



A New Eco Church Officer to help boost nature and climate action in churches in the North of England

Lucy Foster from Kendal, in Cumbria, has joined Christian conservation charity, A Rocha UK, as their Eco Church officer for the North of England. Lucy is an ordained curate and has worked for 14 years in nature conservation. Lucy's new appointment underscores A Rocha UK's commitment to supporting Eco Churches across the country. Eco Church is a grassroots programme helping to grow and inspire local churches and their communities. With Lucy in her role, the charity aims to widen and deepen their reach in the North of England to equip many more churches by supporting existing and creating new Eco Church networks.

There is an increasing desire in churches in the north of England to respond to the challenges of the climate crisis and nature loss. Lucy will be encouraging churches in their potential to transform local communities and help churches use the Eco Church award programme as a tool to tackle climate change. The damage from the Cumbrian floods in 2009 and 2015 are just one example of the vulnerability of the communities in this region.

A Rocha UK works for protecting and restoring the natural world by equipping Christians and churches in the UK to care for the environment as a normal part of their individual life and church mission. As Eco Church officer for Northern England - home to churches in post industrial towns and small, rural parishes - Lucy will be encouraging many more churches to become Eco Churches. Individual churches - especially those with small congregations, limited resources and old buildings to care for need additional support to

meet them – Eco Church programme and my role can help. There is the hope that more churches will take up the cause of Eco Church.

Over the next five years, A Rocha UK expects to transform local churches and denominations in the UK into a significant force in environmental care and restoration. This new post will play a key role in assisting in the delivery of our strategic goal of seeing 15% of churches in the UK committed to caring for creation by 2025.

Lucy's newly created regional role is thanks to a three-year grant from the Benefact Trust, formerly All Churches Trust. Lucy Foster is a self-supporting minister in the Church of England and curate to the ecumenical Helm Mission Community. A film and drama graduate, Lucy also likes crime fiction. We asked her what she's looking forward to in her new role:

"I am delighted to join the Eco Church team at A Rocha UK. There has never been a more important time to find, stretch and support those very special people who have the will to build a better world through Eco Church. I know that I will be able to support, advise and learn from my team and I'm excited about being part of the next phase of the Eco Church journey. I'm especially looking forward to learning about the creative ways churches across the north are nurturing God's creation and worshipping with diverse Christian communities. I see my job as part of my ordained ministry – the sentinel part of priesthood that Church of England ordination service speaks of – keeping watch and warning the community."

Helen Stephens, Church Relations Manager at A Rocha UK, said: *"As Eco Church continues to grow we are keen to promote and embed Eco Church regionally as well as nationally, recognising that there are unique challenges in different parts of the country. So we are delighted to welcome Lucy Foster to A Rocha UK to expand and deepen the work of Eco Church in the North of England when there has never been a more urgent time for the Church to play its role (along with other sectors of society) in caring for this precious planet. She brings insight and wisdom from her years of conservation work and lay ministry experience as well as a lovely mix of enthusiasm and passion for the natural world and care of people. She is joining a very busy Eco Church team and I look forward to working with her."*

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For images, case studies and to arrange interviews, please contact:

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Notes to editors:

Available for interview - Lucy Foster & Helen Stephens, EcoChurch, A Rocha UK;

1) A Rocha UK is a Christian charity undertaking practical nature conservation and education with local communities and equipping others to care for the environment. Its primary mission is for UK Christians and Churches to care for the environment.

www.arocha.org.uk

A Rocha is part of a worldwide family of A Rocha organisations. We work collaboratively with others who share the passion for the planet and our desire for its flourishing.

2) Eco Church is a free online award scheme and is an A Rocha UK project. It is an award scheme in England and Wales for churches. At a practical level, the Eco Church scheme encourages churches to reduce energy use; protect open space and valuable natural habitats; reduce our churches' contributions to climate change; keep our churches safe and healthy; lessen pressure on the local water supply and reduce run-off into local waterways.

The Eco Church initiative is an ecumenical scheme helping churches link environmental issues and the Christian faith and respond in practical action in the church, in people's lives, and in the local and global community. It has awards at three levels, Bronze, Silver and Gold, and considers how the environment is addressed within worship and teaching, buildings and land, community and global engagement and lifestyle.

<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk>