

# The Connection Between Faith and Climate Action



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# Introduction



Brent Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and committed to do all reasonable in its gift to aim for carbon neutrality by 2030 and to make Brent one of the greenest, most biodiverse and climate resilient boroughs in London, with our residents better connected to nature.

Brent adopted a Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy in 2021 which is underpinned by rolling delivery plans which are updated every two years.

Brent cannot solve this issue alone and has therefore been working together with all its stakeholders, including voluntary and community groups, and faith leads, to raise awareness of the climate emergency, to support the embedding of sustainable behaviours and to tackle climate inequality.

Brent coproduces projects and events, provides resources and works with community representatives to ensure that messaging and delivery is faith and culturally appropriate.



# The Role of Faith



The vast majority of the world's population follow a faith; in fact, 85% identify with a religious group (World Population Review, 2024). In the London Borough of Brent, 80% of residents follow a faith; that is significantly higher than the London average which is 71%.

There is often a historic barrier to understanding, engaging and including faith at an institutional level because of the secular outlook of many institutions. The

Bloom Review found that **"the terms 'faith', 'belief', 'religion', and other basic tenets and principles of the range of faiths and beliefs in the UK are often poorly understood in government and public services, including the Civil Service, the police, the National Health Service (NHS) and in education."**<sup>1</sup>

Failure to understand and engage with faith communities results in an inability to deliver

services that meet the needs of the service users because faith is often integral to the access of these services. **"For many people, religion, faith and belief inform what they do and how they interact with their communities, inspiring them to engage in both the civil and civic activities which build social capital and strengthen the ties that bind our country together."**<sup>2</sup>

Faith and Climate Change Working with faith communities and trying to change behaviours around climate change is extremely relevant because of how faiths view the moral and ethical importance of protecting the planet, and how communities identify themselves and engage.

Where faith is central to people's lives, it plays a big role in their cultural practices, but also faith plays an important role in community needs, and the support they need from their leaders and councils.

Faith settings do not only provide a place for worship and religious rituals, but they act as community centres, support networks and crisis care. They play a huge role in bringing people together from within their direct community as well as the wider community. **"For many people in the UK, their place of worship is their 'marketplace' – the place they go to for pastoral support, for spiritual nourishment and for practical guidance. If we are to truly improve equality of opportunity across our communities, we must find the spaces where those messages will be heard. For many, this is through their faith leaders and their places of worship. Ensuring our**



**understanding of the role of faith in society remains current and improving the government's overall faith literacy are crucial steps to successfully delivering the levelling up agenda."**<sup>3</sup>

The approach to working with faith communities must be a holistic one and one embedded in understanding and respect. Faith leaders are also not just those in formal settings such as Imams, Reverends and Rabbis, but also those who lead supplementary schools, youth groups and other community organisations with a faith ethos.

Faith leaders are trusted voices and embedded within their community, and they can play a supportive role in delivering messages helping councils reach those who are often unheard or neglected.

The influence and impact of faith communities cannot be underestimated, and faith leaders need to be included in any engagement and communications on key topics including climate change.

1 Bloom Review, Does government 'do God?' An independent review into how government engages with faith; p.11

2 Bloom Review Does government 'do God?' An independent review into how government engages with faith, p.9

3 Bloom Review Does government 'do God?' An independent review into how government engages with faith; p.9





# Brent Council: Faith Climate Action Group



Brent Council alongside the Brent Multifaith Forum and its sub-group, the Brent Faith Climate Action Group, has launched several successful projects to engage faith communities on the ground in regards to climate action.

The Faith Climate Action Group is a group of faith leaders across Brent who are passionate about taking climate action. They work closely with their congregations and the wider

community to reduce carbon emissions and show kindness and compassion to the planet.

Faith communities see the care and protection of the environment and their practice of faith as inseparable. Climate action is at the core of all faith teachings and moral principles; hence we believe that working closely with faith communities to tackle the climate emergency is essential.

Using the appropriate language, terminology and

faith narratives can help achieve wider reach and make lasting behaviour change through individual actions and responsibility.

