

Diocese of London
Environmental Challenge



PROGRESS REPORT
Diocesan Synod, 17th March 2011

To begin by reminding ourselves of the Diocese's aims: "We will implement the Church of England policy on shrinking our environmental footprint and will play a full part in the debate on ecological matters" (London Challenge Commitment 5e). Synod reaffirmed its determination to hold this course, when it established a new ***Diocesan Environmental Policy*** in 2010. We continue working towards target savings in ***energy and carbon emissions*** of 20.12% by 2012, 42% by 2020 and 80% by 2050.

Progress is measured by analysis of ***Parish Annual Returns***. 2005 to 2008 saw savings of 12%, but this was partly cancelled out by a rise of 9% in 2009 – still leaving a net drop in consumption from 2005 to 2009, but only about 4%. This may be attributable to the snowy weather at the beginning and end of 2009; possibly portable electric heaters were being used to supplement gas central heating. Electricity is less carbon efficient, so it might have been better to raise settings on gas heating (then turn them down again when mild weather returned of course). We'll be working out from this year's returns what was the outcome from 2010 – a very cold year in the UK (though equal warmest worldwide and the wettest ever recorded).

We began our efforts towards planning energy and carbon savings through the Diocese's own ***Climate Action Programme*** – comprising ***Environmental Audits*** (beginning in the Two Cities area), ***Generic Building Solutions***, and ***Energy-saving Benchmarking***. These are now drawing towards completion. They have led on to our scheme of ***Climate Action Plans*** – bespoke plans of zero-cost savings for churches – launched in 2010. 220 churches around the Diocese have participated in one or more of these programmes so far – we need the remaining 260 to come in too! And we need sustained action by all, including – especially – through ***Climate Action Plans***, if we are to meet our 2012 target.

After that, to go further, capital investments in building improvements will be needed, supported by the conclusions of ***Generic Building Solutions***. Where fundable and feasible, this is happening already – we call this ***Climate Action Projects***. We are majoring on solar panels (for churches and parsonages), to begin with. Meanwhile in times of economic stringency, there is plenty everyone can do, saving both money and energy through simple economies in the management and use of our buildings.

Recycling of waste from churches was the subject of the Central Barnet motion passed by Synod in December 2009. Work is progressing towards a new scheme for kerbside collections.

Our care for **wildlife and biodiversity** – especially in our churchyards – expresses the reality of our commitment to cherish God’s creation, literally right outside our own back door! Congratulations to All Saints Harrow Weald and St Mary Magdalene Holloway, who won awards two months in a row during summer 2010 in the ‘Green Corners’ competition, run by the Conservation Foundation. At the same time, in collaboration with Southwark Diocese, we continue preparatory work and fundraising towards a professional programme of **Churchyards Ecology Surveys**.

The strains on the environment and climate demand that we reconsider our daily **lifestyles**. For example, travel and consumption of resources. A response has just been submitted to local authority consultations on **transport** provision in London. We are preparing a guidance leaflet on **food**, to add to those already published on the topics already mentioned in this bulletin: energy and carbon, water and waste, wildlife and biodiversity.

Returning to climate change – which continues to loom over everything else, no matter what the sceptics may say – the effort of reducing energy use and emissions is termed ‘mitigation’ – or more precisely, ‘abatment’. We have to mitigate not only the causes, but also the consequences – those happening already, especially flooding (which has increased threefold worldwide since 1980), and those to come which will be much worse still. In the end, no amount of adaptation to multi-degree warming and the resulting deteriorating climate will be enough – unless we have brought it under control, by reducing our energy use and emissions now.

At the same time, we need a heightened state of **disaster preparedness, resilience and response**. This was the subject of an article in the *Church Times*, last November – ‘Prepare now for natural disasters’. This came out of a discussion by our **Environmental Reference Group** – a joint initiative with the Dioceses of Southwark and St Albans. Its brief is to give in-depth thought to some of the thornier issues that beset us – among them the implications for ethics and justice of the Environmental Challenge. This new group supplements our existing **Steering Group**, which continues to direct our efforts under the chairmanship of Michael Bye.

