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The quarterly church buildings newsletter for the Diocese of Coventry

InSpires

Coventry Diocese: a snapshot

How are things looking in Coventry Diocese, and what are we doing to respond to the climate emergency?

- Church buildings & halls make up 40% of the Church of England's carbon emissions
- 85% of church energy consumption comes from heating
- In 2012 over 70% of church heating was produced by fossil fuels
- The total carbon emissions for church buildings in the Diocese is approximately 2500 CO₂e per year, equating to an average of c9.8 CO₂e per year, per church (2019-2020 data)

It is very clear that we need to consider how we can reduce our carbon emissions. In 2020 we introduced a free energy audit programme for PCCs, and collaborated on a research project with IPV Flexgen in 2021, which helped us to identify the potential for all churches in the Diocese for solar PV and EV charging, with consideration to the challenges that Listed buildings can face with such interventions. These have enabled us to accurately identify the Dioceses' top 20% carbon emitters, and our focus now is to support these PCCs in developing action plans to try and reduce their carbon footprint, whilst supporting smaller churches with 'easy wins'.

We support the processing of applications to the new Net Zero strand of the Church Improvement Fund, and we are part of the Diocesan Net Zero Steering Group to input on how we drive the campaign forward across the Diocese, with a particular focus on church buildings, as well as supporting PCCs in making changes to their church building that supports reducing carbon emissions.

To find out what else the Diocese is doing to respond to the climate emergency, read [Helen Grocock's \(Governance, Risk & Environment Advisor\) article on the ebulletin.](#)

Hot Topic: the NZ2030 challenge

With the Net Zero 2030 target getting worryingly closer, should we be disheartened by the challenges we face in getting our church buildings to meet that challenge? Godfrey Armitage, the Diocesan Environment Adviser, considers the situation...

What a world we are living in now! Scientists have known for over 150 years that gases like carbon dioxide absorb heat, making this planet fit to live in. But levels of carbon dioxide have been rising year on year, showing an increase of 25% in the last 50 years. With record breaking temperatures, droughts, floods and wildfires, in a planet facing increasing stress, we may well be tempted to despair.

The Bible reminds us (Colossians 1: 15-20) that Christ is Creator, Sustainer and Reconciler of all things. With that assurance, let us consider the climate crisis and our response to it. The Fifth Mark of Mission of the Anglican Communion reminds us that creation care is an integral part of the gospel. In 2020, General Synod committed the Church of England to aim for Net Zero Carbon by 2030. To many that seems far too ambitious a task. Theologian Richard Bauckham said: "God can make

of what we do much more than we can make of it ourselves." We must pray, "Thy will be done on earth as in heaven", and get on with God's work reflecting his love for his creation and for all people. [Eco Church](#) provides a practical framework to motivate and resource churches. An online survey indicates how you are caring for God's earth in your Worship and Teaching,

Management of Church Buildings and of Church Land, Community and Global Engagement and personal Lifestyle. Since Eco Church started in 2016, over 1 in 3 churches in the Diocese have signed up, and over half of these have achieved an award. To help manage church buildings, we encourage you to use the CofE's [Practical Path to Net Zero Carbon document](#), available with great resources on its website, which shows 'easy' wins to reduce your footprint, progressing to more expensive projects.

'The Fifth Mark of Mission reminds us that creation care is an integral part of the gospel.'

Solar Panels at St George's, Rugby: 12 months on...

The solar panels on the roof at St George's recently featured in the BBC news, but how successful has the project been in saving energy? And what is the financial benefit from the investment? Project Co-ordinator, Phil Hemsley, discusses its impact over the first 12 months...



In early 2020 St George's received a "Green Journey" energy report suggesting ways to reduce our CO2 emissions. The two biggest hits would be to change the heating system from gas to electric, and to fit solar panels. As church heating is a more complex issue, when we had the opportunity to apply to WCC Greenshoots fund in May 2021 we successfully submitted our solar panel project, with £23,000 funding granted in August. The PCC approved funding the balance and we were able to accept the offer in October 2021. Subsequently we also successfully applied to the Diocese Church Improvement Fund for a further £5000, and the supplier Synergy Power Ltd was instructed to proceed with Phase 1 (completing the design, ensuring structural integrity of the roof, and obtaining permission to connect to the grid) in November. In parallel we applied for the necessary faculty, which was granted at the end of January 2022. The equipment supply order was placed, and installation and commissioning took place in early March 2022, so we have had just over a year's operational experience.

