

SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES, ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE



Wednesday 14 December 2022

**2.00 pm Luttrell Room - County Hall,
Taunton**

To: The members of the Scrutiny for Policies, Environment Committee

Cllr S Ashton, Cllr A Boyden (Vice-Chair), Cllr A Bradford, Cllr B Clarke, Cllr M Dimery (Chair), Cllr H Hobhouse, Cllr M Kravis, Cllr M Martin, Cllr H Munt, Cllr K Pearce, Cllr T Power, Cllr J Roundell Greene and Cllr A Wiltshire

All Somerset County Council Members are invited to attend.

Issued By Scott Wooldridge, Strategic Manager - Governance and Democratic Services - 8
December 2022

For further information about the meeting, please contact Jamie Jackson
JAJackson@somerset.gov.uk or Democratic Services on
democraticservicesteam@somerset.gov.uk

Guidance about procedures at the meeting follows the printed agenda and is available at
(LINK)

This meeting will be open to the public and press, subject to the passing of any resolution
under Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to
Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

This agenda and the attached reports and background papers are available on request prior to
the meeting in large print, Braille, audio tape & disc and can be translated into different
languages. They can also be accessed via the council's website on
www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers

**Are you considering how your conversation today and the actions
you propose to take contribute towards making Somerset Carbon
Neutral by 2030?**



RNID typetalk

AGENDA

Item Scrutiny for Policies, Environment Committee - 2.00 pm Wednesday 14 December 2022

****Public Guidance notes contained within agenda annexe****

1 Apologies for absence

To receive members' apologies

2 Declarations of Interest

Details of all Members' interests in District, Town and Parish Councils can be viewed on the Council Website at

[County Councillors membership of Town, City, Parish or District Councils](#) and this will be displayed in the meeting room (Where relevant).

The Statutory Register of Member's Interests can be inspected via request to the Democratic Service Team.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting

To approve the minutes of the previous meetings held on 26th October 2022 and 30th November 2022

- To follow

4 Public Question Time

The Chair will allow members of the public to ask a question or make a statement about any matter on the agenda for this meeting. These questions may be taken during the meeting, when the relevant agenda item is considered, at the Chair's discretion.

5 Scrutiny for Policies, Environment committee work programme (Pages 9 - 12)

To receive any updates from the Governance Manager, Scrutiny and discuss any items for the work programme.

To assist the discussion, attached are:

- The Committee's Forward Work Programme

Item Scrutiny for Policies, Environment Committee - 2.00 pm Wednesday 14 December 2022

- The Scrutiny for Policies and Place committee's Forward Work Programme
- The Executive Forward Plan of key decisions can be viewed [here](#)

6 **Interreg 2 Seas- End of Project Progress Report** (Pages 13 - 42)

Members are asked to consider and note the update.

7 **Peat- Update on work with DEFRA on the future of Peat Workings** (Pages 43 - 46)

The Scrutiny for Environment and Policy is asked to note the approval to take discussions forward with DEFRA and the peat producers in Somerset and to support the proposed approach.

8 **Estates decarbonisation - our programme and progress** (Pages 47 - 72)

Scrutiny is asked to consider and comment on the accompanying presentation.

9 **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty overview** (Pages 73 - 76)

Members are asked to consider and note the update.

10 **Any other business**

The Chair to raise any other urgent items of business

This page is intentionally left blank

Guidance notes for the meeting

1. **Council Public Meetings**

The former regulations that enabled virtual committee meetings ended on 7 May 2021. Since then, all committee meetings need to return to face-to-face meetings. The requirement is for members of the committee and key supporting officers to attend in person, along with some provision for any public speakers. Provision will be made wherever possible for those who do not need to attend in person including the public and press who wish to view the meeting to be able to do so virtually.

2. **Inspection of Papers**

Any person wishing to inspect minutes, reports, or the background papers for any item on the agenda should contact Democratic Services at democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk or telephone 01823 357628. They can also be accessed via the council's website on www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers. Printed agendas can also be viewed in reception at the Council offices at County Hall, Taunton TA1 4DY.

3. **Members' Code of Conduct requirements**

When considering the declaration of interests and their actions as a councillor, Members are reminded of the requirements of the Members' Code of Conduct and the underpinning Principles of Public Life: Honesty; Integrity; Selflessness; Objectivity; Accountability; Openness; Leadership. The Code of Conduct can be viewed at: [Code of Conduct](#)

4. **Minutes of the Meeting**

Details of the issues discussed, and recommendations made at the meeting will be set out in the minutes, which the Committee will be asked to approve as a correct record at its next meeting.

5. **Public Question Time**

If you wish to speak, please contact Democratic Services by 5pm 3 clear working days before the meeting. Email democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk or telephone 01823 357628.

Members of public wishing to speak or ask a question will need to attend in person or if unable can submit their question or statement in writing for an officer to read out.

After entering the Council building you may be taken to a waiting room before being taken to the meeting for the relevant agenda item to ask your question. After the agenda item has finished you will be asked to leave the meeting for other members of the public to attend to speak on other items.

A slot for Public Question Time is set aside near the beginning of the meeting, after the minutes of the previous meeting have been agreed. However, questions or statements about any matter on the agenda for this meeting may be taken at the time when each matter is considered.

At the Chair's invitation you may ask questions and/or make statements or comments about any matter on the Committee's agenda – providing you have given the required notice. You may also present a petition on any matter within the Committee's remit. The length of public question time will be no more than 30 minutes in total (20 minutes for meetings other than County Council meetings).

You must direct your questions and comments through the Chair. You may not take a direct part in the debate. The Chair will decide when public participation is to finish.

If an item on the agenda is contentious, with many people wishing to attend the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

An issue will not be deferred just because you cannot be present for the meeting. Remember that the amount of time you speak will be restricted, to three minutes only.

In line with the council's procedural rules, if any member of the public interrupts a meeting the Chair will warn them accordingly.

If that person continues to interrupt or disrupt proceedings the Chair can ask the Democratic Services Officer to remove them as a participant from the meeting.

Provision will be made for anybody who wishes to listen in on the meeting only to follow the meeting online.

6. **Meeting Etiquette for participants**

- Only speak when invited to do so by the Chair.
- Mute your microphone when you are not talking.
- Switch off video if you are not speaking.
- Speak clearly (if you are not using video then please state your name)

- If you're referring to a specific page, mention the page number.
- Switch off your video and microphone after you have spoken.
- There is a facility in Microsoft Teams under the ellipsis button called turn on live captions which provides subtitles on the screen.

7. **Exclusion of Press & Public**

If when considering an item on the agenda, the Committee may consider it appropriate to pass a resolution under Section 100A (4) Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the basis that if they were present during the business to be transacted there would be a likelihood of disclosure of exempt information, as defined under the terms of the Act.

If there are members of the public and press listening to the open part of the meeting, then the Democratic Services Officer will, at the appropriate time, ask Participants to leave the meeting when any exempt or confidential information is about to be discussed.

8. **Recording of meetings**

The Council supports the principles of openness and transparency. It allows filming, recording, and taking photographs at its meetings that are open to the public - providing this is done in a non-disruptive manner. Members of the public may use Facebook and Twitter or other forms of social media to report on proceedings. No filming or recording may take place when the press and public are excluded for that part of the meeting.

Please contact the Committee Administrator or Democratic Services on 01823 357628 or email democraticservicesteam@somerset.gov.uk if you have any questions or concerns.

This page is intentionally left blank

Environment Scrutiny Work Programme (December 2022- March 2023)

December

- Interreg 2 Seas- End of Project Progress Report - Steve Dury Project Manager Coast Catchment Levels and Moors
- Peat- Update on work with DEFRA on the future of Peat Workings- Colin Arnold Service Manager Development and Planning
- Estates decarbonisation – our programme and progress – Abigail Lamberti Energy Manager Property Services
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty overview - Jim Hardcastle of the Mendip Hills AONB

January

- An introduction to the work of Scientific Services - Darren Clark Service Manager Scientific Services
- Asset Management Plan and Disposals - Oliver Woodhams Head of Property Services and Victoria Goscomb Governance and Performance Property Services

February

- Severn Tidal Commission - Paul Hickson Strategic Manager Economy and Planning
- Update on SRA Key Decision regarding SRA Funding and SCC Hosting role - David Mitchell Service Manager SRA
Nutrients Management Task and Finish group for Somerset – Introduction and early findings – Colin Arnold Service Manager Development and Planning
- Somerset Tree Strategy – Mark Fortune Service Manager Climate Emergency Economic and Community Infrastructure
- Climate Emergency Tracker – Mark Fortune Service Manager Climate Emergency Economic and Community Infrastructure

This page is intentionally left blank

Scrutiny for Policies & Place Committee Work Programme 2022-2023

Overarching themes	Committee meeting dates / proposed agenda items	Lead Officer/Item Lead
6 December 2022 @ 10am		
Economy	Somerset Futures Assessment Economic Growth and Business Opportunities	Service Manager, Economy & Planning - Paul Hickson
Information items	Cultural Strategy – link to report	Arts & Entertainment Manager, SSDC – Adam Burgan Service Manager, Library & Registration Services - Sue Crowley
HR	Complaints Policy	Customer Experience & Information Governance - Rebecca Martin
Finance	Budget Monitoring Report – Month 7 (October)	Service Manager, Finance Business Partnering – Christian Evans
10 January 2023 @ 10am		
Libraries	Libraries Update	Service Manager, Library & Registration Services - Sue Crowley
Revenues & Benefits	Income & Arrears Management Policy Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Scheme	Assistant Director – Customer, Somerset West and Taunton Council - Richard Sealy
Highways	A358 Taunton to Ilminster Upgrade	Strategic Manager, Infrastructure Programmes Group- Andy Coupe
Insurance	Insurance Policy Contract Award – property, public liability, motor fleet, crime, terrorism, fine art (14 policies £2m p.a.)	Mendip District Council Deputy Section 151 Officer – Duncan Moss Strategic Manager – Commercial & Procurement, Finance & Governance - Paul Skuse
Finance	Budget Monitoring Report – Month 8 (November)	Service Manager, Finance Business Partnering – Christian Evans
7 February 2023 @ 10am		
Highways	Award of Professional Services Contract for Place Services (core highways, transport and wider place services)	Strategic Commissioning Manager - Highways and Transport, Mike O'Dowd-Jones
Finance	Budget Monitoring Report – Month 9 (December)	Service Manager, Finance Business Partnering – Christian Evans
Finance	Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 – Jason Vaughan	Director of Finance & Governance – Jason Vaughan

Scrutiny for Policies & Place Committee Work Programme 2022-2023

7 March 2023 @ 10am			
Finance	Budget Monitoring Report – Month 10 (January)		Service Manager, Finance Business Partnering – Christian Evans
SSE/Property	Dillington House – summary of exit costs		Ian Rowswell – Head of Support Services to Education

Note: Members of the Scrutiny Committee and all other Members of Somerset County Council are invited to contribute items for inclusion in the work programme. Please contact Sarah Wright, Democratic Services (01823) 357628 sarah.wright@somerset.gov.uk who will assist you in submitting your item.

Future Items			
Overarching themes	Committee meeting dates / proposed agenda items		Lead Officer/Item Lead

Revised 25.11.22

Somerset County Council
Scrutiny Committee
– Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee
– 14 December 2022

Climate Change Adaptation in Somerset using Nature Based Solutions: update

Lead Officer: Stephen Dury, Senior Commissioning Officer (Water and Environment)

Author: Stephen Dury

Contact Details: steve.dury@somerset.gov.uk

Cabinet Member: Cllr Sarah Dyke, Lead Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change

Division and Local Member: n/a

1. Summary

1.1. The purpose of this report and presentation is to:

- Update the Committee on recent progress on climate change adaptation in Somerset, undertaken with funding from two European INTERREG projects led by SCC: TRIPLE C and Co-Adapt.

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

2.1. Members are asked to consider and note the update.

3. Background

3.1. The coming decades are likely to see a higher flood risk in Somerset and greater economic damage as a result of climate change.

3.2. In 2019, the Somerset local authorities declared 'A Climate Emergency'. Somerset's Climate Emergency Strategy - "Towards a Climate Resilient Somerset" - was formally adopted by all five Councils in November 2020. One of the Goals of the strategy is to ensure the ongoing resilience of the county to the inevitable effects of Climate Change.

3.3. Furthermore, the Somerset Flood Action Plan includes a commitment to develop long-term land management solutions to reduce flood risk in the face of climate change. This work requires funding. Whilst the Somerset Rivers Authority provides one method of funding activities, this did not provide sufficient funding for the range of work that SCC and partners wished to undertake.

3.4. SCC led an international consortium of partners to bid for funding via the INTERREG 2 Seas programme. The bid was successful, and the resulting project, Triple C (2016-2022) was funded by the European Regional Development Fund. It was a transnational project, with 12 partners from three countries (UK, NL, BE). The Triple C Project in Somerset is part of the "Hills to Levels" approach to

tackling both flooding and the erosion caused by high rainfall events, and adapting to climate change. SCC managed the project, and FWAG SW were the local delivery partner.

- 3.5.** This was followed by a second successful bid with a new partnership, also led by SCC. Co-Adapt (2019-2023) has 13 partners from four countries (UK, NL, BE, FR). The projects' objective is to develop, test and roll-out approaches to co-creation of 'Nature Based Solutions' (including 'Natural Flood Management' / 'Slow the flow' measures) to improve adaptive capacity to the water-related effects of climate change
- 3.6.** There are 3 projects being funded in Somerset in Co-Adapt:
 1. Adapting the Levels (FWAG SW, Somerset Wildlife Trust, SCC) - Somerset Levels
 2. Porlock Streams (National Trust) – West Somerset
 3. Connecting the Culm (Blackdown Hills AONB) – Devon and part of Somerset
- 3.7.** Both projects have been highly successful in trialing new and innovative methods of using nature-based solutions to improve resilience to climate change. Co-Adapt finishes in early 2023, and the project partners are keen to source new funding to keep the momentum going.

