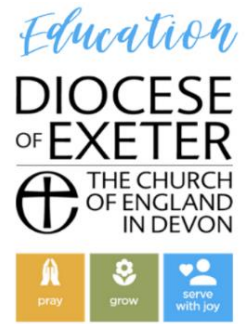


Climate Action Plan



To enable all, through the love of God in Jesus Christ, to 'live life in all its fullness' (John 10:10b)

Nurture vision-inspired education; **Nourish** personal and spiritual growth; **Enable** connected communities that **flourish**

Rev 3 - May 2024

Context and Commitment – Church of England

In 2020, General Synod formally recognised that the global climate emergency is a crisis for God's creation and a fundamental injustice, and in response it committed the whole of the Church of England to achieve net zero carbon by 2030.

General Synod requested a plan to be developed, setting out how the Church was to achieve net zero carbon in the timeframe. This plan known as the 'Routemap', was approved by General Synod in July 2022 and endorsed by Exeter Diocesan Synod in March 2023. The Diocesan Synod also voted to adopt the Diocese of Exeter Net Zero Carbon vision statement, as follows;

"As Christians, we believe that God calls us to safeguard the integrity of creation and to renew the life of the Earth and its peoples. The Diocese of Exeter recognises that the global climate emergency is not only a crisis for God's creation but is causing fundamental injustices across the globe. With the national Church of England, we commit ourselves to work with all available resources towards Net Zero Carbon by 2030. To this end, we will draw up and implement a feasible programme of action with a clear time frame, based on the Routemap to Net Zero Carbon by 2030. We will review our action plan regularly and report publicly on progress."

The Exeter Diocesan Synod also adopted the 'Diocesan Environment Policy' in March 2024, with a commitment to *"promote creation care across church schools"*.

There are approximately 4,700 Church of England schools in the country, which are estimated to collectively contribute 52% of total carbon emissions (by building type) for the whole Church of England. It is for this reason that schools are integral to the Church's mission to work towards net zero carbon as a whole Church, and they will be supported by the local Diocesan Board of Education (DBE).

Exeter Diocesan Board of Education Committee (EDBE) adopted its Climate Action Policy at its meeting on 26th June 2024 and committed to embed it in its decision-making and working with church schools, federations, and academy trusts and their staff, children and young people to help ensure the protection of future generations by acting proactively to reduce our collective impact on the environment. The EDBE Climate Action Policy can be found [here](#)

EDBE commissioned and has adopted this EDBE Climate Action Plan to put the EDBE Climate Action Policy into action and is supporting and encouraging the whole diocesan family of schools to make a declaration to reduce the carbon footprint at their church school and to develop a school-level Climate Action Plan.

Context and Commitment – Central Government Department of Education

The UK Government has made a commitment to climate action. It has identified short, medium and longer-term actions that will enable progress towards achieving their 4 strategic aims and overarching vision, with a commitment to achieving Net Zero Carbon by 2050. Their current strategy is for the period to 2030. [DfE sustainability-and-climate-change-strategy](#)

In England, the 4 strategic aims of the DfE's sustainability and climate change strategy are:

- 1 Excellence in education and skills for a changing world: preparing all young people for a world impacted by climate change through learning and practical experience.
- 2 Net zero: reducing direct and indirect emissions from education and care buildings, driving innovation to meet legislative targets and providing opportunities for children and young people to engage practically in the transition to net zero.
- 3 Resilience to climate change: adapting our education and care buildings and system to prepare for the effects of climate change.
- 4 A better environment for future generations: enhancing biodiversity, improving air quality and increasing access to, and connection with, nature in and around education and care settings.

A key initiative in the strategy is [sustainability leadership and climate action plans](#) . The strategy states: *“By 2025, all education settings will have nominated a sustainability lead and put in place a climate action plan”*. This includes early years settings, schools, multi-academy trusts, colleges, and universities.

Context and Commitment – A unified and co-ordinated approach

The UK Government and the Church of England have separately made commitments and have developed strategic plans for a move to Net Zero Carbon and which will impact on the work and resources at church schools. Although the Church of England's 2030 Net Carbon Zero target is more ambitious than the UK Government's target date of 2050, the government's current strategy does accord with the church's timeframe, offering the opportunity for a synchronised approach.

Church schools operate in a world of different relationships and authorities including the Department for Education, Diocesan Board of Education and Local Authorities. They also have a range of different governance structures and responsibilities depending on the category of church school and their partnerships and whether they are academies as part of an academy trust. Additional relationships and responsibilities also exist with site trustees and the local parish.

