

Diocese of Derry Environmental Strategy

Foreword: Bishop Donal McKeown

The world of today is one of interconnectivity. This term can be applied to economic supply chains – but also to how the world’s currents, temperature and wildernesses are intimately connected with the health of our urban environments and private ‘bubbles’.

A Catholic approach to the environment is not merely an ecological fad. Recent Popes have spoken clearly about the ‘human ecology’.¹ This refers to the delicate balance between human flourishing and the protection of the physical environment. And it also focuses on the creation of healthy reciprocal relationships within the human family. That points us to how the Common Good is damaged by an excessive focus on the individual and their rights.

We are social beings and not merely individuals. Society does exist. We are responsible, not just for ourselves but for those whom Jesus calls ‘the least of his brothers and sisters’ (Matthew 26:40). When our interrelated world gets out of balance, it is firstly the poor who suffer.

A healthy environment is thus central to care for people and their innate dignity, whatever their economic status and their place of residence.

I am grateful to our Laudato Sí group members who have worked long and hard to prepare this document. They have brought passion and rigour to their deliberations.

What we have here is a set of practical suggestions for parish communities. I hope that these concrete ideas will encourage local communities to use their resources well and be a sign of hope that we can do something to protect both the beauty of the God-given world and the life of the people who live here.

We recall a proud history of Celtic spirituality. The spirituality of the Celtic monasteries was very aware of how close God was in the world around. And the monks had a passion to bring Good News to the European mainland.

I hope that this publication will help us all to live more simply so that others may simply live. I entrust it to the prayerful discernment of our prayerful faith communities around the diocese.

+ Donal McKeown
Bishop of Derry

¹ [Centesimus Annus \(1 May 1991\) | John Paul II \(vatican.va\)](#) para 38; [40th World Day of Peace 2007, The Human Person, the Heart of Peace | BENEDICT XVI \(vatican.va\)](#) para 8

INTRODUCTION

“Yahweh God took the man and settled him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and take care of it”.
Genesis 2:15

The spirituality that moulded many of the present generation of Christians left many of us with the notion that our relationship with God is first and foremost a personal/private affair. It was inadequate in its social dimensions. Over the last sixty years in particular there has been a radical development of social teaching in the Catholic and Protestant Churches so that at the present time most of the main Christian Churches have the same social justice agendas. (The Social Justice Agenda' by Donal Dorr, 1992, chapter 2). The Catholic Church, during the Pontificate of John XXIII, developed its teaching on human rights and on the goods of the earth being intended for the use and benefit of all. Later Vatican II called for a just economic order and committed the Church to work for world peace. 'Justice and Peace' may sound like an old cliché now but it was a major shift in Catholic teaching. Vatican II opened the way for the Church to give 'preference to the poorest'² and for enabling them to become agents of their own development. One key element of the Pontificate of Paul VI was the acknowledgement that economic problems often call for political solutions. This can be taken as an encouragement to Christians to become involved in the political struggle for justice. Another was the Synod on 'Justice in the World' (1971), the key statement being "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel".³ It also contained a very strong and specific commitment to justice within the Church itself. Some years later (1990) Pope John Paul II made the strong link between peace, justice and ecology. This was followed by Pope Benedict's plea for the elimination of the structural causes of the dysfunctions of the world economy and correcting models of growth which have proved incapable of ensuring respect for the environment.

Then we had a qualitative leap with Pope Francis' 'Laudatosi' and his 'integral ecology' - the idea that there is no way to address the environmental crisis without also addressing our social crises; hence his plea for an 'ecological conversion', a listening to "THE CRY OF THE POOR and THE CRY OF THE EARTH'. All this development was of course in response to the widening gap between rich and poor and the destruction of the planet that was calling out for attention across the world.

There has also been a development in social justice awareness in the World Council of Churches: Some of the key stepping-stones were: 'non-discrimination', 'stewardship', 'The Responsible Society' and 'a just, participatory, and sustainable society' ('The Social Justice Agenda' by Donal Dorr, 1992, chapter 3). This last phrase was replaced in 1983 by an even more comprehensive one: "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation". This expresses well the three key elements in the social agenda of ALL the mainline Churches.

Pope Francis in his Encyclical *Laudato Si* in 2015 said he wished to communicate with everyone on the planet, but in particular with all Christians. He reinforced the truth that Creation is a project of love, of the love God gives to humanity.

The proposals and suggestions outlined in this strategy document will have a much better chance of becoming living actions within our diocese if they are communicated with the spirit of loving urgency.

² Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth: From Leo X III to Pope Francis*, 2016, pp.4-5

³ *Ibid.*, p191.

The document seeks to speak to the whole people of the diocese, laity and clergy and hopes that those who respond will begin to reflect and act in each individual parish.

Not all reflection and action can be taken at a parish level; there are decisions that will require diocesan consent and implementation. There is a wealth of resources already in existence from which we can draw upon and share.

There also exists within the diocese an established network that provides channels of communication – deaneries, schools, catechetical centre, youth groups, young diocesan ambassadors, John Paul II participants etc. Some of the above are already working in response to these exhortations. With shared communication comes the opportunity of shared learning and shared practice. The hope would be that, as a diocese, we will use the varied and multiple means available to us, spiritually, liturgically and practically, to promote the message of Laudato Si.

It is to all of us, as Christians, citizens and consumers, that this statement is specifically addressed. It seeks to identify our responsibilities and opportunities, as an institution and individually, to engage in consumer best practice and to work and advocate where possible for necessary change in government and corporate practice.

With this environmental strategy statement, the Diocese of Derry formally acknowledges its responsibility to participate in the global challenge to find ways to mitigate the effects of environmental degradation and climate change. Its aim is to enable the Diocese and its members to become agents of change and transformation.

The following are generic websites related to this Policy

- Derry Diocese. <https://www.derrydiocese.org/>
- Irish Bishops Conference. <https://www.catholicbishops.ie/>
- Trocaire. <https://www.trocaire.org/>
- Cafod. <https://cafod.org.uk/>
- Christian Aid. <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/>
- Eco Congregations. <https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/>
- Laudato Si' Movement (formerly Global Catholic Climate Movement) <https://www.laudatosimovement.org>
- Laudato Si' ActionPlatform. <https://laudatosiactionplatform.org>

The Diocesan Environmental Strategy

“Our sister” (the earth) “now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. she “groans in travail” (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters”. (Laudato Si Par 2)

The strategy document sets out its objectives under six major themes with an additional three cross cutting themes. Each of these themes has a separate page (see below) giving suggestions for action by the Diocese/ Parishes and by individuals

Land	Food	Energy	Design, Construction & Management of buildings	Waste & Water	Transport
Leading by example with our land.	Producing and consuming food in a fair and sustainable way.	Minimising the impact of our energy use on our environment, today and tomorrow.	Leading by example with our buildings.	Minimising our waste and water use and re-using what we can.	Minimising the impact of our travel on our environment, today and tomorrow.

Cross -cutting themes

<u>Theology & Liturgy</u> : Achieving our goal in a Christian context
<u>Communication & Education</u> : Informing practical steps for parishes and people.
<u>Implementation and Monitoring</u> : Checking how we are doing

LAND

“Then God said, ‘Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.’ And it was so”. Genesis 1:11

Lands in the ownership of the Diocese/Parishes includes Churchyards, units acquired through bequest or purchase, grounds attached to schools and other categories. The Diocese seeks to ensure that all church-owned land is being managed to the best environmental and sustainable standards.

Actions for the Diocese/ Parishes to consider.

Make an inventory of land in the ownership of the Diocese/Parishes according to the range of categories itemised above, so that a specific environmental policy can be developed with respect to the use/management of each category.

Churchyards contribute enormously at present to the preservation of local plant and animal species and have additional potential as sites for further protecting and increasing biodiversity. Things that can be done to make churchyards more wildlife friendly include:

- leaving some areas unmown (rewilding)
- planting trees and restoring native woodland wherever possible
- recycling old flowers; discouraging use of plastic (flowers flowerpots and packaging) at graves.
- avoiding use of weed-killers and pesticides. Making and using compost as alternative to artificial fertilisers.
- introducing nest boxes and feeding stations for birds
- encouraging insects and hedgehogs by leaving piles of leaves and rotting logs
- introducing beneficial plants e.g. berry-bearing trees for birds, flowers for bees, moths and butterflies
- encouraging or introducing native plant species
- Creating areas of beauty (with seating) for enjoyment, contemplation and prayer.