4. Consultations undertaken

- 4.1.** This report and presentation provide a commentary and details of progress made to develop and deliver nature-based climate adaptation measures in Somerset. It is a collaboration between SCC and other delivery partners. Consultations have been undertaken with partners in order to develop and agree the activities.
- 4.2.** Significant public engagement has been undertaken in Co-Adapt. For example, in Adapting the Levels, all day, public drop-in event were held in 2 target areas. These were highly interactive events, with many opportunities for group and 1:1 conversations and various forms of feedback. Also, a series of workshops were held with Parish, District and County Councillors in each target area.

5. Implications

- 5.1.** The projects have demonstrated the effectiveness of using nature-based climate adaptation measures in Somerset. With European funding no longer available to continue to fund these activities, partners will be seeking other sources of funding and continued political support
- 5.2.** The County Council is / has been the lead partner for these projects, and the accountable body that receives and distributes the funding; this is a role often played by the council to facilitate and enable partners to deliver beneficial

projects in the County. Without SCC's involvement and agreement to taking the lead partner role these projects would not have taken place.

6. Background papers

6.1. [Click here and list background papers used when preparing the report]

Note For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author

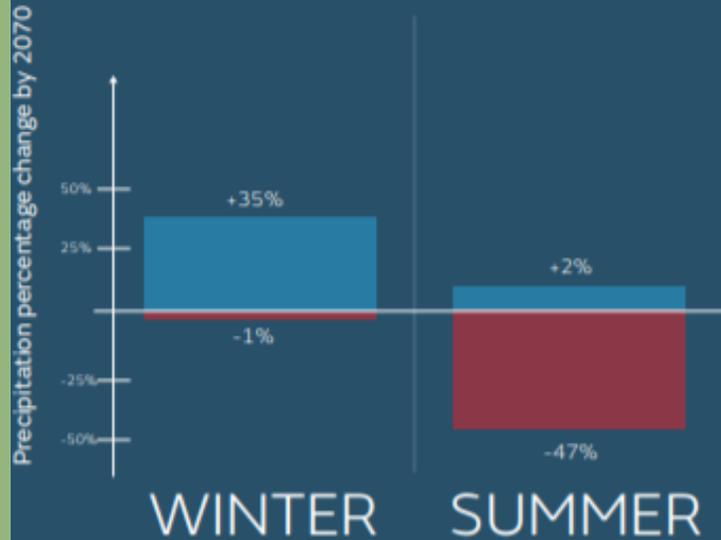
This page is intentionally left blank

Changing Patterns

In England and Wales there is now a 1 in 3 chance of a new monthly rainfall record in at least one region each winter

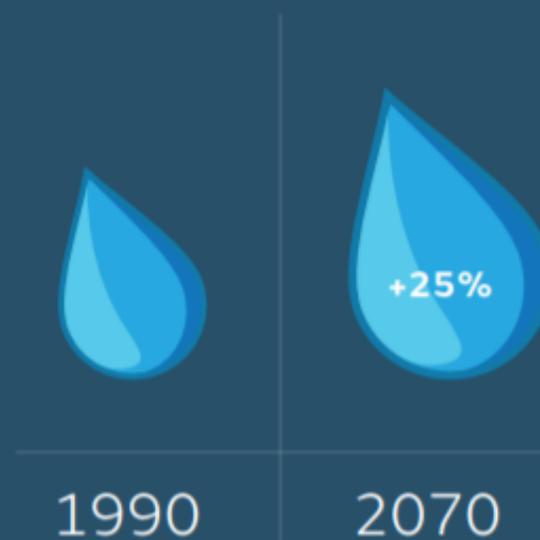
WETTER WINTERS, DRIER SUMMERS*

UKCP Probabilistic (25km) projections show that by 2070, under a high emission scenario, average winter precipitation is projected to increase, whilst average summer rainfall is projected to decrease.



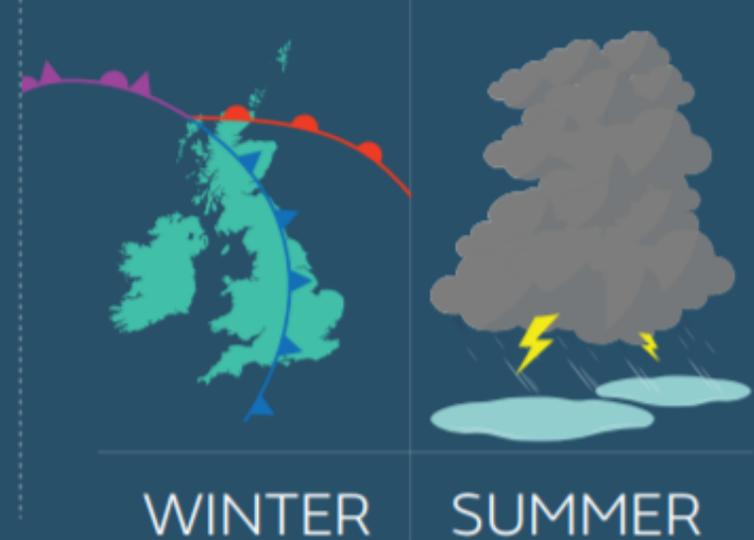
FUTURE INCREASES IN EXTREME HOURLY RAINFALL INTENSITY

By 2070, extreme hourly rainfall intensity associated with an event that typically occurs once every two years increases by 25%.



CHANGES IN THE TYPE OF RAINFALL

By 2070, Local (2.2km) projects more of the rain in winter will come from frontal rain events of higher intensity and in summer from short lived high intensity showers.

