Somerset Objectives & Actions 2023 - 2033

Climate Resilient SOMERSET

This strategy
has been
developed by

With the support of **Evolving Forests**

Environment Agency

Naturally Somerset
Somerset Local Nature partnership

EXMOOR
NATIONAL PARK

Quantock Hills
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Forestry Commission

WOODLAND
TRUST

Trees People Place

The broad themes of the Strategy have been turned into objectives to aid delivery. From these objectives actions are proposed that will allow the Strategy to be successfully delivered.

Treescapes:

Found in all settings from forestland to moorland, agricultural to urban landscapes.

The word treescapes acknowledges the increasing level of importance that trees take on within the landscape.

The Objectives have been grouped in order of priority based on scoring completed by the steering group in 2023.

These priorities may change over time and will be reviewed annually against results and policy changes.

Short-term priority

- Engage communities.
- Recognise the need for the 'tree strategy' to be a living document. Do not let it stagnate.
- Engage young people.
- Encourage increasing structural diversity on a woodland scale.
- Any new combined authority Strategic planning documents must recognise the roles of trees.
- Create linear features to allow connectivity and movement of biodiversity.
- Increase the understanding of the opportunities and issues of treescapes in developments beyond just the aesthetics.
- Bring people in the profession together regularly.
- Rationalise documents and remove (as much as possible) relic documents.

Medium priority

- Create a contract with the steering group and the CC to outline roles and responsibilities.
- Increase urban tree cover in parks and on roadside.
- Aim to plant 240ha/ year in Somerset.
- Identify unmanaged woodland and encourage owners.
- Identify areas where more carbon planting may take place.
- Become a centre of excellence for agroforestry practice.
- Be open minded about species origin and provenance.
- Increase diversity of woodland types on catchment scale.
- Engage FE and HE colleges and training opportunities.

Long-term priority

- Ensure increased tree cover is monitored.
- Encourage thinking on the origin and provenance of stock.
- Be flexible and responsive to emerging opportunities. Use this action plan as a basis for funding bids.
- Create a Somerset First policy for timber use in developments.
- Ensure woodland product and services are ecologically sensitive.
- Ensure support mechanisms for interested parties.
- Trees adapted for shading for people and animals.
- Recognise decline of old orchards & orchard creation in orchards.
- Challenge status quo, an open discussion for new ideas on woodland management.

Wood Culture

Somerset's trees need to rely on a broader cross section of residents to take an active part in their future. Future generations will be impacted most if Somerset's trees are not managed in a resilient way.

Wood Culture

Objectives	Actions
Engage communities	1) Every town and village has access to an accessible treescape. 2) Every town or parish will have a community woodland group that has a stake in it's urban and peri-urban trees that will be used for education and volunteering with a focus on underrepresented members of the community. 3) Promote the concept that trees have multiple values including biodiversity, carbon storage, timber, social prescribing, shading and shelter to people and animals, and enhancing the character of urban and rural landscapes through a promotional campaign about Somerset's trees.
Expand opportunities to connect people	1) Create a "Somerset Woodmeet". A network for foresters, woodspeople, arboriculturalists, planners, community woodland groups, landscape architects, and others in tree-related work to meet informally regularly. 2) Training for architects, landscape architects and developers on incorporating treescapes into developments and how to retrofit car parks, highways, and other neglected spaces with new treescapes. This training should incorporate local planning frameworks and statutory requirements.
Engage young people	1) Every school has access to a woodland close enough to be regularly used with minimal logistics. 2) Every school child has access to a forest school or other woodland educational setting and appropriate resources. 3) Investigate new technologies and platforms for conversations around treescapes, for instance use of virtual reality, social networks, and gaming.
Identify training opportunities	1) Engage two further education colleges in developing forestry or tree-related courses. 2) Develop the green economy by creating short, long, higher and further education courses and apprenticeships in tree work and forestry/woodland management using the Somerset Framework agreement for provision of apprenticeships. This could incorporate T6 forestry apprenticeships.

Resilient & Adaptable Treescapes

Creating resilient and adaptable treescapes will bring greater ecological and economic diversity to our woodlands from a landscape to individual tree level, from unmanaged ancient woodland to restructuring plantations.

