



Parish Environmental Policy

At St Hilda's, 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. In line with this, we aim to take the practical steps necessary to realise the Fifth Mark of Mission, which is *"to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew the life of the earth"*.

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.

Objective

The PCC will integrate environmental responsibility into all aspects of church life — worship, teaching, mission, pastoral care, youth work, buildings and land management, administration, and charitable giving.

We are committed to reducing our carbon footprint in line with the Church of England's net zero target by 2030.

To fulfil our objective, we will take the following actions across different areas of church life.

Key Action Areas

1. Worship, Teaching & Mission, Youth & Children's Work

We aim to include the importance of care for creation in our worship, prayers, teaching and mission, and our work with children and young people. 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 aim to equip leadership, volunteers and church members with the skills, knowledge and confidence to respond to this responsibility.

2. Parish Environmental Contact and Eco Group

A Parish Environmental Contact (PEC), appointed by the PCC, will act as a point of contact for the Deanery Environment Champion and the Diocese, and will promote environmental news and issues and encourage PCC members to bring concerns and ideas forward to the PCC on a regular basis.

An Eco Group, open to anyone to join, will meet regularly to:

- Support the PEC in delivering the church's environmental aims
- Plan and implement practical environmental initiatives
- Engage the congregation in creation care through events, communication and education
- Monitor progress towards Eco Church goals and other environmental commitments
- Set measurable goals and regularly report progress, plans, and recommendations to PCC.

The Eco Group will play a key role in embedding care for creation into the life of the church and ensuring that environmental actions are sustained and collaborative. The Eco Group will also keep the congregation updated with reports in the quarterly parish newsletter.

3. Eco Church

We are currently a Silver Eco Church and will continue to progress to Gold. We will regularly review our Eco Church survey to guide progress.

4. Energy Monitoring & Audit

We will ensure that our church submits a return for the Church of England Energy Footprint Tool each year to monitor our church energy usage and gain an estimate of the current carbon footprint for our church buildings.

We plan to carry out an environmental and energy audit of the church, hall and hut, identify the most significant issues and impacts that should be addressed, and develop and implement plans and programmes to tackle them. We aim to minimise energy use and maximising energy efficiency.

We will explore funding opportunities for energy improvements.

5. Tackling our Energy Use & Carbon Footprint

We recognise the most important environmental impact will be an ongoing reduction of our carbon emissions. Any proposed changes to our buildings will take our Eco Church commitment into account and will meet high environmental standards. We will monitor and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions of the electricity and gas used in our church buildings and maximise energy efficiency by:

- Continuing to use green energy suppliers and tariffs
- Using thermostats for temperature control
- Fitting LED light bulbs
- Turning off lights, appliances and computers when not in use
- Improving insulation where possible
- Investigating and implementing renewable heating alternatives in all our buildings and replacing old, inefficient boilers
- Exploring self-generating energy solutions, such as solar panels.

6. Transport

We will encourage our church members to use forms of transport to church, work, meetings etc. which have minimum or reduced environmental impact – e.g. walk, cycle, public transport, car sharing, electric vehicles. We will investigate cycle racks, car charging ports and other possible means to encourage the modes of transport listed above. We will ensure transport options are inclusive and accessible.

7. Food and drink

Where food and drink is purchased, we will endeavour to ensure that it is:

- Fairtrade, B Corps and/or Rainforest Alliance (e.g. tea and coffee)
- sourced locally to reduce their carbon footprint
- minimal plastic use and waste.

When we provide food or host bring-and-share meals, we will offer or encourage vegetarian and vegan options. We will aim to reduce food waste and compost where possible.

8. Procurement, Recycling and Unnecessary waste

We will prioritise products and services with low environmental impact. We will aim to reduce material consumption and the impact of our activities on the environment by:

- Using email rather than sending hard copies
- Using recycled paper

- Reusing / repairing items and promoting local “repair cafes”
- Using low environmental impact cleaning materials
- Providing recycling collection points
- Avoiding single-use plastics and promoting reuse.

9. Water use

We will avoid using water unnecessarily as a part of our responsibility to conserve natural resources, check for leakages, and where possible fit water minimising systems to taps and cisterns. We will also collect rainwater with the use of waterbutts.

10. Land

We will respond to the nature crisis and loss of biodiversity through practical action, collaboration and campaigning. We will regularly assess our land and property for wildlife and manage them to conserve biodiversity through initiatives such as planting pollinator-friendly species, leaving parts of the lawn un-mown, composting, and avoiding the use of harmful chemicals. We will involve the community in wildlife surveys and planting days.

11. Sustainable 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 aim 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. We will encourage individual members of our congregations to take actions in their personal lives to complement and supplement these actions of the church community and promote ethical and environmentally aware consumption patterns by individuals and households.

12. 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. We will work with others in our local community to identify environmental issues that need addressing in our area and help develop actions to tackle them. We will also continue to organise parish litter picks and other events to engage the community.

13. Charitable Giving

We will continue to direct some of our charitable giving to charities which are working to care for the environment or to support those who are adversely affected by climate change, such as Christian Aid.

14. Regular Review

This policy will be reviewed by PCC every two years and progress in relation to the policy will be reviewed every 12 months by the Eco Group.

Signed on behalf of the PCC:

Print name:

Dated:

Next review date:

Useful Resources

- CofE Birmingham Environment webpages <https://www.cofebirmingham.com/everyday-faith/caring-for-the-environment/>
- Eco Church, A Rocha <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>
- Church of England - Environment Programme <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change>

Links and Christian Organisations

- Churches Together in Britain and Ireland environment <https://ctbi.org.uk/environment-churches-and-christian-organisations/>
- Operation Noah <http://operationnoah.org/>
- Green Christian www.greenchristian.org.uk/
- Christian Aid <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/>
- Tearfund <https://www.tearfund.org/>

Buildings & Land

- Church Care <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare>
- Church of England net zero carbon guidance <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/net-zero-carbon-church>
- Caring for God's Acre, churchyard care www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/

Climate Change

- Pray and Fast for the Climate www.prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk/
- Climate Emergency Toolkit for churches <https://www.climateemergencytoolkit.com/>
- Climate Stewards www.climatestewards.org

