

Ipswich Road United Reformed Church Environmental Policy v4

1. Purpose

1.1. The United Reformed Church has the overarching goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2030.

1.2. This Environmental Policy contains the commitments made by Ipswich Road United Reformed Church (referred to as 'The Church' or 'We' below).

2. Summary

2.1. The Church is committed to improving the sustainability and environmental stewardship of its activities and operations for the benefit of all of God's creation.

2.2. The Church has registered as an Eco Church and a Fairtrade Church and will follow the A Rocha Eco Church guidance to help us achieve our environmental goals.

3. Context

3.1. As Christians we are called to conserve the earth's complex and fragile ecology and to be good stewards of its resources. We recognise that human beings have a special responsibility to care for God's good earth so that human life and all God's creatures may be sustained in harmony.

3.2. We are called to demonstrate God's love for the whole world. We recognise that: the climate crisis is becoming more urgent and that its greatest impact will be on the most vulnerable people in our world; irreparable damage is being done to ecosystems all over the planet, resulting in severe loss of biodiversity and shrinking the earth's capacity to provide food for all of its inhabitants; humanity's inability to address this crisis has diminished the biosphere for future generations and that action can no longer be delayed.

3.3. The organisational context for this Policy Statement is the Environmental Policy for the United Reformed Church, as adopted by General Assembly in 2022. The most significant contributors to the denomination's carbon footprint are travel, buildings, energy use, and how investments are used. It encourages local churches to adopt sustainable practices regarding targets and monitoring, meetings, travel and transport, buildings, investments, use and disposal of resources, worship, teaching and education, as well as advocacy. Mission Council is continuing to develop the denominations' environmental policies and actions as part of an on-going engagement with the environmental crisis.

4. Our commitments

4.1. The Church is committed to making its premises carbon neutral by 2030, through the following actions:

Having calculated our carbon footprint we will continue to track and identify ways to reduce it by cutting energy waste, improving insulation, and upgrading to more energy efficient lighting and appliances.

Having installed solar panels and transferred to a renewable energy supplier, we will monitor and reduce our energy use, making our many groups using the premises aware of this strategy. We will investigate off-setting any remaining carbon footprint.

4.2. Care for the intricate web of life on our planet is a core value for our activities. It affects the way we worship, what we purchase as well as how we live our individual lives.

4.3. We are committed to minimising our negative impact on the environment. We will encourage the practice of sustainability principles such as reduce, reuse, repair, recycle and repurpose. We will encourage our church community and beyond to live gentler on the earth and to challenge systemic injustice.

5. What this means in practice

5.1. Worship.

We will make opportunities for special celebrations of Creation; and we will incorporate into our regular services preaching, prayers and songs about caring for God's earth.

5.2. Teaching.

Our human responsibility of caring for the earth will be included in teaching for children, youth, and adults, including exploring related themes in small groups. Through our publications and our website we will inform and encourage progress towards our goal of safeguarding the integrity of creation and sustaining the life of the earth.

5.3. Stewardship.

In managing our church buildings (both church premises and manse) we will find ways to reduce our consumption, and to meet our energy needs from renewable sources. We will endeavour to make environmentally positive choices in all aspects of our work, including: using eco-friendly products, such as loo rolls, cleaning materials and eliminate our use of single use plastics; reducing waste; improving energy efficiency; and encouraging environmental awareness among all users of the Church premises.

5.4. Land management.

We will continue to explore and implement creative options to encourage native wildlife on our church land, and commit to an eco-friendly management approach.

5.5. Community engagement.

We will create opportunities for our neighbourhood to engage with environmental issues and show by example meaningful responses to the challenges posed by climate change and the need for a more sustainable lifestyle. We will work with others in our local community on local environmental issues and collaborate on actions to tackle them.

5.6. Campaigning

We will support charities and campaigns to address the global impact of the climate crisis and respond to the nature crisis and loss of biodiversity through practical action, collaboration and campaigning.

5.7 Advocacy

Seeking climate justice is part of Christian discipleship and practice. We will highlight and raise awareness that the climate and nature crises adversely affect the poorest most. We recognise that it is our responsibility to promote justice for people and nature wherever they are in the world.

5.8. Communication

We will communicate our biblical understanding of responsibility to God for all that is entrusted to us through creation, making the links between poverty, wealth and environmental degradation. We will strive to equip leadership, staff, volunteers and church members with the skills, knowledge and confidence to respond to this responsibility. We will encourage individual members of our congregation to examine their own lifestyle and take actions in their personal lives to complement and supplement the actions of the church community, including: promoting walking and cycling to reduce car use; encouraging the use of ethically sourced food that follows the LOAF principles (Locally grown, Organic, Animal-friendly, Fairtrade) and reducing their household's carbon footprint.

5.9 Investment

As far as we are able to have influence we will

- a) not invest in fossil fuel companies whose total turnover is more than 10% derived from the extraction and/or supply of fossil fuels, including thermal coal, natural gas and oil
- b) where possible, play a proactive role as investors, by engaging further with companies whose activities foster significant carbon emissions, e.g. the electricity and automotive industries, and producers of energy intensive products such as cement.
- c) support investment in renewable energy and clean technologies.

6. Collaboration

6.1. We invite all members of the congregation and all users of The Church premises to support us in implementing this policy. We welcome feedback and constructive suggestions for actions to help achieve our objectives.

Ipswich Road URC, Eco Group, April 2026