Faith plays an important role in communities and brings people together. Therefore, we need to harness the power and commitment to the environment of faith communities and bring them into the conversation.

We also need to tackle climate inequality and injustice, as well

as increase representation of faith communities on this key issue, so that followers of faiths can see how central climate action is to their faith beliefs.

We launched the Faith Climate Action Plan at the Wembley Sephardi Synagogue in July 2023 to support faith centres in their climate action journey.

Other key initiatives to date include:

- Climate Change and My Religion Exhibition
- Faith Leaders Roundtable Discussion on Engaging Faith Communities on the Climate agenda
- From Brent to Bowl community cookbook
- Hosting Eco Peace Delegation visit
- Faces of Climate Change exhibition and film
- Thought leadership on faith and climate action
- Kiln Theatre Climate Takeover Event and Panel Discussion on Communities and Climate Action
- Co-production of climate action projects, including repairs cafes, faith leaders cycle rides, education workshops



- LSE and Brent Council Symposium: The Connection Between Faith and Climate Action
- Revive and Ride, repurposed bike scheme for faith and community centres
- Community greening days in faith centres
- No Faith in Plastic campaign
- Roots of Brent: Youth Film Project





# Case Studies:

## LSE and Brent Council

### Symposium: The Connection Between Faith and Climate Action



A partnership was formed with London School of Economics Religion and Global Society research unit (LSE RGS) in 2024 to bring awareness around policy and research into faith and climate action alongside grassroots community action work. The aim was to bring councils, climate engagement specialists, policy officers and faith communities into a room to share best practice and to

learn from each other. Brent Council and the LSE RGS subsequently co-hosted a Symposium on 'The Connection Between Faith and Climate Action' on 22 October 2024 at Brent Civic Centre. LSE RGS presented their policy and research work on faith and climate change – and the importance of working with faith communities to bring about positive behaviour

change. Brent Council showcased its grassroots work with faith communities in the borough. This was followed by two workshops:

**Workshop 1:** How can councils and public sector organisations employ faith inclusive policies to reach and involve faith communities on important matters such as tackling climate inequality?

**Workshop 2:** How do we begin to meaningfully engage faith communities on climate action?

**Symposium Workshop Summary**  
The key themes that emerged from discussions during the workshops are set out below:

- Promoting Faith Literacy in the Public Sector**  
Investing in faith literacy training to better engage with diverse faith communities, fostering inclusive environments and improving service effectiveness.
- Integrating Faith Inclusion into DEI Strategies**  
Engaging faith communities in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) strategies, ensuring that faith-sensitive initiatives are included.
- Involving Faith Leaders in Co-Producing Service Development**  
Actively engaging faith leaders in the co-production of services for communities to reflect the diverse needs and values of faith communities.
- Incorporating Faith Communities in Climate Adaptation Strategies**  
Involving faith communities and leaders

in the development and implementation of climate adaptation strategies.

- Engaging with Both Secular and Faith Spaces**  
Prioritising outreach to both secular and faith spaces, ensuring inclusive engagement in climate and DEI efforts.
- Aligning DEI Strategies with Climate Inequality and Inclusion**  
Addressing the intersection of faith, race, social justice, and climate inequality in DEI strategies.
- Implementing Faith Monitoring for Inclusion**  
Monitoring the participation of faith communities in public services.
- Addressing the Needs of Communities Affected by Global Conflicts and Displacement**  
Developing strategies and training to support conflict-affected faith communities to participate in local climate action.

Brent Council is continuing its partnership with LSE RGS to work with faith and policy leaders and equip them to engage with communities of faith in tackling the climate emergency. See the full report

on our website<sup>1</sup> from the workshop.

<sup>1</sup> LSE and Brent Workshop Summary: <https://tinyurl.com/3r9psvax>



# Faith Climate Action Plan



The Brent Council Faith Climate Action Plan was designed to support faith communities at a local level to embrace sustainable behaviours, and was launched at the Wembley Sephardi Synagogue in July 2023.

This Faith Climate Action Plan was produced as a resource for places of worship in the London borough of Brent to use and help promote greener behaviours and sustainable ways of living.

