

Diocesan Synod 8th November 2014

Environmental Policy – Revd Mark Betson

Reporting back from the Deaneries on the Environmental Policy

In the last 12 months we have been able to gather feedback concerning the Environmental Policy from the Deaneries and the Cathedral. Overwhelmingly they have been in support of the policy and no amendments were tabled that would change the wording of the policy from the form it originally came to Synod with in November 2013.

However the Deaneries were consistent in challenging the policy with the following comments:

- The policy is fine but we want the specifics of what it means in practice.
- We don't want it to be just another initiative but something that is carried through and held to account.
- The question was posed and aimed at the Diocese: that we recognise we have a problem, but how are you going to help us?
- It was felt that the policy can only work if we have a central point of communication and the options adopted are affordable.
- We recognise that individual Parishes need to take responsibility for their environmental policies.
- A strong view was expressed that each church needs to appoint a champion who will be responsible for individual parish policies.
- There was a worry that there doesn't appear to be a clear strategy or plan to make it work.

The Diocesan Environmental Action Group (DEAG) has been working to respond to some of these challenges as to the implications of the policy being accepted and has attempted to define what it would mean at a diocesan and parish level in practical terms. This is not simple as it predicts discussions that need to be conducted with departments in Church House - to understand particular issues they have which the DEAG can contribute towards. Each individual parish situation also brings its particular situation which the policy would have different implications for.

However, beginning at a parish level, we can recommend that a practical outworking of the policy would be for each parish that has not done so already to aim to sign up with Eco-congregation and undertake an environmental audit in the future.

An environmental audit would be a basic measure that every parish can do. There are other audits available and we are not saying that these are not equally useful but the Eco-congregation audit has been tried and tested for many years and works well.

Eco-Congregation is an award scheme designed to motivate churches to demonstrate that the gospel is good news for God's earth by incorporating the biblical ethic of environmental stewardship into their spiritual values, practical action and community engagement.

Audit:

- Self-assessment of church's 'green credentials'
- Serves to identify and celebrate what's already being done; highlight areas for improvement; and establish priorities for future action
- Leads to formation of an action plan covering the spiritual, practical and missional aspects of church life

The audit is the first step in determining what actions are suitable for each parish to go forward with. It is free to download and paper copies of the audit will be supplied on request.

In addition to asking parishes to look at what they are doing the DEAG will also offer to link parishes with local/national groups who can support them with environmental issues. These links can build community engagement, offer additional local knowledge and help with access to funding for environmental projects.

Two examples are **Community Energy South** (www.communityenergysouth.org.uk) and **Caring for God's Acre**.

Community Energy South (CES) is an unincorporated association of community energy groups across Southeast England, including Sussex, Hampshire and Kent.

Aims:

- Support communities in CES to develop their own renewable energy (RE) projects for financial benefit and provide education value by showing our partners' commitment to a low carbon future.
- To provide opportunities for asset backed community/green investment.
- To support the development of a network of local energy efficiency services across the SE.
- To inform/inspire the public to generate and reduce their energy usage.
- To create and support a local RE industry.
- To inspire communities to sell green, community controlled electricity.

Current groups cover the areas of:

Eastbourne, Rye, Hurstpeierpoint Keymer Ditchling, Worthing, Chichester, Balcombe, Forest Row, Berwick/Upper Dicker, St Leonards & Hastings/Rother, Steyning, Brighton & Hove, Barcombe/Newick/Plumpton etc, Lewes and Newhaven surrounds.

Emerging groups are developing in:

Mayfields, Wadhurst, Cuckfield, East Grinstead, Horsted Keynes, Crowborough, Ashdown Forest.

Caring for God's Acre (CfGA) is a national charity with a membership which supports the conservation of churchyards. Whilst recognising and appreciating that the primary function of these sites is for burial, quiet reflection and remembrance CfGA seeks to support their conservation and enhancement in a sensitive way.

Through the CfGA website, telephone helpline, conferences, training days, case studies and printed information, the charity supports people with the conservation of their own churchyards.

At a Diocesan level the DEAG has organised and will organise an annual environmental act of worship. With the agreement of the Diocesan Secretary members of the DEAG will consult with the departments at Church House to support their work where it engages with environmental issues: for example renewable energy projects, parsonage insulation and theological training.

An example of the help potentially on offer is through the local authority partnership **Your Energy Sussex** that has access to Government schemes such as Green Deal, the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and other funding sources aimed at installing energy saving measures in up to 680,000 households over the next 25 years and helping organisations to become more energy efficient. This partnership is engaging with schools, including Church schools, about energy saving and renewable energy and we are working with them to try to develop an offer regarding parsonage insulation.

In line with what is being asked of parishes, Church House will also be asked to conduct an Environmental Audit to determine what is being achieved already and what could be achieved in the future.

The policy also commits the Diocese to supporting the aims of the national Church of England Shrinking the Footprint campaign. To do this the DEAG is intending to use data we have from a diocesan survey of energy usage in 2007 and contact churches from this survey to compare with current energy usage. This would give us an indication about trends in energy usage across our churches to inform further action.

Conclusion

The DEAG will support the implementation of the Diocesan Environmental Policy, provide a central resource for parishes and the Diocese (through in-house expertise and through contacts accessible via the diocesan website and other publications), and will offer to review progress. We can make recommendations to parishes but it will be up to individual parishes to take them up. There is not a mechanism by which we can enforce take-up, nor should there be. This policy is meant to point the direction the diocese intends to go in and mark a commitment to try to live up to its contents.

CHICHESTER DIOCESE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

The Diocese exists to proclaim the Gospel and nurture the Kingdom of Christ in East and West Sussex. Because of this mission our Environmental Policy is based on the 'Five Marks of Mission' (Lambeth Conference in 1988).

We acknowledge that God is in communion with all life, and that all life exists in an intimate, mutually supporting relationship sustained by and reflective of God's love. The action of human beings is placing the whole community in peril. We wish to turn to Jesus for inspiration to be a medium for change. We understand the need to seek ways to translate our commitment into actions that demonstrate our love and care for the earth which in Christ accompanies us as we long for the coming of His Kingdom.

We see our objectives as being:

To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom: to celebrate the gift of Creation, with His loving concern and good purposes for all He has made and show its spiritual and practical value to all.

To teach, baptise and nurture new believers: to promote environmental mindfulness as an intrinsic part of our approach to Christian life.

To respond to human need by loving service: encouraging a way of living and ordering one's life in community, with care for the land and all its creatures in response to problems such as climate disruption, water scarcity, flooding and habitat destruction as they impact on the world.

To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation by seeking to value the 'free' nature of environmental resources and challenge the economic structures that take advantage of this at Creation's expense.

To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth: by establishing the Diocese's own environmental impacts through our Church buildings, many of them listed, 300 ministry houses and 158 Church schools. Using this understanding we plan to devise a strategy to improve their environmental performance.

The Diocese commits itself to:

- demonstrate God's great love for the whole of Creation by incorporating wider environmental concerns into theological and liturgical life.
- understand how the Diocesan buildings, land and activities impact on the environment and devise a strategy to manage these issues.
- support the Shrinking the Footprint team in their target of reducing the whole of the Church of England's carbon emissions of 80% by 2050, with an interim target of 42% by 2020.
- provide examples, materials and encouragement to parish Churches to engage with broader aspects of their environmental and ethical practice.

"The present challenges of environment and economy, of human development and global poverty, can only be faced with extraordinary Christ-liberated courage."

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby