

Eco Champions

Further Information for Eco Diocese award criteria

Eco Champions are volunteers who play a valuable role in guiding churches towards their eco objectives and act as a point of contact for churches seeking advice on environmental matters. They may operate within Church of England deaneries, parishes or areas. They might be known by other titles such as Creation Care Champions, Environmental Advocates or Eco Ambassadors. They also exist in other denominations where they can be known as Green Apostles (URC) for example. This document shares some of the practices happening within different dioceses to help as you implement an Eco Champion structure within your setting.

This document draws on the research carried out by Sandra Eldridge, DEO Chelmsford Diocese (2022), and the case examples in blue boxes are taken from her research at that time unless stated otherwise.

Choosing a structure

Deanery level:

Example from [Birmingham](#)

Our **Deanery Environmental Champions** act as the key point of contact for environment-related matters within their deanery. They circulate environmental news and resources and stay in contact with their local network of Parish Environment Contacts.

Parish level:

The Truro parish representatives, called **Creation Care Champions (CCCs)**, form a creation care network that meets monthly 'to listen to each other, share our experiences, pray, green the gospel together and have a regular guest speaker to teach us on a different Creation Care topic each month', and also belong to a private Facebook page. About a quarter of churches in the diocese have CCCs. Churches are asked to appoint CCCs, but also sign up for Eco Church, complete their EFT returns every year, and develop a creation care policy.

Area and parish level:

Leeds diocese has representatives at both area and parish level (**Area Environment Champions** and **Parish Environment Officers (PEOs)**). Where PEOs exist this gives the DEO and the Area Environment Champions a conduit into a parish for training and resources.

Area level:

In the Diocese of London all senior staff (bishops and archdeacons) signed up to Caring for God's Creation. **Creation Care leads** have been set up for each episcopal area. The Diocese of London report seeing Eco Church registrations going up in areas where they have Creation Care leads; this is also the case for Truro Diocese. The Creation Care leads can attend more deanery synods and other area meetings than the two individuals working on environmental matters across the entire diocese could; their local bishop is aware of and has commissioned them; archdeacons signpost to them; they can speak in churches as 'local clergy'; when the Eco Church data are received in the diocese the DEO has someone more local to share it with. In one of the five areas there is a plan to recruit deanery/parish champions but the area Creation Care lead is coordinating this.

Appointing representatives

Recruiting volunteers can be a slow process. Sometimes there are people who are already involved in eco matters and it will be worth approaching them to ask if they'd like to take on the role more formally – chat through a role description and the system of management and support. In other instances a recruitment process will be helpful.

For Creation Care Leads at episcopal area level, London diocese said: 'I approached each bishop/archdeacon and asked whether they would support a "Creation Care" lead in their area. They all said yes which was wonderful. Then I asked for recommendations of clergy or laity in their area already doing this work really well in their parish. I also cross-referenced this list of names/churches with our Silver Eco Churches and took soundings from others. From this I had one or two candidates from the clergy in each area, whom I approached to see if they were willing to do this role. So now we have 6 Creation Care Area Leads (there are 5 areas, but in one of our areas we have a part-time clergy and part-time LLM doing the role). All of them are clergy in Silver Eco Churches which helps, as they are seen by peers as having "walked the walk".'

For deanery representatives, Oxford diocese said: 'To find interested people we advertised the opportunity to our Greenshoots Network, people working on environmental matters in their churches, and we asked our steering group members for suggestions of people in their areas who may be interested. Then the advert also went out in Diocese-wide comms mailings.'

Support, training and development

Appropriate support, training and supervision is essential for any volunteers. Ensure this has been thought about and that all documentation is up to date. Make sure details such as time commitment and travel expenses are talked through, agreed and re-visited as needed. For further information about managing volunteers read [The Citizen Information Board Managing Volunteers 08.pdf](#) or visit [NCVO](#)

We will have another Zoom meeting in the New Year and I shall encourage others to follow the lead of one who has had a banner made that lists all the churches. Coloured A Rocha UK roundels, which can be stuck beside the church name, show what stage the church is on on the Eco Church journey. Sharing such ideas will, I hope, encourage them all to widen their engagement with their deaneries.

We meet termly with them all - online or in person. I think they find this helpful as some solidarity and space to vent /share passion about the climate crisis and what more we can be doing. So hopefully they feel professionally developed as well. When we get our Eco Church numbers each quarter I have someone to share it with! They love seeing them as it shows them progress.

Example from [Bristol](#)

Our Eco Champions network meets bi-monthly, the format of the meetings is to have a short presentation followed by networking. We send out an environmental briefing/newsletter in the alternate months. We try to make the presentations relevant, usually spotlighting a church or new environmental initiative from across the Diocese. The feedback we've received is that the group found great value in the networking element of the meetings. I have often heard people can feel quite isolated when working on environmental issues within their church. We are extending the meetings from 60 mins to 90 mins to accommodate more networking.