This plan focuses on key areas where faith organisations and

places of worship can have a long-term environmental impact at a local level in Brent, as well as save money, for example on energy bills, and promote a healthier lifestyle for their congregations.

The Faith Climate Action Plan supports faith centres to evaluate their behaviours and performance in the following areas:

- Buildings and energy
- Food and catering
- Education and young people

- Wisdom and faith teachings
- Community action
- Guides and resources
- Reducing waste
- Sustainable travel

The Faith Climate Action Plan is the work of Brent Council in partnership with Brent's Faith Climate Action Group, who are a group of faith leaders passionate about taking climate action.

They work closely with their congregations and the wider community to reduce carbon emissions and show kindness and compassion to the planet.

Dr Mario Phillip, the previous Chair of the Faith Climate Action Group in Brent said: "The Faith Climate Action Plan is an important tool in the hand of faith communities in helping them to align their belief and practice with climate and environment goals. As faith communities see our care and protection of the environment and our practice of faith as inseparable; to omit one invariably impacts the other.

"We also need to tackle climate inequality and injustice, as well as increase representation of faith communities on this key issue, so that followers of faiths can see how central climate action is to their faith beliefs."

Download the Faith Climate Action Plan at <https://tinyurl.com/mryzy82e>



**"Faith plays an important role in communities and brings people together. Faith centres and places of worship are usually hubs of the community. Therefore, we need to harness the power and commitment to the environment of faith communities and bring them into the conversation."**

Dr Mario Phillip, the previous Chair of the Faith Climate Action Group in Brent



# Climate Change and My Religion Exhibition

Climate Change and My Religion is a unique photo exhibition that we launched for the Brent Climate Festival (in November 2022) which explores the ways in which faith informs our thinking about and motivation to act on climate change.

We brought together a group of 11 religious leaders from Brent's mosques, churches, synagogues and temples. The initial contact was made through the Brent Multi-Faith Forum; a group that is representative of the faith groups in Brent.

Brent Multi-Faith Forum sent a call out to their wide network. We had an amazing response rate and a lot of interest to be involved in a project for climate change.

We worked with local photographer Don Jordan, who took the photos in black and white to have maximum impact. They were displayed in the Atrium of the Civic Centre – a place that has hundreds of visitors a day.

As well as the photographs, the leaders were encouraged to share their perspectives on the climate emergency which would be used as a quote in the exhibition. They all shared

a belief that looking after the planet is central to their faith. As part of the project, they also pledged to take specific steps to reduce their environmental impact.

