

# Torbay Christian EcoAction

March 2024 newsletter

This is the March newsletter which I tend to deliver late in the month.

I start with a reflection. As I indicated in February, my wife and I have been in Australia for the past few weeks. I know Australia well. But this time perhaps looking more at the environmental aspects and approaches. It's a curious place and this comment is inevitably a huge generalisation. In the urban environment such as Sydney and Melbourne, there is the awareness of environmental concerns as we find in many places around England. Yet where we were in Queensland, a place of dramatic housing development, original forest comes down frequently with seemingly little protest. Moreover public transport outside the main cities is very limited and with significant distances, the car rules supreme. Petrol and diesel are much cheaper than here. Moreover it is a country whose economy has hitherto been so reliant upon fossil fuels and other mineral extraction, taking up and effectively destroying huge swathes of the countryside. It is an economy which has got used to the riches from minerals. There are so many conundrums and challenges for that country.

This newsletter is coming in PDF form but also with a link at <https://davidhodson.com/green-issues/> if that is easier for you to distribute. If you want a word version, let me know. If you want to unsubscribe, email me. If you know of anyone who you think would like to receive, again let me know.

## How green is your garden? Greater environmental concerns in gardening

This event was planned for 27<sup>th</sup> April, but we have found it harder than we expected to gather a good range of speakers and presentations. We have therefore decided to adjourn it until the autumn. More news later

## Green hustings

It now seems highly unlikely we will have a general election in the spring and therefore the provisional date for the green hustings event has been taken out of the diary. We will find another date for the early autumn and write subsequently.

## Exeter Diocese Eco-Church Celebration, Exeter Cathedral, 28<sup>th</sup> of April 12.30 – 3.30

This is organised by the Diocese Creation Care team to celebrate the eco-church scheme in Devon and all that has been achieved so far. There will be presentations from A Rocha including to churches which have bronze, silver or gold accreditation, an update from the diocese team of what is happening around Devon and around the country, various displays and stalls followed by Creation Care Evensong for those who want to stay on after the event. Details here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/ecochurch-celebration-tickets-789190007557>

## Pedestrianisation in Paignton

This has been both a political and community hot potato in the past 18 months. The road from the railway station towards the cinema was pedestrianised. Still some access naturally but a conventional pedestrian street. This met with lots of protests from traders and others and was converted into a one-way street. This met further protests and, as I understand it, it has reverted to what it was. I cannot comment on the arguments of the traders and similar. It does however seem a pity when one looks at pedestrianisation schemes in other cities and towns here and abroad that it was not possible. It would be interesting to hear from recipients of this newsletter living and working in Paignton with their perspective.

## Our buses go electric

The buses around Torbay will become zero emission as a consequence of a substantial investment overhauling the local fleet of buses. This must be good news for the quality of air and generally for our local environment. It is a combination of investment by Stagecoach and the government funding about 25 local councils. More on the story here: [https://www.torbayweekly.co.uk/news/home/1457105/torbay-s-buses-to-go-electric-after-historic-27m-investment-in-bay-s-public-transport.html?utm\\_source=dlvr.it&utm\\_medium=twitter](https://www.torbayweekly.co.uk/news/home/1457105/torbay-s-buses-to-go-electric-after-historic-27m-investment-in-bay-s-public-transport.html?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter)

## Become Exeter diocese eco-champion and join their network

The Exeter diocese seems to be doing a really good work, recognised across the country, on environmental issues and awareness. They are creating a network for parishes, but I understand to be not just Anglican, to help encourage working within local churches. They acknowledge it can be a lonely task if there doesn't seem to be others within the congregation of similar mind or enthusiasm. It has just been launched. Clare and I have signed up for our church, St Matthias, and we encourage you to do for yours. More details here:

[https://exeter.anglican.org/invitation-to-join-the-diocese-of-exeter-eco-champs-network/?fbclid=IwAR1F-rLuVUaZ-9RGf7iGu0FyEsnpMLXvtVOhaMizeLS0FtFtkCGnd37c\\_eI](https://exeter.anglican.org/invitation-to-join-the-diocese-of-exeter-eco-champs-network/?fbclid=IwAR1F-rLuVUaZ-9RGf7iGu0FyEsnpMLXvtVOhaMizeLS0FtFtkCGnd37c_eI)

### Christian climate action, Devon and Cornwall

I have come across this organisation, which is national but with local groups. The Devon and Cornwall branch have an online meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> April at 7 PM to which I have signed up and I will report in the next newsletter. If anyone is already involved with them, please let me know. More details here

