**The Diocese of Leeds Environmental Policy Statement**

**Background**

Jesus commissioned His disciples to take the good news of his death and resurrection to all of creation, reiterating the original purpose of humanity to act as rulers over creation. Rulers who are made in God’s image, loving, Christlike rulers, servant kings within the natural world.

Climate change and its impacts on people is one of the biggest issues confronting our world today. People of all ages, backgrounds and experience are finding that taking action on climate change is at the very heart of what it means to be a Christian for them. The Anglican five marks of mission have always seen the protection of creation and challenges to injustice as part of the mission of the church.

The church is called to share a narrative of hope and action, something especially relevant in light of the climate emergency. We see caring for creation as integral to the whole ministry and mission of our churches and church schools.

The diocese’s ambition to become net zero carbon is a symbol, and by itself will not prevent global climate change. However, it stands in a long and biblical tradition of prophetic action, drawing attention to all that runs counter to God’s will and the common good. The kingdom of God is characterised by justice, peace and ecological wholeness. The vocation of the church is to be sign, a sacrament, and a foretaste of Christ’s kingdom - a kingdom that brings the renewal of the whole of creation.

Our net zero carbon work is a significant and costly act of sacrificial love, which tells the next generation and the world’s most vulnerable that they are heard, and we are alongside them. We are called to stand in solidarity with our global sisters and brothers across the Anglican Communion. We know the injustice of climate change, which is impacting most deeply on the poorest in society, both locally and globally, and future generations, who have historically done the least to cause it. The ecological crisis is also a humanitarian crisis, and addressing it is as much about how we love one another as how we care for God’s creation.

**Commitments**

The Diocese of Leeds is striving to be net zero carbon by 2030. Our vision for 2030 for our clergy properties, schools and churches to be warm, bright and welcoming buildings that are well maintained, powered by renewable energy and more energy efficient, with lower energy costs.

Investing in the future of our buildings will enable them to be sustainable signs of the kingdom, better serving the needs of the worshiping congregation and community and acting as beacons of excellence in the transition away from fossil fuels.

The Diocese of Leeds continues to be at the forefront of eco mission nationally. We are acting in response and support of the General Synod’s call in February 2020, to be net zero carbon by 2030.

The key principles which underpin our ambition to be net zero across the diocese estate are that it is:

* Rooted in a strong theological foundation
* Urgent, relevant and widely understood
* Data driven and focused
* Embedded in all we do

Our diocesan rapid decarbonisation work is not our only response to climate change, nor the only way we express our mission to care for all creation. We continue to promote and engage with the Eco Church Award scheme, a tool to assist creation care being threaded through the life of a church. Our net zero programme provides opportunities for all Christians, including our Bishops and senior clergy, to advocate with credibility about this work in the public square.

**Implementation**

In 2021 the Leeds Diocesan Board of Finance approved and Diocesan Synod welcomed the diocese’s strategic decarbonisation plan - Saving Creation: Strategic Action to Combat Climate Change.

The plan was introduced to Synod in October 2021 and built on both the General Synod motion in 2020 and a previous Diocesan synod motion in March 2019 committing the Diocese of Leeds to carbon reduction targets (50% reduction by 2030 and zero by 2050)

Having a net zero action and climate resilience plan is part of the longer term strategic planning for the diocese. This allows us to be relevant and inspirational, and also gives the buildings our communities use a firm footing for many years to come. Continued engagement and communication with a wide range of stakeholders is essential. We acknowledge that not all PCCs, schools or clergy property occupants will be in a position to move at the same speed, and careful support and guidance will be needed as we journey together.

While there is a long tradition of scripturally-based Christian relationship with creation, decarbonisation brings new challenges where the body of Christ does not have prior expertise. As we learn together, training and upskilling will be vital to help meet our ambition of net zero. Several training strands are already underway for clergy, lay people and diocesan staff, including us developing a groundbreaking Eco Mission Enabler Ministry Pathway on behalf of the national church. Adaptability will be required through the phases of this programme to meet the needs of learners at different stages. We want to create confident Christians who can help to transform communities for the climate emergency context.

This work will be firmly embedded in our work and mission, as part of our broader Barnabas: Encouraging Confidence programme. Various specific roles have been created to support parts of this work, including a Property Development Officer, a School Buildings Support Officer, a Net Zero Churches Technical Consultant and a Net Zero Funding Officer. Funding our net zero ambition will be challenging. We value the partners we are already working within and will be open to working with other organisations.

We are working to ensure our land estate management is in line with our net zero strategy and supports high levels of biodiversity and climate change mitigations. We are working with agricultural tenants to ensure high levels of environmental management and best practice for sustainable agriculture. We are undertaking a planting programme of new woodland on our glebe land to increase biodiversity and sequester carbon. We are working with other partners to identify biodiversity enhancements and flood mitigation schemes within our portfolio. We are also working with renewable developers to identify wind, solar and battery storage opportunities on our land.