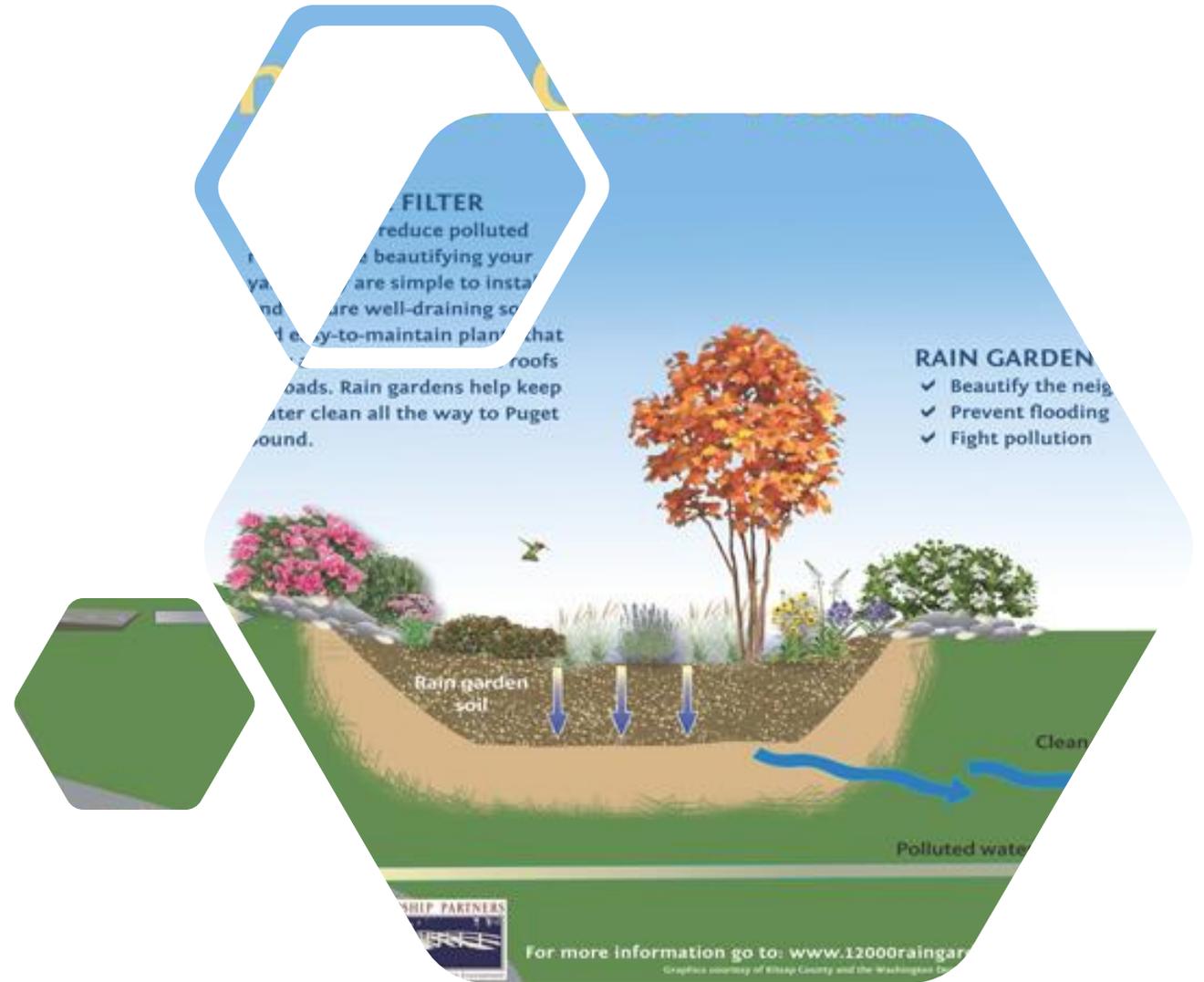


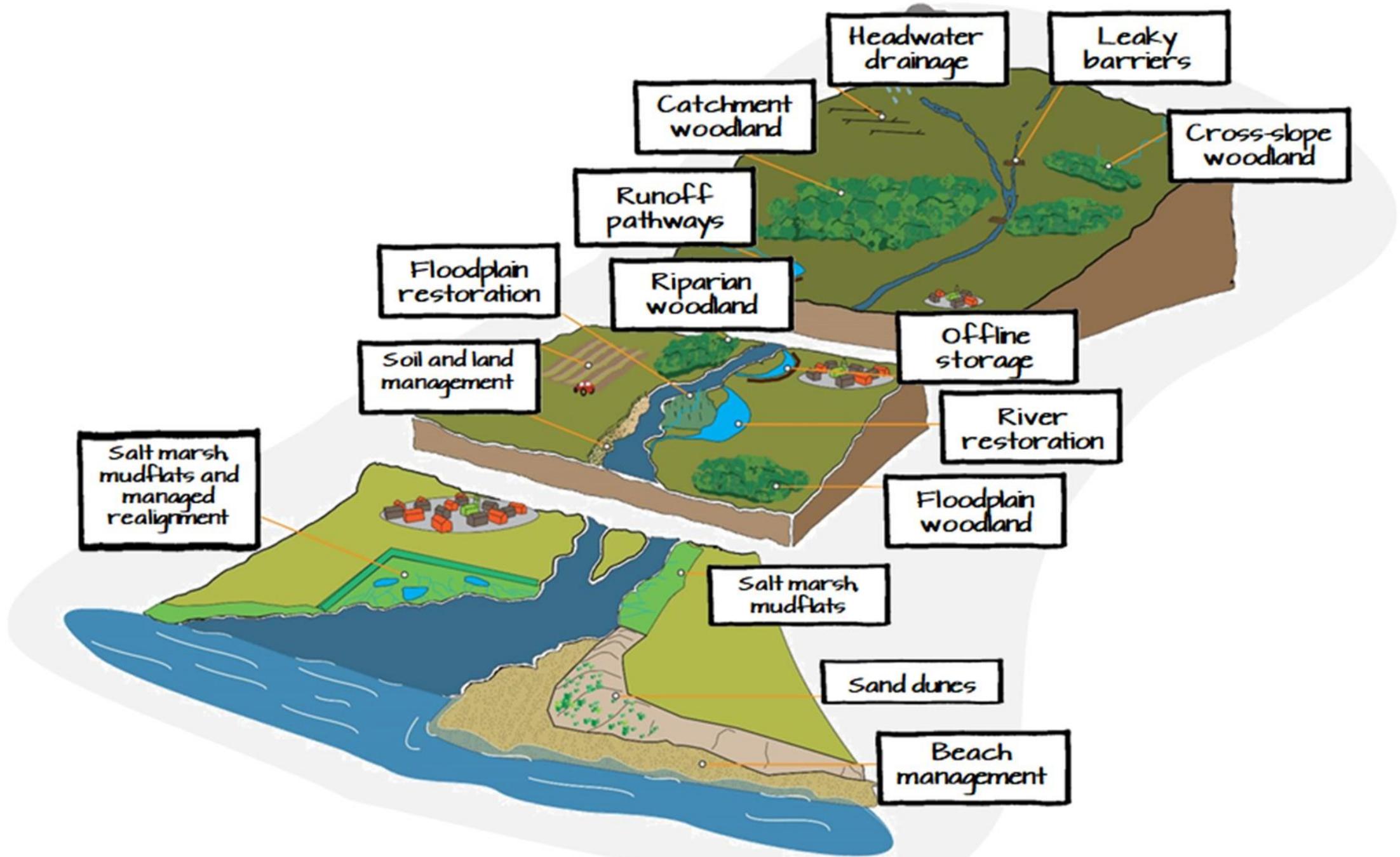


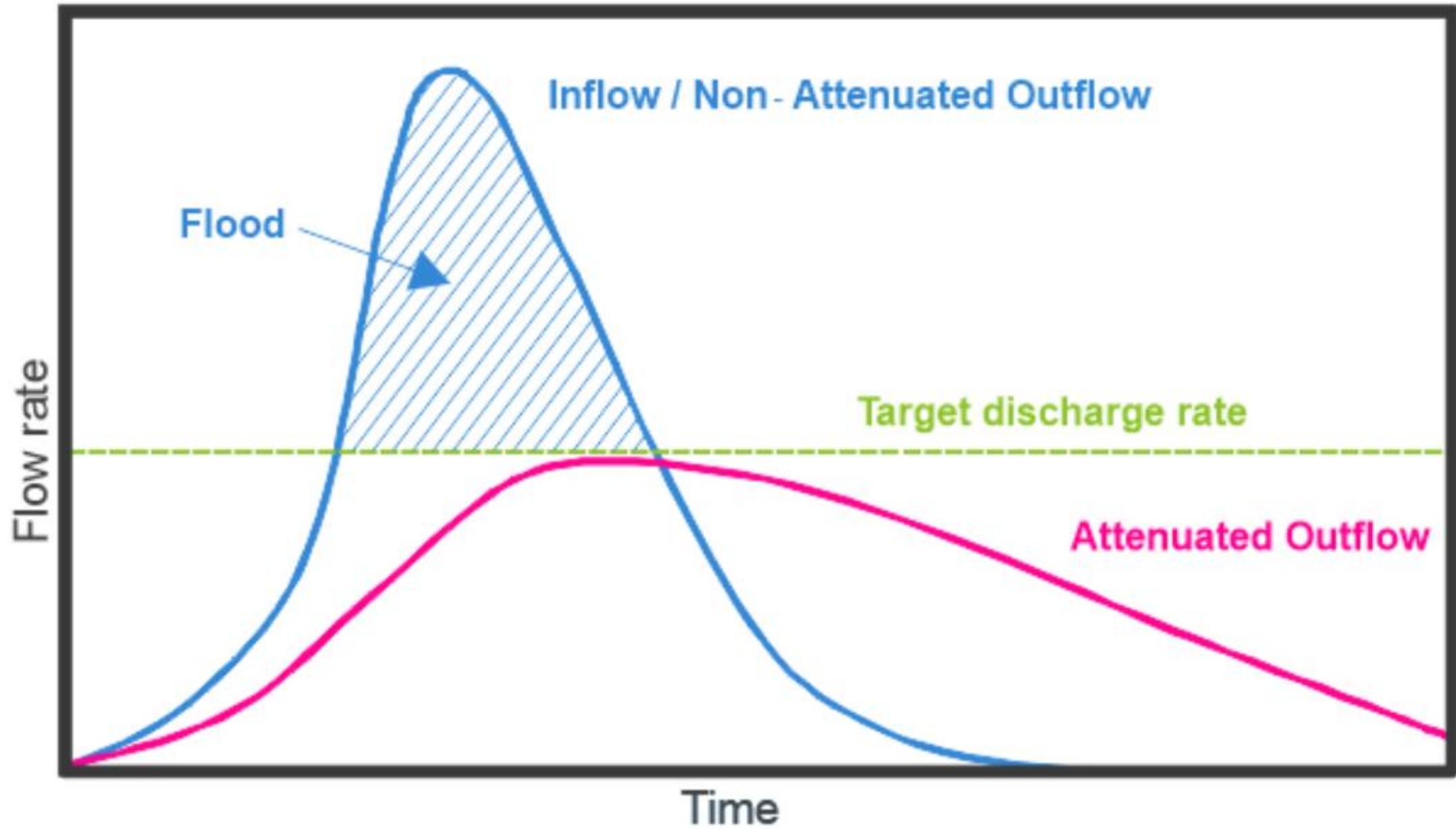


Nature-Based Solutions can help!

- Complements and supports traditional flood risk reduction
- Multiple benefits
- Often low cost
- Can be used from Household Scale to Landscape Scale







Steve Dury, SCC
sdury@somerset.gov.uk



Interreg 
EUROPEAN UNION
2 Seas Mers Zeeën
TRIPLE C
European Regional Development Fund

'Every field, every farm, every stream has a part to play in reducing flooding, water conservation and erosion control'



TRIPLE C (Climate resilient Community based Catchment planning & management) will reduce flooding in the participating catchment areas by demonstrating and validating, through a series of pilot projects, how farmers can create cost-saving water retention and erosion control measures upstream.

LP1	 UK	Somerset County Council
PP2	 UK	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group – (FWAG South West)
PP3	 UK	Devon Wildlife Trust
PP4	 UK	Kent County Council
PP5	 NL	Brabantse Delta WaterBoard
PP6	 NL	ZLTO (Southern Dutch Farmer and Horticulturists Organization)
PP7	 BE	Province of Antwerp
PP8	 BE	Inagro
PP9	 BE	ABC Eco ² (Agroenvironmental management centre Eco ²)
PP10	 BE	Province of East Flanders (PCM)
PP11	 BE	Vegetable research centre East Flanders (PCG)
PP12	 BE	The Flemish Environment Agency

NATURAL FLOOD MANAGEMENT & WATER RETENTION MEASURES



Somerset catchments

Somerset



Upper Darent Catchment'

Kent

West-Noord-Brabant & Antwerpen



North Devon catchment

Devon

Catchment Rivierbeek

Brugge & Tielt



Catchment Kleine Aa/ Molenbeek



EROSION CONTROL MEASURES



Triple C in Somerset has been working as part of the wider Hills to Levels project to slow the flow and reduce flooding and soil erosion.

FWAG SouthWest have worked with farmers, landowners and local stakeholders to provide:



- 1:1 advice
- Demonstrations
- Focus Groups
- Capital grants for Natural Flood Management (NFM) including water retention and erosion control measures
- Monitoring of NFM measures
- Modelling the benefits of NFM measures delivered

This has used match funding from the Somerset Rivers Authority.

Over the past 5 years, as part of the Triple C project FWAG SW have delivered:

- Over 550 farm visits
- 83 water retention measures
- 27 erosion control measures
- 49 soil husbandry visits
- 8 demonstration and trial sites with monitoring
- 4 water retention sites monitored
- 15 events and workshops



Results:

- 40,000m³ of runoff reduction, and 50% reduction in flood risk at local flooding 'hotspots' in the catchment.
- €2.1M (£1.81M) cost savings compared to cost of traditional adaption measures.
- €0.44M cost savings due to reduced need for dredging of River Parrett
- 174 households with enhanced
- 30% of catchment with improved adaptation capacity
- A 30% reduction in soil erosion over 16,020 ha - based on reducing soil erosion incidents or occurrences by 30% on 150 farms of average size 100ha
- €0.417M (£360,000) will be saved on cleaning roads, jetting culverts, cleaning highway ditches and road sweeping over 4 years

Additional achievements:

Through the Hills to Levels project, Triple C in Somerset has received national recognition:

- Included as a case study of Working with National Processes and Natural Flood Management in the UK Government 25 Year Environment Plan in 2018
- Winner of the UK Rivers Prize in 2018
- Volunteer Flood Warden working with the project was recognised as a River Champion in 2019
- Presented at the 2020 Rivers Conference
- Project film winner of the Interreg 2 Seas film award



It has also helped in the development of other projects in the South-West to continue the legacy of the Triple C work, including projects to reduce flood risk and erosion in the Stour Headwaters, Somerset Frome and Brue catchments.



How to set up a successful catchment-scale project:

An example action plan, lessons learnt and testimonials from the Triple C project



Hills to Levels – Triple C Project in Somerset

<https://www.fwagsw.org.uk/natural-flood-management-videos>

Co-Adapt

Climate Adaptation through
co-creation

Page 31

- 13 partners in 4 countries
2019-2023
- Co-Adapt has received €7 million from the Interreg 2 Seas programme and is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund
- SCC lead partner
- 3 projects in Somerset:
 - Porlock Vale Streams (Nat Trust)
 - Adapting the Levels (SCC, SWT, FWAG)
 - Connecting the Culm (BHAONB)

Interreg 
EUROPEAN UNION
2 Seas Mers Zeeën
Co-Adapt

European Regional Development Fund





Adapting the Levels

- ‘Climate Adaptation through Co-Creation’
- 12 partners in 4 countries – SCC lead partner
- Co-Adapt has received €7 million from the Interreg 2 Seas programme
- 40% of Adapting the Levels funded by Somerset Rivers Authority
- FWAG, Somerset Wildlife Trust and SCC partners on Adapting the Levels

Sometimes the solutions are right under our noses! Lots of people had ideas about how our homes can be part of the answer – how we build them, the rules on what we build, and how we can improve them.

“Working together has to be the way forward. This is the biggest challenge we all face.”

“Stop covering driveways with impermeable surfaces.”

“ALL new housing built to the highest environmental standards- Renewable energy, insulation, rainwater capture. MAKE the developers change and Regulate, Regulate, Regulate.”

“Sharing good practices- informal open gardens, tree planting, composting how to.”

“Stop building on the flood plains.”

“Start local scheme and supply water butts.”

“Education support for small local projects enabling individuals to implement small, beneficial changes.”

“Local events that attract locals and neighbours to attend and interact with landowners & farmers.”

“Education for everyone, old and young.”

“Make all our public buildings SuDs friendly.”

There are lots of ways we can use the power of nature to help reduce the risks of flooding and drought – these are known as nature-based solutions or NBS.

“Slow the flow in upland areas of catchments.”

“Work with nature to restore the moorland.”

“Lots of rewilding.”

“More trees of course, but not the only solution...”

“Don’t plant trees on old pasture which is still home to the wildflowers, these are carbon sinks in themselves.”

“Planting of hazel plantations on slopes above floodplains. Willow in flood areas.”

There are more answers right under our feet – in the soil that feeds us and soaks up rainwater. Improving relationships between farmers and local communities, changing the subsidy systems for farming, being mindful of what crops are grown where and protecting the Levels’ carbon-rich peat were all topics that came up.

“How do we change farming, so that it suits the new climate and is part of the solution not the problem?”

“Floodwater storage on agriculture land/ payment for landowners.”

“More use of flooded fields and compensation for farmers.”

“Stop blaming farmers for problems we all created and need to solve together.”

“Maize!”

“Deep-rooted grasses on moors. Rotation crops.”

“Make space for water so the rivers can flood onto the floodplains.”

These ideas came up with an eye on the future, how we safeguard our communities, prepare changes that are coming, and work with nature to adapt.

“Realise socio-economic benefits of adapting now & grow accustomed before it’s too late.”

“Communities need to re-think normalcy of flooding.”

“Accept that change is coming, work with nature to adapt.”

“...Adaptation is about what we can do in advance, and so much better (and cheaper) than trying to clear up after the event.”

“Find areas to make space for flooding.”

Tackling climate change requires solutions at every level, from individuals all the way up to National Governments.

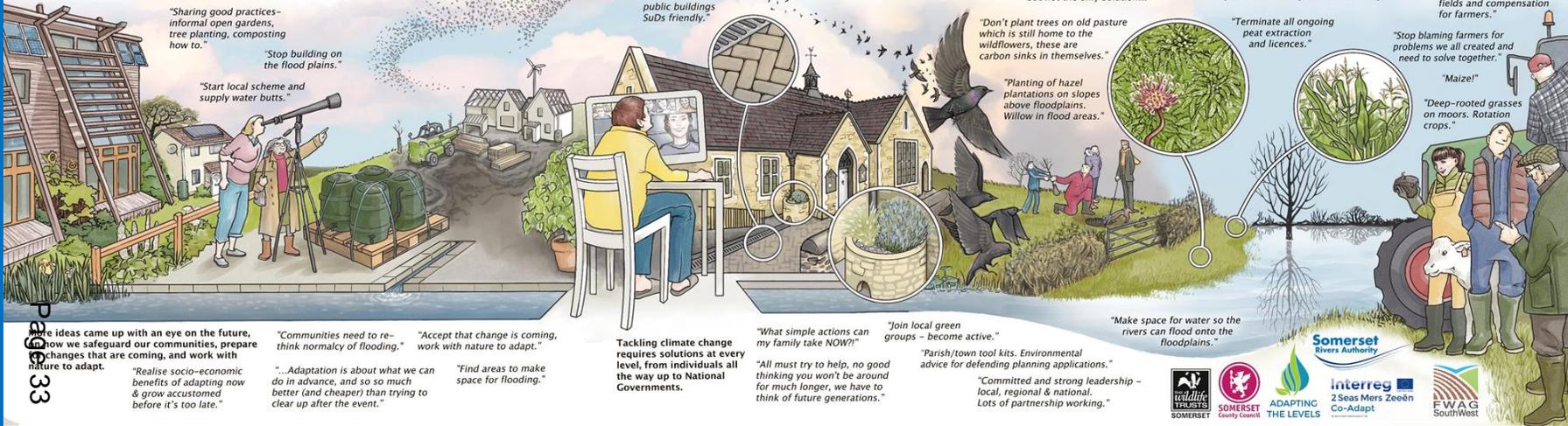
“What simple actions can my family take NOW?”

“All must try to help, no good thinking you won’t be around for much longer, we have to think of future generations.”

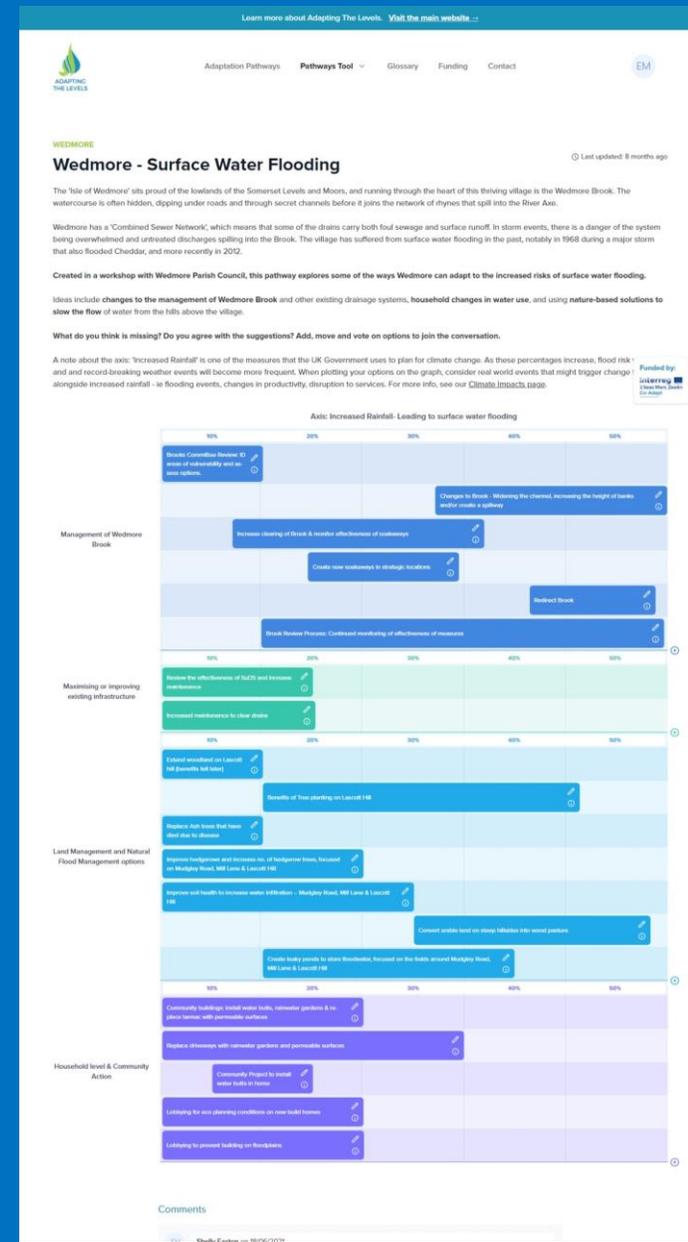
“Join local green groups – become active.”