Resilient And Adaptable Treescapes

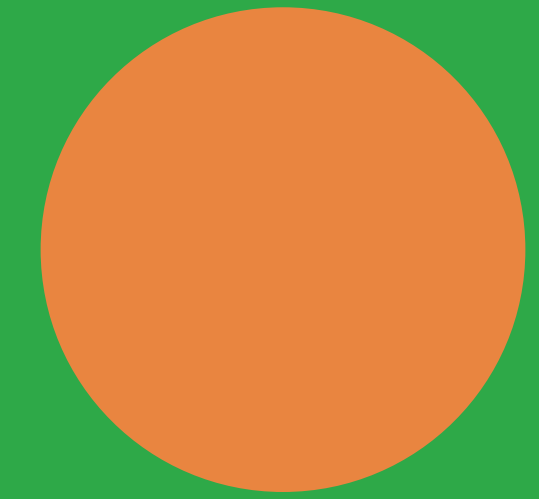| Objectives	Actions
Understand treescape opportunities & issues	1) Use stakeholder consultation to understand ongoing issues with treescape management and identify opportunities. For instance, regular communication with community woodland groups and Somerset Woodmeet. 2) On the back of stakeholder consultation understand the barriers to management that stop owners doing more. This may be different for different character areas in the County. 3) Review published material on species and management options for Somerset landscapes and identify any gaps to guide owners and developers across all treescapes including woodland, urban, and highway. This should consider Somerset's varying landscape characters. Look to combine these into an easily accessible resource.
Identify unmanaged woodland	1) Monitor and increase the percentage of woodland in management as measured by Forestry Commission and actively encourage owners into better management practices. 2) Create a baseline picture of owners intentions and management plans to understand the direction of management of existing woodland. Use this to promote the benefits of appropriate woodland management. 3) Ensure that any future management is in line with the UK Forestry Standard
Increase catchment scale diversity	1) Diversify woodland types in character areas mixing high forest, agroforestry, urban forestry, and newer forms of woodland management. This should be undertaken in line with the character area profiling in the Strategy Evidence Document and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. 2) Owners encouraged to adopt continuous cover forestry and more complex management systems where appropriate. This includes structural diversity in woodland, trees in linear features, and urban settings.

Resilient And Adaptable Treescapes

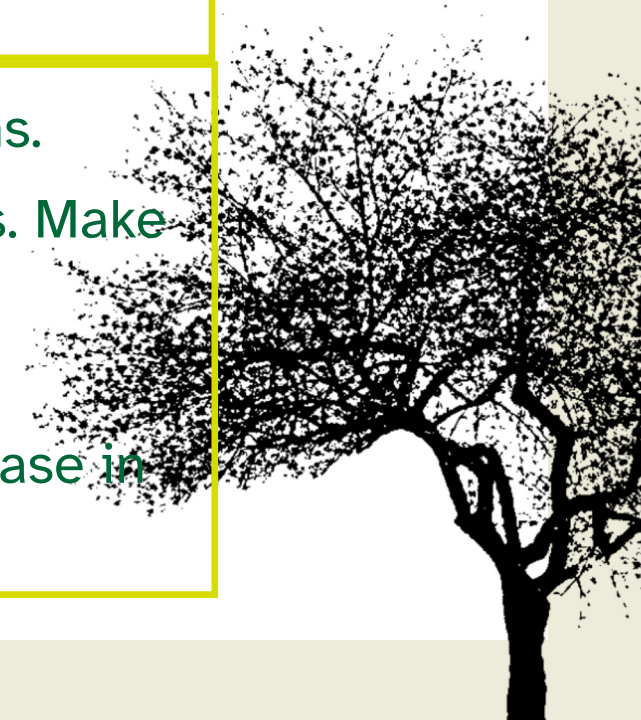| Objectives	Actions
Increase awareness of tree origins	1) Practice and promote trees species selection which is most appropriate to local conditions and adaptable to future climates. 2) Review published material on species and management options and identify gaps for Somerset landscapes to guide owners and developers across all treescapes including woodland, urban, and highway. 3) Be open minded about the vast array of treescapes across Somerset and the implications for species within those treescapes. The suitability of species for example within urban or agroforestry may be different to woodland or commercial forestry.
Ecologically sensitive products & services	1) Create a framework that enables all treescapes in Somerset to be in better ecological condition as a result of their management practices. 2) Somerset's roadside and highway trees will be managed for their biodiversity, ecological value, and contribution to pollution remediation in line with county and national policy and regulations.
Consistently challenge status quo	1) Create an culture that promotes and encourages open discussion for new ideas on woodland and treescape management. 2) Create a subgroup of the steering group to consider new developments in silviculture and tree management and their appropriateness to Somerset. 3) Employ specialist advisors with forestry and arboriculture qualifications that can provide a range of views. These advisors will be available to offer impartial advice to those involved in managing treescapes.

