



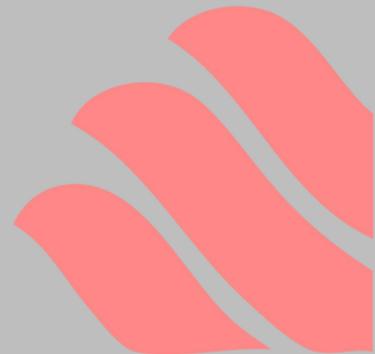
Environment Policy Annual Review

2024



“ Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience. ”

-Pope Francis





On Scilly, from St Mary's to Tresco by John Cosgrove

Introduction

This is the fourth annual review of the Diocese of Plymouth Environmental Policy which was agreed by Trustees in January 2021. This report gives a brief overview of progress being made to implement the commitments in the policy. We have continued promote prayer and reflection on Catholic Social Teaching and our responsibility to care for our Common Home; re-assessed our carbon footprint and continued to implement an action plan for improvement. We encourage engagement by parishes and schools in Laudato Si' Week and Season of Creation, taking action to care for our common home. Our Curia offices hold regular live simply meetings to encourage care for the earth and care for the poor.

Reflection by Canon John Deeny, Chair of the Environment Committee

The Earth is a sacred gift—entrusted to us to cherish, protect, and restore. The beauty and abundance of nature reveal God's love, but we also confront the ongoing challenges of climate change, pollution, and loss of biodiversity.

Here, in the Diocese of Plymouth, we are truly blessed to live in a particularly beautiful part of God's creation. As its stewards, we renew our commitment to caring for our common home.

Inspired by Pope Francis' call in Laudato Si', we continue our journey of ecological conversion, seeking to integrate care for creation into every aspect of our diocesan life.

Through education, prayer, and action, we continue to work to build a more just and sustainable world.

It is wonderful to see the progress made over the past few years in terms of our awareness of the need for change, and also in the concrete steps taken to care for the environment, some of which are shared in the report below. You can see in the report that each commitment of our policy is being addressed. However, we recognise that this mission is ongoing.

Our commitment to creation care is not just a policy—it is a reflection of our faith in action.

With gratitude for the progress made, and trust in God's grace and guidance, we renew our dedication to being responsible stewards of the Earth, ensuring a hopeful future for generations to come.

'So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.'
Galatians 6:9

The following is a summary of actions taken in 2024 to take forward each of our twelve commitments:

(i) 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.

Caritas Diocese of Plymouth hosted three events at [Plymouth Cathedral](#) for Laudato Si' Week to focus on how we can look after the world around us. This year's Laudato Si' Week theme was inspired by the symbol for Season of Creation 2024, "firstfruits." We gathered in community to contemplate and nurture hope for our "suffering planet" (Laudate Deum #2).

John Paul de Quay from the Ecological Conversion Group visited the diocese a number of times and offered talks and workshops on integral ecology. Sister Margaret from Boarbank Hall spoke at an evening of reflection in September on the origins of Laudato Si' and its message.

SEASON OF CREATION SONG

Fr Ignatius Raj of the Society of St. Eugene De Mazenod, created a wonderful [Care for Creation Song](#). It encourages everyone to care for God's wonderful creation and be good stewards of our common home.



(ii) 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)



One of the core themes of Caritas Plymouth is a focus on poverty and we offered a range of activities and events during 2024, to encourage parishes to consider the concept of integral ecology and the interconnection between the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

A number of parishes took up this theme for the Harvest Festival celebrations and organised collections for local foodbanks. (Pictured is the Buckfast Abbey parish collection).

We support the work of our sister agency, CAFOD, to create a fairer world and tackle global poverty and environmental degradation.

*“our care for one another and our care for the earth are intimately bound together
(Laudate Deum #3)*

(iii) 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. (Pope Benedict, Caritas in Veritate #51)

We circulated materials to all parish communities to encourage them to hold events during Laudato Si’ Week and Season of Creation. Caritas Plymouth was given additional resources to deliver an event in Laudato Si’ week 2024. The project explored ways in which art and intergenerational linking can inspire conversation and spiritual reflection about Care for Creation. The aim was to prompt people to explore Gospel teaching and what it tells us about stewardship; to reflect on their own lives and consider actions and choices to lessen their own impact. The end result was a Laudato Si’ exhibition, prayer walk and series of events at Plymouth Cathedral. Over half of our parishes shared information about Season of Creation and around a third of parishes celebrated a Mass or held a celebration.

Caritas Diocese of Plymouth presented seven Laudato Si Awards in 2024, including to two parishioners, Carman Jaye and Jane Clapworthy, from Our Lady and All Saints Church, Teignmouth. As part of their faith commitment, the volunteers look after the parish garden, which is a beautiful oasis at the side of the parish. The pictures show the fruits of their amazing work.