In the first year, the panels exceeded our expectation and:

- generated 28 megawatt hours of electricity,
- saved 11 tonnes of CO2 from a gas fired power station,
- saved £3000 in electricity costs (from reduced import cost and payments for exported power) ... this will increase to £5000 this year due to increased energy prices.

We exported over 80% of the electricity generated, the rest being used in our church hall. Export payments are therefore very important, and we found Octopus Energy to be the most competitive, competent, and helpful company of those we approached. We are currently being paid 15p per kWh for export.

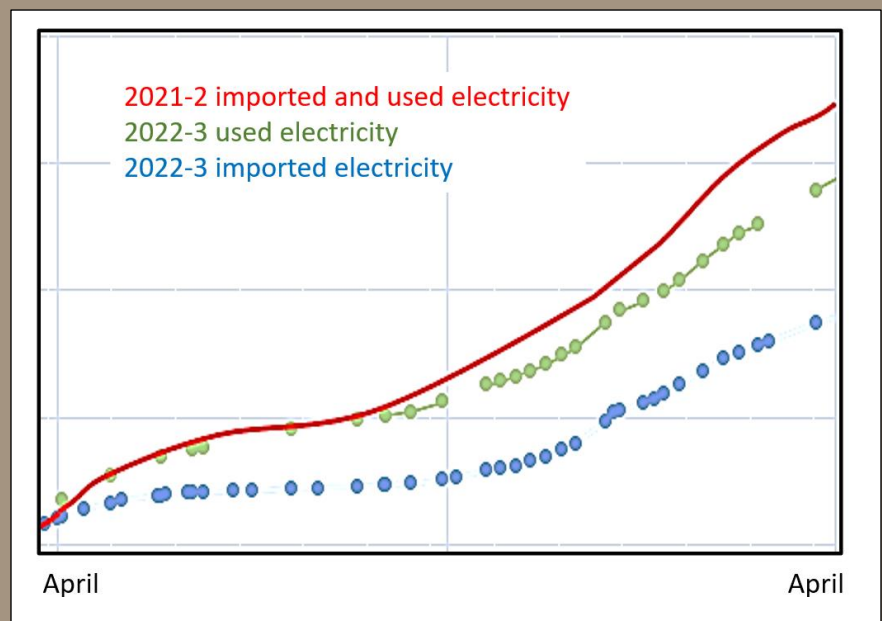
In addition to the solar panels we took measures to reduce the energy consumption in the church hall. A generous donation of £1000 from a parishioner allowed us to replace 96 fluorescent tube lights with LEDs, and a Councillor grant allowed us to fully insulate the kitchen area of the hall. As the hall is well used during the week and is heated 24x7 in winter by an air source heat pump with underfloor heating these measures were very worthwhile.

The chart below compares the energy use before fitting the energy measures with after, and also shows the reduction in energy import from the solar panels. Overall, our electricity import has halved from previous year's values.

So yes, the project has been a success and particularly welcome in these times of high energy prices. The timeline shows that these projects can take some years to fruition, and they certainly need effort and tenacity, but the generous grants and gifts have meant that they have cost the church nothing financially.

And it is worth noting that since we received our Church Improvement Fund grant, the scheme has increased the amount of funding that can go towards net zero projects up to a maximum of £25000 – so that gives a great start to any new project that is looking for funding.

I can only encourage everyone to 'get started' on your energy reduction projects – the world needs them.



Would you like help to make your churchyard a haven for wildlife?

The Church Buildings Team is preparing to approach funding and delivery partners for a long-term Diocesan-wide churchyard biodiversity project. If you have a churchyard and would like specialist help, practical advice and funding to improve the biodiversity and management of it, please register your interest in the project by emailing [Claire Strachan](mailto:Claire.Strachan) by June 10th.