Expanding Tree Cover

There is a need to increase and enhance tree cover. There is also a need to be sensitive to Somerset's varied local landscapes and ecological conditions alongside the many other motivations those planting woodlands will have.

Expanding Tree Cover

Objectives	Actions
Nature recovery	1) Promote the adoption of connective features such as hedgerows, highway verges, and street trees through existing grant schemes and investigate additional sources of funding. 2) Support the creation of corridors of connected treescapes to aid movement of biodiversity across the county. 3) Map out and deliver high-status demonstrator project to create county-wide North to South and East to West tree-based ecological corridor.
Create a minimum 240ha / year	1) Provide County wide support in the form of expert silviculturists and arboriculturalists to advise owners and managers. 2) Create a subgroup of the steering group to work with the Forestry Commission and other statutory bodies to consider contentious tree planting schemes and propose solutions. 3) Create new community, public, and private initiatives to drive increased diverse planting throughout the county, for example every town having a community woodland group that could take responsibility for new urban and peri-urban planting. 4) Monitor new planting of woodland via new planting grants, urban planting, and other schemes to ensure targets are being met. Monitoring should also ensure all new planting is UKFS compliant. 5) Monitor tree loss in woodland systems and urban settings (for instance for new developments). 6) Ensure that these losses are reflected in targets for increased tree cover. 7) Using the mechanisms of Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Biodiversity Net Gain, work with internal stakeholders, landowners and other partners to identify priority locations for tree and woodland cover
Increase urban tree cover	1) Develop a framework for developers to better work with industry experts and professionals to create sustainable tree plans. 2) Somerset Council to investigate the creation of a local planning framework around trees and treescapes in developments. Make it a planning condition that development sites are adequately landscaped with appropriate tree planting. 3) Use Taunton and 'Taunton Garden Town' as exemplar sites for urban tree planting. 4) Create an evidence and expertise base to inform suitable types of tree planting and to target urban areas where an increase in tree canopy is most needed.

Expanding Tree Cover

Objectives	Actions
Encourage specialist planting	1) Identify local areas and opportunities for increased planting to meet the County's carbon obligations and Somerset's Climate Emergency Strategy. 2) Target new woodland planting in locations which help to reduce the risk of flooding to which Somerset is extremely vulnerable. 3) Continue and expand the 'Trees for Water ' planting in locations which will reduce run-off and and soil erosion and is currently run by the Somerset Rivers Authority. 4) Take a right-tree in the right place approach that is led by the owner and their expert manager to fulfil the specialist requirements. 5) Employ specialist advisors with forestry, arboriculture, and ecologically sensitive landscape architect qualifications to be able to give independent advice.
Trees adapted for shading	1) Ensure that tree planting acknowledges the requirement to provide ample shading for animals and people. 2) Increase the knowledge base around the benefits of agroforestry and urban forestry systems. 3) Share knowledge and learnings with non-tree based professionals as well as within industry.

Woodland Services

We will ensure that local communities benefit from their treescapes through the quality of landscape and living space that trees enhance. We will work with land managers, urban planners, developers and community groups as well as public agencies to integrate trees into our living and working landscapes better.

