

SHEFFIELD METHODIST DISTRICT

ENVIRONMENTAL VISION AND POLICY – 3 MARCH 2026



Policy statement

We recognise the urgency of the climate and nature crises and the fundamental injustice these represent. We will take the practical steps necessary to strive toward safeguarding the integrity of creation and sustaining the life of the Earth.

Connexional commitment

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission. Caring for creation is one of the ways, we as churches, can share God's love with others, challenge injustice and help people in our own communities and beyond.

The Methodist Church has set an aspirational target of becoming a net zero carbon emissions church by 2030. Many districts, circuits and churches have already begun to work towards net zero goals, an Eco Church awards, or other aims in caring for creation. The Action for Hope – path to net zero was approved by Methodist Council in 2021 with focus on Faith (consistent use of assets), Wisdom and Lifestyles.

Furthermore, the Methodist Church, in providing Action for Hope funding, has set expectations about expected behaviours:

- Linking creation care and climate justice to mission/ growth planning
- Measuring carbon emissions and anticipated emissions impacts of proposed actions
- Registering with A Rocha Eco Church
- Having a person/ group responsible for overseeing their environmental priorities
- Willingness to share stories of their eco-actions

Our Net Zero vision:

As an integral part of our commitment to become a growing, inclusive, evangelistic, justice seeking district “for such a time as this”, our net zero vision is that by 2030:

- **simple incremental steps in creation care will be a frequent justice seeking route to churches becoming revitalised**
- **at least 18 justice-seeking flourishing churches across our district will have become Silver Eco Churches**
- **the district will be widely seen to be “leading by example” on a shared journey to Net Zero through its own activities**

By “flourishing” we mean churches which are in a position of sufficient stability to meaningfully write a medium term mission/ growth plan and have potential to grow significantly and become noticeably even more inclusive, evangelistic and justice-seeking than they are now. These are broad themes, with indicators of fruitfulness and priorities being best defined locally. Stability and level of energy makes assessment against Eco Church criteria and capital-intensive projects more likely to be wise investments.

New churches and fragile churches with willingness to experiment with new ways of being that they might be “revitalised” have an equally significant place in our net zero vision. Such churches will often be reliant on relatively small numbers of people. They are also more likely to change or significantly remodel their places of meeting in the near future.

Key challenges will be:

- High costs of capital expenditure
- Specialist expertise needed to identify carbon-saving measures
- In Church at the Margins contexts or fragile churches, time and effort required to understand and measure compliance with Eco Church requirements may not feel a natural priority. Church members/ building users may be living in fuel poverty with regard to their own homes.
- Lack of awareness may inhibit understanding of the gospel imperative to respond to the climate and nature crises
- Lack of awareness of practical environmental actions that can be taken with minimal cost or effort
- Failure to address our own carbon footprint restricts our missional credibility

To enable this vision, as a district we will:

1. Continue to provide subsidised Energy Efficiency Surveys for buildings
2. Provide combination of grants/ loans to implement recommendations from Energy Efficiency Surveys
3. Facilitate a District Eco Church support network, complementing and signposting other networks, and spreading awareness of how churches could take steps forward
4. Model practical and prayerful consideration of environmental impacts of our own activities
5. Register as an Eco District and reach Bronze Accreditation
6. Achieve EPC energy efficiency rating of C or higher for all residential properties under district trusteeship, and encourage circuits to set their own environmental policies

Our actions

1. Continue to provide subsidised Energy Efficiency Surveys for church premises

At the time of approval of this policy, we have supported 18 churches in having a tailored specialist survey undertaken by our recommended supplier. These surveys are effective in clarifying the most effective and efficient ways of reducing energy consumption and carbon footprint, and provide valuable evidence when seeking grant funding.

We will continue to offer 50% subsidy for Eco Surveys and encourage churches to make use of these. Further details are available at

<https://www.sheffieldmethodist.org/what-we-do/finance-fundraising/energy-efficiency-fund.html>

2. Provide combination of grants/ loans to implement recommendations from Energy Efficiency Surveys

Provide grants of up to £10,000 to Bronze Eco Churches to make improvements to their buildings to support their progression towards Silver Eco Church status. Our expectation that reaching Silver is significantly more expensive than reaching Bronze for most churches.

Grant conditions will include that these changes are based on grant-supported energy efficiency surveys or other suitably qualified professional advice, and that they are consistent with the church's active mission/ growth plan.

Grants will be awarded by DLT, with applications being pre-scrutinised by the Net Zero Support Team.

These grants will initially be funded by money allocated to Sheffield District as part of the Connexional Action for Hope strategy.

Further details are available at <https://www.sheffieldmethodist.org/what-we-do/finance-fundraising.html>

3. Facilitate a District Eco Church support network, complementing and signposting other networks, and spreading awareness of how churches could take steps forward

We recognise that what makes for an effective network will vary over time, and that different people and churches will have different needs.

We will regularly promote eco stories, resources and advice through all district media channels (email newsletter, social media, magazine), with an emphasis on simple practical actions and theological underpinning.

We will (with their permission) identify and communicate with formal or informal eco-advocates across the majority of our churches. Over time, by incorporating into officer visits or conversations with church leaders.

We will support and equip people with opportunities to spread awareness, such as Local Preachers and Worship Leaders.

4. Model practical and prayerful consideration of environmental impacts of our own activities

The main activities of the district with carbon footprint are expected to be

- Paid travel (including coaches to 3Generate)
- Staff (most of whom work from home)
- IT equipment
- Internal and outsourced printing (including our magazine)
- Heating district office (although this is provided by The Foundry Sheffield for the Victoria Hall building using a district heating system)
- Events, of which District Gathering is the largest
- Potentially we will become responsible for a residential property portfolio (see below)

We have recently started

- Monitoring car miles claimed for on district expenses
- Asking attendees at District Gathering and other district events how they have travelled and their recommendations to reduce carbon footprint

We will set priorities each year for aspects of our work where we will concentrate our efforts on improving our environmental impact.

5. Register as an Eco District and reach Bronze Accreditation

Reaching Bronze Accreditation relies in part on Victoria Hall (the church in which the district office is located) becoming a Bronze Eco Church. We may need to support The Foundry Sheffield (who manage the building) and Victoria Hall Methodist Church in reaching this accreditation, noting the significant steps that have recently been made through installation of solar PV and secondary glazing.

6. Achieve EPC energy efficiency rating of C or higher for all residential properties under district trusteeship, and encourage circuits to set their own environmental policies

Specific funding streams may become available for residential properties, which we will need to be alert to for this target.

Current Methodist Guidance (CPD Book VII, part A2.3) is that “circuits should seek to provide manse to meet a minimum of a ‘C’ energy efficiency rating.”

Currently we are not responsible for paying energy bills on any buildings as a district, but will need to consider impact on this policy if we do.

Net Zero Support Team

Implementation of this policy will be overseen by the Net Zero Support Team, on behalf of the District Leading Team

An updated version of this policy will be presented to DLT for re-approval in 2028.