

## Gold for Salisbury Cathedral's eco work 23 JUNE 2021

### Caring for the environment helps worshipping life

SALISBURY has become the first cathedral in the UK to gain a Gold Eco-Church Award for its efforts to address the climate crisis. The award, announced last week, is organised by the nature-conservation charity A Rocha UK. There are currently 3500 churches signed up to the Eco-Church scheme, but gold awards are rare.



To be eligible, Salisbury Cathedral pledged to be carbon-neutral by 2030, installed solar panels on the cloisters, initiated a survey of the congregation to encourage care for nature, created a nesting site for peregrine falcons at the base of the spire, installed bird, bat, and hedgehog boxes, and mapped the ecology of the Cathedral Close, discovering a rare form of dock.

Helen Stephens, the head of the Eco Church initiative, presented the award to the cathedral's Chancellor, Canon Robert Titley. Also present was the Bishop of Salisbury, the Rt Revd Nick Holtam, who retires next month, having also served as the Church of England's lead bishop on the environment. Ms Stephens described the event as "an exciting milestone. . . Securing a gold award shows that even large cathedrals can help restore the environment, and also how caring for the environment has enhanced cathedral life in so many ways. Everything from how the cathedral worships and what food it serves, to the energy it uses, the wildlife that lives in and around the Close, and even the water that flushes from the loos has been taken into consideration to put conservation at the heart of the cathedral's community."

Canon Titley said that aiming for the award had "mobilised the cathedral's worshippers, volunteers, staff, and local residents", as well as partners such as Salisbury Cathedral School, the Cathedral Friends, and the Harnham Water Meadow Trust.

**Applications sought.** All churches and Christian organisations are encouraged to tell the *Church Times* about planet-saving projects that they have undertaken, for an inspiring video and booklet in the autumn, produced in collaboration with A Rocha UK and the environmental networks of the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales.

A reminder of the sorts of projects that we would like to hear about:

- building projects moving towards net-zero carbon, such as energy efficiencies, pew heaters, heat pumps, and solar panels;
- building projects that balance conservation and the environment, such as maintenance programmes, sympathetic retrofits, and using low-carbon materials;
- courageous advocacy and community engagement;
- nurturing the natural world, and using church land to develop health and well-being;
- involving young people at every level;
- diocesan initiatives that break new ground; and
- simple but effective gains on a shoestring.

The closing date for entries is 21 July.