

# DIOCESE IN EUROPE

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THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

Bishop in Europe:  
**The Right Reverend Dr. Robert Innes**



The Suffragan Bishop in Europe  
**The Right Reverend Dr. David Hamid**

January 26<sup>th</sup> 2021

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

## **Carbon Net Zero Target**

We live in a world facing many and varied issues that affect our day to day living and that test our Christian faith both as individuals and as chaplaincies. Most immediately, all of us are facing the uncertainty that Covid-19 brings and the consequent change with which we are having to deal on a regular basis.

However, one of the things about which all of humanity is sure is that we all belong to this one planet Earth on which we live and which is our home in the universe. Our longer-term task therefore is to work out how can we build on the good foundations and initiatives that are already in place in so many of our chaplaincy communities, to care enough for our common home so that it remains a sustainable place for future generations.

Much human activity, in its sometimes careless domination of God's gift of creation, produces carbon dioxide (among other greenhouse gasses) as a by-product. The science tells us that, unless we manage to reduce these emissions, there will be an irreversible consequence: the temperature rise in our planet's atmosphere will have very serious effects on all life, human or otherwise.

The peaceful witness of people such as Greta Thunberg tells us that now is the time to act; "Eleven years is all we have ahead of us to change our direction" (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, 2019). The General Synod at its meeting in February 2020 set before the whole Church the challenge to reduce our target for net carbon emissions to zero by 2030. This challenge requires a thorough assessment of the life of our church communities as a Diocese throughout Europe.

Our Diocesan Synod meeting in December was hugely supportive of the aim of a net zero balance for our carbon emissions by 2030, reflecting the aspirations already in our Diocesan Strategy. Action is needed on two specific fronts. One is to actively work to reduce the emissions that we and our chaplaincies are responsible for through our own consumption of resources. The other is to balance our use of those resources which produce carbon dioxide with carbon absorbing activities, so called carbon offsetting. This may involve engaging with schemes such as tree planting. As bishops we have already been practising carbon offsetting in relation to the essential travel we are required to undertake.

As bishops we have established an environmental working group chaired by Archdeacon David Waller working alongside our Environment Officer Rev'd Elizabeth Bussman. To get us started the group has suggested three easy things for every chaplaincy to consider, which we commend to you:

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1. **To get ‘eco-church’ onto the working agendas of our chaplaincies and meetings.**

The group was struck by the request that our Chaplaincy Councils and our AGMs are asked to automatically include ‘safeguarding’ as an item on all agendas and felt that this was good practice to follow. We are therefore asking that this also be the case with ‘eco-church’, supported by our existing Diocesan Synod decision that we become an ‘eco-diocese’.

Within that somewhat general title it will be possible to discuss a range of issues and responses. One will be following through in the work that A Rocha encourages (<https://arocha.org.uk/>). A second will be paying attention to our net carbon emissions as General Synod has asked us to do.

2. **To understand better the environmental impact of our activities by exploring our carbon zero footprint.**

The Diocesan working group has looked at several online tools in order to offer some recommendations to Chaplaincies. We suggest that you might use the following in order to help calculate your own community’s carbon footprint. This is not to prevent chaplaincies exploring options themselves, just to complement existing local usage and good practice. (<https://www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx>)

3. **To distribute the ‘First Steps’ documents to chaplaincies**

These are a set of useful practical ideas for churches that have been produced centrally by the Church of England and that are intended to help communities reflect on their own circumstances and local ‘net carbon’ decisions. They are included with the e-mail for this letter as a part of the support that the working group seeks to offer.

As at this time of year we turn from reflecting on the vulnerability of Christ’s birth towards the loving sacrifice of his death, we are drawn to understand afresh God’s faithfulness to us as human beings. The incarnation of the Son of God reminds us that it is the created order in which God has chosen to dwell and through which God can be discovered afresh in each moment and generation. And in the cross of Christ, we see the most powerful working out of the love of God for the world he has made (John 3.16).

We therefore commend these issues to your continued prayer and action through the lives of the chaplaincy communities that together form our diocesan family.

With all good wishes,

Yours in Christ,

*+ Robert Gibraltar in Europe*

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*+ David*

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