



Diocese of Chelmsford

Encouraging sustainable travel

1. Context

The world is facing a human-induced climate emergency already bringing suffering and hardship to many who have done the least to create it and causing extensive destruction of eco-systems and biodiversity. The Diocese of Chelmsford recognises that this is the context in which we are called to live and preach the gospel, and that this context provides opportunities and challenges.

The way we travel is contributing to the climate emergency. In 2022, a quarter of the carbon emissions from within UK borders was due to transport and over half of those emissions were from cars. In general, planes, petrol and diesel cars and motorbikes emit more carbon per passenger (between 246 and 114 g per passenger km) than trains, buses and electric cars (between 97 and 27 g per passenger km) while bicycles and walking are the most environmentally sustainable forms of transport (source of figures:

<https://ourworldindata.org/travel-carbon-footprint>).

This document is a response to this context. It sets out how the Diocese plans to reduce carbon emissions from Diocesan work-related travel while also supporting more sustainable travel across all its communities. It builds on

- an updated *Environment Policy* approved by Chelmsford Diocesan Synod in March 2023 which contains two relevant clauses (see box)
- a *Diocesan Action Plan for Net Zero Carbon* (in line with the *Church of England Routemap for Net Zero Carbon*), approved in June 2023, which includes an action to develop a travel plan.

Box 1: *Environment Policy* clauses relevant to travel:

1. We will encourage environmentally friendly forms of transport: walking, cycling, using public transport, sharing cars, keeping journeys to meeting venues short, and keeping fossil fuel emissions as low as we can, wherever possible.
2. We will consider alternative venues for, or alternatives to, face to face meetings, to reduce environmental impact where possible.

The development of the approach set out in this document involved consultation with Diocesan staff, clergy, and volunteers to explore the challenges to travelling more sustainably, how we might encourage sustainable transport and reap other benefits, and how to incorporate the implementation of the policy statements from the Chelmsford Diocese *Environment Policy*. The development focused on enabling and empowering communication and engaging widely across the Diocese.

2. Aim

In line with the *Church of England Routemap to Net Zero Carbon*, the primary aim of our approach to sustainable travel is to:

- reduce carbon emissions from work-related travel done on behalf of the Diocese

However, we recognise wider benefits of sustainable travel and have taken a slightly wider approach which we hope will also:

- support the health and wellbeing of those travelling on behalf of the Diocese through, for example, promotion of and support for increased walking and cycling

- support churches and other communities in the Diocese in reducing carbon emissions
- provide networking and missional opportunities.

3. Scope

In line with the Church of England Routemap to Net Zero Carbon, our approach is designed to support the reduction of carbon emissions from all work-related travel on behalf of the Diocese, defined as travel for which expenses could be claimed from the Diocese. Some examples are given within the Routemap: “the petrol/diesel used by archdeacons on visitations, Church Building Council/Diocesan Advisory Committee members on visits to discuss projects, reimbursable clergy and ordinand travel, reimbursable staff and volunteer travel, reimbursable train journeys, staff and clergy making reimbursable flights for work or ministry, coaches hired for school trips etc.” For Diocesan staff, work-related travel occurs when individuals need to be somewhere other than their normal workplace to carry out their duties. An individual staff member’s normal workplace is defined in their Statement of Main Terms of Conditions of Employment. The plan does not apply to travel between home and a normal workplace, although it is expected that such travel will be affected by decisions and actions taken in relation to in-scope travel.

The plan will apply to Chelmsford Diocesan Board of Finance staff, volunteers, and Archdeacons. It is expected that Bishops will want to model good practice in respect of sustainable travel and follow the ethos of what is proposed in this document as much as possible even though their travel expenses are covered by the Church commissioners.

Recognising the seriousness of the climate crisis we will also encourage more sustainable travel in communities across the Diocese, in addition to focusing on travel related to Diocesan business.

4. Current travel

4.1. Work-related travel on behalf of the Diocese

The Diocese of Chelmsford comprises the whole of the county of Essex and five east London boroughs. It therefore contains both very rural, and highly urban, areas. The administrative centre and Cathedral are located in Chelmsford. Geographically, Chelmsford, is near the centre of the Diocese and is served well by rail links from London and some parts of the Diocese but it is not quick and easy to get to Chelmsford by public transport from other parts of the Diocese.

