

South Somerset Environment Strategy

October 2019

Our Vision for South Somerset:

'we wish to be a leading Council in developing and adopting a Green Agenda to promote sustainable environment, economy and communities'
(South Somerset Council Plan 2019/20)

1. Context and Background

1.1 Context

During 2018 and 2019, many Councils in the UK and Governments around the world responded to public calls to take strong and rapid mitigation measures to reduce carbon emissions and have declared climate emergencies. Many of these declarations are often accompanied by a commitment to accelerate action to achieve carbon neutrality and to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change and extreme weather.

In May 2019 South Somerset District Council formally recognised a climate and ecological emergency through Full Council and agreed to

'develop a strategy by the Full Council meeting in the Autumn of 2019, that sets ambitious targets to protect the environment and ecology; to reduce Carbon Emissions; and for a) South Somerset District and b) the Council to become carbon neutral'.

We are now working in partnership across Somerset to tackle climate change as the neighbouring authorities of Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West and Taunton and Somerset County Council all made similar declarations. Mindful that a county-wide strategy is emerging, and that many issues are best tackled together, this South Somerset strategy is just one element of a much broader programme of change. We identify here action which we will take locally; but these actions will sit within a much larger plan and align with it.

1.2 Why do we need an Environment Strategy?

The release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere from human activity is changing the world's climate and the planet is warming up. 17 of the 18 warmest years ever measured took place in the 21st century and in the last 30 years each decade has been hotter than any previous one on record. ¹ Rising global temperatures in the long-term will create more extreme and unpredictable weather changes, rising sea levels, severe flooding and reduced water availability, all of which pose significant risk to human health, wildlife and ecosystems.

The extent of climate change depends on how successfully we, locally, nationally and globally reduce greenhouse gas emissions to limit temperature rises.

The Paris Climate Change Agreement (2015) is an international framework that aims to avoid the most devastating effects of climate change by cutting carbon emissions and has set to limit temperature rises to 2°C above pre-industrialisation levels with an aspiration of 1.5°C. The Paris Agreement was ratified by the UK in 2016 and as of May 2019, 194 states and the European Union had signed the Agreement. ²

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/climate-change-explained#history>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris_Agreement

The UK Climate Change Act 2008 sets a statutory target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% compared to 1990 levels by 2050. In 2019 the UK government amended the Climate Change Act and set a *legally binding target to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions from across the UK economy by 2050*.³

In 2018 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported on the impacts of global warming of 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty.⁴ This report highlighted the stark risks and impacts of half a degree difference of warming targets for the world (between 1.5-2°C).

All Local Authorities have a "biodiversity duty" under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, A Green Future (2018), pledges that this will be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it, and pass on to the next generation a natural environment protected and enhanced for the future.

2. Our Current Commitment

Our current Council Plan identifies the environment as one of our five key areas of focus. We are committed to keeping the beautiful district of South Somerset clean, green, attractive and sustainable. Our expert teams already undertake a huge amount of work to ensure that we honour this pledge and below we give examples of some of the work we currently, and will continue to, do:

Waste, Recycling and Resource Management

- Recycle More: from June 2020 the types of items that can be collected at kerbside will be expanded to include plastic tubs, pots and trays
- From Spring 2020, none of the waste collected at kerbside in South Somerset will go to landfill; instead it will be used to generate clean energy
- Over 90% of all recycling in South Somerset stays in the UK and the Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) led the way in providing transparent information about what happens to waste collected for recycling
- Recycling of waste from house clearances is used to help residents furnish homes
- We recycle machinery parts and waste oil used at our Lufton depot and collected from flytipping
- The new cremators at Yeovil Crematorium are designed such that the emissions from mercury fillings will be captured by abatement plant, along with particulate and other emissions
- Any broken bikes or bike parts found abandoned are collected and passed on to a company which recycles bikes for rural communities
- We use only Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified timber wherever possible

³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/climate-change-explained#history>