Actions for groups and individuals to consider:

- For those with land attached to their homes, the recommendations above regarding rewilding, tree-planting and ways to promote and not harm wildlife apply. Also explore alternatives to peat moss.

Further information

Eco Congregation Ireland	www.ecocongregationireland.com Resources Section 9 ideas and advice on care for church grounds and land.
Trees on the Land	www.treesontheland (32 county initiative)
NeighbourWood Grants Scheme	https://www.teagasc.ie/search/?q=neighbourhood+scheme
All-Ireland Pollinator Plan	www.pollinators.ie/faithcommunities
We are the Ark	www.wearetheark.org
Pocket Forests Ireland	www.pocketforests.ie
Tree-planting and re-wilding.	https://www.makeitwild.co.uk/product/individual-carbon-offsetting-by-planting-trees-make-it-wild

FOOD

“Purchasing is always a moral and not simply an economic act” Laudato Si Par 206

Food consumption issues pertaining to the environment include food waste, food miles, excess/plastic packaging and additives used in food processing.

Actions for the Diocese/ Parishes to consider.

- Use of Fairtrade products and local and seasonal foods at Church-sponsored events
- Promote discussion of ethical and environmental topics associated with food production and processing, including advertising and consumption.
- Promote and support farmers' markets
- Promote healthy eating.

Actions for groups and individuals to consider:

- Plan your shopping; make a list
- Grow your own food in gardens or allotments or in pots where space is limited
- Purchase Fairtrade and local and seasonal foods.
- Reduce food waste
- Choose products with minimal packaging
- Reduce energy use by buying less frozen and processed food
- Consider changing the red meat content in meals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Further information

Fairtrade	www.fairtrade.org.uk
Stop Food Waste	www.stopfoodwaste.ie
Grow It Yourself	www.giy.ie/get-growing/

ENERGY

Heating, lighting and powering our church properties and homes produces a significant proportion of society's carbon dioxide emissions

Actions for the Diocese/ Parishes to consider:

- Conduct an audit for each parish on how energy is being sourced and used in respect of (1) heating, (2) lighting and (3) powering Parish properties, towards developing a more energy efficient policy and programme for the diocese
- Switch to green electricity supply.
- Use low energy lighting
- Timetable meetings and take other steps to minimise heat use
- Insulation and draft proofing.
- Ensure regular maintenance of existing heating equipment.
- Consider need for installation of more efficient heating system
- Review frequency and purpose of floodlighting and look at more efficient systems
- Investigate the feasibility of fitting solar/photovoltaic panels and wind turbines

Actions for groups and individuals to consider:

- Use low energy lighting
- Insulating and draft proofing
- Switch off equipment rather than leaving on standby
- Put thermostats on a lower setting, using programmable room thermostats to set different temperatures for different times of day, heating for shorter periods
- Choose low energy appliances when replacement is necessary
- Switch to green electricity
- Investigate the feasibility of fitting solar/photovoltaic panels and wind turbines
- Burn locally sourced wood instead of coal and turf

Further information

Eco Congregation Ireland

www.ecocongregationireland.com Resources Section 7
Guidelines on caring for church premises

Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland www.seai.ie

DESIGN CONSTRUCTION DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF BUILDINGS

This page is concerned with both new-build and building renovation projects. Environmental concerns may also influence the way we clean and maintain property.

Actions for the Diocese/ Parishes to consider.

- Pay due attention to the requirement for environmental audits to underpin all Church new-build or renovation projects.
- Discussions with architects, consultants and contractors should give due prominence to environmental issues.
- Use environmentally friendly materials, including for painting and cleaning
- Environmental impact of any proposed alterations or extension
- Collection of water from roofs for watering churchyards or toilet flushing
- Double or secondary glazing where possible.
- For further suggestions see the Energy page.