A staff survey provided information on current staff travel practices. Forty-five people responded. About half of those who responded said they never travelled for work purposes in a typical month. About half used zoom or teams meetings very often. Most people who travelled for work used their car at some point, 45% used public transport, only 20% used bike, foot or other means of transport. The Diocese investing in pool cars was mentioned, including partnering with other dioceses to explore group procurement from an electric vehicle (EV) manufacturer. However, given the embodied carbon in vehicles, and the staff survey results, an exercise would have to be undertaken to ascertain exactly how beneficial this might be.

Archdeacons, especially those in more rural areas, explained how car travel offered other benefits for their ministry including being able to provide lifts, speak privately etc. while driving. Volunteers also felt that there was little alternative to car travel in rural areas. The lack of suitable public transport, particularly in rural areas, made a switch away from car travel very difficult. This suggests that actions to support the move to EVs would be helpful.

However, there are multiple barriers to moving to EVs including the cost of buying, current EV charging infrastructure, and the problem of home charging for those who rely on on-road parking. The difference in price between charging EVs at home and elsewhere (which can be 10 times more expensive) was a concern. It was felt that there was an opportunity for the Diocese to consider whether policies and procedures could improve support for EV users. Lift-sharing was also mentioned, particularly in relation to travel to meetings, but it was felt that more guidance is needed to deal with legal, financial, insurance and logistic complexities.

The location of some Diocesan buildings, in particular Bishopscourt and the Pleshey Retreat House, were mentioned as posing difficulties for those wanting to travel more sustainably.

In relation to more active travel, cycling is not for everyone, but even for those who might consider it, safety and lack of infrastructure (bike lanes, cycle racks and cycle storage) were seen as barriers. Some churches already run Dr Bike sessions. These sessions not only help those who cycle with technical issues but also build communities of cyclists. It was suggested that more churches might consider running such sessions.

4.2. Other travel across the Diocese

Parish clergy described different patterns of travel depending on their location, identifying that options for more sustainable travel were very context dependent. For example, these options depended on how many churches clergy had to go to, whether the church(es) was/were rural or urban, and size and make-up of congregations. It was felt that each parish would need to develop their own plans; material to support this would be helpful. Within those plans, different circumstances of congregation members would need to be considered.

It was also felt that that it might be worthwhile to share information about what churches are doing (and what deaneries are doing) between deaneries. It was suggested that deaneries might consider face to face meetings in the summer and on-line meetings in the winter. The necessity of changing current regulations/standing orders to do this was mentioned.

5. Approach

The document draws on the ideas of Workplace Travel Plans (WTPs). A WTP is a working document aimed at supporting sustainable travel for work-related journeys, moving those within its scope towards safer and cleaner travel, reducing both carbon emissions and pollution. It comprises actions to promote walking, cycling, public transport, carpooling, the use of technology such as online meetings instead of travel, and flexible working practices.¹

A WTP helps people to choose to travel more sustainably. This includes active travel choices such as cycling, walking, and scooting, plus options such as public transport and lift sharing.

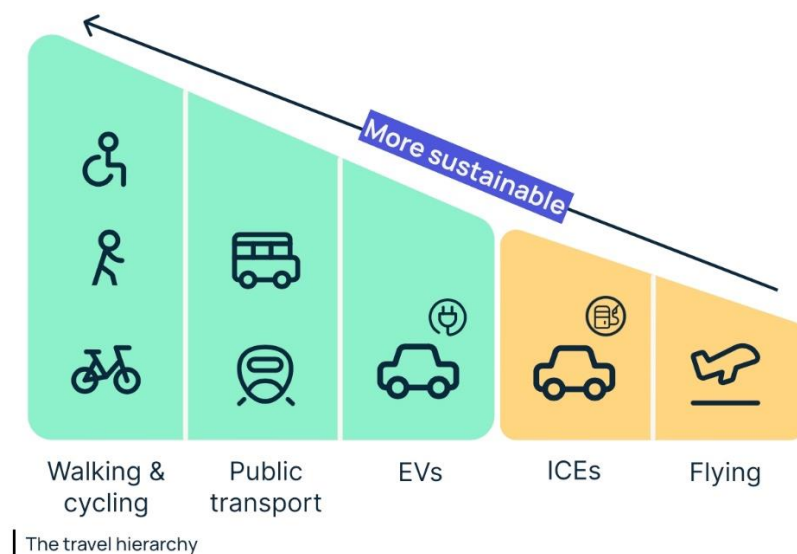
The sustainable travel hierarchy is a useful visual aid to support this aim. The hierarchy presented here is produced by an organisation supporting small and medium enterprises called Seedling.²

