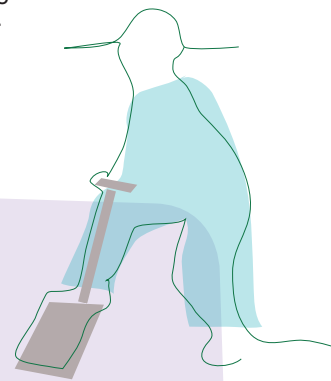


How Green is your Church?

A Rocha UK's new Partner Churches Scheme seeks to be flexible enough for churches of every size and type, and also at every stage of their journey in discovering God's purposes in creation care. **Here are three examples, each of them with some past or proposed A Rocha involvement, but all very different and involved with other initiatives too.** Some churches begin by focussing on their building; some on their grounds; some on their services; some on the attitudes and lifestyles of their members. The diversity is as great as

God's creative biodiversity – each church is a very different kind of animal. In each case, discovering creation care is involving Christians more fully in their local communities as well as in a deeper love for our wonderful God and his amazing world. Perhaps your church's story could feature in a future issue of the magazine, as we celebrate what God is doing around the UK? In the words of A Rocha's founder, Peter Harris: 'We suspect we are part of something truly God-breathed, a way to love God the Creator by caring for his creation'.



The Church that Grew Out of the Ground

– Bankfoot, Perthshire Church of Scotland

Victoria Deschampneufs (A Rocha Scotland Coordinator) writes: Bankfoot Church, in the heart of 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.

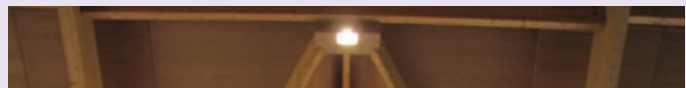
The church is used by approximately 60% of the local population every week, providing facilities previously missing in this small village, such as a café, soft play area, youth bar, meeting rooms, a day centre and a large multi-functional gym. Outside, the grounds are to be transformed into a fruit orchard, 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. John Swinney, Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth, says that 'the building is a model for how all public buildings should be built'.

The building embodies good environmental principles and succeeds in being inviting. The décor is 'recycled chic': bathroom tiles made from yoghurt pots and the youth café bar has inserts made from recycled CDs. Local craftsmen have contributed their skills too – the communion table, lecterns, side table

and crosses were crafted from an oak tree felled by a storm and donated by the local farmer.

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. 'For I know the plans I have for you says the Lord, plans to give you hope and a future.' Jeremiah 29:11. (www.bankfootchurch.org.uk)





The Journey – Cambridge Community Church

Large evangelical charismatic church

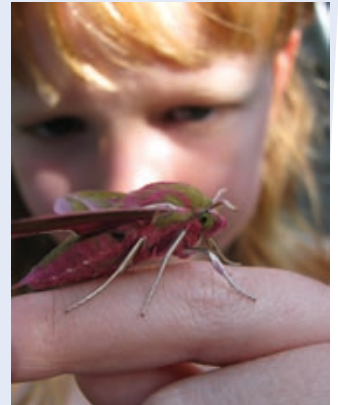
Steve Campbell (Senior Pastor): I'm nervous even writing this because the church I lead seems such a long way from being the conservation-friendly church A Rocha espouses. However, I do believe it's true to say that we are better informed and equipped than ever before in relation to the challenges our 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!

During 2009, through input from Dave Bookless, Ruth Valerio and David Chandler, we have informed people of the ecological challenges and the biblical mandate to take care of creation. Many have responded and taken practical steps to stay informed of the issues and engage through appropriate action.

As a church, we were already involved in local community action projects and had cleared a

local brook, planted trees and shrubs, picked up litter and put up bird boxes. As an alternative to mid-week small groups, we've run a short course called 'What a Wonderful World' which explored the issues, and we now have **C2@C3** (Creation Care at Cambridge Community Church) a programme that has included seminars and nature watching events. We have become a Fairtrade church and have publicised a local Fairtrade shop at our Sunday services and conferences.

Over the years I have often questioned: will the small part I do in this regard make any difference? Ruth Valerio made an excellent point when she said she leaves that part to God as she responds by doing what it is right to do. We all have choices to make and at least this past year it feels like we have given people the tools and information to make wise and informed decisions. The journey continues. (www.cthree.org)



Grounds for Hope – St Luke's Crosby, Merseyside

Anglican

Steve Matthews tells the story: In October 2006, we hosted a workshop on managing our church grounds; could we turn our four acres from a liability into an environmentally-friendly resource?

To bid for Big Lottery funding we first needed ideas and local support. Our vision was 'to create a place of beauty and a haven for people and wildlife'. We consulted our church family and canvassed support (traders' group, local school) for a community garden with accessible paths. Suddenly we had new partners: Sefton Council included us in the judges' circuit for Crosby in Bloom, and a company supplied free compost from green waste.

Other ideas quickly came and funding followed: annual wildlife activity mornings continue to 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 us with a valuable focus.

We have been particularly encouraged by the responses of those who are not 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.'

We wanted to green all of our church's life and began to explore 'Eco-congregation'. A monthly green stall now runs after the morning services. We celebrated Environment Sunday and re-enacted the Easter story outdoors in our 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.

(www.stlukecrosby.org.uk)

