

Eco-congregation Scotland

Eco-award self-assessment checklist

This is **not** an application form! This form is designed to **help** a congregation to **assess its readiness** to apply for a bronze, silver or gold eco-award.

For each section and sub-section below, read the three statements carefully, then tick the statement that most closely describes your congregation.



1. General Issues

1.1 Evaluation and planning

	bronze	silver	gold
The congregation has used the church check-up to identify the congregation's environmental strengths and weaknesses.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
The congregation has an "action plan" of eco activities, and monitors its progress.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
The congregation has a long term sustainable eco "action plan" which it regularly reviews, evaluates and updates.			<input type="checkbox"/>

1.2 Initiating and coordinating

	bronze	silver	gold
A number of people from across the congregation are involved in initiating and coordinating eco activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
The congregation has an established group which has responsibility for initiating and coordinating eco activities, and is supported by the leadership of the congregation.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
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.			<input type="checkbox"/>

1.3 Communication

	bronze	silver	gold
There is regular communication on eco issues and activities within the congregation eg newsletters, internal noticeboards.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
The congregation communicates about eco issues both in and beyond the congregation eg public noticeboards, website, local media		<input type="checkbox"/>	
The congregation is well-known within its community for its leadership and commitment to environmental issues			<input type="checkbox"/>

bronze silver gold

1.4 Eco-congregation Scotland involvement

The congregation is a registered eco-congregation.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Members of the congregation actively support local network events, and contribute ideas for sharing with other congregations.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
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.			<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Spiritual Living: helping the whole congregation to make the link between their Christian faith and environmental concerns.

2.1 Discussing issues

bronze silver gold

Church leaders (deacons, elders, vestry etc) discuss the role of eco activity in the spiritual life of the church.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
There are opportunities for leaders and members of the congregation to meet to discuss environmental issues.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Leaders and members of the congregation are regularly involved in discussing environmental issues and lifestyle.			<input type="checkbox"/>

2.2 Worship and congregational life

bronze silver gold

Aspects of creation care are sometimes reflected in worship, prayers and sermons.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Care for creation is regularly reflected in worship, prayers, bible studies and sermons.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
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.			<input type="checkbox"/>

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

3.1 Individual members taking action

bronze silver gold

Basic practical steps to reduce energy use and waste by individual members of the congregation are being encouraged.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.			

3.2 Action in church buildings

bronze silver gold

Basic practical steps are being taken to reduce energy consumption and waste (where possible) within the church building .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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 action, where possible, related to travel and finance.			

3.3 Biodiversity, wildlife, grounds and gardens

bronze silver gold

The congregation has considered and implemented some action to adapt the church grounds (where possible) to be more environmentally friendly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.			

4. Global Living: Having a positive impact on and/or working with national and global environmental justice concerns

4.1 Local and national concerns

bronze silver gold

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.

<input type="checkbox"/>		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>

4.2 global and international concerns

bronze silver gold

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.

<input type="checkbox"/>		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>

Self-assessment Summary

Total number of ticks in each category

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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If you have **ticked gold for all 11** statements, you are ready to apply for a gold award.

If you have **ticked a mixture of silver and gold statements**, you could apply now for a silver award, or use the checklist to identify areas you would need to work on before applying for a gold award.

If you have a mixture of all three levels, you could apply now for a bronze award, or use the checklist to identify areas you would need to work on before applying for a silver or gold award.

Notes:

1.1 Evaluation and planning

An “action plan” doesn’t need to be complex, but it should at least include a list of actions to be taken during the coming year, target dates for these, and who will be responsible for making them happen. It can then be used as a simple checklist when reviewing progress during the year.

1.2 Initiating and coordinating

Many congregations find it useful to have a small eco-group to coordinate and initiate activities. This may be a stand-alone group, or a sub-group of the kirk session or equivalent. It is important that this group has the support of the church leadership, and is not seen as a fringe group. The role of the group should include encouraging others from the congregation to become involved in care for creation in a variety of ways. The group should liaise with other groups (property, finance, worship, world mission, community links etc) as required, and should report regularly to the church leadership.

An alternative approach is for an existing group to take responsibility for environmental issues alongside its other concerns, but care must be taken to ensure that environmental issues are not lost in a wider agenda.