Also during November 2010, a crowd of about 130 from within the diocese and parishes, as well as the national Church, the professions, industry, local authorities, the media, gathered in St Paul Shadwell, for an evening entitled **Resourcing the Challenge** – at which we presented our *Climate Action Plans*, and our strategy for installing solar panels to churches.

Resourcing the Challenge provided a curtain raiser for **Route 2050**, scheduled for 3:00 pm on May 9th 2011, at St Peter Eaton Square. The subject, as the title suggests, is our long term plans and vision. This will be a public event. We especially want the voices of children and young people to be heard as we set our ambitions for *their* world. The Bishop of London has agreed to present the keynote address. Several MPs are among early invitations and acceptances. We urge every Synod member to enter this in their diaries, and to take part in what promises to be a milestone event.

The breadth of the audience at *Resourcing the Challenge* represented well the attention our work is attracting, and the partnerships we are establishing. Another example is a recent webinar, hosted by **BITC (Business in the Community)** – one of the Prince’s major charities. Together with Arup and Thomas Ford & Partners, two of our consultants, we presented to a diverse professional and business audience our plans for renewable energy and solar panels. A link to the video is to go up on the diocese’s website in the next few days. Another such occasion, a couple of weeks after the last presentation to Synod on the Environmental Challenge, was an invitation to a breakfast forum at **The Economist**, as one of ‘twenty business leaders on the environment’. The credit we have gained already in the estimation of the wider world should encourage us to redouble our efforts towards achieving our objectives.

The environmental work of this Diocese has also for a number of years been attracting attention beyond these shores, not just in the UK – through the involvement of our Bishop in a range of international forums. Last December, a delegation of **faith leaders from Nigeria**, representing the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, and the Muslim religion, were received in the Old Deanery and conducted on a tour of St Paul's. They came to hear about the Church of England's long term plan **Church and Earth 2009-2016** – with a view to developing a plan of their own. This diocese was a contributor to *Church and Earth*.

Then came an invitation to **South Africa** for a mutual exchange of experience in planning and delivering our respective long-term plans – also identifying potential for a synergy with the work of ALMA (Angola and Mozambique are both in the Anglican Province of Southern Africa) *.

Durban in South Africa will play host to **COP 17** (the 17th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), from November to December 2011. The UN has to share the support it can give to this event with an even bigger 'Earth Summit' in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, known as 'Rio+20' – referring back to the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. How much is there yet to show for that? There must be considerable doubt whether either Durban or Rio can deliver not just the needed worldwide commitments, but the sustained motivation and action to turn them into reality.

It would be wrong to conceal from an audience like this the prognosis as matters stand right now: it is a very grim and threatening one: but we must still act as God commands. During addresses in South Africa, I made mention of Moses' words in Deuteronomy 30 v 19:

"This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live ..."

This tremendous challenge invoked by Moses concluded a catalogue of blessings for obedience to God, and penalties for wrongdoing – all in terms of fertility and abundance on the one hand, and environmental degradation and disaster on the other. The sins he warned of, especially taking the Lord's name in vain, were characteristic of Moses' age (and ours) – while taking God's creation in vain is everywhere in evidence in our time. Is not the choice for people today, including us, in principle a similar one to that presented by Moses to the Children of Israel? While recognising that the 'fullness of life' that we are called to demonstrate may well have to be lived against a background of mounting crisis and outward privation. Will hope prevail?

This report is necessarily brief. Copies can be supplied of:

- The article in the *Church Times* of 12th November 2010
- A report on the South African trip
- The response to the transport consultation
- A 'flyer' for *Route 2050*.

For these and other resources, please email brian.cuthbertson@london.anglican.org, or call (020) 7932 1229. And visit www.london.anglican.org/Shrinking-the-Footprint.

Brian Cuthbertson
2nd March 2011

* The cost of the South African trip was minimised by subtracting the cost of a family holiday en route – the remainder due to the South African leg being shared between the LDF, the Church of Southern Africa, and Alliance of Religions and Conservation (the organisation tasked by the UN to promote these long-term plans). The carbon cost of flying (£91 for the SA leg) is being settled through *Carbon Retirement* – the same scheme that is an integral part of *Climate Action Plans*.