

CASE STUDIES FOR CHURCHES

Faithfully embracing the responsibility of caring for the planet takes shape in many different ways. People in communities around the world are taking steps to improve their local environment, educate others and advocate for God's love for His Creation. Here are a few stories from around the UK and around the world to help encourage and inspire, as well as to show that Creation stewardship is just as diverse as Creation itself!

These examples can be used as illustrations in talks, or to provoke group discussion. For instance, people could be split into small groups (2-4) each with one example to read, and then asked to think about what they could learn from this example that might be useful for their own local situation, or their church's mission links. You can find plenty more information about these and other projects, including photographs and downloadable short videos, at www.arochoa.org and www.arochoa.org.uk.

UK Churches

Bankfoot, Perthshire (Church of Scotland) www.bankfootchurch.org.uk

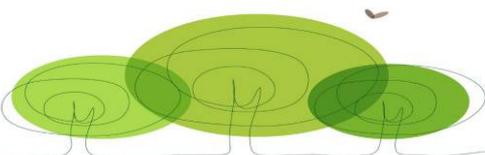
Bankfoot Church, in rural Perthshire, is one of the most 'eco' buildings in Scotland since being rebuilt following a fire in 2004. Out of the ashes, the church has created a building that responds to the social and environmental challenges of the 21st century.

The church is used by about 60% of the local population each week, providing new village facilities such as a café, soft play area, youth bar, meeting rooms, a day centre and a large multi-functional gym. Outside, the grounds are being transformed into a fruit orchard, vegetable garden and wildflower meadow, to benefit people and wildlife.

Amazingly, the energy consumed for this large community centre is equivalent to a two bedroom bungalow. This is achieved by two wind generators, an underground heat pump and high-grade insulation. The building embodies good environmental principles and succeeds in being inviting. The décor is 'recycled chic': bathroom tiles made from yogurt pots and the youth café bar has inserts made from recycled CDs. The communion table, lecterns, side table and crosses were crafted from an oak tree felled by a storm, donated by the local farmer, and created by local craftsmen.

In creating a building that integrates cutting-edge environmental techniques, this church has not only created a spiritual and community space but one that also honours God's natural world.

"The building is a model for how all public buildings should be built". John Swinney, Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth



St Luke's Crosby, Merseyside (Anglican)

www.stlukecrosby.org.uk/grounds/page00.shtml

In October 2006 St Luke's hosted a workshop on managing its large church grounds, focused on the question: "Could we turn our 4½ acres from a liability into an environmentally-friendly resource?" The first steps if they were to bid for Big Lottery funding were agreeing a vision and obtaining local community support.

The vision that was articulated was clear and easy for everybody to relate to: "to create a place of beauty and a haven for people and wildlife". The church consulted its own members and canvassed support (traders' group, local school) for a community garden with accessible paths. Through reaching out into the community they suddenly found new partners: Sefton Council included the church in the judges' circuit for Crosby in Bloom, and a local company supplied free compost from green waste.

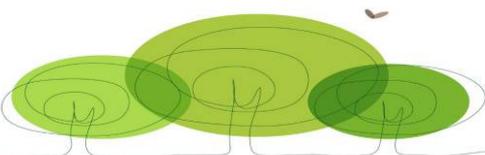
Other ideas quickly came and funding followed: annual wildlife activity mornings draw in the local community; a monthly 'groundforce' work-party (10-15 people) on a Saturday morning attracts some from outside the church family; working towards the national Green Pennant award for quality green spaces provides a valuable focus.

One of the most striking things has been the responses of those who are not yet members of the church:

- "It continually enthruses me to be involved with this project. The sense of community is just incredible."
- "To be able to give a variety of people the opportunity to work together and do something they enjoy is such a valuable thing. It's brilliant."

It was important that the project wasn't only focused on the churchyard and a few keen gardeners but sought to green all of the church's life, so St. Luke's signed up to the EcoCongregation award scheme (www.ew.ecocongregation.org). A monthly green stall now runs after the morning services. The church celebrates Environment Sunday and has even re-enacted the Easter story outdoors in the transformed garden area. The Church Council now has an environmental policy, and St Luke's has switched to 'Good Energy' for electricity, with extra costs offset by energy-efficient lighting.

