The Priory Church of St Laurence, Blackmore

Eco Church News. November 2026

Our Eco Church Journey: St Laurence Blackmore Achieves Bronze Award

We are an Eco Church!

'A Rocha UK' has presented an Eco Church Bronze Award to St. Laurence Church, Blackmore in recognition of our efforts to care for God's earth in each of the following areas:

Worship & Teaching

Buildings & Energy

Land & Nature

Global & Community Engagement

Lifestyle



September's successful 'Eco Church Conversation' was the culmination of at least two years effort to achieve an Eco Church Bronze Award.

The Eco Church - An A Rocha UK Project has been running for 10 years. Many of our Eco Church Group members attended a gathering at Chelmsford Cathedral to mark this anniversary.

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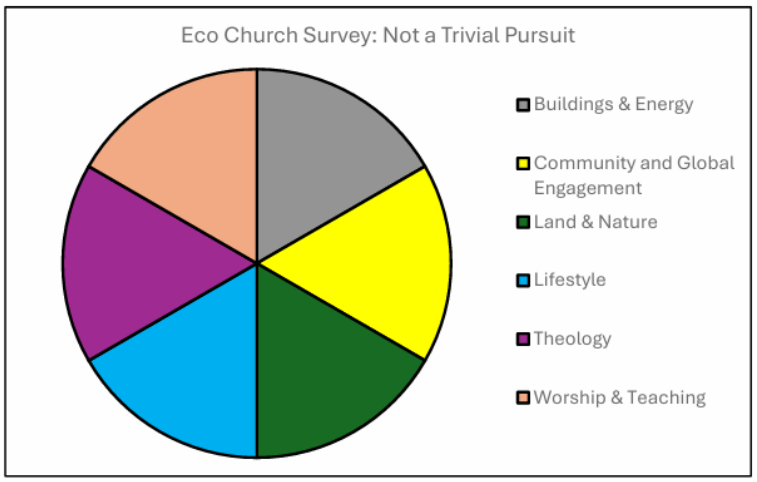
Eco Church

In this edition of the Newsletter, we highlight some of the projects either completed or ongoing that helped us gain recognition as one of over 4000 Eco Churches. Also, to let you know about our plans for the churchyard in 2027 following a public survey.

"Sunday is the golden clasp, that binds together the volume of the week". These words, quoting the poet Longfellow, were written in the commonplace book of a Captain Reeve during the early Victorian era.

Today, in any context, the word 'Sunday' is more appropriately replaced with 'Worship'.

A Rocha's Eco Church Tenth Anniversary Report says that "worship and teaching" are foundational. Worship provides an opportunity to express our sorrow and repentance for the current state of the world; to remind us of our vocation to care for the earth and assure us that God will one day restore all things."



Blackmore's Eco Church Group would go further to suggest that 'Theology' is the fundamental golden clasp around which all teaching, learning, planning and action informs our Christian approach to climate change and the nature crises. Eco Church is not a trivial pursuit.

For more information visit our website www.blackmorechurch.org.uk/eco-church . We welcome also your questions and comments: Email blackmorevicarage@gmail.com

Projects Begun or Completed to Achieve a Bronze Award

These are some of the projects across the five categories which gained St Laurence Church, Blackmore an Eco Church Bronze Award.

Worship & Teaching

- Addressing the climate and nature crises as integral to our Christian faith, life and worship.
- Holding an annual Harvest Festival and worship outdoors on Easter Sunday.
- Equip ministers to teach about climate care.
- Doing all these things occasionally in public worship:
    - Acknowledge and celebrate God's relationship with, and work in, creation.

- Pray lamenting the destruction and damage to creation confessing our part in this and making intercessional prayers.

Buildings & Energy

- We recognise the climate and nature crises and the fundamental injustice these represent and have committed to reduce our carbon footprint.
- We have appointed an Eco Church Champion and trained him in Carbon Literacy.
- We have an Eco Church Group with access to training to support the community.
- We measure our Carbon Footprint: having plans to end using gas – a major fossil-fuel – to heat our church building.
- We already have a metered water supply, installed water-saving devices, and installed LED lighting.

