



**ecojudaism**  
OUR FAITH IN THE PLANET

## Synagogue Environmental Policy – Example

### Introduction

This template example is based on one that has been kindly shared by Donna Cohen at Barnet United Synagogue, and EcoJudaism thanks her and Barnet United 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.

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### 1. Introduction and Aim

In this document Barnet United Synagogue (*referred to as Barnet Shul*) defines its ethical and social responsibility to protect the environment. It recognises legal and statutory obligations and aims to do more than the minimum required and to lead from the front by encouraging members to adopt similar practices in their home and work environments.

Barnet Shul, a community which continues to grow, has members of all ages, opinions and attitudes towards environmental citizenship. Some are passionate and committed to living an environmentally sustainable life, whilst others recognise a need for change but welcome more information to understand any changes. A very small minority of people are less enthusiastic to commit towards making a change. We are therefore targeting our policies to encourage broad participation to ensure long term sustainable changes across all our operations.

**This Policy:**

- answers Section 1, Question 1 of the EcoJudaism Environmental Audit.
- is based around the EcoJudaism Environmental Audit
  - Section 1 Management
  - Section 2 Prayer & Teaching
  - Section 3 Lifestyle
  - Section 4 Land Buildings and Consumables
  - Section 5 Community and Global Engagement
- is a 'working document' for continual review by those initiating changes
- can be used when engaging with the community on environmental matters
- outlines existing shul initiatives and future projects to drive environmental sustainability
- applies to all aspects of Barnet Shul life including - trustee governance, regular and annual religious services such as Shabbat and Festivals, Bnei Mitzvah Programme, Youth Work, Adult Education and Social Events.
- applies to our engagement with external agencies such as cleaning and catering companies on the occasions when we hire their services.
- is implemented by The Eco Team and the Council to ensure that our community members are encouraged and energised to participate in our environmental journey.

**2. Long Term Objectives****Section 1 – Management**

The Shul Council, premises and environmental teams consider environmental impacts within their decision making. They also liaise with other affected parties such as the kiddush and events teams to discuss ways in which we can manage catering in a more sustainable way.

Building on the success of past projects to galvanise future initiatives. To date activities have included:

- Banning the use of single use plastic tablecloths and instituting a member rota to wash fabric reusable cloths instead
- Collecting surplus lightly worn clothing for those affected by the war in Ukraine; donating 300 pairs of shoes to GIFT
- Planting shrubs in our synagogue forecourt to enhance the area and attract pollinating insects
- Replacing single use plastic with Vegware
- Reducing the number of paper serviettes and plates used
- Replacing plastic-bottled fizzy drinks with glass bottle cordials and jugs of water to reduce plastic and waste
- Introducing an effective and robust recycling system
- Hiring a more suitable and effective waste management contractor

- Hiring a professional composting contractor
- Completing the 360 Carbon Footprint Audit
- Optimizing the use of our freezers to reduce food waste
- Producing more e-newsletters to reduce paper distributed to members
- Lobbying for changes in carrying cases for Lulavim – and succeeding
- Changing our tissues to a more sustainable brand

## Section 2 - Prayer and Teaching

Include prayer and teaching activities that promote environmental awareness, reminding members of their Jewish religious obligations and teachings to ensure it is regarded as essential as part of a responsible Jewish life.

We support Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis KBE's aspiration to ensure that environmental sustainability is a crucially important matter for this generation.

In Bereshit 2:15 it states "Hashem took the man and He placed him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to take care of it" We recognise our mandate from Hashem to take responsibility to cherish and safeguard our planet.

We recognise that climate change presents a profound threat to humanity and we must all play our part in tackling it with effective action. Such action supports Torah teachings and practical guidance within the Talmud.

Conscious action applied appropriately can benefit society as a whole and need not be seen as a challenge to religious observance. We are delighted that the Rabbi mentions the environment increasingly in his sermons

## Section 3 – Lifestyle

Encourage members of the community to consider their own carbon footprint and how to minimise it.

Promote sustainable cooking/consumption. An example is the successful Barnet "Love Your leftovers" cookbook produced entirely by members of the Barnet Shul

Donate lightly used clothing and linens to local charities. Regularly host GIFT food drops and other initiatives in the Shul. Consider a children's clothes swap as an event in the Shul

It is expected that members will walk to Shul on Shabbat and High Holydays

Promote more use of bicycles and car sharing for weekday events. Also encourage more walking groups and annual matza rambles.

## Section 4 - Land, Buildings & Consumables

Liaise and communicate with caretakers to ensure that less harmful cleaning products are used on-site.

Investigate the potential viability of installing sources of renewable energy and energy use reduction

Encourage community members (children and adults) to develop a small area, in the forecourt outside the synagogue, with the introduction of more plants where possible.

Update carbon 360 footprint calculation every 6 months

## Section 5 - Community and Global Engagement

Develop awareness of local and global environmental issues through effective engagement within the shul community

Include progress updates (in Ma Chadash, ShabbatON, and social media) to inform the community about environmental issues to demonstrate that sustainability is core to a religious Jewish life.

Encourage shul members to attend other green educational events.

Share best practices with other communities.

Barnet Shul is also happy to support “Dorot”, an ambitious new United Synagogue environmental initiative.

