



Our approach towards addressing climate change.

The Diocese of Plymouth is fully committed to caring for God's Creation. This commitment stems from the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching, which together underpin everything that we say, what we think, and most crucially how we manage our resources. "Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue: it is not an optional aspect of our Christian experience" (*Laudato Si'*, 217).

We view climate change and the unprecedented ecological crisis not only as distinct ethical issues but as a fundamental challenge that will impact on future generations. As emphasised by Pope Francis, the world is facing a global crisis with many dimensions and impacts: in conflict, economic disruption, food supplies, higher energy costs, falling living standards and increased poverty. Therefore, our approach must consider climate change from a Catholic Social Teaching perspective as well as an environmental perspective. It must acknowledge the impact of change on the most vulnerable people, and at the same time recognise that a transition away from fossil fuels is a fundamental step towards a sustainable future.

Our diocese has already taken practical steps towards reducing carbon emissions in our parishes and schools. Most of our diocesan gas and electricity already comes from a single green energy contract procured through an inter-diocesan procurement initiative, IFM. We have an Environment Committee, which is in the process of formulating a decarbonisation strategy for the diocese to become carbon neutral. The core elements of the strategy will include the development of a knowledge management system that can be accessed by the parishes about their carbon footprint and encourage them to act. This would include spiritual and ecological formation about the wider Gospel imperative to act as stewards of creation. We will foster development of a Christian spirituality of ecology in our communities, with a call to a new lifestyle, beginning in personal and family life. Already, we have identified some quick wins to reduce diocesan emissions by undertaking building maintenance, insulation, better management of heating controls, draught proofing etc. We are embedding environmental considerations into our property decisions, switching where possible to new, greener technologies when heating systems need replacing.

The UK Government is committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050, and by 2030 to have reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 80% relative to the 1990 levels. As part of this transition, we expect that there will be a significant economic shift, which will continue to impact means of livelihood, affordability and employment patterns. We see it as our responsibility that people and communities are not left behind in the transition towards net-zero economy. As a member of the Church Investors Group, we have the opportunity to partner with like-minded investors from many mainstream Church denominations and church-related charities to advocate for responsible environmental practices and encourage companies to invest in renewable energy sources and reduce their carbon footprint.

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We have two investment managers who handle our investment portfolio. We hold our investment managers accountable as good stewards of our equity investments not only through active monitoring, engagement and voting but also by assessing the commitments of the companies that we invest in and avoiding those whose activities are not in keeping with our ethical investment policy. In November 2023 we advised the managers that we wish to exit any direct investments in fossil fuel companies and this process is now in progress.

We have also set aside some of our investment funds for social impact projects delivered through Caritas Diocese of Plymouth and continue to look for faith-inspired investment opportunities. We will continue to review our approach and strategy towards becoming carbon neutral. We recognise that the dimensions are multi-faceted, and the overall journey will require continual improvements, amendments and learning from new developments and ideas as they emerge.

Diocesan Environment Committee

15 February 2024