

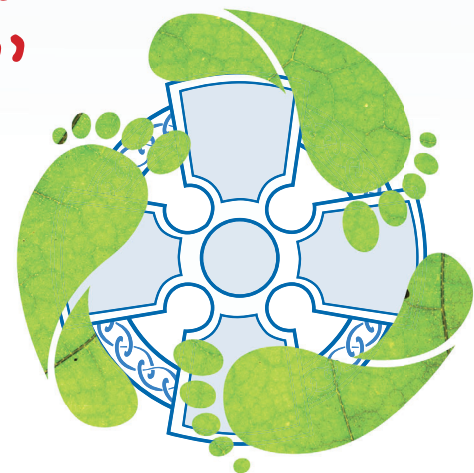
Towards net zero: Where to start?

By making a commitment to reach net zero carbon by 2030, the Church in Wales has set a bold and ambitious target. Navigating a pathway towards that target may seem daunting but as with all major endeavours, it becomes easier to realise when you break it down into smaller steps. Start with quick wins and build up to bigger and more ambitious initiatives. Bring people with you and show them the tangible gains to be realised along the way. Above all, drive action and always aim to show that net zero targets are about real-world changes, not just well-meaning rhetoric.

The following ten points, give you some pointers on where to start but don't take these suggestions as definitive. Be creative. Be vocal. Drive innovation and be the catalyst for change in your community and beyond.

We are facing a climate emergency and the Church in Wales wants to be at the forefront of change. Everything we do should be guided by the principle that:

“Actions speak louder than words”



10 steps to success ...



1 Establish an eco-group and appoint a lead climate champion

We need to see the climate crisis as part of our evangelistic mission. We need champions to spread the message, to drive change and to show our love for all of God's creation.

Create an eco-group for your Church or Ministry Area. Seek out people in your immediate community and beyond who can help. Anyone with relevant skills or experience in any sector that can help. People with environmental expertise, energy experts, builders, plumbers, electricians, digital and social media communicators will all be helpful. Don't undervalue passion though. Find the people that care and co-opt them to your champions.

Having formed the group, challenge them to meet regularly. Appoint a leader to coordinate action, ask them to be a public point of contact for information dissemination and give them focused goals and timeframes to achieve them.



2 Declare a climate emergency and devise an environmental policy

We are living in a climate emergency and we need to say so. Devise a statement that recognises the reality we face and publicise that through the channels available to you.

With the help of your eco-group, devise an environmental policy. This should be clear, succinct and goal driven. It isn't a comprehensive plan but a series of pledges that can easily be conveyed in few bullet points. It needs to be ambitious but make sure it is attainable and has clear targets. "We will reduce the amount of electricity we use by 50% by December 2024" for example.

Make sure this policy is as visible as it can be. Put it on the noticeboard, circulate it on social media and on the website. Ensure it is seen, invite feedback and encourage volunteers.



3 Register with A Rocha Eco Church

You have the people, you have the policy and so now is the time to benchmark where you are and where you need to go next. Go online and visit: ecochurch.arocha.org.uk

Register your church with A Rocha Eco Church and you can find out about a range of environmental actions that your church can take in areas like worship and teaching, managing church buildings, managing church land, community and global engagement.

Registration is free and once you have submitted your details there is a survey you can take which will assess where your church is on the eco-church scale. You may even find that your church has already achieved sufficient actions to be awarded one of the bronze, silver or gold attainment levels. The actions required for each level of attainment are made clear on the site and provide excellent pointers for practical actions you can take. The website also provides a wealth of resources to help you on your journey to carbon neutrality.



Measure your church carbon footprint using the Energy Footprint Tool



Beginning the journey towards carbon neutrality, means having an accurate idea of where you are starting from. You need to know how much carbon your church emits now. This will form the baseline of your climate action plan and is an essential foundation for success.

The Church in Wales' online calculator, known as the Energy Footprint Tool (EFT), is now available and can help you generate the data you need. All you need to do is enter your energy use as it appears on your utility bills for the previous 12-months and some information about average church attendance across the year.

Once the data has been input into the Energy Footprint Tool, a clear and accurate carbon value will be generated for your church's carbon emissions. You can use this to plan where the biggest differences can be made. You can also see how your energy use compares with other churches.

For more information see: <https://eft-wales.parishreturns.info>

Devise a climate action plan



Draw up an action plan based on your environmental policy and your carbon footprint data. Focus on specific tasks, themes and actions that will generate easy, short-term gains to engage and encourage further activity. Success is the best driver for success.

The Eco-Church attainment levels can provide you with a clear set of actions and tangible rewards. Aiming for bronze, silver or gold can help focus and unite your team.

Your plan should be very clear about the type of action to be undertaken, likely time scales, the expected outcomes, and who will be responsible for the work. Remember also to include how you will communicate your plan and to whom.

... remember, actions speak louder than words ...





Develop a roster for routine church maintenance and repair

Keeping heat loss and damp penetration in your buildings to a minimum is an important part of helping to reduce your carbon footprint. A planned approach to routine maintenance is therefore a key part of any good climate action plan.

Block draughts, repair broken windows and keep gutters and downpipes clear of debris. Regular checks of the heating and lighting systems are also important because they mean that problems can be spotted early and acted on. That, in turn, will help you maintain those systems at maximum efficiency.

To help you plan routine maintenance in a structured way, go online and work through the steps in Section A of the **Practical Path to Net Zero** document:

www.churchinwales.org.uk/climatechange



Arrange an energy audit of your church

An energy audit, undertaken by an experienced and suitably qualified energy auditor, is a detailed assessment of the context and energy use of your church. It will help you understand how you could save energy and potentially, which future low carbon options may be suitable for your church. Contact your diocese to arrange an energy audit.

When the energy audit is undertaken alongside a quinquennial inspection, you will be provided with an overview of your building's needs and importantly, you will be able to plan for all building maintenance and upgrade work at the same time and before you are required to renew the existing heating and/or lighting system. Having advance notice of your future low carbon heating options gives you time to budget and fundraise too. The energy audit report could also prove a useful document to accompany any funding proposal.



Develop a specific heating strategy

Heating is the source of the vast majority of carbon emissions generated by a church and as a result, moving away from the burning of oil and gas is seen as crucial for churches to achieve net zero. The findings from your energy audit report could form the basis of a detailed heating strategy and a focused net zero action plan for each church, with short (within two years), medium (two to five years) and longer-term (five years plus) actions outlined. This document could be additional to your climate action plan.

As part of the heating strategy, you could commit to investigating the recommended low-carbon, renewable heating system options outlined in your energy audit and look to replace your gas or oil heating systems with electric solutions.



Switch energy tariffs to green electricity and green biogas tariffs

Most energy companies offer green energy tariffs, although you ought to be aware that some tariffs are greener than others. This is a useful guide: *Green electricity tariffs* | Centre for Sustainable Energy (cse.org.uk).

The current energy crisis means that many of the greenest deals are not currently available but keep an eye on the market as circumstances change. This resource can help you keep track of changes: *Compare Green Energy Suppliers* | Big Clean Switch (bigcleanswitch.org).

Offset the remainder of your emissions

Once you have reduced your energy use as much as possible you can offset the rest of your church's emissions through reputable offsetting schemes, such as Climate Stewards (climatestewards.org) - Climate Stewards, to become a 'net zero' church.

Additionally, and if applicable, consider rewilding parts of your church grounds and planting trees to help capture carbon naturally from the air at the local level. Perhaps also engaging with activities, such as forest church, that highlight your climate commitment to others might act as mission in the community and enable all to appreciate the wonders of our natural world.

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