Energy Footprint Tool now open!

The first step to reducing your carbon footprint is to find out what it actually is in the first place. The Church of England's [Energy Footprint Tool](#) is the easiest way to do this. By inputting the data from your energy bills, and adding in an estimated hours of usage, you can find out your carbon footprint then track the impact of any carbon reduction steps you are taking in the coming years. The EFT will remain open until the 31st July. If you need help, the [Diocese of Manchester has produced a handy video](#) to help you on your way.

Churchyard Conservation

Love your Burial Ground week with Churches Count on Nature 2023

Churchyards are important habitats for plants and wildlife, and as more species are threatened, good conservation of these sites is absolutely essential. Saturday 3rd June to Sunday 11th June is the annual Love Your Burial Ground Week and is a brilliant way to celebrate your churchyard, and think about how good stewardship of it.

It is well known that churchyards are wonderful places for wildlife and biodiversity. They provide havens for rare species of plants, insects and animals, and sometimes are one of the only public access green spaces in a community. It's important to protect the biodiversity within them, and [Caring for God's Acre](#) is dedicated to supporting PCCs and volunteers do just that all year round. Join them for a week in June to really celebrate and promote just how fantastic your churchyard is!

[Love Your Burial Ground Week](#) is a festival of biodiversity and heritage, and is a great opportunity to introduce your community to how special it is, and generate interest and support in its care and management. Churches across the country are holding all sorts of events and activities, from community picnics, to history tours, to bug hotel building and treasure hunts, and concerts. You could hold a Churches Count on Nature identification session, to identify and record the different wildlife in your churchyard.

The first step in protecting species is identifying them, and it's a really important part of any churchyard conservation project.

From here you can start to plan how to manage your churchyard in the future – this could involve designating particular areas for wildflowers, clearing brambles, planning repairs of boundary walls, or tree management, and developing a Churchyard Team to support this work.

You can find lots of help and guidance on churchyard management on the [Caring For God's Acre website](#). If you're interested in finding out more about Love Your Burial Ground Week join their

free [webinar on May 16th](#) on the event.

[Read about the amazing Churchyard Conservation project at St James' Church, Alveston](#), for more inspiration and top tips!



'1 in 7 of the UK's wildlife species is at risk of extinction'



Bard's Ride and Walk Saturday May 13th 2023



Bard's Ride 2023 will start at the wonderful Stourton, Cherington and Sutton-under-Brailes Village Hall (CV36 5HG) before you cycle around the beautiful Warwickshire countryside.

There is a choice of 2 Rides for 2023:
Challenge Ride: 60 miles / 100km
Classic Ride: 25 miles / 40km
or join us for Bard's Walk.

Delicious refreshments will be available and there will also be a raffle with terrific prizes.



Cherington Village Hall

All details can be found on www.bardsride.co.uk



Register now at www.riderhq.com to secure your place



@bardsride @bardsride bardsride

All profits will enable the organisers of this event, the Warwickshire and Coventry Historic Churches Trust, to give grants to churches and chapels to repair and preserve their buildings for future generations.



FREE Churchwardens Training >>>

Church Buildings and Good Maintenance 12th July, 2023

It may not seem as exciting or 'visible' as solar PV or a swish new heating system, but good maintenance of your church building is a key part in helping your church meet the Net Zero 2030 target. Remember that the more damp a church is, the colder it will feel, and the more difficult it will be to heat, so by ensuring your church is watertight, your heating system will run more efficiently.

On July 12th the Church Buildings Team will be running a FREE training session for churchwardens on the subject of church maintenance at St Michael's Church Centre, Budbrooke. [Click here](#) for more information and to book or contact [Claire Strachan](mailto:Claire.Strachan).



Meet the Team!

Godfrey Armitage

In this issue there is no better team member to focus on than Godfrey Armitage. You've probably heard his name, but what does he do?