1.3 Communication

Communication is important to ensure that environmental concerns are shared with the whole congregation, and where possible with those outside the congregation. Many congregations have regular articles on relevant topics in church newsletters, or on a church website, or use interactive noticeboards to keep the whole congregations (and members of the community who use the buildings) well-informed and challenged. It is also important that the “official eco-congregation contact person” disseminates information to the congregation, and keeps Eco-congregation Scotland informed of any changes in personnel, e-mail address etc.

1.4 Eco-congregation Scotland involvement

Every eco-congregation is assigned to a local network of other eco-congregations in the area. These networks often arrange events and meetings for support and sharing ideas. Members of eco-congregations are encouraged to attend these events, and become involved in their local network. We also encourage members to come long to the Annual Gathering in April each year, to hear motivational speakers and to learn and share ideas in the workshops. The Annual Gathering incorporates the (brief) AGM of Eco-congregation Scotland, and eco-congregations which are official members of ECS should try to ensure that a representative attends.

2.1 Discussing environmental issues

Environmental issues, their spiritual basis and lifestyle implications, are complex and demanding. Discussion groups, workshops and seminars either within the congregation, or at external events, are an important way of helping individuals and the congregation as a whole, including church leaders, to understand what their commitment to being an eco-congregation means.

2.2 Worship, study and prayer

The link between Christian faith and environmental concerns should be reflected regularly in the worship and prayer life of an eco-congregation. This could include special services during Creation Time or around Earth Hour, for example, but should not be limited to these special times. Care for creation and climate (in)justice could be included regularly in prayers of intercession, as often as prayers about war and peace, hunger and poverty, justice and victims of natural disasters. ECS (and other organisations) provide resources including prayers, sermon outlines and study materials which congregations can use.

3.1 Individual members taking action

An eco-congregation should encourage and support its members to take practical individual action to reduce their environmental impact, by providing resources material, poster campaigns, newsletter articles, “green slots” in worship, Lent campaigns, study groups and discussions, to allow members to make their own personal decisions. Individual action could involve a wide range of areas, including home energy use, switching energy suppliers, home insulation, solar heating and PV panels, recycling and upcycling, food related issues, travel issues – reducing car use where possible, cycling and walking, using public transport, keeping air miles to a minimum – and financial issues, including investment decisions. The idea is not to lecture individuals on what they should do, but to provide information and support so that individuals can make informed choices, and be encouraged by others taking similar action.

3.2 Action in church buildings

For some churches, significant reductions in carbon footprint can be made by, for example, replacing heating systems, improving insulation, installing double glazing, investing in renewable energy systems, and where this is possible, it should be encouraged. However, such measures are not always possible for economic, practical or planning reasons, and encouraging individuals to apply these ideas in their own homes is at least as important and effective. In all church buildings, good practice by users should be encouraged, including monitoring and recording energy use, and simple practical steps such as closing doors, using thermostats and heating controls. Congregations could also provide recycling facilities for members and hall users, and composting and food waste bins in kitchen areas. Congregation should also encourage the use of re-usable rather than disposable crockery, car sharing, encouraging walking or cycling to church, and investigating how and where church funds are invested.

3.3 Biodiversity, wildlife, grounds and gardens

There are many things which can be done to make gardens and grounds more environmentally friendly, including allowing wild flower areas, using natural methods of pest control, avoiding peat-based composts. Good practice can be applied in church grounds and individual members’ gardens. Congregations may be able to become involved in community garden projects. Church grounds can also be developed as places for peaceful reflection and prayer, and can be opened to the community.

4.1 Local and national concerns

Eco-congregation members are encouraged to be involved in environmental initiatives outwith their own congregation. This could be by leading or being involved in local community projects – transition towns, beach clean-ups, community energy projects, planning issues, eco-schools, secular environmental groups and networks, local politics – or by supporting national organisations e.g RSPB, Woodland Trust and others - financially or through active membership. Individuals and groups may also be involved in lobbying political representatives on environmental issues.

4.2 Global and international concerns

Environmental issues of climate change, habitat damage, pollution and overuse of resources, are global and international in impact and require global and international solutions. Christians need to be well-informed, and actively engaged. At very least, we should be supporting those charities and government actions that mitigate the worst impacts, including Christian Aid, TEAR Fund, SCIAF and others. The use of Fairtrade products is common in many (most?) churches, but we need to go beyond that to deal with underlying causes of poverty and underdevelopment, as they are made worse through climate change. This might be through supporting campaigning organisations like WWF, Friends of the Earth, Stop Climate Chaos and others, and/or through lobbying our political representatives and companies to take positive action.