Land & Nature

- We recognise the significant contribution churches can make to the UK's target of 30% of land protected by nature by 2030 by:
  - Producing a 'Churchyard Management Plan' Churchyard-Management-Plan.pdf .
  - Consulting on 'Improving God's Acre for People and Nature'.
  - Promoting the leaflet on individual actions, 'Thirty Action for Nature Recovery by 2030' 30-for-30-Leaflet.pdf .
- Erected bird boxes, bat boxes, a bug hotel, and created a log pile in the churchyard
- Sown a wildflower area and planted an area with daffodils (an Easter Garden) with the help of schoolchildren which is mown annually.
- Herbicides or pesticides will not be used in the churchyard, nor horticultural products containing peat.
- Observed and noted the changes happening in the churchyard producing and publishing these on our website A-Guide-to-Birds-in-Blackmore-Churchyard.pdf , A-Guide-to-Butterflies-in-Blackmore-Churchyard.pdf , A-Guide-to-Mosses-and-Lichens-in-Blackmore-Churchyard.pdf , and A-Guide-to-Wildflowers-in-Blackmore-Churchyard.pdf .

Global & Community Engagement

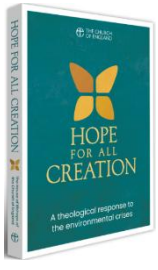
- We have a Communication Plan:
  - including pages on our website: Eco Church – Priory Church of St Laurence, Blackmore .
  - published an Environmental Policy: St-Laurence-Blackmore-Environmental-Policy.pdf .
  - uses social media to speak about issues.

- We recognise that the climate and nature crises have impacts locally, nationally and globally and has devised an action plan.
- We raise awareness of the impact the climate and nature crises have locally across the church community.
- Avoid the use of disposables such as cups, plates, cutlery, and single-use plastics wherever possible.
    - Recycles, understands local authority's practice on waste, and either composts or feeds food waste to the birds.
- Car sharing to events, and making available vegan and vegetarian food options.

Lifestyle

- We include in our Weekly Notice Sheet eco tips and encouragement for a more ethical and sustainable lifestyle.
- We promoted (at the 'Eco Church Conversation' open meeting) the use of carbon footprint tools to calculate individual and household carbon footprint – https://footprint.wwf.org.uk/ and / or https://www.climatestewards.org/carbon-calculators/
    - Everyone who completed the 'Lifestyle Survey' (at the 'Eco Church Conversation' and afterwards) agreed that reducing personal carbon footprint was important, and many have calculated their carbon footprint for the first time using one of these tools.
- Recognising that heating and lighting at church and home is one of the three biggest contributors to carbon emissions in the UK we are promoting:
    - ways to reduce energy consumption and improve energy efficiency
    - switching from gas / oil to electricity for heating
    - renewable energy tariffs.
- A plan to promote ethically and environmentally aware consumption patterns by individuals and households – demonstrated through the process of 'Lifestyle Survey' completion.

Worship & Teaching: Hope for All Creation



Hope for All Creation: A theological response to the environmental crises is a new **Church of England House of Bishops** teaching document. It sets out how Christian faith should shape the Church's response to climate change, biodiversity loss, and wider ecological crises. The document is presented as a guide for faithful living, ministry, and responsible stewardship of the planet.

