

PRESS RELEASE 16 June 2022



A New Eco Church Officer to help boost nature and climate action in churches across Wales

Delyth Higgins has joined Christian conservation charity, A Rocha UK as their Eco Church officer for Wales. Delyth joins us at a time of increasing demand for Eco Church as more churches seek support to take practical action on caring for God's earth. Delyth is Welsh-speaking and lives in Swansea. Previously she has worked with Renew Wales, the national programme which supports community groups to take action on climate change.

Eco Church has a good take-up in Wales with over 150 registered churches. Feedback from these churches highlighted the demand for a more regional presence to coordinate events, networks, and promotion of the scheme. The new role is supported by a three-year grant from the Benefact Trust.

A Rocha UK aims to widen and deepen Eco Churches reach in Wales. There is the hope that more churches of different sizes and denominations will register for Eco Church.

Wales is home to large churches in growing cities to small, rural traditional chapels and parishes, and Delyth hopes to encourage many of them to become Eco Churches.

Churches will benefit from shared learning, support, ideas and resources and speaking with those who have already done something similar. There are already new EC resources available in Welsh, which Delyth will build upon and offer more talks and events in the Welsh language. A Rocha UK works to protect and restore the natural world by equipping Christians and churches in the UK to care for the environment as a regular part of their individual life and church mission.

Delyth says: 'Since moving house three years ago, I have become even more aware of nature and take an interest in watching the huge variety of birds that come into the garden and the beautiful views towards the mountains in the north – through the changing seasons. I am looking forward to meeting the people around Wales who have, who are and who will be embarking on the Eco Church scheme and, in particular, building relationships and networks amongst churches throughout Wales so that they can learn from, support and encourage each other.'

Helen Stephens, Church Relations Manager at A Rocha UK, said: “ *We are keen to promote and embed Eco Church more deeply across Wales, recognising that there are unique challenges in different parts of the country. So we are delighted to welcome Delyth Higgins to A Rocha UK to expand and deepen the work of Eco Church in Wales 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.*

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

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Notes to editors:

Available for interview - Delyth Higgins & 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.

www.arocha.org.uk

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 the local water supply run-off into local waterways.

The Eco Church initiative is an ecumenical scheme helping churches to make the link between environmental issues and the Christian faith and to 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>

3) Benefact Trust exists to make a positive difference in people's lives by funding, guiding and celebrating the work of churches and Christian charities, empowering the most vulnerable and giving people, communities and places a renewed opportunity to flourish. <https://benefacttrust.co.uk/>