<https://christianclimateaction.org/events/>

### Blame our bad weather on El Niño

I doubt many of us receiving this newsletter have any doubt about the impact of climate in one part of the world on the entire globe. But this has been shown with the impact on us here in Devon and Cornwall of El Niño. This is a weather phenomenon off the West Coast of South America which has disrupted trade winds globally as well as the Jetstream which has so much impact on our weather here in Torbay. We were already aware that it had had a major impact on the coral on the Great Barrier Reef on the other side of the Pacific Ocean. Now it has reached us in Devon. A piece from the BBC explaining is here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-devon-68666843>

### A life on Our Planet by David Attenborough, book review

May I unashamedly plug this book, published by Penguin a couple of years ago, by David Attenborough. He looks back through his many decades involved in so many bringing the natural world to us in our living rooms and what he has seen change for the worse. He then asks what can and we must do about this. What will happen if we don't do anything especially about fossil fuels. It lays down

fundamental challenges and sets out his vision of what could happen to pull back on some of the worst impact. I highly recommend.

Similar work from our friends in Plymouth and Exeter

The March newsletter of the Plymouth churches green action can be found here: <https://mailchi.mp/d9dce7f22f77/pcga-eneews-mid-march-2024?e=9dd45dc4a5>

The Exeter newsletter is at the end of this newsletter. Both contain valuable information about other events in Devon

Thank you for getting this far

Please let me have any items you want me to distribute including from your organisation or church or news items for information.

Best wishes

David Hodson

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Exeter newsletter

Dear All

It's so wonderful to see signs of Spring, isn't it? I find it such a hopeful time as we approach Easter.

Am not going to apologise for the delay in sending out this email because I am a rather busy person (as a volunteer on a chaplaincy team, doing voluntary community work with my local church and I work part time for Single Friendly Church Network) and so just did not have the time to gather things together in February. It is surprising how long it takes! I am so grateful to be in touch with Nicky in Plymouth and David in Torbay for sharing information but want to also thank Liz for her write up of the DEFAN tree planting event.

As part of Lent fasting, I have deleted Facebook from my phone and so it is surprising just how out of the loop I have been in terms of community events that are happening from this simple act. So please, more than ever, do let me know if you hear of any eco-related events or news, nationally or in Exeter, suitable for this group.

#### Updates, reflections and requests

##### **Liz from South St Baptist Church's write up of the DEFAN Tree planting event**

On Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February, eight of us joined the Devon Faith and Beliefs Forum (aka DEFAN) to do some tree planting in Exeter's Northbrook Park, part of Ludwell Valley Park in the Green Circle. Along with around ten others (Buddhist, Bahá'í, Quaker, Jewish) we managed to plant 150 small 'whips' of small indigenous trees in a rough patch of grass near a sheltering group of taller trees, supervised by a Devon Wildlife Trust Ranger. We shared readings from our faiths beforehand, held silence and got to know a little of each other as we walked and planted. A new way to approach our next stage - the Silver Award. See the Devon Wildlife Trust website for information on their work to plant trees and repair the damage of Ash dieback in Devon. DWT manages Exeter's wildlife areas for the City Council. Also we are raising money (£120) for us to twin our small 'garden' behind the lower hall with Kenya with two families through the Charity Ripple Effect. Please email if you would like to see the photos from the event.

##### **Do you know anyone interested in being part of Christian Climate Action in Devon, Cornwall and Plymouth?**

National CCA local group coordinator is gathering everyone together for a zoom in April to see about a more regional approach to organising, so if you know of anyone who wants to take part in things like prayer vigils outside of Parliament (see next) or organising more SW events then please email [ccalocalgroups@gmail.com](mailto:ccalocalgroups@gmail.com) and more general information is here on their website <https://christianclimateaction.org/>

##### **Christians hold vigil against fossil fuels outside Parliament (From Torbay news – see link for full newsletter at the end)**

In mid-February, hundreds of Christians held a vigil outside Parliament protesting against usage of fossil fuels with an address by Lord Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, about the importance of urgent action. See more here:

[Hundreds of Christians hold vigil against fossil fuels outside Parliament \(churchtimes.co.uk\)](https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/news/2024/feb/16/hundreds-of-christians-hold-vigil-against-fossil-fuels-outside-parliament/)

NB This vigil was ecumenical and organised jointly by Christian Climate Action, Christian Aid, Tearfund, CAFOD, Green Christian, Operation Noah, A Rocha and the Salvation Army. It aimed to reflect our calling to be both prayerful and prophetic about the climate crisis.

