

Public Agenda Pack



Notice of Meeting of

EXECUTIVE

Wednesday, 7 June 2023 at 10.00 am

Luttrell Room - County Hall, Taunton TA1 4DY

To: The members of the Executive

Chair: Councillor Bill Revans
Vice-chair: Councillor Liz Leyshon

Councillor Theo Butt Philip	Councillor Adam Dance
Councillor Sarah Dyke	Councillor Tessa Munt
Councillor Mike Rigby	Councillor Dean Ruddle
Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts	Councillor Ros Wyke

For further information about the meeting, including how to join the meeting virtually, please contact Democratic Services democraticservicesteam@somerset.gov.uk.

All members of the public are welcome to attend our meetings and ask questions or make a statement **by giving advance notice** in writing or by e-mail to the Monitoring Officer at email: democraticservicesteam@somerset.gov.uk by **5pm on Thursday, 1 June 2023**.

This meeting will be open to the public and press, subject to the passing of any resolution under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A: Access to Information.

The meeting will be webcast and an audio recording made.

Issued by (the Proper Officer) on Tuesday, 30 May 2023

AGENDA

Executive - 10.00 am Wednesday, 7 June 2023

Public Guidance Notes contained in Agenda Annexe (Pages 5 - 6)

Click here to join the online meeting (Pages 7 - 8)

1 Apologies for Absence

To receive any apologies for absence.

2 Minutes from the Previous Meeting 10 May 2023 (Pages 9 - 14)

To approve the minutes from the previous meeting.

3 Declarations of Interest (Pages 15 - 16)

To receive and note any declarations of disclosable pecuniary **interests, other registrable interests and non-registrable interests** in respect of any matters included on the agenda for consideration at this meeting. (The **other registrable interests** of Councillors of Somerset Council, arising from membership of City, Town or Parish Councils and other Local Authorities will automatically be recorded in the minutes).

4 Public Question Time

The Chair to advise the Committee of any items on which members of the public have requested to speak and advise those members of the public present of the details of the Council's public participation scheme.

For those members of the public who have submitted any questions or statements, please note, a three minute time limit applies to each speaker and you will be asked to speak before Councillors debate the issue.

We are now live webcasting most of our committee meetings and you are welcome to view and listen to the discussion. The link to each webcast will be available on the meeting webpage, please see details under 'click here to join online meeting'.

5 Adult and Health Services Transformation (Pages 17 - 54)

To consider the report.

6 Adoption of the Somerset Tree Strategy (Pages 55 - 158)

To consider the report.

7 Early Careers Strategy (Pages 159 - 198)

To consider the report.

8 Executive Forward Plan

To note the latest Executive Forward Plan of planned key decisions that have been published on the Council's website – [Executive Forward Plan](#).

Guidance notes for the meeting

Council Public Meetings

The legislation that governs Council meetings requires that committee meetings are held face-to-face. The requirement is for members of the committee and key supporting officers (report authors and statutory 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.

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 [Committee structure - Modern Council \(somerset.gov.uk\)](#)

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](#)

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.

Public Question Time

If you wish to speak or ask a question about any matter on the Committee's agenda please contact Democratic Services by 5pm providing 3 clear working days before the meeting. (for example, for a meeting being held on a Wednesday, the deadline will be 5pm on the Thursday prior to 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, or alternatively can attend the meeting online.

A 20-minute time slot for Public Question Time is set aside near the beginning of the meeting, after the minutes of the previous meeting have been agreed. Each speaker will have 3 minutes to address the committee.

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.

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.

There is a facility in Microsoft Teams under the ellipsis button called turn on live captions which provides subtitles on the screen.

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.

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.

Microsoft Teams meeting

Join on your computer, mobile app or room device

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 326 070 249 670

Passcode: okznxa

[Download Teams](#) | [Join on the web](#)

Or call in (audio only)

[+44 1823 772277,,333179709#](#) United Kingdom, Taunton

Phone Conference ID: 333 179 709#

This page is intentionally left blank



Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive held in the Luttrell Room - County Hall, Taunton TA1 4DY, on Wednesday, 10 May 2023 at 10.00 am

Present:

Cllr Bill Revans (Chair)
Cllr Liz Leyshon (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Adam Dance	Cllr Sarah Dyke
Cllr Tessa Munt	Cllr Mike Rigby
Cllr Heather Shearer	Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts
Cllr Ros Wyke	

Other Members in Attendance

Cllr Steve Ashton, Cllr Tom Deakin, Cllr Habib Farbahi, Cllr Dean Ruddle, Cllr Fran Smith, Cllr Lucy Trimmell, Cllr Sarah Wakefield

Other Members in Virtual Attendance

Cllr Adam Boyden, Cllr Mandy Chilcott, Cllr David Fothergill, Cllr Andy Hadley, Cllr Marcus Kravis, Cllr Tony Lock, Cllr Diogo Rodrigues, Cllr Jo Roundell Greene, Cllr Gill Slocombe, Cllr Mike Stanton, Cllr David Woan.

1 Apologies for Absence – Agenda Item 1

Apologies were received from Cllr Val Keitch (in virtual attendance)

Flooding in the County

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Revans, referred to the overnight significant flooding incident in areas of Somerset, thanking all involved in reacting, finding solutions and supporting residents impacted by the situation.

At the invitation of the Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Revans, the Executive Director, Climate and Place, Mickey Green, provided an update on the conditions, resulting from flash flooding in South Somerset, highlighting; the coordinated response and multi-agency meetings held and further plans to support and act should the situation worsen; the areas of concern and work of Somerset Council officers alongside the emergency services and volunteers to support and assist those

impacted and assist in the continued recovery operation.

The Lead Member for Environment and Climate Change, Cllr Sarah Dyke, and the Lead Member for Transport and Digital, Cllr Mike Rigby, further added to the above points advising of the significant road debris and landslides, the investigation and potential intervention to understand the situation and work towards future prevention.

The Service Director Public Health, Lou Woolway, added to the above points advising of work taking place from a Public Health perspective, using learning from previous flooding incidents with the focus on the potential sewage leaks and use of generators indoors.

2 Minutes from the Previous Meeting – Agenda Item 2

The minutes of the Executive meeting held on 15 March 2023 were agreed upon, and signed by the Chair.

3 Declarations of Interest – Agenda Item 3

To receive and note any declarations of disclosable pecuniary or prejudicial or personal interests in respect of any matters included on the agenda for consideration at this meeting. (The personal interests of Councillors of Somerset Council, Town or Parish Councils and other Local Authorities will automatically be recorded in the minutes.)

Members of the Executive declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Member of a City/Town, or Parish Council:

Cllr A Dance – South Petherton Parish Council

Cllr V Keitch – Ilminster Town Council

Cllr M Rigby – Bishop’s Lydeard and Cothelstone Parish Council

Cllr H Shearer – Street Parish Council

Cllr F Smith-Roberts – Taunton Town Council

Cllr R Wyke – Vice Chair Westbury-sub-Mendip Parish Council

4 Public Question Time – Agenda Item 4

The Chair noted that there had been no public questions submitted by the published submission deadline.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Revans, paid tribute to Somerset Councillor, Cllr Mike Lewis, who sadly passed away 2 May 2023.

5 Equality Audit, Assessment and Peer Challenge – Agenda Item 5

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Revans, invited the Lead Member for Public Health and Equalities, Cllr Adam Dance, to introduce the report.

The Lead Member for Public Health and Equalities, Cllr Adam Dance, introduced the report, highlighting: that the paper proposed the completion of three external audit processes to help identify where the Council is working well, areas of improvement and assist with identified actions needed to make the improvements; that with the transition to a single authority in Somerset there was the opportunity to review, reassess and establish a direction and fresh benchmark going forward for Somerset Council.

At the invitation of the Lead Member the Public Health Promotion Manager-Equalities, Tom Rutland, proceeded to present the report, highlighting: the three proposed external audits and the work processes to bring the assessments together to contribute to the Council's ongoing commitment and improvement around equality and diversity; the three audits: Disability Confident Leader Assessment, Internal Race Audit, Equality Framework for Local Government Peer Assessment; and the provision of a robust action plan to support progress.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Revans, invited comments from other Members present, questions and points raised included: the welcome work during the early formation of Somerset Council; the learning from the five previous Council's; the organisational wide training, including Elected Members and staff; the importance of understanding equality and diversity across the organisation; the role of a 'champion' for effective guidance and challenge; the duty under the equality legislation and the opportunity to look to assess function as an organisation; public and community engagement; the capacity and resource of the team to achieve recommendations; and the work with partners to build into service provision.

The Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources and Performance, Cllr Liz Leyshon, emphasised the importance of the Member Equality Steering Group (MESG) and asked for assurance of the involvement of the MESG in the planned work through April 2024.

In response, the Public Health Promotion Manager-Equalities, Tom Rutland, advised of the support and involvement of the MESG thus far and confirmed that the

future involvement of MESH to be integral to the audit processes and the promotion of the organisational direction.

The Executive proceeded to vote on the recommendations, which were agreed unanimously.

