

FAQs about 'Net Zero' works to properties

The Fifth Mark of Mission is 'To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth'

What is Net Zero?

Put simply, the net zero ambition means reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and balancing remaining emissions by removing greenhouse gases.

In February 2020 the General Synod called on all parts of the Church of England to work to achieve year-on-year reductions in emissions and urgently examine what would be required to reach net zero by 2030.

The Church of England sets targets nationally and defines *carbon net zero* as the reduction of in-scope carbon emissions (from the oil, gas and electricity we use in our buildings and petrol and diesel transport) and the removal of an equivalent amount of carbon from the atmosphere for the remaining in-scope emissions by use of accredited offsetting schemes.

The national 'Routemap to Net Zero' states 'we see a future in 2030 where the buildings of the church will be warm, bright and welcoming, powered by renewable energy and using low or zero carbon technologies for heat and light. Energy consumption for the church as a whole will have fallen, on-site renewable energy generation will have increased.'

In this diocese, we have adopted a strategy to "Cherish creation, cut carbon and speak up" and devised an action plan for how we will do this. Our Diocesan Synod approved the strategy and plans in November 2023.

Why cut carbon?

Greenhouse gas emissions cause climate change, if we continue as we are temperatures will continue to rise to levels that threaten the lives and livelihoods of people everywhere, but disproportionately impacting the poorest and most vulnerable. (Source: United Nations, 2025).

The global climate emergency is a crisis for God's creation, and unjust to the poor and future generations. It is the context into which we are called to live and preach the Gospel. We link all our actions on net zero carbon to our Christian mission, as expressed in the Five Marks of Mission.

Through this we can grow the Church while reducing our environmental footprint; Christ's Gospel message will reach and engage new people, particularly the young.

Our church is the Church of England. If we cannot do this, as a leader in our country, and in our communities, who will?

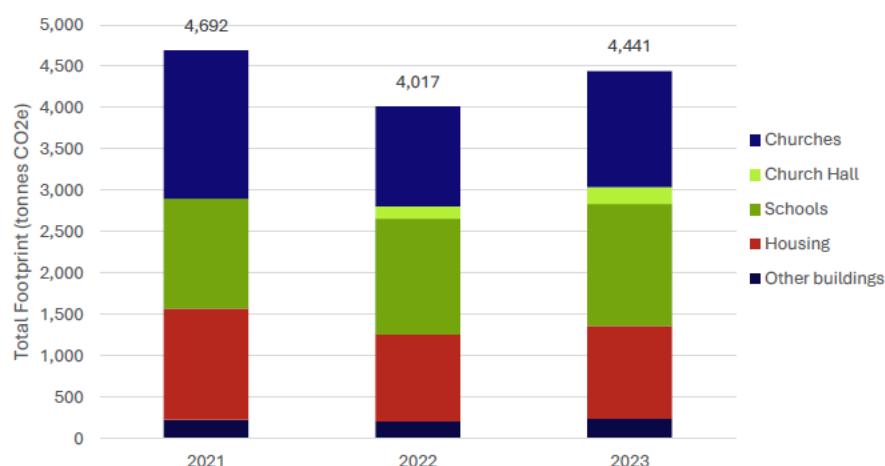
Why are we doing work on properties to reduce carbon emissions?

Firstly, these works are not just about cutting carbon emissions. These works also

1. Make warmer, more energy efficient homes that are cheaper to run for clergy and their families. This helps with both retention and recruitment, and has helped us buck the national trend in clergy recruitment.
2. Enable us to comply with pending (2026) Government legislation on energy performance requirements for rented properties.
3. Align with general improvements needed to properties to improve liveability, for example eliminating damp.
4. To comply with building regulations which necessitates energy efficiency improvements when undertaking other works to a home.
5. To avoid costly obsolescence in our portfolio - which historically has led to this diocese and others having to sell otherwise well-suited clergy houses that require unaffordable modernisation.

Housing makes up 22% of carbon emissions for the church in this diocese (1120 tonnes of carbon in 2023). Cutting carbon emissions is hard for us all, but for the Diocesan Board of Finance the main space in which we can have impact is on housing. We can support churches and schools to cut carbon but that is for them to choose to do, and will also require much greater financial resources to achieve.

Figure 3. Truro emissions breakdown by building type and year



Note on data: the increase in emissions shown in 2023 is significantly due to a change in the way the national church calculates church and school emissions.

What properties are having work done?

The Truro Diocesan Board of Finance (TDBF) owns or manages 120 properties, almost all for clergy housing.