“Parish/town tool kits. Environmental advice for defending planning applications.”

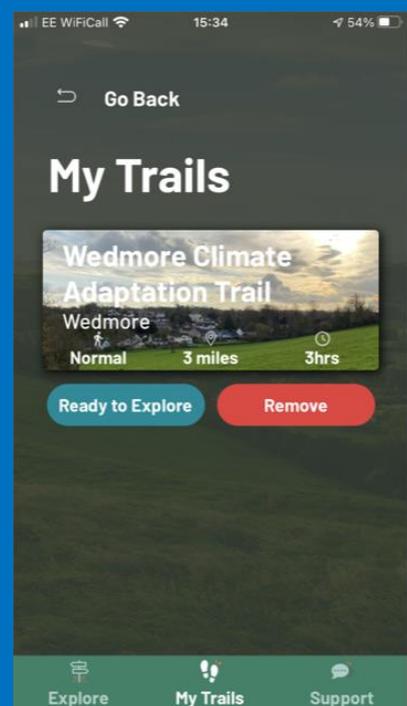
“Committed and strong leadership – local, regional & national. Lots of partnership working.”



Page 33



- # Online work
- Report drawing together opinion and findings from public events
 - Mobile app – Somerset Trails
 - Online Adaptation Pathways tool
 - Online workshops



Community Work

- School visits – workshops with interactive tools
- Engagement Team instrumental in setting up Langport and Huish Episcopi Flood Group
- Work with existing flood groups such as Martock and West Somerset Flood Group
- Always looking for innovative ways to engage on flooding

Page 34





Page 35

Riverlands

Porlock Vale Streams
River Aller floodplain reconnection



What?

- River restoration
- Creating space for water
- From drainage to habitat
- Working with agriculture - not farming vs wildlife
- Resilient river catchments
- (a bit) messier

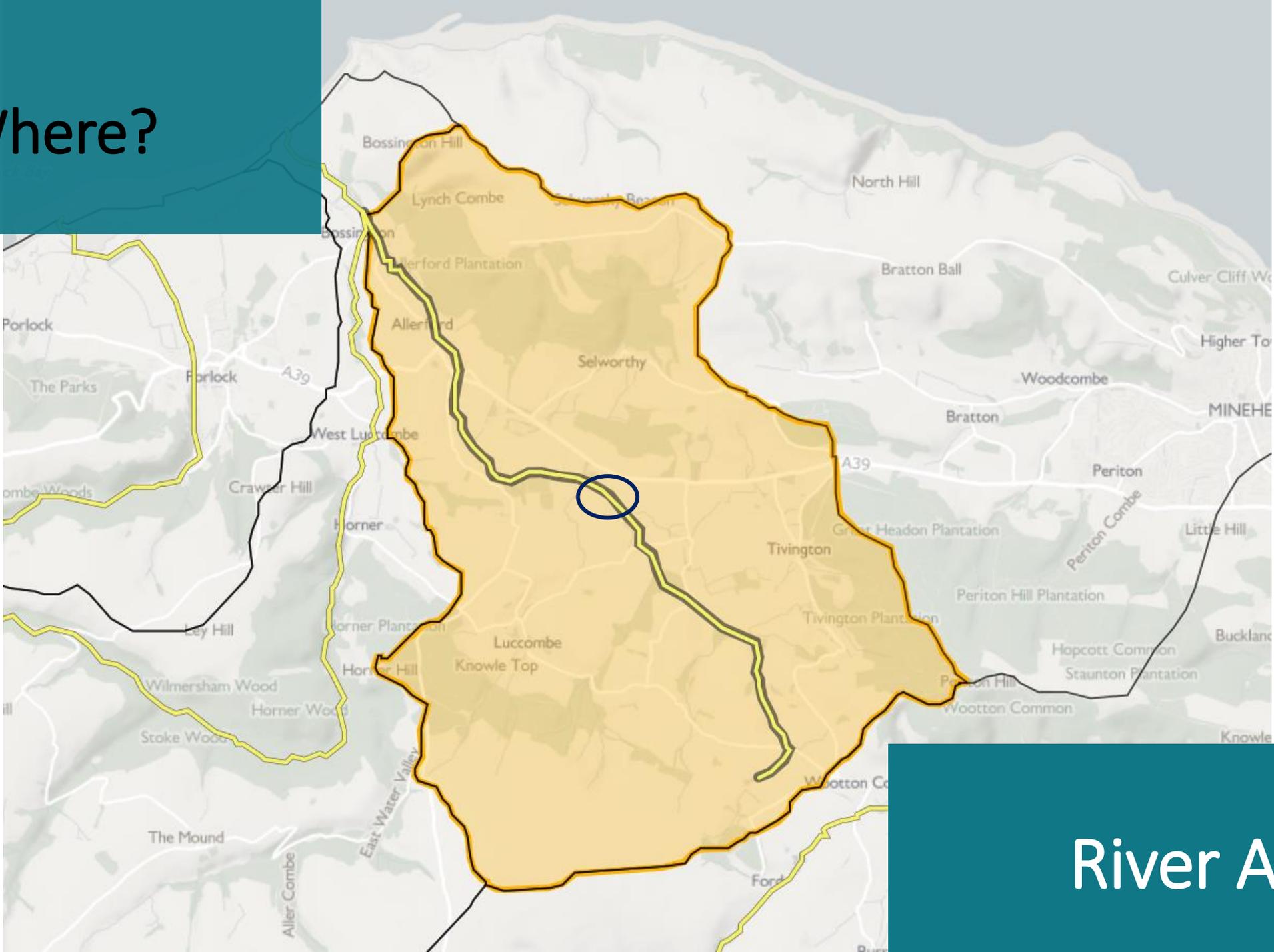


Where?



Where?

Page 38



River Aller

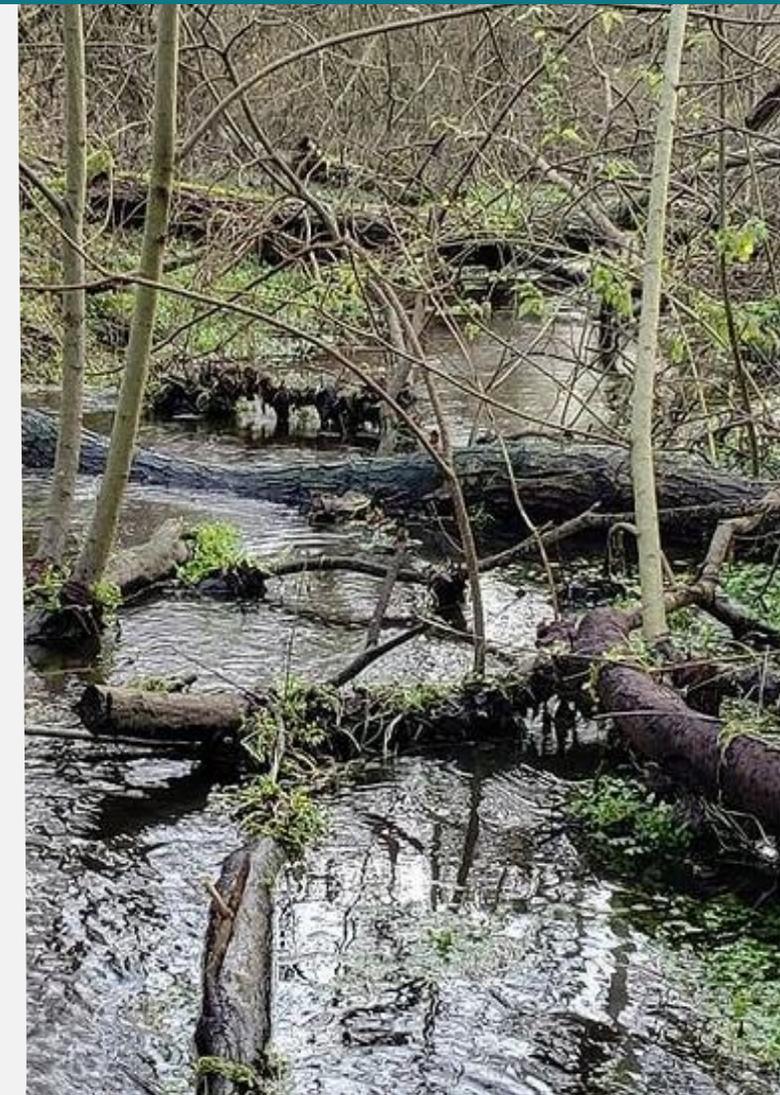
Why?

- Climate emergency – extreme weather
- Habitat loss – 90% of wetlands since Roman era
- Biodiversity crisis – nature in crisis
- Farming – economic, policy/funding, environmental
- West Somerset – social deprivation



Why?

- **25 – year environment plan.** ‘deliver cleaner air and water in our cities and rural landscapes, protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats. It calls for an approach to agriculture, forestry, land use and fishing that puts the environment first’.
- **Somerset’s Climate Emergency Strategy.** Reduce carbon emissions in the county and make Somerset a county resilient to the inevitable effects of Climate Change.
- **Exmoor NP Nature Recovery Vision.** Exmoor’s farmers, land managers, conservationists, communities and public bodies will work together to deliver ‘a Nature-rich Exmoor National Park’ which is great for wildlife and great for people.
- **EA2025** - by 2025 air will be cleaner and healthier, rivers, lakes, groundwater and coasts will have better water quality and will be better places for people and wildlife, nature and land will be better protected and enhanced
- **National Trust** - Healthy rivers and catchments, rich in wildlife, enjoyed and cared for by all.



Why?

- Protecting communities and infrastructure from extreme weather
- Restoring natural process – immediately and profoundly
- Landscape rich in wildlife
- Cleaner water & Healthier soil
- Tourism
- Evidence – nature based solutions



what we are not doing

- Taking land out of production
- Re-wilding
- Flooding upstream
- Flooding downstream
- Working outside our remit
- Working in isolation



Somerset County Council
Scrutiny Committee
14th December 2022

Peat - Update on work with DEFRA on the future of Peat Workings in Somerset

Lead Officer: Michele Cusack Director Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning

Author: Colin Arnold

Contact Details: colin.arnold@somerset.gov.uk

Cabinet Member: Councillor Sarah Dyke Lead Member Climate and Environment Division and Local Member: N/A

1. Summary

- 1.1.** This is an update on the work undertaken so far to review the current extent of permitted peat extraction on the Somerset Levels and Moors and efforts to limit extraction.
- 1.2.** This issue relates to the County Plan in terms of preventing climate change and in response to the Council declaring a Climate Emergency in November 2019 and an Ecological Emergency as announced on 20th July 2022, given that Peatlands are recognised as being important to carbon capture and for biodiversity.

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1.** An Officer Non-Key decision has previously been taken by the Director of ECI Commissioning who approved authorised officers to engage with owners/operators of peat extraction sites in Somerset and gave approval to explore with those operators the possibilities of voluntarily ending peat extraction on their sites in exchange for financial compensation.

Following a meeting on Monday 21st November 2022 between DEFRA and Senior Officers from Somerset County Council DEFRA has confirmed that in order to facilitate the cessation of peat extraction funding could* be made available to reimburse the authority where compensation is paid to an operator/owner to end peat extraction. Reimbursement would be on a *case-by-case basis and will be conditional. DEFRA has also advised members of the Somerset peat industry that this funding may be available for SCC to progress the cessation of peat extraction. DEFRA has agreed to send a formal letter of intent or engagement to SCC. This is now awaited.

- 2.2.** This report was presented to the Executive at the Executive/ SLT meeting of 5th December and approval was given to Officers to engage with DEFRA to reduce the extent of extraction of peat on the Somerset Levels and Moors and on the intention to facilitate this through financial compensation provided by DEFRA to the Council.

The Scrutiny for Environment and Policy is asked to note the approval to take discussions forward with DEFRA and the peat producers in Somerset and to support the proposed approach.

3. Background

- 3.1.** The extraction of peat from the Somerset Levels and Moors is known to have taken place during Roman times and has been carried out since the Levels were first drained. After the Romans left Britain, from this period forward peat extraction was undertaken by hand by the owning or tenanted farmers with more intensive mechanised and commercial extraction taking over from around the 1970s.
- 3.2.** On 7 August 2020 the BBC reported that a DEFRA spokesperson stated: "This Government remains dedicated to being a world leader in tackling climate change. Healthy peatlands have an important role to play in cutting greenhouse gas emissions and helping us reach our net zero target, which is why we have committed £640m through the Nature for Climate Fund to restore 35,000 hectares of England's peatland by 2025. We will also phase out the use of peat in horticulture in England by 2030 and have been clear that we will consider further measures to end the use of peat once and for all."
- 3.3.** The chief executive of the UK Climate Change Committee (CCC), Chris Stark, said: "Peatland restoration is a no-brainer but action needs to start now. Most of the UK's peatlands are in bad shape, accounting for around 5% of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions. This problem is fixable, by restoring and managing our land more sustainably. In the longer-term, well-functioning peatlands can continuously suck up CO₂ from the atmosphere, unlike trees, and represent an important and potentially growing reservoir of carbon. Healthy peatland can also deliver additional benefits such as cleaner water and reduced flood risk."
- 3.4.** It is estimated there are over three billion tonnes of carbon stored in the peatlands in the UK – equivalent to all carbon stored in the forests of the UK, Germany and France put together.
- 3.5.** The Liberal Democrat manifesto launched in the run up to the May 2022 elections makes a specific pledge to work with partners to end peat digging on the Somerset Levels and restore bog areas to act as a carbon sink.

