

WE WISH ALL OUR READERS A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

Eco-Congregation Scotland Newsletter

Issue 20**December 2011**

Helping you to care for God's creation

Editorial

In this guest editorial and following the announcement of a major review of Feed in Tariffs announced by the UK government in late October, Ian Galloway (convenor of the Church of Scotland's Church and Society Council) asks:

Is the UK Government's solar panel review FiT for purpose?

The UK Government has shocked the renewable energy world by proposing to cut the subsidy for solar panels by 50%. The subsidy is provided in the form of a 'Feed in Tariff' or 'FiT' that is designed to encourage the installation of low carbon electricity generation on houses or other buildings, including churches. The scale of the cuts and their speed - they came into effect on 12 December - has caused real consternation.

One of the reasons for the announcement is the success of the scheme, which has attracted far more interest than the government had expected. Churches have begun to take interest and this unhappy announcement coincided with the Eco-Congregation Scotland solar panel conference at Partick South Church in Glasgow on 29 October. This conference brought together 120 representatives from churches around Scotland to discuss the pros and cons of solar panels.

Speakers and participants agreed that solar panels might be useful in Scotland, despite our rather grey climate but firmly concluded that they only make sense as part of a 'whole church' energy management policy.

The conference report encourages congregations to do the basics before considering solar panels: install draught proofing or secondary glazing. This would help improve the energy rating of the church, something the UK Government is also seeking to encourage in its consultation. Few churches have energy performance certificates



Selkirk Parish Church's solar panels

and their introduction has been resisted by some church authorities. However, the UK Government is suggesting this could become a pre condition for the subsidy.

Others have criticised the UK government proposals. Housing associations have suggested that they are regressive and that they will destroy plans by social housing providers to install solar panels on housing in low income areas. Friends of the Earth in England are arguing the whole review is illegal because of the haste with which it is being introduced and are mounting a legal challenge in the courts.

This is a lot to consider and we will be looking at the details closely. But it does say something about the inadequacy of the consultation. The UK Government has come up with some reasonable arguments about the subsidy but has managed to upset just about everybody in the process. At a time when government, churches and communities should be working together to respond to climate change the consultation risks driving us apart.

You can find out more about the ECS Solar Panel Conference and Review of FiTs at :

www.ecocongregationscotland.org/events/solar-panels-in-church-buildings

News

Making use of the sun - when you have it in abundance!



St Andrew's, Jerusalem

St Andrew's Church of Scotland in Jerusalem have taken further carbon-saving measures, installing solar water heaters on the roof of their Guesthouse in June 2010, replacing old oil-fired boilers (which were not only inefficient but also dangerous and due for replacement!). The heaters are topped up by a natural gas-fired boiler, which is rarely required. In the last 12 months, since installation, this saved NIS 90,000 (GB£15,430) in financial terms, or about 11,870 litres of fuel (diesel oil which is NIS 7.58 per litre). According to our calculations that is 30 tonnes of CO₂, which is a huge saving. Well done St Andrews!

Church Buildings - Liability or Valuable Community Resource? By Scott Wham

There are over 4000 church buildings in Scotland. These buildings will always be an important part of our heritage and tradition, but we must prevent the church from becoming a building preservation society. They are causing a huge headache for every denomination as maintenance and running costs spiral rapidly out of reach. It is well documented that congregations are aging and declining. However, whilst traditional Sunday church-going may be in decline (down to 11.2% in the 2002 Scottish Church Census), other models are growing with many attending mid-week services and events (involving an additional 3.9%). We have a large surplus of buildings due, in part, to denominational unions and other factors such as population shift. These have resulted in duplication and many buildings which are just simply in the wrong location. Unfortunately, they are often characterised by cold, damp and uninviting spaces, notoriously difficult to heat and maintain. It is vital that these buildings start to work for us, rather than against us. The most effective strategy we have is to increase their occupancy, in particular through exploring partnerships with other local service providers. One day in seven does not represent a sustainable use of a building. Churches are increasingly seen as being

detached from their community, not helped by the fact that the building is often closed throughout the week. This is unlike the first churches which served as both community and worship centres. No distinction should exist between a church and a community centre. There are many excellent examples of churches responding to this challenge and connecting with their community.

