

The Lay Community of Saint Benedict

14. Environmental Policy

ANNEX 1: Internal Implementation

Background

1. In the Statement of Intent which was approved by the Community's Council on 16 September 2023 and by its Trustees on 18 November 2023 the Community recognised its responsibility, and that of its members, actively to seek and encourage a way of life which respects the natural world, and provides a sustainable model for others to follow. It intends to be a model of love and care for God's creation. It intends in particular to take and to promote effective action on the environmental issues facing the world both:
 - (a) in the ways in which the Community organises itself and arranges events and activities; and
 - (b) by encouraging and others to consider how they might do so on a personal basis in their daily lives.
2. The Statement of Intent envisages that the Community will prepare and from time to time review a separate internal implementation paper setting out how it intends to take and promote effective action on the environmental issues facing the world in the ways in which it organises itself and arranges events and activities. This is the first such internal implementation paper.

Caring for Creation group

3. The Community has formed a Caring for Creation group to provide additional focus and to encourage and support Community members and others in taking prayerful action, personally and in collaboration with others, in response to the climate and ecological emergency.
4. The Caring for Creation group links with and is responsible to the Council through the Formation and Spirituality team.

Encouraging members and others

5. The Community also intends through the Caring for Creation group to prepare, review and circulate from time to time collections of suggestions encouraging members and others to consider how, on a personal basis, they might live simply and sustainably and, through their prayers, example and encouragement, might influence others to do likewise and so to help care for our common home. This is covered in Annex 2.

Virtual, in-person and hybrid gatherings

6. In recent years, and in particular since the Covid pandemic and associated lockdowns, it has been possible to hold virtual gatherings of the Community, mainly by Zoom calls. This has included the Easter triduum, the Summer Gathering, regional meetings, meetings of the Council, the Trustees and teams and groups, webinars and daily prayers in an online chapel and other meeting spaces. Virtual attendance has the advantages of increasing accessibility and reducing the environmental impact and cost of travelling. On the other hand, attendance in person enhances the quality of the experience and the sense of community. Hybrid gatherings are often possible, albeit at the expense of some inconvenience and loss of flexibility.

7. Where significant gatherings are held in person, the Community intends to facilitate hybrid attendance when it is reasonably practicable to do so, with a view to retaining the advantages of virtual attendance for at least some of those who wish to attend in that way.

Travel to in-person gatherings

8. With a view to reducing the carbon footprint of its in-person gatherings, the Community intends:
 - to encourage those attending in person to do so by public transport and to avoid flying;
 - where appropriate, to arrange lifts to the venue from train stations, bus stops etc and *vice versa* for those travelling by public transport; and
 - to encourage those travelling by car to share lifts.

Catering at in-person gatherings

9. To the extent that the Community can influence the catering at in-person events (which may be limited where external caterers are involved, for example at Worth Abbey or Cefn Lea), it intends to ensure or encourage:
 - a reduction of carbon footprint by including vegetarian and/or vegan options at all meals, and meat-free meals for all at some meals;
 - the use of Fair Trade and locally sourced products;
 - avoiding so far as reasonably practicable the use of disposable crockery and cutlery and other single use plastic items;
 - avoiding unnecessary waste by careful ordering and/or co-ordinated bringing and sharing and by encouraging participants to take away afterwards any unconsumed food and drink and other supplies; and
 - appropriate management and recycling of food and other waste,while taking into account any special dietary requirements of those attending.

Use of power and water at in-person gatherings

10. The Community intends to encourage those attending in-person gatherings to conserve power and water by:
 - avoiding excessive use of heating and air conditioning;
 - avoiding the unnecessary loss of warm or air conditioned by leaving doors and windows open more than is required for appropriate ventilation;
 - switching off lights and electrical appliances when they are not in use; and
 - not wasting water (and particularly hot water) by leaving taps running or over-filling kettles.

Use of paper

11. The Community intends to promote the responsible use of paper by;
 - using projection and limiting the use of hard copy service sheets, hand-outs, meeting papers etc at in-person gatherings (this may include making them available electronically for those who opt to view them on portable devices);
 - making Listen and other publications available electronically for those who opt to receive them in this way rather than in hard copy form;
 - where hard copy papers are used, considering the use of recycled and/or lighter-weight paper; and
 - recycling waste paper and cardboard (after shredding where appropriate for reasons of confidentiality, data protection etc).

Banking and investment arrangements

12. The Community currently has annual income and expenditure of about £70,000 and net assets (including reserves) of about £100,000. The Community's finances are relatively modest and straightforward and require access to banking and deposit services. The Community has not hitherto felt any need to make any other financial investments.
13. The Community intends that any bankers appointed to provide banking and deposit services to the Community should have an approach to environmental issues that is, as far as possible, compatible with the Community's ethos, charitable status and approach to environmental issues, without compromising the Community's legal obligations as a charity regarding its financial best interests.
14. The Community's bankers are currently CAF Bank Limited (CAF Bank). Eligible deposits with CAF Bank are protected up to a total of £85,000 by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. CAF Bank is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Charities Aid Foundation CAF), which is a registered charity. Most of CAF Bank's loans and advances to banks are to the Bank of England. Most of the debt securities held by it are issued by multilateral development banks for maturities of up to five years. Most of CAF Bank's loans and advances to customers are to charities. The environmental policy statement of intent of CAF and CAF Bank is available at [caf-environmental-policy.pdf \(cafonline.org\)](#) and these banking arrangements seem satisfactory.

Restrictions on campaigning and political activities

15. Having regard to:
 - (a) the nature of the Community as one for those who embrace Benedictine spirituality;
 - (b) the Community's inclusive ethos and its policy on Toleration and Mutual Respect, a copy of which is available on the Community's website; and
 - (c) the requirements of the Community's charitable status,

the Community does not engage, and does not want to be perceived as engaging, in campaigning or political activities.

16. However, as indicated above, the Community intends to make suggestions encouraging members and others to consider how, on a personal basis, they might live simply and sustainably and, through their prayers, example and encouragement, might influence others to do likewise and so to help care for our common home. It is the personal responsibility of those to whom any such suggestions are made to decide how they should respond.
17. The Community recognises that the extent to which individuals can have an impact on care for creation may be significantly enhanced if they not only live simply and sustainably but also engage in appropriate campaigning and political activities not only in the UK but also internationally. The Community has no wish to inhibit members and others from engaging in such activities provided that there is no suggestion that they are endorsed by or performed on behalf of the Community.

Other arrangements

18. The Community also intends:

- (a) to review from time to time (and at least every two years) the performance of the Community in relation to care for creation;
- (b) to comply with all relevant environmental legislation that applies to the Community;
- (c) where relevant, to integrate care for creation considerations into the Community's decision making processes;
- (d) to raise awareness of caring for creation issues among the Community's officers, employees and contractors and, where relevant to provide them with appropriate information and training; and
- (e) where relevant, to take caring for creation issues into consideration in the procurement of goods and services.

13 October 2023