

2nd National 'Shrinking the Footprint' Day Conference.

An outline, with notes, of the event.

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Wednesday 30th June 2010.

Venue: Lambeth Palace.

Hosted by Rt Revd Richard Chartres, Bishop of London.

About 70 in attendance – most dioceses were represented.

Bishop Richard opened the event by noting that the recent recession had helped in the reduction of carbon usage but warned of the rising scepticism about Global Warming in the public's mind despite overwhelming scientific evidence. He reminded those attending that the church's involvement is not about jumping on some liberal band-wagon but is about deep spiritual and moral engagement with the issues. **He called for a recommitment to public advocacy and symbolic action.** Shrinking the Footprint is not just about the environment but also waste management and other issues. He spoke of example that needs to be set by dioceses structures and cathedrals.

Amy White, events manager at Lambeth Palace, spoke of the various projects reducing the carbon footprint of the Palace and the Archbishop. These included basic 'public building' measures (eg low energy light bulbs, push taps, new boiler, water based paints etc), the Archbishop's 'hybrid' car, the provision of a staff bike-shed, environmentally friendly cleaning fluids, and increased composting of kitchen waste. This has led to a near 50% reduction in rubbish bin usage. Energy production is being investigated. It was also noted that Church House are using Eurostar tickets as an incentive for their staff to reduce their footprint.

Steven Bowler of the Cathedral & Church Buildings Division, spoke of the continued future of 'Shrinking the Footprint'. This year the focus was on Biodiversity, next year's focus would be schools. Future events were to be held for DAC's and 'Practitioners'. He noted the objections to certain elements of carbon shrinking government legislation and the need to get the right solutions, not just politically nice solutions. Concern was expressed about the new Government's cutbacks that might threaten the Carbon Trust, but there was hope of a reform of the electrical generation strategy.

Next year will see a push to re-measure the Carbon Footprint of the church. Discussions will be needed with each diocese as to how best do this. Sharing successes and failures since the first measurement should not be done in a spirit of competition but of mutual support.

Rachel Harden and Ruth Watkins introduced the renewed website. Stories and links to dioceses websites will be a feature. There is also a Twitter address linked from the site.

In a glance around the country....

Clare Bryden spoke of the 6 diocese of the South West working in partnership. A working group produced a Synod Motion that went to all 6 Synods. The Motion gave a mandate for

action. The group share best practice tips on such things as the insulation of clergy housing, ethical investments and leasing roof space for energy generation.

Kathleen Green spoke of working in the midlands between Coventry and Leicester diocese. This included Environmental Strategies, heat-pumps and Churchyard wildlife gardens.

Barry Goodwin spoke of the sharing of information between the dioceses of London Southwark and St. Albans. Such cooperation meant that they now had access to other environmental bodies at regional level and now has an ecumenical dimension.

Brian Cuthbertson spoke of the ‘London Challenge’ and noted that they were on track to reach their 2012 targets. Their ‘Generic Building Solutions’ scheme was showing some success and noted that there was no correlation between potential energy savings and the age of the building in question. Biomass systems are best, with solar coming in second. It is projected that 90% savings are (in general) possible.

The very Revd Peter Judd (Dean of Chelmsford) outlined their story of being the first Cathedral Eco-congregation. He also highlighted that discussions at the Deans’ meeting in November 2009 included the heating in Blackburn and the lighting in Rippon.

Martin Goss and Madeleine Holmes of the European Christian Environmental Network (www.ecen.org) noted that environmental problems do not respect traditions or national boundaries. Networks enrich and help to influence debate. They see a role to encourage chaplaincies in Europe to continue to engage with environmental issues.

Terrie Robinson and Stephen Lyon of the Anglican Communion Environmental Network spoke of the ability of a global network giving greater visibility to the cause, giving encouragement to local initiatives, and educate Anglicans as individuals and communities. They noted the environmental links with the 5 Marks of Mission and the Millennium Goals. Around the Communion there were many ongoing initiatives, practical projects, education, worship and theological thinking. Examples being: Australia – Environmental booklet; Church of South India – Water and waste sustainability project; Hong Kong – An electrically self-sufficient retreat house. The Anglican Network also engages with lobbying governments and helps develop liturgy and theology in this area.

Pete Brotherton (Peterborough Diocese DEO & head of Biodiversity at Natural England) spoke about the **UN year of Biodiversity**. He noted that the UK has failed to halt biodiversity loss and even failed to reduce the rate of that loss. There will be a UN general session on biodiversity in September. (see www.biodiversityislife.net) Pete noted the growing acceptance of links between biodiversity and climate change issues, and he encouraged positive action. Natural England have sponsored the London Sacred Space Awards. We should care about biodiversity because it at the core of our faith and being, not just because we like wildlife.

