

Environmental Policy



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1 Introduction

This document has been prepared by the Eco Church Team at Dorchester Abbey, as part of our deliberations regarding the Eco Church Survey, with the aim of achieving an Eco Church **Bronze Award**.

1.1 Policy statements

- **We recognise** the climate and nature crises and the fundamental injustice these represent.
- **We recognise** and teach that creation care and action to address the climate and nature crises are integral to Christian faith, life and worship.
- **We recognise** the need to manage our land for nature.
- **We recognise** that we need to take action locally, nationally and globally to tackle climate injustice.
- **We recognise** that integrating creation care into our daily lives is an act of worship and obedience to God as we grow in discipleship.

1.2 Denominational commitment

One of the Anglican Communion's Five Marks of Mission is:

*"To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain
and renew the life of the earth".*

As a part of the Church of England, we recognise the commitment, approved by General Synod in July 2022, and is set out in "The Routemap". This is a plan for how the C of E can be net zero carbon by 2030. In line with this, we have committed to reduce our carbon footprint, as set out in this document.

1.3 Our principles and values

God created the world and everything in it.

God has created an awesome and majestic cosmos to bring him praise and glory. We are but one part of his created order. Jesus has redeemed the whole earth through his death and resurrection. We have a special responsibility to care for the Earth so that human life and all God's creatures may be sustained in harmony.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1, NIV)

Our church is committed to minimising our negative impact on the environment. Christians it is our responsibility to care for creation, using resources wisely so that climate change is mitigated, biodiversity protected or enhanced, finite resources conserved, and waste and pollution minimised.

Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out, who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it... (Isaiah 42:5, NIV)

Seeking climate justice is part of Christian discipleship and practice.

Following Christ's teachings means loving our global neighbours and caring for creation. The climate crisis both reflects and feeds off inequality, exploitation and greed: often the communities who are suffering the most from its effects, particularly in the Global South, are those who have done the least to cause it. We will aim to act in accordance with this understanding, making changes to improve our sustainability and to show solidarity with those across the world who are suffering in this crisis.

What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8, NIV).

2 Our Commitments

2.1 Worship and Teaching

We will communicate our biblical understanding of responsibility to God for all that is entrusted to us through creation, making the links between poverty, wealth and environmental degradation. We understand the interconnectedness of these issues and the need for holistic transformation through our commitment to the Five Anglican Marks of Mission. We will strive to equip leadership, staff, volunteers and church members with the skills, knowledge and confidence to respond to this responsibility.

2.2 Buildings and Energy

We recognise the most important environmental impact will be an ongoing reduction of our carbon emissions. We will seek to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions as much as we can, within the limitations of a Grade I Listed Ancient Abbey Church, working toward net zero carbon.

2.3 Land and Nature

We will respond to the nature crisis, pollution and loss of biodiversity through practical action, collaboration and advocating for positive change.

2.4 Community and Global Engagement

We will highlight and raise awareness that the climate and nature crises affect the poorest first and worst, so our responsibility is to them and the places they live, wherever they are in the world, to promote justice for people and nature.

2.5 Lifestyle

We recognise that we have an impact on the world through the choices available to us and our use of money and resources. We will strive to support our church family and wider community in bringing about positive change and care for God's Earth. We will seek to encourage our church community and beyond to live gently on the Earth and be prepared to challenge systemic injustice.

Our church has a plan (Outlined in Section 3) to promote ethical and environmentally aware consumption patterns by our church, individuals and households.

3 Application

We are committed to applying these principles in the following areas:

3.1 Worship and Teaching

3.1.1 Awareness

- The PCC, staff, volunteers and church members will be made aware of this policy and it will be accessible on our website.
- This policy and action plan will be regularly reviewed at PCC meetings, communicated and embedded in work plans.

3.1.2 Skilled and equipped

- All Eco Team members will receive Carbon Literacy training.
[Home - The Carbon Literacy Project](#)
- We will offer other church members the opportunity for Carbon Literacy training, Carbon Audits, or other relevant topics as interest is shown.
- We will offer opportunities for more in-depth engagement with environmental issues through our sermon series and small-group studies.

3.2 Buildings and Energy

3.2.1 Energy use (Abbey, Guesthouse, No 8 Manor Farm Road)

- We will assess our energy use annually, using the Church of England Energy Toolkit calculator.
- We will set annual carbon reduction targets and review our progress annually.
- We recognise that digital data has a footprint and we will encourage regular digital clean-ups.
- We will maintain our solar panels in order to maximise our on-site green electricity generation.
- We will encourage everybody to consider their energy use and switching to a green tariff.
- The PCC is committed to offset our carbon footprint with Climate Stewards.

3.2.2 Travel

- We are committed to minimising unnecessary travel and encouraging use of the least polluting means of transport.
- We will prioritise the use of public transport and bicycles over private cars for church business. (Air travel is generally not appropriate for church business and would normally require a PCC agreement.)
- We will consider the pros and cons of meeting in person versus online, wherever appropriate, while recognising that most people walk to Abbey meetings.

3.2.3 Fabric

- The Fabric Coordinator will monitor the upkeep of the building, including through our Quinquennial Inspections, to ensure repairs are undertaken promptly and continually review ways in which we can improve. The coordinator will provide regular reports to the PCC.

3.2.4 Operations

We will regularly review our operations plan (Outlined below) for energy efficiency:

Heating:

- Set to 16 degrees Celsius by default
- Manually increase to 18 degrees for some concerts and reverted to 16 degrees after the event.
- Timers set to warm the Abbey for regular services, coffee morning, toddlers, session & choir practice.
- Timers can be manually overridden for one-off events as needed.
- Timers set to turn off all areas of the Abbey at 11:30pm each night to avoid overrides being on for too long.
- Heating manually turned off mid-May to mid-October.

