

Bishop blesses compost toilet

20th Jul 2009

NEWS from Shrinking the Footprint
(The Church of England's National Environmental Campaign)

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Rural churches with no running water are improving their facilities with the installation of cost-effective compost toilets. The latest environmentally friendly toilet, installed in an isolated church in Devon, has been blessed by the Bishop of Crediton, the Rt Revd Bob Evens.

The twin 'treebog' was constructed at Escot Church in East Devon (Exeter Diocese) after church members and vicar the Revd Cate Edmonds agreed it was the answer to the problem of hosting special events at a church that stands in the middle of a field. The previous alternatives had been importing costly porta-loos or 'inviting' people to take a chance behind a tree. The cost of connecting the church to the main water supply and building toilets is estimated to be around 10 times the price of installing a compost system.

John Michael Kennaway from Escot installed the eco-friendly timber and straw toilets (called treebogs); they require no running water and will also be available to passing walkers.

The principle of these toilets is simple, says Martyn Goss, Director of the Council for Church and Society (Exeter Diocese): "A pit about 8' x 4' x 6' deep is dug and that forms the soakaway. The pit is then surrounded by a 5' high wall of straw bales encompassed around by chicken wire – to stop damage from animals (or others). Sat atop the bales is a platform onto which two proper enclosed toilets have been built – they are approached up a flight of wooden steps. The whole construction is made from timber and straw bales. There is no running water, plumbing or electricity. Everything is ecologically recognised and acceptable to such bodies as National Trust, Friends of the Earth and RSPB. Gravity takes away the liquids and the solids break down naturally. There is little or no odour, and no health hazards."

"Now Escot can plan events knowing the toilets are close by. As the construction is close to a public footpath, we are confident it will be a welcome stopping-off point for walkers on occasions. Toilet rolls and hand gels provide the necessary other hygiene bits and pieces," added Escot Church Warden, Keith Townsend.

The first composting toilet in Exeter Diocese was at Chardstock, St Andrew (Grade II listed); faculty issued in May 2003 for "Biolet waterless toilet facilities in the South porch". A similar one has been installed in a shed in the churchyard at Luppitt, St Mary (Grade I listed). There are two further parishes interested in following Escot's example – both churches with no running water.

Other dioceses with compost toilets include Bath and Wells, Salisbury and Winchester.

David Shreeve the CofE's National Environment Adviser said: "The CofE has been looking to reduce its energy consumption through Shrinking the Footprint and has recently extended this campaign to include biodiversity and water issues. The composting toilet would appear to tick all the boxes and bring great relief at the same time"

Notes for editors

www.shrinkingthefootprint.org The Church of England's National Environmental Campaign

www.exeter.anglican.org

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