy use in all our buildings and moving from oil/gas to electricity where possible
2. Implementing renewable energy solutions such as heat pumps and solar power on our property
3. Using less polluting forms of transport, moving to electric or hybrid cars, car sharing, wherever possible walking or cycling
4. Developing wildlife conservation schemes in our land
5. Using Fair Trade, environment- and animal-friendly products wherever possible
6. Reducing waste by composting and recycling as much of it as possible
7. Reducing paper usage (and then only using recycled paper)
8. Using online meetings often, but balanced with our need for human contact and Christian fellowship
9. Disseminating information on good practice, and seeking expert advice, practical help, and funding possibilities
10. Promoting sustainability through our preaching, liturgy and teaching, and setting a good example

We recognise that not all of these apply to every congregation and that some will depend on the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions, but we can begin to plan now.

Whole church action

This programme is addressed not only to congregations but to the whole church, in all its structures and activities, congregational, diocesan, and provincial. But we also urge everyone in the church to consider as individuals and households how the guidance points can be applied in their own lives. We are encouraged that some congregations have taken wholehearted action following previous Synod motions on climate change, and others have done a little, but there is now a need for all to act to meet our 2030 target.

We see a crucial role for Dioceses to carry forward this agenda for climate action through their leadership role, in supporting and monitoring progress. For example, they may wish to establish an Environment Group or change the scope of the existing Diocesan Building Committee. Progress towards the target should be reported to Diocesan Synods. At a Provincial level, all aspects of our organisation must play their part: the College of Bishops, the Scottish Episcopal Institute, General Synod Office, the Standing Committee and its boards with their pendant committees. The Faith and Order Board have a significant role through the work on liturgy and doctrine to ensure that care for God's creation is woven through all that we do.

Programme of actions:

In order for the Scottish Episcopal Church to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030, we recommend that:

Congregations

- Perform an audit of the present carbon footprint of congregational activities (not just the buildings)
- Produce an action plan to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030, using the Toolkit (and summarised below in the Process Notes for Buildings)
- Congregations join and become active in Eco-Congregation Scotland
- Look at how to promote living in more environmentally sustainable ways

Dioceses

- Create a structure for supporting congregations to move towards net zero carbon emissions
- Ensure that all parts of diocesan activities (including offices, retreat houses, homes for the elderly, and schools) move towards net zero carbon emissions
- Monitor congregations and all parts of diocesan activities that impact on climate change

Province

- The College of Bishops speak and encourage action on climate matters at all levels of the church
- The Provincial Standing Committee establish a reporting mechanism that gathers information on progress from all parts of the SEC and reports annually to General Synod
- The Administration Board consider how to fund environmental improvements to church buildings
- The Mission Board promote climate action as integral in the mission of the church and its witness to the world
- The Faith and Order Board disseminate theological and liturgical resources
- The Institute Council and SEI Management Committee consider ways to enhance and further develop SEI's existing work on climate justice and the integrity of creation within its formation and training programme

Individuals

- Apply the guidance points to our own lives and households, seeking where we can play our part too

As the global climate emergency requires effective action by wider civil society, the SEC should work at all levels to promote the adoption of national and local policies which will achieve the required reduction in carbon emissions.

Making an Action Plan for your Church

The importance of action on Buildings

One of the best ways of imagining our impact on climate change is to think of it as a carbon 'footprint'. This is made up of all the ways in which the church, its clergy and staff, and its activities contribute (both directly and indirectly) to emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. This is what we aim to reduce to net zero.

For most congregations, the biggest part of the footprint by far is the energy used to heat the buildings in which people gather and reside – the church, its halls, rectory, offices and other buildings. We recommend that most congregations and dioceses start their journey to zero carbon with their buildings. It is about how we heat them, where and when we heat them, and by how much. Because this is challenging, we need to look at it step by step, starting with what can be done now.

The following notes outline the process we are asking those responsible for any building to follow. The Toolkit will provide a lot more detail, but we wanted to give some guidance in this Action Plan.

Understand your buildings:

- How do you heat your church, halls, and rectory? Are any in need of replacing?
- What is your current energy usage? Look at past and present utility bills
- Work out your **carbon footprint** using the Toolkit

Develop an Action Plan for the Buildings:

- Assess where you can make savings: conduct an **energy audit** to identify areas for action
- Identify things you can do now
- Identify medium term things you can start to plan, and longer-term goals
- Seek advice on what are your best options and where to find funding
- Identify actions, taking into account the views and experience of current users

The **action plan** for your buildings will ensure you set goals, help you to work towards realistic timescales, and allocate specific people to specific tasks. Identify **measures of success**, so that you can track your progress. An action plan may be very simple or require multiple steps to define what has to be done, when and by whom. As part of the action plan and to gain momentum and confidence, identify quick wins (easier actions you can do now that do not cost the earth).

