The Diocese of Southwark

DS(26)17

DIOCESAN SYNOD

NZC & Environment Update

For Information

Introduction

1. The Diocese continues to make good progress towards the environmental goals set out in the *Diocesan Environmental Policy (2024–2027)*, approved by Diocesan Synod in November 2024. The following annexes provide updates on progress towards two of the Diocese's overarching goals in this area: achieving Net Zero Carbon, and meeting the criteria for the Eco Diocese Silver Award.

Background

2. The Diocese is working towards the Church of England's target of achieving Net Zero Carbon by 2030, with a backstop of 2035. This *work* forms part of the missional commitment to care for creation and sits alongside progress towards achieving the Eco Diocese Silver Award by 2027/28.

3. The Eco Diocese scheme takes a holistic approach, seeking to embed care for creation across all areas of diocesan life. This includes Eco Church engagement, land and nature, carbon reduction, training and development, finance *and* investments, collaboration with partner organisations, schools, and the visibility and celebration of environmental news and within diocesan communications.

4. **Annex 1** provides an update on work towards Net Zero Carbon, including progress in reducing our collective emissions. **Annex 2** offers an update on wider environmental work, particularly in relation to Eco Diocese and Eco *Church*.

Our Shared Calling & The Road Ahead

5. This work aligns strongly with the Southwark Vision priority of *Healing*, as we seek to respond faithfully to the climate and nature crises and to care for God's creation.

6. We recognise that this calling is shared. It requires all of us, as the Body of Christ, to play our part. Across the Diocese, there are many encouraging signs: parishes working to restore local biodiversity, reduce emissions, advocate for climate and nature justice, and nurture deeper awareness of creation care in worship and as part of discipleship.

7. We give thanks for this growing commitment, and for the progress that has already been made. At the same time, there remains much to do. Our Diocese will continue to encourage parishes to deepen their engagement, particularly through Eco Church and Net Zero Carbon work, as well as embedding care for creation more fully across all areas of diocesan life and mission.

Appendix 1

Net Zero Carbon Programme Update

2025 Progress

1. The Diocese of Southwark is well thought of by the National NZC Team for its approach and achievements on Net Zero. We are now seen as a Diocese with an embedded NZC programme and were also invited to lead the Inspiration session at the Church of England's National NZC Conference.

2. The Diocese has successfully secured a £200,000 capacity grant from the National Programme for the 2nd Triennium to 2029. We have also secured a £90K grant for Church Quick Wins projects and are invited to apply for Church Decarbonisation funding in May which could significantly benefit 6 of our high emission churches in the 2nd Triennium. Completion of the Energy Footprint Tool increased to 75% in 2025, up from 58% in 2024, following targeted communications and training. This significant increase in data has enabled more focused engagement with higher-emitting churches and supported the prioritisation of energy audits and advisory support.

3. Given resource and budget and technical constraints we are moving forward well on our net zero mission across all elements of the programme.

4. **Parishes:** Many of our high emitter churches have received support in terms of technical advice and funding. We have two churches receiving phase one funding from the Demonstrator Church Programme as well as five churches successfully being granted funding from the Net Zero Quick Wins initiative. Subject to final data validation around half of our high emitter churches are showing emission reductions.

5. **Cathedral:** In 2025, the Cathedral decarbonised the offices in Montague Chambers with heat and cooling being provided wholly via (air-to-air) Air Source Heat Pumps. With a commitment to Green Energy supply until 2030 this largely completes the first of three significant steps in the Cathedral's NZC Plan. The Cathedral is now planning for the more complex steps of decarbonising the Millennium Building as well as the Cathedral.

6. **Clergy Housing:** A Net Zero Demonstrator House project in a parsonage is close to completion and this will be an inspiring example of a net zero carbon clergy house in our Diocese thanks to funding from the national church.

7. **Schools:** Work across school buildings in this period has focused on operationalising the heat pumps installed in 60 of our schools. This will eventually mean that half of our schools have electrical heat pumps as the primary source of heating. Overall it is expected that that the final data report for 2024 data (submitted in 2025) due shortly from the National Church will show a continued downward emission trajectory for the Diocese and we predict that overall we will be at between 75% and 80% of the 2022 baseline emissions.

2026 Priorities

Parishes

8. The priorities for our parishes in 2026 will be:

9. Strongly supporting our high emitting churches on their journey to Net Zero by focusing around 75% of Net Zero Programme Manager time on bringing net zero planning advice and National Programme funding to these churches

10. Taking action to bridge funding gaps including building strong links with community energy organisations who can provide capital funding and ensuring we maximise the potential benefits of the new shared funding advisor funded by the National programme.

