



Environmental Vision Document for St Mary's West Horsley – June 2026

Introduction:

This vision document seeks to lay out how we as God's stewards will seek to take responsibility in caring for God's creation. The document does not establish hard standards that are binding, but it describes our vision as a church, showing how we aspire to respond to God's call in the near future. It indicates the direction in which we aim to move.

We are aware that the current state of nature and the rapid development of climate change demand serious action, but we also acknowledge that time is needed for changing attitudes and procedures.

This document is not an absolute requirement for moving toward the next Eco Church award given by A Rocha, but it is inspired and directly encouraged by their resources.

Once this vision document is adopted by the PCC, every year an **Action Plan** will be established, which will contain S.M.A.R.T. targets: **S**pecific – **M**easurable – **A**mbitious – **R**ealistic – **T**ime bound. At the end of each year the Eco-Team will present to the PCC an Annual Report. The PCC will review the targets and revise the Action Plan annually in consultation with Fabrics Team and Eco Team.

The annual Action Plan will be the application of the vision laid out in this document.

Section 1: The foundations of this vision document

The following passages from the Bible represent the foundation for this Christian responsibility (quoted from the NIVUK 2011):

Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." AND

Psalm 19:1 "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." – *God is the creator of all that exists and creation reflects the glory of God.*

Genesis 1:27-28: "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." – *The so-called "cultural mandate", which gives humanity authority over the earth.*

Genesis 2:15: "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." – *Our call to cultivate the earth and to care for it. See also the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30.*

Matthew 6:26 "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" – *God cares for all creatures in nature, but especially for humanity.*

Leviticus 25 makes provisions against over-exploitation of the land in Israel and protects the poor from getting poorer while the rich get richer. The land should have a periodic Sabbath rest (also benefitting the wildlife), impoverished persons should re-gain their liberty in the Jubilee Year and rural property should be restored to the original owners to enable them to make a living off it.

The introduction to the chapter “Environment and Net Zero Carbon” on the Guildford Diocese’s website makes the following statements:

“Caring for the environment and working towards Net Zero Carbon - Why are we doing this?”

At the heart of Christian discipleship lies a deep theological understanding that our relationship with God, with each other, and with creation is interconnected.

Caring for creation is therefore an act of honouring these relationships:

God - *By caring for creation we honour the God who loved creation into being and made human beings in his own image to care for it.*

People - *When we recognise the earth as a shared home, our actions reflect this. Climate change and environmental degradation are having a negative impact on people in every part of the world, especially those who are living in poverty and vulnerable situations. Accordingly, we think about the impact of our choices on the well-being of others and try to honour them through our actions.*

Creation - *Acknowledging creation as a divine masterpiece that reflects God’s handiwork, we should do whatever we can to pass on this gift to future generations. We consider its value and become stewards of this precious gift.”*

A bit further down we read:

“There has been a 69% decline in global wildlife populations since 1970, and 70% of ancient woodlands in this country have gone. A vanishingly small 3% of UK wildflower meadows are left.

Enamoured of our own creativity, we have been squandering God’s gift of the natural world with relentless and astonishing speed in a single generation. And, with climate chaos firmly taking hold of the planet, we are making our own future on Earth less and less certain.

But we are people of faith, and therefore guardians of Hope.

By acting together in a united way, trusting in God’s love - by prioritising action - we can become leaders in turning this devastation around, and move one step closer to the Kingdom in the process.”

It is a well-researched fact that increasing levels of CO₂ in the atmosphere have been causing climate change at a worrying speed during recent decades and as a consequence we experience more and more extreme weather events like storms, heat waves, floods and droughts – even in the UK. We call this the “climate crisis”. The worst affected areas of the world are often poor countries, whose populations coincidentally contribute the least to global greenhouse emissions. This is what is widely known as “climate injustice”.

Section 2: Starting points of our Environmental Vision

We recognise the climate and nature crises and the fundamental injustice these represent.

St Mary's commits to seeking climate justice as part of the Christian responsibility of loving our global neighbours by raising awareness for the need of

- equal access to natural resources and
- equal protection from the negative impact of climate change on livelihoods.

We recognise and teach that creation care and action to address the climate and nature crises are integral to the Christian faith and life. They are acts of worship and obedience to God. St Mary's commits to honouring our Creator by caring for the environment and seeking to use natural resources wisely.

We recognise the need to manage our land as stewards of God's creation, not only for human benefit.

We recognise that Christians need to take action locally, nationally and globally to protect God's creation and to tackle climate injustice.

The Church of England's commitments:

1. Net Zero Carbon by 2030

The Church of England as a whole has committed to Net Zero Carbon by 2030.

This ambitious target was adopted by the General Synod in 2020 and informs the current Net Zero Carbon strategy of the Diocese of Guildford.

see: <https://www.cofeguildford.org.uk/mission/environmentandnetzerocarbon>

As a local church we commit to increasing our efforts in line with the diocese's Net Zero Carbon target wherever we can.

2. The "Fifth Mark of Mission"

The fifth "Mark of Mission" as adopted by the General Synod of the CoE in 1996 is ***"to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth"***.

see: <https://beingchurchin21stc.wordpress.com/pt2025/1-overview/anglican-marks-of-mission/>

Section 3: St Mary's Environmental Vision – a work in progress

1 Worship and Teaching

We seek to develop a biblical understanding of the church's responsibility before God for all that is entrusted to us in creation. We will strive to equip leadership, staff and church members with the skills, knowledge and confidence to act on this responsibility.

2 Buildings and Energy

We recognise the significant environmental impact of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. We will seek to reduce them as much as we can, working consistently toward the Net Zero Carbon target.

3 Procurement, Waste and Water

We recognize the significance of choosing to purchase environmentally friendly supplies that are produced and traded under Fairtrade conditions. We aim to minimise our waste output and to adhere to the legal requirements of waste separation to enable maximal recycling. We aim to save water.

4 Land and Nature

We will respond to the nature crisis and loss of biodiversity through practical action of our own and in collaboration with local organisations like the Horsleys Climate Action Network (CAN) and Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT). We aim to manage the land owned by St Mary's in a way that sustains biodiversity, protects natural resources like soil, water and air and promotes the appreciation and enjoyment of God's creation.

5 Community and Global Engagement

We will highlight and raise awareness that the climate and nature crises affect the poorest first and worst so our responsibility is to promote justice for them wherever they are in the world.

6 Lifestyle and Transport

We recognise that in sum our individual choices of lifestyle and consumption have a great impact on the environment. We will therefore strive to encourage individuals and households in our church family and wider community to reduce use of natural resources and consider changes towards greater sustainability in the areas of personal lifestyle and individual transport.

In conclusion...

This is a work in progress and as a church we need to do it prayerfully, seeking God's will. We will also need to do it in the context of our local community and in partnership with other local and national organisations, supporting each other in our shared vision. May the Lord guide us in His wisdom and give us the willingness to change our attitudes and actions where we need to – especially where it is inconvenient and costly!