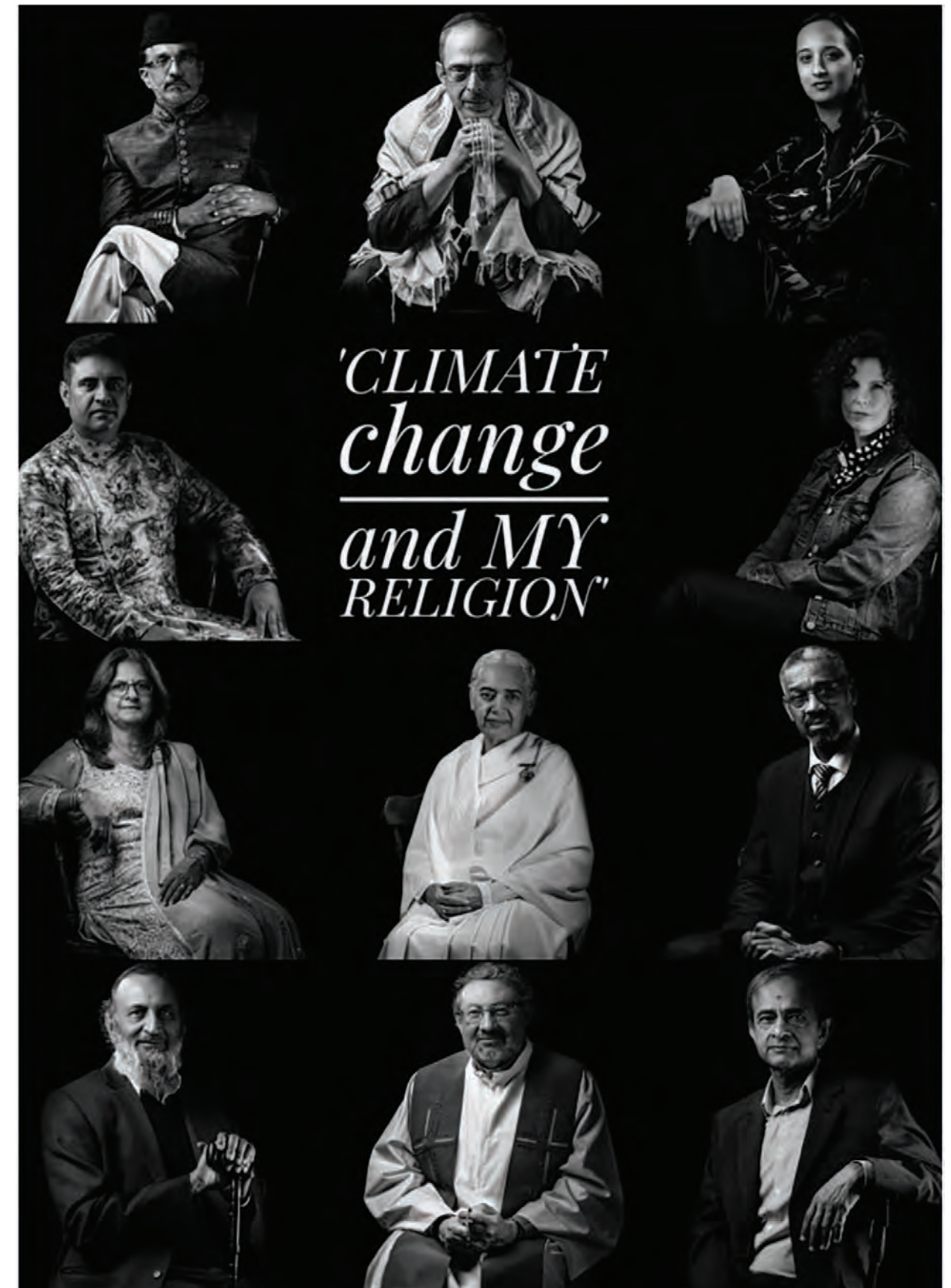
The aim was to encourage the wider community to be inspired by their faith leaders, and to also take pledges to make small or big changes for the planet. Some of the faith leaders who took part in the exhibition have expressed their views on its success:

- Kirit Wadia, Neasden Temple: **"The exhibition gave the faith community an opportunity to express its commitment to the Climate issue. Faith communities are ideally placed to bring about awareness and can encourage their members to take action, to reduce their emissions by making change in their lifestyle."**
- Narinder Nathan, Brent Sikh Centre: **"I was very honoured to be part of the Climate Change and My Religion Exhibition. This initiative by Brent brought the topic to the community and to make**

**them aware of this very important issue. This was a wonderful opportunity for all faiths to get together and to make pledges on behalf of our communities."**

We wanted to use the exhibition as a conversation starter on collective importance of climate change with faith communities. The portraits have since been touring different religious venues across Brent.

To find out more on these projects, please visit [www.brent.gov.uk/climateemergency](http://www.brent.gov.uk/climateemergency)





# Insights from Faith Leaders on Climate Action

As part of our ongoing efforts to highlight the intersection of faith and climate action, a short video was showcased at the Brent Council and LSE Symposium featuring local and national faith leaders. In this video, these leaders spoke passionately about their work within their communities and explained why climate action is integral to their faith beliefs and values. Their insights emphasised how environmental stewardship is deeply rooted in many religious traditions, urging the need to recognise the moral responsibility to care for the planet and its future. Through this video, the aim was to foster a greater understanding of the vital role that faith communities play in the global conversation on climate change, and inspire action that aligns with both spiritual principles and environmental sustainability.

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both spiritual principles and environmental sustainability.



