

Environmental Policy

Implementation Plan

1. Purpose

1.1. This is an agreed, documented statement of the United Reformed Church Eastern Synod's plan to implement its Environmental Policy. (Issue 2, October 2023)

2. Implementation

Eastern Synod affirms its pledge to shrink its carbon footprint and to strive to protect and restore the environment. Synod recognises that this is a demanding and collaborative endeavour and commits to providing all practicable assistance to churches. Synod also recognises that this pledge calls for both conversion on the part of its individual members and the transformation of internal structures.

2.1. Accordingly, Eastern Synod will:

a) encourage and support local churches to achieve Eco Church status and progress through the award levels, celebrating successes and sharing stories.

- Jeremy Flack, Green Apostle to offer encouragement and support to local churches, and to collate stories to be shared on the website.
- Lythan Nevard, Moderator, Jo Clare Young, Mission and Training Officer and Nicola Grieves, Children and Youth Development Officer to raise the possibility during local church visits.
- Environment theme of Sept 2023 Faith in Action day and will be for March 2024 Synod.

b) develop and implement plans to progress through the Eco Synod award levels (Bronze awarded June 2023)

- In April 2024 Jeremy Flack, Green Apostle, Faith Paulding, Finance Officer and David Coaker, Synod Clerk to work through draft Silver Eco Synod application.
- Through that determine actions or areas of work to achieve silver or work towards gold.

c) Calculate and track the carbon footprint of key activities (such as energy use of buildings, travel and transport, and meetings)

- Develop and implement an action plan for making annual reductions in this carbon footprint in order to reach net zero emissions by 2030.

- In April 2024 Jeremy Flack, Green Apostle, Faith Paulding, Finance Officer and David Coaker, Synod Clerk to work 360° carbon to offset Synod activities for 2023.
- That result to be compared with the 2022 result and propose an action plan.
- Engage with the URC Net Zero Task group to ensure that our plans integrate with theirs.

d) Appoint and support at least one or more 'Green Apostles' to monitor progress on creation care within the synod

- Jeremy Flack, Green Apostle, current term runs to the end of 2025.
- Encourage others to support him and local churches in this activity.

e) Ensure that its buildings and land are environmentally friendly and offer grants to ensure that church premises are environmentally friendly

- [Sustainable Buildings Guidance](#) and [Sustainable Buildings Plan](#) have been prepared and shared with local churches.
- Make best efforts to make the Synod Office, manses in the Synod Manse Scheme, and associated land, environmentally friendly.
- Synod grants are available to support Eco improvements to property.

- include environmental and energy saving suggestions into quinquennial surveys of buildings.

- Surveyors to be instructed to include these suggestions.

- Investigate and, where possible, improve the levels of energy efficiency and environmental performance of buildings, including insulation, glazing, ventilation and heating and cooling systems, through refurbishment or replacement.

- Any building related visits to local churches by Resources or LBAC to raise these possibilities.
- Audit to be undertaken to highlight buildings that can be easily improved and those that require greater effort. Resources to review and decide what support and finance to be offered to make necessary improvements.

- Ensure any buildings purchased have an Energy Performance rating of C or above, or are upgraded immediately after purchase to achieve this rating.

- Amend Property and Manse policies to reflect this.

- Implement measures to reduce energy use.

- As above

- Support the generation of renewable energy – either on our own buildings or by investing in and cooperating with local community projects.

- Promote examples, share experiences and encourage grant applications.
- Taking note of Local Authority planning policies re: renewable energy e.g. installation of solar panels.

- Choose green energy tariffs, from suppliers investing in new renewable energy generation, and pay to offset the carbon emissions of any unavoidable use of fossil fuels.

- Promote green energy suppliers and carbon offsetting.
- Offset Synod activities as determined by 2.1 c)

f) Reduce, where practicable, car and air travel for meetings through the use of videoconferencing. With due regard for distances and costs involved, individuals will be encouraged to use transport with minimum impact – to walk, cycle, use buses and trains, car-share and use electric and other energy-efficient vehicles where possible. Where there is no alternative to flying and the benefits out-weigh the environmental harm members will be encouraged as a temporary expedient to adopt the practice of carbon off-setting with respect to essential travel by making payments supporting sustainable projects, e.g., through Climate Stewards.

- Synod conference room set up for video conferencing.
- Staff encouraged to use minimum impact transport and video conferencing.
- Company cars to either be hybrids or EVs.
- Synod meetings papers to include minimum impact transport details and encouragement.

g) Not invest in fossil fuel companies whose total turnover is more than 10% derived from the extraction and/or supply of fossil fuels, including thermal coal, natural gas and oil. (These provisions reflect the Church's current agreed Ethical Investment guidelines)

- Existing policy

h) Encourage churches to work in collaboration with ecumenical partners and with/initiate local transition and sustainability groups.

- Jeremy Flack, Green Apostle to offer encouragement and support to local churches, and to collate stories to be shared on the website.

i) Promote an environmental theology and encourage their churches to receive training and support on issues of environmental care and to include these in the initial and on-going training of ministers, preachers, worship leaders and elders.

- Jo Clare Young, Mission and Training Officer to include in her offer.
- Nicola Grieves, Youth and Children's Development Officer to include in her offer.
- Include in programme for Minister's Summer School and Gathering.
- Explore what can be offered by RCLs

- Compile, promote and use resources for worship and teaching related to environmental themes.

- Include on Synod website.
- Include in worship at Synod, Committees and other times that staff lead worship.

- Provide, promote and use resources and campaigns that support churches and church members to reduce their environmental footprint.

- Include on Synod website.
- Engage with URC and ecumenical programmes to encourage this within local churches.

j) Encourage church congregations to be more aware of, and ready to respond to, environmental issues in their area.

- Jeremy Flack, Green Apostle to offer encouragement and support to local churches, and to collate stories to be shared on the website.

k) Encourage individual members of church congregations to be environmentally aware as part of their own lifestyle.

- Engage with URC and ecumenical programmes to encourage this within local churches.

l) Campaign at a local and/or national level for policies that care for the environment.

- Engage with URC and ecumenical programmes to encourage this within local churches.

m) Establish the habit of recording and celebrating environmental initiatives of churches in the Synod.

- Jeremy Flack, Green Apostle to offer encouragement and support to local churches, and to collate stories to be shared on the website.