Following consideration of the officer report, appendices and discussion, the Executive

- **Approved the Council undertaking a Disability Confident Leader assessment in June. This will include the preparation work, audit process and receiving the recommendations and findings that come from this audit.**
- **Approved the Council undertaking an internal Race Audit in August. This will include the preparation work, audit process and receiving the recommendations and findings that come from this audit.**
- **Approved the commitment to deliver training on race and challenging behaviour.**
- **Approved the Council undertaking an Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) Peer Assessment in October. This will include the preparation work, 3-day external Peer Assessment, receiving the recommendations and findings that come from this assessment and agreed to receive a response to this report.**
- **Acknowledged the level of commitment that will be needed from the whole organisation, and partners, over the coming year to support these three processes.**

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.

REASON FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.

6 Street Naming & Numbering Policy adoption – Agenda Item 6

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Revans, invited the Lead Member for Communities, Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts, to introduce the report.

The Lead Member for Communities, Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts, introduced the report, highlighting: that Somerset Council is now the statutory body responsible for the establishment and operation of the street naming and numbering service to

ensure that all properties in the area are officially addressed, formerly the remit of district councils operating in a two-tier local government system; and the options considered.

The Executive Director for Strategy, Workforce and Localities, Alyn Jones, further added to the above points, highlighting; the background to the street naming and legislation process, framework and policy.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Revans, invited comments from other Members present, questions and points raised included; the legislation and governance route of policy adoption; street naming consultation with local communities and Parish Councils.

The Lead Member for Prosperity, Assets and Development, Cllr Ros Wyke, asked that a formal protocol be considered for the process of consulting with Parish Councils regarding street naming.

In response, the Digital Systems and IT Manager, Adam Rhymer, confirmed that currently full consultation is given as a matter of courtesy to Parish Councils, and that the delivery of the service and policy forming is set to go through the relevant workstream to form a policy of working arrangement and engagement with Parish Councils.

The Executive proceeded to vote on the recommendations, which were agreed unanimously.

Following consideration of the officer report, appendices and discussion, the Executive noted and approved:

- **The intention of the Council to adopt the legislation identified as Option A, and the proposed policy, to enable and support the operation of the Street Naming and Numbering Service.**
- **The delegation of authority to the Executive Director Strategy, Workforce & Localities to place the relevant notices in accordance with paragraph 25 of Schedule 14 Local Government Act 1972 confirming the intention set out at paragraph 9(a) of the report; and**
- **Further to the notices under 9(b) being issued and the relevant time periods elapsing, that authority be delegated to Executive Director Strategy, Workforce & Localities to arrange to submit the proposal to adopt the Option A legislation, and the draft policy, to Full Council for adoption at the next available date.**

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report.

REASON FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report.

7 Executive Forward Plan – Agenda Item 7 - Agenda Item 7

The Executive noted the Forward Plan

(The meeting ended)

.....
CHAIR



Somerset
Council

SOMERSET COUNCIL

COUNCILLORS WHO ARE ALSO CITY, TOWN AND/OR PARISH COUNCILLORS

SOMERSET COUNCILLOR	CITY, TOWN AND/OR PARISH COUNCIL
Steve Ashton	Crewkerne Town Council / Hinton St George Parish Council
Suria Aujla	Bridgwater Town Council
Jason Baker	Chard Town Council
Lee Baker	Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council
Marcus Barr	Wellington Town Council
Mike Best	Crewkerne Town Council
Alan Bradford	North Petherton Town Council
Theo Butt Philip	Wells City Council
Simon Carswell	Street Parish Council
Norman Cavill	West Monkton Parish Council
Peter Clayton	Burnham Highbridge Town Council
Nick Cottle	Glastonbury Town Council / St Edmunds Parish Council
Adam Dance	South Petherton Parish Council
Tom Deakin	Taunton Town Council
Caroline Ellis	Taunton Town Council
Ben Ferguson	Axbridge Town Council
Bob Filmer	Brent Knoll Parish Council
Andrew Govier	Wellington Town Council
Pauline Ham	Axbridge Town Council
Philip Ham	Coleford Parish Council
Ross Henley	Wellington Town Council
Edric Hobbs	Shepton Mallet Town Council
John Hunt	Bishop's Hull Parish Council
Val Keitch	Ilminster Town Council
Andy Kendall	Yeovil Town Council
Jenny Kenton	Chard Town Council
Tim Kerley	Somerton Town Council
Marcus Kravis	Minehead Town Council
Tony Lock	Yeovil Town Council
Martin Lovell	Shepton Mallet Town Council
Mike Murphy	Burnham Highbridge Town Council
Graham Oakes	Yeovil Town Council / Yeovil Without Parish Council
Sue Osborne	Ilminster Town Council

Kathy Pearce	Bridgwater Town Council
Emily Pearlstone	Ilchester Parish Council
Evie Potts-Jones	Yeovil Town Council
Wes Read	Yeovil Town Council
Leigh Redman	Bridgwater Town Council
Mike Rigby	Bishop's Lydeard and Cothelstone Parish Council
Tony Robbins	Wells City Council
Dean Ruddle	Somerton Town Council
Peter Seib	Brympton Parish Council / Chilthorne Domer Parish Council
Heather Shearer	Street Parish Council
Gill Slocombe	Bridgwater Town Council
Brian Smedley	Bridgwater Town Council
Federica Smith-Roberts	Taunton Town Council
Jeny Snell	Yeovil Town Council / Brympton Parish Council
Andy Soughton	Yeovil Town Council
Richard Wilkins	Curry Rivel Parish Council
Dave Woan	Yeovil Town Council
Ros Wyke	Westbury-sub-Mendip Parish Council

The memberships of City, Parish or Town Councils will be taken as being declared by these Councillors to be other registerable interests in the business of the Somerset Council meeting and need not be declared verbally.

Monitoring Officer of Somerset Council



Decision Report - Executive Decision

Forward Plan Reference: FP/23/04/07

Decision Date – 7 Jun 2023

Key Decision – Yes

ASC Transformation Proposal: Options for Implementing Opportunities Identified in the Diagnostic of Adults Services

Executive Member(s): Cllr Heather Shearer

Local Member(s) and Division: n/a

Lead Officer: Mel Lock, Executive Director, Adults Services

Author: Anna Littlewood, Service Director, Adults Transformation

Contact Details: anna.littlewood@somerset.gov.uk

Summary / Background

1. Adult Social Care is a key statutory duty for Somerset Council and approximately 38% of Councils net revenue budget for 2023/24. The vast majority of the budget is spent on supporting people in receipt of statutory services, including investment in prevention and short-term support. Somerset's spend per adult is in line with the average for England and lower than the average for the Southwest. Somerset benchmarks particularly low when it comes to spend on older people.
2. The Adults budget is growing, and this growth is driven by demographics, increasing complexity of need, and the rising costs of care. The council has some ability to control this growth by working to improve people's independence and delay or prevent the need for long term services. This is not only better for the budget, but it also improves the lives of the people we work with, delivering better outcomes and increasing wellbeing.
3. The Adult Services net revenue budget set in February 2023 increased by £26m from £160m in 2022/23 to £186m in 2023/24. This increase was reflective of the £11.9m overspend in 2022/23 and significant pressure with higher demand driven by the long tail of the pandemic and higher costs due to inflation rates. It included £5m of savings from changing how the service was delivered.
4. An external partner, Newton Europe, was procured in November 2022 to carry out a diagnostic review across all provision to identify the best opportunities for controlling future spend through optimising productivity, managing demand into the service and ensuring that people who draw on services and their carers are at the heart of designing their own support, and future service models.

5. This paper presents the key findings of this diagnostic and sets out the options for the major transformation of the Adults Services and achieving the cost reductions in a timely way.
6. This highlighted major opportunities to change and improve how we deliver Adults Services. Three primary areas were identified to improve outcomes for residents, supported by five enabling workstreams:

Improving outcomes:

- **Improving the environment within which our practitioners operate** so they have the tools to do the job; the time, support, processes, and access to the right services, to help people maximise their independence.
- **Ensuring we have the right care available in the right place, at the right time;** focussing on supporting working age adults (Learning Disabilities /Mental Health / Physical Disabilities) to gain skills and progress to more independent care settings.
- **Optimising our intermediate care, in particular our discharge to assess and reablement service** to both support people to return to greater independence, and to have the capacity for more people to move through the service each year.

Enabling areas:

- **Develop the workforce,** including focussing on improving productivity in social care teams and reducing backlogs for assessments and reviews.
- **Optimise the process of sourcing care** to maximise availability of the right support and reduce delays.
- **Develop the right performance management dashboards,** framework and culture, to support teams to use data on a daily, weekly and monthly basis to drive performance.
- **Develop a process and approach to financial monitoring,** to rigorously track the performance of improvement projects and ensure the target benefit is being achieved.
- **Where required, develop our digital and technology infrastructure** to enable the above including a new digital assessment tool.

