



Environment Policy Annual Review

2021/22

“ *Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.* ”

-Pope Francis



Introduction

This is the first annual review of the Diocese of Plymouth Environmental Policy which was agreed by Trustees in January 2021. This report gives a brief overview of progress being made to implement the commitments in our the policy. Overall, we are making progress and in particular increasing opportunities for prayer and reflection on Catholic Social Teaching and our responsibility to Care for our Common Home.

The following is a summary of actions taken in 2021/22 to take forward each of our twelve commitments:

(i) To pray, study the scriptures, reflect on Catholic tradition, and educate ourselves about the interconnectedness of all aspects of our common home in order to develop a spirituality which seeks to understand the effects of our actions on the poorest and most vulnerable people in our world as well as the earth's fragile ecology and the need for economies and lifestyles which reflect God's creation.

The Diocesan policy was launched with a pastoral letter from Bishop Mark to our schools and parishes to introduce our Diocesan commitments and to encourage everyone to consider how to implement the policy. The Diocese also nominated an environmental lead, Deborah Fisher OBE, Caritas Manager.

“We cannot leave the healing of our common home and the well-being and care of our brothers and sisters merely to a response from industry and government”

Bishop Mark O'Toole

In 2021 we organised nine events with an environmental focus, with over 220 people attending. This included an online Theology event with Bishop Mark and Sister Margaret Atkins OSA in June, a range of events to introduce the policy to parishes and schools and a Youth Climate Mass at Plymouth Cathedral on 5 November, attended by eight Plymouth schools and timed to coincide with the COP 26 meeting in Glasgow. We work in close partnership with CAFOD.

We have launched new pages on our Diocesan website to set out our commitments and provided guidance for parishes and schools on how to take action.

The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change.

-Pope Francis, Laudato Si', 2015

(ii) To advocate for and work with people on the margins and people living in poverty since “a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; [integrating] questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (Pope Francis Laudato Si' #49)

We developed two joint campaigns for Laudato Si' Week and Season of Creation with CAFOD and our Diocesan Schools Commissioner. Christ the King (Holy Family Parish), Our Lady Queen of Martyrs and St Joseph, Blessed Sacrament, and St Mary's Primary School, Buckfast, have all been designated “Live Simply award communities” by CAFOD, with St. Mary's being the first school in the diocese to receive the award in 2021.

(iii) To ensure the mission of the church locally and on a diocesan level includes proclamation on environmental concerns in line with the living out of the gospel in people's lives, and exercising the prophetic voice of the church in support of stewardship and appropriate environmental action, such that the views of the church are heard and widely understood. (Pope Benedict Caritas in Veritate #51)

Bishop Mark asked all parishes to celebrate a Mass for Creation in September 2021 and Caritas provided resources for parishes in collaboration with CAFOD . In November 2021 we conducted a random sample survey with parishes. This survey suggests that 50% of parishes held environment-focused events.

(iv) To ensure that our buildings are managed with care for the environment and have action plans to reduce negative impacts

Our Diocesan property team take environmental considerations into account in all building decisions. We have written to all 61 of our property suppliers to share our policy and to invite them to support our commitment to improving practice.

We actively consider reducing our carbon footprint and the environmental impact of all new building investment decisions.

(v) To minimise our use of the earth's natural resources, reducing our carbon footprint, minimising waste generation, and re-using and recycling when possible.

In October 2021, we received the carbon footprint measurement guidance being developed by Salford Diocese and the Guardians of Creation project. We are working with the University of Plymouth to recruit an intern to complete this work for us. We have shared some case studies on our website, for example St. Joseph's Primary School, Exmouth, and its rainwater harvesting system. According to our random sample survey, only 29% of parishes recycle and this needs to be an area of focus in 2022.

The Diocese of Plymouth is powered by fully renewable energy through the Inter-diocesan Fuel Management (IFM) agreement with British Gas

The Diocese is exploring greater use of electric car charging points and some parishes, like St. Mary Immaculate in Falmouth, have already installed their first car charging station.

(vi) To follow ethical purchasing practices and influence our suppliers and contractors to ensure that goods and services procured support the environmental policy, and, in turn, that all suppliers and contractors progressively improve their own environmental performance

We have contacted over sixty contractors and suppliers to the Diocese to share our environment policy and to invite them to help us to meet our goals. We have also asked for their environmental commitments and will track responses to inform future purchasing decisions. We also ask suppliers to match our commitment to paying the real Living Wage.

(vii) To enhance the biodiversity of all Diocesan-owned grounds and gardens and our schools.