⁴ <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

- Rainwater is harvested to water plants at our nursery
- We have installed a composting toilet at Chard Reservoir
- Across our offices we are 'Digital by Default' and discourage unnecessary printing

Natural Environment

- We are proud of our heritage in creating award-winning open spaces – we have been awarded 3 Green Flag Awards at Country Parks and local Nature Reserves – and will continue to work to this standard
- Natural green spaces are managed to a five-year plan, these include habitat management, biodiversity enhancement, species specific targets and invasive species control
- We engage the community to manage our countryside sites and run active conservation volunteer schemes
- We plant an average of c.500 trees each year at our countryside sites
- We run educational programmes and events at our countryside sites
- We encourage biodiversity in our verges and public open spaces through the use of wildflowers and diverse floral planting, which benefits pollinators
- We have submitted a bid to the Urban Challenge Tree Fund to plant 2,500 in Yeovil in phase 2 of the fund

Built Environment

- Our adopted Local Plan encourages sustainability and energy assessment for new planning applications / encourages new build to be low or zero carbon
- We are currently exploring options to bring forward key housing sites and associated infrastructure and consider how solutions might use energy sourced at point through air/ground heat source pumps, solar or other means
- We consider green infrastructure in all larger scale projects e.g. Yeovil refresh, through contributions to public open space on- and off-site
- We are working with Highways to deliver a cycle path on the Eastern side of Yeovil
- We have an air quality action plan for Yeovil
- We secure the planting of new trees and shrubs where appropriate, whenever we grant a planning consent

Energy and Renewables

- We are investing £750,000 in the Yeovil Crematorium to ensure compliance with environmental standards
- During 2018/19 we developed one of the largest UK Battery Energy Storage System facilities (25MW) to support Western Power Distribution and the National Grid to use clean, renewable energy across the region. This facility will also reduce currently wasted power generated through solar and wind throughout the UK and store it for use at peak times
- We have photovoltaics on several SSDC-owned buildings to generate electricity
- We have installed an air source heat pump at Ninesprings for reduced energy usage

Travel and Transport

- We are currently accessing Highways England funding to install three rapid electric car chargers at strategic points which are easily accessible from the A303 in South Somerset. These will be at Wincanton, Ilchester and Ilminster
- We operate a cycle to work scheme
- We are working in partnership with the transport authority (Somerset County Council) to develop and cycling and walking infrastructure plan for Yeovil
- We are developing an Access Plan for Chard to encourage walking and cycling as part of the Chard Regeneration Programme
- The Council Plan 2019/20 identifies a priority for South Somerset to be to assess options to improve community transport provision. We are activating this project from October 2019
- We operate agile working, allowing staff to work from a location that is convenient to them, to minimise unnecessary travel

3. SSDC's Future Commitment

We have developed our plans to tackle climate change in two clear pathways. One of these is to consider our own estate and operations and what actions we can take to become carbon neutral. The second is to consider our responsibilities in respect of the wider geography that comprises the South Somerset District.

SSDC's ambition is to be an exemplar local authority in both caring for, and enhancing, our environment. Adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change means changing the way we do things. This encompasses looking to ourselves and our own operations, taking direct action wherever possible, enabling or supporting others where appropriate and lobbying government for action where we need change that can only be effected at national level.

We have recognised a climate emergency and, in doing so, we acknowledge that there is a need to act now to tackle carbon emissions and become carbon neutral. However, we need to balance the need to act, with the necessity to be accountable for the way in which we prioritise the allocation of funds. We will make bold decisions where there is robust evidence that these deliver the right outcomes for our residents, businesses and communities, but we will not commit public money before a thorough assessment of return on investment (either monetary or environmental or other benefits) and the opportunity cost of the financial commitment has been completed.

We recognise that the pace of change related to climate change and policy direction is fast and the strategy will therefore be fully reviewed in two years to ensure that our ambitions and actions are aligned to emerging national and global policy and to identify the next tranche of activities.

