

Eco Communities in the Diocese of Leicester

What is an Eco Community in the Diocese of Leicester?

A worshipping community (parish, fresh expression of church or church plant, chaplaincy or school) which recognises and embodies caring for creation as intrinsic to the Gospel.

We do this through:

- **Obedience** to God's command to care for God's creation and enable it to flourish
- **Worship** to join with all creation in worshipping our Creator through our prayer, praise and practice
- **Discipleship** to follow the example of Christ by living in full relationship with God, each other and all of creation, with a commitment to actively learning together
- **Mission** to share the Good News of God's concern and our agency to all creation
- **Justice** to recognise the global effect of the environmental crisis and to advocate for those most affected by climate breakdown

In practice this includes working towards the achievement of:

- the Church of England Net Carbon Zero commitment, and
- the Diocese of Leicester commitment to Eco-Diocese and Eco-Churches.

Eco Communities is one of five priorities within the Diocese of Leicester.

Therefore, as a minimum we strongly encourage all worshipping communities in the diocese to take some simple actions:

- work towards the Bronze Eco Church award.
Currently 31 churches from across the diocese have Eco Church Awards. More info available at: <https://ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk/>
- have an annual eco focus through worship e.g. at harvest or Creationtide.
- maximise opportunities for recycling across your church community.
- engage with the created world in which your church community lives and worships.
- review heating and lighting use and make changes as far as possible to lower carbon use.

Next steps would include:

- working towards the Silver Eco Church Award.
- developing engagement and knowledge of a pathway towards carbon zero heating and lighting.

For those who have a significant focus in this area, Eco Communities could look like:

- assessing the pathway towards carbon neutral heating within your church building/context and having switched to 100% green energy.
- working towards the Eco Church Gold Award.
- using Creationtide as an annual focus and priority within the worshipping life of the church.
- developing regular outdoor worshipping communities such as forest church or mossy church
- regular engagement with the wider community to care for the local environment, e.g. with schools, community groups

Examples from around the diocese can be found on the diocesan website: [Eco Communities stories](#)

At a diocesan level our commitment to Eco Communities looks like:

- facilitating a programme of cultural change so that environmental concern is embedded in all that we do as worshipping communities and individual Christians, including providing training resources through the Learning Hub and peer support facilitated by the Diocesan Environmental Group.
- working to achieve the Eco-Diocese Silver Award by 2026 (30% of churches with an Eco Award, of which 1/3rd are Silver or higher)
- ensuring membership of the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) includes specific expertise in this area
- having developed a Net Zero Carbon Action plan by Dec 2023, incorporating plans for retrofitting the diocesan housing portfolio
- conducting a survey regarding land managed and administered by the diocese
- working with Glebe land tenants to encourage environmental considerations to be at the forefront of our land management, and welcoming and exploring opportunities for land use that contributes towards environmental care and NZC (such as use for solar energy, or environmental gain in the event of land development)
- providing training and development opportunities for local Eco champions and developing the diocesan support available to churches working towards Eco Church awards
- embedding environmental training within the standard training offer for clergy, lay ministers and others
- achieving Eco Church status for St Martins House and equivalent industry awards for the Conference Centre and St Martins Lodge.

Within the Diocesan Board of Education's work with our church schools, this looks like:

- signposting schools to "[Let's Go Zero](#)" as they help resource and support schools with being more environmentally friendly and reducing Carbon usage.
- encouraging and showing best practice of outdoor classrooms/outdoor worship and Forest school.
- encouraging courageous advocacy in schools with environmental campaigns that will help schools to become more environmentally friendly and decrease energy usage.
- working with MATs who are taking great strides in this area and sharing their practice.
- encouraging schools to become involved with and sharing stories of [Eco Schools](#).

Eco Communities also relates to the other four priorities, for example:

New Communities:

New pioneering opportunities such as forest church or mossy church, linked into the local community

Intergenerational Communities:

Children and youth bringing passion and energy, older generation bringing wisdom and hope.

Intercultural Communities:

Breadth of experience and understanding shared from around the world in lament and hope.

Reconciling Communities:

Building bridges between people and creation around them as well as between people and God.

Approved by the Bishop's Council, October 2023