The book is available as a free download: churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2026-06/hope-for-all-creation-for-web-new.pdf

St Laurence Blackmore Environmental Policy

Our church recognises:

- and teaches that creation care and action to address the climate and nature crisis are integral to Christian faith, life and worship

- the impact of the climate and nature crisis and has a plan to take action

- and has a plan to promote ethical and environmentally aware consumption patterns by individuals and households

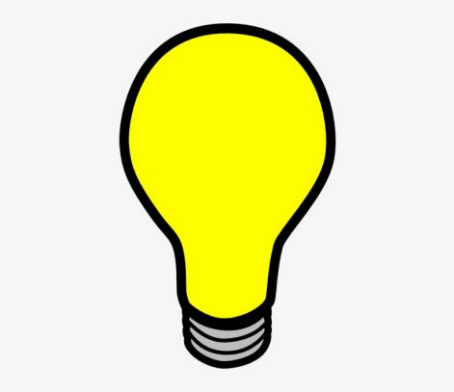
- the fundamental injustice caused by the climate and nature crisis. We have committed to reduce our carbon footprint year-on-year

- and has written a Churchyard Management Plan to manage our land for nature in an impactful way.

Lifestyle: Ten Ways to Reduce Energy Consumption and Improve Energy Efficiency

Reducing energy use is not only good for the environment; it can also lower household bills and make your home more comfortable. The following actions focus on everyday behaviour, heating efficiency, appliances, and longer-term improvements.

1. **Lower your thermostat slightly.** Reducing the room temperature by even one degree can cut heating demand while still keeping the home comfortable.
2. **Use heating controls effectively.** Set timers, thermostatic radiator valves, and room thermostats so that heating is only used where and when it is needed.
3. **Improve insulation.** Loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, and insulated floors help keep heat inside the home, reducing the amount of energy needed for heating.
4. **Draught-proof doors and windows.** Sealing gaps around frames, letterboxes, pipework, and floorboards prevents warm air escaping and cold air entering.
5. **Switch off appliances at the plug.** Many devices continue to use energy in standby mode, so turning them off fully can reduce unnecessary electricity use.
6. **Use energy-efficient lighting.** Replace older bulbs with LED bulbs, which use much less electricity and last longer.
7. **Wash clothes at lower temperatures.** Washing at 30°C and using full loads reduces electricity and water heating demand.
8. **Avoid overfilling the kettle.** Boil only the amount of water needed, as kettles are high-power appliances and can waste energy quickly.
9. **Reduce hot water use.** Shorter showers, efficient shower heads, and fixing dripping taps can reduce the energy used to heat water.
10. **Choose efficient appliances.** When replacing appliances, select models with strong energy ratings and use eco settings where available.



Reducing our individual energy use

The energy used in our digital consumption collectively emits the equivalent amount of carbon as the entire airline industry.

IT sector electricity demand ranks behind only two countries in the world – China and the USA.

What can we do?

*REGULARLY DELETE THINGS WE DON'T WANT OR NEED ON OUR LAPTOPS, PHONES ETC.

* UNSUBSCRIBE FROM EMAIL NEWSLETTERS THAT NO LONGER INTEREST US.

* LIMIT OUR "REPLY ALLS".

* USE RENEWABLE POWERED CLOUD SERVICES.

for more top ideas go to www.climatecare.org/resources/news/infographic-carbon-footprint-internet

What else can we do at home? 3 top quick wins are:

* USE SMART HEATING CONTROLS

* TURN DOWN THE THERMOSTAT

* SWITCH OFF "STANDBY"

there's lots of advice at www.energysavingtrust.org.uk

and we can * BUY GREEN ENERGY (and it doesn't always mean the same thing), find the best green providers at www.renewableenergyhub.co.uk

more information in leaflets: L5-You-and-your-energy.pdf

Land & Nature: Improving Blackmore Churchyard for People and Nature

'Churchyard Consultation' Results

We invited church attendees and others to complete this survey, with space to make comment.