3.1 Ecology and Biodiversity

We recognise the need for a considered and robust approach to nature conservation across the district. At consultation sessions for this strategy it became clear that our residents want to be reassured that this is a high level priority, whether that be on our own land or that of others.

The South Somerset landscape is wonderfully diverse; from the protected landscapes of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in the west and east, to the wetlands of the Somerset Levels further north and distinct heritage monuments like Cadbury Castle and Hamdon hillfort further south. Overall it is of high quality. There is a wealth of wildlife habitats largely integrated to the rolling lowland agricultural landscape. Large parts of the district's countryside are protected by national and international designation (4,968 Ha of AONB, 3,390 Ha of Sites of Special Scientific Interest across 39 sites, 3 National Nature Reserves including Ramsar and Special Protection Areas sites on the Somerset Levels and Moors) together with a greater array of locally declared wildlife sites (5 Local Nature Reserves and 2 Country Parks).

Our Countryside team manages 290 Ha of the Authority's own land, as natural greenspaces for people and nature. The award winning parks and greenspaces retain conservation management principles at their core and the work of rangers and volunteers is to five year land management plans. Hedgerows are laid, dry stone walls repaired, woodlands managed and hazel coppices actively attended. Priority habitats like traditional hay meadows support skylark populations and a new species specific approach to margin management is designed to attract the rare shrill carder bumblebee. Reed beds have been expanded at Chard and marginal plantings on water courses are implemented to improve water quality and enhance the habitats for wildlife. Through the delivery plan of this Strategy the experience of the countryside team will be shared through new public education and engagement programmes.

Existing formal education provision for schools and groups will continue, with curriculum linked sessions available across the key stages. By building capacity in the Countryside and Environment Services teams, groups and communities will benefit from sessions covering a range of practical subjects from gardening for wildlife, tree planting and creating pollinator corridors. The networks of skilled volunteers, who play a pivotal role in habitat management across sites, will continue to be supported, enabling tasks from practical woodland management to species surveying to be completed. Records supplied to the Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC) will help inform and drive the strategies of the County ecological team and Local Nature Partnership (LNP).

We recognise the importance of protecting the existing tree stock of the district; from street trees, woodlands, hedgerows and veteran specimen trees. With South Somerset having below the county and national average for woodland tree cover, tree planting on our own estate will become a priority for us. We will also enable communities to deliver their own planting projects in their parishes through the provision of locally relevant guidance documents and factsheets providing the key elements and attributes needed to grow a successful project. The importance of creating green networks and corridors will feature in the 2020 Open Spaces Strategy and we will strive to reduce fragmentation and isolation of species through the provision of new networks where possible on our land.

We will work with the County ecological team and Local Nature Partnership to ensure the principles of nature recovery networks are understood at a local level and can be translated into action on the ground. By supporting the County Pollinator Action Plan through actions across our own estate and through influencing the management of others, where we can, it is hoped that tangible and lasting differences can be delivered. By feeding into the Local Nature Partnership and supporting its work we hope to enable cross sectional leadership on environmental issues that deliver powerful results.

Visitors choose to come to South Somerset to spend time in the high quality natural environment. Walking on the extensive rights of way network and regional trails, cycling the lanes and droves, visiting traditional craftspeople like willow weavers and cider makers is all dependent on a high quality, well managed and sustainable natural environment. This value is recognised through our Tourism and Economic Development teams and by starting the work to calculate the value of this natural capital we will be better placed to review our position to protect and improve our natural capital. Ensuring that South Somerset truly recognises the value of the natural environment for the health and wellbeing of our residents, visitors and also to the economy.

For nature conservation to be truly effective each resident and community must be enabled to make a difference in their garden or parish. This grass roots effort must be linked into county and regional nature networks that will bring the biggest and most powerful outcomes for ecosystems. We recognise that we have a central role to play supporting and enabling our human communities at a local level, whilst staying connected to the bigger picture, with our local and national partners.

