

Revised Procedure for Energy Surveys Report to Synod Together

The initial pilot Professional Energy Audit of church premises was rolled out from last Autumn. However, early results have led us to suspend this pilot, for reports proved not particularly helpful for the average local church property convenor. Also the use of the building as a place of worship and the way our buildings are generally used day-to-day was not taken into account. There was also concern survey reports would become “generic”. The recommendations revealed that the way ahead involved expenditure of an eye-watering amount of money on each church or to close most of our current church buildings, or go down the morally dubious off-setting route.

So not quite back to the drawing board, but we are now looking at alternative approaches, focusing on more realistic ways in which churches can act on the path to reduce their carbon footprint.

A group, consisting the Property Officer and Convenor, the Green Apostles and other knowledgeable interested parties, is to look at providing a list of what Churches might be able to implement themselves. The aim is to produce a self-assessment checklist, a database of practical options, and information to assist embarking on the road to reducing their carbon footprint. The URC has agreed a new Environmental Policy, which came into effect in January: [Environmental Policy - United Reformed Church](#) and this together with information produced by other denominations is also being reviewed to assist in this process.

In addition the Quinquennial survey template will now include a requirement for “obvious” solutions to improve energy efficiency be noted.

For future developments and major improvements to existing buildings works are to be viewed on an ‘eco-bases’. A full energy audit may be appropriate in these cases.

With the change in direction from the original concept the avenue for funding will need to be reconsidered.

The resolution passed at Synod Together (October 2019) that the Southern Synod adopts 2025 as the target by which we should reach Net Zero Carbon has given an impetus to work and most importantly collaboration between the Synod’s Green Apostles and the Synod Property team but it is apparent this target cannot be achieved. We therefore propose that rather than continue with a target that we are unable to deliver, we refocus by falling in line with the new denominational approach to aim to reach net zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2030 and use the 2025 date as a milestone along the journey.

This will itself require a very significant amount of work and resourcing, but it feels the right path to take as we move forward.

David Pickering - Joint Green Apostle
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