

Newcastle Reform Synagogue (NRS)

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NRS ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Approved 2025-10-31, replacing version approved 2022-01-24

Introduction and Aim

Newcastle Reform Synagogue (hereafter abbreviated to as 'NRS' in this policy) recognises that as Jews, we have a religious and moral responsibility to respond to the climate and biodiversity crisis. We are commanded to 'Choose life': Life for ourselves and the countless other species on earth; life for this generation and the generations to come.

NRS has a strong cohort of members who are individually passionate and committed to living in an environmentally sustainable life. This Environmental Policy (hereafter referred to as 'this Policy') is intended to give leadership and direction to our activities and enable us to respond to the EcoJudaism Sustainability Action Plan.

Our first Environmental Policy was created in 2021 and contributed to our achievement of the EcoSynagogues (as it was then) Silver Award. This revised Policy is also intended as a 'working document' which will be regularly reviewed, as the Environmental Impact Team (hereafter referred to as 'Impact Team') engages with the congregation more broadly. In this Policy we record what has been achieved at NRS and what our objectives are for the future.

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 social events. In addition, this Policy 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 - enabling us to meet the "First 5 E's" of the EcoJudaism Sustainability Action Plan (SAP).

Long Term (Continual) Objectives of this Policy

1. Management

- The executive committee and Impact Team considers environmental impacts within all of its decisions.
- Continue to develop the Impact Team to represent the diversity of NRS and encourage younger members to participate.
- Secure support from visiting Rabbis and other synagogue leaders.

2. Prayer and Teaching

- Include prayer and teaching activities that promote environmental awareness.

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 carpooling, cycling and public transport.

4. Land, Buildings and Consumables

- Liaise and communicate with external agencies as appropriate to ensure that environmentally friendly products and methods are used on-site at NRS.
- Continue to develop the synagogue gardens and outdoor areas, for growing produce and promoting biodiversity.

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 EcoSynagogue 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.

Targets (Priorities and Task Based)

The Impact Team will propose an annual plan to NRS Council for approval. The plan will consider work under the headings listed in section 3 above and any others deemed relevant for that year. (See Appendix 1 for current Annual Plan)

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 info@newcastlereformsynagogue.co.uk

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

APPENDIX 1

ANNUAL PLAN - Priorities and Targets for 2025-26 / 5786

The Impact Team will meet quarterly to review our progress against these targets.

A. Management

- Work towards an 80% compliance score with the EcoJudaism SAP - resulting in NRS being eligible for the Gold Award.
- Impact Team to complete the SAP and submit for review.
- Continue to monitor the carbon footprint of NRS and take actions to further reduce it. Introduce a regular EcoCorner in the NRS newsletter. Members to contribute photos, findings and ideas.

B. 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.
- Incorporate an environmental theme to festivals and Shabbat services, including participating in EcoShabbat.

C. Lifestyle

- Introduce a regular EcoJudaism section in the NRS Newsletter, where members can share ideas and findings relating to preserving resources, dietary choices and reducing emissions.

D. Land, Buildings and Consumables

- Replace existing lightbulbs with LEDs as required.
- Continue to monitor the boiler and replace parts as long as they are available.
- Continue to monitor bicycle use and ensure adequate cycle parking is available.
- Liaise with NRS Guild and outside agency to address eco-friendly cleaning materials.

E. 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 along with news and ideas to inform the congregation about environmental issues- in order to demonstrate that sustainability is integral to Jewish life.
- Arrange an Eco-event bi-monthly after the Kullanu service.
- Invite external speakers on environmental issues.
- Continue to support environmental charities and organisations.
- Approach other religious communities within Newcastle to share existing environmental initiatives.
- Invite local leaders to discuss environmental issues.
- Encourage members to share environmental projects they are engaged in.

F. Biodiversity

- Continue to review activities in the outdoor areas, to promote biodiversity and environmental sustainability.
- Raise awareness of nature conservation projects in Israel.