(iv) To ensure that our buildings are managed with care for the environment and have action plans to reduce negative impacts

We work closely with the diocesan property team who ensure that all major decisions about building refurbishment consider the environmental impacts.

The diocesan property team proactively support environmentally-friendly projects in our parishes. For example they are supporting the provision of solar panels to the presbytery at Sacred Heart; - provision of new electric central heating to the presbytery and additional insulation at St Austell; provision of solar PV, increased thermal performance, electric car charging points, and air source heat pumps to the church and presbytery at Tiverton.

The property team work closely with Plymouth CAST Multi-Academy Trust who have been successful with grant funding through the net zero accelerator programme for new projects in four schools.

The property team have created an Energy Performance Certificate database for rental properties and are looking at initiatives to increase the thermal performance of the buildings.

Our diocesan Head Of Property, Kirsty Wright, spoke at a national catholic conference about how ‘Local Church Communities Can Become Guardians of Creation’ discussing how to promote greener practices within our property estates.

‘Praise to you, my Lord, through sister Mother Earth, who sustains us and governs us and who produces varied fruits with coloured flowers and herbs.’

St Francis of Assisi (from Canticle of the Sun)

The Diocese of Plymouth is powered by fully renewable energy through the Inter-diocesan Fuel Management (IFM) agreement with British Gas

v) To minimise our use of the earth's natural resources, reducing our carbon footprint, minimising waste generation, and re-using and recycling when possible.

We have set up a Live Simply team at the diocesan Curia offices at St Boniface House and received the CAFOD Live Simply Award in 2023. New systems have been introduced to purchase fair trade and environmentally-friendly products, to reduce waste through composting and other approaches. We regularly collect for our local foodbank and look for other ways to reach out to those who are struggling.

(vi) 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

The Curia offices carry out a range of actions to show our Care for Creation (recycling points, composting, purchasing fair trade and recycled goods; shared lunches, prayer and reflection) and throughout the year had regular collections for the local food bank.

We have continued our focus on Modern Slavery looking at the challenge of identifying modern slavery in our supply chains and are currently developing a Modern Slavery Statement.

(vii) To enhance the biodiversity of all Diocesan-owned grounds and gardens and our schools.

Our 2023 parish survey indicated that around 15% of our parishes have a biodiversity initiative and this is something we will be looking to develop further. In May, the diocesan curia offices and some parishes celebrated 'No Mow May' to provide a positive environment for plants and insects.

“There are no lasting changes without cultural changes ... and there are no cultural changes without personal changes” (Laudate Deum, 70)

(viii) To encourage ecological education in our schools and parishes

We work closely with our Diocesan Education Service and schools to encourage reflection and action on environmental issues.

Schools and parishioners came together to work on a 'Mossy Carpet' project - a mass participation artwork helping us to consider how small actions can make a huge change, and how our Christian faith calls us to be part of the restoration of nature in a time of climate and ecological crisis.

180 children came to join us at Plymouth Cathedral during Laudato Si' week, viewed their work and received our special prayer card designed by a pupil at Holy Cross school.

126 pupils and adults from 6 schools in Plymouth took part in the workshops creating the art displays.

The image shows our work on the Mossy Carpet. Picture courtesy of Tanya Trevena.



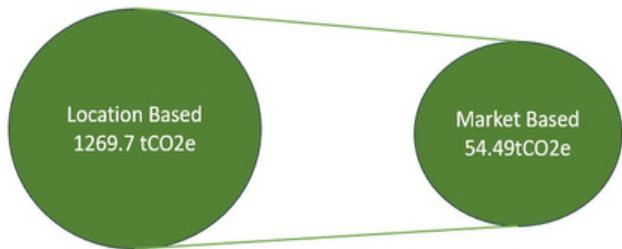
ix) To ensure that our investment policies adhere to ethical guidelines and promote investment for social benefit.

We reviewed our investment policy in 2023 and keep it under consideration in the light of new guidance issued by the Vatican—Mensuram Bonam. We work closely with the Church Investors Group and others to understand and implement best practice. We work to tackle modern slavery in our supply chains and raise awareness of the benefits of the environmental, social and economic impact of our investments. In February 2024, the Diocesan Trustees agreed an approach towards addressing climate change which considered climate change from a Catholic Social Teaching perspective as well as an environmental perspective and which set out some of the practical steps that the diocese is and will be taking to respond to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the Poor.

(x) To access all our activities and operations in order to identify, understand and evaluate all the direct and indirect environmental aspects and prioritise action to address them.

We have evaluated our carbon emissions from Scope 1 – (Direct Emissions from the activities of an organisation including fuel combustion); and Scope 2 – (Indirect Emissions from electricity purchased and used by the organisation). We conducted a small parish survey to estimate the cost of other emissions generated by the work of our parishes. We have developed an initial plan for our journey to carbon neutrality. The Curia offices have tracked all our printing use and are taking actions to reduce printing. We will be considering travel, and other measures as part of the development of a wider sustainability strategy.