Actions for groups and individuals to consider

- Apart from the requirements of legislation, carefully consider the environmental impact of any proposed alterations or extensions.
- Use environmentally friendly materials, including for painting and cleaning
- Collection of water from roofs for watering or toilet flushing.
- Double or secondary glazing where possible.
- For further suggestions see the Energy page.

Further information

Environmentally friendly cleaners www.ecoverdirect.com

WASTE AND WATER

Avoidance of waste, recycling of materials, efficiency in the use of water and preventing water pollution are among the practices most needing to be fostered to counter the culture of profligacy in the use of the earth's finite resources.

Actions for the Diocese/ Parishes to consider.

- Link in with the local authority domestic waste and recycling programme.
- Investigate the concept of Zero Waste – the promoting of 'reduce, reuse and repair' – over and above recycling.
- Parishes promote host repair cafes or skills-share workshops where people learn skills of repairing items for reuse instead of replacing them
- Support second-hand sales
- Set policies on waste reduction and recycling for groups using premises
- Reduce water use.
- Harvest water for outdoor use.

Actions for groups and individuals to consider:

- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle at home, school or work.
- Choose to buy organic and Fairtrade products over alternatives.
- Donate unwanted clothes, toys, books, furniture to charity shops.

Further information

An Taisce & Environmental Protection Agency
Zero Waste North West
Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful
MyWaste

www.greenhome.ie
<https://zerowastenw.org/>
www.eco-homeni.org
www.mywaste.ie

TRANSPORT

Transport accounts for about 30% of carbon dioxide emissions in Western societies.

Actions for the Diocese/ Parishes to consider.

- Reduce the number of meetings requiring participants to travel.
- Reduce or avoid air travel for meetings, pilgrimages.
- Car sharing.

Actions for groups and individuals to consider:

- Cycle or walk when possible
- Use public transport
- Car sharing
- Drive smart to minimise fuel consumption
- Avoid or reduce air travel.
- Consider changing to a hybrid or electric vehicle

THEOLOGY AND LITURGY

“What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” (Laudato Si Par 160).

Respect and care for God’s creation is an intrinsic dimension of religious belief and practice.

Our worship, whether in church or small groups or privately, has to be at the heart of any expression of our relatedness to the whole of creation under God

Actions for the Diocese/ Parishes to consider.

- Provide opportunity for theological reflection on Papal teaching in recent times regarding justice, peace and care for creation as constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel.
- Support Laudato Si Book Clubs (facilitated by Trocaire)
- Provide an adequate focus on creation themes in worship and preaching.
- Explore creative ways to give expression to environmental concerns in liturgy.
- Parish bulletins to carry short extracts from Laudato Si throughout the year.
- Incorporate a creation dimension into the preparation for and administration of the Sacraments, in particular First Communion and Confirmation.
- Utilise liturgical events and resources in general to address creation concerns, particularly throughout the Season of Creation.
- Each Parish having a “Season of Creation” Programme, as a regular item of its annual calendar, drawing upon guidance and resources provided by the Irish Bishop’s Conference”
- Initiating ecumenical services, events and discussions on the theme of care for God’s Creation.
- Include prayers for creation, weather, and climate migrants in Prayers of the Faithful.
- Incorporate the seeking of forgiveness for offences against nature, on the Liturgy of the Eucharist and in penitential services.

Actions for groups and individuals to consider:

- Reflecting, in study and prayer, on climate change and environmental degradation.
- Encouraging others to similar reflection.
- Engaging with local environmental *initiatives and campaigns of civic society*.
- Contributing a faith-perspective, informed by reflection and prayer, to the public discourse on climate change.

Further information

- Laudato Si’ resources inc Study Guide, www.trocaire.org/resources
- Trocaire Laudato Si Book Club/Resources
<https://www.trocaire.org/documents/laudato-si-book-club/>
<https://www.trocaire.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/laudato-si-ppt.pdf>
- Season of Creation Resources <https://www.catholicbishops.ie/>
- Eco- Congregation Ireland www.ecocongregationireland.com
- Reconciling God, Creation and Humanity www.ecologicalexamen.org
- Christian Aid Ireland. Resilience and Climate www.christianaid.ie
- Laudato Si Pledge www.laudatosipledge

COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION

We need to challenge ourselves with new learning for new realities and be generous in sharing information.