Woodland Services

Objectives	Actions
A centre of agroforestry excellence	1) Map current agroforestry including orchards, willow beds, silvo-arable, silvo-pasture, and forest garden systems. 2) Develop a knowledge base and suite of resources to promote suitable systems within each landscape type. 3) Create an educational offering on agroforestry based on Somerset being a leader in agroforestry. At least one FE college offering an agroforestry focussed course. 4) Increase urban centred agroforestry as an educational tool to showcase both trees and food production, for instance in urban farms or parks and gardens.
Increase local timber use	1) Create a database of existing supply chains of County grown timber to end products. 2) Create and share written and physical case studies of sustainable uses of Somerset timber in projects and communicate these with the community. 3) Undertake engagement events that promote the idea of multi-use treescapes that can provide products and services that include timber and ecosystem services. 4) Actively encourage owners to have type A certification - FSC/PEFC or GiB, or at the very least be UKWAS compliant in order to supply local developments. 5) Research innovative uses for timber coming out of woodland being brought into management as an incentive for owners to bring woodland back into management. 6) Develop markets for 'poor quality source' materials from unmanaged woodlands for instance charcoal to the large tourism sector in Somerset; the potential of biodistillation or wood for carving and turning.

Woodland Services

Objectives	Actions
Enhance the natural capital economy	1) Develop county-wide and landscape character guidance on enhancing natural capital provision such as valuing carbon amenity, ecosystem services etc. 2) Create a web-based portal where those involved can access information on grants and markets for natural capital.

Governance

The broad themes of the Strategy have been turned into objectives to aid delivery and from these objectives actions suggested that will allow the Strategy to be successfully delivered.

Governance

Objectives	Actions
Do not stagnate	1) Recognise the need for the tree strategy to be a living document and put in place a framework for annual review and adaptation. 2) Clearly set out the roles and responsibilities of the council, the steering group, and anyone employed to deliver the strategy.
Rationalise documents	1) Review, remove, and archive (as much as possible) relic documents including past strategies no longer in use and may confuse ongoing work.
Planning recognises role of trees	1) Create a new Supplementary Planning Document that recognises the vital role of trees in their work and future/ forward plans. This should be implemented within the council's planning policies. 2) Ensure the Steering Group are represented or allowed to comment on any new planning documents to do with rural, urban, development or highway proposals.
Steering group	1) Revise the make up of the Steering group concentrating on roles needed and agree with Somerset Council. 2) Create a contract between the steering group and the council to outline roles, responsibilities, and provide accountability for actions. 3) Steering group to create a wider group of experts with whom they discuss focussed issues and opportunities.

Governance

Objectives	Actions
Financing the strategy	1) Monitor grants and funding including land management grants and more strategic funds. Create a web portal to communicate resources and funding opportunities. 2) Steering group to negotiate with the council on budget and budget responsibility for fulfilling the strategy.
Links with policy & strategies	1) Maintain links with steering groups and other regional policy makers including Local Nature Recovery Partnership. 2) Ensure that the steering group has at least one member that can ensure national guidelines and policy (e.g UKFS) is being upheld in all actions. 3) Ensure connection with tree, environmental, and urban regeneration strategies. For instance Somerset's Local Nature Recovery strategy, Somerset Trees for Water, Taunton Garden Town, sub-regional local plans.

Trees and woodland priority by character area

The priorities of the strategy have been ranked against the character areas present in Somerset. Respondents were asked to score each priority high medium or low for each character area.
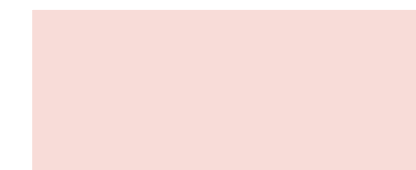
The results give a broad indication of the type of treescape management that might be appropriate in each area.

High priority

Moderately important

Less importance for specific area

Trees and woodland priorities as scored by Steering Group

	Levels and Moors	Mendip Hills	Yeovil S'plands	Exmoor	Vale of Taunton	Blackdown Hills	Quantocks	Mid-S'set Hills
Diversify woodland types								
Increase tree cover								
Create linear features								
Be open minded about species and origin								
Opportunity for agroforestry								
Increase urban tree cover								
Trees in urban developments								
Ensure all woodlands are in management								
Increase tree based carbon stocks								
Contribute to home-grown timber								