

Climate Action Policy

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**

June 2024

Context and Commitment

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."

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) also recognises that there is a climate crisis and a crisis for creation. The collective response across the diocesan family of schools is driven by our call to mission, specifically to the fifth mark of mission; *'to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth'*.

EDBE will therefore strive to embed this mission within its policies and decision-making, 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.

EDBE will demonstrate leadership by developing a EDBE Climate Action Plan and will encourage the whole diocesan family of schools to make a declaration and will support their development of school-level Climate Action Plans and to take action to reduce their carbon footprint.

EDBE will work closely with the National Church in developing and disseminating resources and tools to schools to support them in their journey to Net Zero Carbon. It will also fully engage with the National Society Decarbonisation Framework and its consultants in identifying and supporting capital investment opportunities at individual church schools.

Net Zero Carbon

The Church of England defines Net Zero Carbon as the reduction, as far as possible, of all in-scope carbon emissions (from the oil, gas and electricity we use in our buildings and petrol and diesel transport) and the removal of an equivalent amount of carbon from the atmosphere for the remaining in-scope emissions by use of accredited offsetting schemes. To achieve this not only demands energy efficient buildings and a fundamental change of mindset regarding the heating and fuel solutions to be installed in schools, but also necessitates embedding positive attitudes, behaviours and a culture of sustainability throughout all aspects of school life. This must be rooted in the EDBE's and the academy trust/federation and/or school's theologically rooted vision and must be widely understood at all levels of the church school community in order for it to become fully embedded in the organisation.

Church Schools and Categories

Governance and premises responsibilities and capital funding routes differ for the various categories of church schools and therefore the national Net Zero Carbon Roadmap which focuses on decarbonisation solutions is mainly directed to those categories of church schools where the DBE has a greater degree of influence. These are:

- *Voluntary Aided Schools* – in which foundation governance is in a majority and SCA capital grant is routed through the DBE.
- *Multi Academy Trusts* with Majority Church Articles - in which foundation governance is in a majority.

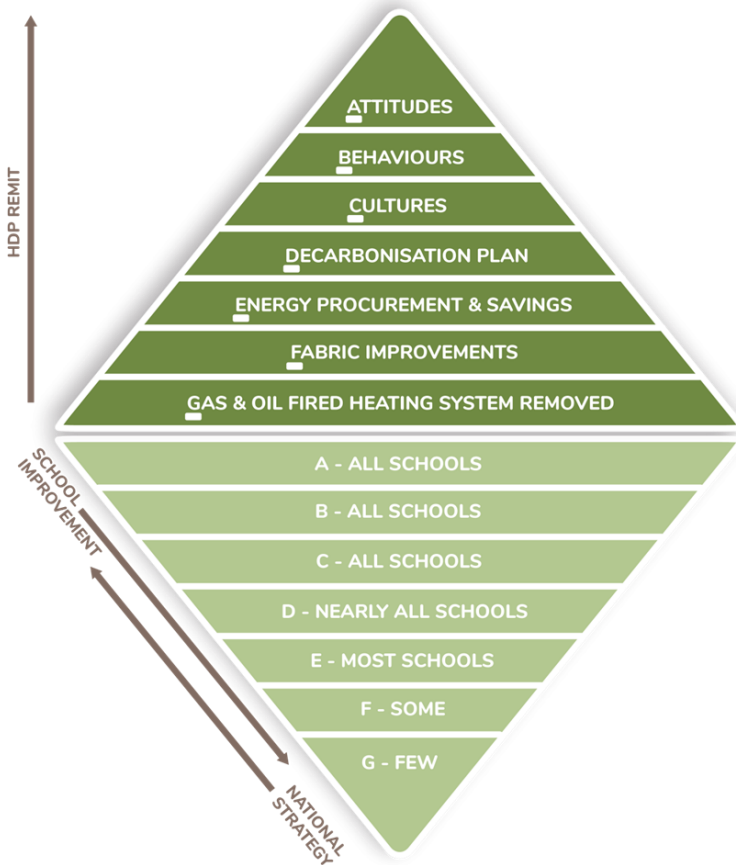
The DBE has potentially less influence at the following category of church schools:

- *Multi Academy Trusts* with Minority Church Articles - where foundation governance is in a minority.
- *Voluntary Controlled Schools* - where Local Authorities have the premises responsibility and capital grant is routed through them, and foundation governance is in a minority.

Although decarbonisation of heating systems is fundamental to the Church's vision, it is likely to only be feasible and affordable in some suitable church schools. The Decarbonisation Diamond (below) summarises a more inclusive and realistic approach for all church schools to engage with the process of reducing carbon emissions and moving to a more sustainable future.

