



## Over 5,000 Eco-Churches in England and Wales are turning green

Today, Tuesday 12 July 2022, six months on from COP26, conservation charity A Rocha UK announces that 5,152 churches of various denominations have signed up to their Eco Church award scheme. This signals an intent to engage in deliberate, ongoing action to care for nature and the climate on church premises and in the local community. And 36% of those churches have achieved a bronze, silver or gold award.

A prime example is St Paul's Marylebone, the second church in the Anglican Diocese of London to receive a gold award. They are adding taller plants to their outdoor space to increase biodiversity, have created a water area for birds and other wildlife, and installed a water butt. St Paul's eco-team work closely with children from the local Christ Church Bentinck Church of England Primary School who helped plant a tree as part of the gold award celebration. The Bishop of London, the Lord Mayor of Westminster and local community members were there too. St Paul's is not on its own. *'We are all in this together. This is a great example of the church working well with others in the community. I look forward to working with St Paul's to grow the network of Eco Churches in London and beyond.'* said Deborah Colvin of St James's Piccadilly, the recipient of London's first gold Eco Church award.

In Leicestershire Oadby Baptist Church achieved their bronze award in March. Their aim is to draw the community into the church space. Vegetables, herbs and flowers are grown in a community garden behind the church and the wildflower garden, bird boxes and insect hotels all help to attract insects and birds. Last year the church led a Climate Sunday service and more recently young people ran a service where they shared their concerns about the environment.

Beulah United Reformed Church in Cardiff is the first church in Wales to divest from fossil fuels. Here, creation care has regularly been at the heart of teaching and worship. Their Canolfan garden gained a Green Flag Award in 2020 and children from the church grow vegetables and herbs. This silver-awarded church also engages its MPs and Assembly Members in its services and events. They are measuring their carbon footprints (using Climate Stewards' 360 Carbon tool) and will be encouraging members to switch to green energy suppliers.

A Rocha UK believes that Eco Church, now in its seventh year, is helping to bring about a step-change in Christian action on the environment. Eco Church is an ecumenical scheme that helps churches see the connection between their faith and the environment, and take practical action in response. It considers how the environment is addressed within worship and teaching, buildings, land, community and global engagement, and lifestyle. But it is more than an award scheme - it is a growing, learning community of churches all wanting to play their part in responding to climate change and biodiversity loss.

Helen Stephens, A Rocha UK's Church Relations Manager said *'We are hugely encouraged to have passed 5,000 churches in the Eco Church community but given the scale and urgency of the climate and biodiversity crises we are certainly not complacent. We can all do something - Eco Church is for all church communities, from small rural parishes to those on urban estates, regardless of where or how they meet and whether or not they own land. An important step and something very achievable for any church is gaining their bronze Eco Church award. The bronze award milestone greatly encourages a congregation and demonstrates what's possible, inspiring them to take further, deeper action, and providing a good basis for making links with the wider community.'*

Now that Eco Church has reached this very significant milestone of over 5,000 registered churches, A Rocha UK's goal is to reach 10,000 churches in England and Wales in the next 5 years.

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**For images and to arrange interviews please contact:**

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**Notes to Editors:**

**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. Their main mission is to enable UK Christians and Churches to care for the environment. [www.arocha.org.uk](http://www.arocha.org.uk)

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

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

Launched in 2016, the Eco Church scheme has gained momentum. Even throughout the Covid pandemic Eco Church continued to receive applications for bronze, silver and gold awards. We offer practical guidance to an increasing number of churches opting to care for God's earth. Twenty seven churches have achieved a gold level Eco Church award including Quaker, Methodist, Baptist, United Reformed and Anglican churches. To become a gold-awarded church churches must prove high environmental standards in each area covered by the Eco Church Survey. These areas are worship and teaching, management of church buildings, management of church land, community and global engagement, and lifestyle.

In partnership with Christian Aid, The Church of England, The Methodist Church, Benefact Trust, The United Reformed Church and Tearfund. In the Eco Church scheme's seventh year, A Rocha UK are encouraging more churches to join the Eco Church community. Churches can do so by registering and completing a simple survey at:  
<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk>