

Barrow Church Silver Report

Our Eco Church journey ... so far

Background

When I arrived here last year, it was apparent that there was a need to stimulate people's awareness of the environment. Little or nothing was in place but the potential was there in so many ways. I was aware that we could do so much here in our little corner of Suffolk that could make a difference and catch on with the other churches and villages in our benefice. Even though climate change is a worldwide issue that could put people off, I felt that anything we could do was necessary and possible...from small acorns...!

Establishing important relationships

We realised that there are multiple opportunities for learning about God's creation and the challenges that now face our environment. Firstly, I engaged with all PCCs to encourage each one to work towards Eco Church and to appoint one person in each parish to be our lead 'environment officer'. We set up our Environment Committee by involving local specialists such as Suffolk Wildlife Trust who surveyed our churchyards, Save Our Swifts, and A Rocha. We ensured we have the parish council on board and I presented our scheme to them and had two volunteer councillors join me on the project.

We decided to aim for all five churches to be Eco Church and to take that step further by becoming champions of the environment and setting this at the heart of all we do. Besides my other duties, I took on the role for Barrow Eco Church.

Habitats

By changing the mowing regime at Barrow church (which had to be approved by the parish council), Eco Church has created the perfect habitat for insects, small mammals, birds. Also, a great



environment for children to learn, connect to nature, and have fun. We have linked up with the local hedgehog hospital and plan to introduce hedgehogs into the churchyard. The patches of long grass will provide them with corridors and a safe environment to search for food. I have a passion for swifts and have linked with Save Our Swifts and installed swift boxes on the rectory, and in addition, have support from the two church schools to do the same on their buildings. We have installed bird boxes (including owl boxes) and plans are in place to use the churchyard to rehome hedgehogs from the Suffolk Hedgehog Hospital.



Grass area for insects, small mammals, hedgehogs, birds and deer

Wild grasses provide an abundant food supply for caterpillars. In fact, a variety of plants you might consider weeds are actually



caterpillar favourites, such as dandelions and groundsel. This latter plant is irresistible to cinnabar moth caterpillars.

Eco rectory garden

We have turned half of the rectory garden (about half an acre) into an environment project - an organic allotment is surrounded by a myriad of wildflowers that have been introduced; bird boxes, bee boxes, and a bug hotel have been installed; plus a small fruit orchard to enrich the environment for birds and insects. In keeping with the churchyard, we have left the boundaries wild to encourage insects. The other half of the garden has is managed and we have left the borders wild. There are numerous bird feeders in and around the garden and we have a constant number of birds feeding including Greater Spotted Woodpeckers and Nuthatches alongside blue, great and coal tits.



We have five swift boxes and a calling system. This year was the first and we saw a number of birds fly onto the boxes to 'bang' them which we hope is a good sign for next year!

Engaging with the community

We ran an Eco-Trail in Barrow Church for the local school and had 170 children and all their teachers. We were teaching children about God's creation and how we can

look after our environment and biodiversity, through providing education that is relevant, meaningful, and enjoyable. We draw on children's interest, experiences, and prior knowledge by giving them opportunities to connect to the real world, giving them a sense of empowerment to make a difference. One of our methods is through movement and a multi-sensory experience, by creating this Eco Church nature trail. Pupils from the school followed a specially designed nature trail that weaves in and out of the abundance of wildflowers and grasses left to thrive as part of the Barrow Benefice Eco Church initiative. The children learned



about God's creation and there were four prayer stations along the route covering: the creation story, the environment, and the Eco Project, Psalm 8 using floating mini prayer letters and thinking about the weather, and God creating the animals and humans. Children also had Psalm 139 on a handprint card and even a fingerprint poster, illustrating our uniqueness.

The headteacher wrote to say: "Thank you so much for a really lovely morning for the whole school at the church. The feedback from the staff was very positive! It was lovely to see the church from a different perspective and spend time in the grounds. The activities were all lovely and very well run."

By involving the community, and children, in particular, we provide an opportunity for collaborative working, embedding learning, positive outcomes, and wonderful memories!

Education and Lifestyle

We have approached our project by providing theory and evidence-based learning and through practice. We distribute a weekly church newsletter, which includes Eco Church. We also contribute to the monthly benefice magazine. We have addressed a balance of articles: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Plastic Footprint, Plastic in our oceans and water sources, plastic alternatives, no-mow May, Honey Bees, Make Every Flower count, Environment Day, G7 Summit, Rocha 20 years, Rocha, Butterflies Part I, Butterflies Part II and Sewage Spills. Future topics include: Foxearth Meadows, The Big Butterfly Count, Carbon Foot Print series, Biodiversity, Helping pollinators hibernate: practical ideas, Conserving Water, COP 26, How and when to make a bug hotel, Recycling Week, Eco Christmas series.

We have an Eco Church display board set up permanently in All Saints Church. Our aim is to provide information on environment issues and climate change, promote Eco Church and engage with the community. We also include environmental issues every week in our weekly newsletter (see attached).

Our church has a compost loo built inside a shed (see photo)!

Our five parish environment officers meet regularly (first meeting in August 2021) to share ideas and plans and to have a key member of the environment community (Save Our Swifts this year) to talk to us about their work. We recognise the importance of working as a team.



Worship

Our services endeavour to embrace the importance of love of one another and the environment in which we are so fortunate to live in. Our intercessors will lead prayers and include links to our work. Please see attached last Sunday's intercessions.

Future plans: -

Continue our established partnerships, such as Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Save Our Swifts

Continue to write in the monthly benefice magazine distributed to five villages.

Continue to promote Eco Church in our weekly church newsletter.

We hope to have an Eco Fair in Barrow

We are planning swift boxes for the church tower

We hope to influence local communities to do more

We will be going into the school in Barrow to present to some of the classes the Swift project in advance of their boxes going up next year

Not applicable answers:

WORSHIP & TEACHING: We do not have a youth group,

BUILDINGS: All Saints church does not have gas and is a listed building so cannot have double glazing or wall insulation. We do not have a church hall. The office is at the vicarage.

LIFESTYLE: There is no church fund.

Our project has been undertaken on a very small shoestring; we have had no financial support as much of it is adapting methods already in place; using our own resources and skills; donating or receiving small donations where possible.

Rev'd Lynda Sebbage

All Saints Church, Barrow Eco Church