In addition, because all Church of England academy schools in the Diocese of Exeter are in mixed-MATs with community academy schools, and many voluntary church schools are in federations with other community schools, then the added benefit and 'reach' of this initiative will be much greater than just the 134 church schools in the Diocese.

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

EDBE Climate Action Policy

Exeter Diocesan Board of Education commits:

- a) To embed a vision which demonstrates leadership by the DBE working towards all church schools becoming Net Zero Carbon.
- b) To embed an estates vision for Voluntary Aided church schools becoming Net Zero Carbon.
- c) In support of (b) above, the EDBE commits to ringfence 20% of the Voluntary Aided School Condition Allocation (SCA) capital allocation received to deliver fabric improvements for energy efficient VA school buildings.
- d) To inspire and encourage church schools to work to the Church of England vision of sustainable schools that create better outcomes for all children and young people, to conserve the environment and to enable the planet to flourish for future generations.
- e) To work collaboratively with Local Authorities and local Governance organisations/groupings to disseminate knowledge and benefits to all schools within the county of Devon.
- f) To inform and support church schools and Academy Trusts in developing governance structures, leadership and policies for embedding sustainability into the life of the school.
- g) To inspire and encourage church schools to develop and work towards a School Climate Action Plan ahead of the DfE's 2025 expectations.
- h) To provide and signpost resources, provided by the National Society / Framework, to church schools, federations and academy trusts to support and inspire their work regarding climate change.
- i) To work with the National Framework consultants in gathering information and data to support grant applications to fund Heat Decarbonisation Plans (HDPs) for church schools and for supporting decarbonisation capital grant applications, working alongside the schools / Academy Trusts.
- j) To provide and signpost tools and resources to enable schools to develop evidenced-based planning for improvement.
- k) To encourage church schools and academy trusts to understand their energy consumption and to explore options for green energy contracts and smart meters.
- l) To encourage schools to utilise their Asset Management Plan (AMPs) and other data to identify and implement 'quick wins' for capital improvements to save energy.
- m) To encourage schools to share their data and experience to help inform and monitor improvements at church schools over time.

- n) To encourage schools to work with and as part of climate change initiatives inside and outside of school, especially linking with local church environment projects and campaigns.
- o) To encourage schools to integrate this work into the curriculum.
- p) To support children and young people to use their voice to advocate for a more sustainable future.

The DBE's Authority

EDBE's Climate Action Policy is predicated on an offer of encouragement and support to church schools, federations and academy trusts but where that approach is unsuccessful in getting them to engage, then the Diocesan Board of Education Measure 2021 confirms the authority of the DBE which can;

- Give advice to the governing body and boards of directors, or to the site trustees and to the local authority; all of whom must have to give due regard to that advice;

and ensure that,

- Governing bodies and boards of directors seek advice from the DBE before carrying out capital works on the school site;

and note that,

- The DBE may give a direction to the governing body or board of directors where they are failing to exercise their functions relating to the school site or where the endowment is not being applied in the best interests of the school.

Conclusion

EDBE recognises that there is a climate crisis and is committed to using its resources, influence, authority and support to assist church schools in developing strategies, plans and actions to proactively reduce our collective impact on the environment.

EDBE will work nationally and locally with colleagues and partners in the Church and in central and local Government and with organisations and charities in striving to provide effective support and resources to church schools as they work to deliver on their commitments.

EDBE will play an active role in the Church of England's commitment to net zero carbon by 2030 and the associated 'Routemap' as endorsed by Exeter Diocesan Synod in March 2023.

EDBE will develop a EDBE Climate Action Plan for engaging with and supporting church schools in the collective vision of achieving net zero carbon by 2030.

EDBE will monitor and actively manage the EDBE Climate Action Policy and EDBE Climate Action Plan in order to support church schools in this area of work, and will report on progress at EDBE meetings.

Reference and Links

- [Joint statement on climate change by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch | The Archbishop of Canterbury](#)
- The Fifth Mark of Mission of the Anglican Communion
<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/marks-of-mission.aspx>
- National Church of England Guidance Routemap to Net Zero Carbon
[RoutemapToNetZeroCarbonFinal.pdf \(churchofengland.org\)](#)
- National Church of England Guidance and resources for schools [Net Zero Carbon Schools | The Church of England](#)
- DfE Sustainability and climate change strategy
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainability-and-climate-change-strategy/sustainability-and-climate-change-a-strategy-for-the-education-and-childrens-services-systems>
- SIAMS Sept 2023 framework [siams-framework-september-2023.pdf \(churchofengland.org\)](#)