Actions for the Diocese/ Parishes to consider.

- Create a dedicated area on the Diocesan website with information, reflection and hints on practical action for parishes and individuals. It should highlight initiatives taking place in the diocese and in parishes and be regularly updated. The Net, local media and parish bulletins should be utilised as much as possible.
- Open Parish websites for use by those in the Parish promoting environmental action.
- Each Parish Council to have a spokesperson for care of creation matters.
- Provide training days, for Clergy and Parishioners, on the implementation of the strategy document. Those within the diocese and parishes who are active in local environmental organisations should be utilised to the fullest in such training, together with Trocaire personnel and resources.
- Take part in the Eco-Congregations Ireland Award Scheme.
- Encourage schools within the diocese to gain and maintain Eco Schools, Green Flag, Sustainable School and Fairtrade School awards.
- Support environmental projects initiated by children and young people.
- Ensure co-ordination in respect of environmental matters between parishes and parish-based environmental groups, diocesan youth programmes, and the environmental activities of civic society organisations.
- Establish formal links with Local Authorities in respect of environment matters.
- Care of creation issues to be included in Parish-level consultations within the National Synod process.

Actions for groups and individuals to consider:

- Sharing expertise and knowledge
- Learning from and engaging with environmentally concerned groups
- Keeping up to date with information.

Further information

- United Nations Climate Change. <https://www.un.org/climatechange>
- Eco Congregations <https://www.ecocongregationireland.com/>
- Eco Schools Northern Ireland <https://www.eco-schoolsni.org/>
- Green Schools Ireland. <https://greenschoolsireland.org/>
- World Wildlife Fund <https://www.worldwildlife.org/>
- **Global Healing:** a film-based resource produced on behalf of The Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales. It's for parishes, groups and individuals and aims to inform, challenge and equip people to engage with Pope Francis' call to Care For Our Common Home. <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/our-work/environment/global-healing/>

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING.

“All is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start” (Laudato Si Par205).

“How well are we doing?” is always a useful question.

The Diocese, Parishes, groups and individuals are encouraged to continuously monitor their actions and achievements in caring for nature.

Reducing consumption is a key part of any move towards the reduction of carbon emission for diocesan and parochial properties. Reducing consumption requires a change in each of us, a conversion, to understand that it is up to each one of us to reduce energy use.

Actions for the Diocese to consider

- Incorporation of the Environmental policy into the Diocesan Pastoral Plan.
- Review by the Diocese to avoid any direct holdings in fossil-fuel-related funds, following the lead already set by other Irish Dioceses.
- Regular review of investment policies and practice to ensure ethical and environmental investment.
- Requesting Parishes, when submitting their Annual Returns, to **also** report on their implementing of the Diocesan Environmental policy across all six themes that serve as the structure for this strategy.

Actions for Parishes to consider

- Continually measure the environmental impact (positive or negative) of any proposals and decisions.
- Continually monitor the energy use and carbon emissions of its estate. Given the size, nature and age of some buildings, as well as listed building restrictions in some cases, this is recognised as a particular challenge. However, parishes are encouraged to find workable ways to reduce carbon emissions.
- Review by parishes, to avoid any direct holdings in fossil-fuel-related funds, following the lead already set by other Irish Dioceses.
- Regular review of investment policies and practice to ensure ethical and environmental investment.

Actions for groups and individuals to consider:

- Calculate the carbon footprint for your household, consider how reductions could be achieved put in place mechanisms through which emission-reduction outcomes can be measured.
- Ethical investment, avoiding fossil-fuel-related funds

Further information

- Catholic Responsible Investments: CBIS
[https://cbionline.com/eu/catholic-responsible-investing/#:~:text=Catholic%20Responsible%20Investments%20\(CRI\)%20is,in%20the%20importance%20of%20mission.](https://cbionline.com/eu/catholic-responsible-investing/#:~:text=Catholic%20Responsible%20Investments%20(CRI)%20is,in%20the%20importance%20of%20mission.)
- Carbon Calculator: <https://carbon-calculator.climatehero.me/>