Godfrey is the Diocesan Environment Officer. He has chaired the [Diocesan Environment Group](#) since September 2015, after he had helped to organise the 2015 Conference 'Reconciling a Wounded Planet' at Coventry Cathedral; here we heard 'stories of hope for a world in environmental crisis'. Godfrey also chairs the Diocesan Net Zero Carbon 2030 Steering Group and is on Coventry DAC, hoping to steer parishes in environmentally friendly directions as they come up with new projects in their buildings and churchyards. He is a tutor for the Christian Rural and Environmental Studies Certificate programme.

He has shared his story of his Christian journey and his love of ecology and biodiversity in one of the 2021 [Churches Count on Nature webinars](#). As Christians, we believe that God not only created everything, but is actively involved in his creation, so scientific understanding helps us to be 'planetwise' * and to be effective stewards. (*title of a book by Revd Dave Bookless).

Funding for Net Zero Projects

One of the main barriers that PCCs feel they face in reaching the Net Zero 2030 target is finding funding to support projects that will help to improve their carbon footprint. Grants are becoming fewer and farther between for all types of church projects, and are highly competitive, so funding projects to help you get to Net Zero can feel impossible! Andy Duncan, Church Buildings Funding Support Officer, discusses where you might be able to find support.



Grants for renewable energy are hard to find because money saved on energy bills is seen by grant-awarding bodies as 'income'. Recognising our churches' difficult financial circumstances, the Diocese has launched a Net Zero fund. PCCs can apply for up to £25,000 (or up to 50%, whichever is lower) for projects that reduce energy consumption. This could include LED lighting, under pew heating, insulation and double glazing, as well as solar panels and battery storage.

Renewable energy projects can be large and complicated, so a 2-stage process has been introduced. Churches should contact Jo.Hands@Coventry.Anglican.org for further details.

I can help you with planning projects and preparing grant applications too, so please get in touch with me on Andy.Duncan@Coventry.Anglican.org.

The Heart of England Community Foundation are also offering grants of up to £2,000 for community energy projects in community buildings: <https://www.heartofenglandcf.co.uk/community-energy-warwickshire-fund/>

You can also find more help and guidance on funding for Net Zero on the CofE's website: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change/fundraising-for-net-zero-carbon#na>

From Zero to (Net Zero) Hero



In February 2020 General Synod passed a motion committing the Church of England to reach net zero carbon by 2030, bringing forward it's proposed target date by 15 years. Church buildings (incl halls) make up 40% of the Church of England's carbon emissions, so it is clear that we all need to play our part. But with such a big target to meet, how on earth do we get started?

For many PCCs, getting their church to be carbon neutral feels like a huge task amidst a huge amount of other jobs to do, but there is a lot of help and guidance out there to help you get started.

The very best starting point for all PCCs is the [Practical Path to Net Zero carbon](#) which summarises how churches can reduce their energy use and associated carbon emissions, and provides a handy list prioritising what you can do easily and cheaply, right up to the big projects which may need more funding and time to organise. The little things you do can have a huge impact, so don't immediately leapfrog over them to big expensive schemes.

The [Church of England's Net Zero webinar series](#) is absolutely brilliant for all kinds of advice and guidance on a whole range of topics – from solar panels, to making a carbon action plan, to heating, funding and climate resilience, it's all there and free to access.



If you are considering a major project, like solar PV, a new heating system, insulation or secondary glazing, speak to your Church Architect and the relevant DAC Advisers (contactable through the Church Buildings Team) who can offer expert advice specific to your particular church.

If you haven't already, you could register with [Eco Church](#). This scheme helps you to find ways to care for your church and the environment, winning you awards along the way! A total of 81 churches in the Diocese have already signed up, and the Diocese received it's Bronze award in 2019.

There's tons of guidance on the Church of England website too, and if there is anything you need help with that you can't find, you can always contact the [Church Buildings Team](#) for help and support.

Church Buildings Team: <https://www.coventry.anglican.org/info-for-parishes/church-buildings-dac/>

Net Zero and Church Buildings: <https://www.coventry.anglican.org/info-for-parishes/church-buildings-dac/net-zero/>