7. These key opportunities, supported by the enablers, when delivered will lead to significantly improved outcomes for the residents of Somerset. These outcomes are based on prevention, better use of communities and reabling people to maintain independence, therefore reducing the need for long term services:
 - **700 more people benefiting from reablement every year.**

- **200,000+ fewer hours of homecare needing to be commissioned every year.**
 - **80 fewer residential placements needing to be commissioned every year.**
 - **100 adults with a learning disability moving out of a residential home and back into the community.**
8. The diagnostic identified opportunities to deliver recurring savings to the scale of approximately £14.2m per year, stretching to a possible £17.2m. The majority of the savings are in the form of demand management, controlling the growth of the Adults budget by the projected amount. This scale of savings will only be achieved if we are able to deliver the required programme of change at the pace outlined in the diagnostic report, over the next 14-18 months.
9. The council now needs to take a decision on how to proceed and deliver these transformational opportunities to realise the projected cost reductions and the improved outcomes for local people. The 'do nothing' approach is not an option as this would mean continuing to add significant pressure to the Councils budget position.

There are therefore three options to do this;

- 1) To **deliver the required transformation programme using existing internal capacity and skills**, both from within Adults Services and from the corporate business change team. The identified savings would take longer to achieve with the timeframe being potentially 2-3 times as long as that proposed in the diagnostic report. This option puts additional pressure on an already stretched workforce and carries no guarantees that the savings will be realised. This transformation programme is of a similar scale and complexity as the unitary programme. Due to this we do not have the capacity within the new council to deliver both programmes of change.
- 2) To **continue the strategic partnership with Newton Europe** to implement the next phase of transformation under the procurement framework of the initial engagement. The projected savings would be guaranteed using a 100% contingent commercial fee model. The cost of this option would be approximately £7m over the next 18 months, however the contract would guarantee recurring savings of at least £10m-£14.2m per annum. This includes a team of 15 specialist staff from Newton and includes a learning and development programme for Somerset colleagues to improve their knowledge, skills in behaviours in managing change - leaving us in a better place to lead future change programmes.

- 3) To **undertake a further procurement exercise to open up the opportunity for a strategic partner to implement these opportunities alongside the service**. This option risks either low response from the market due to the contract being to deliver the findings from a competitor's diagnostic or the successful organisation taking 3-6 months to perform their own diagnostic before designing their version of a transformation programme for Adults Services. Requiring a similar contingent fee model for this work would reduce the market for responses even further. This would significantly delay the achievement of the savings.
10. The **preferred option is option 2; to further engage Newton Europe in this next phase of transformation**. It will be a significant invest to save programme for the Council and a unique opportunity for major transformational change, within Adult Social Services. It will be delivered collaboratively with a highly experienced strategic partner, with a one-off cost of up to £7m (paid over two years) that is 100% contingent on the delivery of better outcomes for people. Newton would guarantee to deliver at least 1.3 times the one-off combined fee for Phases 1 & 2 (Diagnostic & Implementation Programme) in recurrent, annual financial benefit (£10.0m guaranteed benefit per year at full run rate). If this is not the case, either Newton will continue to work at no extra charge until this is realised, or the fee will be reduced, pro rata. We are confident that a targeted value of £14.2m of recurrent savings through managed demand will be deliverable against this fee.

Recommendations

11. The Executive agrees:
- a) The aims and objectives of the next phase of the Transformation Programme for Adults Services
 - b) To engage Newton Europe as strategic change partner to work alongside the service to deliver these transformational objectives by implementing the opportunities identified in the diagnostic and support the delivery of identified reductions.
 - c) To fund the costs of the transformation programme of £3.5m each year for the next two years initially from Earmarked Reserves and review the

position later in the financial year once the 2022/23 statement of accounts from the predecessor councils has been completed.

Reasons for recommendations

12. A strategic delivery partner with a track record of achieving results brings a rapid and sustained injection of capacity as well as consistent experience and tried and tested models of change delivered at scale. Integrated working with a delivery partner reduces the risks of benefits not lasting and can support the development of in-house capability.
13. Newton Europe as a leading partner in Adult Social Care and Local Government will complement the existing resource, skills and capacity within Somerset to support the implementation and long-term sustainability of this major transformation change within Adult Social Care. The proposal will bring opportunities for extending our own in-house business change capability and identify opportunities to extend benefits more widely across the organisation.
14. Through the diagnostic work completed to date, we have identified that the potential to achieve better, more independent outcomes for people is possible. Arising from improved outcomes is the potential for delivering significant recurrent financial benefits against the Adult Social Services budget. The anticipated volume changes as a result of the transformation proposed would achieve a targeted recurrent annual benefit of £14.2m.
15. The sustainable annualised benefit is broken down in an “Opportunity Matrix” described in Table 1 below. As part of the Diagnostic Phase, a likely “targeted” value was derived. This targeted value considers our relative starting position and itself represents a major step change. However, at the same time we derived a “stretch” figure that would show us the potential if we maximised all aspects of model.
16. Consolidating this level of change whilst sustaining and improving outcomes for people and managing within a tight financial envelope will require a range of skills and capacity. Through a competitive process we sought a partner who had extensive transformation experience in transforming Adult Social Care and one that would use a robust evidence base while working in close collaboration to identify opportunities and work with us to deliver those outcomes. Implementation would follow a tried and tested methodology that focuses on front line led change with solutions and opportunities being rigorously tested, piloted, implemented and embedded over a period of 18 months to ensure that they are sustainable in the longer term.

17. What the fee is paying for

a. The core delivery team

- The team will peak at 15 Newton staff, working full time on the Somerset programme for 12 to 15 months
- This team will have a blend of expertise, across:
 - Operational change specialists with strong public sector experience (around 70% of the team)
 - Digital specialists (around 20% of the team)
 - Behavioural change specialists (around 10% of the team)
- The team will be varied throughout the course of the programme according to what is required to deliver the agreed benefits; additional resource is put in at Newton's cost with the fee remaining fixed

b. Specialist support

- Newton have a team of specialists, outside of the core team, who will be drawn on as required. These specialists include:
 - Data engineers
 - Software engineers
 - Data scientists
 - User experience designers
 - Leadership development specialists / coaches
 - Learning and development specialists

c. Skills transfer

- The programme team will be built jointly between Newton and Somerset colleagues
- The Somerset colleagues joining the team will have a access to an L&D programme, including days of focussed training (3-4 days as a kick-off / induction) along with support on the job
- The ambition is that the Somerset team will be equipped to continue to improve performance following the core programme, and to lead future change programmes

d. Advice and guidance from experienced senior advisors

- Newton's team of senior advisors will be on hand to provide support and guidance as required.
- This would be both 'behind the scenes' directly to the Newton team, as well as working directly with Somerset colleagues as required and appropriate.

- e. Quality assurance and senior oversight
 - Regular quality assurance will be provided by senior members of Newton's leadership team (usually 2-4 days / month)
 - Somerset will also have regular access to members of the Newton senior leadership team as required

- f. Intellectual property
 - Newton have extensive IP, built over partnering with 100+ public sector organisations; all IP relevant to Somerset will be openly shared.
 - Any IP developed during the partnership will be freely licensed to Somerset.

Table 1: Indicative resource required from Somerset Council. Requirement for 4 FTE delivery leads (from operational, commissioning or P&C team). Required roles in bold, additional roles that will depend on scope or early design in italics.

Worksteam	Role	Suggested time requirement	Requirements or 'nice to haves' for individual
Programme Leadership	Programme Sponsor	0.25 days/week	
Programme Leadership	Programme Lead	Full time	
Programme Leadership	Programme Governance and Alignment	1-2 days/week	
Whole Life Disability workstreams	Sponsor - Ops	0.25 days/week	
Whole Life Disability workstreams	Sponsor - Commissioning	0.25 days/week	
Transitions / Preparing for Adulthood	Delivery Lead	Full time – activity to begin Sept 23	
Progressions, Enablement and Moves	Delivery Lead	Full time – activity to begin Sept 23	Often helpful to have someone with practice experience in this role but not essential
D2A / Reablement	Sponsor - Ops	0.25 days/week	
D2A / Reablement	Sponsor - Commissioning	0.25 days/week	
D2A / Reablement	Delivery Lead	Full time – activity to begin Jun 23	

Older Adults Outcomes from Decision Making	Sponsor - Ops	0.25 days/week	
Older Adults Outcomes from Decision Making	Sponsor - Commissioning	0.25 days/week	
Older Adults Outcomes from Decision Making	Delivery Lead	Full time – activity to begin Aug 23	
Performance Management	Sponsor	1 days/week	Initially high input required tapering to 0.25 days a week in monitoring
Financial Monitoring	Sponsor	1-2 days/week	Initially high input required tapering to 0.25 days a week in monitoring
<i>Digital Infrastructure</i>	<i>Sponsor</i>	0.25 days/week	Dependant on identified digital requirements (e.g. bringing together health and social care data in D2A work)
<i>Short Term Impact</i>	<i>Sponsor</i>	0.25 days/week	Involved with or has understanding of existing short term impact initiatives