This initiative was launched by the Office of the Chief Rabbi and the United Synagogue, a comprehensive strategy to reduce our environmental impact. Dorot comprises seven projects which started to be rolled out during 2022 and 2023 and we are actively supporting five of these:

- The flagship project to plant a [tree for each US member](#) to sequester CO2 from the air as part of the Queen’s Jubilee Celebration Green Canopy project. Barnet Shul members actively supported this campaign and planted trees as part of this initiative. Barnet has also worked as a key participant in the Barnet Tiny Forest project, planting and maintaining 600 trees
- Another headline project is the phasing out of disposables from United Synagogue nurseries, shuls and offices, reducing the amount of plastic sent abroad by the UK where it is often dumped or burned. Barnet Shul was ahead of the game and was already well advanced in taking measures to activate this prior to Dorot. Single use plastics/Tetrapaks were banned in Barnet Shul in November 2022. Barnet Shul was chosen as the flagship US shul to host The Green Voices Panel in 2022

- Unused United Synagogue land is being rewilded to encourage biodiversity and provide a home for wildlife. Barnet Shul is working with US Heritage to see how we can create green areas at Marlow Road Cemetery
- In line with Dorot Policy Smart energy solutions will be introduced at Barnet shul, following an energy audit. 'Smart' devices will help measure, monitor and reduce energy consumption.
- We are holding conversations about responsible food consumption

### 3. Barnet Shul Targets (Priorities & Tasks) to review twice year.

Maintain compliance at 40% or above within the EcoJudaism Bronze award Audit framework until the Silver award is achieved.
Achieve and maintain 60% compliance within the EcoJudaism Silver award Audit framework
The Eco Team to officially submit the EcoJudaism Audit form for review.
Review 360 Carbon Footprint Audit
Investigate the viability of arranging for a Barnet Shul Energy Performance Certificate to map CO2 output and identify opportunities for improvement.  Encourage members of different generations to join the Eco Team  Liaise with Youth Leaders to promote sustainability in potential workshops and events
<b>Prayer and Teaching</b>
Invite members, Rabbis and other suitable speakers to deliver Sermons and teaching themed around environmental issues – to enhance awareness within the community
Host at least one annual Eco Shabbat, Tu B'shvat seder or event promoting EcoJudaism and Dorot.  The Rabbinic couple to extend education regarding sustainability beyond general communal events into smaller workshops with Bnei Mitzvah groups and in collaboration with our Youth Leaders
<b>Lifestyle</b>
Communicate the Shul's own carbon footprint calculation when conducted
Demonstrate to community members how they can calculate their own personal CO2 footprint.

Update the shul website to include public transport information for new and existing members to use to attend events which are not held on Shabbat and Yom Tov.

Promote the message of Reduce, Reuse, Re-fill, Recycle within the community

Promote the LOAF ethos by encouraging members to consume goods at home that are Locally grown, Organic, Animal Friendly and Fairtrade

Explore the possibility of an Eco Tips section in the ShabbatOn/Ma Chadash

### Land, Buildings & Consumables

Rigorously maintain the plastics ban within Barnet Shul and replace this with either materials which can be reused multiple times or Vegware items such as plates, bowls, cups and kiddush shots.

Bar/Bat Mitvah bookings and other kiddushim – the shul office to include a section in the booking form that drinks in plastic bottles, cans or Tetrapaks are not served at kiddushim. It is expected that hirers will respect our own decisions as well as US guidelines. We anticipate that the government's 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 plastics ban will be extended beyond restaurants and other catering establishments in the near future and feel confident we are already prepared.

Review cleaning products used and replace with less harmful chemicals.

Investigate additional insulation to the building and assess where this can be optimised.

Monitor the current waste management provision for maximum efficiency

Continue the use of recycled paper, tissues and refillable liquid soap containers. Research recycled serviettes and paper towels. Also encourage the community to use less.

Consider the purchase of a water butt to be used to collect rainwater to water plants during increasingly dry summers.

In the event of any building projects, insist on a BREEAM or similar assessment to ensure best practice in building design, construction and operation

### Section 5 - Community and Global Engagement

Invite MPs/dignitaries and members of other communities/faiths to Eco Shabbat, EcoJudaism or Dorot events. Use opportunities such as Tu B'shvat, Shavuot, and Succot to remind others of the beauty of the natural world

Work with US to collaborate with both Dorot and EcoJudaism so that our common message may be communicated from a shared platform

Approach other local faith communities/leaders to share existing and potential environmental initiatives.

## Monitoring and Auditing

The Eco Team

- will monitor progress against the above objectives and targets through bi-monthly hybrid meetings.
- reports directly to the Barnet Shul Council.
- discusses new objectives/targets and any changes to existing objectives/targets and then proposes them to Barnet Shul Council for approval and implementation.

## Communication

Barnet Shul is committed to ethical transparency with all its operations. This Policy is available on our website <https://www.barnetshul.com/> for our members and the general public. Anyone wishing to discuss progress against our objectives, or proposing new objectives, are encouraged to contact [donna.cohen@barnetshul.org](mailto:donna.cohen@barnetshul.org)

<b><u>Signed</u></b>	<b>Donna Cohen / Natalie Shaw</b>	<b>Synagogue Eco Team</b>
	<b>Simon Hayes</b>	<b>Chairman</b>
	<b>Russel Rich</b>	<b>Financial Representative</b>
	<b>Samuel Landau</b>	<b>Rabbi</b>
	<b>Shoshana Landau</b>	<b>Maayan</b>