

## Stroud Deanery Synod 3rd October 2023

### Agenda item 6 **Developments across the diocese**

Presentation by Jennie South, Deanery Eco Ambassador. Jennie volunteered for the Stroud Eco Ambassador role in July. The role includes updating churches on environmental work in the Diocese and helping churches engage with the C of E and Diocesan commitment to Net Zero Carbon by the end of 2030.

The numbers of churches gaining the A Rocha Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards is one tool the Diocese is using. There is an award scheme for Dioceses and Gloucester gained Bronze in 2021 and is working towards a target of Silver by the end of this year. There will be an update on the Diocesan path to Net Zero Carbon during the November Diocesan Synod. Meanwhile the Diocese has received a grant from the Sylvanus Lysons Trust. It will be used to survey all vicarages with decarbonisation in view, so that appropriate works can follow. Hopefully a win-win as it will also help vicarage household finances and the wellbeing of their occupants. The diocese is also applying to C of E for a grant for a net zero project officer. If successful, the person appointed will lead the net zero aspect and Cate Williams, Diocesan Environmental Engagement Officer, will concentrate on Eco Church and other 'hearts and minds' work.

There will be Carbon Awareness training in Stroud on the evenings of October 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. Details have been circulated. The Diocesan Wildlife Gardens scheme offers grants of up to £250, details on the web site. Church Times Greener Churches Award 2024, entries close next June so plenty of time: there are seven categories offering a range of opportunities to use some of the great things you are already doing, celebrate them and perhaps win £1,000!

### **Stroud Deanery**

Jennie now has at least one Eco contact for each group of churches. Please, if you haven't already done so, put her in touch with an 'interested' person from your individual church for an initial conversation.

Cate Williams held an Eco Resourcing café at the Amberley Shop in September. Nine people from four local churches picked up some good ideas and went away to share these with others. Let Jennie know if you'd like something similar nearer to your home base.

Individual churches can help in achieving the Diocesan Zero Carbon 2030 target by being involved in the Eco Church survey. It is just one of the measures being used. It is not a tick box exercise, but a tool to help us recognise and celebrate those many things that we are already doing to care for and live lightly on the earth.

In the deanery:

Twelve churches are currently registered with A Rocha.

Six have gained the Bronze Award the most recent being St George's Nailsworth

Two more churches are nearly ready to make their Bronze submission.

BUT we need more – not an award for its own sake but because it is the best tool we have currently for auditing what we are doing, trying to do more and embedding the best environmental decision making, as individuals and churches, in all the choices we make.

The Eco Church survey is done online and covers 5 areas: Land, Buildings, Lifestyle, Community Engagement and Worship and Teaching. A copy of the last section had been circulated and people invited to look at the survey in its entirety before the meeting.

Members then spent time in small groups filling in a short 'survey' considering the perceived hurdles and suggesting ways of responding positively to them.

Jennie has looked at the results and a summary is below together with links to some sources of information and support that might be helpful.

### **Survey Results**

Sixteen responses were received representing thirteen churches.

Churches not yet registered with EcoChurch were asked for reasons that might account for this. The numbers for each suggested reason are below:

- 8 Other church priorities dominate
- 4 We are too few in number to take this on
- 3 Everyone is too busy
- 3 Church action wouldn't make any significant difference
- 3 We are already environmentally aware and don't need a survey

- 2 There is no money for reducing our carbon footprint
- 0 Never heard of Eco Church. Too complicated. Environmental action is unnecessary. We don't want the prestige of getting an award

Other reasons given are: Carbon zero strategy is a matter for Government/Parliament; requires individual action; this church can never be carbon neutral if it remains a place of worship; never brought up at PCC; congregation eclectic, very few live in parish; can't afford solar panels; Covid;

Below are the questions and responses received from churches already registered with EcoChurch:

When considering the A Rocha Eco Church survey were there things that held your church back?

Lack of enthusiasm, no-one interested, limited resources, other priorities, lifestyle section, inviting speakers, solar panels too costly.

What triggered registering?

Passionate, enthusiastic individuals, climate change, concern for creation, desire to do something, need for advice, deanery synod presentations, synod publicity.

When registering what, if any, problems did your church encounter?

No problems reported.

When completing the survey what, if any, problems did your church encounter?

No problems reported.

What actions related to the Eco Church Award is your church now planning?

Getting all benefice churches on board, green tips on pew sheet, lifestyle changes, sharing tips, committee with church and community members to develop further actions, plan (as yet unfunded) to be net zero by 2030.

Initial comments from Jennie on these results:

1. No one said the survey itself was a barrier
2. Some churches, not yet registered for Eco Church recorded some encouraging positive steps: promoting Fairtrade, researching improved heating options, managing their churchyard for wildlife
3. Working together with people in the community, and in other churches is worth exploring
4. The climate crisis, it's impact on us and the environment is increasingly a priority for society generally – and must be for churches too
5. People still look to the church to 'do the right thing'  
5<sup>th</sup> Mark of mission: To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Helpful links

**Greening Tetbury – for Eco Top tips.** <https://www.greeningtetbury.org/>

**WWF carbon footprint tool:** <https://footprint.wwf.org.uk/>

**Church of England webinars on getting to net zero** –webinars with lots of detail for those working on particular projects

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change/webinars-getting-net-zero-carbon#na>. Under **Recordings of webinars on low carbon solutions** No 3 'Energy Saving Quick Wins', Matt Fulford's might be helpful. Matt is now the DAC sustainability advisor.

**Caring for God's Acre:** <https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/> includes **Churches Count on nature**

**General EcoChurch resources:**

The full survey can be seen at [www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk](http://www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk) and selecting 'View survey questions'.

All sorts of resources on our **Diocesan website**. Click on the headings for the five EcoChurch sections to get lots more links and info: <https://gloucester.anglican.org/living-faith/environment/eco-church-in-an-hour/>

Also loads of resources on the **EcoChurch website** – link is to resources section but do have an explore if you haven't already: <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/resources/>

Howard Gilbert described the work of the Gloucestershire Community Energy Co-operative, particularly the two solar panel projects in Minchinhampton. Further details available at [www.gloscommenergy.org.uk](http://www.gloscommenergy.org.uk)

*Jennie South October 2023*