Although, in principle, the Diocese's influence on schools should be commensurate with the foundation governance model, and whereas this might be the expectation of the national church through the Net Zero Carbon Roadmap, this is not always the case at a local level, where relationships and cooperation can change over time depending on the school leadership and events (current and historic). It is unlikely therefore, that all church school in the Diocese will fully engage with a unilateral initiative from the Church at a time of limited resources and over-stretched workloads in the schools.

Mindful of these challenges and complexity, Dioceses are best to position themselves to support church schools and provide practical advice and resources to assist church schools and academy trusts as they work to meet the DfE's climate action expectations and requirements. This is because all schools and academies (irrespective of their category) will be expected to meet the DfE's climate action requirements and so church schools will then benefit from the support they receive from the Diocese in meeting those DfE expectations, rather than feeling they are being penalised for being a church school and having to take action to achieve the Church's Net Carbon Zero commitments (i.e. with the perception that being a church school incurs more work and pressure than other schools). In this way, church schools should then feel they are being supported by the Diocese in meeting the DfE's expectations and with the added benefit that this support can also assist their wider non-church school partnerships/Federations or academy trusts. This approach by the EDBE can be enhanced by working alongside Local Authorities and the Devon Association of Governors to help plan and coordinate the roll-out of advice and support to Governors, and which will deliver a consistent message to all schools, irrespective of the school category.

The DfE's Expectations for all Schools by 2025 – School Climate Action Plan

The DfE expects that *"By 2025, all education settings will have nominated a sustainability lead and put in place a climate action plan"* and the EDBE Climate Action Policy and EDBE Climate Action Plan have been developed and are structured to advise, encourage and support all church schools to deliver on this expectation as well as delivering on the Church of England's own Net Zero Carbon commitments.

The DfE has identified that a school's Climate Action Plan should typically address the following:

- Decarbonisation - for example calculating the schools carbon footprint and taking actions to reduce carbon emissions, such as becoming more energy efficient.
- Adaptation and resilience - such as taking actions to reduce the risk of flooding and overheating.
- Biodiversity - for example engaging with the National Education Nature Park and enrolling in the Climate Action Award. [National Education Nature Park and Climate Action Awards](#)
- Climate education and green careers - such as ensuring the education provided gives knowledge-rich and comprehensive teaching about climate change, and that teaching staff feel supported to offer this.

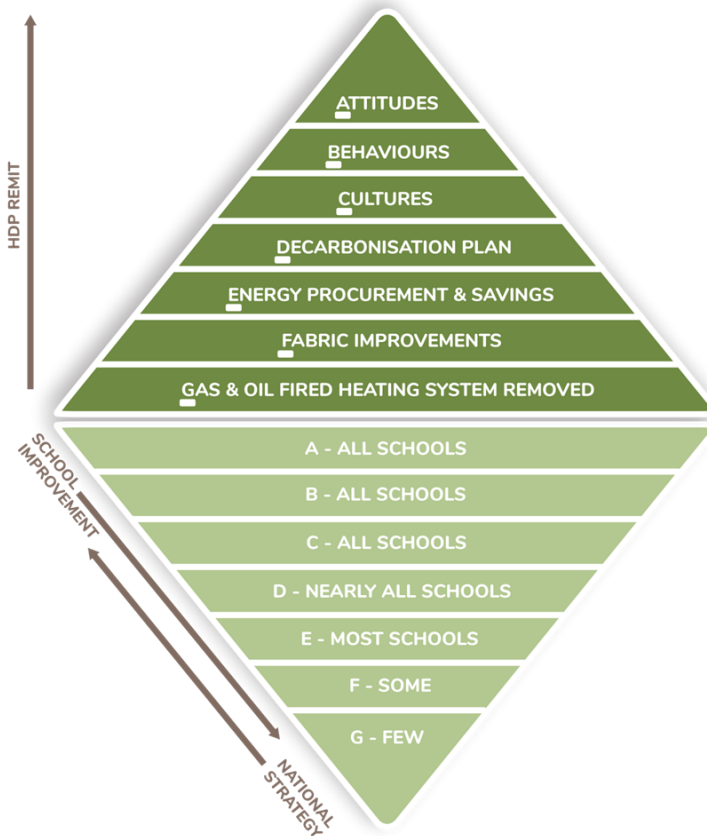
The Church of England's expectations for Decarbonisation at Church Schools

All church schools are expected to fully engage with the target of Net Zero Carbon by 2030; that is not to say that all church schools will be able to fully achieve Net Zero Carbon by that time, but all can fully participate in developing the attitudes, behaviours and cultures which will help ensure the protection of future generations by acting proactively to reduce our collective impact on the environment.