Careful analysis of the property portfolio is carried out, with ministry-need driving decision making - i.e. where clergy will need a home. This underpins the planning for this work, enabling us to prioritise.

We don't undertake carbon net zero work on properties that are likely to be sold or replaced. Cost benefit analysis is also carried out, to ensure that the works proposed are proportional to the benefit to the clergy person living there, and the value of the property.

Priority is getting homes ready for incoming clergy, not because we favour them but because disruptive work is better done while the property is empty.

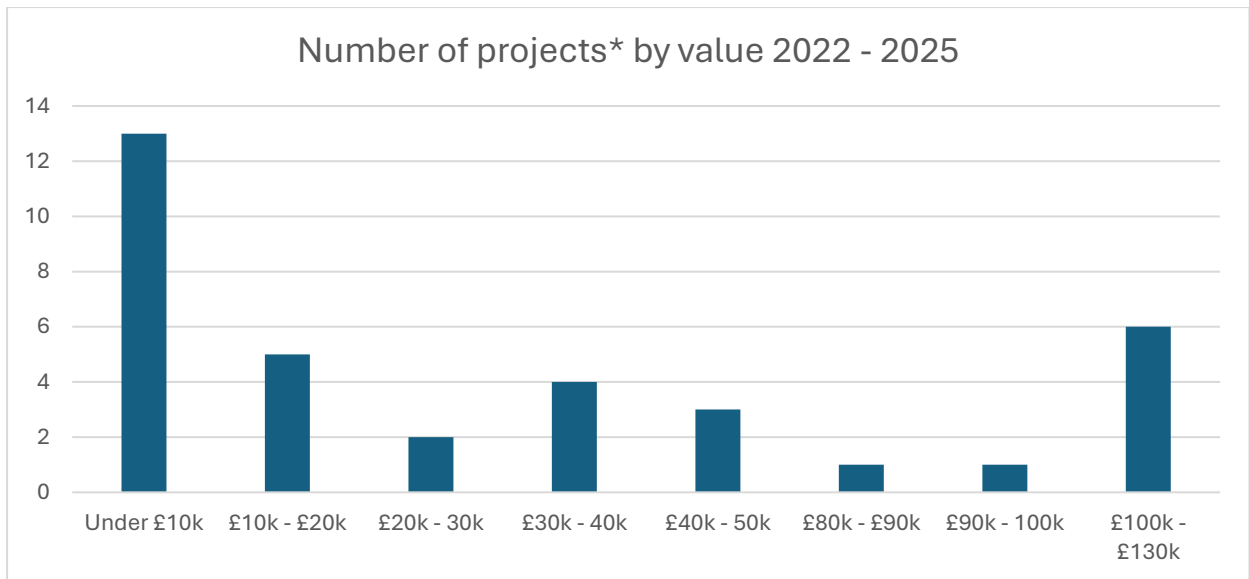
The Board of Finance built bespoke clergy housing in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Many of those homes have not had major works carried out to them since construction and so by upgrading their energy performance whilst modernising the homes generally ensures those investments made 30-40 years ago are cared for and endure through time.

What work is being done?

The plan is to bring all or most properties up to a similar standard, typically with solar panels, good insulation (roofs, walls and floors) energy efficient heating, proper ventilation (vital in well insulated properties in the Cornish climate) and modern windows. Some of our newer properties don't need much work to get to this standard, others need much more work.

The cost-benefit analysis is complex but takes into account whether it would be better to replace the property (in some parts of the diocesan houses are very hard to replace so we may need to compromise), the likely life-span of existing systems (we don't want to replace nearly new heating systems etc) and if there is an opportunity for a new-build property.