4. The Scope of the Strategy

As a result of needing to undertake thorough assessments for some activities, this strategy could only ever outline the first phase of our commitments; more will follow. Our focus now is on delivering those actions which we know will deliver a positive impact and where we have the greatest control to take action.

We have followed a number of themes in exploring what we already do, what we currently know and what we might do to reduce our net carbon emissions. Under each theme we have given consideration to what we might do around our own estate to improve environmental performance and what we might do across the wider geography of Somerset to achieve the outcomes and Vision that we committed to. The themes identified include:

- Waste, Recycling and Resource Management
- Natural Environment
- Built Environment
- Energy Consumption and Renewables
- Travel and Transport
- Awareness, Engagement and Behaviour Change

This strategy precedes a Somerset-wide strategy that is currently being developed by a partnership of all Somerset Local Authorities to tackle climate change. South Somerset, through both officer and elected member participation, is fully engaged with the development of that strategy and our expectation is that the County and South Somerset strategies will be aligned. There are three themes which are consciously absent from the South Somerset strategy. This is because they are better tackled at county level, where the likelihood of meaningful engagement with some key stakeholders is improved and where the implementation of solutions is more achievable. These are:

- Flood Water and Adaptation to Heatwave and Drought
NB. It should be noted that we already plan for extreme weather events at South Somerset specifically through our business continuity planning
- Farming and Food
- Health and Wellbeing

5. What do we already know?

We have access to national data (Source: 2017 BEIS Local Authority Emissions dataset) on the level of carbon emissions within South Somerset, split by domestic, industrial and transport emissions. This is a reliable source and will permit us to track progress; however, there is a considerable time lag in the data becoming available and it excludes emission from airports and motorways. In South Somerset, 42% of our carbon emissions emanate from transport, compared with 33% from Domestic activities and 25% from industrial.

Over the last ten years annual car mileage has been falling nationally, from an average of 8,300 in 2009 to 7,600 in 2018; a reduction of 8.4%. The percentage reduction has been far more marked in diesel vehicles (19.7%) but, as these form the minority of car types on the road, the overall numbers do not reflect this. We do not have data for Somerset, or even for the South West for most measures; however, we do know that the average annual mileage in the South West is slightly below the national average at 7,292. This may reflect the age profile of the South West, which means that a smaller proportion of the population is of working age.

We know that Somerset County Council has had to reduce subsidies for bus routes, which has resulted in a decrease in bus use since 2010. Many rural communities have now been left with no choice but to cling to the car and we need to offer viable, attractive alternatives to persuade our residents to give up their car or use it for fewer journeys.

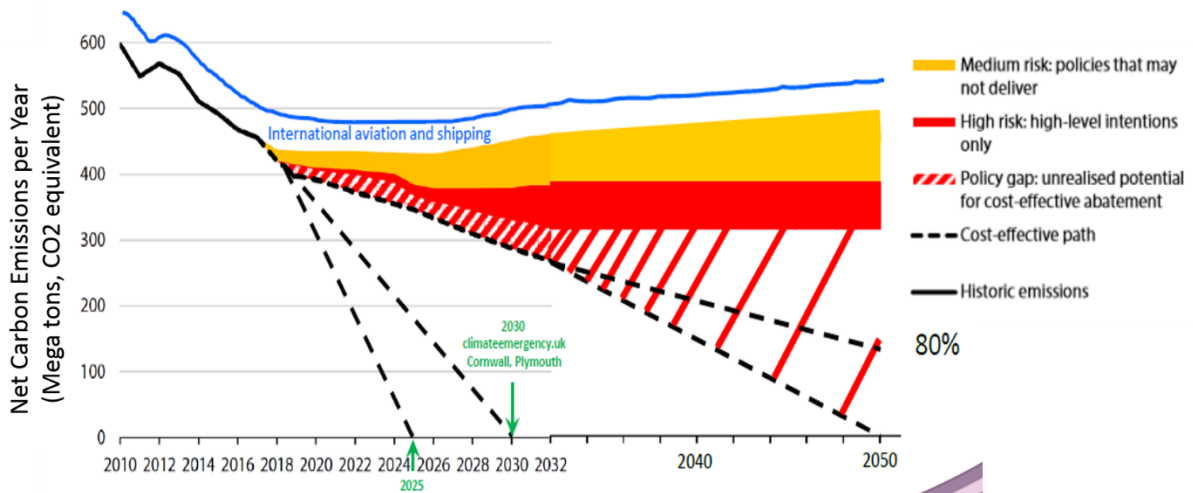
In South Somerset, our tree canopy is 4% district-wide and 18% in Yeovil; this compares with 2.6% across the County of Somerset. We know that our current tree stock is able to sequester (net annual removal of CO₂) only a very small proportion of kilotons of carbon emitted; the tree canopy across the county of Somerset is sufficient only to absorb domestic emissions from one district (Sedgemoor). We will need to undertake further work to calculate more precise levels of offset achieved through increased tree canopy in our districts