Table 2: Opportunity Matrix

	Opportunity	Outcomes / operational impact	Key metric impacted	Scaled Opportunity	Stretch Opportunity
Older Adults	Outcomes from Decision Making (Older People)	Driving more independent outcomes through strength-based practice, improved care capacity and more creative alternatives to formal support.	Reduced hours of homecare Reduced resi/nursing starts	£1.8M	£2.2M
	Short term services (including reablement) capacity optimisation and increased referrals	More people accessing short term services (who need it)	Increased reablement finishers	£6.7M	£8.1m
	Short term services (including reablement) effectiveness	Greater effectiveness of short-term services	Reduced hours of homecare	£2.8M	£3.3M
	Older Adults Total			£11.3M	£13.6M
Working	Effective transitions to adulthood	Increased independence for young people as they transition to becoming an adult	Reduced average package cost 18-25	£0.4M	£0.6M

	Outcomes from Decision Making	Driving more independent outcomes through strength-based practice, improved care capacity and more creative alternatives to formal support.	Reduced residential/supported-living starts. Reducing Home care Hours	£0.2M	£0.3M
	Progression / enablement	More working age adults living independently in their community	Number of moves completed to more independent settings. Reduced Homecare*	£2.0M	£2.4M
	Working Age Adults Total			£2.6M	£3.3M
All Adults	Outcomes from Decision Making (Mental Health, Physical Disabilities, other)	Driving more independent outcomes through strength-based practice, improved care capacity and more creative alternatives to formal support.	Reduced hours of homecare Reduced resi/nursing starts	£0.3M	£0.3M
	All Adults Total			£0.3M	£0.3M
Opportunity Matrix Total			£14.2M	£17.2M	

18. The tracking of benefits and financial impact will follow a rigorous approach and is outlined in more detail in the financial legal implications sections of this report.
19. Provided the work can mobilise quickly, £10m of this can be delivered by the end of year 2. These targets are based on mobilising the programme in July '23 and taking 18 months to achieve full implementation.

Table 2: Benefits profile

	FY23/24	FY24/25	FY25/26	FY26/27
Reductions target	£0.2m	£10.4m	£13.1m	£14.2m
<i>Stretch targets</i>	<i>£0.7m</i>	<i>£13.1m</i>	<i>£16.1m</i>	<i>£17.0m</i>

Other local authorities and health systems have engaged Newton Europe to deliver similar pieces of work, with evidence of successful realisation of savings target and improved outcomes for local people. The table below has been compiled both with evidence provided by Newton (that has been agreed with the local authorities in question) and through direct conversations with directors in other organisations.

Please take note of the Derby City testimony where a decision was made not to implement the outputs of the diagnostic.

Table 3: Other Local Authorities' Experiences

Leicestershire County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 150 older adults per year now avoid going into residential care. • The reablement service became 27% more effective. • During the programme, over 50 adults with learning disabilities moved out of residential care into supported living, or other community settings. • The programme was signed off as having delivered £11.8m recurrent financial benefit. <p><i>Email from Director at Leicestershire</i></p> <p><i>“They do have a tried and tested methodology on both the adults and children’s (less so on SEN). Our decision to appoint was taken on the basis we just did not have the</i></p>
-------------------------------	---

	<p><i>inhouse change skills to ensure the change was implemented successfully and stuck. We do not have any regrets, though there are a few things we possibly would have done slightly differently on childrens. However, they did deliver the savings and made quality improvements that could well help re future Ofsted. Your decision could be a little like ours - and hinge on whether you have the capability to do it yourself.”</i></p>
Lancashire County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 450 fewer people going inappropriately into residential care each year. • 80% more service users receiving reablement within existing commissioned capacity. • 15% more independent outcomes achieved for citizens from the improved reablement service. • £27m annualised savings.
Derbyshire County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 78% more people are accessing short-term enabling services - an increase of 1,800 people each year. • More people are supported to stay home with 1/3 fewer residential placements. • The programme achieved over £21m in annualised financial benefit.
Essex County Council	<p><i>“We were very impressed with the work of Newton Europe, and they are easily the best consultants we have worked with. They are doers and are very good at connecting with partners.</i></p> <p><i>Our programme has been successful – and also won the national LGC award for integration in 2022. We are pleased that we can see and measure the improved ways of working, with less people going into residential care and lower levels of care packages being required.</i></p> <p><i>In a nutshell, I would recommend them”</i></p>
Derby city	<p><i>From conversation with Director</i></p> <p><i>Derby Urgent Care System previously did a diagnostic with Newton and decided not to proceed to implementation due to lack of buy-in across wider system partners. However, 5</i></p>

	<i>years later and issues in the system have not moved forward at the pace we needed. We have just completed a second diagnostic and are more positive about taking a joint decision across the system to proceed with them to implementation.</i>
Nottinghamshire	<i>From conversation with Director “Took forward opportunities directed at improving reablement and overachieved on the savings. I enjoyed working with them, they bring insight, focus and pace. They work bottom up at practitioner level. They are worth the investment, but it is a leap of faith. The experiences of older adults massively improved as did staff wellbeing.”</i>

Other options considered

20. The Adults Transformation Programme was set up in May 2022 and focussed on delivering the government reform agenda, preparations for assurance, a major restructure of operational teams and a redesign of home care. It also has resources and projects linked into the digital and workforce programmes being delivered at the level of the Integrated Care System. Major elements of the government ASC reform agenda have since been delayed, most prominently Charging Reform and the delivery of Liberty Protection Safeguards. The programme has been successful in the mobilisation, design and early implementation phases of assurance, operations restructure and home care redesign and these workstreams are now being transitioned into business as usual. The programme therefore is in a transitional stage and will become the delivery vehicle for implementing the opportunities outlined in this report.
21. Consideration has been given to delivering this work with our existing change team and operational and commissioning staff. There is, within the Council, considerable knowledge and experience in change. There is also considerable pressure on our change resource across the new council as services transition to operating as part of a unitary authority. Given the scale and pace of change needed within Adults Services in the current challenging environment, as well as the complexity of change required, it was felt that this would be strongly supported by continuing to work with Newton Europe as our Strategic Partner. If we were to deliver this alone it is likely that the delivery timeframes of the scale of change required would be too long to realise the £10m cost control target for the Adults Budget. We would also need to invest and expand the business change team working across adults, building in time for recruitment.

22. Consideration has also been given to returning to the market and conducting another open procurement exercise to invite other change partners to tender for the opportunity. This option risks either low response from the market due to the contract being to deliver the findings from a competitor's diagnostic or the successful organisation taking 3-6 months to perform their own diagnostic before designing their version of a transformation programme for Adults Services. Requiring a similar contingent fee model for this work would reduce the market for responses even further.

Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan

23. This proposal supports the Council Plan priorities 2023-2027 in the following ways.
- A healthy and caring Somerset. The opportunities focus on promoting the independence of the older people and working age adults that we support. The health and wellbeing of individuals is at the heart of improving adults' services.
 - A fairer, ambitious Somerset. The proposal will enable a step-change in the way adult social services are delivered in partnership with the NHS. This has the potential to improve already good services to become excellent and a flagship in the region. By improving access to reablement in particular increased gives people a fairer chance at independence.
 - A flourishing and resilient Somerset. By improving the lives of the people we support we enable them to flourish in their own communities and empower them to make the choices that are right for them and their lives. By providing the right care at the right place at the right time, people are more resilient to changes.
 - A greener, more sustainable Somerset. Working at a more local level in communities has environmental benefits as well as supporting local communities to thrive in the way they are able to support their own populations.
24. There are also strong links to the Adult Social Care Strategy 2023-2026 particularly the priorities 'Prevention and Early Help' and Right Support, Right Place, Right Time.
25. The Medium-Term Financial Plan for the council is dependent on Adults Services delivering a balanced budget. This work will enable the service to make a step change in how the service manages budget growth and help to secure the delivery of the Medium-Term Financial Plan for the Council.

Financial and Risk Implications

26. Against the 2022/23 net revenue budget of £160m for the Adult Social Care there was an overspend of £11.9m. There was an investment of £0.5m November 2022 to procure Newton Europe, to undertake a diagnostic across all provision to identify the best opportunities for controlling future spend through optimising productivity, managing demand into the service and ensuring that people who draw on services and their carers are at the heart of designing their own support, and future service models.
27. Their early work identified that significant on-going reductions to cost could be achieved and savings of £10m were built into the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) with a profile of £5m in the 2023/24 budget and a further £5m in 2024/25. After considering these cost reductions, significant pressure with higher demand driven by the long tail of the pandemic and higher costs due to inflation and the 2022/23 overspend, the budget for 2023/24 was increased by 16% to £186m.
28. The diagnostic by Newton Europe has identified that reductions in cost of £14.2m can be achieved over a 4-year period with a stretched target of £17m.

	FY23/24	FY24/25	FY25/26	FY26/27
Reductions target	£0.2m	£10.4m	£13.1m	£14.2m
<i>Stretch targets</i>	<i>£0.7m</i>	<i>£13.1m</i>	<i>£16.1m</i>	<i>£17.0m</i>

29. The profile of the cost reductions is different those built into MTFP in February and will cause a pressure within the service of £4.8m in 2023/24 but will help in future years.
30. In order to deliver these on-going reductions, there is the one-off costs of the contract with Newton Europe of up to £7m. This transformational activity would meet the criteria for the flexible use of capital receipts but at this stage this investment in transformation should be funded from Earmarked Reserves and with the 2023/24 costs from the social care volatility reserve. Once the 2022/23 Statement of Accounts for the 5 processor councils have been completed, we will be reviewing reserve and capital receipts position for the Somerset Council and

will report any changes to funding of the investment to the Executive. We will be seeking to work with our system partners who will also potentially benefit from this work to minimise the cost to the council.