		Response %
Having a Nature Trail is a great way to encourage people of all ages to visit	Agree	100%
	Neutral	0%
	Disagree	0%
Having the church building open daily for quiet reflection is appreciated by me	Agree	76%
	Neutral	24%
	Disagree	0%
There are enough benches in the churchyard to sit and spend time.	Agree	40%
	Neutral	47%
	Disagree	13%
I can stay longer because the church has a toilet that I know I can use.	Agree	67%
	Neutral	21%
	Disagree	12%
I am in favour of the planting of a Butterfly Garden in the area by the wall.	Agree	100%
	Neutral	0%
	Disagree	0%
The old Garden of Remembrance with deer-eaten roses looks tired and should be replaced with an Herb Garden.	Agree	68%
	Neutral	29%
	Disagree	3%
I agree that part of the churchyard which has unvisited graves may be earmarked for 'no-mow May' for grass to grow around and on graves and allowing wildflowers to benefit pollinators.	Agree	68%
	Neutral	24%
	Disagree	9%
Allowing bramble to grow in areas where graves are very old is acceptable.	Agree	21%
	Neutral	35%
	Disagree	44%
I visit the churchyard because I have someone I know buried or remembered here.	Yes No	

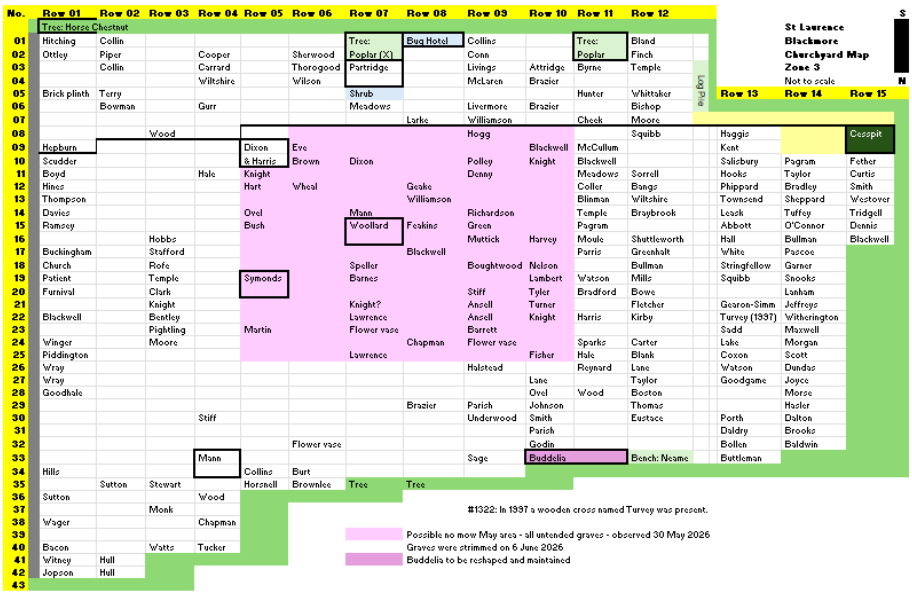
The survey results show unanimous support for a butterfly-friendly garden, and agreement that a Nature Trail is a great way to encourage visitors to come to the churchyard. Having done the 'Big Butterfly Count' for the first time in summer 2026 we might see more butterflies in the churchyard in the future.

The PCC has listened carefully to the comments made and changed the ideas it had for the Old Remembrance Garden, by not removing live roses but adding herbs.

All these ideas become proposals and recommendations, then decisions made by the PCC. These decisions have been displayed on Notice Boards on the lychgate and inside the church on our Eco Church Noticeboard (alongside our Bronze Certificate!).

Completion of a new Nature Trail.

