# Introduction

Caring for creation is a fundamental part of our mission as the United Reformed Church. General Assembly has requested that all synods give an annual report on their progress towards net zero greenhouse gas emissions.

In 2022, General Assembly (resolution 17) resolved that “**urgent action** should be taken to reduce carbon emissions across the whole of church life, with the aim of reaching **net zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2030**.”

In 2024, General Assembly (resolution 36) requested that “local churches, **synods and related trust companies** should report by 31 March each year on an assessment of progress made during the previous calendar year in reducing carbon emissions across the synod, including synod offices, manses and church buildings held in trust by synod trust companies and synod activities.”

Steps to decreasing net zero emissions include more energy-efficient buildings, using renewable energy, and carbon-neutral travel and lifestyle choices. Synods are ideally positioned to lead this urgent action.

The reporting template that follows seeks to enable consistent reporting across every synod, over several years, that documents a path towards net zero greenhouse emissions. We hope that each synod will be able to celebrate major advances each year.

We encourage you to include in the report **examples of good practice** and **success stories**, ideally with links to images or videos. We would like to share these widely through URC Comms to inspire more action. These should also be **shared often within your synod**, perhaps in a synod newsletter or an eco newsletter, with the support of your Green Apostle/Advocate/Team.

# Part 1 – General Information

1. **Synod name**

1. **Name and role of person(s) completing the report**

1. **Whose responsibility is net zero in your synod?**

1. **When was your synod’s environmental policy last reviewed?** (please use dd/mm/yyyy format)

1. **Does your synod’s current environmental policy express a commitment to reducing carbon emissions?**

1. **Have you started measuring your synod’s carbon footprint?** (e.g. using the [360º Carbon Calculator](https://360carbon.org/en-gb/) from Climate Stewards)

1. **How much do you expect synod emissions will reduce by 2030[[1]](#footnote-2)?**

     %

1. **What are you including in calculations of your carbon footprint?** (tick all that apply)

Synod office(s)  All synod business travel

Synod staff commute  All synod activities

Manses owned by the synod  Other manses within the synod

All church buildings & halls  All local ministers’ business travel

Lifestyles of local congregations (e.g. travel, energy use)

# Part 2 – Synod office(s), activities and travel

1. **For the areas where you are measuring the current carbon footprint, enter the figures below:**

Your office(s):       tonnes of CO2 equivalent

Travel on synod business[[2]](#footnote-3):       tonnes of CO2 equivalent

Commute of synod staff:       tonnes of CO2 equivalent

Synod activities:       tonnes of CO2 equivalent

1. **What are the most significant actions the synod has taken this year to reduce its carbon footprint?** (a bullet point/short sentence for each action; no more than six actions)

1. **Please indicate if there are areas where the synod is under-resourced:** (e.g. finances, knowledge, skills, staff time)

1. **Please name any other synods/organisations you are collaborating with to help reduce your carbon footprint:**

# Part 3 – Supporting local congregations

1. **For the areas where you are measuring the current carbon footprint, enter the figures below:**

All church buildings & halls:       tonnes of CO2 equivalent

All local ministers’ business travel:       tonnes of CO2 equivalent

Lifestyles of local congregations[[3]](#footnote-4):       tonnes of CO2 equivalent

1. **What encouragement have you given to local churches in the last twelve months to reduce their carbon footprint?** (e.g. through synod or eco newsletters, training, closure/merger discussion)

1. **What financial resources are you offering to churches that are seeking to reduce their carbon footprint?**

1. **Local congregations’ participation in Eco Church (England and Wales) or Eco-Congregation (Scotland)[[4]](#footnote-5):**

What percent of churches in your synod are registered?      %

What percent have reached Bronze award level?      %

What percent have reached Silver award level?      %

What percent have reached Gold award level?      %

# Part 4 – Manses

1. **For the areas where you are measuring the current carbon footprint, enter the figures below[[5]](#footnote-6):**

Manses owned by the synod:       tonnes of CO2 equivalent

Other manses in the synod:       tonnes of CO2 equivalent

1. **What actions have you taken to reduce the carbon footprint of manses?** (e.g. selling, insulation, replacing heating system)

# Part 5 – Sharing good news

1. Please share any actions taken by your synod or local congregations to promote or achieve reducing your carbon footprint in the last twelve months. This could be a few bullet points or links to news items on your website, an e-newsletter, local press reports, etc. Please email a photograph (that we can share publicly) for each item where possible.

1. We seek permission to share the data contained on this form, including good news items and photos you share with us, within the URC and beyond it. Do we have permission to do so?

Yes, permission is given for the form’s contents, plus related photos, to be used publicly

**Please confirm the date of submission:**

# Thank you

We really appreciate the considerable time and effort you have put into filling in this form as faithfully as you can. We sincerely hope it has been a useful tool in keeping this important issue an active focus of synod life, and that you will see positive results from year to year.

This is a new area of work for all of us, in uncharted territory. By sharing these experiences broadly, we want to inspire and encourage good practice across the whole of the URC, and to be able to communicate the importance of caring of creation as part of the URC’s mission and discipleship.

We promise to use the given information sensitively: the purpose is always to encourage. We will seek to maximise the impact of the data through positive representations of the information you include, and never to embarrass or criticise anyone or any synod.

This is an annual report, but if you have questions or news to share at other times, please do get in touch – we will be delighted to try to assist wherever we can.

# Contact details

Send queries, completed forms, photos or other news to:

Roo Stewart

Head of Public Issues

[roo.stewart@urc.org.uk](mailto:roo.stewart@urc.org.uk)

020 7916 8632

Good practice, good news stories, links and resources are available on the URC website: [urc.org.uk/greenerchurch](https://urc.org.uk/greenerchurch).

1. Before an expert calculation is completed, a ‘hope’ or ‘goal’ here would still demonstrate intent. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Carbon calculators vary in complexity and accuracy. Various travel carbon calculators are available online, e.g. [goclimate.com/travel-calculator](https://www.goclimate.com/travel-calculator). More accurate calculators that will return the carbon footprint of specific vehicles are also available, e.g. [drivesmart.co.uk/car-carbon-footprint-calculator.aspx](https://www.drivesmart.co.uk/car-carbon-footprint-calculator.aspx) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Carbon calculators vary in complexity and accuracy. We recommend [climatestewards.org/carbon-calculators/](https://www.climatestewards.org/carbon-calculators/) for church buildings and individuals.

   A fun, simple and fast alternative for calculating personal carbon footprint is [carbon-calculator.climatehero.org/](https://theunitedreformedchurch.sharepoint.com/sites/missionteam/Shared%20Documents/mission%20team/Church%20and%20Society/Roo/Church%20&%20Society/Net%20Zero/Synod%20Net%20Zero%20reporting/carbon-calculator.climatehero.org/) which will give a very rough result but some useful suggestions for improvement. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Eco Church and Eco-Congregation help congregations care for creation in a holistic way, not only with reducing their carbon footprint. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. A manse’s Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) will give an indication of CO2 emissions as well as steps to reduce its carbon footprint.  
   Find current EPCs at [www.gov.uk/find-energy-certificate](https://www.gov.uk/find-energy-certificate) (England and Wales) and [scottishepcregister.org.uk/](https://www.scottishepcregister.org.uk/) (Scotland) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)