All our schools are actively encouraging environmental projects and there are many examples such as the wellbeing garden in St. Mary's Primary in Buckfast (below, left). We have less information about projects in parishes. In a 2019 survey only 30% of parishes said that they had an environmental project in their grounds. However, there are positive examples that we can build on such as the wildflower area in the garden at St Cuthbert Mayne in Launceston, a group making birdhouses at Christ the King, Bournemouth, and the creation of a greenspace from a disused area at Our Lady & St. Patrick at Teignmouth.



(viii) To encourage ecological education in our schools and parishes

CAST Schools have been encouraged to buy 'Caritas in Action' and 'Building the Kingdom' resources, which have a strong focus on ecological education. A Live Simply day in October 2021 showcased St Mary's Buckfast, our first school to get a Live Simply Award and Blessed Sacrament Exeter which also has the award.

(ix) To ensure that our investment policies adhere to ethical guidelines and promote investment for social benefit.

We reviewed our investment policy earlier this year and will be recommending it is updated to have a greater emphasis on environmental issues.

(x) To access all our activities and operations in order to identify, understand and evaluate all the direct and indirect environmental aspects and prioritise action to address them.

We will be taking forward this assessment when our carbon footprint measurement is in place.

(xi) To measure and reduce our environmental footprint to achieve year-on-year reductions in emissions and examine what would be required to reach net zero emissions by 2030.

As noted above, we require the carbon footprint measurement to take place before we can take forward this assessment but hope to make good progress on this in 2022.

(xii) To regularly review and report on our way of working at Diocesan, school and parish level to verify our effectiveness in achieving environmental objectives.

A committee has been put in place which meets quarterly to review progress and prepare an annual report for Trustees.

***“Creation itself is a song of Praise to the Creator,
We are to re-discover our home within it.”***

- Bishop Mark O'Toole



PARISH ACTION

In 2019 we conducted a parish survey that suggested 30% of parishes have taken action on the environment. We will run a further survey in 2022 but in the interim conducted random sample interviews with 11 parishes which we will use as a baseline to measure progress:



Fig 1

40% of sample parishes have environmental projects



Fig 2

70% of sample parishes use Fairtrade Goods



Fig 3

50% of sample parishes have had environment – themed events



Fig 4

29% recycled

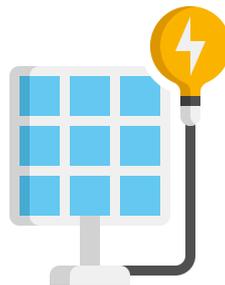


Fig 5

29% of parishes either had or were looking into solar panels



Fig 6

14% were entirely paperless



Fig 7

14% were transitioning to electric vehicles

From awareness to action: next steps

◇ **To produce a decarbonisation strategy for agreement by Trustees**

We will be undertaking an exercise (either an internship or consultancy) to measure our carbon footprint and to develop a draft strategy for submission to Trustees with concrete steps to reach net zero.

◇ **To enthuse and inspire parishes to take action through two face to face events in 2022 which will encourage individuals and parishes to make concrete pledges**

We have been successful in a bid to the Big Lottery to roll out a programme of events to encourage greater engagement at parish level.

◇ **To develop a self-assessment and reporting system to measure our progress on decarbonisation**

Part of the decarbonisation strategy will be to develop a self-assessment and reporting system.

◇ **To continue to share Church teaching, good practice and ideas.**

We will use parish newsletters, Facebook, Twitter and the website as well as events to share church teaching and good practice.

◇ **To support funding bids for environmental projects and share outcomes and impact.**

Five applications have been submitted for the Together for Our Planet funding programme by Caritas Plymouth and four parishes; Axminster, Blessed Sacrament Exeter, St Cuthbert Mayne Launceston and Westmoors. Two have been successful (Caritas and Launceston).

◇ **To work with other dioceses through the Environmental Leads meetings to share good practice.**

We will continue to actively participate in national activities to promote best practice across the Church in England and Wales.

Dear Pope Francis,
I promise to care for our common home by **not** taking more than our fair share. I will make sure to turn off lights before I leave the room.
His Holiness,
Pope Francis
Apostolic Palace
00120
Vatican City
Your Sincerely





Bishop Mark, and students from Holy Cross, Keyham Barton, St. Boniface, St. Peter's, St. Joseph's, St. Paul's, Cathedral School of St. Mary, and Notre Dame during the Environmental Youth Mass for COP26.

This report has been produced by the Diocesan Environment Committee: Canon John Deeny, Sarah Barreto, Declan Keough, Anthony Akinpelu and Deborah Fisher, with grateful thanks to Caspian Lipman, Caritas Intern for his contribution.

Any questions please contact caritas@prcdtr.org.uk

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