

Somerset Council Ecological Emergency Action Plan and commitment:

Leading the way towards nature recovery in Somerset

Objective: *Protect and restore Somerset's land, rivers, freshwater and marine habitats by making nature bigger, better and more joined-up for biodiversity, carbon, flood resilience and wider benefits.*

Action Plan:

1. Deliver on the Environment Act statutory biodiversity duty on the Council, including but not limited to the Council's first consideration report and the Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance documentation. Put the ecological issues at the heart of the Council's actions for the climate emergency and ensure that opportunities to gain mutual benefits for both the climate and the ecological emergencies are maximised.
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3. Ensure that the ecological emergency and nature recovery considerations are embedded in all work areas and decision-making processes including the financial emergency recovery initiatives.
4. Take a leadership role on the ecological emergency and nature recovery in Somerset including on the development and delivery of the Somerset Ecological Emergency and Recovery Strategy (SEERS) for Somerset, working with, influencing and inspiring partnership working across the County and region through our Local Nature Partnership (LNP) to help deliver nature's recovery, with measurable outcomes to ensure that Somerset has an ecologically resilient, wildlife rich environment. Partnership organisations, include, but not exclusively the Somerset Wildlife Trust, The National Trust, Natural England, RSPB The Environment Agency, The Woodland Trust, Wessex Water, Exmoor, National Park, and Somerset Ecological Record Centre (SERC).
5. Ensure that the ecological emergency and nature recovery considerations are embedded in all work areas and decision-making processes including the financial emergency recovery initiatives and planning.
6. Deliver on the Environment Act's statutory biodiversity duty on the Council, including but not limited to the Council's first consideration report and the Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance documentation.
7. To ensure that when the Local Plan is adopted that the SEERS ecological emergency and nature recovery (including green infrastructure, ecosystem services and natural capital) are strategic priorities for planning and new development, through site allocations, policies and an up-dated Somerset Design Guide.
8. The SEERS will include, but not exclusively:
 - a) The continued support the development and implementation of the Somerset Nature Recovery Network (including bee lines), and the Somerset Ecosystem Services and Natural Capital Mapping (and Natural Capital Investment Strategy),

- including through the Local Plan, biodiversity net gain (BNG), phosphate and nutrient neutrality and developer contributions.
- b) Promote tree and woodland planting and re-wilding in the right places with the right species in line with Somerset Tree and Woodland Creation Strategy, to maximise wildlife value, carbon sequestration and other benefits, in collaboration with the Somerset Local Nature Partnership.
 - c) Work with farmers and other rural land managers to support the movement towards lower carbon and phosphate emissions farming and other actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change whilst at the same time increasing natural capital and providing additional ecosystems services benefits. To encourage the reduction in pesticides in Somerset by at least 50% by 2030
 - d) Ensure Council owned land and buildings are managed in a biodiversity friendly manner and that opportunities are taken to create new wildlife habitats.
 - e) Design and develop a Somerset Waterways and Coastal Biodiversity Vision, Strategy and Action Plan to maximise biodiversity and other opportunities in this area.
 - f) Progress the ongoing green infrastructure (GI) agenda, including through completing designing and delivering a Somerset Council Green Infrastructure Strategy; ensuring the inclusion of high quality well managed GI in new developments, in the new Local Plan, advice on neighbourhood plans; continuing support for and collaboration with the national GI benchmark, Building with Nature.
 - g) Promoting the creation of new natural green spaces and green links across Somerset.
 - h) Liaise with other partners to establish an ambitious biodiversity net gain (BNG) system for Somerset.
9. Review how our natural environment can increasingly become a key part of the tourism offer for Somerset.
10. Provide advice for local communities on how to incorporate biodiversity, green infrastructure and natural capital (ecosystem services) into their Local Community Network (LCNs) plans, Neighbourhood plans, Parish/ Town / City plans and other initiatives.
11. As the lead authority, deliver on our duty to create and embed a Local Nature Recovery Strategy, in support of the right habitat in the right place and multiple ecosystem services.
12. We will promote the health benefits of nature and ensure well maintained rights of way and public greenspace.
13. We meet our duties by mapping and enforcing (manage Somerset Councils assets) Somersets Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) Country Parks and Local Geological Sites (LGS) promoting improvements in both quantity and quality development of sites through green financing solutions to meet 30 by 30 obligations and objectives.
14. Enable wider delivery and mainstream nature-based solutions, including through enabling and supporting partnerships, landscape-scale and whole-catchment approaches and working to influence key stakeholders (i.e. water companies).



15. We will develop an integrated approach to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) natural carbon sequestration and storage, compensation, green infrastructure, water quality and natural flood management.
16. We will support Somerset's blue and green infrastructure, introducing workstreams on Somerset's Marine and Coastline by working with Dorset and Sevon Inshore Fisheries and Conversation Authority to sustainably manage fisheries and protect estuarine habitats.
17. Embed biodiversity planning and Nature Based Solutions with Local Flood Risk Management Strategy priorities and work streams.
18. Embed nature based Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) approaches within highways drainage schemes.
19. Work in collaboration with the Somerset Catchment Partnership to identify and develop measures within the wider catchment.
20. Develop a monitoring framework (data platform and ecological baseline) for the regions nature environment to enable us to measure progress towards our ambitions, including the possibility to use a wildlife index to measure abundance and diversity of wildlife amongst the current ecological network.
21. Support the development of platforms that enable businesses to invest in the natural environment.
22. Identify and establish future landscape scale projects and partnership within the region.
23. Where appropriate, refocus and integrate existing action plans currently in place but perhaps have somewhat gone by the wayside into our monitored programme and project plans (i.e. Somerset Pollinator Action Plan).

