

Eco Diocese Bronze Award REPORT

Name of Diocese: Diocese of Lichfield
Contact person: Jan Firth
Date of bronze application: 30.8.25 Evidence and 25.9.25 Application Form
Date of EC review meeting: 1.10.25
Outcome: Award confirmed



	Observations and feedback
Ownership Commissioned an individual or group to coordinate and progress Eco Diocese	Lichfield Diocese established a NZC Steering Group in 2024 to write the diocese NZC strategy and milestones. The group continues to meet to drive forward these objectives, including Eco Church and Eco Diocese progress. The working group includes representation from DAC, church and schools building and estates departments, Director of Comms and others. There is a strategic and methodical approach to implementation and monitoring and clear whole diocese ownership. There is a clear outward facing statement on the Diocese of Lichfield website including the statement 'As a diocese, we are committed to taking climate change seriously' here.
Relevant Church House/Diocesan Office award Achieve bronze award for Church House/Diocesan Office.	The diocese office, St Mary's House, gained a silver Eco Church Award on 30.1.25, award reference is ZBEPZD.
Eco Church awards 10% of local churches registered; 5% of local churches awarded	In a diocese of 546 churches, the Diocese of Lichfield has 181 (33%) churches registered and 70 (13%) churches have awards. Of the awarded churches this includes 20 silver and 2 gold awarded churches - a tremendous achievement and great resource for the diocese. The criteria thresholds are well exceeded and the diocese is in a strong position for going forward. Note, as there are a number of Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs) in the Diocese of Lichfield, don't forget to include these when reviewing the church data on the Eco Church platform for example. The approach of using the Rural Deans to promote Eco Church in their patch seems to be successful in the growth of Eco Church registrations. With an especially high number of registered churches, we encourage targeting registered churches to progress toward bronze as a potential strategic approach.
Policy An environmental policy.	The Diocese of Lichfield Environment Policy is easily accessible from the diocese website. An updated Environmental Policy (2020) is also embedded on the webpage and is currently being updated for presenting to the synod in Autumn 2025. Although the current policy (2019) is in the process of being updated, it outlines biblical underpinning, is succinct and has clear objectives stated. We look forward to the updated version being adopted in due course as it provides more depth and detail.

	The updated policy connects diocesan responsibility with all of creation, climate justice and St Chad's own teaching - the saint and bishop to whom Lichfield Cathedral is dedicated. The updated policy is comprehensive, and stretches to all facets of the diocese infrastructure with practical actions.
Training and development Embed environmental issues in ongoing training for both lay and ordained ministers.	The Diocese of Lichfield Autumn 2025 Lichfield.docx-EmbeddedFile.pdf and Spring 2025 Lichfield.docx-EmbeddedFile.pdf illustrate a comprehensive diocese training programme produced each term. It is understood that environmental issues and creation care theology are included in all the programmes. The following training events were especially noted: Consider the Lilies: Harvest & Creation Care Thursday 5 September 2024 Mortal, can these bones live? - A theological and practical study day on creation care in the season of resurrection Thursday 27 February 2025. The Green team delivered the session and there were a mixture of 20 priests and laity. In deepening this criteria moving forward, we encourage environmental issues and creation care theology to be more explicitly expressed in the training programme as a discrete theme or expressed in the descriptions of other courses.
Schools and education Promote environmental care across church schools in the diocese.	There are 206 schools within the Diocese of Lichfield: 20 voluntary aided, 75 voluntary controlled, 110 academies, Oone Cathedral school. £166,000 of funding has been secured for Low Carbon Skills Funding for 8 Schools to engage specialist and expert advice and skills needed to create robust heat decarbonisation plans to prepare for heat decarbonisation and energy efficiency works. Litchfield Diocese Board of Education are partnering with Justice and Courageous Advocacy Network as a resource to train teachers and leaders in supporting schools to <i>'help their students develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to speak out against injustice, promote equality and human rights and work towards a more sustainable and equitable future.'</i> There is clear evidence that there is considerable action being taken within the schools of the diocese to make progress in decarbonisation. We would encourage the diocese to explore tools to further support schools in integrating creation care into the classroom e.g. Christian Aid's Global Neighbours, Eco Schools and Let's Go Zero.
Carbon reduction Commit to developing a plan for carbon reduction.	The diocese NZC Action Plan is a clear, comprehensive and easily accessible document, we especially noted the comment: <i>'Our decision to decarbonise the diocese is fundamentally based in our responsibility as Christians to tend carefully to God's creation and protect it.'</i>
Finance and investments Manage diocesan investments ethically.	In 2023, the Diocese has a policy statement Diocese ends investments in fossil fuel - Diocese of Lichfield explaining that <i>'The Diocese of Lichfield has completed its divestment from fossil fuel companies and has committed to not reinvesting in them in the future.'</i>

	Moving forward (toward silver Eco Diocese), we encourage exploring the The Green Declaration to help move conversation toward <i>investment</i> in climate solutions.
Collaboration (e.g. with other dioceses, faith groups, secular/community groups) Work with other dioceses, faith groups and/or secular community groups to encourage greater environmental action, including promoting Eco Church as a helpful tool.	As well as collaboration with other dioceses via the DEO network, the Diocese of Lichfield DEO works with the diocese Strengthening communities team who ‘work with communities and individuals, churches and other faith groups, across Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, The Black Country and north Shropshire, to support community building and improve lives. We want to help build resilient communities where everyone’s voice is heard and everyone’s strengths are celebrated. We do this by actively partnering with a wide range of churches, faith groups, charities, voluntary, community and social enterprises.’ This is a fantastic initiative and we enjoyed learning more about the Caldmore community garden that has enabled people in that community to come together and grow flowers and meadows and vegetables.
Celebrating Creation Established the habit of recording and celebrating individual environmental initiatives.	The Diocese of Lichfield has some excellent resources shared on the Diocese of Lichfield website and NZC page. Although a few years old, we really enjoyed this wonderful video. Further examples of evidence of the communication and celebration was highlighted on the news page e.g. St Mary’s House achieving a Silver eco award and great features in the diocese bulletin e.g. Oxon Church getting gold in June. It was also great to learn that a plan for a celebration event is in the pipeline for 2026.

Further comments and observations

There is a very clear sense of the Diocese of Lichfield striving to care for creation. Through comprehensive documents and methodical planning, the diocese is growing the number of Eco Churches, supporting schools as they journey toward NZC and deepening theological understanding of God’s earth and how to care for it. We especially appreciate the excellent communication conveyed in documentation and on the website with clear statements about faith underpinning the action of care for creation. The diocese website is clearly presented with sharing of relevant environmental and NZC resources. We would like to extend our congratulations to all involved in fulfilling the requirements for a bronze Eco Diocese award, this is a tremendous achievement and we hope you share this good news widely. We really encourage you to keep building on these solid foundations as you progress further.