We capture air quality data from a number of locations across South Somerset. Air quality across the district is currently good, although NO2 is high on some of Yeovil’s arterial routes and we experience sporadic rises in ozone across the district linked to weather conditions. We do not currently capture the carbon footprint of our own operations, so a benchmarking measure will need to be taken during this financial year to allow us to track our performance.

The chart below shows net emissions of CO2 for the whole of the UK. The red dashed line indicates the policy gap between the high-risk policies and projections to reduce emissions by 80% from the 1990 baseline or to net zero by 2050.

Given the scale and rate of change required, it will be impossible for us to reach our targets of carbon neutrality within the county by 2030 without significant and immediate policy changes in central government coupled with individuals and businesses making major behavioural changes.

Chart 1: The Scale of the Challenge



Whilst this means that major action from Central Government is required, we have identified some actions that we can take locally as described later. However, this evidences the need to lobby central government for increased policy, funding or powers for Local Authorities.

6. Progress to date

This work has been led by our own Environment Community of Practice, which comprises our internal experts and those with strategic and/or operational responsibility for each of the areas outlined above. In shaping next steps, we have also drawn heavily on the views of various stakeholders, from within South Somerset and beyond, with whom we have engaged fairly extensively. This includes community engagement activities with:

- expert local interest and action groups
- local primary schools
- Parish and Town Councils
- elected South Somerset District Council Members
- officers employed by South Somerset District Council

The purpose of this initial engagement activity was to hear what stakeholders feel the key environmental issues are and how we might address these. We plan wider engagement with our communities in the near future, and further engagement and consultation with stakeholders following adoption of this strategy, to help inform a more detailed delivery plan and shape the next phase of commitments. This will effectively become an Action Plan that sits below this overarching Environment Strategy once approved, detailing what, how and when we will deliver our Priority Outcomes (see below) and Vision.

National Policy Development: Whilst there is much that local authorities can do, either themselves or in partnership with others, there are some outcomes that can only be brought about by national policy change.

National Planning and Policy Framework: we need a shift in national planning policy to give local authorities the ability to demand higher environmental standards of developers, such as increased energy efficiency standards, installing electric charging points, solar panels, rain/grey water harvesting solutions. On adoption of this strategy, Elected Members of the Council plan to activate a campaign, through appropriate channels such as the Local Government Association, to persuade government to change Policy.

Public transport: this is arguably the biggest barrier to achieving reduction in carbon emissions. Somerset County Council, as the transport authority, is responsible for provision of bus routes across Somerset. Somerset has a low density, highly dispersed population and this makes providing a meaningful bus service extremely expensive. However, the paucity of bus provision means that we are largely a car dependent population. We need additional funding if public transport provision is to be improved or alternative solutions found, permitting people to desist from car use.

Electric vehicle infrastructure: whilst we are developing plans locally for enhancing electric vehicle infrastructure, we believe that a national, evidence-led approach to determining likely volume, demand, type and location of chargers and associated funding to support roll out, is essential to prevent poorly planned, reactive provision emerging.