31. Engagement of Newton Europe to support the delivery of the Adult Social Care Transformation Programme would be based on the following core principles:
 - a) 100% of fee is contingent on delivery of outcomes. In the Design and Implementation phase Newton would guarantee to deliver at least 1.3 times the one-off fee in recurrent, annual financial benefit. This means at a minimum the partnership needs to deliver at least £10m for Newton Europe to attract their full fee. However, we are confident that a targeted value of £14.2m of recurrent savings will be deliverable against this fee. Newton Europe conduct business largely through reputation and have a strong track record of meeting or exceeding the targets set.
 - b) The programme would be planned and resourced to deliver the full target benefits value of £14.2m. At the end of the design and implementation phase, if the final benefits are less than the guaranteed savings, then Newton will rebate its fees until the 1.3 times ratio is achieved. For clarity, in the unlikely event that only £3m of recurrent benefit is delivered, the total fee (including Diagnostic fee already paid) would be proportionately reduced to £2.3m. In the extreme worst-case scenario, if nothing is delivered, then Somerset Council would pay nothing, including receiving a rebate for the diagnostic fee.
 - c) With the fixed maximum fee, if circumstances require Newton to put more resource into delivering the target financial benefit than originally planned, they do so at their own risk and at no additional expense to Somerset Council.
 - d) Newton includes a mechanism to allow Somerset to terminate the contract at any time, by giving a few weeks' notice, for any reason, paying only for work done to date.
32. Alongside financial challenges we recognise that aspects of our service delivery are not where we need it to be and that we are now entering the new assurance regime for Adult Social Care. There is a likelihood that this process will identify requirement for improvements. Conducting a large-scale transformation programme at this time to improve outcomes and control the budget will help to mitigate the risk of an adverse report as a result of ASC Assurance.

33. Relevant key risks in the Adult Social Care Risk Register (with JCAD reference) are set out below including a revised risk score as a result of the proposed decision.

Current risk: AANDH0030 – Adult Social Care unable to achieve MTFP targets / deliver a balanced budget (costs exceed available resources) (AMBER/MEDIUM RISK)					
Risk Management as a result of proposed decision: During the mobilisation of the programme a rigorous approach to benefits tracking will be developed to give confidence in unlocking the benefits realisation. This will include.					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational KPI development and tracking against agreed baselines, along with evidence from trials to provide clarity of impact of the change programme. • Use of agreed financial equations and benefits model to determine forecast financial benefit based on the observed changes in operational KPI's. • Reconciliation of actuals vs forecast 					
During the timeline of the programme, operational KPI performance must be sustained for an agreed period before signed off as achieved.					
What is unquantifiable at this stage is the impact of external factors (such as increasing cost of the market, or a pandemic) but would need to be understood if occurred.					
Likelihood	3	Impact	3	Risk Score	9
				Revised Risk Score	9

Current Risk: AANDH0033 – Insufficient staffing resource and capacity to contribute to/deliver against transformation projects alongside core BAU activity (AMBER/MEDIUM RISK)					
Risk Management as a result of proposed decision:					

Working with Newton Europe will bring a team of highly skilled specialists alongside our workforce. Whilst this is an injection of transformation capacity, the activity will drive the requirement for input from our operational and commissioning teams to contribute and implement changes. Therefore, the risk remains at the same level of likelihood and impact.					
Likelihood	3	Impact	3	Risk Score	9
			Revised Risk Score	9	

Legal Implications

34. The Commercial & Procurement Team and Legal Services Contract team are fully engaged in the process of awarding this contract and have had early view on a draft contract so that any early implications can be understood for the purposes of this key decision. No negotiations will take place until the key decision has been taken and the call-in period has passed.
35. The Commercial & Procurement Team have confirmed that direct award for the continuation into implementation is possible under the framework through which Newton Europe were originally engaged in Nov 22.
36. In recognising the financial risk of any investment, the contract will be structured to make all attempts to minimise any downside risk, whilst enabling us to maximise upside potential. There are therefore a number of accompanying assurance mechanisms, including rigorous KPI monitoring, robust programme governance, contractual mechanisms to enable early termination and invoicing check points with the ability to pause payments should delivery and benefits fall significantly behind plan. This is also referred to in the Financial Implications section above.
37. A clear statement of aims will be set out in the contract with appropriate break clauses built in to protect funding. The data protection agreement that has been in place throughout the diagnostic will be extended to cover the implementation phase.
38. The programme will be accountable to the Corporate Transition, Transformation and Change Board. This will ensure alignment with other major programmes of change for the council.
39. SWAP Internal Audit will undertake an audit of the programme deliverables against the agreed project initiation document and the contract, 6-9months into the programme.

HR Implications

40. The proposal will provide opportunities for staff development and skills transfer in both Adult Social Care as well as more widely across the Council. This work will provide staff with opportunities to expand their skills and learning. The business change team aligned to Adults Services will play a lead role in supporting Newton Europe with this proposal's implementation alongside Finance and Performance colleagues.
41. The transformation programme will be front line led and will work alongside the operational and commissioning staff in Adult Social Care to design, pilot and implement a new way of working in Somerset. The Newton methodology ensures that staff and teams are inextricably linked to the design of improvements and their implementation. Adult Social Services are committed to ensuring the right resources are available to support its implementation.
42. The operational teams are currently going through a restructure aimed at building smaller local teams and developing some specialised teams. This is an investment in the workforce and will ensure that the structure and numbers of staff are fit for the future of adult social care. Whilst there will be some challenges in delivering this work alongside the restructure, there are opportunities to use the transformation work to establish new ways of working and develop exciting work plans for these new teams.

Other Implications:

Equalities Implications

43. The council's lead equalities officer, consulted as part of this proposal, has confirmed that an Equalities Impact Assessment is not yet required for the purposes of this paper. This is because this paper is proposing an approach to implementing a list of potential opportunities that will not see a reduction or removal of existing service. Detail of how these opportunities will be taken forward into changes that will be implemented on the ground will come out of the design and testing phase of each workstream. Before implementation these will require standalone decisions and considerations of due regard
44. It is therefore proposed that an approach to ensuring due regard for protected groups should be woven into the design and testing stages of each workstream. This standardised approach to equalities will be taken across the implementation of the programme, and will include:
 - Somerset Equalities Awareness training for all members of the programme team including Newton Europe staff.

- An initial consideration of equalities impacts through the design phases of each workstream. The testing phase will then be used to monitor and evaluate these identified impacts and actions to mitigate them.
- Equalities Impact Assessment completed at the end of this phase for each workstream progressing to implementation, which should be signed off by the programme board.
- Recognising that the due regard legislation is non-transferable the role and responsibility for equalities will sit with the Somerset Council staff member (sponsor) who is responsible for each workstream.
- An ongoing consideration review of potential impacts on staff will be maintained through the implementation phase to make sure they can inform any permanent implementation.

Community Safety Implications

45. Positive impact upon quality of life and wellbeing of individuals whose care and support is improved because of this work.
46. No other community safety implications identified.

Climate Change and Sustainability Implications

47. Where possible adults services endeavours to meet local needs locally and the transformation taken forward as a result of these opportunities will maintain this principle. This is supported by a move to more localised operational teams which the opportunities for improvements will be built around.
48. Provision of appropriate and sustainable housing is also at the heart of making sure people get the right care in the right place at the right time. This element will feature particularly in the improvements for working aged adults that come out of this work.

Health and Safety Implications

49. No implications

Health and Wellbeing Implications

50. From the Health and Wellbeing Strategy the proposal has:
- significant positive impacts on health and wellbeing

- significant positive impacts on preventing ill-health (physical and mental health)
 - significant positive impacts on reducing health and social inequalities.
51. Significant improvements will be seen for elderly people who would benefit from being able to access more better quality reablement to maintain their independence at home for longer. Similarly for people with learning disabilities or physical disabilities, the enabling workstream will increase the number of working age adults living independently in their community. For children transitioning into adults services, we also expect to see an improvement in their options for independence.

Social Value

52. We know that Adult Social Care contributes to at least £50.3 billion to the economy in England and provides significant societal benefits.
53. The economic contribution is important because it is conducted across the country and is a higher share of economic activity in poorest areas. Meaning that future investment automatically supports the levelling up agenda.
54. Developing employment, skills, and training opportunities for people physical and learning disabilities is part of the strategy to help them to live independently in their own communities. This will be explored in the enabling workstream.
55. Many of the opportunities identified to take forward are focussed on improving the health and wellbeing of individuals, maintaining independence, and reducing inequalities of local residents and employees.

Scrutiny comments / recommendations:

56. The scrutiny Committee are meeting to discuss this matter on a date following the publication of this paper. Any comments will be as an addendum to the report at the Executive meeting.

