

Net zero carbon emissions in the UK

Contact Name and Details	Steve Hucklesby, Policy Adviser, Joint Public Issues Team hucklesbys@methodistchurch.org.uk
Resolutions	<p>57/1. The Council receives the report.</p> <p>57/2. The Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) urges the UK government to set a target and establish policies to achieve net zero emissions in the UK well before 2050; ii) commends the Eco Church movement in England and Wales and Eco Congregation in Scotland; iii) encourages Methodist churches to join this movement and invites circuits and districts to consider registering their intention to become Eco circuits or Eco districts. <p>57/3. The Council notes that <i>Hope in God's Future</i>, adopted as a Conference Statement in 2011, advocated a reduction in UK greenhouse gas emissions of at least 80% by 2050. The Council notes the work undertaken since the adoption of <i>Hope in God's Future</i> and acknowledges that the achievement of net zero emissions in the UK before 2050 implies further ambition in relation to this target.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	To acknowledge that, since the publication of <i>Hope in God's Future</i> in 2009, the peer-reviewed science around climate change suggests that the UK and other nations must accelerate their ambition to reduce emissions To encourage Methodists to commit to Eco Church, Eco Circuit, Eco District or Eco Congregation movements to help the Methodist Church reduce carbon footprints.
-------------------------	---

Background

1. In 2009 the Methodist Church published *Hope in God's Future* in order to set out a Methodist understanding of the challenges facing our global ecology and the theological and ethical implications. The report provided an account of the peer-reviewed science and the implications for Christian discipleship. It was compiled in conjunction with the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the United Reformed Church. In 2011 *Hope in God's Future* was adopted by the Conference as a Statement of the Judgment of the Conference.
2. *Hope in God's Future* endorses the UK Government target for reductions in greenhouse gas as legislated in the 2008 Climate Change Act. The Climate Change Act requires UK-wide emissions reductions of 80% by 2050 and requires five year carbon budgets that are currently agreed as far as 2032. The Methodist Church seeks to reduce its own emissions in keeping with these targets, although this is not possible to measure with any precision.

New evidence on urgent action to tackle climate change

3. Since the national targets were identified, both the scientific evidence and the global ambition for action have developed further. In 2015 the international Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published the Fifth Assessment Report to bring policy makers and the public up to date. The report concluded that changes to global climate already observed are unprecedented over decades to millennia. In Paris in 2015, governments agreed to take the action necessary to constrain global average temperature rise to well below two degrees above pre-industrial levels. In 2018 the IPCC published a report on the impacts of a greater than 1.5 degree global warming and provided an assessment of the actions

required to avoid this scenario. Consequently the UK Government has asked the Committee on Climate Change to provide advice in 2019 on a net-zero emissions ambition for the UK.

4. The IPCC report on the impact of 1.5 degrees global warming states that for stabilisation of global temperatures at this level global net zero carbon emissions would most likely need to be achieved around 2050 (with an interquartile range of 2045 to 2055). However this relies on the availability and affordability of substantial amounts of carbon capture and storage technology in the latter half of the 21st Century, a scenario that seems uncertain at best.
5. It is clear that the commitments of both the Methodist Church (as represented in the Statement of the Conference) and the UK Government to advocate for concerted global action to avoid potential catastrophic effects of climate change now requires a reassessment of our UK carbon targets.
6. If global net zero emissions is to be achieved at 2050 then developed nations (as these nations still have higher per capita emissions than most) must achieve a zero carbon economy before 2050. On the basis of the scientific evidence available today, it is clear that the UK's resources, technology and ingenuity should be used to achieve net zero carbon emissions in the UK well before 2050.
7. The Methodist Council is therefore asked to recognise that, since the publication of *Hope in God's Future* in 2009, the peer-reviewed science around climate change suggests that the UK and other nations must accelerate their ambition to reduce emissions. This will enable the Methodist Church, through the Joint Public Issues Team, to continue its advocacy work on climate change, and, along with many others, push for net zero carbon emissions in the UK well before 2050.

Eco Church, Eco Circuit, Eco District

8. In January 2018 the Methodist Council endorsed proposals for the development of Eco Circuits and Eco Districts, along with the well-established Eco Church awards. Eco Church is a programme of A Rocha (a Christian organisation engaging communities in nature conversation) and run in partnership with a number of Churches including the Methodist Church. Eco Church, Eco Circuit, Eco District are one accessible and corporate way in which people throughout the Connexion can engage with the need for more ambitious climate change targets.
9. The Methodist Council is asked to commend those churches and circuits that have expressed interest or have received awards, and to acknowledge this movement to be an important expression of the concern of the Methodist people to protect our common future.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

57/1. The Council receives the report.

57/2. The Council:

- i) **urges the UK government to set a target and establish policies to achieve net zero emissions in the UK well before 2050;**
- ii) **commends the Eco Church movement in England and Wales and Eco Congregation in Scotland;**
- iii) **encourages Methodist churches to join this movement and invites circuits and districts to consider registering their intention to become Eco circuits or Eco districts.**

57/3. The Council notes that *Hope in God's Future*, adopted as a Conference Statement in 2011, advocated a reduction in UK greenhouse gas emissions of at least 80% by 2050. The Council notes the work undertaken since the adoption of *Hope in God's Future* and acknowledges that the achievement of net zero emissions in the UK before 2050 implies further ambition in relation to this target.