Local Grid: we look to central government and Western Power/Scottish and Southern Electricity to deliver improvements to the Local Grid to permit us to harness energy produced locally for local use

7. Priority Outcomes

Although we already undertake numerous activities that underpin our aim of caring for and enhancing our natural environment, we acknowledge that we could do more to achieve our goal of carbon neutrality.

By 2030 we commit to achieving a significant reduction, in the order of 80%, in our carbon emissions. Our ambition is to be carbon neutral across our own operations and land holdings by 2030 at the latest, and ideally by 2023, so any residual carbon emissions will need to be offset.

We will also work to achieve a significant reduction in emissions and improve sequestration rates across the geography of South Somerset, through direct action, by supporting the communities of South Somerset to meet their ambitions and through the way we do things; ensuring that working towards carbon neutrality is a thread which runs through all of our decision-making.

We will contribute fully to the work of the county-wide Climate Change Group and by working to address issues collaboratively which have county-wide implications, to achieve our county-wide targets.

1. We will Reduce our Reliance on Fossil Fuels; by

- reducing our energy consumption
- harnessing natural resources, for example by harvesting rain and grey water
- switching to renewable sources of energy
- raising expectations of developers, through our Local Plan policies
- making sustainable procurement choices,
- investigating in additional green energy investments

2. We will Reduce Emissions; by

- reducing our business mileage
- decreasing reliance on the car
- facilitating the growth of electric vehicles for both personal and operational use
- reducing the level of particulates in the district
- facilitating non-motor vehicle modes of transport

3. We will Minimise Waste and Increase Recycling;

- we need to generate less waste, and encourage the use of sustainable alternatives to single-use plastics and other single use items
- we will encourage reuse and recycling and savings in the use of natural resources
- we will explore opportunities to improve our existing housing stock and ensure that new homes are built with recycling in mind

4. We will Offset carbon emissions; by

- increasing our tree canopy through the combined efforts of SSDC, parish and town councils, volunteers and residents
- protect existing hedgerows and tree canopy from the effects of development and reviewing our policy on tree preservation
- protecting existing wetland, marsh and bog and encouraging additional vegetation planting in rivers and ponds
- increasing biodiversity across our own land holdings

- working with local food producers to accelerate the production of environmentally friendly food stuff
- minimising the environmental impact of food production
- investing in offset where we are not able to deliver it ourselves; i.e. as a last resort

8. How will we deliver our aims?

Together with our stakeholders, we explored numerous activities that we might take in order to meet these commitments. Some of these merit far more detailed investigation, but what we heard during our engagement events was a desire for us to make a start, to commit to a series of actions/targets that *are* achievable in the short-term and to focus initially on our own estate.

As a result, Section 8.1 below identifies a number of short-term, tactical actions which we believe we can deliver by March 2021 across our own estate, with the majority of these deliverable even earlier, by March 2020. In addition, there are a number of actions which we will put in place immediately for the benefit of the wider South Somerset District.

8.1 Interventions for Implementation in 1-2 year time frame

			By When
Over-arching	1	Have benchmarked the carbon footprint of SSDC's operations, working in partnership with the Carbon Trust and set ambitious targets for carbon neutrality	Dec' 2019
	2	Have adopted a measurement system for tracking our reduction in emissions and increased capacity for offsetting and publish our progress	April 2020
	3	Develop a procurement strategy which attaches social value to carbon reduction, either through reducing emissions or offsetting, using the National Scheme for assessing Themes, Output and Measures (TOMs)	Mar' 2020
	4	Develop a detailed and specific marketing and communications plan, that delivers bespoke materials to and for our communities and visitors. Examples might include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water refill points, an eco-business tool kit, green travel and vehicle pollution, householder how to be "green" tool kits, providing information on how communities can make a difference, tree planting tool kits for parishes and communities from "how to" guides and grant funding assistance, preventing water pollution, encouraging use of smart meters, tool kits for schools focusing on the educational benefits of managing for wildlife in their grounds, access to grants and how to run green clubs, calculating your carbon footprint and how to offset it and grant funding opportunities. 	Mar' 2020