Background

57. In November 2022 Adult Social Services sought a strategic partner to work with Adult Social Care to undertake a forensic diagnostic look at our Services with a focus on understanding the opportunities to ensure consistent, person-centred, independence-focused outcomes for all the people we support. Newton Europe, following a procurement tendering process, were successful. The diagnostic provided Adult Social Services with the evidence upon which we could envisage

and build a future programme of transformative change to improve services, improve outcomes and deliver required savings.

58. Newton Europe worked alongside Adult Social Services to use the evidence to produce a sustainable, measurable and outcome focused transformation strategy and implementation plan. A plan that is grounded in data and evidence and one that will set out the opportunities for the medium to long term in Adult Social Care. Developed in close collaboration with front line staff and senior leaders, it maps a clearly articulated plan that is underpinned by robust performance management and financial monitoring principles. This plan focuses on developing a sustainable Adult Social Care service for residents to support people to be more independent for longer.
59. This is an ambitious proposal that embraces the fundamental challenges in Adult Social Care and sets out a clear vision for the future. The programme is grounded in the core principles of the Adult Social Care Strategy and underpinned by the strategic vision of Somerset Council, focusing on preventing, reducing and delaying the need for formal Adult Social Care services, and supporting people to live as independently as possible with the right support at the right time.

Summary of Diagnostic Outputs

60. The Diagnostic took place from November 2022 to March 2023, and set out to undertake an evidence-based review of our services, identifying our areas of strengths and pressures, what we need to change, and how to deliver change successfully. The activity included workshops with colleagues, reviewing over 100 service user journeys through the Somerset system, joining team meetings, and shadowing individuals to better understand their role and challenges. It also included analysis of data from multiple sources – those already collected on finance and business intelligence systems, as well as surveys and studies with frontline staff. This has generated prioritised opportunities for change and a plan linked to our Adult Social Care Strategy to improve outcomes, staff and resident experience, and make sustainable financial savings.
61. We reviewed real service user journeys with a multi-disciplinary group of practitioners and asked if the person had achieved the ideal outcome for them – and if not, why not. We saw that we have brilliant staff in our organisation who regularly support service users to achieve ideal, independence-focused outcomes. We also know that we don't always achieve these outcomes consistently. Through these workshops, we found the potential to improve

outcomes for **54% of the service users reviewed**. The opportunities for improved outcomes lay in three key areas:

- 1) Providing the right environment for our teams to practice
- 2) Being able to provide the right care, in the right place, at the right time.
- 3) Optimising intermediate care

The right environment for our teams to practice

62. In 38% of cases, practitioners felt that decision-making led to a non-ideal outcome for our service users.

- We know that our teams are struggling to keep pace with demand, resulting in increasing backlogs of Care Act Assessments and reviews. This means that our practitioners are feeling the pressure to balance all aspects of their roles and have the appropriate time to work through more creative or strengths-based solutions for our service users.
- Backlogs are growing across teams and, while variable between teams, productivity is lower than we would like. Teams reported feeling that our processes and systems do not always support them in their role efficiently and effectively and there are some unclear roles and responsibilities between teams.
- The pressure of feeling personal accountability if something went wrong and the pressure from expectations of service users and families also impacts our practitioners.

63. We can achieve more ideal outcomes more consistently for the people we support by **creating an environment which supports and enables practitioners to make the best use of their professional skillset**; including their support and leadership, time and tools that support them in their ways of working, and how we manage and monitor performance.

The right care, in the right place, at the right time

64. In 36% of cases, practitioners felt that not having the right commissioned services available led to a non-ideal outcome for our service users.

- Having the right services and settings available for our service users is vital to achieving more ideal outcomes. For our older adult population, we want to see a shift towards more independent settings, such as homecare and extra care housing, and away from residential and nursing placements.

- This pattern of greater independence is also reflected in support for our adults with learning disabilities, where more ideal outcomes could be achieved through Shared Lives and supported living rather than residential care.
- To achieve this for both of these cohorts, we need the right settings commissioned in the right volumes, which are easy to access.
- Workshops with practitioners also found that we could improve future independence for 70% of adults with learning disabilities reviewed, including moving into more independent accommodation settings, with the appropriate goal setting and reviews process and support from enabling services.
- A key enabler to achieving this more ideal balance of provision is being able to source the right care from our providers, in a timely way.
- Having the right pathway through our services is also important, not least for those young people preparing for adulthood, by ensuring planning for transition from an earlier age.

65. With the **right provision of services** that are easy to access and are focused on achieving goals for our service users and **pathways** that work more effectively across teams and organisations, we can support more ideal outcomes for the people we support – ensuring they are in the most independent setting possible for them.

Optimising intermediate care

66. Our reablement service could be supporting more people to live more independently. While we currently support over 150 people every month in this service, the diagnostic found additional demand for this service in both our hospital and community pathways.

- The number of people who successfully finish a reablement period every month has fallen significantly since mid-2021 and is below benchmarks for counties of a comparable size.
- We know there are up to an additional 250 people per month who could benefit from this service, across both hospital and community pathways. This would impact their long-term care needs and support them to a more independent outcome.
- There are opportunities to unlock some of this capacity within the current service model, by reducing delays in the service to impact length of stay and by realising a higher number of commissioned hours from providers. We can also consider options to further increase the capacity of this service through exploring alternative models of reablement provision.

- The effectiveness of the service – the impact on long-term care needs – is also variable between providers, and there are opportunities to improve through greater access to specialist support from therapists and ensuring a strong improvement cycle to review cases within the service.
67. Optimising delivery of our D2A and reablement service would increase capacity, allow for a greater number of referrals into the service and increase the effectiveness for each individual.
68. **The diagnostic also identified key areas of change that would enable the opportunities described above:**
- Develop the workforce alongside the current operational restructure, including **improving productivity** in social care teams and reducing backlogs for assessments and reviews.
 - Optimise the process of **sourcing care** ensuring clarity on roles and responsibilities and appropriate alignment with operational teams, to maximise availability of the right support and reduce delays.
 - Develop the right **performance management dashboards**, governance framework and culture throughout all levels of the organisation, to support teams to use data on a daily, weekly and monthly basis to drive performance.
 - Develop a process and approach to **financial monitoring**, to rigorously track key metrics and understand the performance of improvement projects and ensure the target benefit is being achieved.
 - Where required, develop our **digital and technology infrastructure** to enable delivery of the opportunities above.
69. These key opportunities, supported by the enablers, when delivered will lead to significantly improved outcomes for the residents of Somerset:
- **200,000+ fewer hours of homecare commissioned every year.**
 - **80 fewer residential placements commissioned every year.**
 - **100 adults with a learning disability moving out of a residential home and back into the community.**
 - **700 more people benefiting from reablement every year.**
70. Additionally, this work will deliver in excess of £14m saving per year against the ASC budget. Refer to table 1: Opportunity Matrix in the above report.

Background Papers

- Exec Summary report from ASC Diagnostic
- [Adult Social Care Strategy 2023-2026](#)

Appendices

1. Future Focus Implementation Pack: Newton Europe Implementation Proposal

Report Sign-Off (if appropriate)

	Officer Name	Date Completed
Legal & Governance Implications	David Clark	12 th May
Communications	Chris Palmer	17 th May
Finance & Procurement	Jason Vaughan	11 th May
Workforce	Chris Squire	12 th May
Asset Management	N/A	
Strategy & Performance	Alyn Jones	21 st May
Executive Lead Member	Cllr Heather Shearer	17 th May
Consulted:		
Local Division Members	N/A	
Opposition Spokesperson	Cllr Sue Osborne	18 th May
Scrutiny Chair	Cllr Gill Slocombe	18 th May

This page is intentionally left blank

Adults Transformation

Options for Implementing Opportunities Identified
in the Diagnostic of Adults Services



Adults Services: current pressures

- Adults Services budget is £186m and growing each year and accounts for 38% of council budget
- Drivers of growth are demographics, complexity of need and cost of care
- We can control some of this growth by improving people's independence and delay need for long term services.
This is better for people and also better for the budget
- Adults has growth control target of £10m next year (also referred to as 'savings target')
- But....

Page 46

Service continues to experience **high demand** due to tail of pandemic

Inflation continues to drive up the **cost of care**

Already there is **pressure on 23/24** due to high cost of care

Hospital discharge too dependent on expensive beds

MTFP savings initiatives alone will not manage the budget growth

Economic value of Social Care

- 1.5m people are offered care and support in the UK
- Around 361,000 people reside in homes
- 818,000 receive publicly funded care and support in care homes or in the community in 2021/22
- 289,000 were 18/64
- Care and support creates 1.5million jobs
- 4.7m people provide some unpaid care to family and friends
- Estimated 15m people 1-3 of the population take part in informal volunteering

Page 47

Adult social care contributes to at **least £50.3 billion** to the economy in England and provides significant societal benefits

- **The Gross Value Add (GVA)** of the sector has **increased each year** since 2016/17, especially during the pandemic.
- The economic contribution is important because it is carried out across the country and is a **higher share of economic activity in poorest areas**. Meaning that future investment automatically **supports the levelling up agenda**.

