



Harrogate Deanery Synod

7th March 2024

St James's Church, Bilton Lane, Harrogate, HG1 3DT

GUEST SPEAKERS:

Tim O'Brien, Net Zero Officer of the Yorkshire North and East Methodist District.

Rose Gosling, Summerbridge Methodist Church.

Eco Church: Buildings

Mrs Deborah Booth, Harrogate Area Environment Champion, began by reminding Members about the Energy Footprint Tool. This enables churches to submit their utility bills and church square footage in order to work out their 'carbon footprint'.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/policy-and-thinking/our-views/environment-and-climate-change/about-our-environment/energy-footprint-tool>.

Deborah then warmly welcomed our two guest speakers: Mr Tim O'Brien, Net Zero Officer of the Yorkshire North and East Methodist District, and Mrs Rose Gosling, Summerbridge Methodist Church.

Mr Tim O'Brien, Net Zero Officer of the Yorkshire North and East Methodist District.

Net Zero Yorkshire North and East – Setting the scene

Tim stated that there are 200 churches in Yorkshire North and East, most of which are small and rural, and none built before the 18th Century. Within this area there are three cities, York, Hull and Ripon and two large towns, Harrogate and Scarborough. There is a mix of affluent and deprived areas. Tim informed that they work closely with the Anglican diocese of Leeds and York.

Net Zero Officer – What do I do?

Tim explained that his task is to enable and encourage churches to achieve the target of becoming carbon net zero by 2040. There are three areas to focus on:

- 1) **Property:** the physical buildings. There are 200 Methodist churches and approximately 30 buildings all of which need to achieve net zero status by 2040.
- 2) **Energy:** the energy churches use. Tim stated that he advises churches on obtaining sustainable energy tariffs and also works with community energy groups throughout the district to encourage, help and advise.
- 3) **People:** Tim informed that each person produces on average 10 tons of CO² per year. A church is the same. He explained that if we reduce one church to zero carbon, that is the same as 10 members of the church reducing their carbon footprint.

Net Zero – A definition

Tim explained that there are three broad areas which the Yorkshire North and East District Net Zero 2040 commitment includes:

Scope 1

- Buildings emissions from oil and gas heating
- Churches and church buildings
- Housing and offices
- Business travel in owned petrol/diesel vehicles

Scope 2

- Generation emissions from the electricity we use

Scope 3

- Business travel in non-owned transport
- Purchasing
- Waste
- Water
- Contractors
- Investments

Mrs Rose Gosling, Summerbridge Methodist Church. Rose is also a Gold award assessor for the Eco Church Award Scheme and speaker for A Rocha.

Rose started by explaining that Summerbridge Methodist Church received its Gold award from A Rocha in 2021. Rose outlined the role of Climate Stewards in the Eco Church journey.

Climate Stewards are: <https://www.climatestewards.org/>

- Passionate about helping people to measure, reduce and offset their carbon footprint, whilst supporting global neighbours to adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- Part of the A Rocha family of organisations, caring for God's creation around the world. They work with hundreds of individuals, charities and churches providing advice and support in helping them in their carbon reduction journey.

A Rocha UK – Caring for God's Earth.

Rose showed a video which illustrated the purpose and goals of A Rocha. It explained that A Rocha has been in existence for 41 years and is a worldwide family of conservation working to show God's love for all creation by protecting and restoring vulnerable habitats, species, and communities. There are now 7000 registered churches; 3000 with awards.

Eco Church areas: These are already probably familiar to most people:

- Worship and teaching
- Buildings – the focus of this synod.
- Land
- Community and global engagement
- Lifestyle

Summerbridge Methodist Church: the actions they took to become an Eco Church building

- 1) Improved the outdoor space and garden, making it more eco friendly
- 2) Created an extensive recycling centre. Currently they have 24 areas for recycling
- 3) Devised a creation care noticeboard
- 4) Used a 360° carbon footprint tool (like the one Deborah mentioned earlier)
- 5) Displayed simple signs to remind people to switch off lights/heating etc
- 6) Installed a HIVE to monitor and regulate the heating
- 7) Installed a three zone heating system, to heat separate rooms when required, rather than heat the whole church
- 8) Changed to environmentally friendly toilet paper and kitchen rolls
- 9) Twinned toilets e.g. <https://uk.cheekypanda.com/blogs/learn-sustainability/what-is-toilet-twinning>
- 10) North Yorkshire Council continue to provide recycling bins for objects which cannot be easily recycled at home e.g. trade waste
- 11) Installed LED lighting
- 12) Installed Solar panels on church roof

Useful links to A Rocha

- <https://arocha.org.uk/>
- <https://arocha.org.uk/what-we-do/eco-church/>
- <https://arocha.org.uk/sign-up/>

Rose handed back to Tim.

Achieving Net Zero

Tim provided some wise advice about how to achieve net zero.

- One of his key points was to centralise the effort. Rather than each church trying to do this in isolation, Tim urged churches to work together and centralised the activities.
- Tim explained that there is plenty of money available for dealing with community space, but there is a process in order to obtain the money. Here is some of Tim's advice on how to manage the process.
 - 1) You need to *demonstrate* clearly that you understand what needs to be done. Tim urged Churches to seek professional assistance to help smooth this process.
 - 2) Tim stressed that although there is a lot of funding available, it is not always easy to access. Professional assistance will help overcome these bureaucratic barriers. Tim made the point that, it takes a lot of effort for one church to raise £5K worth of funding, but it is not much more effort for seven churches to raise half a million pounds worth of funding, so go for the half a million. Think big! Do lots of churches at the same time.

- 3) Deliver the benefits efficiently. Tim advised that churches show the funders that their money is in safe hands. He advised, if you demonstrate that you have done what you said you'd do, you are likely to get more money.

What needs to be done?

As a summary of actions, Tim recommended that churches...

1) Assess what needs to be done

- Be clear about what you want to do and how this will benefit you
- More importantly, think about how this will benefit others
- Think beyond churches as spaces for worship

2) Demonstrate your level of commitment

- Get professional advice that you can share with others
- Show commitment through schemes like A Rocha Eco Church Awards
- Communicate this commitment well in advance, through the church website and newsletters

A word about funding:

Tim offered some judicious words about obtaining funding.

- Be aware of what funds are available. These often have short windows of opportunity. Tim explained that these funds pop up and then disappear quickly, so be ready to go. Get your plan ready so when funding pops up you're ready to apply for it.
- Tim acknowledged that completing application forms is laborious but stressed that it is worth the investment. Be prepared to spend time preparing and revising funding applications.
- As previously mentioned, Tim reiterated that it is easier to apply for one big fund than many smaller ones, so urged churches to work collaboratively.
- Develop good ongoing relationships with funding bodies. Tim recommended that church write to inform the funders about the changes/improvements and invite them to the celebrations of your achievements.

Delivery Dos and Don'ts:

Tim finished by summarising his presentation's key points:

- Do have a formal plan for delivery and stick to it. Ensure the plan is professional and has achievable targets.
- Do keep the principal funders aware of progress and any problems or delays
- Do celebrate (interim) success
- Do get professional help if you need it.

- Don't underestimate the effort involved in managing delivery
- Don't rely just on contractors to ensure a smooth delivery
- Don't assume everyone will appreciate your efforts

Tim ended by saying that they are committed to supporting the efforts of all Churches in our region, so should you have any questions or wish to discuss any of these issues further, please do contact him on netzero@yorkshirenethodist.org or 07713 786770.