One is Kilmallie Free Church in Caol, Fort William which has just embarked on an extensive upgrade and development programme, including the installation of a biomass heating system. Their plans will open up the church for daily use and provide a comfortable and fit for purpose environment. Such developments cultivate more respect for the church and, in turn, help to erode the stigma commonly associated with church buildings.



The vision for Kilmallie Free Church

The church still has a very significant role to play. Our ambition should be to make churches the true community facilities they were always intended to be. Our buildings have tremendous potential to become the focal point of their community if we are willing to be flexible, innovative and visionary in our approach.

Scott is a postgraduate architecture student at the University of Strathclyde. His thesis project is exploring how to develop the potential of church buildings as sustainable community centres.

Camas Centre, Isle of Mull

Camas Centre is an outdoor centre on the Isle of Mull with an environmental focus. They are a part of the Iona Community and one of a few Christian Centres registered as an Eco-Congregation. Most of their work is with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

However, they also offer themed weeks aimed at adults who want to experience the community at Camas, and the beautiful landscape that surrounds it.

A week on Organic gardening, April 21 – 27, 2012 An opportunity to do some useful, practical work in the vegetable garden at Camas, suitable

News continued

for all gardening abilities, those with experience and those who are willing and just enjoy being close to the soil! Led by Liz Paterson: gardening enthusiast and member of the Iona Community, and Beccy Chenery: Camas gardener. Individual Rate: £189 (Saturday to Friday)



The Camas Centre, Isle of Mull

A week in Exploring Creation, September 15 – 21, 2012 The Celts spoke of two books in which it was possible to discover or 'read' God: the little book was the Bible, and the big book was Creation. This reflective and recreational programme offers the chance to join with others in exploring creation in the beautiful setting of Camas. Led by Kathy Galloway: practical theologian, writer, activist and former Leader of the Iona Community. Kathy is now the head of Christian Aid Scotland. Individual Rate: £230 (Saturday to Friday)

Visit www.iona.org.uk and click on the Camas section for more information.

Environmental Champion

Rev Norman Hutcheson of Dalbeattie Parish Church was nominated for this award made by D&G Life. The award is for individuals who are passionate about safeguarding and improving the environment and Norman was named as a runner up. He has been leading his church's environmental work since 2002. In the local community he has worked with a range of carbon reduction projects and he also helped bring Eco-Congregation to Hungary. Congratulations Norman!

A new face at Eco-Congregation Scotland

Welcome to our new Administrator, Oyunn Anshus! Oyunn comes from an environmental background and she is there to answer your general enquiries, help keep the website and e-news up to date and administer the registration and awards processes - what a lot to do in just 1.25 days a week!

National Gathering date announced

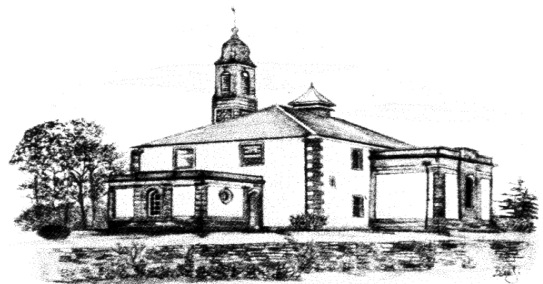
The Eco-Congregation Scotland National Gathering will take place on **Saturday 21st April 2012 at Bridge of Allan Parish Church**. Further details and the full programme will follow but please put the date in your diary!

Award Winning Churches

If you are thinking of applying for an award, please ensure you are using an up to date application form (downloadable from <http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/award/>). The new version of the form has a spreadsheet to help you calculate the carbon footprint of the church buildings – which is now a requirement for all award applications.

