

URC South Western Synod Eco Policy

Green Light: Steps to sustainability:

The United Reformed Church is committed to caring for creation and adopted an Environmental Policy in 2016, revised 2019. It commended the Eco Church award scheme within the context of its Environmental Policy and has worked with A Rocha UK to develop Eco Synod as a tool to encourage local churches to engage in wider creation care. It is evident that if we are to maintain a balanced eco system then the church needs to lead by example.

At its Trust Meeting in Autumn 2021 the SW Synod Trustees agreed new support for local churches to improve their premises in relation to environmental and ecological responsibility. This policy has therefore been developed working alongside our Green Apostles.

Survey:

The Synod Property Officer wishes to conduct a questionnaire survey and its findings can be incorporated into the Quinquennial Surveys. This survey will also be useful for churches looking into the A Rocha Award Scheme too as it forms part of the Eco Church survey for the Gold-Bronze Awards (as applicable). Equally if you have already submitted your Eco church survey– you only need do this once and can forward your findings to us (just the part which asks for information about buildings and land) by sending a copy to the Synod property office by email: property@urcsouthwest.org.uk

This information will provide an instant audit about our church property assets (churches, halls, manses and land (including churchyards) and any other property related interests in respect of how eco-friendly these assets are. The results of the survey will help us to see how even small steps can help with our eco-challenge and the results will be shared across the Synod. If you need help with filling out the survey please contact the Synod Property office / Green Apostles who should be able to assist / offer guidance. For assurance the vast majority of the questions can be answered by whoever is responsible for the building maintenance, with possibly a very few needing input from the treasurer (e.g. whether the energy supplier is on a green tariff).

In addition we would hope that you will be looking at ways to reduce the carbon footprint such as exploration of supplier's green tariffs, the installation of SMART and water meters and by switching to recycled products such as toilet rolls, cleaning products, biodegradable products instead of plastics; recycled paper in admin church offices. We would also encourage you to support your local council's recycling schemes including as appropriate clothes recycling bins.

For larger schemes such as installation of insulation, solar panels, boiler replacements would usually form part of the normal property grants such as Facelift Grants / 10% Grants and identified under the 5 year Quintennial Survey as a requirement / update.

Thank you for your support in this very important and vital ministry.

Eco-Grant:

The Trustees have agreed to introduce an Eco Grant. Its prime purpose being to encourage churches in all manner of eco friendly schemes from bat boxes to LED lighting schemes and shows their commitment to this topical and worth-while agenda.

Obviously for bigger schemes (such as boiler replacements, insulation, solar panels) the Synod encourages use of the Facelift Grants (50%) and the Property 10% grant (LEPs FLG 25% / Property 5% Grant).

The Eco-Grant will be useful in a variety of ways to help churches develop eco best practice via incremental steps a bit like the loaves and the fishes by starting in a small way and building up to make a huge difference.

The Eco-Grant will provide 50% or up to £3000 (25% or up to £1500 for an LEP) and can be applied for at any time for eco-related projects by completing the Property Form in the usual way. From time to time this policy will be reviewed and eco successes (no matter how great or small) will be reported in the e-newsletter from the Synod to celebrate and encourage our church communities to get involved showing our towns and villages that we the URC SW churches are serious about climate change and are committed to making a difference in our neighbourhoods, as custodians of this planet.

Examples where Eco-Grants could be used are listed below:

In our churches and church halls:

- calculating targets for reduction of carbon footprint and an energy efficiency management plan via consultancy;
- exploring double glazing opportunities;
- exploring secondary double glazing options;
- replacing light bulbs with LED light bulbs;
- making use of and installation of rainwater collection points including the use of grey water;
- installation of dual flush systems (or similar water saving devices) on toilet cisterns;
- providing cycle racks
- providing electricity car charging points; (see enclosed as a useful link https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/CCB_EV_Charging_Guidance.pdf)
- recycling facilities both inside and/or outside the buildings etc.

In our Manses:

- calculating targets for reduction of carbon footprint and an energy efficiency management plan via consultancy;
- exploring double glazing opportunities;
- exploring secondary double glazing options;
- replacing light bulbs with LED light bulbs;
- making use of and installation of rainwater collection points including the use of grey water;
- installation of dual flush systems (or similar water saving devices) on toilet cisterns;
- providing cycle racks;
- providing electricity car charging points; (see enclosed as a useful link https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/CCB_EV_Charging_Guidance.pdf)
- recycling facilities both inside and/or outside the manses etc.
- encouragement for wildlife habitats in our land such as Bat boxes, hedgehog boxes, plant a wildflower garden or corner, bee keeping, bug boxes, bird boxes, bird feeder stations;
- creating a pond or wetland in the garden;
- composting facilities in the garden;
- growing fruit and vegetables in suitable planters or into the soil in the garden;
- going peat-free;
- planting native trees and bushes;
- Using alternatives to harmful chemicals in the management of the gardens;
- Installing a water butt for watering plants;

In our church yards:

- encouragement for wildlife habitats in our land such as Bat boxes, hedgehog boxes, plant a wildflower/meadow garden, bee keeping, bug boxes, bird boxes, bird feeder stations;
- creating a pond or wetland;
- composting facilities;
- growing fruit and vegetables in suitable planters (going peat-free);
- creating a contemplative prayer garden;
- planting native trees;
- Using alternatives to harmful chemicals in the management of the land;
- Installing a water butt for watering plants;