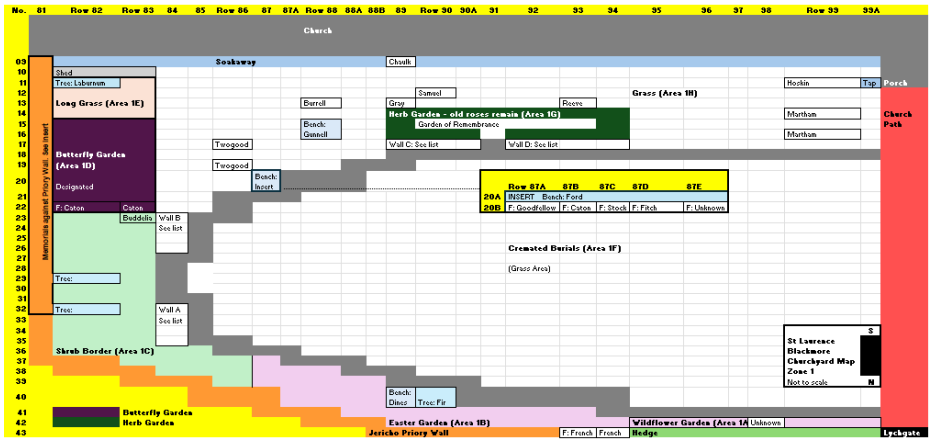
We will create a **"No-mow May" area** on and around the unvisited and untended graves (pink on plan) to attract pollinators to wildflowers – a nectar boost after the daffodils before summer flowers. Grass won't be cut and graves won't be strimmed until early June.



Prune and reshape the buddleia next to the Neame Bench (purple on plan).

We will **"companion plant" herbs but not replace roses in the old Garden of Remembrance** (green on plan).

We will plant a **butterfly-friendly garden** (dark purple on plan).



We will clear bramble on graves except to those which have potentially dangerous edges.

Churchyard Management Plan

Our 'Churchyard Management Plan' will be updated during the winter for approval at Easter 2027 when the current, first, edition expires.

Global & Community Engagement: Season of Creation Service at Blackmore



"The impact of climate change is real", Archdeacon Mutuota says. Warning of health and economic breakdown: "Something must be done". Our Lives are Connected to the Earth. In Kenya people experience drought and famine. Floods are another problem. Increased risk of typhoid, cholera, worms etc. Kenya is calling on the West to be prepared for climate events.

On 13 September 2026 we welcomed to Stondon Massey and Blackmore as our preachers: Ven. Johnson Gachoki Mutuota, Archdeacon Kirima Archdeaconry with Revd. Sandra Eldridge, Chelmsford Diocesan Environmental Training Officer.

When Revd. Sandra introduces herself, she is often met with the response that she must love birds, butterflies, bears, flowers, grasses, the sea etc. This is true she says but "it is my love for people and caring about people. As we have seen this summer not only has nature been suffering but people have been suffering throughout the world by extreme heat.

"Our lives are connected to the Earth. There have been 35000 excess deaths in Europe because of the extreme heat. People are saying this year that something is not right. In Kenya climate change has been apparent for much longer".



Archdeacon Mutuota introduced himself by saying that he led clergy with big congregations in an Anglican Diocese in Kenya. He is also a farmer with first-hand experience of climate change which has been recognised by very many since at least 2004, not 2026.

His land and people experience drought and famine. "Climate change has made this more critical. There is not enough water. People die. Animals die because there is not enough water."

Crop failure is happening due to the change of seasons. "The rains are supposed to come in mid-October. Now it is happening in September. Last season the rains came in February not March, and there was a whole month of rain. So consecutive and continuous, it was difficult to plant anything. Consequently, there was a lot of famine. People die from famine. It affects the way of life economically and socially."

"We always have rain, but things have changed. Twenty to 25 years ago we knew when the rains would come. This has changed. When the rains come, we don't know.

"Last December we planted corn. Every plant died. There is not a lot of money to invest so farmers borrow from the bank. Can you imagine how we can repay a loan and feed our family when crops fail?"

Floods are also another problem. In the capital, Nairobi, "the rains came from nowhere" and eight lives were lost. Deaths come from both floods and diseases.

"The impact of climate change is real", Mutuota implores. "Something must be done".

"The El Niño we have been talking about means lives could be lost. It is real: flooding, heat, lives, property.

"Very few people have access to clean piped water so collect water from pools because there is no alternative". It increases the risks of "cholera, typhoid, worms" because "floods cause waste to be deposited with fresh water. The government does not sponsor healthcare. A health breakdown because there is no clean water as a basic need causes a breakdown in the economy.