First Awards

Mearns Kirk, Glasgow held a range of environmentally-themed worship services (both traditional and informal). Among other practical initiatives in the church and grounds they established a wildflower garden with a walking route for prayer and contemplation. A novel idea is to run a "Spare Seat" club, where people are encouraged to give each other lifts. They also have long term commitment to fair trade and support for homeless people in Glasgow.



Mearns Kirk

St John Ogilvie's, Edinburgh were already active when they registered but went on to achieve the award in record time! They have taken steps to reduce their carbon footprint such as car-sharing and installing energy saving measures in the church house. Through their Justice and Peace work Fair Trade status has been achieved and they have undertaken lobbying work with SCIAF and Stop Climate Chaos. The J and P group has also made contributions to the liturgy on a caring for creation theme. There are a variety of reuse and recycling initiatives that also serve to help the poor and disadvantaged.

Second Awards

Cadzow, Hamilton has an enthusiastic and capable Eco-Group which has maintained progress, as well as initiated new activities. A new and very impressive heating system has been installed, which will considerably reduce the church's carbon footprint - and save money! They also hosted an evening for other local

Award Winning Churches continued

churches and invited Hamilton Grammar School to share their expertise in measuring and reducing the carbon footprint of buildings. The Cadzow café is an important contact with the local community, operating on a Friday when school is finished early so that pupils are able to call in at lunchtime on their way home.

... and a Third award - we only have 5 third award winners nationwide and so this one is extra special!

Fairlie have been very active in lobbying both against the proposed new coal fired power station at Hunterston and for the Climate Change Bill, when it was going through parliament.



Produce from Fairlie's organic garden

They have a productive organic garden and an annual litter pick in the community. Several of their older members have their own litter pickers and keep things tidy throughout the year. Happily, they have been rewarded by seeing a decline in the amount of litter around the village in recent years.

News from the Networks

More NEW Networks!

In the last edition of the newsletter we announced two new networks and now there are two more! It seems there is almost a trend starting in that two award winning eco-congregations have both recently suggested setting up networks in their local area and so we now have...

Mid Argyll Following an approach from Ardrishaig Parish Church, a meeting was held on 15th November to investigate setting up a network for this area. The meeting was well supported and the group plans to meet again early next year. Watch this space!

News from the Networks continued

Esk, Clyde and Tweed this is the provisional name for the network being established with the help of Carlops Parish Church to cover an area to the south of Edinburgh. They held a meeting on 24th October attended by representatives from 5 different churches and decided to hold two meetings a year. The network and the work of Carlops Church have attracted the attention of Claudia Beamish MSP (a member of the parliamentary committee for environmental affairs) who has asked if she can come to a future meeting. It will be formally launched on Monday 26th March by Ewan Aitken (Chair of Eco-Congregation Scotland), 7.30pm at Carlops Parish Church.

The two other new networks have also been launched:

Angus On 25th October at Arbroath Old and Abbey Church twenty people attended the launch meeting, representing 10 different churches. The meeting was very positive about the network. Progress to date and many good ideas for projects were shared between the congregations represented. A programme was set up for next year and they are looking into establishing an online discussion forum.

Ayrshire This network was launched at an Eco Fair event on 22nd October at Saltcoats New Trinity Church. Mike Adam from St Ninian's Old Parish Church in Stirling also gave his presentation on "Low Carbon Church". Although people attending the Eco Fair came from a wide geographical area, numbers were a bit disappointing. It is planned to hold a meeting with all registered churches in Ayrshire early in the New Year to explore how to further develop a network in this area.



