

CHURCH TIMES

Synod emissions target realistic, says its mover

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Follow-up of C of E zero-carbon motion to be debated



THE whole Church should be committed to reducing its [carbon footprint](#), and, if it works systematically and together, it can succeed, Canon Martin Gainsborough, a [General Synod](#) member, has said.

Canon Gainsborough moved the amendment in the General Synod in February which resulted in its adoption of the target of net zero emissions by 2030 ([Synod and Comment, 21 February](#)).

Canon Gainsborough was commenting on the publication today of Synod papers on the scope and definition of what net zero would look like, to be debated by the Synod this month. “What an achievement and what a legacy that would be!” he said. “I have been hugely impressed by the way in which the Environment Working Group has been working since the momentous vote in February.”

“The definition of what is included for our net-zero carbon target seems the right one. It is also widely supported, as the consultation process relating to it shows.”

Chaplain to the Bishop of Bristol, Canon Gainsborough was formerly the professor in development politics at the University of Bristol and the Social Justice and Environmental Adviser in Bristol diocese

Data has been submitted from 4500 churches — about one third of parishes — to the Energy Footprint Tool (EFT). Twenty-two diocesan synods have carried or are planning to debate a net-zero motion, and 23 have either registered or planned to register as an eco diocese.

[Birmingham](#), [Coventry](#), [Guildford](#), [Leeds](#), [Liverpool](#), [St Edmundsbury & Ipswich](#), [Salisbury](#), and [Winchester](#) have achieved Bronze status.

The Church's current carbon footprint is described as "very significant". A baseline study in 2012 found that it created between 600,000 and one million tonnes of carbon-dioxide equivalent: the standard measure of greenhouse-gas emissions. That figure was purely for energy, and did not include transport, water, waste, and purchases.

Heating accounted for more than 80 per cent of church energy use. Purely electric heating has, on average, a lower net-carbon footprint than gas or oil, and the Synod papers make practical recommendations for reducing both energy use and carbon transmission. The lowest tier of these are "actions that nearly all churches can benefit from, even low-occupancy churches only used on a Sunday. They are relatively easy, with relatively fast pay back. They are a good place for churches to start."

These include attention to maintenance and draught-proofing; switching to 100-per-cent renewable energy on a "green tariff", perhaps through the parish buying scheme; replacing light bulbs and floodlights with LEDs; writing an energy-efficient procurement policy; making a commitment to renewable electric and A+++ rated appliances; and offsetting small remaining amounts of energy with a contribution to community projects in the developing world.

At the other end of the scale are the main "Only if" projects, such as the installation of ground-source heat-pumps, likely to be done only as part of a reordering.

Included in the 2030 target are churches, [cathedrals](#), church halls, and ancillary buildings; Royal Peculiars; [theological education institutions](#); clergy housing; [voluntary aided schools](#) and diocesan academy trusts; and church bodies' offices and diocesan properties. It also includes all work-related travel by clergy, staff, and volunteers.

A further phase of work from 2030 includes all emissions from large building projects; emissions from the farming and management of church lands, and all emissions from products bought, such as paper and printing; downstream emissions from waste disposal; emissions from building contractors; and carbon generated from use of emails and the internet in work-related contexts. All these are said to be "within our influence to a significant degree".

Those acknowledged to be out of the scope of the target, "but still within our mission to influence", include greenhouse-gas emissions for which worshippers and visitors are responsible, and schools that are fully controlled by local authorities.

The PCC and congregations of two rural churches, St Michael's, Baddesley Clinton, a small building south of Birmingham, and St Michael and All Angels, Withington, in the Cotswolds, are highlighted for their recent work. The church at Baddesley Clinton, which has no gas or

running water, is now carbon-neutral after the installation of under-pew heating, which heats a bubble of air round the pew rather than the whole church space.

It has halved its energy consumption by switching to a renewable-energy supplier; has replaced all light bulbs with LEDs; and offsets to climate stewards the travel associated with people coming to church. The Rector, the Revd Patrick Gerard, who is also the diocese of Birmingham's environmental adviser, describes his PCC as "not an eco-warrior PCC at all, but very practical". The LEDs had been "an easy win", and the congregation were now warm. The old wall heaters had been retained, "but we now have the confidence not to use them."

The church in Withington, in [Gloucester diocese](#), was believed to be the first to become carbon-neutral, in 2010, when a biomass boiler, solar panels, and LEDs were installed ([News, 1 October 2010](#)). Although the biomass boiler worked, it was simply a boiler replacement, and did not change the the number of radiators. Loading it with wooden pellets became an onerous task for a small core of people.

Pew heaters have been installed, and have made a fundamental difference to comfort levels, besides maintaining zero-carbon credentials, it has been reported. Residual electricity is bought from renewable sources.

The project leader, Matt Fulford, said on Tuesday, "Different people will view the project in different ways. You've got those viewing it as a very positive environmental project; others take a treasurer's view that sees it as as a very positive financial project; and a third view it as a success because of the comfort element. It is now a very usable building which is enjoyable to be in; so it's a missional view in being able to serve its core purpose better. It's lovely when all three of these come together."

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