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/news/climate-change/240-hours-prayer-and-protest>

<https://cte.org.uk/lent-prayer-vigil-for-climate-justice/>

<https://cafod.org.uk/news/events/no-faith-in-fossil-fuels-24-7-prayer-vigil-during-lent-2024>

##### **Exeter Silent Vigil**

I think am already volunteering elsewhere on Sat 30<sup>th</sup> March, but would be great if someone could go to the Silent Vigil and let me know about your experience.

##### **Call out for local news/interesting articles**

Please do let me know about anything happening this April – June with lots of notice – if I continue to have Facebook deleted from my phone after Easter – then more help will be needed in general so I don't miss too many events.

#### Dates for your diary

#### Upcoming events

#### **Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March – 13.00 – Exeter Central Train station**

Obviously slightly too late notice as it is happening in 3.5 hours, but wanted to let you know that something is being done! An 'Energy for All' protest against the government cuts as part of Unite and Fuel Poverty Action. A protest advocating for insulation and taxing fossil fuel companies.

#### **Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> March – 10.00 – Belle Isle Park (Repeats on 17<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> March)**

Local Nature Volunteer day – increasing Biodiversity - Join Friends of Belle Isle Park as they increase the biodiversity of this beautiful riverside park to aid our local wildlife and improve human/nature connection. <https://www.meetup.com/green-drinks-exeter/events/299290443/>

#### **11–17 March 2024 The Big Plastic Count (From Plymouth news – see link for full newsletter at the end)**

The Big Plastic Count is the UK's largest investigation into household plastic waste. Now, we have a huge opportunity to finally get to grips with the plastic waste crisis.

That's why we need you and thousands of others to come together, count our plastic waste and push ministers, supermarkets and big brands to lead the way at the global talks.

*This could also be done by churches - why not register your church to count your collective plastic waste? [Click here to find out more or to register please](#)*

#### **Friday 15<sup>th</sup> March – 19.00 – City Gate Pub**

Green Drinks – Friendly Social for People with a Love of Nature

<https://www.meetup.com/green-drinks-exeter/>

#### **Saturday 23rd March - 20.30 - Earth Hour 2024 (From Plymouth news)**

Can an hour change the world? What if an hour wasn't just an hour...but the spark we need for change? An hour reminding us to make all other hours count. Switch off all your non-essential appliances and lights in your home for an hour. Or why not host others at a community Earth Hour in your church?

#### **Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> March – 11.00 – Meet under canopy by Debenhams then move to Bedford Square**

As part of the Silent Rebellion's monthly offering, SILENT VIGIL praying and meditating for the Climate Emergency and for banks to divest. All are welcome, some people there might be handing out leaflets for XR Exeter but it is a joint event for anyone. They request that people wear black clothing. Two 20 minutes sessions of standing or sitting in silence, with a short break in between. Short debrief after and should be finished by 1pm. If you would like to join the communications for the group I can put you in touch with their group chat.

#### April

#### **Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> April – 11.00? – Belmont Park?**

Kidical Mass Bike ride – the last one started in Belmont Park at 11.00 and so it is possible the same will happen again <https://www.facebook.com/ExeterKidicalMass/>

**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> April – 14.00 – St Matthew Church Hall (From Torbay news)**

How green is your garden? Greater environmental concerns in gardening. It will be a half day event, all welcome. Please put in your diary. We hope to have more news by the middle of March and watch this space. If you would like to get involved in organising and have any distinctive interests, please do get in touch as there is a lot to do yet to prepare.

**REMINDER: Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> April – 12.30 – 15.30 – Exeter Cathedral**

You are invited to our special Eco Church event at Exeter Cathedral. Organised by our creation care team, it will celebrate the eco church scheme in Devon and all that has been achieved so far. Dave Bookless from [A Rocha](#) will be sharing a message, and churches around the diocese will be sharing inspiring stories. Come along and be encouraged to take action in your parish and mission community! There will be a variety of displays and stalls from Devon-based environmental organisations. Delegates will also be welcomed to stay on after the event for a special Creation Care Evensong at the Cathedral. Tickets are free, but booking is required. [Click here](#) to book your ticket.

**Latest Plymouth Churches Green Action Enews** is here as usual <https://us17.campaign-archive.com/home/?u=ce9a7af55d25190ca5e491686&id=79d7c7e662>

**Latest Torbay Christian EcoAction newsletter has a website!** [Torbay Christian EcoAction: February 2024 Newsletter – David Hodson](#)

Blessings

Liz