



# Creation Care Diocesan Synod Update 2026

## **Context**

Throughout the bible we are called to join in God's work of tending and caring for creation. We are invited to join with Christ as agents of reconciliation throughout creation and act as prophetic signs of his ultimate work of recreation.

In response to this call General Synod made a commitment in 2020 for the Church of England to reach net zero carbon (NZC) by 2030, Diocesan Synod joined in this commitment locally in 2021. In November 2023, Diocesan Synod approved an Environmental and NZC Plan<sup>1</sup>. This detailed the steps we'd take to care for creation, increase energy efficiency across our buildings and activities, and reduce our joint carbon emissions.

Part of this plan included work towards a Silver Diocese Eco Church award. It also committed the Diocesan Environment Group (DEG) to provide yearly updates to synod.

This year the DEG has established two working groups to progress our Eco Church award work and to review our NZC action plan, providing a draft to synod later this year. Following an update on progress this year, this paper contains updates from these two working groups.

## Progress In 2025

### **Grant Funding**

Due to the end of the national funding triennium in 2025, grants were paused mid-way through the year. However, we were still able to support:

**Quick Wins** – 25 Successful grants

**Give to Go Green** – 9 Successful grants

**Energy Audit Grants and Fully Funded Audits** – 25

**Heating Feasibility Study Grants** – 4 Successful grants

The DEG approved a new capacity funding application to the Church Commissioners in January 2026. If successful this grant will fund the Diocesan Environment Officer and NZC Project Co-Ordinator roles for a further 3 years. We expect to hear the outcome of this grant in the coming weeks.

### **Energy Footprint Tool (EFT)**

We also saw improvements in our Energy Footprint Tool completions from 86% in 2024 to 93% in 2025. This is against a national average of 67% completion. This tool helps PCC's review their yearly energy costs and calculates a carbon footprint report for each parish. It is a key tool to track our progress and is an important part of accessing further grant funding

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<sup>1</sup> <https://winchester.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/DS-23-14-Winchester-Environmental-and-NZC-Plan-Oct-2023.pdf>

from the Church Commissioners. We are hugely grateful to everyone who took the time to complete this in 2025.

### **Church Building Heating**

Our heating systems make up a large part of our church buildings and halls carbon footprint. However, because of the fabric and structure of our buildings, facilitating low carbon alternatives can be challenging. We continue to work with the DAC to support PCC's in balancing costs, comfort, building fabric and carbon efficiency when exploring heating solutions. Over the last two years we have seen several church buildings transition to low carbon heating alternatives.

In July 2022 General Synod approved a change to faculty rules, requiring all parishes to have 'due regard' to NZC guidance from the national Church Building Council when installing replacement or new heating systems/boilers. While this does not prohibit the installation of new gas boilers, it does require PCC's to fully consider alternative options.

In 2024 and 2025 we have been working with the DAC to develop our support for parishes requiring faculty permission for new heating systems. Recognising the challenges for PCC's in accessing independent heating advice, we have established a new grant funded from the Church Commissioners capacity funding for up to £2,000 towards heating feasibility studies. These studies help parishes to address the need to explore low carbon options and understand the wider needs or trade-offs in selecting a system.

Our most consistent experience is that parishes who've been able to create a plan in advance of a heating failure are best able to respond at the end of a system's life and access grant funding. Therefore, through the building survey commissioned by Synod in November, in 2026 we hope to begin to proactively list and contact parishes with older heating systems to help create a plan in advance of boiler failure.

### **Eco Church**

The Eco Church scheme is an effective way for parishes to create a wholistic plan to care for creation in throughout church life and celebrate all the good they're doing. This year we have continued to see more churches join the scheme and gain awards:

**New Registrations in 2025 – 10**

**New Bronze Awards in 2025 – 1**

**New Silver Awards in 2025 – 6**

### **Focuses For 2026**

As mentioned above, both our NZC and Eco Diocese action plans are currently being reviewed. These will help to focus our work in the coming years. In 2026, we hope to continue supporting parishes with access to grants, while also growing our EFT completion rates and Eco Church Awards. We also expect to have a particular focus on:

- **Top 20% of emitters** – 20% of our parishes emit over 50% of our church emissions. We'll be contacting these parishes to support access to expanded grant schemes.

- **Housing** – Clergy housing represents 27% of our diocesan footprint. Following receipt of Energy Audits with QI's we are developing a portfolio wide approach to energy efficiency.
- **Boiler Plans** – As mentioned above, we will work to identify and support parishes with older boilers at risk of failure. Helping them to create a plan and access funding in advance of a breakdown.

Below are two update papers from both the NZC plan working group and the Eco Diocese working group.

