



ecojudaism
OUR FAITH IN THE PLANET

Synagogue Environmental Policy - Example

Introduction

This template example is based on one that has been kindly shared by Linda Scott at Newcastle Reform Synagogue, and EcoJudaism thanks her and Newcastle Reform Synagogue for their generosity.

Please use this example as a starting point for your own communities. Each community is different both physically, in terms of its environmental priorities and its position on its environmental journey.

There is no right or wrong to your policy. It should reflect your current position, aims and objectives, and be a statement of commitment from all Synagogue stakeholders.

When you have completed yours, please send us your template to add to our bank of resources, as another example to help other communities.

1. Introduction and Aim

Newcastle Reform Synagogue (hereafter abbreviated to as 'NRS' in this policy) recognises that it has an ethical responsibility to protect the environment that goes beyond legal and statutory adherence. Whilst NRS has a strong cohort of members who are individually passionate and committed to living in an environmentally sustainable life - there has not been any formal governance or framework specifically dedicated to environmental issues. This first Environmental Policy (hereafter referred to as 'this Policy') has been written in response to the Section 1, Question 1 of the EcoSynagogue Environmental Audit. This Policy should be viewed as a 'working document' which will be continually reviewed - as the Environmental Impact Team (hereafter referred to as 'Impact Team') engages with the congregation more broadly. In this Policy we outline what is currently in place at NRS and what our objectives are for the future in order to become a more environmentally sustainable congregation.

2. Scope of Responsibility

This Policy applies to all aspects of Synagogue life including - trustee governance, regular and annual religious services such as Shabbat and festivals, Cheder, Adult Education Classes and socials events. In addition, this Policy also applies to our engagement with external agencies such as cleaning companies, catering and gardening on the occasions that we hire their services for NRS. The Impact Team and the Trustee Board are not only responsible for ensuring that this Policy is implemented, but also that our community members are encouraged and energised- which are two of the “First 5 E’s” set out by EcoJudaism.

3. Long Term (Continual) Objectives of this Policy

3.1 Management

- The executive committee and Impact Team considers environmental impacts within all of its decisions.
- Develop the Impact Team beyond its current core members- so that a greater positive impact can be achieved within NRS.

3.2 Prayer and Teaching

- Include prayer and teaching activities that promote environmental awareness.

3.3 Lifestyle

- Encourage community members to calculate their own carbon footprint and develop ways to reduce it.
- Raise awareness of vegetarian, vegan and low carbon footprint (sustainable) cooking/consumption within the congregation.
- Continue to donate clothing to local charities and explore the possibility of hosting further toy/plant/book swap events within NRS.
- Encourage more sustainable methods of transport within the community such as car-pooling, cycling and public transport.

3.4 Land, Buildings and Consumables

- Liaise and communicate with external cleaning agencies to ensure that less harmful cleaning products are used on-site at NRS.
- Investigate the potential viability of installing solar panels/photovoltaics or alternate sources of renewable energy for NRS.

- Encourage community members (children and adults) to develop a small area, in the garden outside the synagogue, for the growing of produce and herbs.

3.5 Community and Global Engagement

- Develop awareness of local and global environmental issues through effective engagement within the NRS congregation.
- Include progress updates from the Impact Team (in the newsletter) along with occasional sections that can inform the congregation about environmental issues- in order to demonstrate that sustainability is integral to Jewish life.
- Encourage NRS members to attend other Green Shabbat or EcoJudaism events within the Northern Communities collective.
- Investigate other religious communities (beyond Judaism) within the North East to share similar approaches/initiatives whilst strengthening interfaith commitment to environmental sustainability.

4. Targets (Priorities and Task Based)

We will review these targets on a 6-month basis.

4.1 Management

- Ensure that NRS are currently compliant at 40% or above with the EcoSynagogue Audit framework- resulting in NRS being eligible for the Bronze Award.
- Work towards a 60% compliance score with the EcoSynagogue Audit framework- resulting in NRS being eligible for the Silver Award.
- Impact Team to officially complete the EcoSynagogue Audit and submit for review.
- Calculate an estimate for the carbon footprint of our Synagogue (this calculation will be specific to the building only and not include congregation members).
- Investigate the viability of an Energy Performance Certificate to map the carbon output of NRS and identify areas for future improvement.

4.2 Prayer and Teaching

- Invite NRS and Guest Rabbis (or lay speakers where appropriate) to deliver sermons and teaching themed around environmental issues - so that awareness can be improved within the congregation.
- Have NRS host at least one Green Shabbat and event promoting EcoJudaism (see 3.5)

4.3 Lifestyle

- Communicate when NRS has calculated its own carbon footprint.

- Deliver an accessible session on teaching the congregation members how to calculate their own carbon footprint.
- Update the NRS website to include public transport information for new and existing members.

4.4 Land, Buildings and Consumables

- Phase out all single use plastic within NRS and replace this with materials that can be reused multiple times.
- Review the cleaning products for the synagogue and replace with less harmful chemicals.
- Investigate the insulation within the roof void in synagogue and assess where this can be upgraded to current standard.
- Review the current composting setup for grass and garden waste.

4.5 Community and Global Engagement

- Invite members of other Northern Community congregations to a Green Shabbat or EcoJudaism event at NRS.
- Approach other religious communities within Newcastle to share existing environmental initiatives.

Monitoring and Auditing

Progress against the above objectives and targets will be monitored by the Impact Team through monthly Zoom meetings. The Impact Team will report directly to the NRS Council (Trustee Board). New objectives/targets and any changes to existing objectives/targets will be discussed by the Impact Team then proposed to NRS Council for approval.

Communication

NRS are committed to ethical transparency with all operations. This Policy will be made available upon request- in both digital and written format- to NRS members and the general public. If any person wishes to discuss our progress against the Impact Team objectives, or make proposals for new objectives, they should be directed to telephone 07513945981 or email nrs.ecosynagogue@gmail.com

This policy is also available on our website in the members page at <https://www.newcastlereformsynagogue.co.uk/>

Signed _____