Almost all schools will be expected to have a (Heat) Decarbonisation Plan and most schools will be able to achieve savings by reviewing their energy procurement.

Some schools will be able to upgrade the fabric of their schools so it is more thermally efficient (dependant on securing capital funding), but only a few schools will be able to move to a fully decarbonised heating system due to the high capital costs involved, and therefore it is important to identify those schools that are most suitable and will achieve the best possible outcomes for the investment needed for full decarbonisation.

The Decarbonisation Diamond



- Accessible for all schools
- Easy to weave into worship
- Bountiful inspiration resources
- Forums for ideas and connection
- Create a culture for reuse and recycling
- Plan for a sustainable future

The Decarbonisation Diamond identifies:

All Schools can engage with and change and develop their
Attitudes
Behaviours
Culture

Nearly All Schools can commission/develop a
Decarbonisation Plan

Most Schools can review
Energy procurement and savings

Some Schools can be supported by the EDBE with
Fabric improvements

Few Schools can be supported by the DBE with
Gas and oil-fired heating systems removal

Church of England National Initiatives and Support for Church Schools

[Net Zero Carbon Schools | The Church of England](#)

The National Society recognises that the Church of England's commitment to Net Zero Carbon at church schools requires all Diocesan Boards of Education to deliver a consistent message and work to similar initiatives and utilise and share resources in a consistent manner for the Church to deliver on its commitment. It is also important that the National Society's engagement with the Department for Education (on behalf of all schools) is able to do so with the confidence that all church schools are moving forward in a unified and consistent manner. For these reasons the Church of England's Net Zero Carbon Programme Board agreed to support the establishment of a National Framework for the Decarbonisation of School Buildings through DBE Services. The National Framework will:

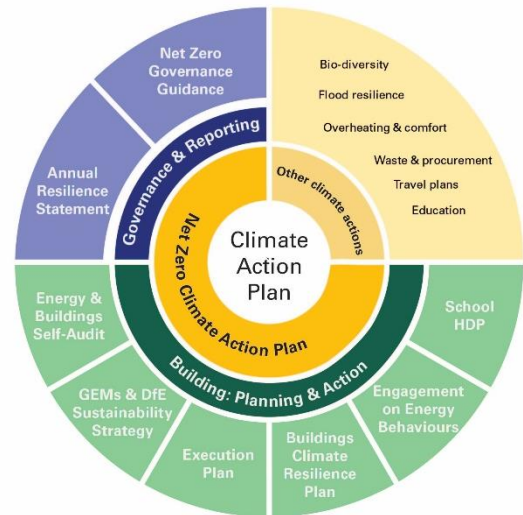
- Appoint Regional Consultants to work with Dioceses to advise and support Diocesan Boards of Education on the appropriate steps to support church schools and academy trusts in the move to Net Zero Carbon, and will focus on putting in place the structures and will support decarbonisation project funding applications at those schools which can deliver the best possible outcomes for the required investment.

The Framework Regional Consultants for the South West Region is Inspired Efficiency who will work with EDBE/PSD officers to identify those VA church schools and church schools in majority foundation academy trusts that do not yet have a Heat Decarbonisation Plan in place and will complete the grant application to enable the Diocese of Exeter to make a grant bid to Salix under the Low Carbon Skills Fund (LCSF) programme. If successful, the Heat Decarbonisation Plan will be developed for the named schools by the Regional Framework Consultant.

- Appoint consultants to undertake a comprehensive analysis of open-source data on schools in order for DBE services to identify the schools (nationally) that are likely to be most eligible for large scale decarbonisation projects through an early bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (ahead of the more detailed information that will be available following the preparation of Heat Decarbonisation Plans at all church schools). This information will also help inform the prioritisation of the Heat Decarbonisation Plan programme at each Diocese.

- Encourage and support Dioceses, working with Regional Framework Consultant, to enable schools and academy trusts to identify those church schools that are best suited to deliver large scale decarbonisation projects and to support them in future funding bids under the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme and throughout the delivery phase (should they be successful).

