



Diocese of Westminster

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An Integrated Approach to Diminishing our Dependency on Fossil Fuels

Four years ago, Pope Francis promulgated *Laudato Si'* (2015) calling for dialogue with all people about the care and future of our common home. He recognised that our “sister [Mother Earth] now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her.” (LS 2) She “groans in travail” (Rom 8:22, LS 3) because of the harm we have inflicted on her. The “urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. The Creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home.” (LS 13) This calls for ecological and spiritual conversion in action by individuals, all institutions and governments.

Addressing climate change is one of the defining environmental and social challenges of the 21st century. Evidence suggests that irresponsible human activity is contributing to levels of social and environmental harm with the impact on human beings borne disproportionately by the world’s poorest communities.¹

Whether through transport, heating, or the generation of electricity our daily lives are still dependent on the burning of fossil fuels. As a Diocese we are, therefore, called to act to accelerate the transition to cleaner forms of energy. The Diocese has an environmental impact through our parishes, schools and office buildings, as well as through our investments. As a consequence, we have a coherent approach to the energy transition across all of our activities, which we continue to develop.

Our Direct Activities: The Diocese is already committed to sourcing a minimum of 90% of the energy that is used by our parishes and curial properties from green or renewable sources. This is close to being achieved. To continue this coherent and realistic approach, within four years this commitment will be extended to all our schools.

In every new building, the Diocese will seek, where possible, to incorporate these measures into the design. Furthermore, the Diocese encourages its parishioners, parishes and schools to grow in understanding of our common home and take steps to reduce their carbon footprint and respect the gift of creation.

Our Investments: The Diocese invests in line with a strict climate change policy. This policy currently excludes companies that generate more than 10% of their revenue from the extraction of thermal coal and oil from oil sands.

We recognise that this investment position needs time to develop. We must ensure that the transition seeks justice for all stakeholders. In line with the Diocese’s direct activities we will, by

¹ Source: IPCC (2014) ‘Climate Change 2014 Synthesis Report Summary for Policymakers’ Available at https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/AR5_SYR_FINAL_SPM.pdf Accessed 20/5/2019

the end of 2021, transition our investment holdings. From that point onwards we will only invest in electrical utility and fossil fuel companies that have taken steps to manage their business in line with energy scenarios that limit temperature rises to a level that is well below two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial times.

In the interim period we will continue to engage as shareholders with the companies in which we own shares, through our fund managers, in order to influence change in their behaviour. Furthermore, through our membership of the Church Investors Group we will continue to engage with UK and international companies that are falling behind the standards that diocese would expect. Currently, the Trustees are using CDP climate rankings and the Transition Pathway initiative to assess companies.

We also recognise that we have an obligation to use our investment portfolio to accelerate the transition to a low carbon economy. Wherever possible, and subject to proper risk analysis, the Diocese will seek investments that contribute to or facilitate reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. This currently includes significant allocations in solar and wind infrastructure, battery storage and energy efficiency initiatives (such as retrofitting buildings with more efficient heating and lighting systems).

We will constantly review our activities and investments to care for our common home. We echo the hope of Pope Francis: “Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning. We are able to take an honest look at ourselves, to acknowledge our deep dissatisfaction, and to embark on new paths to authentic freedom. No system can completely suppress our openness to what is good, true and beautiful, or our God-given ability to respond to his grace at work deep in our hearts.” (LS 205)

The Trustees of the Diocese of Westminster
13 July 2019