Climate Stewards calculated our Carbon Footprint for 2019 and 2023 (figures below). They estimate a carbon reduction of 18% over that three year period. We undertook a smaller review of progress towards the end of 2024 and will be assessing next steps at our committee meetings in 2025.



(xi) 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.

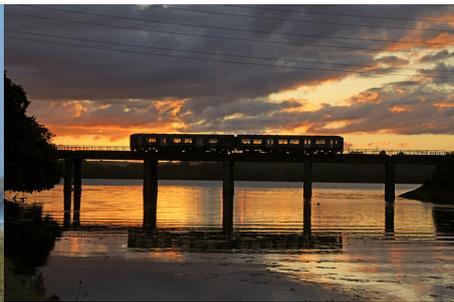
The diocesan Trustees funded an external consultant to assist the diocese in calculating our carbon footprint following the guidelines developed by Salford Diocese ‘Guardians of Creation’ project. In June 2023, Trustees signed off an initial road-map for our journey to carbon neutrality which will be further developed by the Environment and Property Committees in 2024/5.

(xii) To regularly review and report on our way of working at Diocesan, school and parish level to verify our effectiveness in achieving environmental objectives.

A committee has been put in place which meets quarterly to review progress and prepare an annual report. We also report regularly to Trustees who take a close interest in this work.



At Godrevy by John Cosgrave



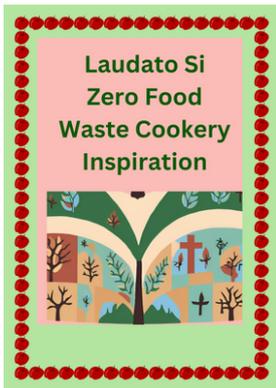
Through the changing scene of the day and the seasons, the tides and the skies by Bernard Mills



The Naturalness of Beauty by Joe Maddalena

Parish Action

Many of our parishes actively promote care for the environment through liturgy and events. Examples include St James parish in Tiverton which has a Laudato Si' Group that meets on the first Saturday of each month. They create regular newsletters and share ideas for action as well as creating a "Zero Food Waste" Recipe Book. St Cuthbert Mayne in Launceston have an annual Mass for Season of Creation followed by the annual planting of a fruit tree by first communicants. 2024 was the 5th tree planted! A small group of volunteers at Saint Anthony's Church, Broadstone, Poole, tend the garden and work to create different areas. One is a wildlife area that attracts insects and butterflies, a second sees pots filled with potatoes, peas, tomatoes, onions and other vegetables grown for the local food bank. These are just a few of the many examples.



Bea Taylor's photographs of the parish garden at Broadstone, Poole

However in our 2023 survey, only 15% of parishes said that they had an environmental project or space where they encourage biodiversity. We will continue to encourage more to develop their green spaces in 2025.

Next steps

2025 is a Jubilee Year, and Care for Creation has been chosen by Pope Francis as one of the six social action themes for this Jubilee Year. Caritas Plymouth will:

- (i) Continue to encourage progress across the diocese in the 12 priority areas set out in the policy, providing prayer resources, advice, support and encouragement.
- (ii) Promote a wider understanding of Catholic Social Teaching and the importance of acting as stewards of creation through a programme of events and sharing of information and materials.
- (iii) Provide resources and opportunities for prayer, reflection and action with a particular focus on Laudato Si' week and Season of Creation.
- (vi) Seek funding opportunities to enable parishes and groups to hold events and undertake projects to show care for our common home.
- (vii) Support the ongoing work to reduce our carbon footprint.
- (viii) Engage parishioners to get their views on a wider diocesan sustainability strategy
- (ix) Provide support to Trustees in their reflections on ethical investment.
- (x) Agree a diocesan modern slavery policy

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR ENVIRONMENTAL WORK OR WOULD LIKE TO TAKE ACTION IN YOUR SCHOOL OR PARISH COMMUNITY PLEASE CONTACT CARITAS@PRCDTR.ORG.UK

Prayer

Heavenly Father,
As you stretch forth your hands to pour out your
graces on this earth,
give us hearts that reflect your mercy.
May we become stewards worthy
of this beautiful planet that you have gifted to us.
May we appreciate all that it gives us
and protect it from harm.
May we turn with love and friendship
to our neighbours in need,
and hold out a hand of help and healing.
May we care for each living creature,
those seen and unseen,
protecting their habitats and
guarding their existence for the future.
May we have a change of mind,
putting on your wisdom and understanding
so that we can stand up for what is right in this world.

Lord, guide us so that each small action
will draw us closer to a world
that is thriving in your peace,
not only now, but for
future generations to come.
We ask this in Jesus' Holy name.
Amen

Tanya Trevena 2024

This report has been agreed by the Diocesan Environment Committee

Any questions please contact

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February 2025