SS  
March 2026

# **Winchester Eco Diocese – Silver Award**

## **Working Group update to Dioecian Synod - Mar 2026**

A working sub-group of the Dioecian Environmental Group (DEG) was formed during the Summer of 2025 to look at how the Diocese of Winchester could work towards achieving an A-Rocha Silver Eco Diocese award, having achieved a Bronze award in January 2019.<sup>2</sup>

**The group** consists of Volunteers from the DEG (Revd Chris Knight, Balinda Smith, Philip Attwood, Victor Humphrey) and is facilitated by Dioecian Staff (Sam Scott and Lucy Howlett).

**Phase 1** has been Establishment and Information Gathering, and the group has met five times to assess the silver level criteria and engage with key dioecian teams (e.g. Education & Finance). A tracker spreadsheet was created and lists the award criteria against the evidence needed, and what actions are required to create or locate information to support an application. Information is being stored in a SharePoint Folder under the Net Zero & Creation Care Group.

**Phase 2** now begins for Enactment and Development of the evidence, where we intend over the remainder of 2026 to build up the body of evidence to support an application. Monthly meeting dates have been identified for the remainder of 2026.

**The largest areas of work will be within the Education, Finance and Land categories.** Communication and celebration, Collaboration with international partners, Training and Carbon reduction will also feature in the submission.

### **Needs from Synod:**

- Continued support and championing of Ecological Work, particularly in parishes through encouraging registered churches to achieve a bronze Eco Church award.
- Agree a Diocesan Environmental Policy (currently a statement of intent).
- Agree a Diocesan Land Management Plan (creating with Savills).
- Identify a diocesan level champion for international links (previous have moved on).

**Phase 3** will be the submission of the award.

### **Our intention is to apply for the Silver level Eco Diocese award in December 2026.**

My thanks go to those who are volunteering their time for this group. We would welcome any other interest in helping this work progress and hope that through it, we can demonstrate how this diocese is committed to caring for God's creation and celebrate the many ways in which we are doing that.

The Revd Chris Knight  
Coordinator - Eco Diocese Working Group  
Assistant Curate – Tadley with Pamber Heath and Silchester

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<sup>2</sup> <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/denominational-awards/eco-diocese/>

# **Winchester Environmental and Net Zero Carbon Action Plan – Review**

## **Working Group update to Diocesan Synod - March 2026**

A working sub-group of the Diocesan Environmental Group (DEG) was formed during the Summer of 2025 to review the Diocesan Environmental and Net Zero Carbon Action Plan that was approved by Diocesan Synod in November 2023<sup>3</sup>. The plan covers our churches, clergy houses, land, offices and other buildings, and work-related travel.

The working group consists of volunteers from the DEG (Victor Humphrey, Belinda Smith, Chris Gillham and Alistair McNaught) and is facilitated by Diocesan Staff (Sam Scott and Lucy Howlett).

So far, the group has concentrated on information gathering, comparing the progress made to date with the existing plan and the milestones outlined in the National Route Map to Net Zero Carbon<sup>4</sup>. Since November 2023 a better knowledge of the Diocese's carbon footprint has been obtained, and this will to be further improved with the imminent release of the results of the Energy Footprint Tool and Energy Toolkit for 2024. In addition, a much better understanding of the possible approaches and issues has been obtained through a network of demonstrator projects undertaken across the Church of England.

The group has met a number of times to discuss the plan, with key diocesan team members, such as those responsible for clergy houses, at some of these meetings. This is a key area where the new arrangement with Savills gives potential for improvement of both the energy efficiency and comfort of our clergy homes. The co-ordinator of the group has also attended meetings of the parallel working group, looking at the Eco Diocese – Silver Award, to engage with diocesan team members working in Education and Finance.

Several key aspects have been identified:

- Given limited resources how do we maximise the carbon reduction per pound spent?
- How do we improve the data to make these optimum decisions?
- How do we embed a concern for creation care and carbon emissions reduction in all we do, across the whole of the diocese?
- What are the appropriate targets to set at this stage to encourage progress?

Attention is now transferring to updating and rewriting the plan. This will progress through the following stages:

- Updating the factual data and information within the plan;
- Updating the identified actions in each area;
- Setting realistic targets against which future progress can be measured.

It is envisaged that the revised plan will be brought to Diocesan Synod later in the year after review by Diocesan Staff. My thanks go to those who are volunteering their time for this group. We would welcome any other interest in helping this work to progress and hope that, through it, we can demonstrate how this diocese is committed to caring for God's creation.

Victor Humphrey

Co-ordinator - Environmental and Net Zero Carbon Action Plan review working group

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<sup>3</sup> <https://winchester.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/DS-23-14-Winchester-Environmental-and-NZC-Plan-Oct-2023.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/net-zero-carbon-routemap>