

Climate Change Adaptation in Somerset using Nature Based Solutions: update

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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