Diagnostic: summary of outputs

An external partner, Newton Europe, was procured in Nov 22 to undertake a detailed diagnostic across Adults Services. This highlighted major opportunities to change and improve how we deliver Adults Services. Three main areas were identified, supported by 5 enabling workstreams:

Improving Outcomes:

1. **Improving the environment within which our practitioners operate** so they have the tools to do the job; the time, support, processes, and access to the right services, to help people maximise their independence.
2. **Ensuring we have the right care available in the right place, at the right time**; focussing on supporting working age adults (Learning Disabilities /Mental Health / Physical Disabilities) to gain skills and progress to more independent care settings.
3. **Optimising our intermediate care, in particular our discharge to assess and reablement service** to both support people to return to greater independence, and to have the capacity for more people to move through the service each year.

Enabling areas:

- Develop the workforce
- Optimise the process of sourcing
- Develop the right performance management dashboards
- Develop a process and approach to financial monitoring
- Where required, develop our digital and technology infrastructure

These key opportunities, when delivered, will lead to significantly improved outcomes for the residents of Somerset:

- **200,000+ fewer hours of homecare commissioned every year**
- **80 fewer residential placements commissioned every year**
- **100 adults with a learning disability moving out of a residential home and back into the community**
- **700 more people benefiting from reablement every year**

As well as improved outcomes, the opportunities are projected to deliver **recurring savings to the scale of approximately £14.2m per year**, stretching to a possible £17.2m.

The majority of the savings are in the form of demand management, controlling the growth of the Adults budget by the projected amount.

By improving outcomes, this work will deliver in excess of £14m per annum

Modelled as reductions against budget, assume forecast growth is accurate

	Opportunity	Outcomes / operational impact	Key metric impacted	Scaled Opportunity	Stretch Opportunity
Older Adults	Outcomes from Decision Making	Driving more independent outcomes through strength based practice, improved care capacity and more creative alternatives to formal support.	Reduced hours of homecare Reduced resi/nursing starts	£1.8M	£2.2M
	Short term services (including reablement) capacity optimisation and increased referrals	More people accessing short term services (who need it)	Increased reablement finishers	£6.7M	£8.1m
	Short term services (including reablement) effectiveness	Greater effectiveness of short term services	Reduced hours of homecare	£2.8M	£3.3M
	Older Adults Total			£11.3M	£13.6M
Working Age	Effective transitions to adulthood	Increased independence for young people as they transition to becoming an adult	Reduced average package cost 18-25	£0.4M	£0.6M
	Outcomes from Decision Making	Driving more independent outcomes through strength based practice, improved care capacity and more creative alternatives to formal support.	Reduced residential/supported-living starts Reducing Home care Hours	£0.2M	£0.3M
	Progression / enablement	More working age adults living independently in their community	Number of moves completed to more independent settings Reduced Homecare*	£2.0M	£2.4M
	Working Age Adults Total			£2.6M	£3.3M
All Adults	Outcomes from Decision Making (MH, PD, other)	Driving more independent outcomes through strength based practice, improved care capacity and more creative alternatives to formal support.	Reduced hours of homecare Reduced resi/nursing starts	£0.3M	£0.3M
	All Adults Total			£0.3M	£0.3M
Opportunity Matrix Total (Exc. Intermediate Care Beds)			£14.2M	£17.2M	

Options to take this forward:

The council needs to take a decision on how to proceed and deliver these opportunities to realise the projected cost controls and the improved outcomes for local people. The 'do nothing' approach is not an option as this would mean continuing to add significant pressure to the Councils budget position. Therefore, we propose the 3 options:

1. Deliver the required transformation programme using existing internal capacity and skills

- Use existing business change and Adults Services staff
- Would need to recruit to expand internal team
- Savings would take approx. 2-3 times longer to achieve than option 2.
- No guarantee of savings
- Additional pressure on already stretched resources in Adults and corporately

2. Continue the strategic partnership with Newton Europe

- Team of 15 staff from Newton work alongside business change and Adults staff
- Deliver intense focussed programme of activity over 14-18 months
- Tried and tested methodology and approach delivered in over 100 public sector organisations with strong results
- One-off fee of c. £3.5m per year (over two years)
- Guaranteed £10m of recurring financial benefit under the contract with shared risk of realisation
- Projected annualised savings between £14m and £17m
- Direct procurement award under existing framework
- Skills transfer incl access to L&D programme

3. Undertake a further procurement exercise to open up the opportunity to the market

- Delays start due to procurement exercise
- This option risks low response from the market due to the contract being to deliver the findings from a competitor's diagnostic
- or the successful organisation may take 3-6 months to perform their own diagnostic before designing their version of a transformation programme for Adults Services.
- Requiring a similar contingent fee model for this work would reduce the market for responses even further

Recommended option

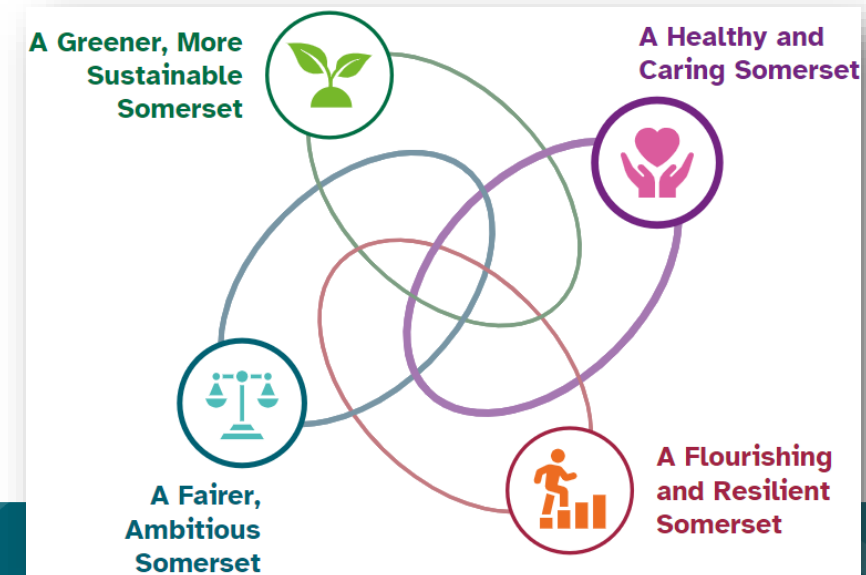
Rationale for recommended option

- A strategic delivery partner with a track record of achieving results at pace, enabling additional capacity as Somerset Council goes undertakes its own Transformation
- Newton Europe is a leading partner in Adult Social Care and Local Government
- Contingency fee model guarantees delivery of at least £10m recurring financial benefit with a target of £14m, stretching to £17m
- Tracking of benefits and financial impact follows a rigorous approach used successfully by many other councils
- If mobilised quickly, £10m of this can be delivered by the end of yr 2.