- 3.6.** Earlier this year the Government undertook an extensive public consultation on the future of the retail sale of peat which identified significant support for the banning of peat sales to the retail market. It is likely that a ban will come into effect by the end of 2024.
- 3.7.** The importance of protecting peatlands is becoming increasingly understood with benefits including carbon storage, sustaining unique habitats and biodiversity, water quality improvements, flood water storage and mitigation. Somerset County Council has declared a Climate Emergency and an Ecological Emergency both of which are impacted by extraction of peat. There is no national or local policy for ending peat extraction so in order to try and bring about the early cessation of peat extraction from sites benefitting from the relevant planning permissions a proactive engagement and support is required rather than a regulatory approach.
- 3.8.** In its role as Mineral Planning Authority SCC has historically granted planning permission for peat extraction on multiple sites within the county in line with national and local policy at that time. Extraction on many of these sites is complete but there are a number where extraction is continuing or has the potential to start.
- 3.9.** The need to protect peatlands has been highlighted nationally and the Government is set to introduce legislation which will ban retail sales of peat in 2024. Sales to the professional sector will be exempted for now, probably until after 2030, with different timeframes for different types of plant - edible, ornamental etc. Most Somerset peat producers have at least a foot in the professional market and therefore a ban on retail sales may not be enough by itself to stop extraction. Most peat extraction in Somerset will probably be completed before a ban on sales to professional market takes effect.

4. Consultations undertaken

- 4.1.** DEFRA has already funded an officer to take this work forward. This supports a dedicated resource at Somerset County Council for the remainder of financial year 2022/23 and for the next financial year 2023/24. This resource is intended to support the review of peat extraction permissions and to provide evidence that will help inform DEFRA and SCC policy decisions related to the ending peat extraction.
- 4.2.** Recently Officers met with senior figures from DEFRA to undertake a tour of a peat site and a composting factory. Discussions around compensation for Peat site owners were undertaken and an agreement was reached that this would be paid for from DEFRA's funds.

5. Implications

- 5.1.** If peat was continued to be produced from the Levels and Moors this will continue to have serious implications in terms of climate change, our ability to deliver on our Climate Emergency goals and environmental pledges and continue to have a significant negative impact on the planet.
- 5.2.** DEFRA has agreed to send a formal letter of intent or engagement to SCC offering the compensation. This is now awaited.
- 5.3.** If the preliminary engagement shows that there is an interest from owners/operators in the voluntary ending of peat extraction on their sites in exchange for financial compensation from the Council further decisions will be sought to formalise approval to proceed with this approach.

6. Background papers

- 6.1.** Officers Non-Key Decision dated 21/10/22

Note: For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author

Somerset County Council
Scrutiny for Policies and Environment Committee
Wednesday 14th December 2022



Estate Decarbonisation

Executive Member(s): Cllr Ros Wyke - Lead Member for Development and Assets
Cllr Sarah Dyke - Lead Member for Environment and Climate Change
Local Member(s) and Division: N/A, Countywide
Lead Officer: Oliver Woodhams, Head of Corporate Property, Economic and Community Infrastructure
Authors: Laura Rose & Victoria Goscomb

1. Summary

In February 2019 Somerset County Council and the four Somerset District Councils declared a Climate Emergency. In November 2020, the Councils published a joint Climate Emergency Strategy. In line with this Strategy, SCC is working towards a Carbon Neutral Somerset by 2030 and to build our resilience for, or adapting to, the impacts of a changing climate.

In addition, the UK has set a legally binding target to achieve Net Zero by 2050. To meet this target, it is essential that the UK eliminates the use of fossil fuels for heating and transport. A zero-carbon world is predominantly electric. Power generation from clean renewable and low carbon sources will need to accelerate to support the increase in electrical demand resulting from the electrification and decarbonisation of heating and transport. A whole systems approach to energy is required, integrating energy conservation, efficiency, heat, and power supported by a smart, resilient flexible grid network.

Decarbonising heat is a significant challenge. Heat currently accounts for over a third of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions. The Committee on Climate Change Net Zero Report identifies that meeting this target will require far greater and faster roll out of heat pumps, and other sources of renewable heat, combined with high levels of energy efficiency.

To enable SCC to hit the Carbon Neutral target, and to meet the goal stated in Goal 1A of the Climate Emergency Strategy, the Property Department have started working on the significant task of decarbonise the Local Authority estate, assets, and operations across Somerset. Several estate decarbonisation projects across the County have been undertaken over the last two years; selected on the basis of the funding budget available, the Government Grant Funding awarded, and the level of CO2 emissions reduction achievable. Members of the Committee will receive a presentation on this programme of projects, the resulting decrease in the carbon output of the Estate, and initial work done to forecast the requirements for further estate decarbonisation schemes.

2. Issues for Consideration / Recommendations	
	Scrutiny is asked to consider and comment on the accompanying presentation.
3. Definitions	
3.1	<p>Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme</p> <p>The Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) provides grants for public sector bodies to fund heat decarbonisation and energy efficiency measures. Administered by the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, it is projected to have provided £2.5bn of investment to reduce the emissions of public buildings by 2025. Public Bodies can bid for this funding, with the outcome of phase 3b bids expected shortly.</p>
3.2	<p>Heat Decarbonisation Plan</p> <p>A Heat Decarbonisation Plan (HDP) is a feasibility study conducted on the building assets of an organisation that details on a whole building level how the estate can be decarbonised. Somerset County Council has prepared an HDP based on feasibility studies undertaken at a total of 94 properties – 73 schools and 21 corporate sites – with funding from the Low Carbon Skills Fund (LCSF). This has allowed the projection of requirements for the decarbonisation of the wider estate.</p>
3.3	<p>Emissions</p> <p>Somerset County Council calculates its emissions by collating data from a range of sources including utility bills and reports provided by third parties. The data is then converted into a carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) to allow for comparison, and categorised in accordance with the International Greenhouse Gas Protocol (GHG), as follows;</p> <p><u>Scope 1 (Direct Emissions):</u> Activities owned and controlled by an organisation that release emissions straight to the atmosphere. Examples of Scope 1 emissions include emissions from combustion in owned or controlled boilers and vehicles.</p> <p><u>Scope 2 (Energy indirect):</u> Emissions being released into the atmosphere associated with the consumption of purchased electricity. These are indirect emissions that are a consequence of an organisation’s activities, but which occur at sources that an organisation does not control. The most common type of scope 2 emission is electricity purchased for own consumption from the National Grid or third party.</p> <p><u>Scope 3 (other indirect):</u> Emissions are a consequence of an organisation’s actions, which occur at sources which an organisation does not own or control. Examples of scope 3 emissions include business travel not owned or controlled by an organisation (e.g., public transport), commuting, use of grey fleet, water waste, and supply chain. Reporting is optional because data collection from these sources can be difficult, and estimates are often used leading to issues with the reliability of the data.</p>
4. Background	
4.1	<p><u>The County Council’s Carbon Footprint</u></p> <p>Somerset County Council is committed to moving towards a Net Zero future and has set</p>

an ambitious target within the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy to achieve carbon neutrality across its estate and operations. The current scope of the Authority's carbon footprint includes:

- Energy usage across the Council's estate and operations (corporate estate, maintained schools, highways lighting, traffic signals bollards and signs, pumping stations and other energy consuming sites incl. Park and Ride despoths, owned and controlled by the Council). Energy is generally consumed for heating, lighting, and operating equipment, and is reported under Scope 1 and 2 emissions.
- Fuel usage related to the operation of the Council's owned vehicle fleet, reported under Scope 1 emissions and,
- Emissions arising from staff business travel (employee mileage claims, click travel data, and hire car fleets) and emissions related to the transmission and distribution of electricity, reported under Scope 3 emissions.

At present baseline emissions exclude emissions arising from properties and services which do not come under direct financial and operational control of the Council. Emissions from the sources would come under Scope 3, and are discretionary to include under the greenhouse gas (GHG) reporting protocol.

Data is collated from a range of sources including utility and fuel bills, and reports provided by third parties. The data is converted by the relevant conversion factor (CO₂e) for each reporting year as advised by the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to allow for data to be compared.

Emissions Performance

4.2

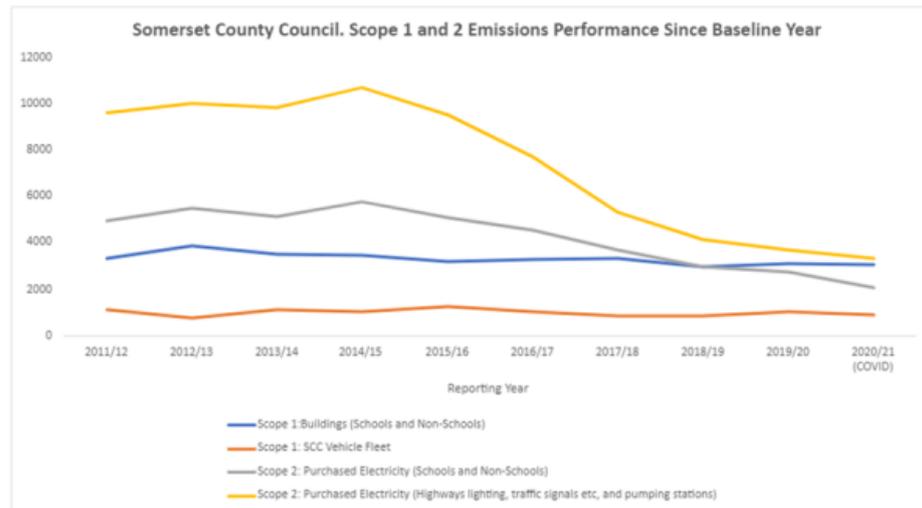
Since the baseline year 2011/12 up to the reporting year 2019/20 the Council has reduced its carbon footprint by 43.21%. Lockdowns during the 2020/21 year distort the underlying decarbonisation for that year, and the full reporting for 2021/22 emissions is not yet finalised.

Council initiatives and external drivers which have contributed towards a positive impact on the Council's performance since the baseline year include the following:

- Increased renewable energy and low carbon power generation on the UK's Power Grid leading to decreased carbon conversion values for purchased electricity (Scope 2 emissions);
- Roll out of LED and dimming across 56% of the Highways Lighting portfolio.
- A part night street lighting pilot across 12 rural parishes in the County. This project contributed towards Exmoor National Park's International Dark Skies Nature Reserve status.
- Energy efficiency improvements to plant and equipment, boiler replacements, heating controls, draught stripping, energy efficient lighting replacement and controls and Solar PV.

- Property rationalisation, and the development of 'hubs'- reducing the number of buildings and creating multi-occupancy buildings.
- Improvements to the Data Centre at County Hall, energy efficiency improvements to ICT and the move from desktop PCs and CRT monitors to laptops amongst other measures.

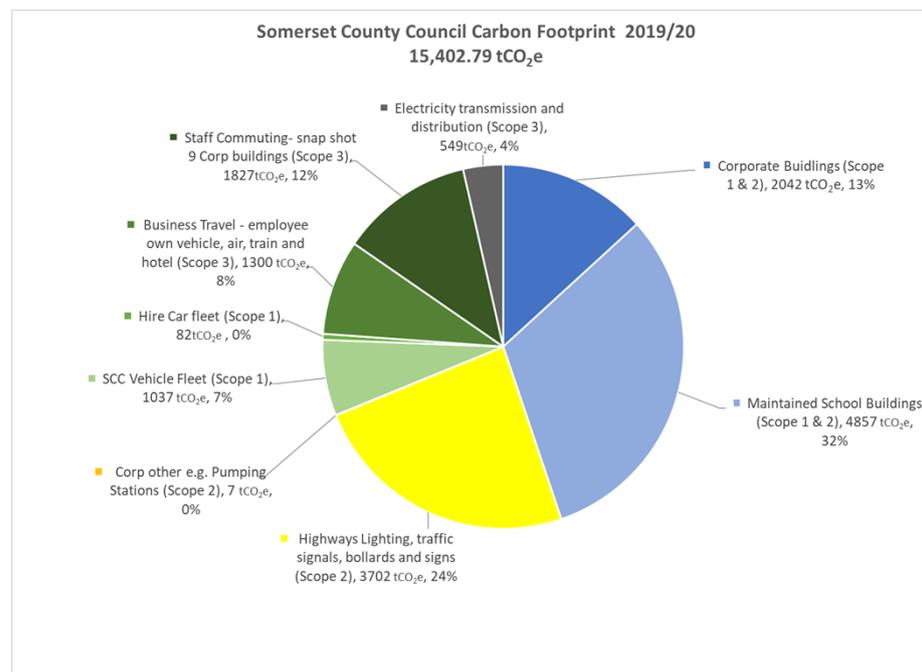
This data has been presented visually here:



The Council's Scope 1 emissions attributed to the consumption of fossil fuels for heating and transport have remained relatively constant since the baseline year. This mirrors the UK's greenhouse gas emissions performance and reductions to date.