Some Easier Actions

Here some easy actions to improve energy efficiency and increase the comfort and sustainability of your building. Consider which ones are relevant to your situation.

- Get better thermostats, use better thermostat settings, refurbishing radiators
- Reduce draughts, using curtains, repairing faulty windows,
- Insulate pipework
- Replace lights with LEDs, reviewing floodlighting times,
- adding pew cushions
- Consider if you can reschedule times the buildings to reduce how many times you need to heat them from scratch
- Clear gutters

An Action Plan for all your activities

Make an **action plan** for reducing your carbon footprint in the other aspects of the church's activities.

- **What we consume:** paper use, food purchases and their packaging, cleaning products
- **Circular economy:** recycling and reuse, not using disposable cups and teaspoons
- **How we meet:** more use of on-line or hybrid meetings
- **How we travel:** what else can you do to reduce car use for clergy, vestry members and congregation; sharing cars; planning meetings around rural bus times; avoiding long drives for scattered rural vestry members; installing a bike rack

Tougher Actions

Start now to identify the harder actions which will take longer and be more expensive. Here are examples of a low carbon 'replacement list' which will require greater investment. The Toolkit will suggest sources of good advice, for example.

- Move to a heat pump or electric heating system
- Use a renewable device alongside the existing energy system
- Buy energy efficient electrical equipment
- Install renewable energy generation like solar panels
- Replace petrol or diesel cars by electric or hybrid

Useful Resources

We are not alone in this task. It is being tackled by churches across the whole UK. We have gladly drawn upon the excellent work done by the Eco-Congregation Scotland programme and its English Eco-Church partners, on the Church of England's and Church of Scotland's expert advice on what to do in church buildings, and the Church in Wales' practical actions, on Christian environmental organisations like A Rocha and the John Ray Initiative, and on relevant secular sources. We are also taking due note of wider initiatives in Scotland on climate action, such as the Just Transition Commission and the Scotland's Climate Assembly, and the UK Climate Change Commission.

We encourage local churches to join Eco-Congregation Scotland as part of putting into practice the recommendations of this report. Eco-Congregation Scotland is a network of over 500 congregations across 15 denominations, which has been working for 20 years to be a catalyst for individuals and churches to act together in caring for God's creation. It works ecumenically and has financial support from the Scottish Government in promoting environmental action at a local level. Over 30% of SEC churches are already members, as is the Scottish Episcopal Institute. Eco-Congregation provides resources, worship and teaching material, and importantly provides a network to help churches work together, share good practice, and drawing upon each other's experience in caring for God's creation.

Some Resource Links

Eco Congregation Scotland	https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/ https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/materials/ideas-for-action/practical-living/greening-the-cornerstone/
Carbon footprint calculators	https://360carbon.org/ https://www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx
Climate Emergency Toolkit	https://www.climateemergencytoolkit.com/
Church of England practical path to non-zero carbon churches	https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/net-zero-carbon-church/practical-path-net-zero-carbon-churches
Church of Scotland better heating guide	https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/2998/heating_guide.pdf
Climate Sunday	https://www.climatesunday.org/
TEAR Fund	https://www.tearfund.org/campaigns/reboot-campaign
Eco-Church	https://ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk/
John Ray Initiative (on Christian environmental education)	https://jri.org.uk/

Ongoing Work by the Church in Society Committee

This Programme of Actions provides the Synod with an outline of the steps which are needed from all parts of the church aiming towards net zero carbon by 2030. We seek the Synod's agreement on:

- 10 points of guidance
- the programme of actions that highlights the priorities for congregations, Dioceses, the Province, and individuals to progress action towards a carbon neutral church
- creating a structure within Dioceses and the Province to monitor progress towards the target

A more detailed Toolkit is in preparation, which we hope to have available by the time of the Synod. In the period between March and June 2021, the Church in Society Committee will work on preparing this document together with the Communications Team.

To reach net zero carbon is an ongoing action over the next nine years and beyond. By its nature, the Toolkit and recommendations will be developed further as information and resources improve, and as good practice emerges. As we receive information from dioceses and congregations, we hope a picture of the church's carbon footprint will emerge against which we can begin to measure progress towards our 2030 goal.

Technical Group on Climate Action, Church in Society Committee

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