**Rabbi Dr Frank Dabba Smith**  
Co-Chair of the Brent Multi Faith Forum and International Advisory Committee of Eco Peace Middle East

"It is a privilege and an honour to work closely with Brent with the work concerning the connections with faith and climate. With respect to Eco Peace Middle East, even now with the horrible situation and suffering in the Middle East we still seek to bring together as equals Jordanians, Palestinians and Israelis who are committed to environmental peace making. And the even larger concerns of global warming, climate change in the Middle East which critically affects water and pollution."



**Amandeep Kaur**  
Eco Sikh  
"I am here to talk to you a little bit about Sikh beliefs,

many of them are centred around the connection between all people; interconnectedness of all living things and not just people. The oneness that Guru Nanak Devji, our first Guru talks about is what unites everybody and everything together – all of God's creation. Guru Nanak Devji also says "Air is our Guru, Water is our father, and Earth is our Mother"" We must respect nature as it is as much a part of us as we are a part of it, and any event that talks about adaptation, resilience and preparedness for all communities to make sure it is inclusive and a just transition is really important."





**James Holland**  
Coordinator of  
Westminster Interfaith at the  
Roman Catholic Diocese  
of Westminster

"Climate action is important in the catholic faith. For this let us start with one of the leading voices on ecological

action, the late Pope Francis. Some of you might be aware that Popes take a name when they are elected. Cardinal Begoglio chose Francis after St. Francis that great saint who wrote the Canticle of the Sun, a prayer of praise to God who we reach through 'Brother Wind' and 'Sister Water'. We believe that God the Father, created the earth and that we are a part of his glorious creation. We believe that all of creation contains the mark of the Creator and therefore by respecting creations, we are respecting God the Creator. In 'Laudato Si' Pope Francis' encyclical, his letter on the

care of our common home, he makes an important link between the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

In Section 49, he writes that we have to realise that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach. It must integrate questions of justice and debates on the environment so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. And for me this provides a useful perspective that working for a sustainable future in our Diocese also creates a sustainable future for those who are across the world most acutely suffering the effects of climate change."



**Kamran Shahzad**  
Bahu Trust

"As a Muslim, I believe that the religion of Islam is inherently environmental because it emphasises stewardship on earth and the promotion of respect for all living beings. The Holy Qur'an encourages sustainable practices, conservation, and the gratitude or what we call

'shukr' for nature's resources. Islamic teachings advocate for a balance urging followers to protect the environment as a sacred trust from God for future generations. That is why the Bahu Trust is actualising our faith teachings into practical actions. We have developed and delivered Imam training on climate action. We have created community friendly faith inspired educational resources on climate change. We have added an Islam and the environment module into our madrasa curriculum. We have various plastic free campaigns, we have community clean-ups. In fact, 20 of our 22 mosques around the country have solar panel generating

clean green energy. The Bahu Trust also has Observer Status and engages with the United Nations on climate change issues with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNCC), the United Nations Environment programme and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, taking part in the various global motions."



**Shanon Shah**  
Faith for the Climate

"Faith for the Climate exists to encourage, inspire and equip faith communities by coming together to realise the important role we can play in bringing about a just and sustainable society,

where people communities and ecosystems can flourish and where wellbeing is not sacrificed for profit. We do this by operating as a network that provides the space for people of all faiths and beliefs to come together, learn from one another and support and encourage one another through regular activities such as our network webinars, and our faiths for climate justice workshops, and we also organise special film screenings, photo and art exhibitions, even musical performances and family friendly picnics. Our network also consists of faith-based

organisations that have the resources and know-how to design and deliver advocacy campaigns such as Christian Aid, CAFOD, Islamic Relief UK, Quakers in Britain and Soka Gakkai UK. We therefore convene interfaith climate justice advocacy subgroup that conduct campaigns and advocacy work to influence politicians on our priority issues. We also support faith groups especially minority or smaller communities to take action on these priority areas."



