

Environmental Policy and Action Plan

Document Control:

Policy Owner:	District Secretary
Policy Author(s):	Lisa Murphy, District Secretary and Mary Corfield, Consultant
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Approving Body:	District Policy Committee
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Date of Next Review:	This policy will be reviewed annually.

Amendment History:

Version Number:	Effective Date:	Summary of Amendments:	Author:

1. Introduction

The West Midlands Methodist District ('the District') believes that all of creation is God's gift, and we are called to steward it responsibly. Scripture reminds us:

"God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." – Genesis 1:31 (NIV)

In 2011, the Methodist Church adopted the report *Hope in God's Future: Christian Discipleship in the Context of Climate Change* as a Conference statement. This joint report produced by the Methodist Church, the Baptist Union and the United Reformed Church reminded the Methodist Church in Britain that our response to the climate emergency and our care for creation is a central and integral part of our discipleship.

In 2021, the Methodist Conference set an aspirational target for the Methodist Church in Great Britain to become a net zero Church by 2030 and called on all within the church to take action. In response to the Conference decision, the Methodist Council developed a strategy entitled *Action for Hope*.

A Methodist Way of Life identifies '...care for creation and all God's gifts' as one of the ways in which we live out Our Calling.

This policy affirms our commitment to living out our calling to care for creation and responding to the *Action for Hope* strategy by:

- Recognising the reality of the climate emergency.
- Striving for a significant reduction in our carbon footprint by 2030 and carbon neutrality (net zero) as soon as is practicable.
- Integrating environmental care into worship, ministry, and daily life.
- Encouraging action at every level—individual, Church, Circuit, District and community.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all activities and decisions of the District, including:

- Governance and operations, through policies and procedures
- Property matters
- Use of the District's resources and grant making
- Worship and discipleship
- Outreach and community engagement.

While it primarily addresses the District's own responsibilities, we also encourage Circuits and Churches adopt and adapt this policy for their own contexts.

3. Objectives

Promote Environmental Stewardship: Encourage and support our circuits and churches integrating care for creation into their spiritual and communal life.

Reduce Carbon Footprint: Implement measures to significantly reduce the District's carbon emissions from District-owned properties and District-sponsored travel.

Resource Allocation: Allocate funds specifically for environmental initiatives that aid in carbon footprint reduction.

Community Engagement: Work collaboratively with local communities, charities and other partners to foster broader participation in environmental sustainability.

4. General Principles

The District is committed to valuing God's Kingdom in all we do and seeks to preserve and protect it for future generations, both here and across the world.

This means that there are three core principles underlying our decision making:

- Treading lightly – Using resources wisely, preserving the earth and its resources for those still to come and minimising waste.
- Honouring God's creation – Remembering that the earth is a gift from God and being mindful of the care of it in all decisions, including those relating to investments and property.
- Justice, Dignity and Solidarity – Speaking out for those most affected by environmental degradation, both at home and abroad, including the natural world.

5. Commitments

The District commits to putting this policy into action through the development and implementation of an Environmental Plan, which will be regularly reviewed and updated. The Environmental Plan can be found in the appendix to this policy.

The District will:

- Register as an Eco District, and work towards achieving an Eco District award.
- Recruit an Eco Officer to support Circuits and Churches to register with Eco Church, identify Eco Champions and develop their own Eco Plans.
- Incorporate environmental sustainability into mission planning, including the use of property.
- Provide access to grant funding to enable churches to undertake Energy Audits and respond to the audit findings.
- Produce an annual review of progress towards net-zero to the representative Synod.

6. Responsibilities

Overall accountability for ensuring the District complies with this policy lies with the District Policy Committee.

Responsibility for implementing the policy and co-ordinating and monitoring actions designed to achieve net zero lies with the District Secretary and the District Eco Officer.

All staff and officers of the District are responsible for making sure they understand the Environmental Policy along with any specific environmental and related standards or procedures that may apply to their activities.

7. Monitoring and Reporting.

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary to reflect new insights, technologies, and mission opportunities. Progress will be reported through:

- Annual environmental impact statements
- Public updates at meetings or through newsletters
- Celebration of individual and community achievements

8. Offsetting

Carbon offsetting will only be used as a last resort when emissions cannot be eliminated. Any offsetting initiative will be approved by the District Policy Committee and should align with reputable standards (e.g., Climate Stewards).

9. Conclusion

By adopting this policy, we affirm that care for creation is an expression of our love for God, for our neighbours, and for future generations.

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." – Mark 16:15 (NIV)

Appendix One: District Environmental Plan

Appendix One: District Environmental Action Plan

This Environmental Action Plan sits underneath and supports the implementation of the District Environmental Policy. Its purpose is to translate the policy's principles and commitments into practical steps that Churches, Circuits, and the District bodies can follow.