Visitors at the Ayrshire Eco Fair

News from the Networks continued

Existing networks

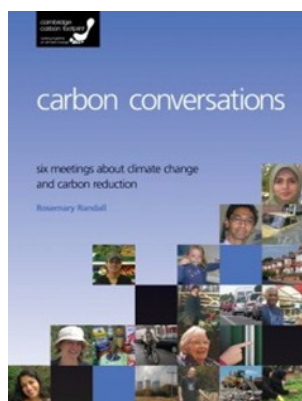
Most of the existing networks have now set a programme for 2012. All meetings are advertised on the website. If there is a network in your area don't forget to keep an eye on the network pages of website:

<http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/networks/>). These pages are also available for you to advertise your congregation's events. If there isn't a network in your area and you might be interested in helping to set one up, do get in touch - we would be happy to assist!

Aberdeen / Aberdeenshire met on 5th October to share and exchange ideas for Eco-Congregation projects. To view some of the wonderful ideas that were discussed see <http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/networks/aberdeen/>. Everyone felt that this was extremely interesting and a well worth while activity, especially as several of the groups represented were embarking on their third award and new ideas were very welcome.

Dumfries and Galloway also had a meeting on 5th October, when the main topic was "Energy Conservation & Renewables for the Home".

Edinburgh met on 19th October and agreed a way of working for the future which will share administration and organisation of meetings. The Network churches also received an offer from members to run "Carbon Conversation" courses for their congregations. This course, selected by the Guardian as 'one of the 20 most promising solutions to Climate Change', is being used by a growing number of communities and businesses all over the UK to discuss climate change and other environmental issues, how they will affect us and how we can all contribute to a better future.



A Carbon Conversation course in your congregation might help strengthen the green group and get others involved and active. Please get in touch with Jean jeanc@inf.ed.ac.uk, if you are interested in hearing more.

Fife met on October 24th with a topic of "Involving young people". They plan to host a Climate Change Roadshow next year.

Glasgow met on 28th November when Jan MacDonald spoke about the "Love Food, Hate Waste" campaign (see <http://www.wasteawarelovefood.org.uk/> or <http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/>).

Helensburgh and Lomond met on 16th November, when there was a useful exchange of news and information.

Highland and Moray hosted a Climate Change Roadshow on Saturday 12th November at Ness Bank Church, Inverness.

Orkney is hoping to have a big eco-congregation event in the spring, probably including a Climate Change Roadshow.

Perth met on November 15th and watched part of a DVD called "Garbage Warrior", about Michael Reynolds, an American architect who has spent his life building environmentally friendly, self-sufficient buildings from waste materials.

South Lanarkshire plans to invite a speaker from SL CAN, the Zero Waste campaign in their area, to their February meeting.

Stirling met on 22nd November to hear more about solar photovoltaics, including a discussion on the implications of the proposed changes in Feed in Tariffs.

West Lothian and Falkirk is hosting a Climate Change Roadshow on 17th January 2012 at Falkirk Old and St Modan's Parish Church, Manse Place, Falkirk, FK1 1JN. Tel 01324 611017. Further information from: moragmackay@foasmpc.org.uk
Directions: www.foasmpc.org.uk

Resources

Dunscore Survey

As a congregation starting to think about applying for their third Eco congregation award, Dunscore (a rural church near Dumfries in South West Scotland) decided that it would be useful to find out what the whole congregation thought that we, as an Eco-Congregation, should focus on. We decided to prepare a short survey listing a wide variety of possible activities that we could do to see which were considered "must dos" and

Resources continued

which were “don’t bothers”. The survey offered activities from ladybird surveys to lift-sharing and from lobbying to local produce – plenty to choose from!

The results were fascinating and quite surprising. Lift-sharing (something that could reduce our church service carbon footprint quite significantly) was popular. This has given us encouragement to persevere in finding someone to coordinate sharing for services and meetings. The “green corner” of the church was seen as “worth doing” – again offering encouragement to maintain our recycling containers and Eco information.

Equally interesting were things that were considered by many as “not worth doing”. Demonstrating was clearly in this category despite our occasional and worthwhile participation in marches (such as The Wave). Perhaps most surprising was that despite having had some apparently well received “Eco Services”, these were not seen as popular.