Emissions Sources

4.3



The pie chart demonstrates the distribution of the Council's GHG emissions by activity. The property estate accounts for 46% of the Council's carbon footprint (Scope 1 and 2

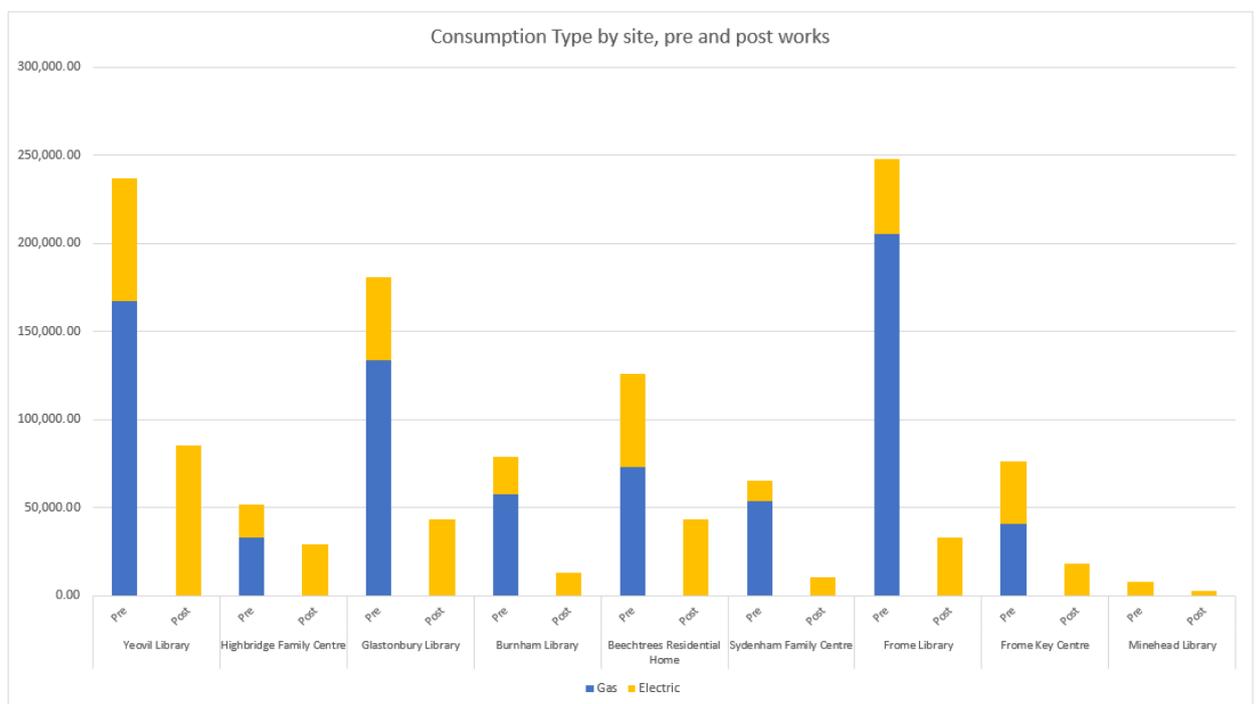
	<p>emissions) based on the information and data currently collected.</p> <p>The non-school estate accounts for 28% of the Council’s Scope 1 Emissions, while the Maintained Schools Estate accounts for 47%. Therefore, schools are a key area to target to identify and implement measures to decarbonise heat.</p>
<p>4.4</p> <p>4.5</p>	<p><i>Our approach to the challenge</i></p> <p>In September 2020 central Government launched Phase 1 of £1 billion in grants available as part of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) to reduce carbon emissions. Phase 1 provided funding over the financial years 2020/2021 and 2021/2022, with Governmental PSDS funding awarded to SCC standing at £4.1m alongside SCC’s funding investment to date of £5.6m.</p> <p>To date, SCC has completed 12 PSDS projects - 5 libraries, 3 Family Centres, 2 Schools, a Children’s care site and County Hall B Block. In the main, these projects have removed fossil fuels entirely from the sites, although at Taunton Library and County Hall B Block some gas heating will remain in place following the schemes. Across the 10 projects to have completed to date, SCC have achieved an estimated carbon emission reduction total of 153 tonnes (estimated over a 12-month period).</p> <p>One of these schemes, Yeovil Library was completed in November 2021 and is recognised to be the 2nd project nationally to complete under the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.</p> <p><i>Strategy – the Fabric First approach</i></p> <p>When decarbonising buildings, we have taken a whole-building approach to the challenge. Rather than replacing components or changing specific parts of buildings, we have looked at the whole building and decarbonised it – as far as possible – in its entirety.</p> <p>We have taken a “fabric first” approach, as this is fundamental to the energy performance and consumption of a building. Typically, around 65% of heat input is lost through the ‘fabric’ (roof, walls, windows) of a building.</p> <p>The county council’s strategy is to undertake practical and financially viable fabric upgrade measures, to remove end-of-life gas fuel supplies / boilers and replace these with electrical heating; where possible schemes also include local generation (Photovoltaics) to reduce Scope 2 emissions. We believe that this approach will deliver the best carbon reductions in the most cost effective, sustainable way over time.</p> <p>Alongside the PSDS-funded projects noted above, the county council is also funding major decarbonisation projects at Wookey Primary School, Wellington Library, Wadham School, with Minehead Library and Shepton Mallet library having already completed in 2022 and 2021 respectively. In addition, feasibility reports for heat decarbonisation have</p>

been prepared for 73 of the LA Maintained Schools and 23 corporate sites utilising Low Carbon Skills Fund (LCSF) funding following successful bids to this programme and the award of c. £460,000 of LCSF grant. These studies take a whole building approach to maximise efficiency and savings, identifying implementation costs, and prioritising decarbonisation opportunities according to the life expectancy of existing heating systems.

4.6 What SCC has achieved since the Climate Emergency Declaration & Results so far.

Time has now passed since the completion of the first tranche of decarbonisation projects. This allows us to begin evaluating the effects of the works on our energy usage for the first time.

The graph below shows the kWh used by site pre- and post-works. Electricity is represented in orange and gas in blue.



There has been a significant reduction in total kWh used at each site. Some sites have seen their electricity consumption increase, although this is to be expected as all heating and hot water now runs on electricity rather than gas, except at Minehead Library which did not have gas appliances. Scope 1 emissions – the direct burning of fossil fuels at site – have ceased at all 10 sites.

4.7 Looking ahead – next steps in our Estate Decarbonisation journey

PSDS Phase 3B funding opportunities and bids have been submitted by Corporate Property Officers in October 2022, with bid outcomes expected to be received in March 2023.

To date, bids have been submitted by SCC covering 4 sites –

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kilve Court (Outdoor Education Centre) • Williton Library • Frome Community College • Oaklands Primary School, Yeovil <p>Alongside this, 2 further bids have been submitted by Somerset West & Taunton -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellington Sports Centre • The Alcombe Centre, Minehead <p>4.7 <i>The longer-term</i></p> <p>In order to meet the carbon reduction pledge that was set, a rolling programme of decarbonisation projects will need to be undertaken across the County.</p> <p>Heat Decarbonisation studies on 73 of 124 maintained school sites identified projects totalling more than £66m that would reduce Scope 1 emissions in the schools estate by around two thirds (by around 2000 tCO₂e per annum). Further studies on some of our non-schools buildings have identified other projects totalling around £6m which are estimated to lead to a further reduction of 180 tCO₂e per annum. These cost estimates will have increased due to inflation since the studies were carried out; and even if all of this work were funded and carried out, a large number of fossil-fuel heating systems would remain. Nationally, the total estimated figure for decarbonising the public estate is in the region of £25-£30bn.</p> <p>It may be that some of this can be met by further funding rounds from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, but it is very likely that there will be a requirement for the Council itself to fund some or the majority of these schemes, and this will be a major challenge in the years to come.</p>
<p>5. Links to County Vision, Business Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy</p>	
	<p>The recommendations directly support the County Council’s Climate Emergency Strategy.</p> <p>SCC’s lead and approach on climate change and the 2019 Climate Emergency pledge has led to SCC being ranked by Climate Emergency UK as the top County Council in the country.</p> <p>Decarbonising of the Council’s estate is one step in SCC’s pledge to mitigate against further decline of environmental damage to the natural habitats of Somerset. When we look at a building from a “Fabric First” prospective, we are looking at not only the carbon savings that the materials used are going to provide to the building, but the carbon footprint of the journey involved in the process.</p>
<p>6. Financial and Risk Implications</p>	
	<p>The principal risks are:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning / heritage approval required for future projects - this is a low risk as the necessary stakeholders for future projects will have been kept involved during the scoping and technical design development stages. • Materials / supply chain shortages – this is a medium risk as the knock-on effects from the well-publicised material shortages and inflationary pressures in the construction industry alongside effects from Brexit, the Covid Pandemic, Suez Canal delay impacts roll out across projects; some materials are on longer lead in times for ordering, which in turn impacts project timescales. • Meeting the grant funding conditions / risk of grant clawback - this is a low risk, mitigated through liaison with Salix as the grant administrators, subject to funding bids. Risk of grant clawback is classed as low risk as although the Council will report programme, costs, and actual performance on carbon reduction to Salix the clawback rights for the grant are limited provided that the measures agreed are delivered. The principal risk around grant clawback relates to timescales of delivery; it will therefore be a requirement that the Project Team liaise closely with Salix to ensure that approval is received for each iterative revision of the programme.
7. Background Papers	
	None.



Estate Decarbonisation

Scrutiny for Policies and Environment Committee
14 December 2022

Update from Corporate Property team



Presentation contents

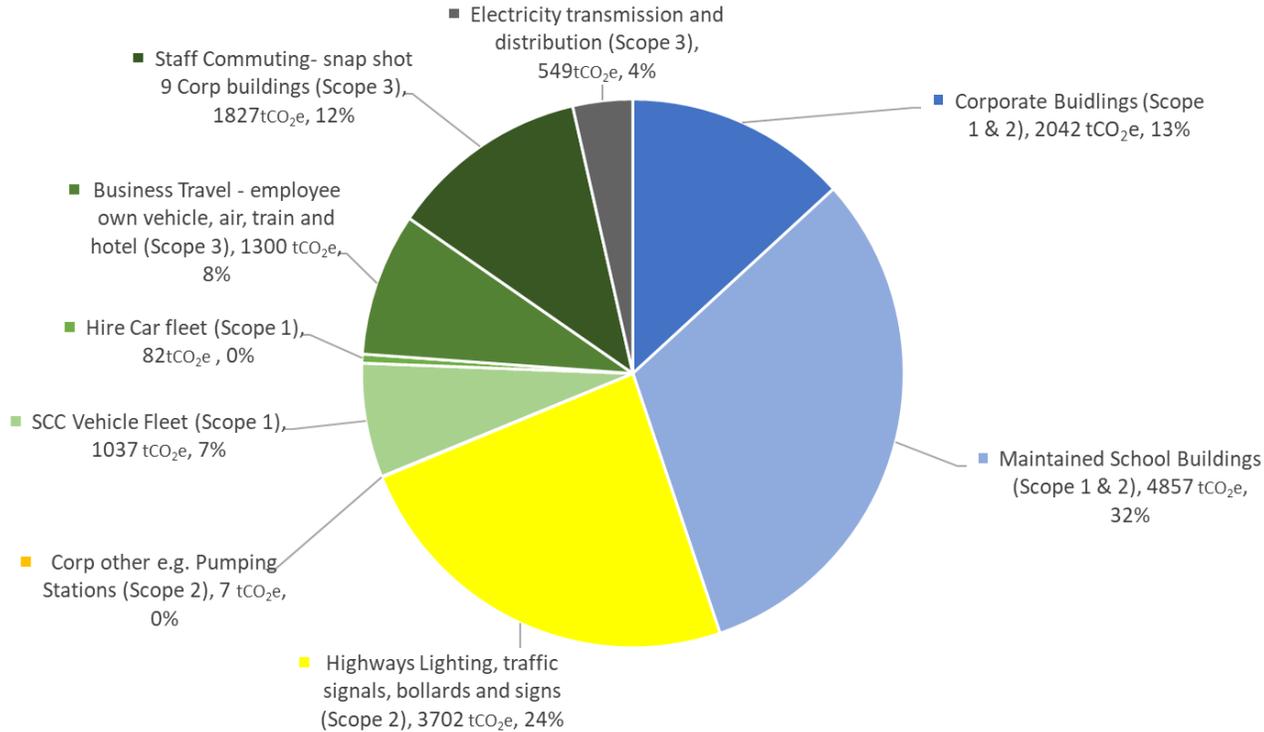
1. County Council's carbon footprint
2. The Council's approach to the challenge
3. What has been achieved
4. Results so far
5. The next 6 months
6. The longer term
7. Context of Local Government Reorganisation



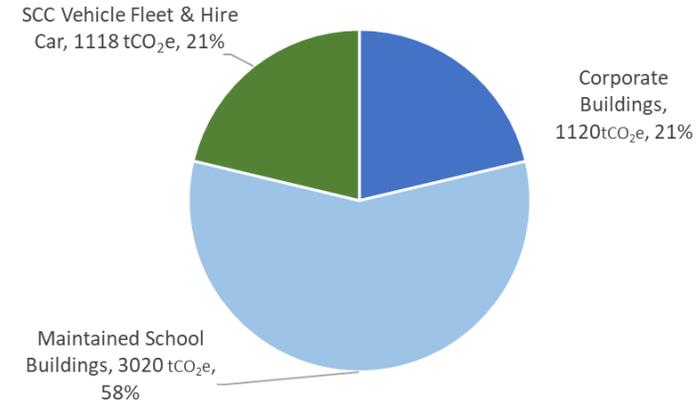
County Council's Carbon Footprint



Somerset County Council Carbon Footprint 2019/20
15,402.79 tCO₂e



Distribution of Reported Scope 1 Emissions



Page 57

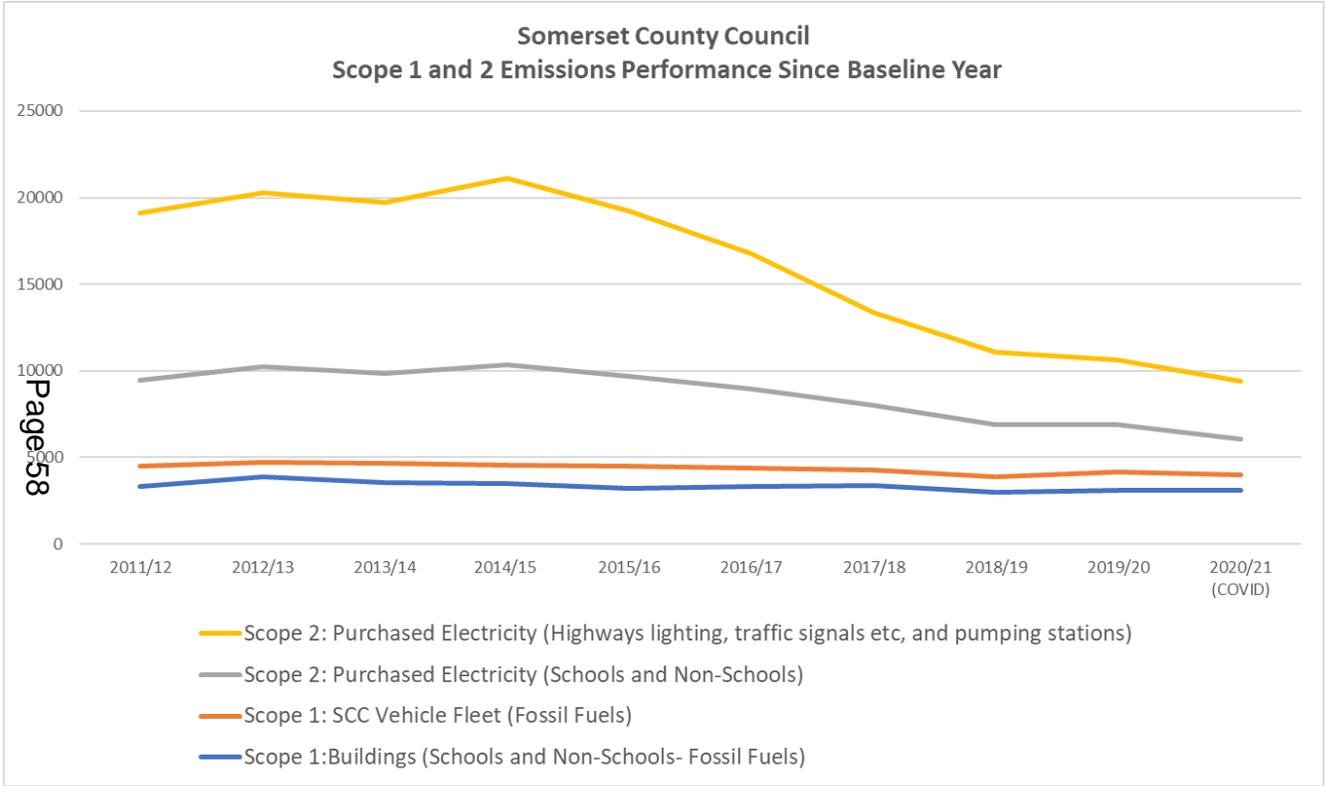
Scope 1: Emissions related to direct fossil fuel usage i.e., heating/hot water, vehicle fleet emissions

Scope 2: Emissions related to purchased electricity

Scope 3: Indirect emissions. (Optional to include under GHG protocol due to issues with data collection, & reliability.