In addition, the National Society has commissioned an architect-led consultancy, Retrofit Action For Tomorrow (RAFT), to advise on the development of a strategy and programme to accelerate energy and emissions-reductions, resource efficiency and climate resilience in schools. Their work is focused on encouraging schools to gather evidence-led and actionable information and to build this into beneficial engagement programmes and building retrofit solutions that support them in their journey to Net Zero Carbon and in the preparation of their School Climate Action Plan. RAFT has produced an [Execution Plan](#) to assist in that process



A significant challenge for church schools is engaging with Community Solar organisations who will be seeking to lease the roof of church schools for the installation of solar pv, and with the schools benefitting from the free energy generated and the panels provided at no capital cost to the school. The challenge for church schools result from the standard legal agreements and funding models prepared to meet the needs of these pv companies but not the requirements of the Site Trustees of church schools. They also typically do not fully comply with all statutory legislation affecting leases, e.g. s77 of the School Standard and Framework Act 1998. The National Society is seeking to find a practical solution/offer to church schools based on a new form of legal agreement that is suitable for church schools but also is acceptable to solar pv companies – but this is far from straightforward and is likely to take some time to deliver a workable solution. In the meantime, deliverable pv solar solutions for church schools will require the school/academy trust to fund the initial capital costs themselves, as this avoids the need for a lease and so overcomes the problem.

The National Church has also engaged with partners to help roll-out a series of tools and resources that church schools and academy trusts can access directly or via their local DBE, to assist the school's journey to Net Zero Carbon [practical-path-to-net-zero](#)

Diocese of Exeter – Initiatives and Support of Church Schools

The Diocese of Exeter's Social Justice and Creation Care Team in the Department Mission and Ministry is to develop a Diocesan Net Zero Carbon Action Plan that covers all aspects of the Diocese's work (including schools) and to which this EDBE Climate Action Plan contributes.

Officers from the Creation Care Team will work alongside the EDBE Officers to support and advise church schools and academy trusts in their work towards net Zero Carbon and in the development of their own School Climate Action Plan. This support to schools and academy trusts will be part of the EDBE function and engagement with church schools and will include support in education, governance and premises matters as appropriate. [Guidance for CofE Schools/Academy Trusts](#)

EDBE allocates SCA capital grant annually to VA schools' priority building works project in the Diocese. EDBE commits to allocate a minimum of 20% of the total SCA grant available each year to projects that will support a schools' journey to Net Zero Carbon and Climate Action Plans through fabric improvement.

EDBE will encourage church schools to integrate creation care into the curriculum and collective worship and will encourage children and young people to use their voice to advocate for a more sustainable future.

EDBE will encourage church schools to express creation care through their theologically rooted Christian vision and which enable all to flourish. [siams-framework](#)

EDBE will seek to identify and reduce the adverse environmental impact of DBE Members' and Officers' work (e.g. travel, waste, paper, printing etc).

EDBE's Roadmap to Climate Action Plans at Church Schools

Sustainability - Governance and School Leadership

[Environmental sustainability: a whole school approach | National Governance Association](#)

- All church schools should be encouraged to appoint a Governor to lead on Sustainability (if not done so already); the Governor is to be appointed by the beginning of the 2025-26 academy year at the latest. Academy trusts should have such governance at Director and Hub/Local Governing Body levels.
- All Governance structures should adopt a suitable Statement such as:

Governor's Statement

The [governing body/board] reaffirm the declaration to take action to reduce year on year emissions and to take all reasonable steps to establish evidence-led planning to aim to a net zero carbon school/estate by 2030 and beyond. In the face of unprecedented challenges, our school/academy is working to future proof the estate, for the benefit of current and prospective communities. Recognising that governance is the engine for change, this annual report on the delivery of objectives in key areas will be shared as good practice and learning with the Diocesan Board of Education.

- All church schools (or relevant academy trust) should appoint a member of the SLT (or other suitable member of staff) to lead on sustainably at the school (or academy trust).
- Sustainability should be an agenda item at each Governor/Director/Hub/Local Governing Body Meeting, and a report tabled which records progress towards a School Climate Action Plan, together with all other environmental initiatives. These should then be included as part of an annual report on progress in meeting sustainability targets and shared with the Diocesan Board of Education.
- Diocesan Foundation Governor/Director Induction training should include issues of creation care in church schools and their responsibilities to embed this in their works at their schools/academy trusts.
- Church schools that put these structures in place will then comply with the DfE requirement *“By 2025, all education settings will have nominated a sustainability lead...”*

Collecting Data at School Level

- EDBE will provide and signpost tools and resources to enable church schools and academy trusts to develop evidenced-based planning for improvement.
- EDBE will encourage church schools and academy trusts to understand their energy consumption and to explore options for green energy contracts and smart meters.
- EDBE will encourage schools to share their data and experience with the Diocese and other partners to help inform and monitor improvements at the school over time.

