

Eco-Congregation Scotland Award criteria and assessment process (2017)

1. Applying for an award

Congregations may apply for an Eco-Congregation Scotland Award at any time. The award will be made at one of three levels (bronze, silver or gold). Application can be made for any of these levels of award. There is no need to apply for a bronze award first if the congregation already meets the criteria for the silver or gold awards.

Congregations applying for an award should complete and submit the appropriate application form, and may also submit relevant supporting evidence. Congregations may submit information on projects undertaken both prior to and since registering as an Eco-Congregation, but must clearly show that there is ongoing current work at an appropriate level to obtain an award.

2. Assessment Process

On receipt of an application form, the application will be reviewed by the Programme Coordinator. Once satisfied that the application is complete and appropriate, two assessors will be appointed. These assessors will arrange to visit the congregation at a mutually agreeable time to discuss the application. The assessors will then submit a report to the Programme Coordinator indicating whether the award should be made and at what level, identifying particular areas for commendation, and recommendations for ongoing action. The outcome of the assessment will then be communicated to the congregation. Depending on the evidence presented, assessors may recommend an award at a different level than the one applied for.

3. Validity of awards

The awards are valid indefinitely, but congregations are encouraged to re-apply when they feel they have met the criteria for a higher level award, and to progress towards the gold award over time.

4. Summary of criteria

To achieve an award, the congregation must show that they meet (or have taken significant steps towards meeting) **all** of the criteria for that level of award, as listed in the tables below, in each of the 4 broad areas:

1. **General aspects**
 - a. Evaluation and planning
 - b. Initiating and coordinating
 - c. Communication
 - d. Eco-congregation Scotland involvement
2. **Spiritual living**
 - a. Discussing ideas
 - b. Worship and congregational life
3. **Practical living**
 - a. Individual members taking action
 - b. Action in church buildings
 - c. Biodiversity, wildlife, grounds and gardens
4. **Global living**
 - a. Local and national concerns
 - b. Global and international concerns

Note: To achieve a gold award, a congregation needs to be able to demonstrate they have met (or have taken significant steps towards meeting) **all** the criteria for the award, **and also** show that they have a long-term commitment to promoting environmental issues as an integral part of their congregational life.

Bronze	Silver	Gold
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1. General issues		
1.1 Evaluation and planning		
The congregation has used the church check-up to identify the congregation's environmental strengths and weaknesses.	The congregation has an "action plan" of eco activities, and monitors its progress.	The congregation has a long term sustainable eco "action plan" which it regularly reviews, evaluates and updates.
1.2 Initiating and coordinating		
A number of people from across the congregation are involved in initiating and coordinating eco activities.	The congregation has an established group which has responsibility for initiating and coordinating eco activities, and is supported by the leadership of the congregation.	Eco activities, involving a significant proportion of the congregation, are embedded in the programme of many groups within the congregation, and fully supported by the leadership of the congregation.
1.3 Communication		
There is regular communication on eco issues and activities within the congregation eg newsletters, internal noticeboards	The congregation communicates about eco issues both in and beyond the congregation eg public noticeboards, website, local media	The congregation is well-known within its community for its leadership and commitment to environmental issues.
1.4 Eco-congregation Scotland involvement		
The congregation is a registered eco-congregation.	Members of the congregation actively support local network events, and contribute ideas for sharing with other congregations.	The congregation is an active member of Eco-congregation Scotland, with individuals showing their commitment by attending the Annual Gathering or taking on leadership roles at local, network or national level.

2. Spiritual Living: helping the whole congregation to make the link between their Christian faith and environmental concerns.		
2.1 Discussing issues		
Church leaders (deacons, elders, vestry etc) discuss the role of eco activity in the spiritual life of the church.	There are opportunities for leaders and members of the congregation to meet to discuss environmental issues.	Leaders and members of the congregation are regularly involved in discussing environmental issues and lifestyle.
2.2 Worship and congregational life		
Aspects of creation care are sometimes reflected in worship, prayers and sermons.	Care for creation is regularly reflected in worship, prayers, bible studies and sermons.	Care for creation is embedded in the worship, study and prayer life of the congregation, and reflected in the congregation's mission or policy statements.

Bronze	Silver	Gold
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3. Practical Living: Taking practical action in individual lives, the church and/or church grounds.

3.1 Individual members taking action

Basic practical steps to reduce energy use and waste by individual members of the congregation are being encouraged.	Members of the congregation are being challenged and supported to find ways of significantly reducing their own impact on the environment, by considering issues such as energy use, recycling, travel and finance.	In addition to action by individuals within the congregation, members of the congregation are involved in leading or actively supporting one or more practical projects within the community to reduce environmental impact.
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3.2 Action in church buildings

Basic practical steps are being taken to reduce energy consumption and waste (where possible) within the church building .	The congregation is developing and beginning to implement a strategy for the church as an organisation to significantly reduce its impact on the environment by considering issues such as energy use, recycling, travel and finance.	The church is implementing and developing its environmental strategy in innovative and imaginative ways, is continuing to monitor its energy use, and has undertaken significant steps to minimise energy use and reduce the carbon footprint of its buildings, to reduce waste and to implement appropriate actions, where possible, related to travel and finance.
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3.3 Biodiversity, wildlife, grounds and gardens

The congregation has considered and implemented some action to adapt the church grounds (where possible) to be more environmentally friendly.	Members are being encouraged to take practical steps in and around both the church grounds and their own properties to be more environmentally friendly.	In addition to action in church grounds and members' properties, the congregation actively supports projects in the wider community to support biodiversity and wildlife.
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4. Global Living: Having a positive impact on and/or working with national and global environmental justice concerns

4.1 Local and national concerns

Members of the congregation are made aware of local and national eco concerns through church notices, newsletters, meetings, posters etc	Members of the congregation are actively involved in supporting positive environmental initiatives in the local area or the UK.	The congregation is actively engaged in supporting local or national action to combat environmental damage and build a more sustainable future.
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4.2 global and international concerns

Members of the congregation are made aware of global and international eco concerns through church notices, newsletters, meetings, posters etc	The congregation is actively involved in supporting FairTrade, and charities working in parts of the world impacted by climate change.	The congregation is actively engaged in supporting and/or campaigning for international action to combat environmental damage and build a more sustainable future.
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5. Beyond the Gold Award

The Gold award is valid indefinitely, but congregations are encouraged to re-assess their progress at regular intervals and inform Eco-Congregation Scotland of their progress.

6. Awards for Outstanding Achievement

In addition to the bronze, silver and gold awards, congregations may apply for, or be nominated for, our annual awards for outstanding achievement in three categories: spiritual living, practical living and global living. Nominations are to be received by 31st December each year and will be judged by the Board. The awards will be presented at the following AGM.

7. Validity of old awards

Congregations who have received 1st, 2nd, 3rd or continuing awards under the previous award scheme will retain and “hold” these awards indefinitely.

8. Transitional Arrangements

Applications for awards under the revised award scheme criteria (as described above) will be accepted from 1st August 2017.

Applications for awards under the previous award scheme will continue to be accepted until 30th September 2017.

During the first 6 months of the new award scheme, all existing and previous award holders will be invited to apply for one of the new awards, by submitting an application form and supporting evidence. The application will be assessed by a team of assessors, and a bronze, silver or gold award will be made as appropriate. There will be *no assessment visit*. This concession will apply only for existing award holders during the transitional period (until 31st Jan 2018).

After this transitional period, all applications, including those from holders of previous awards, will be assessed in the usual way, based on an application form, evidence and assessment visit.