Stroud Deanery Environmental Ambassador report to Deanery Synod September 2024

5th mark of mission: *To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth*

Diocesan update

**Net zero project officer posts**

I have spoken about this in my previous reports so you will know that 70% of the funding for the posts comes from a grant from C of E. They will each work across all three dioceses in their specialist area and in their own diocese on general net zero work.
Updates:
Hereford – schools – didn’t appoint the first time, it is currently advertising for recruitment.
Gloucester – clergy housing – Erica Siddall
Worcester – church buildings – Lee Westcott.

Diocesan Environmental Engagement Officer

Some of you may have seen in the diocesan bulletin issued today that funding for Cate Williams role as Diocesan Environmental Engagement Officer is not being renewed, so she will leave this post at the end of November.  Presumably Erica Siddall will cover some of what Cate has been but how this will develop is not clear as yet. There is a lot more to the environment and our care for creation as part of the 5th Mark of Mission than Net Zero.
Many of us have received ongoing encouragement and support from Cate during her 4 years in this post and on behalf of us all I would like to record our thanks to her tonight.

Helping churches reduce their carbon footprint C of E Energy Footprint Tool (EFT)

Those churches who submitted their data for the calendar year 2023 get the results immediately showing clearly their churches carbon footprint. It may reassure them that their carbon footprint is small – as is often the case for small low use churches where it will be comparable to domestic use. For the large churches, open throughout the week, with heavy energy use by using the EFT they can start to track their progress year on year as they take action to reduce their carbon footprint.

**Ecochurch drop in with sustainable heating demo.** Holy Trinity Stroud Nov 18th 3.30 – 6.30 drop in any time but book your demo slot which lasts about 45 minutes at:
Stroud  [EcoChurch Resourcing: EcoChurch drop-in with sustainable heating demo – Diocese of Gloucester (anglican.org)](https://gloucester.anglican.org/event/ecochurch-resourcing-eco-church-drop-in-with-sustainable-heating-demo-2/)

Stroud Deanery Eco Church

Since the May Synod meeting, St John the Baptist, Pitchcombe, have gained an A Rocha Bronze Eco Church Award and the deanery has its first two Silvers: St Mary’s, Fretherne and Holy Trinity, Minchinhampton. Thanks to the Eco teams and congregations there for all the progress they have made.

A Rocha launched the revised Eco Church survey last week on 8th October - the first revision since the survey was introduced in 2016. There is a transition phase lasting until end January 2025 when the existing survey will still be valid. If you are a church with a survey underway then this might be a good time to check up on the last few things and press the ‘SEND’ button. I know we have one church about to go for Bronze and another for Silver.
So as a deanery we have:
 2 registered nearly at Bronze
 9 Bronze – a couple of those almost ready to go for Silver
 2 Silver

These awards are gained over time – 2yrs for Pitchcombe, using the survey as a tool to focus their thinking and actions, taking small steps across the board which all add up – for example Woodchester have put up swift boxes,
Holy Trinty Stroud held a very successful Craft Swap not only reusing and re-purposing materials but connecting them with people the community – and this is often a great spin off from Eco Church work – people from the community may turn up to help with a litter pick, a churchyard tidy up, garage trails and so on.
It is encouraging to note that churches are not deterred by negative reactions. Here is an example of the way one of our churches has approached this:
*‘the frustrating thing is that the people who are vehemently against the sort of actions that are needed are much more vocal so appear to be in the majority which they aren't. We have reached the conclusion that no matter how we try to explain to them, they don't want to know so all things considered we have decided just to ignore them and carry on with doing our best to increase the biodiversity of our little bit of God's garden*.’

There are some significant changes in the new survey and early next year I am planning to offer an opportunity for churches to get together to look at the implication of the revisions. **Now would be a good time to look at the survey and register your church,** (see the link below)– having done that and as you start to look at it – most churches find that they are already doing all sorts of ‘good’ environmentally sound things. You can go at your own pace, a step at a time – no one is going to be checking on you! You can start to make a few small changes appropriate to your context.

<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>

Sustainable Church Flowers

Sustainable Church Flowers are: local, seasonal, and arranged without the use of environmentally damaging floral foam. This was the focus for the Flower Festival ‘Glorifying God Sustainably with Flowers’ held in St Johns Cirencester which had participants from fourteen church from two deaneries. The link to further information is below:

[Flower Festival “Glorifying God Sustainably with Flowers” at St John the Baptist Cirencester – Diocese of Gloucester (anglican.org)](https://gloucester.anglican.org/2024/flower-festival-glorifying-god-sustainably-with-flowers-at-st-john-the-baptist-cirencester/)

[Jennie blogs: “10 lily stems create over 30kg of C02” – Diocese of Gloucester (anglican.org)](https://gloucester.anglican.org/2024/jennie-blogs-10-lily-stems-create-over-30kg-of-c02/)

Church yards

Rebecca Charley, Strategic Lead for Biodiversity and Nature Recovery for Stroud Council is keen to make sure that churchyards are included in their Biodiversity and Nature Recovery plan. It was held at Holy Trinity Minchinhampton and attended by over 30 people, including parish and district councillors and representatives from 12 Stroud deanery parishes: the meeting focused on managing churchyards for wildlife and biodiversity. Rebecca plans to hold another session in March and if another church would like to act as host for this please let me know. We now have an open email group of ‘churchyard people’ to share information and tips – get in touch with me if you would like to know more. One thing we can all do is to ask our local Parish Councils whether they have included churchyards in their local plan.

I am always happy to help if I can or to try to answer any questions you may have – and if I don’t have the answer to try to help find it! Please contact me using the email below

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15th October 2024