Some sustainable travel hierarchies have digital meetings (ie no travel) as the most environmentally sustainable travel strategy, for example, the Energy Saving Trust.³

1. <https://www.nationaltransport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Implementers-Guide.pdf>

2. <https://www.seedling.earth/post/what-is-a-sustainable-transport-hierarchy>

3. <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/an-introduction-to-the-sustainable-travel-hierarchy/>



6. Targets

The review of the *Diocesan Environment Policy*, *Church of England Routemap to Net Zero Carbon*, and current travel suggest that the following targets would be useful:

- Benchmark data to better understand the extent of emissions from different travel sources
- Consider specifically travel to and from meetings, and specific locations
- Use policies, procedures, and engagement with external bodies to support switching to EVs, where feasible
- Use policies, procedures, and engagement with external bodies to support using public transport, bike, walking, as feasible
- Review and update relevant Diocesan policies and procedures to encourage all types of sustainable travel
- Communicate reasons for more sustainable travel, ways to travel more sustainably, and useful resources across the Diocese
- Support exploration of more sustainable travel within churches and other communities

7. Implementation

Table 1: Actions for NZC management board (in conjunction with others as necessary

Further work on benchmarking travel data in relation to carbon emissions and describing context for travel to establish the relative effectiveness of different actions (2025)
Arrange a desk-based review of appropriate locations for EV chargers eg Diocesan offices, Cathedral, Archdeacon offices, churches (2025)
Provide directions that promote more sustainable methods of transport to commonly used venues (includes, for example, Cathedral, Pleshey Retreat House, Bishops court) (2025)
Support more sustainable travel to meetings by providing a list of churches across the Diocese with good public transport links and bicycle accessibility that are willing to host meetings and by providing resources, examples, and ideas (for example thinking about start and end times to facilitate travel by public transport and bike) (2025)

Explore with other Eastern Region dioceses group procurement for EVs for clergy (2026)
Produce information to support lift-sharing (2026)
Engage with local councils etc. around improving local transport infrastructure (2026)
Review progress with the plan annually and update to reflect ongoing context (annually)
Communicate the approach to sustainable travel and progress (periodically)

Table 2: Actions for Diocesan staff/teams/groups

Introduce a cycle to work scheme (2025)
Review policies and procedures that impact on travelling more sustainably and how they could be improved to provide incentives to do so (2025)
Provide information for staff on options for more sustainable travel (2025)
Provide opportunities for staff to discuss more sustainable travel (2025)
Consider alternatives to plane travel (2025)
Investigate options for a salary sacrifice electric vehicle scheme for employees (2026)
Ensure contractors, volunteers, etc are aware of Diocesan commitment to sustainable travel (2026)
Promote and facilitate installation of EV chargers as appropriate once work done to identify appropriate locations (2026)
Explore the environmental cost-benefit of pool cars (2026)

Table 3: Actions to support emissions reduction from other travel

Ensure adequate publicity about funding for eg EV chargers and other infrastructure (2025)
Support churches to think about and explore more sustainable travel by providing appropriate resource material, examples and ideas (2025)
Develop a directory of groups across the Diocese that promote EV use and cycling (2026)
Support deaneries (and their churches) to reduce carbon emissions, including supporting liaison between deaneries facing similar challenges to more sustainable travel (2026)

Table 4: Actions for leadership team

Explore how those in leadership positions could set an example (2025)

This implementation plan will be reviewed and updated regularly by the Chelmsford Diocese Net Zero Carbon Management Board and a report on progress will be incorporated into the annual report to Deanery Synod on the Diocese's *Net Zero Carbon Action Plan*.

Recommendation (agreed at Diocesan Synod 22nd March)

That this Synod: DS(2025)03

- a) note that the trustees of the Chelmsford Diocesan Board of Finance (CDBF) have decided to implement the actions set out in Encouraging Sustainable Travel,*
- b) encourage use of sustainable transport across all CDBF activities and;*

c) encourage Parochial Church Councils and other worshipping communities within the Diocese to consider how they may be able to do the same across their activities.

APPENDIX

Useful links:

<https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/an-introduction-to-the-sustainable-travel-hierarchy/>

https://cofecarlisle.contentfiles.net/media/documents/document/2024/01/Sustainable_travel.pdf

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/planning-land-and-recycling/planning-and-development/sustainable-travel>

<https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/advice/efficient-driving/>

<https://d3hgrlq6yacptf.cloudfront.net/5f3ffd8a9f6aa/content/pages/documents/workplace-travel-plan.pdf>