		Shifts in behaviour will only be achieved if the right information is provided in a timely and accessible fashion, by providing high quality marketing materials that tap into national agendas and high profile campaigns and which are also locally engaging.	
Reduce our reliance on Fossil Fuels	5	Commit to sourcing our energy from renewables and give notice on our current contract if necessary	Oct' 2019
	6	Fully energise our 25 MW Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) facility	Mar' 2020
	7	Add a further 5 MW capacity into our BESS facility	Mar' 2021
	8	Capture rain/grey water for watering at Yeovil Recreation Ground	Mar' 2020
	9	Wessex Water will be installing two water bottle refill units in Yeovil town centre. We will investigate the feasibility of installing a further unit at the Yeovil Recreation Ground	Mar' 2020
	10	Provide support, alongside partners, for communities to access existing funding around renewable energy, including the newly launch National Lottery Community Fund, which aims to help people and communities to take the lead in tackling the climate emergency	Apr' 2020
Reduce Emissions	11	All staff have the technology and training to facilitate agile working, thereby reducing our business mileage	Dec' 2019
	12	We will investigate piloting a scheme to monitor NO ₂ at key traffic congestion sites, using Diffusion tubes, married with a campaign to encourage drivers to switch off their engines, with the aim of reducing NO ₂ .	Mar' 2020
	13	Develop a green travel plan for each of SSDC's operational sites	Dec' 2020
	14	Audit our cycle network to provide evidence to inform future decision-making and improve cycling infrastructure. Complete the development of a cycling and walking infrastructure plan for Yeovil as part of the Yeovil Refresh	Dec' 2020
	15	Audit community transport across the district and consider the feasibility of improvements/make recommendations	June 2020
	16	Propose revision of Local Plan policies for inclusion at the next stage of the Local Plan Review. These to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require improvements on carbon emissions for new buildings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 19% reduction on regulated carbon emissions (relative to Part L of Building Regulations 2013) through improvements to the building fabric ○ A further 10% reduction on regulated carbon emissions through carbon sequestration by tree planting and/or on-site renewable energy systems ○ Long term aim for zero carbon buildings ○ Ability to pay into a fund to offset carbon emissions – the fund to be used on projects identified by SSDC 	June 2020

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require electric vehicle charging points for new dwellings with parking spaces and set standards for installation of charging points in parking spaces for non-residential development (aligning with new Government consultation standards) Require the protection of important environmental features (landscape/biodiversity) in policy, to include all water bodies; i.e. streams, wet ditches, rivers, ponds and wetlands/marsh Ensuring that new homes are built with recycling and waste in mind 	
	17	Monitor developers to ensure they are meeting the energy standards they have committed to	Dec' 2020
Minimise Waste, Recycle More	18	Target the removal of all drinks for sale in plastic bottles in our canteen, entertainment venues and vending machines; where no alternative exists then ensure recycling facilities for those plastics exist at each site	Dec' 2019
	19	Collect paper, card, plastic, cans, glass and food across all of our key sites, including at our entertainment venues, and ensure that whatever waste remains does not go to landfill	Mar' 2020
	20	Review the provision and location of public waste bins	Mar' 2020
Offset	21	Use SSDC-owned land to draw down carbon through planting of 1,000 trees and investigate investment opportunities through the Woodland Carbon Fund	Dec' 2020
	22	Protect existing wetland, wet meadows, marsh and bogs and encourage additional planting of water vegetation in rivers and ponds	
	23	Review our policy on tree and hedgerow preservation, to include tree replacement standards	Dec' 2019
	24	Develop and adopt an Open Spaces Strategy which outlines our future direction in respect of conservation management and appropriate tree planting, alongside the need also to be meeting our residents' needs for play and leisure	Dec' 2019
	25	Progress enhanced mapping to inform Nature Recovery Networks	Mar' 2020
	26	Investigate natural capital schemes and consider approaches to enable SSDC to adopt a system that benefits habitats, wildlife and people	June 2020