Annual data collated where currently measurable)

Scope 1 and 2 Emissions Performance Since Baseline Year



This graph presents the Council's Scope 1 and 2 emissions performance since the baseline year (excluding emissions reduction resulting from property rationalisation and Academy School conversions)

Scope 2 emissions have reduced significantly since the baseline year due to the implementation of Highways Lighting energy efficiency schemes, coupled with the Grid has become greener due to increased renewable and low carbon energy generation, and closure of fossil fuel power stations.

Scope 1 emissions attributed to the consumption of fossil fuels for heating and transport have remained relatively constant since the baseline year mirroring the UK's greenhouse gas emissions performance to date.

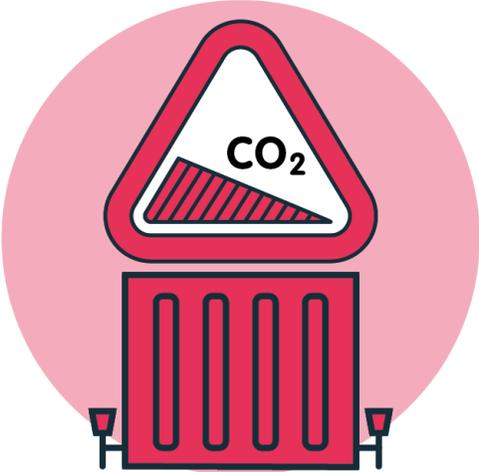
To achieve Net- Zero it is imperative to eliminate the use of fossil fuels for heating and transport.



Summary: Somerset County Council's Decarbonisation Position

Page 59

	Corporate Buildings (Council Occupied)	Maintained School Buildings
Total No. of sites	58	124
All Electric	11	5
Fully decarbonised	8	0
Partial decarbonisation/ energy efficiency work	3	3
Current PSDS Bids	2	2
Current decarbonisation projects (non- PSDS)	4 (+6)	1
Heat Decarbonisation Feasibility Studies (LCSF)	23	73
Energy Audits commissioned by Corporate Property (ELENA)	28	0

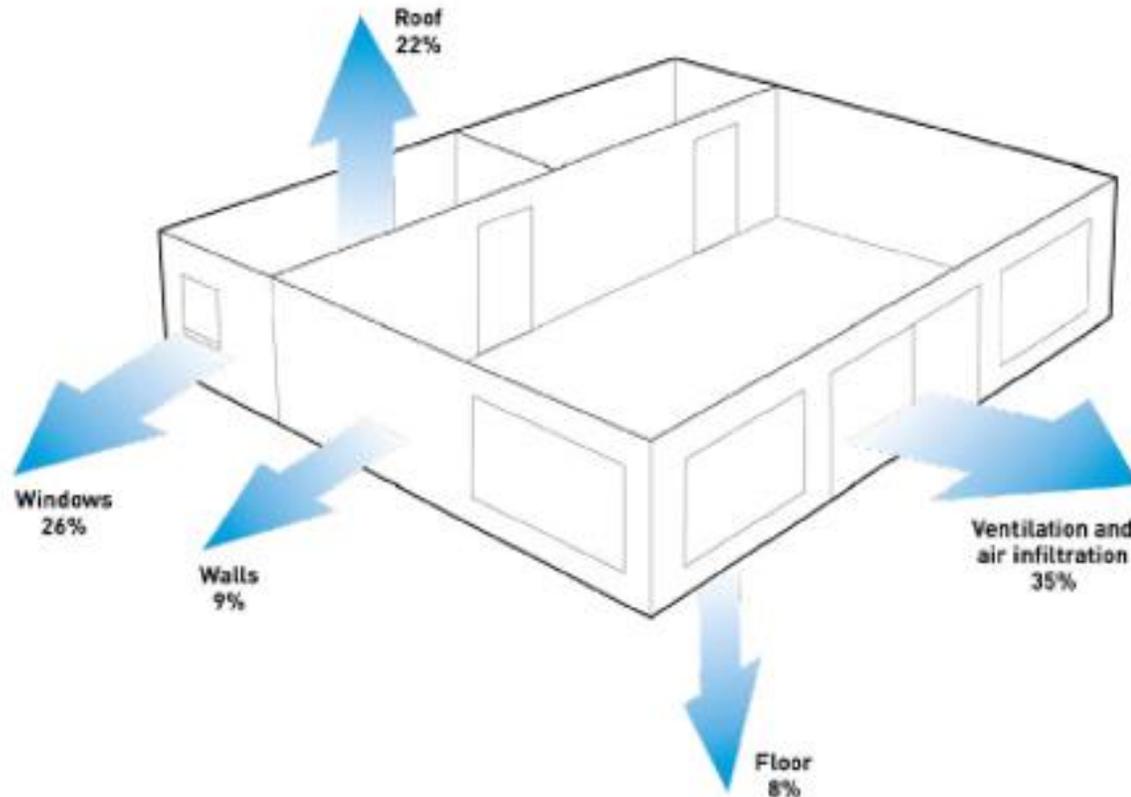


The approach to the challenge



From the Carbon Trust.

Taking a "fabric first" approach is fundamental to the energy performance of a building. The building fabric refers to the roof, walls, windows, floors and doors of a building.



Somerset's Climate Emergency Strategy

GOAL 1

"To decarbonise Local Authorities, the wider public sector estates and reduce our carbon footprint"

Typically 65% of heat input is lost through the building fabric: 35% through vent / air losses.

The Somerset strategy:

- Undertake practical fabric upgrade measures which are financially viable. Opportunity to address building condition programme work at the same time
- Reduce **air infiltration** – where possible installation of a managed ventilation system and heat recovery.
- Remove gas **fuel** supplies and replace with electric
- Include **local generation** (PV) to reduce scope 2 emissions.

The approach to the challenge



Timeline of Somerset County Council's Decarbonisation Journey.

- **Yeovil Library:** Commissioned decarbonisation study December 2019
- August 2020 Initial PSDS Phase 1 announced for October submission
- Bid Announced as successful December 2020
- Construction work May- November 2021 (+7 months)
- **County Hall and Taunton Library**
- Funding awarded February 2021
- Construction period September 2021 to January 2023
- **7 Sites Projects (Frome, Glastonbury, Burnham Libraries, Sydenham and Highbridge Family Centres, Frome Key Centre and Beechtrees Children's Home)**
- Renewable Heat Pilot Study Summer 2020
- PSDS funding awarded March 2021
- Phased approach- 2 priority sites June – September 2021, remaining sites October 2021 – May 2022.

Challenges:

- Pandemic
- Government stimulus package created a shortage of ASHP's (!)
- SALIX: Not been easy!
- Technology + Infrastructure

What has been achieved

Yeovil library



Frome Key Centre



Frome library



Burnham library

What has been achieved



Page 63



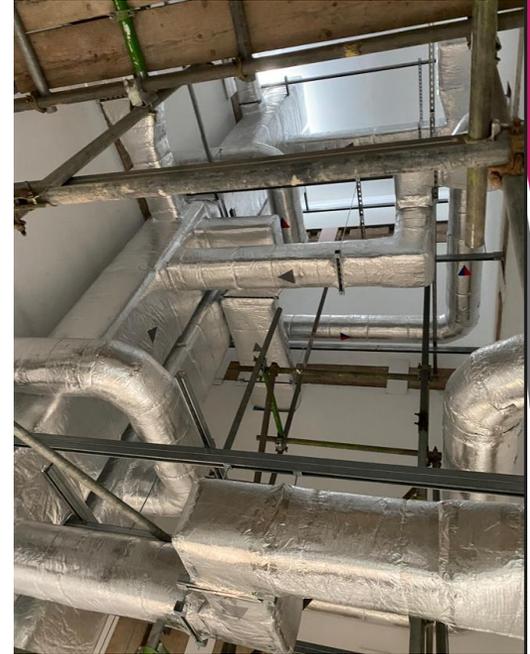
Glastonbury library



Beechtrees



Sydenham Family Centre



County Hall

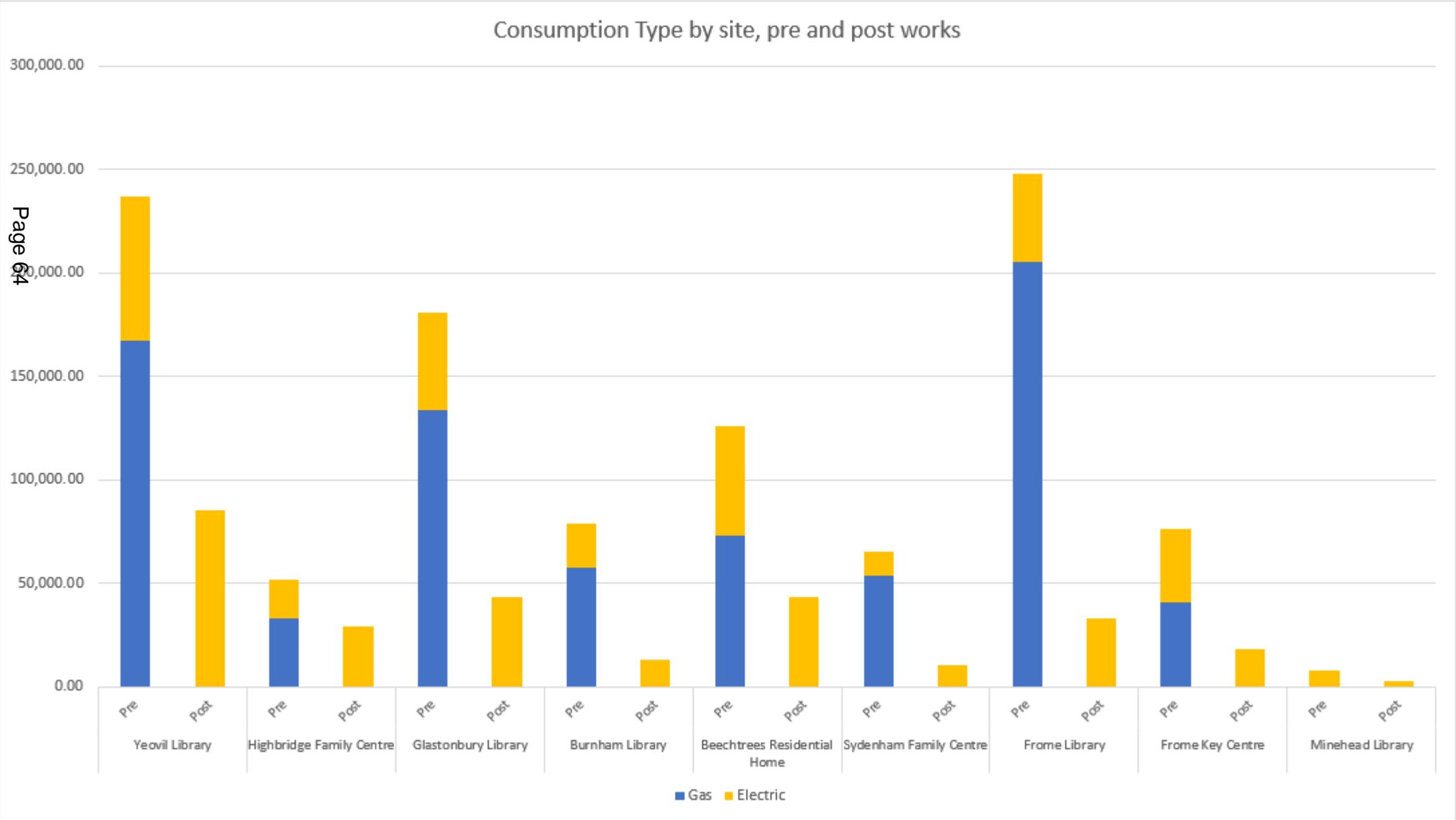


Highbridge Family Centre



improving
LIVES

Results so far



Page 64

What has been achieved



Summary of completed and in progress energy / decarbonisation projects - November 22

Project	PSDS?	Est. annual tCO ₂ e reduction (bold= estimates based on actual readings to date)	Total cost of schemes (note - covers de-carbonisation and condition elements)	Delivery by	Site works dates	£funded by SCC
Chilthorne Domer Primary School	Y	0.63	5,142	SSE	July 21-30/10/21	0
Woolford Infants School	Y	2.9	22,315	SSE	22/7/22-6/9/21	0
Geovil library	Y	29.39	425,000	Futures4Somerset	14/06/21-12/11/21	113,800
Highbridge Family Centre	Y	4.39	119,000	Futures4Somerset	16/08/21-24/9/21	42,206
Glastonbury library	Y	26.65	308,000	Futures4Somerset	18/10/21-04/02/22	15,133
Burnham Library	Y	12.75	269,000	Futures4Somerset	31/01/22-4/4/22	123,505
Beechtrees residential home	Y	16.1	194,000	Futures4Somerset	27/09/21-end March	42,904
Sydenham Family Centre	Y	10.61	314,000	Futures4Somerset	06/12/22-31/3/22	194,242
Frome library	Y	41.54	344,000	Futures4Somerset	06/12/21-31/03/22	111,885
Frome Key Centre	Y	11.29	250,000	Futures4Somerset	15/11/21-11/03/22	152,678
Taunton library	Y		835,000	Willmott Dixon	25/04/22 – 19/9/22	4,913,900
B Block County Hall	Y	190	6,665,000	Willmott Dixon	08/11/21 – 21/11/22	
Shepton Mallet library	N	1.7	81,000	Qube	12/04/21-4/06/21	72,000
Minehead Library	N	1.08	800,000	HBC	03/07/21 - 11/03/22	800,000
Wookey Primary School	N	13.2	377,839	Futures4Somerset	24/10/22-31/3/23	377,839
Wellington library	N	t.b.c.	1,350,000	to be confirmed	March-Nov 23 tbc	1,350,000

New Build / Acquisition Projects

Our Corporate Landlord model allows the council to ensure decarbonisation is considered in every project, including the acquisition or construction of new buildings.