**Sister Jayanti**  
Brahma Kumaris

"Greetings to all my sisters and my brothers. I belong to the Brahma Kumaris which is part of the Adi Sanatan Dharma, the original religion of Bharat, of India. Within our teachings, our understanding is that climate change has happened for two reasons; the violence that we have within

ourselves and the violence that we inflicted on nature, and you see the result and the outcome of that. Secondly also the chaos in our minds and so the disturbance that's being caused to nature and the environment and the break down. We don't always appreciate our intentions, our thoughts, our feelings create vibrations that impact everything around us. They impact not only our actions, but they also impact nature and the environment and even all forms of animal life. And so, the remedy is, that we now have to bring about change within ourselves, and when our consciousness is just simply restricted to the physical consciousness then

there is greed and ego and attachment and anger. When we change our consciousness to our spirituality, we are in touch with our inner core values of a human being, peace and love and truth and joy and purity. And as we change, our vibrations change and so we are able to bring order back and harmony back into the world around us, and through that also of course the transformation in nature so that nature is then restored to its original state of peace and purity."



# Key Faith and Climate Organisations:

## Ashden

Ashden boosts climate innovation in the UK and Global South. Our support brings clean energy to villages and refugee camps, and fixes up cold and draughty homes. We make schools more sustainable, and help communities protect and restore the nature around them. We shine a spotlight on innovators, and connect them with new partners. We work with funders and policymakers to influence, inspire and raise ambition.

Ashden supports green jobs, better health and fairer societies. For further information visit the Ashden website <https://ashden.org>

## Eco Church

Eco Church is A Rocha UK's award scheme for churches in England and Wales who want to demonstrate that the gospel is good news for God's earth. Their website is <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk>

## Eco Islam

Eco Islam/IFEES is about protecting the planet for future generations using Islamic teachings. You can get

more information at [www.ifees.org.uk](http://www.ifees.org.uk)

## EcoJudaism

Eco Judaism promotes the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment across the Jewish Community in accordance with the principles of the Jewish faith. Their website is <https://ecojudaism.org.uk>

## Eco Sikh

Eco Sikh is a response from the Sikh community to the threats of climate change and the deterioration of the natural environment

## Faith and Belief Forum

The Faith and Belief Forum work towards a connected and supportive society across schools, universities, and communities.

They work towards a world where people of different faiths, beliefs and cultures have strong, meaningful and lasting relations.

They build good relations between people of all faiths and beliefs. They believe in a future that belongs to everyone, a future free from

hate. Visit their website <https://faithbeliefforum.org>

## Faith for the Climate

Faith for the Climate exists to encourage, inspire and equip faith communities in their work on the crisis of climate change – the biggest and most urgent challenge facing humanity. Visit their website <https://faithfortheclimate.org.uk>

## Hindu Climate Action

Hindu Climate Action work towards a shift in consciousness towards a greener and more compassionate future. More information can be found at [www.hinduclimateaction.org](http://www.hinduclimateaction.org)

## Sustainably Muslim

Sustainably Muslim aims to inspire and empower Muslims to serve the environment and their community through education and social action.

# Conclusion



Looking after the planet is a matter of moral and ethical importance to faith communities and is deeply connected with faith teachings and values.

Working closely with faith communities to tackle the climate emergency is essential. This also includes engaging in an inclusive and respectful way, using the appropriate language, terminology and faith narratives as these can help achieve wider reach and make lasting behaviour change through individual actions and responsibility.

Faith leaders are trusted voices and embedded within

their community. Faith networks have big reach and influence in their communities, and working in partnership with them on this core issue for us all is a significant step on the journey towards net zero.

There are historical barriers to faith-centred approaches within secular institutions, and this lack of voice and inclusion can have detrimental impacts, as those affected the most by climate change are more at risk, unable to influence change and raise awareness of their needs. This renders them even more vulnerable from the worsening effects of climate change.

There is an urgent need to tackle climate inequality and increase representation, and advocate for inclusive policies, faith literacy and understanding. Faith communities are multi-ethnic and multi-racial. They have similar needs based on faith values, and councils and public sector can be more inclusive if they understand their needs better.

Representation and policy inclusion matter, because if communities do not see themselves represented within the climate agenda, they will feel like there is no place for them.



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Does government 'do God?' An independent review into how government engages with faith.

<https://tinyurl.com/mrxzjskd>

## KEEPING THE FAITH

APPG\_CovidReport\_Full\_V4.pdf