Responsibility for delivering this plan lies with the District Secretary, under the oversight of the District Policy Committee (DPC). Local churches and Circuits participate actively, but the District holds primary accountability for resourcing, coordination, support, grant procurement, and monitoring.

This Environmental Action Plan is a living document. It will be reviewed every six months to:

- Monitor progress
- Identify priorities
- Incorporate new opportunities, technologies, and insights
- Ensure the District remains on track towards its environmental commitments.

Timeframe

Action	By when?	By who?	Complete?	Progress
Approve the Environmental Policy and Action plan.	July 2026	DPC	Yes	
Register as an Eco District	July 2026	District Secretary	Yes	
Apply for the Connexional Environmental Grant Funding (note 1)	Sept 2026	District Secretary	Yes	
Recruit a District Eco Officer (note 2)	Sept 2026	District Secretary		
Incorporate environmental sustainability into mission planning	From Sept 2026	Mission Team		
Review the District Grants Policy (note 3)	Nov 2026	DPC		
Induct the District Eco Officer and develop work plan (note 4)	Dec 2026	District Secretary		
Undertake a review of District Policies to ensure that principles in the Environmental Policy are reflected	February 2027	Policy Owners		
Measure District carbon emissions, in particular from travel, using an appropriate measurement tool	February 2027	Eco Officer		

Produce an annual review of progress towards net-zero to the representative synod.	September 2027	Eco Officer		
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Notes:

1. We are aware that a maximum of £357,132 is available to support environmental work in the district. This funding will be used to:
 - Employ a District Eco Officer
 - Enable Churches and Circuits to undertake energy audits, and nature audits where appropriate.
 - Provide training, resources, and support materials to local Eco Champions
 - Provide seed funding for Circuit/church projects
2. Recruitment of a District Eco Officer will begin within six weeks of grant approval from the Connexional team. This timeframe will be made easier by the candidate role description having been created and approved as part of the funding application. A copy of the job description can be found below.

The aim will be to have an Eco Officer in post within three months of having received the funding. The Eco Officer will coordinate and support all environmental work across the District in conjunction with other District Staff and Officers as appropriate.

3. The District Grants Policy already makes provision for Eco Grants, but this needs expanding to include the range of projects/initiatives that qualify for grant support and to clarify which property improvements fall under the scope of the policy. This work will be done in conjunction with the Chair of the Resourcing Mission Committee, the Grants Officer and the District Property Advisory Committee.
4. The workplan outline for the Eco Officer will be:

First three months	Relationship building with key people across the District, including current Superintendents and Circuit Leadership Teams, existing Eco Champions in Circuits and Churches, and lay workers.
	Researching initiatives already happening around the District to create a picture of progress already made and to identify priority areas for support.
	Supporting churches and circuits to apply for grant funding.
	Develop an action plan to work towards a Bronze Eco District award.
Three to six months	Support churches and circuits to recruit Eco Champions.
	Support churches and circuits to register as Eco Churches/Circuits

	Develop template Eco plans for churches and circuits to adapt to their own contexts
	Plan and run gatherings for Eco Champions to provide training, resources and support.
	Work with the Communications Officer to develop an Environment stream in District communications, including an Eco Newsletter to share information and celebrate achievements and content for social media and the District website.
Six to 12 months	Ascertain a baseline carbon footprint for the District using tools such as 360° Carbon
	Support churches and circuits to review current Eco Policies and Plans to identify next steps in achieving Silver and Gold Eco Awards.
	Develop a series of resources for churches and circuits in collaboration with other staff and officers, including tips for quick wins to improve energy efficiency, practical advice on moving away from the use of fossil fuels, worship resources, small group discipleship resources such as bible studies and workshops.
12 months to 2 years	Complete actions identified to achieve the Bronze Eco District award and begin to develop an action plan to work towards a Silver award.
	Develop relationships with external partners such as local conservation organisations, wildlife groups, schools seeking environmental collaboration, community climate initiatives and ecumenical environment groups, brokering connexions with churches and circuits.
	Support churches and circuits to develop environmental projects such as community gardens, repair cafes, recycling or reuse hubs and public workshops on climate issues.
	Conduct a review of progress to date and identify priorities.
Ongoing	Input into the planning of District events such as Synod etc to advise on environmental considerations.
	Input into policy development.
	Encourage churches to participate in national moments such as Earth Day and Great Big Green Week
	Encourage churches and circuits to highlight environmental justice issues and engage with community leaders, councillors and MPs.
	Report into the DPC and Representative Synods.

