

Community energy project

Bath and Wells has secured funding from the South West Net Zero Hub to explore the possibility of creating a community energy model. Community energy consultancy Pure Leapfrog will look at the options available. Dan Wills, Diocesan Net Zero Adviser explains.



What is community energy?

Community energy is about generating and using energy locally, so that the financial, social and environmental benefits are retained within the community.

How does this community energy project work?

It is understanding what currently prevents community energy from happening at scale across the Church, and designing a model that can overcome those barriers.

How does it work in practice?

A central organisation would raise the capital and install solar panels on buildings. These buildings can then access genuinely green, locally generated electricity at a lower and more stable cost, without needing to fund the upfront installation.

What about churches?

We will explore how churches can make use of suitable roof spaces, including where buildings are listed, while respecting their historic significance. With new energy trading policy emerging at a national level, churches could also begin to act as local energy producers, generating clean energy for their own use.

Why work with Pure Leapfrog?

They bring independent expertise and will help us design a model that works across our diverse buildings and constraints. Their role is to challenge assumptions, test what is viable, and help us develop a flexible approach that standard models cannot offer.

What is the long-term aim?

The long-term aim is to create a scalable, diocesan-wide model that enables many of our buildings to adopt renewable energy, reduce costs, and contribute to our Net Zero Carbon ambitions, and to build resilience, helping our communities better manage rising energy costs.

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From the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells ☩

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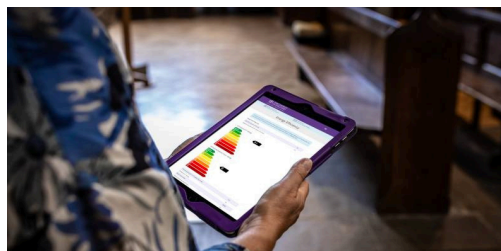
Our journey towards Net Zero Carbon

As part of our mission to take better care of God's earth, Bath and Wells continues to take steps towards its goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. For churches, [the Energy Footprint Tool \(EFT\)](#) supports their journey. It starts with the simple understanding of how much energy you are using and how you can reduce it.

For two churches in our diocese, filling in the EFT also led to them receiving national church grant funding to become demonstrator churches. This enables them to learn how to reduce their energy usage and to share their learnings with others. Taunton Minster is one of those churches.

Murray Cochrane, a member of the Minster's Environment team, explains, "We found we were the highest carbon emitter in the diocese and in the top 20% nationwide. That was a bit of a shock, but it helped people engage with the challenge."

Sue Marshall, a Churchwarden at Holy Trinity Church in Frome, was also surprised by what they found when they completed the EFT, "As a church we knew our energy bills were



high, but we didn't know how we compared to other churches. The EFT made it clear we needed to take some action."

Being a demonstrator church is not about starting from scratch, it is building on the work already underway. It offers an opportunity to deepen that commitment while also helping others in different contexts to take their own next steps.

As Sue shares, this is an important way in which church communities can work together in our shared calling to care for God's earth. "For me, caring for the environment is a fundamental expression of my faith. Taking steps to save energy is a practical way of living that out." That is echoed by Murray, who says, "However hard or long the journey may be, it's important we start making progress."

News in brief

Holy Week Pilgrimage

During Holy Week, Bishop Michael undertook a pilgrimage across Exmoor and the Quantock Hills as part of the diocesan especial focus on prayer in 2026. Pilgrimage has been used by Christians throughout history to pray, draw closer to God and deepen their spiritual journey. Starting on Tuesday of Holy Week and ending on Good Friday, Bishop Michael made his way from Porlock to Goathurst, praying and worshipping with local church communities along the way.



Creative approach to Bible study

During 2024-2025 a number of people met weekly at St. Francis of Assisi Church, Bridgwater to study the Old Testament. As part of their Bible study, participants would listen to a story, discuss it, and then take a quilt pattern designed around it, home to make a quilt

A special safeguarding evening

Colleagues from statutory and voluntary organisations joined the diocesan Safeguarding team for a service and reception in Wells hosted by Bishop Michael. The evening began with everyone attending Choral Evensong at Wells Cathedral, followed by a reception at the Bishop's Palace. Diocesan Safeguarding Manager Ben Goodhind said, "It was inspiring to spend time together, to build relationships and to share the work being undertaken in Bath and Wells."



square. The following week they would return with that story square completed. Over time, these story squares were made into individual quilts. A display of the quilts was held at the church showing a different way to see, understand and think about the Bible stories.

Find out more on these and other stories at bathandwells.org.uk/news

Called to care

By Michael Beasley, Bishop of Bath and Wells

I heard about one of the earliest scientists to get involved in climate change research. When he began, the researcher said, he'd believed that if we could just get the science right, all the challenges could be resolved. The best information would enable humankind to find the right technologies and take the right actions to bring climate change under control. Twenty-five years on, the scientist said, he'd realised he'd got it all wrong. What we need to sort out, he said, is the human heart. We know what to do to address the climate emergency. Our challenge is that we're all too liable to place the actions we need to take into the 'too difficult' box, or just deny there's a problem altogether.

Yet whether we like it or not, the climate emergency is a reality that is advancing upon us. It's seen in rising sea levels and increased freak weather. Talk to our brothers and sisters in Zambia and they'll tell you that the climate emergency is upon them now in increased droughts and floods. Last year the National Emergency Briefing on the Climate and Nature Crisis saw leading experts brief an audience of over 1,200 politicians and leaders from business, culture, faith, sport and the media.

The Briefing outlined the implications of climate breakdown for health, food systems, national security and the economy. If you've not seen it please can I encourage you to [find out where you can watch it.](#)

I invite us all to think too about the next steps we can take to address an issue we'd probably rather ignore. The Church of England has set the bold target of becoming Carbon Net Zero by 2030. Our churches can make a difference in local communities towards achieving this ambitious goal. I urge you to fill out your church's Carbon Footprint return, sign up to achieve an A Rocha Eco Church Award, make whatever difference you can where you are. Such actions are a sign of us turning around – metanoia as the New Testament puts it – away from denial of what's wrong towards putting things right. Our actions can be signs of the change in heart that all of us need to make.

Bishop Michael