Resources and Support

EDBE will provide advice and support for church schools and academy trusts through its regular Flourish newsletter and with information on the [Schools](#) pages of the Diocese of Exeter website.

The following tools and resources will allow schools to:

Identify Quick Wins

All schools can make an instant change by targeting some easy wins to reduce carbon emissions using the [Practical Path](#) checklist which will see early results and motivate the school to move forward.

Understand Your Footprint

The [Count Your Carbon](#) Toolkit provided by [Eco Schools](#) is an interactive tool which allows schools to gradually build up information and knowledge about the school and its construction and use over time. This information provides the essential information to deliver evidence-led solutions for lowering carbon emissions in the school.

Know Your Building Better

Gathering information about the school construction and operation is supported by the use of the [Building and Energy Self Audit tool](#) and also the [Heating Resilience Plan](#) tool.

Analysis of gas and electricity use

A school-specific energy management tool and education programme from [Energy Sparks](#) can help a school understand its electricity and gas use so as to make changes to become more energy efficient and fight climate change.

Access Specialist Support

In addition to the support of Diocesan Officers to church schools, there are a number of charitable companies such as [Ashden Climate Action Advisers](#) who are available to all schools and academy trusts to help start school initiatives regarding their buildings, transport, menus and more.

The Climate Ambassador programme, based regionally at The Met Office, also can offer support to school leaders and teachers in the development and implementation of climate action plans through specialist support, talks, workshops and activities at schools [Climate Ambassadors](#) or email climateambassadors_sw@metoffice.gov.uk

Ideas and Inspiration

The Church of England website has a section intended to provide inspiration to schools and churches on the journey to Net Zero Carbon and which can also offer opportunities for curriculum and collective worship at church schools [Webinars on getting to net zero carbon | The Church of England](#)

Eco Schools provides ideas and inspiration for schools <https://www.eco-schools.org.uk/healthy-summer-toolkit/> . Taking part in the scheme can provide schools and their sustainability leads a useful framework for broader sustainability action.

Transform Our World have created an online tool, Schools Climate Action Planner, [Transform our world planner](#) to enable teachers, students and staff to identify actions they can take to reduce their school's environmental impact

Networks

The UK Schools Sustainability Network (UK SSN) [ukssn](#) brings together regional networks of school staff and students from all over the UK. They share in common a focus on youth social action and sustainability education.

The UKSSN Ops Group [ops.ukssn](#) , is a network of school based operations professionals and volunteers working together to improve sustainability in schools.

Opportunities and Grants

There are grant opportunities for state-funded schools to install electric vehicle charge point sockets at the school site [Workplace charging scheme for education](#) and this grant is available until March 2025

Heat Decarbonisation Plans and funding

The Diocese of Exeter, supported by Inspired Efficiency, applied to Phase 5 of the Low Carbon Skills Funding (LCSF5) bidding round in April 2024 for grant funding to enable Heat Decarbonisation Plans to be prepared for 56 VA and academy trust church schools (those that currently do not have Heat Decarbonisation Plans). The outcome announcement is expected in July 2024. If successful, all VA church schools and church schools in academy trusts will have a Heat Decarbonisation Plan in place within 12 months and which, together with schools' Asset Management Plans, will inform the Schools' Climate Action Plans and identify those aspects where fabric improvement or significant investment for the decarbonisation of heating systems is most effectively targeted.

School Climate Action Plans

The support, initiatives and resources detailed previously will enable schools to prepare effective School Climate Action Plans to meet the DfE expectations for 2025. The gathering and development of information through this support will identify cost and carbon savings to the school and will provide a method of continual review and feedback through governance, business management, building maintenance and development and with curriculum and collective worship opportunities and inspiration as part of the natural school cycle.

The regular review and development of the School's Climate Action Plan will also inform opportunities for future capital works and will ensure that issues of sustainability and reduced carbon is an integral and natural part of all future thought processes and decision-making by the Governing Board and senior leadership team at the school/academy trust.

Conclusion

The EDBE Carbon Action Plan details the DBE's commitment to work with partners to achieve a common goal of Net Zero Carbon and supporting church schools in that process. It also provides a 'routemap' with practical tools and resources to equip church schools and academy trusts in information-gathering, understanding and support in developing their Schools Climate Action Plans by 2025 (and as expected by the Department for Education) and in their continuing journey to Net Zero Carbon by 2030.