"Kenya is working towards informing people on preparedness for climate events, e.g., reducing pollution, sinking boreholes to obtain clean water. We are calling on the people in the West to become prepared, to say what we are doing. To be aware and be prepared early on water catchment.



"Unfortunately, we have some people who live in houses who cannot collect water because the roofs are grass covered". When the rains come for the first three days the rain is allowed to pour off of roofs to clear dust. "From the fourth day it can be collected and pumped back into our houses. Water is collected in plastic tanks.

"Most people are not attached to a national grid so use paraffin in their homes. We are encouraging the use of solar power. We must end fossil fuel use."

There are two Gospel messages.

"Forgiveness is the key - but also cancelling debt. Kenya and other countries are poor. If you have the capacity to cancel debt, do it. It will be a new beginning for first world countries. Wealth is not necessarily a bad thing but at what cost?"

"Paul writes in Romans 8:22 that 'all creation is groaning'. Human beings are not caring enough for creation. We are not caring enough. Are we ready to say that we have been forgiven? What are we doing to the environment that is groaning? We can do it in simple ways. Something else is destroying. What about China? It's not about what the neighbour is doing but what we are doing!

"There is a story of a forest that was on fire pushing all the animals uphill as it got hotter. A small hummingbird flew over to the sea and took water for the land without consultation. The animals said to the bird that it was wasting its time. However, where the water was dropped something changed. That is how the forest was saved.

"In our small way we can save the environment and future place to live."

Revd Sandra continued that in today's Gospel reading (Matt. 18: 21-35) "the rich servant did not show mercy to the poor servant. The rich servant owed his master 600000 times more than he was owed by his poorer servant. The poor servant was right at the bottom: we have those differences in the world now. It is always the poor who suffer. Some people in the UK have bought air conditioners. In London those who live in flats with no gardens cannot afford any of this. Many live in poor quality housing.

"Pope Francis in Laudato Si' speaks of the cry of the Earth and cry of the poor. There are many things we can do, e.g., through Eco Church, the '30 actions for nature recovery by 2030'. The big thing is to reduce greenhouse gases: solar, heat pumps, green energy – but these might be expensive for you.

"I leave you with a quote from the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams: 'Our present ecological crisis, the biggest single practical threat to our human existence in the middle to long term, has, religious people would say, a great deal to do with our failure to think of the world as existing in relation to the mystery of God, not just as a huge warehouse of stuff to be used for our convenience' ".

"In Church we know about the mystery of God – the creator and his love and mercy. All creation is held in His hands. This is the message to take to the community and to the world.

Finally, many have attended the 'People's Emergency Briefing'. Go and see it, it is hard hitting, held with people to consider what their community can do. To "be there and talk to people".

"This Church: It is amazing what you are doing. You are on a journey. Keep going. Amen".

Eco Church Badge

Lifestyle: "Choose one action this year and do it as soon as you can. After a year, choose another".



Members of St Laurence Church who completed the 'Lifestyle Survey' unanimously agreed with the statement: "I see **reducing my carbon footprint** as a response to climate injustice (that climate change will affect the most marginalised the most greatly)".

Professor Jules Pretty – the author of the 30-for-30-Leaflet.pdf - was a Panel Member at the Tenth Anniversary Eco Church Service and event held at Chelmsford Cathedral in September.

He said that "there are so many ways to reduce your carbon footprint – food, transport, housing – but **do just one thing**. The mistake is to try to do them all then you will end up doing nothing". **Do one new thing each year**: "we are all on a path, just that some have not started".

Jules gave examples of individual communities working together to lessen the impact of climate change: paved areas being dug up in Oregon to reduce City temperatures; moving within five years from a car-bound city to one of bicycles where there is a 40000 capacity bicycle rack at the railway station in Utrecht; free electricity between midday and 3pm because of investment in solar panels in Australia; and, a new housing estate where residents will have free electricity for five years at Carpenters Yard, Epping.