Lighting

- Outside lighting manually adjusted to come on at dusk and off at dawn throughout the year.
- Abbey lights preset to appropriate levels for daytime, services, choir practice, performances etc. to optimise energy consumption and light levels

3.2.5 Climate resilience

- We will seek to provide a 'cool space' during the summer as the need arises. (The nature of the Abbey buildings means that we cannot effectively provide a "warm Space")
- Working with the Parish Council, we will seek to support those affected by flooding in our community,
- We will explore ways to improve our climate resilience responses.

3.2.6 Procurement

- We recognise that the decisions we make in what we consume for church life (such as materials, products, equipment and consumables) have an impact on the environment.
- Our procurement decisions will minimise negative environmental impacts, where feasible. Strong preference will be given to suppliers who take environmental responsibility seriously.
- Any construction work will aim to minimize embodied carbon and carbon usage through energy efficiency and procurement of materials.
- We will use recycled paper wherever feasible and otherwise use paper derived from sustainably managed forests.
- We will avoid the purchase of products and packaging that use non-recyclable and non- biodegradable materials in the first instance (see Just Money's ethical purchasing policy information for more information).

3.2.7 Hirings

Our Lettings policy includes the following clause:

“As an Eco Church we encourage all who use the premises to be as environmentally friendly as possible. You are more than welcome to use our plates and cutlery for your event, or to bring your own reusable items. If using disposable items (plates, cutlery, etc.), we encourage you to purchase biodegradable items that can be placed in a compost bin after use and to recycle as much as possible of food packaging materials.”

3.3 Land and Nature

3.3.1 Church Land

The Abbey buildings stand within a substantial area of land which are an important part of the setting. These include:

- The Lychgate and approaches to the Abbey
- An historical burial place (Closed for burials since the late 19th Century)
- The Cloister Gardens, including the herb garden
- The Guest House courtyard
- Busy public footpaths

3.3.2 Land Management

The Abbey Grounds are public spaces to meet, sit and enjoy nature, but they are also used regularly for events, including our monthly Forest Church, Theatre and music, including the biennial “Dorchester Festival”.

We seek to manage them with ecological sensitivity, promoting native species, minimising carbon impact, and engaging with the community.

The closed churchyard is the responsibility of the Parish Council, who maintain this area, including trees.

We also work with “Green DoTs”, a local volunteer group who maintain the cloister gardens for us as well as other parts of the village, while other volunteers maintain flower beds around the approaches to the abbey.

The grass is mown regularly by contractors.

Other features to note include:

- Compost bins created and managed by Green DoTs
- Areas left unmown for wild flowers and wildlife.
- A “Bug Hotel” and other projects by “Forest Church”.



3.4 Community and Global Engagement

3.4.1 Advocacy and action

- We will raise awareness of, and encourage participation in, taking action as a means to loving our neighbour and caring for creation.
- We will seek ways to support and raise awareness of environmental issues as a whole church.
- We will collaborate with, and encourage awareness of, local environmental groups, the Dorchester Parish Council, Green DoTs, and other churches to share resources and best practices.
- We will seek to raise awareness about ethical finance.

3.4.2 Accreditation

- In addition to the Eco Church Accreditation, we will explore becoming a Fairtrade Place of Worship.

3.4.3 Food and drink

- We will opt for Fairtrade tea, coffee and sugar when purchasing for the church (see more detail in section 3.2.6 above).
- We will encourage the practical application of Green Christian's LOAF principles - local, organic, animal-friendly and fairly traded where possible.

3.4.4 Sustainable transport

- We will encourage the use of sustainable forms of transport.

3.4.5 Waste

- We are committed to reducing waste, re-using and recycling waste as far as practically possible.
- We will work with the Parish Council to encourage recycling of 'difficult' items, such as batteries, blister packs, printer cartridges, coffee pods to the wider community.

3.4.6 Finance

- We are committed that a portion of our charitable giving will go toward charities that care for the environment or to support those who are adversely affected by climate change.
- We are working towards switching our accounts to avoid banks most heavily invested in fossil fuels.
- We will not knowingly invest in or deal with companies or organisations whose activities significantly conflict with our own environmental policy.
- We will actively seek to work with financial institutions that make a positive difference.

3.4.7 Communication and promotion of Eco Church

- We will respond to enquiries and seek to promote Eco Church locally.
- We will participate in denominational and other events to promote Eco Church and care for the environment.

3.5 Lifestyle

3.5.1 Sustainable lifestyle

- Throughout the year we will share information, stories and examples of lifestyle action to encourage individual members of our congregations to take actions in their personal lives to care for God's creation.
- We will promote and encourage our church members to undertake personal auditing of individual and household carbon footprints.

4 Implementation and monitoring

- The Eco Team will meet three times a year to monitor progress and agree next actions
- The Eco Team will report annually on progress and activities to the PCC.
- The PCC will review targets and revise the Action Plan annually.
- The PCC will ensure **communication** with the church membership.
- This policy document will be **fully reviewed** periodically as needed considering developments.

Annual Reporting (summary table)

	Year 1 (baseline)	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
KwH electricity used				
KwH of gas used				
Annual carbon footprint (result of 360°carbon)	Energy: Other: Total:	Energy: Other: Total:	Energy: Other: Total:	Energy: Other: Total:

Date policy updated:

Date of next review:

Name of eco lead person:

Name of Eco Church Team:

Action Plan

This will be developed and presented to the PCC for approval before the 2026 APCM

Category	Action point	Tasks	Person(s) responsible	Date to achieve
Worship and Teaching				
Buildings and Energy				
Land and Nature				
Community and Global Engagement				
Lifestyle				