"We've learnt the value of starting small and getting others involved. Visitors to the grounds are delighted with the continuing transformation, and we sense that by taking care of creation across the life of the church, we're helping people to discover the Creator." Steve Matthews, Church Member and A Rocha supporter



Cambridge Community Church www.cthree.org

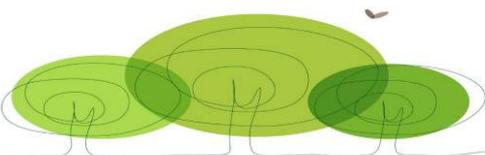
Many churches have only recently begun their journey in following God's call to care for creation. In particular, in large churches with lots of different priorities, those with a vision for creation care may feel they are a small voice competing with many others for attention. This example shows how such a church can begin to be engaged.

David Chandler and his family are A Rocha supporters who have been members of C3 (Cambridge Community Church) for some years. David has patiently sought to highlight the importance of ecological issues and the biblical mandate to care for creation within the church. Initially this began by inviting people on occasional wildlife walks and family-friendly conservation days, which sowed the seeds of interest amongst a few. Gradually this developed into C2@C3 (Creation Care at Cambridge Community Church) a programme that has included seminars, nature watching events and a work party at an RSPB nature reserve.

Engaging the thinking of key leaders and then the whole church was the next stage. David gave Steve Campbell (Senior Pastor) some books on the theology of creation care, and this led in 2009 to inviting Dave Bookless and then Ruth Valerio of A Rocha UK to speak in the main services. This helped the whole church understand both the urgency of the environmental challenges and the clear biblical call to take care of creation. Many responded and have taken practical steps to stay informed of the issues and engage through appropriate action.

C3 was already involved in local community action projects, and some of these now have a conscious environmental focus: clearing a local brook, planting trees and shrubs, picking up litter and putting up bird boxes. As an alternative to mid-week small groups, a short course called 'What a Wonderful World' explored the issues, and the C2@C3 (Creation Care at Cambridge Community Church) programme continues. C3 has also become a FairTrade church and publicised a local Fair Trade shop at Sunday services and conferences.

"It's true to say that we are better informed and equipped than ever before in relation to the challenges our world faces and the practical responses we can take. It's also probably true to say we have more people involved in areas of conservation than at any given time in our 27-year history. So progress has been made!" Steve Campbell, Senior Pastor



UK Projects

Dronfield, Derbyshire

Over the last five years, Churches Together in Dronfield & District (North Derbyshire) has worked with A Rocha UK and over 10 other different community and national organisations in the Lea Brook Valley which flows through the centre of Dronfield. Members from different congregations have come together to help care for a much-used 22 acre river valley and have helped transform it into a beautiful town centre amenity for all the community. With new footpaths and a cleaner river, it is used more widely by the local residents and provides a safe space for families and children. It is estimated that over 100 schoolchildren use the improved footpaths daily, as well as dog-walkers, wheelchair and buggy users, and many others. Wildflower planting and invasive plant removal has helped foster richer and more abundant animal and plant populations. Four new interpretation boards, installed in early 2010, provide information about the local wildlife and habitats. In 2009, the group received the Derbyshire County Council "Excellence in the Community Award" for Conservation, recognising both the social and biological benefits of the project.

"Environmental sustainability cannot be achieved by organisations working alone; the Lea Brook Valley Project is a partnership that has succeeded in transforming this area for the benefit of the wildlife and bringing enjoyment to the whole community." Peter Corke, Principal Environmental Sustainability Officer, North East Derbyshire District Council

Camberwell, Southwark

A local A Rocha UK Friends in Action group in South London has turned a vision for an urban community garden - Camberwell Farmers' Garden - into reality on a council estate in Camberwell. This ground-breaking (or literally concrete-breaking!) project began with planting a small orchard and laying some lawn in spring 2010. Additional planting, including raised beds for growing vegetables, will continue through the year. The project also promotes sustainable living practices by educating people about food sourcing, energy use and food waste. The A Rocha UK Friends in Action group behind the project, known as CACTUS, seeks to engage people, particularly Christians, with the importance of active creation care. CACTUS hosts bicycle-powered events such as film showings, discos and speaker presentations, in which people cycle to power the amplifiers, projectors and sound systems. It is an interactive, positive, "powerful" way to demonstrate our energy use and a means of displaying alternative sources for that energy.

