**Northampton District Environmental Report May 2025**

**Introduction**

The Northampton Methodist District continues to make strides in fulfilling its commitment to environmental stewardship, guided by the 2024 Environmental Policy and the aspirational goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. This report outlines progress across key initiatives, challenges encountered, and next steps, including ongoing developments around the proposed Environmental Officer role.

**1. Policy Progress & Targets**

* **Eco District Recognition**: The District is registered with A Rocha and aims to achieve Silver Eco Church status by September 2025 and Gold by 2027.
* **Circuit Engagement**: 50% of Circuits are targeted to adopt environmental policies by 2026, with 25% of churches aiming for Eco Church registration by 2027.
* **Carbon Footprint Reporting**: Circuits and churches are encouraged to establish annual carbon footprint reports, with a target of a 50% reduction by 2027.

**2. Eco Summit & Working Group Updates**

* **April 2025 Eco Summit**: This summit highlighted energy audits, solar projects, and the Gold Award at Wesley Memorial Church. Discussions emphasised subsidised audit schemes and collaboration with the District Executive. “It was noted that TMCP and HMRC are working to resolve the current tax implication issue of installing solar panels on manses.”
* **Action For Hope Working Group and EcoSummit**:
	+ **Energy Audits**: Focus on clarifying the "why" of audits, exploring bulk procurement, and including manses. A video resource is proposed to engage churches.
	+ **Solar Projects**: St Andrews and Towcester Road are pursuing solar installations. Insurance challenges (e.g., battery storage costs) were flagged, with solutions shared via case studies.
	+ **Earth Day 2025**: Plans to promote activities through District social media and newsletters.

**3. Funding & Resources**

* **Action For Hope Grants**: £240,000 allocated by the District Executive, supplemented by anticipated contributions from the Benefact Trust. Grants are now advertised via the District website and newsletter.

www.northamptonmethodistdistrict.org.uk/mission-team/action-for-hope.html

* **Subsidised Energy Audits**: Proposals are under review to lower barriers for churches through bulk procurement.

**4. Challenges**

* **Insurance Costs**: Solar battery storage remains a hurdle due to increased premiums
* **Engagement Gaps**: Some churches lack awareness of Eco Church programs or face resource limitations.

**5. Environmental Officer Role (Ongoing Development)**

The District is progressing with plans to appoint an Environmental Officerto accelerate environmental work. Key details under discussion include:

* **Purpose**: To coordinate Eco Church programs, manage Action For Hope grants, and support property retrofits.
* **Structure**: A 3-year, home-based role with circa £30,000 annual salary depending on experience, reporting to the District Executive.
* **Progress**: Draft job descriptions and funding being pursued, with recruitment targeted for next Connextional year?

**6. Next Steps**

* Attract more volunteers for the Action For Hope working group
* Finalise the potential Environmental Officer appointment to unify District efforts, depending on Benefact Trust funding
* Host the 5th August 2025 Eco Summit, focusing on energy audits and solar solutions.
* Expand outreach to circuits through ECO tips in newsletters and social media campaigns.
* Review insurance policies with Methodist Insurance to address solar battery concerns.

**Conclusion**
The District remains steadfast in its environmental mission, balancing ambitious targets with practical action. The proposed Environmental Officer will drive this vision forward, ensuring alignment with the Methodist Church’s 2030 net-zero goal.