- Taunton Digital Innovation Centre
- St. Dunstans' ASC unit, Glastonbury
- Orchard Grove Primary school
- Children's Residential Homes



The next 6 months

- PSDS 3B funding opportunities and bids
 - Bid window opened 12 October 22
 - £635 million total fund - "sector caps" being introduced – levels not known yet
 - Bids submitted for 6 sites
 - Kilve Court (outdoor education)
 - Williton library
 - Frome Community College
 - Oaklands Primary School, Yeovil
 - Wellington Sports Centre (SW&T)
 - Alcombe Centre (SW&T)
 - Bid outcomes expected March 23
 - Match funding will be required if bids are successful – links to MTFP
- Measuring, targeting, and reporting energy usage/ carbon emissions- property estate.
- Alignment of energy contracts, updating energy policies and procedures in consultation with District Councils.
- Reinvigorating 'Watts On' campaign in conjunction with the Communications Team



The longer term



1. The Clean Growth Strategy states that it wants the public sector to be leader in reducing emissions, to play a key role in demonstrating best practice and catalysing markets in energy efficiency by implementing measures at scale.
2. The Government's pathway to 2032 targets sees emissions from the public sector falling by around 50% compared to today.
3. Decarbonising the public estate is estimated to cost in the region of £30billion.

Page 68

Heat Decarbonisation Plan

Corporate property has been successful in securing £426k from the Government's Low Carbon Skills Fund to support the development of Heat Decarbonisation Plans (HDP) for the property estate.

- HDP 1 (£65K)- 14 Corporate sites (owned and occupied)
- HDP 2 (£361K)- 73 Maintained schools
- Sites selected for inclusion prioritised by energy usage, floor area and age of buildings.
- 'Whole Building' approach to maximise efficiency and savings

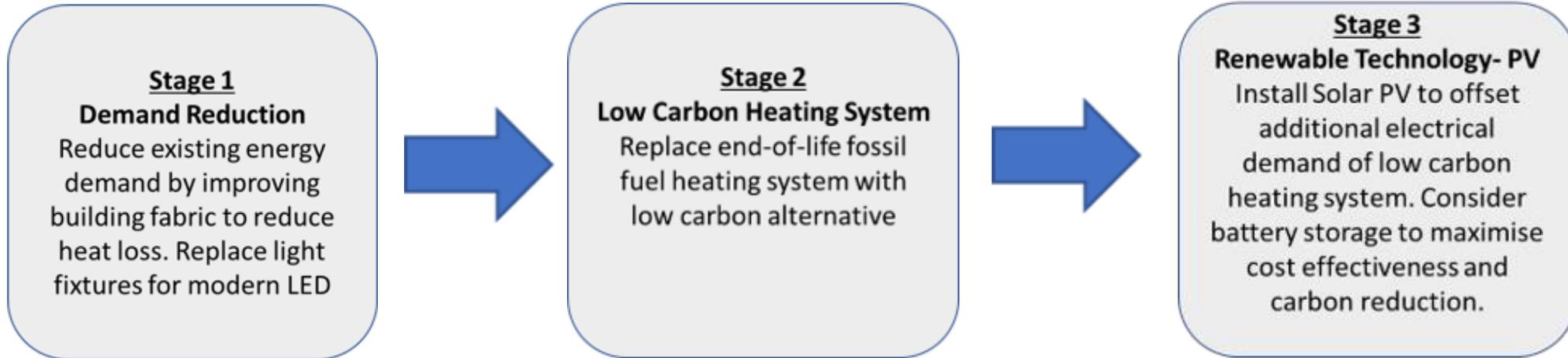


Improving
LIVES

Heat Decarbonisation Plan Outputs



- Bespoke reports for each building (no two buildings are the same)- consisting of three key stages:



- Opportunities to decarbonise heat across all sites surveyed
- Prioritisation of schemes for investment based on when fossil fuel heating systems due for replacement in line with PSDS requirements; Priority 1 (1-2 years), Priority 2 (3-5 years), Priority 3 (5+years)- informs Net Zero Emissions Pathway.
- Identification of Investment required, and information to support future PSDS bids
- Building decarbonisation strategies could be implemented progressively until it is more suitable to transition to a low carbon heating system.
- Identification of energy efficiency 'quick wins' e.g. LED lighting and Solar PV. Key drivers- rising energy costs and energy security!

Heat Decarbonisation Plan- (1 & 2)



HDP 1 Priority	Estimated project Cost	Carbon Saving (tCO ₂ e)
Priority 1 (6 buildings/ blocks)	£2,983,391	79.24
Priority 2 (7 buildings/ blocks)	£1,429,148	62.32
Priority 3 (5 buildings/ blocks)	£855,053	38.43
Totals	£5,267,592	179.99

HDP 2 Priority	Estimated project Cost	Carbon Saving (tCO ₂ e)
Priority 1 (36 buildings/ blocks)	£24,788,550	747.72
Priority 2 (38 buildings/ blocks)	£11,836,100	361.49
Priority 3 (49 buildings/ blocks)	£29,808,700	970.85
Totals	£66,433,350	2080.06

Estimated
Scope 1
emissions
reduction
(Estate)
64%

Looking ahead – Somerset Council

- Joint working – sharing skills, knowledge, best practice

Page 71

Property rationalisation & decarbonisation

- Challenges for the new council
 - Uncertainty - what will the future estate look like?
 - Data / information – incomplete / inconsistent picture
 - Affordability
 - Complexity of estate



This page is intentionally left blank

Somerset County Council
Scrutiny Committee
– 14 December 2022

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) Overview – Mendip Hills

Lead Officer: Jonathan Doyle, Strategic Manager, ECI Commissioning

Author: Jim Hardcastle, AONB Manager, Mendip Hills AONB

Contact Details: jim.hardcastle@somerset.gov.uk

Cabinet Member:

Division and Local Member: Cllr Pauline Ham

1. Summary

1.1. The county of Somerset has a vast range of special landscapes including a number of Protected Landscapes. These include two thirds of Exmoor National Park, the Quantock Hills AONB and parts of the Mendip Hills and Blackdown Hills AONB. There are also small areas of Dorset and Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONBs to the east of the county. The Protected Landscapes deliver or enable delivery across diverse workstreams including climate change adaptation / mitigation, nature recovery, engagement and economic development all influenced by the character of the landscape. The Quantock Hills and Mendip Hills Services are hosted by Somerset County Council.

1.2. The purpose of the report and presentation is to:

- Introduce / update the Committee on the purposes and duties of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Update the Committee on outcomes of the Landscape Review (2019) and implications for AONB Partnerships, Services and local authority partners
- Showcase delivery by the Mendip Hills AONB

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

2.1. Members are asked to consider and note the update.

3. Background

3.1. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – AONBs – are a landscape designation created by the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. They are areas of countryside in England, Wales and Northern Ireland that has been designated for conservation due to their significant landscape value. AONBs have the same level of protection to inappropriate development as national parks but unlike national parks do not have their own planning powers, with the duty being discharged through the constituent local planning authorities.

3.2. The Purpose of AONBs is to conserve and enhance the landscape, with landscape including the scenic landscape, flora & fauna, geology, historic and cultural importance. Currently there are two secondary aims, to meet the need for quiet enjoyment of the countryside and to have regard for the interests of

the local communities living and working within AONBs.

- 3.3.** In 2000 the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) increased regulation and protection of AONBs. Under the Act there is now a requirement for all local authorities with an AONB within their area to produce a management plan and to review the plan at a period not exceeding five years. The Act also placed a requirement that local authorities and other statutory undertakers make sure that all decisions have regard for the purpose of AONBs, including potential effects within and outside of AONB boundaries.
- 3.4.** The Gower and Quantock Hills were the first AONBs designated in 1956, with the Mendip Hills being designated on 1st December 1972. There are now 46 AONBs in Britain, 33 in England, 4 in Wales, 8 in Northern Ireland and 1 which straddles the English / Welsh border. AONBs vary greatly in size, type and landuse. The smallest is the Isles of Scilly at 16km² (6.2 sq mi) and the largest is the Cotswolds at 2,038km² (787 sq mi). Together AONBs cover around 15% of England's land area.
- 3.5.** In 2019 the Landscape Review was published [Landscapes review: National Parks and AONBs](#) . Commissioned by Government in 2018 the review aimed to assess the value and role of National Parks and AONBs in the 70th anniversary year of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. The report concluded that while protected landscapes are delivering much which is good, it falls short of what can be achieved and what society requires. The review recognised that the network of AONBs has different purposes from National Parks, vastly less money but in many cases greater pressures and yet cover areas that are more visited, more biodiverse and are just as beautiful. The review contained 27 proposals ranging from greater funding for AONBs, revised governance, strengthening purposes and powers, increasing the accessibility to all parts of society and connections with nature and wellbeing.
- 3.6.** In January 2022 the Government responded to the Landscapes Review. The response highlighted the will of Government to unlock the potential of AONBs by

 - Renaming AONBs as National Landscapes
 - Creation of a national Landscape, Parks & Trails Partnership – to ensure existing partners (National Parks England, National Association for AONBs, National Trails and National Parks Partnership) work together more effectively.
 - Reviewed or new purposes, specifically in relation to nature recovery and supporting access with specific reference to health & wellbeing.
 - Provision of sustainable funding
 - Robust governance
 - Strengthen the role of AONBs in planning

It is likely that renaming of AONBs and launch of the Landscape, Parks & Trails Partnership will happen during 2023 though it is at a very early stage with uncertainty over the timescale for the other proposals.

- 3.7.** The Mendip Hills AONB covers 198km² (77 sq mi), of note the area contains;
- 5 local authority areas; Somerset County Council (Mendip District 87.67km² 44.3% and Sedgemoor District 34.03km² 17.2%), North Somerset Council 39.35km² 19.9% and Bath & North East Somerset Council 36.95km² 18.6%.
 - 26% of land is designated as a statutory nature conservation site with 29 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Nearly half (48%) of the AONB's SSSIs consist of calcareous grassland, 28% are open water, 11% are earth heritage sites, 6% are broadleaved woodland and the remaining 6% are neutral or acid grassland. There is a national target for 95% of SSSI's by area to be favourable or unfavourable recovering condition, 97% of the Mendip Hills SSSIs are in these categories.
 - 14.5% is woodland with 2.5% of that recognised as Ancient Woodland.
 - The Mendip Hills is important for a number of priority and threatened species – with significant breeding populations of Greater Horseshoe Bat, adder, skylark and many invertebrates. It is the 'assemblage' of good habitats that is noteworthy.
 - Over 1770Ha 8.9% of Open Access land with 447.5km (278miles) of Public Rights of Way.
 - The AONB contains 173 Scheduled Monuments, 206 listed buildings, 1 Scheduled Parks and Garden. This list includes the largest Scheduled Monument in the South West, a WWII decoy city, Europe's first formal cemetery and evidence of humans dating back 500,000 years.
 - The unique geology of limestone over sandstone means there are no rivers rising on the limestone hills, the karst landscape draining water down through the rocks, creating the internationally important cave system, which then emerges at the spring line at the base of the hills. These springs feed the headwaters of the rivers Sheppey, Axe and Cheddar Yeo which in turn feed into the Blagdon Lake Reservoir (Congresbury Yeo), Chew Valley Lake Reservoir (River Chew) and the Cheddar Reservoir (Cheddar Yeo) providing drinking water to around 2 million people.
 - The area contains the international destination of Cheddar Gorge but is predominantly used as a visitor destination by people with a 30 minute radius. The Mendip Hills are culturally significant for outdoor and underground adventure.

Mendip Hills AONB Service budget;
Defra Core Funding £184,662
Somerset CC £34,700

Mendip DC	£8,017
North Somerset UA	£3,500
Sedgemoor DC	£8,001
B&NES UA	£5,000
TOTAL	£243,880

Project Expenditure (External sources)

Connecting on Mendip (National Grid)	£20,000
Defra Access for All	£65,200
Defra Farming in Protected Landscapes	£210,000
Tree planting (various sources)	£35,840
Species Recovery Programme (Natural England)	£9,250
Countryside Stewardship	£6,025
Mendip Hills Fund (visitor giving)	£16,000
TOTAL	£362,315

4. Consultations undertaken

- 4.1.** The Mendip Hills AONB is managed through a Partnership. The report and presentation will provide information on management of the AONB and significant issues.

5. Background papers

- 5.1.** N/a

Note For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author