Drive to net zero will ease climate change

The Church of England's target to be carbon net zero by 2030 is challenging. But our parishes and schools have begun work on it

IT'S a historic building that is difficult to heat. But one rural Hampshire church has found a solution to limit carbon emissions.

Worshippers at the Church of Blessed Mary in the village of **Upham** have been enjoying the benefits of green technology for the past two winters. Their new carbon-neutral heating system has saved them having to invest in an expensive and polluting boiler.

The Hampshire-based firm Caldera, which specialises in renewable energy solutions, installed two 'Warmstone' heat batteries outside the historic church in the winter of 2021-22. It was part of a trial to see if their green energy would work in spaces as large as churches.

The heat batteries use green electricity that is available at cheaper rates overnight, and the system stores up to 200kWh of heat until it is needed. It can then be



New thermal curtains at Portsmouth Cathedral

switched on to heat up the church in time for Sunday services and other activities during the winter.

The rector, the Rev James Hunt, said: "We'd had the same oil boiler since the 1970s. It was housed in the boiler room, which is under the church, and the heat came through a maze of Victorian piping. The

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oil that we were using was also expensive. Not only was it inefficient and emitting carbon, but when we tried to turn it on for the winter of 2021, we discovered it had stopped working.

"Rather than replace it with something similar, we discovered that this trial existed, and we were

Lighting change makes real difference

ONE congregation in Havant is enjoying brighter lights - as well as hoping for cheaper bills.

St Alban's Church in West Leigh was offered an environmental audit of its building, and has already started making changes.

They've replaced all the lighting in its church, church hall, kitchen and corridors with LED lighting.

They've also switched energy providers to reduce carbon emissions. One difference this has made is that the church is now lighter, as the new lights are more powerful.

The project cost just over £7,000, and the parish managed to get a grant of £2,550 from the Benefact Trust.

The vicar, Canon Karina Green, said: "I was pleased the **Church of England decided** to opt for a really challenging target when it came to combatting climate change. Getting to carbon net zero by 2030 means balancing the

happy to be guinea pigs. Caldera did use us to test out how well this system would work in large spaces such as churches, and there were some teething issues. But it does now heat the church effectively.

"This is a great step forward for a historic church such as the Blessed Mary to be heated in this way, and means we're making our contribution towards becoming carbon neutral. A huge thank you to churchwardens Simon Beloe and Richard Clarke for overseeina the project."

All the electricity used comes from renewable sources, and the church is now 'net zero', apart from the lawn mower! It therefore fits in with the Church of England's drive for all our churches, halls, church schools and parsonages to be carbon net zero by 2030. The Church committed itself to this challenging

total amount of carbon we release into the atmosphere with the amount we absorb. "This will affect our church buildings, our church schools, our vicarages and even our theological colleges. It's a massive amount of work. We might miss our target, but even aiming for it will mean we stop polluting God's planet as much as we used to.

"Our new lighting is making a real difference, and I'm hoping there will also be cheaper energy bills.

we're looking to do as a church community as well. Some - like replacing our heating system won't be easy and may involve spending a larger sum of money.

"However, if we really believe that it's worth conserving God's planet and preventing suffering from climate change, we do need to put our money where our mouths are. I certainly feel it's worth trying."

target back in 2020 and has since created a routemap by which it expects to reach this milestone. It involves work on our church buildings, halls, vicarages, church schools and other activities.

Our diocese has put together its own action plan, which includes some short-term, medium-term and long-term actions that should make a difference. That includes everything from dealing with damp and draughts, to looking at how our buildings are heated and lit, and how we source the electricity we use.

It also aims to inspire parishes to apply to become Eco Churches, meaning that the Christian environmental charity A Rocha recognises the steps each is taking to become greener.

Last autumn, we appointed David

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"There are other things

Canon Karina Green with one of the church's new LED lights

Cain to be our part-time diocesan environmental officer, with a brief to advise and help our parishes achieve some of these actions. This two-days-a-week role dovetails neatly with his other role as building development officer and DAC secretary.

Steve Collins, the former deputy diocesan secretary for Guildford diocese, has become net zero carbon programme manager for Portsmouth, Chichester and Guildford dioceses; and we're also appointing a part-time net zero carbon support officer from April to work with Steve and David. All of these posts are being funded nationally.

Among the projects that they are advising on is one to install solar panels on the roof of St Margaret's Church in Southsea. The 120-yearold building has been refurbished