11. Filling skills gaps though:
    - Technical webinars,
    - Identifying people working within the Diocese how have relevant skills they are willing to share
    - allocating part of the National Programme capacity grant to consultancy support

Clergy Housing

12. The key housing strategy remains to review the potential for net zero projects at vacancy as well as to secure funding for further demonstrator house projects in the 2nd Triennium of the programme. New technologies and government programmes such as plug-in solar and the Governments Warm Homes initiative will be assessed and implemented if they are seen to be beneficial to the occupiers, supporting clergy wellbeing and our Net Zero goal.

Southwark Cathedral

13. The Cathedral is now planning for the more complex steps of decarbonising the Millennium Building as well as the Cathedral.

Schools

14. Reflecting that there are now fewer new grant opportunities for schools attention has turned to seeking new funding partners and solar projects. An application has been made to Southwark Community Fund for partial funding to install solar panels in a primary school, while three Croydon schools have been selected for the Department for Education (DfE) School Rebuilding

Appendix 2

Net Eco Diocese Update

1. The Eco Diocese Working Group continues to make good progress towards achieving the silver criteria of A Rocha's Eco Diocese scheme, working across departments to ensure creation care is embedded in each area of Diocesan life.

2. **Office:** An important step forward has been the achievement of the Silver Eco Office Award for Trinity House from A Rocha UK. This followed a programme of work including improving the small urban space outside our diocesan office for the benefit of nature, staff training and engagement, planning for energy efficiency and carbon reduction, and the adoption of an Eco Office Policy & Action Plan to support continual improvement across office life.

3. **Parish Support & Training:** Support for churches engaging with environmental work has continued to develop. In 2025, Archdeaconry Eco Champions were appointed, with at least one in each Archdeaconry. These individuals bring both practical knowledge and a strong commitment to caring for God's creation to their roles, mostly coming from silver and gold awarded Eco Churches. Supported by our Diocesan Environmental Officer, they offer local support, share good practice and build momentum in parishes and deaneries.

4. Environmental themes continue to be embedded within ministerial training and formation, including training for ordinands, Nuts and Bolts for incumbents new to the diocese, and discipleship resources. *Foundations for Creation Care* has been developed as an introductory training for those beginning this work in parishes, while Carbon Literacy training has been delivered for those seeking deeper engagement. Further collaboration with the Diocese of London is planned later in the year to develop additional training with a deeper scope, for those further along their journeys.

5. Training and support also continue to be offered through parish visits, Deanery Synods, meetings with Area Deans, webinars, and talks to wider groups. A growing range of resources has been developed and shared, including materials for seasonal engagement such as Creationtide and Great Big Green Week, alongside regular news through the Eco Bulletin newsletter.

6. **Eco Church Awards:** Participation and progress at the parish level continue to grow. Over 52% of churches in the Diocese are now registered as Eco Churches, with 29% having achieved an award (19% Bronze and 10% Silver or above). There are currently three gold awarded Eco Churches in the Diocese, including two new gold awards in the last year: St George the Martyr, Shirley, and St Mary's Eco Church. The Diocese is therefore close to meeting the Eco Diocese Silver awards threshold, which requires 40% of churches to be registered, 30% awarded, and 10% at Silver or above.

7. **Cathedral:** The Cathedral continues to work towards the Eco Church Gold award and has focussed this year on raising awareness and inspiring the community to reflect on creation care in their own lives and engage in debate about the climate and nature crises.

8. **Schools:** Three schools have been selected for the Department for Education (DfE) School Rebuilding Programme, which takes a holistic approach; both delivering low carbon buildings whilst also addressing outside space, biodiversity, and wellbeing.

9. Educational engagement with sustainability continues to grow. Schools are developing Climate Action Plans, participating in Sustainability Forums, and embedding environmental themes across school life. Twenty-one schools are now engaged with the Energy Sparks programme, helping to identify energy savings through improved data analysis.

10. Schools continue to be encouraged and supported to live out their environmental impact through a justice and responsibility lens, grounded in their Christian vision, and encouraged to work with local churches towards eco awards.

Next Steps

11. Our 2026 priorities include:

- Continuing to increase the number of Eco Church awards, aiming to meet and exceed the Silver threshold through ongoing encouragement, support, and training to equip parishes.
- Progressing the development of a land management plan to ensure diocesan land is used for the benefit of nature and biodiversity.
- Further developing our approach to 'greening' our finances, building on the significant step of divestment from fossil fuels, and continuing engagement with our bank regarding green and ethical policies.
- Developing a more in-depth creation care training course, in collaboration with the Diocese of London, to be delivered during Creationtide and aimed at parishes that are further along in their journeys.
- Strengthening existing relationships with partner organisations to raise awareness of climate and nature issues and support collective action.