



Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire Eco-congregation Network

Notes from meeting held on Monday 21st May 2012 at Banchory-Ternan West Parish Church

Present: Bill Craigie and Ann Wilson (Queen's Cross) John Foster (Birse and Feughside), Ann Ralph (Ferryhill), Maddie Thurlow and Lisa Eunson ((St Ternan;s Episcopal), Ewen Hardy ((Kirk of St Nicholas Uniting), Sue Marshall (Drumoak Durris), Fiona Graham and Jenny Smith (Banchory-Ternan West), Margaret Warnock (Eco-Congregation Scotland)

Apologies: Moira Lee (New Machar), Elizabeth Bayman (St Andrew's Cathedral), Ross Richardson (St Machar's Cathedral), Karen McCrossan (Torry St Fittick's)

1. Attendees were welcomed by Fiona Graham as Eco-Congregation representative from Banchory Ternan West Church (BTW). The topic of purchasing had arisen from the current planned project at BTW, with major changes to the church buildings.
2. **Becoming a Fairtrade Church.** Jenny Smith, Fairtrade contact at BTW, explained the background and steps to becoming a Fairtrade Church. A church should achieve three goals:
 - 1) use Fairtrade coffee & tea after services and at all meetings
 - 2) move on to using other Fairtrade items eg sugar, biscuits, when possible
 - 3) promote Fairtrade during Fair Trade Fortnight.

There is plenty of information, advice and resources on the website www.fairtrade.org.uk. This includes a 'churches action guide' and the application process forms etc.

Discussion: Some of the churches represented were Fairtrade Churches; others had not gone through the formal process. Most of those present used Fairtrade items and some had regular stalls selling items, although the latter had diminished mainly because Fairtrade could be bought locally but also because of issues of volume & sell by dates etc. One suggestion was for the network to give a list of local 'fair traders' so links could be made to make the most of discounts. Fairtrade ideas: raffle of hamper of items; Fairtrade wine tasting event. The Kincardine Church of Scotland presbytery had recently confirmed it was to work towards Fairtrade status, which would be 50% of churches being Fairtrade Churches.

3. **Purchasing policies.** There was a discussion on the merits and contents of having a formal policy as a context to guide church purchasing. Queens Cross made available their policy, which is attached. This covered hospitality, travel, communication, energy, maintenance and investments. This has now been approved by their Board. It was agreed that a key point was to make the policy short. Making sure all relevant people knew about and understood the policy, and remembered about it, would be an ongoing challenge!
4. **Greening your building project.** Frazer Simpson from Kemnay Parish Church had kindly sent some notes on their recent building project. These were read out at the meeting, and are attached. The project included new heating system, new lighting, and flexible seating arrangement. Conclusions: important to carry out detailed calculations for the heating system and lighting. Balancing aesthetics, practicality and eco friendliness is the real challenge.

Inverurie West was mentioned as another local church which had undertaken a very successful building project.

John Forster, a sustainability consultant from Finzean, gave a presentation on the general topics to be considered before any project, and some suggestions to reduce the environmental impacts. John's powerpoint with some notes is attached. Key points: overall sustainability, considering the social, economic and environmental issues; design details; committed good contractor.

Other contributions from attendees: Queens Cross had installed more heating zones to give greater flexibility and efficiency.

Durris Church had reduced energy bills substantially by taking simple low cost actions.

De-stratification fans could be useful: see <http://reducingenergyuse.posterous.com/>.

Worthwhile trying to influence the whole congregation to reduce carbon use as this is potentially much more than just the church premises: see

<http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/In-your-home> for lots of useful information

5. **New draft resource on Management of Finances & Purchasing.**

Margaret Warnock from Eco-Congregation Scotland gave a presentation on the background, context and content of the new resources being prepared for Eco-Congregations. The existing modules were being re-worked to bring up to date. The programme is being simplified with three core areas: spiritual, practical and global living. Churches will have their own ideas to address the various topics. The new resources would provide guidance, sources of information and examples from churches around the country. The new resources will be put on to the website once they have been through a consultation period. The new 'Ideas for Action' number 8 was 'Management of finances & purchasing' (see attached draft). This addressed:

1. Finance: bank, investment, fundraising, expenses
2. Ethical purchasing: equipment, food, flowers, utilities, office supplies
3. Closing the loop: recycling & re-using, composting, carbon offsetting.

There was a separate IfA on church property, although there was some overlap.

Copies of the Draft document were circulated and comments requested.

The simplification of the resources to present then as just three core areas was welcomed.

There was also some discussion about how to get caring for creation included in policies / briefs for church refurbishment / building. The need for case studies about such projects to be available on the website was also mentioned.

6. **News/discussion from churches.**

Ferryhill had insulated their roof by members of the congregation buying their allocation of insulation material and donating to the church.

Aberdeen City Council were no longer providing plants for planters. Good to make contact with local garden centres eg Dobbies, who might be willing to donate plants.

Banchory Ternan West had fund raised and commissioned planters from Wood Recyclability at Pitmedden (see <http://www.woodrecyclability.co.uk/>). This is a social enterprise recycling donated wood.

St Andrew's Cathedral in Aberdeen is undergoing major refurbishment and has requested some is trying to keep caring for creation matters on the agenda. They have requested some support. Bill Craigie and Ann Ralph volunteered to act as mentors, if needed.

General discussion over the 5% reduction in carbon emissions being sought by Church of Scotland. Sometimes hard to achieve this, although in many cases it can be done with simple measures on timing and draught-proofing.

7. Date of next meeting

Tuesday **23rd October** 2012 at 7.30 at **Torry St Fittick's Church**, Aberdeen:

Eco-Congregation / Christian Aid Climate Change Roadshow.

All encouraged to publicise this and get the date into church diaries. Further information will follow

Being conscious that all the national Eco-Congregation events take place in the Central Belt, the idea of having a “mini” Gathering and possibly a joint service in Aberdeen was raised. With the Roadshow in October and the winter possibly being difficult travel wise, it was suggested that the mini Gathering be held around the same time as the Roadshow.