

Applying for a gold Eco Church award

Please read this guidance before submitting your gold award application

How do I apply for a gold Eco Church award?

To apply for a gold Eco Church award you will need to:

- Have reached gold in all categories on the online survey
- Have submitted all supporting documents (detailed below) via the online Platform (including the [Pro Forma](#))

All supporting documents must be uploaded on the online [Eco Church platform](#) as part of your award application. When uploading these documents they MUST be PDFs labelled to indicate the type of document (e.g. Land Management Plan, Environmental Policy) and your church name.

Once you have prepared your supporting evidence (e.g. as Word documents or PowerPoint slides) you can 'Save As' a PDF. If you discover that your PDFs are too big (larger than 20MB) then you may need to compress your images (JPEGs or PNGs) or use a traditional font (newer fonts can sometimes take up a lot of storage).

A maximum of 10 files can be uploaded, with each file having a maximum size of 20 MB.

The online survey

The Eco Church survey provides a framework to support your church and its leadership to take practical action on caring for God's earth. You need to have reached gold in all categories on the [online survey](#) to apply for an award. Please use additional comments on each survey category to expand on any of your 'other' answers and anything else related to this survey category. For a reminder of your gold Eco Church survey answers see our [guidelines on finding your submitted survey responses](#).

Supporting documents

We ask for these separate documents as part of your gold award application:

- ✓ Gold Award supporting evidence pro forma (required)
- ✓ Most recent Climate Stewards 360 Carbon Footprint Report (required)
- ✓ Environmental Policy (required)
- ✓ Action plan (essential, unless combined with Environmental Policy)
- ✓ Land Management Plan / Plan for nature (required)

All these documents are identified in the Eco Church survey and therefore we ask to see them for verification as part of the award process.

Here are some further notes about each of these documents and where to find further information.

Gold Award supporting evidence pro forma

We recommend you complete the [Gold Award supporting evidence pro forma](#) on a laptop or computer rather than a mobile phone or tablet so that you can easily insert pictures, weblinks etc as required to support your documentation and supply sufficient text.

Most recent Climate Stewards 360 Carbon Footprint Report

All sections of the [Climate Stewards 360 Carbon Footprint](#) need to be completed and the report uploaded. If you already complete the [Church of England Energy Footprint Tool](#), you should be able to pull this data through to the Climate Stewards tool and then complete the remaining sections. Annual Carbon Footprints are an ideal way to continually monitor your progress therefore we ask that you send us your most recent report as part of your gold award application.

Environmental Policy

An environmental policy outlines your church's commitment to care for the environment and provides a framework for setting objectives and targets to improve your environmental performance. In it you can bring together church policies and procedures in one document. There is further information about creating an [Environmental Policy and NZC Action Plan](#).

Action plan

You may choose to create a separate Net Zero Carbon (NZC) Action Plan or incorporate your carbon-cutting steps within an overall Environmental Action Plan. You might set goals for the year ahead or create a plan spanning several years. Read more about creating an [Environmental Policy and NZC Action Plan](#).

Land Management Plan / Plan for nature

We suggest all churches create a plan for nature or a Land Management Plan (LMP), but it is an essential requirement for a gold Eco Church award. A plan for nature will help you prioritise and organise biodiversity management on your church land or engage with an outside space to support nature. Read more about [creating a Land Management Plan](#). Your plan for nature will be reviewed by A Rocha UK's conservation team to ensure it is of a gold standard.

Other supporting documents

If you have any other supporting documents (e.g. Climate resilient/Safe spaces policy, Food policy, Waste Policy) we also ask that you submit them – a maximum of 10 files can be uploaded to the platform, with each file having a maximum size of 20 MB. There is additional information about all these documents in the Eco Church resources, which can be accessed from the survey, or via the [Eco Church resources page](#).

Why are there extra steps involved in the gold Eco Church award?

Applying for a gold Eco Church award involves some additional steps to show that the ethos of Eco Church is embedded in your worshipping community. Gold Eco Church awards are given in recognition of the church's achievements. However, just as importantly, gold awarded Eco Churches are exemplars both within the Eco Church community and increasingly beyond it. Gold awarded churches are often called upon to advise and support other churches and encourage Eco Church to grow within their region and beyond.

By verifying key documentation (e.g. Environmental Policy, Land Management Plan, Action Plan) we will be assured that you have established the processes and systems to sustain Eco Church for the future.

Through the process of reviewing your gold award application and carrying out a visit (online or in-person) we meet key people in your church and build the Eco Church community.

What happens next?

There may be several weeks from the date you submit your gold Eco Church award application to the moment you receive news of the outcome, although we will update you on the progress of your application. So that you understand what's involved, here is an outline of the steps taken to process a gold award application. Please note, all communication with the church will take place with the lead contact for Eco Church – the person who has submitted the survey.

1. Once we have received your online application we will review your application and supporting evidence. If there is any missing documentation, or if we have any questions or points to clarify we will get in touch via email. Sometimes we ask for further refinement of a document to ensure it looks current, relevant and effective.
2. We will then assign an assessor to carry out a detailed review of your gold award application. Your application will then be presented to the Gold Panel (a team of assessors). Please note, an application may be declined if supporting evidence is not submitted within 2 months of submitting an award application or if there is no response to requests for information or clarification.
3. Once we are satisfied we have all the relevant information, we will then be in touch with you to arrange a Gold Review Meeting (in person or online) to meet with key members of your Eco Church team. The 'visit' lasts about 2 to 2.5-hours and involves a tour of your building, time for questions and discussion.
4. Under normal circumstances, a decision on your gold award application will be shared within three weeks of a Gold Review Meeting.
5. The outcome may range from a confirmed award, an award with recommendations or conditions or a decline. All applicants will receive feedback on their application. This will include highlighting strengths of the application as well as recommendations or suggestions for the church to take forward.

An award may be declined after a gold online/onsite visit takes place if the church has not demonstrated that Eco Church is embedded and able to be sustained by the worshipping community.

Beyond your gold award

Celebrating your gold Eco Church award is an important part of the process. We encourage you to share the news of your Eco Church award in your church and wider community. Sharing your achievement is a huge encouragement to other churches and will also spur you on as you continue to champion caring for creation.

Will I need to renew my reward?

At this time we do not re-assess churches. We therefore encourage you to continue to review and set targets to continue to sustain and grow as an Eco Church.



Picture: In person gold review meeting