8.2 Enabling Change through Others

There are activities which we cannot deliver directly, but which we can enable through others or support others to deliver. We also commit to:

- 1 Work with groups and individuals across the district to develop a tree planting network, invite the Woodland Trust and Forestry Commission to share funding opportunities and build a volunteer group to carry out planting

- 2 Work with Parish and Town Councils and County Highways to increase tree canopy
- 3 Support local food markets and local food production
- 4 Improve access to water refill points
- 5 Promote SWPs 'Recycle More' and 'Slim my Waste' campaigns
- 6 Discuss existing actions individual businesses are taking (with at least 100 businesses through key account scheme) on the key strategy themes – Reduce reliance on fossil fuels/Reduce emissions/Minimise waste.
- 7 Support the development of a county-wide Air Quality Strategy
- 8 Support the delivery of the county-wide Pollinator Strategy
- 9 Encourage developers to design around existing hedgerows, increase tree canopy and include exemplar features for biodiversity
- 10 Encourage developers to use sustainable materials
- 11 Support the growth of community allotments
- 12 Work with Somerset Local Nature Partnership to ensure Nature Recovery Networks are linked in at country and regional scale
- 13 Signposting business community to Government/Local Enterprise Partnership and other environment schemes
- 14 Producing information on how businesses can help themselves to be greener and reduce their carbon footprint
- 15 List funding opportunities on the Economic Development webpage as and when they become available
- 16 Clarify the government offer/regional/Local Enterprise Partnership/possibly even still EU
- 17 Seeking best practice and sharing with local business
- 18 Map out and celebrate existing 'green' businesses

8.3 Developing our Longer-Term Plans

Following on from adoption of this strategy we envisage continuing to develop this work in earnest through the Environment Community of Practice (CoP) and engage industry experts when appropriate. The CoP comprises officers from across the Council with expertise in the areas identified.

Before taking steps beyond the immediate interventions identified above, we will need to develop key criteria for decision-making, such as emissions saved, financial cost/investment, revenue opportunity, carbon offset, biodiversity gains, social or health benefits.

Furthermore, on the assumption that we will not have the resources to undertake everything that is desirable, we will also need to know where to prioritise our efforts. This requires a stage beyond assessment criteria, to understanding the opportunity cost of pursuing one outcome over another and to understand the full life cycle of any decision we make. We need a clear strategy for developing the optimum portfolio of activity.

Some of the possible interventions which will require far more detailed business cases to be put together, and appropriate assessment made are:

1. All Existing Building/Housing Stock: this falls into two areas. The first is around investigating options for bringing existing buildings back into use. The second is to

explore in detail what the implications would be of retro-fitting existing housing stock in the area with improved insulation, solar panels etc., or of making grants available to homeowners to do the same

2. New Housing Stock: we will need to agree our policy on new builds; for example, how will we balance our desire for zero carbon new homes with the need to deliver homes per se? Is there an acceptable compromise, where is this?
In the light of our existing priority projects around accelerating housing growth, how could the provision of energy from renewable sources and green infrastructure more generally be baked into our plans, especially if we were to build and retain our own stock
3. We certainly need to develop an electric vehicle infrastructure plan and could consider a green infrastructure plan
Once the Open Spaces Strategy is adopted, we should be in a better position to identify appropriate sites for additional tree planting and develop a detailed plan to achieve this. We will also investigate the use of treddges in place of hedges to increase carbon offset
4. We will look for examples of and opportunities for clean business growth across the District in accordance with the Local Industrial Strategy and related funding, including Government's proposed Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) Research
5. We should investigate opportunities for enhancing the natural beauty of South Somerset for green tourism
6. We will develop an environmental management system
7. We will continue to look for additional green energy investment opportunities, with business cases being developed to assure rigour in assessment of the RO