

Diocese of Plymouth Environmental Policy

Our Christian responsibility for the planet begins with appreciation of the goodness of all of God's creation: "God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good"
(Gen 1:31).

Pope Francis, through his encyclical letters *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*, has taken a global lead in encouraging every person on the planet to take action and care for the earth - our common home - and preserve it for future generations, thinking and acting in solidarity with those who are poor and suffering. *Laudato Si'* is a call to an 'ecological conversion' inviting each one of us to recognise the connection between our faith, our planet and the most vulnerable people and to take an active role in preserving the gift of life on earth. *Guardians of God's Creation*¹ argues for 'a more considered relationship with our God, our neighbour and the earth through the way we manage our resources as a Church'.

The Diocese of Plymouth environmental policy respects the earth as God's creation and acknowledges that our care for it needs to be integrated into the life and mission of our Diocese. The policy sets out our commitment as a Diocese. The policy is for every person – young and old, parishioner and employee of the Diocese of Plymouth.

OUR COMMITMENTS

- To pray, study the scriptures, reflect on Catholic tradition and educate ourselves about the interconnectedness of all aspects of our common home in order to develop a spirituality which seeks to understand the effects of our actions on the poorest and most vulnerable people in our world as well as the earth's fragile ecology and the need for economies and lifestyles which reflect God's creation.
- To advocate for and work with people on the margins and people living in poverty since 'a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach;' [integrating] questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*" (Pope Francis *Laudato Si'* #49)
- To ensure the mission of the church locally and on a diocesan level includes proclamation on environmental concerns in line with the living out of the gospel in people's lives, and exercising the prophetic voice of the church in support of stewardship and appropriate environmental action, such that the views of the church are heard and widely understood. (cf Pope Benedict *Caritas in Veritate* #51)
- To ensure that our buildings are managed with care for the environment and action plans to reduce negative impacts
- To minimise our use of the earth's natural resources, reducing our carbon footprint, minimising waste generation, and re-using and recycling when possible.

¹ <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/our-work/environment/season-of-creation/guardians-of-gods-creation/>

- To follow ethical purchasing practices and influence our suppliers and contractors to ensure that goods and services procured support the environmental policy and, in turn, that all suppliers and contractors progressively improve their own environmental performance.
- To enhance the biodiversity of all Diocesan-owned grounds and gardens and our schools.
- To encourage ecological education in our schools and parishes
- To ensure that our investment policies adhere to ethical guidelines and promote investment for social benefit.
- To assess all our activities and operations in order to identify, understand and evaluate all the direct and indirect environmental aspects and priorities action to address them.
- To measure and reduce our environmental footprint to achieve year-on-year reductions in emissions and examine what would be required to reach net zero emissions by 2030
- To regularly review and report on our way of working at Diocesan, school and parish level to verify our effectiveness in achieving environmental objectives.

MONITORING

This policy will be monitored annually by a Diocesan Committee² reporting to the Bishop's Council and Trustees.

This policy is accompanied by a framework for building personal, school, parish and diocesan responses to poverty and the environment.

Let us pray for wisdom and courage for the path ahead.

Date approved: 28 January 2021

Date of next review: January 2022

² The Committee will be chaired by the Vicar General and include representatives from the Trustees, Schools, Finance and Property and Caritas