The survey served several purposes. Firstly, it helped the Eco-Congregation Group to better understand where we should focus our efforts. But, perhaps more importantly, it made the congregation think about Eco issues, their importance and what part they might play in them. Further, it reminded us that being part of an Eco-Congregation means that we are all involved in caring for creation and there are so many ways that we can do this.

If you would like to do something similar in your congregation, Dunscore have kindly shared the format of their questionnaire and it is available at: <http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/networks/dumfries-galloway/>

Eco Driving

Members of the Dunscore Parish Church congregation have also learned how to save money on their petrol and diesel by undertaking fuel efficient driver training recently. The Energy Saving Scotland advice centre organised the training and Pam Hamilton, who took part on the day commented, “I found the session extremely interesting. I learned such a lot about new ways to drive using the gears and clutch and to actually move the car and using the its own momentum much more. As I realise now that my right foot is directly connected to my bank account, this was a really useful hour and will, I hope, help me to drive more efficiently!”



Eco driving at Dunscore

Understanding how to drive more efficiently could save you a lot of money on your fuel bills. It is estimated that after training you could save as much as two months’ worth of fuel in a year. For a limited time, the Energy Saving Trust is able to offer Fuel Efficient Driver Training for only £12 (normal price £40). The training takes approximately 50 minutes and is provided by an approved instructor helping you adopt techniques on how to drive more efficiently.

Adopting fuel efficient driving techniques can lead to:

- *An average of 15% savings on fuel costs
- *Less wear and tear on vehicles
- *Lower carbon emissions
- *Reduced likelihood of accidents .

Any driver* can organise Fuel Efficient Driver Training. Call **0800 512 012** or see <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/scotland/Transport/Consumer/Fuel-efficient-driver-training>

Historic Scotland Guidance Note on MicroRenewables <http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/microrenewables.pdf>. This guidance gives much valuable technical information for those considering renewable energy for a listed building.

Praying for the Earth

This a prayer booklet with beautiful inspiring pictures, written to aid individuals or group prayer. It would be especially useful for anyone leading intercessions or preparing prayer diaries.

The prayers in the booklet are laid out to enable you to use them on a daily, weekly or monthly cycle, with a section at the end of the book on prayers for specific times in the church calendar. It is available for £2 including postage & packaging from Dr Rob Kelsey, The Vicarage, Church Lane, Norham, Berwick upon Tweed, TD15 2LF. Robert@josephkelsey.fsnet.co.uk

Resources continued

Gasland

This DVD, available on Amazon, explores the new technology of "fracking", which is now being introduced to the UK.

What is fracking? The film claims it is the largest domestic natural gas drilling boom in history has swept across the United States. The Halliburton-developed drilling technology of "fracking" or hydraulic fracturing has unlocked a "Saudi Arabia of natural gas" just beneath us. But is fracking safe? When filmmaker Josh Fox is asked to lease his land for drilling, he embarks on a cross-country odyssey uncovering a trail of secrets, lies and contamination. A recently drilled nearby Pennsylvania town reports that residents are able to light their drinking water on fire! For further information about fracking see also Guardian article at: <http://tinyurl.com/5wgf9jq>.

Stations of the Rainforest

The Columban Faith and Justice in Britain has produced a new DVD, Stations of the Rainforests. This revised audio-visual incorporates more global issues related to rainforest destruction, such as the impact of extractive industries, loss of biodiversity and climate change. Links are revealed with human impoverishment and loss of livelihoods. Price £7.00. Available from See <http://www.columbans.co.uk/resources/dvd-video/stations-of-the-rainforests/>

Would you like a tree for your church grounds or to give away to "plant" another Eco-Congregation?

Following the Eco-Congregation Gathering in March, we had about 10 trees left over (rowan, bird cherry and birch). Could you take one for your church grounds or to give away to a neighbouring church and so introduce them to Eco-Congregation? The trees are currently "heeled in" in Margaret's garden



Collecting a "Gathering tree"

and are looking for a more permanent home! From now until March is the planting season for bare rooted stock and so, if you have a means of

collecting one from Callander, or possibly Stirling, or even Edinburgh, please contact: margaret@ecocongregation.org.uk or tel 01877 330182 and we will try to make arrangements!