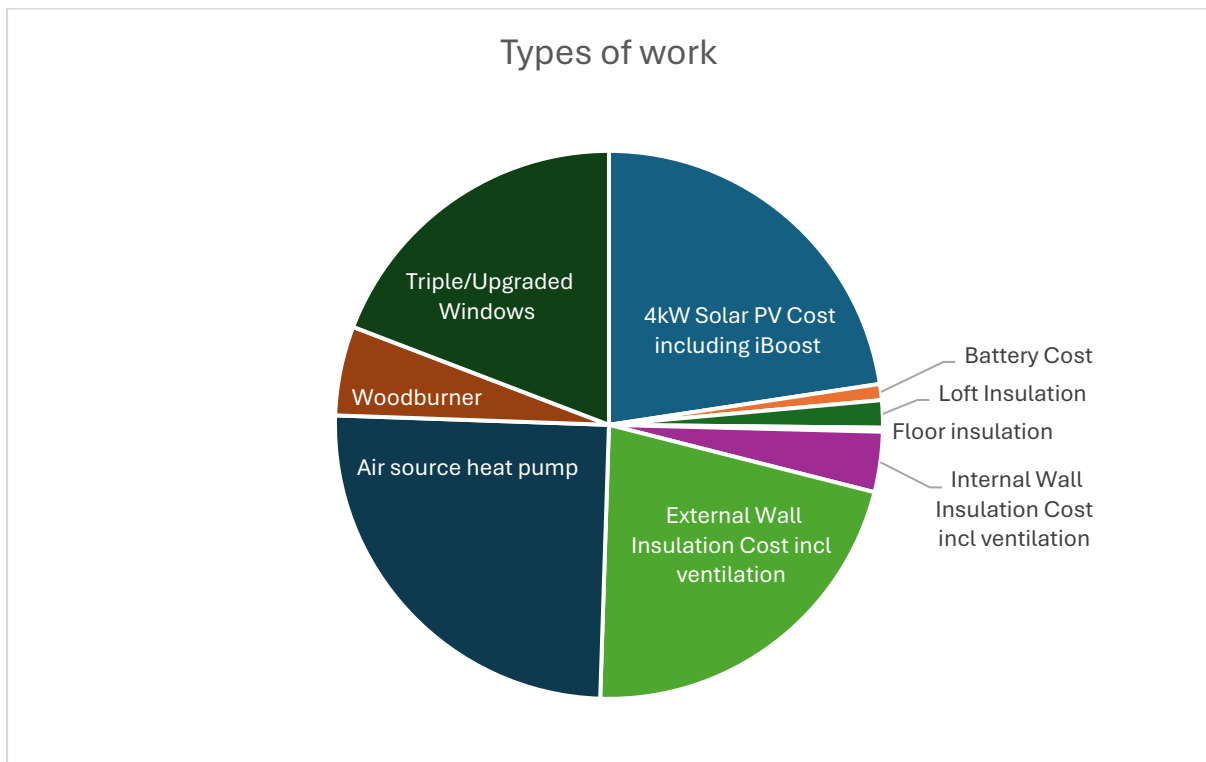
Some of the expenditure would have been required anyway, such as replacing windows or re-roofing a property, and rather than replace like-for-like, improvements such as triple glazing and roof-top solar are selected as it is more cost-effective to complete those works now. What we spend usually adds to the value of the property.



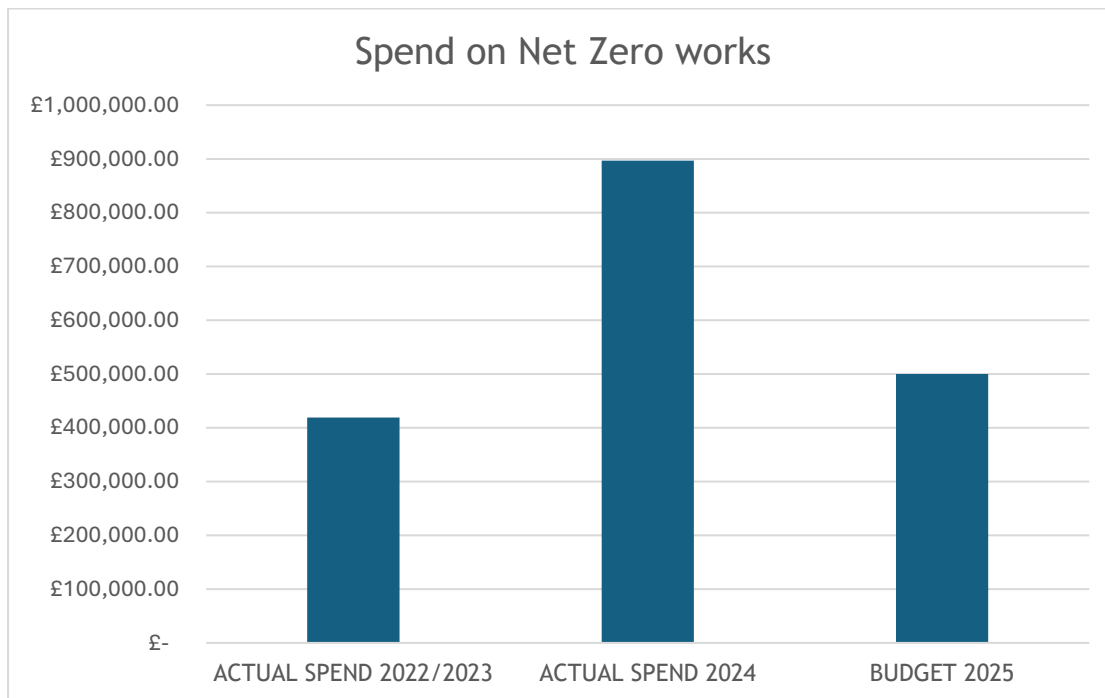
* Projects = each individual property.