Andrea Gilpin of Caring for God’s Acre, spoke on the subject of church yards and burial grounds, noting that even small areas of managed wild growth can real enhance biodiversity. Action Packs are available.

Russell Ball of the Ancient Yew Group enthused about the protected nature of the yews in our church yards. He outlined the difference between Ancient and Veteran Yews and encouraged all to plant more Yew trees.

The conference moved to the gardens where the **Bishop of London planted a Yew tree** that had originated from a 3000 year old Yew. Lunch was served afterwards.

Geoff Bateman of the Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management spoke of their recognition that faith has a role to play in care for the environment. [A refreshing stand for a secular institution!] Supplying clean water accounts for 1% of the UK's carbon footprint, but the heating of water accounts for 6%.

Ken Peters of The Mission to Seafarers requested that the church should consider consistency of stance. He noted that it was difficult to argue for environmentally friendly paints to be used on ships when (for example) the floodlighting of church towers and spires waste so much energy.

Miranda Kavanaugh from The Environment Agency noted the move of environmental policies from an attitude of adaption to mitigation, also the way in which agencies work with communities rather than impose regulations on communities to achieve better environmental outcomes. Partnerships within communities is a positive way forward. The Environment Agency has cut its own carbon footprint by 14% since 2006. This included reducing its car miles by 25% over the last 2 years. It is also putting up a wind turbine for its own energy production.

[I noted a common theme that underlay many speakers was the need for behavioural changes within the population – but also that some signs of this were being seen.]

Edward Mason of the C of E Ethical Investment Advisory Group spoke of encouraging investment in clean technologies, energy efficient plant and sustainable companies.

Dave Bookless of Eco-Congregation announced the launch of the Eco-Diocese material with Leeds/Ripon acting as a pilot scheme. He noted that there were currently 133 churches registered with 67 having gained awards within the Eco-congregations structure. A Rocha's 3 levels of engagement with interested parishes was mentioned along with a number of events and resources available. (see www.arocha.org.uk/resources)

Neil Thorne informed the conference that CAFOD has an Environment Justice Group that has recently been set up.

Christine Wilson of The British Council noted the shift towards a Cultural Relations approach to the environment: based on person to person, group to group cultural and intellectual dialogue. A recent study on barriers (cognitive, normative, political and economical) pointed to the lack of trust that exists and suggested solutions that included the links between climate change and faith. Faith communities can give positive influence and leadership and show the moral standing on environmental issues. (see www.africatalksclimate.com)

Chrispin Chapman of the Churches Conservation Trust noted that the trust is trying to example how to sustainably use old buildings. Over 4000 different events have been held in their buildings – now numbering 341.

Sue Bentley (World Development Adviser, St. Albans) **said that the ‘Elephant in the room’ was Climate Justice** – of which there had been no mention so far. World Development works with Climate change. We need the whole story.

[I wondered if Population Growth was the real underlying issue that is never spoken of.]

Terry Miller & Lizzie Rushton (Lincon Dioc.) noted that our ‘stewardship’ of creation has become ‘management’ and is lacking in Grace, Love and Fellowship.

George Dow of Christian Ecology Link reported that they have about 2000 members including: LOAF; Operation Noah; Churches in Transition; Ecocell. (www.christian-ecology.ork.uk)

Kate Pugh of the Heritage Alliance, an umbrella organisation for heritage NGO’s with a membership of 80, **wishes to grow relationships with Dioc.. Env. Officers.** She said that supporting historic environments is compatible with the Eco-environment. Regional workshops will be set up later to discuss this issue.

Rabbi Natan Levy, of the Chief Rabbi’s Office, reminded us of the old joke that **the solution to problems often lie in our own purses/wallets** and that **we must not blame others for the mess ‘we’ have caused.**

‘We may not share the same vision of heaven; but we do share the same earth.’
(see ‘The Big Green Jewish Website’ at www.biggreenjewish.org)

In a time for questions and discussion.....

Q: Should the church invest in BP and Shell given their stated aims to drain out every last drop of oil?

A: Edward Mason (C of E Ethical Investment Group) replied that it was better to be a shareholder so that the arguments could be voiced at meetings of the company.

Q: Is investing in ‘Clean Technologies’ only investment in a market ‘bubble’.

A: Mr. Mason replied that they were Growth Companies but were also part of a mix of investments rather than a focus.

Q: What are the benefits of having an Environmental Policy as against an Environmental Strategy?

A: Brian Cuthbertson said that the Diocese of London has a ‘both/and’ stand to this.

Personal Observations:

There was a sense of continuity of progress from last year. The need to change the public mind on the subject was clearly seen, as was the call for the church to lead the way in actually practice rather than nice rhetoric. Underlying causes of climate change were less in evidence partly because of their controversial theological nature (eg. Population growth).

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