The challenges we faced included finding suitable times, the time it takes to organise the network, and making sure that everyone is engaged and people don't drop out of the group. We do have a WhatsApp group of around 25 members but, to be honest, it hasn't really taken off so we are planning on setting up a Google group.

Role descriptions

A role description is a really helpful way to detail what you require as well as creating a conversation about the role and level of commitment. It might be that you need to adjust the role description depending on the experience of the volunteer and the areas they feel comfortable in. Be aware of training needs and develop your plan for supervision and support.

We started to appoint Deanery Environmental Reps this year and now nine of the eleven deaneries have DERs. Each one has been doing what they are comfortable with; several are amazing. One has been speaking at PCCs as well as deanery synods and taking part in community Eco Fairs, promoting Eco Church. Another has set up a chapter of Green Christian and had various meetings including one in which he got the local MP to address the group.

Role description example 1

Example from [Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich](#)

The role of a Deanery Environmental Champion

The 5th Mission Statement of the Anglican Communion, as part of the Church Universal, is 'to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and to sustain and renew the life of the earth'. In the Church of England, in partnership with Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, each diocese has appointed a Diocesan Environment Officer/Adviser, and here we have a Diocesan Environment Group (DEG) drawing together expertise from a number of relevant fields, liaising within and without the diocese, our bishops and a number of diocesan officers. To best enable this, recognising the deanery as a key unit of mission, we are trying to encourage deaneries to each appoint a Deanery Environmental Champion (DEC), some of whom have already offered to function in this way alongside their other ministry. It would be most helpful if each deanery could identify such a person, and to that end we describe such a role thus:

- To be the local key contact for environment-related matters within the deanery, particularly Eco Church and the drive to Net Zero Carbon; and to encourage churches to develop their forward plan to net zero carbon, not least post COP-26.
- To encourage churches within the deanery to participate in the Eco Church scheme and to help them to get started, follow up those already registered but not as yet progressed, advising and supporting them all.
- To be a point of contact between the churches in the deanery and the DEG, and to cascade information from the DEG to the churches in the deanery, requesting particular topic assistance from the DEG as necessary.
- To make churches aware of the resources and events available on the diocesan website and from diocesan officers, also from other sources such as Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT), A Rocha, Green Christian, and the Church of England Environment Desk.
- To give updates to the Deanery Synod, who will propose, approve and maintain the appointment of a Deanery Environment Champion (DEC).
- To maintain a list of Eco Church contacts for each of the registered churches within the deanery.
- To provide opportunities for DEC's to convene as necessary, for the sharing of ideas and to receive any relevant training.

Person specification

No prior knowledge is necessary; however, Deanery Environment Champions should be interested in the environment, energy and sustainability issues, and be enthusiastic about the role in a deanery context, and have good communication skills.

Role description example 2

We are establishing a group of Eco Champions (one or more per each of our 16 deaneries) to help promote creation care. This network of **Eco Champions** will be supported by the Diocesan Environmental Officer and will:

- encourage churches to care for creation and engage with the Eco Church scheme
- encourage sharing of good practice between churches within the deanery
- encourage PCCs to include the environment on their meeting agendas and to plan how they might reach net zero emissions
- help disseminate facts about the environmental crisis and raise awareness of learning opportunities;
- network with the Diocesan Environmental Officer and other Eco Champions in the diocese, sharing information and experience
- feed back information to the Diocesan Environmental Officer.

Role description example 3

Example from [Bristol Diocese](#)

Do you have a Parish Eco Champ? We are building a network of Parish Eco Champs whom we can work with to support them to drive sustainable change in the parish. The Eco Champ might be working on Eco Church awards, they may be keen to look at creating a community garden in the church grounds, or perhaps they are working with the congregation to help them respond to the climate crisis.

Eco Champs role

- Drive forward Eco Church and Net Zero initiatives
- Endeavour to help get the energy audit conducted
- Help implement environmental initiatives
- Stay up to date with the Environment Briefing from the Diocese of Bristol
- Ensure that creation care is a standing item on your church's PCC/DCC agenda
- Ensure that environmental information is shared with both the PCC and the wider church community (ie through the newsletter, website, social media, and/or in services) and encourage action
- Share good news stories and events from your church with the Diocesan Environment team to celebrate and share more widely
- Be the main point of contact for your church regarding Diocese and National Church Net Zero initiatives

The role of Deanery Eco Champions involves:

- notifying the diocese's environmental team about opportunities to attend and speak at Deanery events
- sharing environmental news and updates with the deanery, through synods, newsletters and any other deanery communication channels as appropriate
- sharing and celebrating good news stories from local churches, within the deanery, with local networks, and with the wider diocese
- being the named representative for environmental activity
- being the main point of contact for your deanery regarding Diocese and National Church Net Zero initiative.