

Planning for Net Zero – Diocese of Guildford

Introduction

The climate crisis is primarily driven by emissions of CO₂ from the burning of fossil fuels. Churches contribute to these by burning gas/oil for heating / hot water / cooking and using electricity for power.

The Church of England has committed to being Net Zero by 2030, meaning that our day-to-day activities no longer add to atmospheric CO₂. For churches, this means using electricity from renewable sources and eliminating/minimizing our need for gas and oil.

Initial Steps

We have asked churches to take three initial steps, ideally in the next twelve months:

1. **Submit data to the Energy Footprint Tool (EFT)**

This is part of the annual parish returns and uses data on utility bills to quantify the amount of gas and electricity we are using. Knowing this data helps us target interventions to reduce our carbon emissions.

2. **Get your next Eco Church award <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>**

Run by the Christian environmental charity A Rocha UK, Eco Church places Net Zero into a wider environmental context which churches can use as part of their mission. A simple survey leads to action planning, and A Rocha have copious resources available.

3. **Get an Energy Audit**

An energy audit can identify and quantify the actions needed to decarbonise our buildings. They will also ultimately help us save money and enhance our mission as our buildings will be better insulated, more welcoming and run more efficiently.

For some small churches, a full audit may not be required, and a self-audit could be carried out using the [Church of England's Practical Path to Net Zero](#)

Next steps: Creating a Net Zero Plan

Once we have a list of actions from our audit, the next step is to consider when and how we will carry out the works. Are there quick wins which are cheap and/or require no permissions? Should we prioritise items where our existing systems are near their end-of-life?

A simple table could be all we need:

Example: St Ingrid's Church Net Zero Plan (see over)

Action	Cost	Saving per Year	Permissions	Responsibility	Priority	Timescale (plan, funds, works)
Insulate roof space	£3k	£200	List A	Wardens	1	Summer 2025
Exclude draughts	£1k	£100	List A	Operations Manager	2	Summer 2025
Change lights to LED	£10k	£400	List B / faculty	Wardens and Treasurer	3	Plan and fund 2025 Works 2026
Install solar panels	£20k	£2.5k	Faculty / planning permission	Wardens and Vicar	4	Plan/fund '25 Work 2026/7
Replace gas boiler with heat pumps	£40k	n/a	Faculty	Wardens and Fabric Committee	5	Plan by 2027 Fundraise 2028 Works 2029/30

Being on a genuinely green/renewable tariff for your utilities should be a key part of your plan. For more information, consult the Diocese of Guildford NZC Team or look online.

Getting Going

If we are aiming for 2030 we should start now as funds allow and depending on urgency. Put dates against the items in your plan so you know when you expect to tick them off. Larger items will take a while to plan, seek permissions, fundraise and do the work. And be aware of which items will be best in reducing your emissions; heating is usually responsible for the largest share.

Offsetting

This should be a last resort for any emissions you genuinely can't (for now) eliminate. The Church of England recommends offsetting via [Climate Stewards](#)

Potential Funders

The list of funders is always changing as funding streams open and close. We have more details on our website. Among sources you may wish to consider are:

- Benefact Trust
- Marshall's Charity
- Surrey County Council
- National Churches Trust

Sources of Support

Initially look at the [Church of England's pathway to net zero for churches](#)

Then consult the Guildford Diocese Net Zero web pages, and contact Net Zero Project Officer Martin Carr for support martin.carr@cofeguildford.org.uk