"Those of us involved in CACTUS and Camberwell Farmers Garden believe that when Christians get active to care for creation, we are truly stepping into what



God made us to be - his image-bearers and loving rulers of creation."

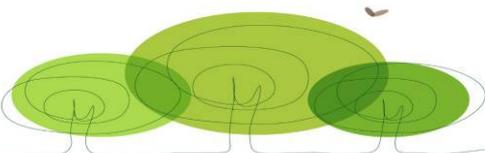
Will Campbell-Clause, A Rocha Young Adults Coordinator

The Gower Peninsula, Wales

A Rocha UK's newest Associated Project, St Madoc Christian Youth Camp is located within the Gower, the UK's first Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In 2009, the camp leaders contacted A Rocha UK, looking to become more intentional in their focus on nature conservation and environmental education. In October, forty scientists came together and conducted an extensive survey, compiling a 160+ page report detailing the geological history, habitat portfolio and species diversity of the area. This information will guide the conservation management plan for the area, as well as provide a basis for conservation work and education onsite. The camp aims to bring inner-city youth from Swansea and Cardiff, as well as further afield, to the camp, introducing young people to Creation in ways they have never seen before.

"St Madoc Christian Youth Camp is a very special place, not just because of its unique and beautiful location, but also because it so positively affects the lives of many disadvantaged children who have little, if any, exposure to such a unique environment." St Madoc CYC website (www.stmadoc.co.uk)

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International Projects

A Rocha Switzerland is working to protect dry grasslands in an area that is under threat of development. In 2009, A Rocha Switzerland conducted an extensive survey of the species present in the Dry Grassland of Genolier (Le Bois-de-Chênes de Genolier), focussing on butterfly and plant biodiversity. They found that the site has 15 species of red-listed (threatened) butterflies and 20 species of butterflies typical and dependant on dry grasslands. There are six species of red-listed plants, five of which are orchids. This work has helped provide evidence that the site has ecological value and is valuable in making a case to protect it against development.

A Rocha Uganda Initiative is not only working to protect and enhance wetland biodiversity in the Kampala district. It is also building a public toilet which will improve sanitary systems and, combined with education on better sanitation practices, will help decrease contamination of the natural springs. The project will also increase access to clean water through wells which will hopefully decrease the pressure on the surrounding surface wetlands. This work emphasises the fact that humans and the environment are closely connected: the health of one affects the other and it is necessary to care for both in order to seek the healing of the land.

A Rocha Aotearoa / New Zealand have recently finished their first youth environmental education camp at Tongariro National Park amidst volcanoes, ferns, unique birds and alpine flowers. Partnering with Scripture Union, A Rocha Aotearoa / New Zealand is working to foster God's love for the planet amongst young people to help encourage a new generation of stewards for the earth. They are also advocating restoring their environment by participating in native bird protection, tree planting, wetland planting and permaculture projects.

A Rocha India is situated in Bangalore – one of the fastest-growing cities in India, and a global technology centre. Yet, around Bangalore there are still many poor rural communities and significant areas of forest and other important wildlife habitats. A Rocha India has worked particularly in the crucial area of human-elephant conflict, seeking to address the problems caused by the combination of urban sprawl, large semi-migrant mammals and crop-growing farmland. A Rocha's biblical basis means that they have sought to avoid approaches that see people and wildlife as in competition, and rather have sought ways to promote safe coexistence. This has led to trialling a novel method of keeping Indian Elephants off crop-fields at harvest time and guiding them along safe corridors – by using their acute sense of smell. It's been discovered that Elephants intensely dislike the scents of tobacco and hot chillis, so A Rocha India have developed a thick rope soaked in a mix of ground-up tobacco, chilli and old engine-oil, hung as a barrier around fields. This has proved remarkably successful and has attracted both good national publicity and interest from other areas facing similar issues.

A Rocha is active in 19 countries around the world – to find out more: www.arocha.org.

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