To inspire you here is the tale of what happened to one of our trees:

Carlops 'Gathering' Tree I have a rowan tree growing in a pot in my garden. It was presented to Carlops Church at the Eco-Congregation Gathering this Spring and is awaiting a decision as to its permanent planting position. This decision will need to be taken soon because our sapling is healthy and growing well.

Over a hundred native species trees were given to churches all over Scotland. What an appropriate gesture for Eco-Congregation to make! This realisation was driven home when I read Stephen Blackmore's article in the Autumn Botanic's magazine. I summarise:-

'The role of forests in the life of our planet is fundamental and they are often described as "the lungs of the planet". They play a vital role in absorbing carbon dioxide and replenishing the supply of oxygen. By pumping moisture into the atmosphere forests have a profound influence on global and regional weather systems. Their presence slows down the run off of water and prevents flooding.

However, even before the industrial revolution, human activities had destroyed half of Earth's forests. Despite decades of international concern our assault on the forests has only recently begun to slow down. Even now 13 million hectares of forest are felled every year. Just as a human being can survive with a single lung, so can planet Earth. We should not however expect it to run a marathon and that is what we are demanding by continuing to consume faster than nature can replenish. Fortunately, just under 4 billion hectares are still forested and in some places, including Scotland, forest cover is increasing steadily.'

The last sentence gives us some good news. Wherever in Carlops our little tree is planted it will add its small contribution to the actions we each take to conserve our environment.

Nan Buchan, Carlops Parish Church

PS Behind the church in Carlops is a high bank of soil which is supported by wooden cribbing. Since writing the above article our tree has been planted above the cribbing where we hope it will help to stabilise the soil and, as it grows, provide a haven for wildlife .

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we pray for the vine and for our part upon it.
 Like the seedling, the vine of your church is fragile. It can grow and it can wither.
 It can spread wide and be richly laden or it can shrink and be empty.
 Following you through these days is not easy; guide our footsteps as we go.
 Help us to hold all your disciples in our hearts today as we consider what actions we can take locally to help tackle climate change and protect the world's poorest people who are suffering the most.
 Bless those who feel sure and those who feel uncertain.
 Bless those whose faith is flourishing and those whose faith is drying up.
 Bless congregations enjoying themselves and congregations which are frantic or fearful.
 Bless us all this day, in your holy name. Amen

Adapted from a Christian Aid prayer - with thanks to Wendy Duncan

Other sources of prayers and information:

Christian Ecology Link prayer guide: <http://www.christian-ecology.org.uk/resources.htm#pg>

Climate Stewards prayer blog: <http://climateprayer.wordpress.com/>

Contributions welcome!

If you would like to send in a news item, review of a resource you have found useful, prayer, quote or any other item, we would welcome your contribution to the newsletter.

Keep in touch!

For environmental and financial reasons the main circulation of the newsletter is by email. Please ensure you keep us informed of any changes to your email address. We welcome new recipients of the newsletter. If it has been forwarded to you, to receive future issues email scotland@ecocongregation.org.uk.

Register your church

Registering on the Eco-Congregation programme is easy and free. It gives your church access to free resources, the chance to be part of a local network, and to work towards an Eco-Congregation Award. It's easy to register. Contact us for a form or visit www.ecocongregationscotland.org.



For advice and support contact:

Margaret Warnock

Email: margaret@ecocongregation.org.uk

Phone: 01877 330182

Website: www.ecocongregationscotland.org

Eco-Congregation Scotland
 121 George Street
 Edinburgh
 EH2 4YN

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To enquire about the programme and request an introduction pack contact:

Oyunn Anshus

Email: oanshus@ecocongregation.org.uk

Phone: 0131 240 2277

OR

Gordon Hudson

Email: manager@ecocongregation.org.uk

Phone: 0131 240 2274