Which measures are chosen and why?

A professional survey is carried out to identify the most suitable measures for the individual property.



How much is the TDBF spending on these works?



Where is the money coming from?

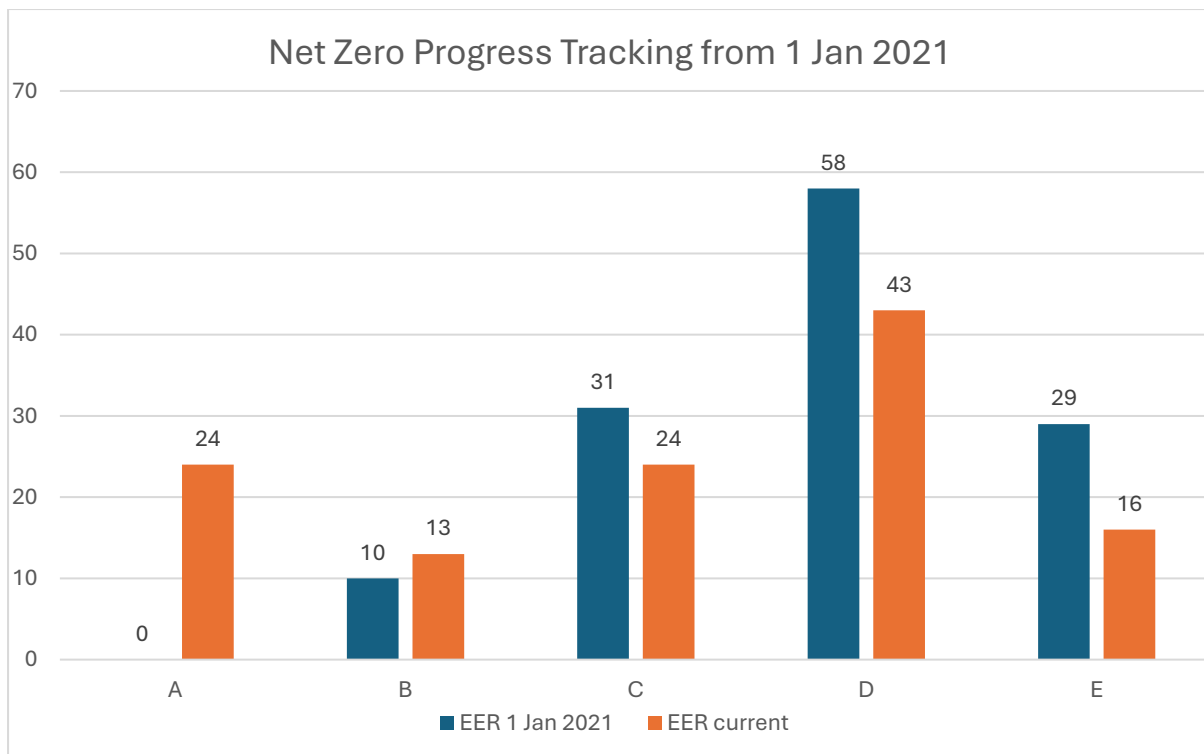
Much of the cost will come from the sale of surplus properties, some of the cost will also come from the sale or income from other assets. In total the Assets Strategy allocates £3m to carbon net zero - none of the money is expected to come from MMF.

What impact is it having?

We are tracking progress using the Energy Efficiency Rating (EER) as shown on the property Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs).

Improving the EER of a property means that it will be warmer, less damp and mouldy, more energy efficient, and usually cheaper to run. It also emits less carbon.

To date (May 2025) this is the progress:



The result of the changes implemented to date have already resulted in a reduction in carbon emissions of **250 tonnes**. This is already **1/5 of total emissions from clergy housing**.

What do clergy say?

‘As a family that care greatly about reducing our carbon footprint yet who have lived in Diocesan housing where we were not always able to make decisions for ourselves regarding heating/insulation, we are very happy in the new house and are very grateful that our energy costs are minimal compared to those in many other rectories.’

‘This is much better than the previous vicarage.’

‘The cost savings of the combination of solar, battery, heat pump and EV are immense.’

‘Thank you, it is a lovely home’

If you have Facebook: two videos about clergy experiences:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1H7vRwxS9H/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1DQQN1XdEk/>