

The Green Church Showcase launched

The Church of England is collaborating with the Church Times and the Roman Catholic Church to launch the "Green Church Showcase."



This will be a hunt for inspiring church initiatives to protect and preserve the planet and builds on earlier successful collaborations: the Green Church Awards and the Green Health Awards.

Participating churches, church schools, dioceses, and Christian groups of any denomination, are invited to submit details of work that they have undertaken to combat climate change, protect nature, and involve their communities in making changes.

A judging panel chaired by the Bishop of Norwich, Graham Usher, the new lead bishop for the environment, will sift through the entries at the end of July. They will be looking for projects that are most easily reproducible by others, so the whole Church contributes to the reversal of climate change.

These selected projects will feature in a specially commissioned video — the 'showreel' — to be launched during the COP26 climate talks in Glasgow at the start of November.

Participants will be encouraged to include information about:

- Building projects moving towards net-zero carbon, such as energy efficiencies, pew heaters, heat pumps, and solar panels
- Building projects that balance conservation and the environment, such as maintenance programmes, sympathetic retrofits, and using low-carbon materials
- Courageous advocacy and community engagement
- Nurturing the natural world, and using church land to develop health and wellbeing
- Involving young people at every level
- Diocesan initiatives that break new ground
- Simple but effective gains on a shoestring

Past winners of Green Awards, eco-congregations, and groups from any denomination are invited to tell their stories.

The showreel will be launched during an online debate about the Church's response to the climate crisis in early November, hosted by Church Times. The selected projects will also feature in a booklet, published at the same time. Advice will be available online, to give other churches and groups the tools they need to replicate the successful projects.

Timetable:

Launch: 4 June

Closing date for entries: Wed 21 July

Judging w/b: Mon 26 July

Creation of videos, booklet, and dossiers: August-October

Launch event and publication: w/b 1 November

The Rt Revd Graham Usher, Bishop of Norwich and Chair of the Church of England's Environmental Working Group, said this week:

"It's my great pleasure to support the Green Church Showcase as one of my first actions, in the week I take over as lead Bishop on the Environment.

"In this vital year for climate action, I encourage churches and church schools around the country to tell their stories. The Showcase aims to celebrate practical action on the ground and, through these real examples of what is possible, inspire others.

"Whether your project has tackled the energy use in your building, cared for nature in your grounds, or engaged your community, please do apply as part of the Green Church Showcase."

The Rt Revd John Arnold, Bishop of Salford and lead Bishop for the Environment, for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, said:

"The Green Church Showcase is a welcome opportunity to acknowledge the achievements of those parishes who are at the forefront of making green changes, which are key to creating a more sustainable future for our society.

"Sharing examples of best environmental practice and supporting creative change will help us to better understand how we can make progress together, as the Body of Christ, on the pressing issue of climate change. In my own Diocese of Salford, through the 'Guardians of Creation' project, we are leading on research into the local church's response to the ecological crisis. We will share this research across ecumenical networks, as the project unfolds.

"Catholic communities are already pioneering change in various ways, including engaging with CAFOD's *livesimply* award, transitioning to greener energies and developing education on this issue in our schools. As we move towards COP26, we hope that 'Green Church Showcase' provides a platform that will enable and encourage churches to learn from each other across denominations.

Andy Atkins, Chief Executive Officer of A Rocha UK, said:

"The Green Church Showcase is a very timely initiative to celebrate — and learn from — the achievements of churches who have been working so hard to make a difference on climate change. In all my 35 years of campaigning on social justice and the environment, I cannot remember a time so fraught with risk and so overflowing with opportunity. Christians and

churches can have a critical influence on this outcome by becoming beacons of good practice, and, speaking up together, on climate change.

“Five years after A Rocha UK launched Eco Church, it has become a national community of more than 3,500 churches addressing the environmental crisis, using practical ways to restore biodiversity and reduce carbon emissions. Christians and churches have a wealth of assets — buildings, land, community links — to bring to bear to this challenge of our generation. And Eco Church provides a learning community with shared tools in which churches can draw on those assets and advance together”.

Paul Handley, editor of the *Church Times*, said:

“Nothing is more encouraging than learning from people who have tackled the same problems and met the same challenges — and overcome them. We know that many Christian communities have taken huge strides in reducing their carbon footprint and protecting the natural world. It will be a privilege to report these achievements and inspire others to follow their lead.”

For more information, and application forms, see <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/green-church-showcase>.