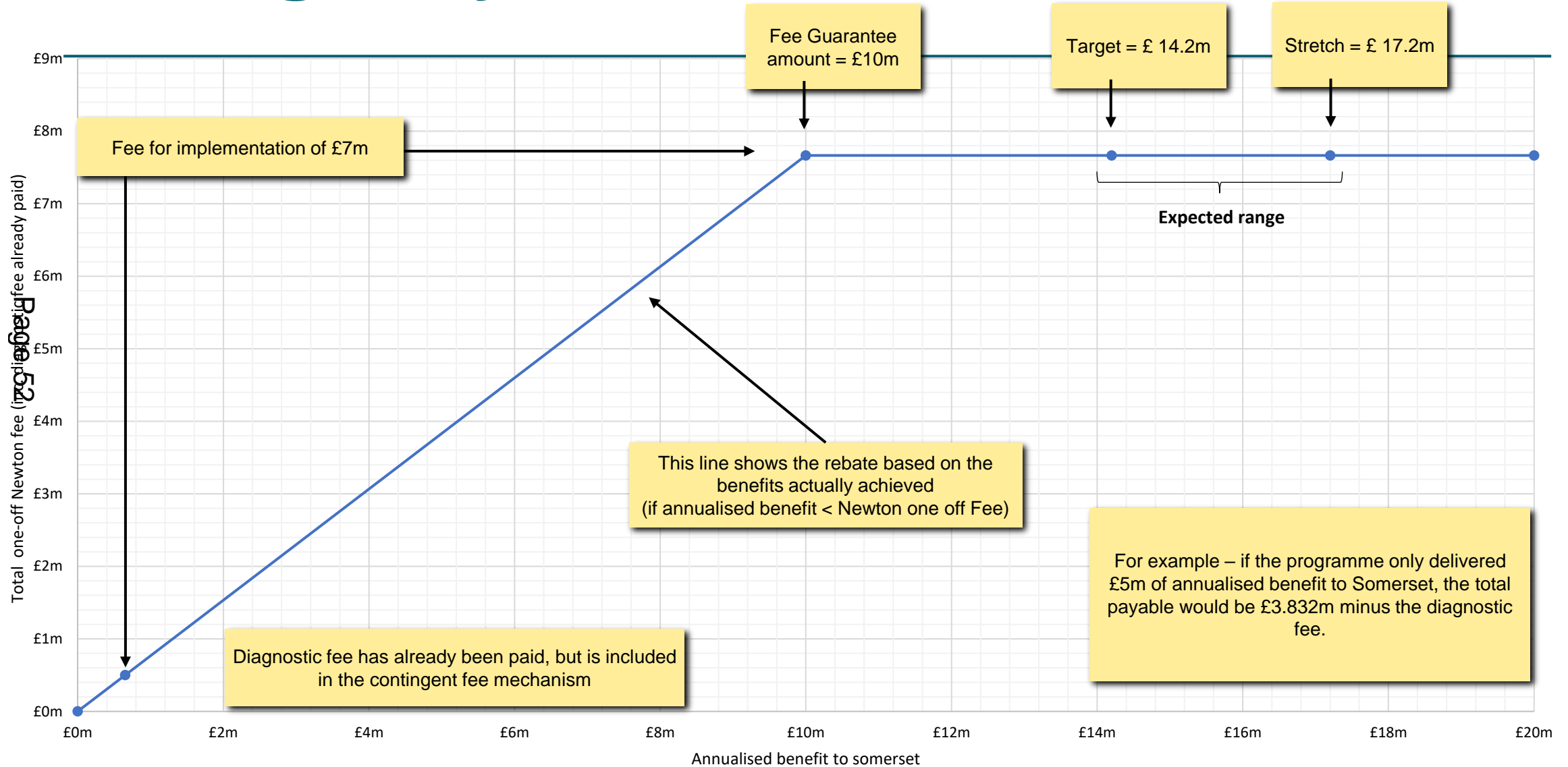
Page 51

	FY23/24	FY24/25	FY25/26	FY26/27
Savings target	£0.2m	£10.4m	£13.1m	£14.2m
Stretch targets	£0.7m	£13.1m	£16.1m	£17.0m

This will contribute to Somerset Council's four priorities:



Contingency Fee model



Governance

- The Transformation Programme will mobilise a governance structure for the programme with representatives from ASC and corporate business partners
- Reporting and assurance through the Transition, Transformation and Change Board
- Consideration will be given to independent programme management
- MTFP Board
- Aspects of the programme will report to delivery Boards within the ICB structure.

Time for Questions





Decision Report - Executive Decision

Forward Plan Reference: FP/23/05/13

Decision Date – 06/06/2023

Key Decision – No

Somerset Tree Strategy

Executive Member(s): Cllr Sarah Dyke – Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change

Local Member(s) and Division: n/a

Lead Officer and author: Jacob Hall – Climate Change and Resilience Officer

Contact Details: jacob.hall@somerset.gov.uk

Summary / Background

1. A wide range of Stakeholders from across Somerset have come together over the last ten months to create the Somerset Tree Strategy. The strategy provides a holistic and joined up approach to Somerset's Treescapes with shared objectives and actions to coordinate a universal approach towards Trees across the county.
2. The strategy has been developed in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders involved in shaping the future of Somerset's Treescapes. A collective approach towards this will help deliver an increase in tree cover at scale and help increase the many benefits offered by trees to communities across the county.

Recommendations

3. The Executive agrees to
 - a. Adopt the Somerset Tree Strategy with Somerset Council as the responsible body for delivery
 - b. Somerset Council Executive takes the appropriate action to develop and adopt a council wide policy to implement and guide everyone on the

objectives of the strategy, and reports back to Scrutiny Committee in 6 months time – Climate and Place

Reasons for recommendations

4. Somerset’s tree cover sits at around 8%, well below the national average of 13% and far short of the national target of 14%. The Somerset Tree Strategy brings together all those working across the county around Treescapes to create a coordinated and collaborative approach to increasing our county’s tree coverage.

The strategy will also sit within the upcoming Local Nature Recovery Strategy. A statutory responsibility for local authorities to map their local area to aid nature recovery under the Environment Act 2021.

5. The Strategy is split across three documents contained within the appendices:
 - Somerset Tree Strategy 2023-2033
 - Somerset Actions & Objectives 2023-2033
 - Somerset Tree Strategy Evidence Document

Other options considered

7. Should Somerset not have a Tree Strategy the approach towards Treescapes across the county would be disjointed and uncoordinated which would be detrimental to the county being net zero by 2030.

Links to Council Vision, Business Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy

8. One of the council’s priorities is to create “A Greener, more Sustainable Somerset”. Trees provide a wide variety of benefits that fall under this priority including alleviating flooding, increasing biodiversity and sequestering carbon. There is also a clear link between our interaction with nature and how this benefits our mental health contributing towards another of the council’s priorities. “A Healthy and Caring Somerset”.

This administration has also committed to planting 150,000 trees per year. The Tree Strategy will support this objective.

9. The Strategy is split across three documents:
 - Somerset Tree Strategy 2023-2033
 - Somerset Actions & Objectives 2023-2033

- Somerset Tree Strategy Evidence Document

The Tree Strategy 2023-2033 is a short sharp punchy document that sets out where Somerset currently is and where we want to go focused around five themes:

- Create a woodland culture
- Resilient and Adaptable Trees
- Expanding Tree Cover
- Woodland Services
- Governance

The Actions & Objectives document expands on the five-theme breaking down each objective into a series of actions over the next ten years.

Finally, the evidence document contains further detail and data on Somersets Treescapes, the development of the strategy and information on the consultation responses. The idea being this information is readily available but doesn't detract from the short, sharp impactful strategy document itself.

Financial and Risk Implications

10. The purpose of this strategy is to detail a high-level overarching list of objectives and actions. Understanding the funding required is the next step in how we deliver the actions set out, therefore this report deliberately does not cover funding. At present there no request for funding from Somerset Council. The Strategy has been developed in partnership and will be delivered in partnership. Therefore, the actions, objectives and funding do not fall solely upon Somerset Council.
11. Somerset Council has successfully received grant funding from The Forestry Commission of £300,000 over the next two financial years (2023/24 and 2024/25). The funding will be used to cover the full cost of employing three officers dedicated to the delivery of the Somerset Tree Strategy.
12. The three posts which are currently being recruited are:
 - Tree Project Officer responsible for partnering and implementing tree planting across Somerset along with sourcing additional funding through grants
 - Community Empowerment Officer responsible for engaging and supporting existing tree planting communities across Somerset

- Technical Officer responsible for providing technical advice and support for planting and maintaining trees across Somerset

13. There are several regular funding streams available for the Council to apply for funding from, organisations such as the Forest Commissions Treescapes and Urban Tree Cover. The previous Somerset Councils have experience in successfully bidding for funding. Therefore, we are confident we can identify sources of funding for the strategy.

14. The risk identified for this report is a failure for the strategy to be adopted by executive. This has been rated as 1 (unlikely) due to the widespread input and support from stakeholders across Somerset as well as support from the policy and environment committee. It is therefore felt that the strategy is strongly endorsed.

The impact of the strategy of not being adopted has been rated as 3 (significant) as the strategy will bring together all those involved in Treescapes into a coordinated approach, therefore by not adopting the strategy work around Treescapes could remain isolated and less impactful.

Likelihood	1	Impact	3	Risk Score	3 - Low
-------------------	----------	---------------	----------	-------------------	----------------

Legal Implications

15. There are no legal implications as a result of this strategy.
16. There is no current plans to commission or procure third party resources for the strategy.

HR Implications

17. There are no HR implications as a result of this strategy.

Other Implications:

Equalities Implications

18. There are no equalities implications as a result of this strategy. Treescapes and the benefits they bring benefit all communities and residents of Somerset.

Community Safety Implications

19. There are no community safety implications as a result of this strategy.

Climate Change and Sustainability Implications

20. There are a wide range of benefits the strategy will bring towards our climate and sustainability objectives including:

- Purification of water sources
- Increased production of sustainable building materials
- Increased air quality
- Climate Change adaptation such as shade for people and livestock during hotter summers
- Increased biodiversity
- Reducing the impacts of surface water runoff and flooding

Health and Safety Implications

21. There are no health and safety implications as a result of this strategy.

Health and Wellbeing Implications

22. The link between health and wellbeing and our interaction with nature is well documented. There are a number of actions and objectives within the strategy that will benefit the residents of Somerset's health and wellbeing.

Scrutiny comments / recommendations:

23. Feedback was provided by the Policies Environmental Scrutiny Committee and incorporated into the Strategy.

An additional recommendation was added to the Executive Committee.

“Somerset Council Executive takes the appropriate action to develop and adopt a council wide policy to implement and guide everyone on the objectives of the strategy, and reports back to Scrutiny Committee every six months – Climate and Place”

Next steps and Governance

24. The strategy will be resourced through the three officers employed through The Forestry Commission funding. These officers will work with stakeholders both in Somerset Council and externally across the county to implement the actions set out in the Actions & Objectives document. Six monthly updates will be presented to the Environment and Place Scrutiny board. The strategy contains short, medium and long term priorities which will be reported on through these updates.

Background

25. The development of the Somerset Tree Strategy came about through the collaboration of members of the Somerset Local Nature Partnership (LNP). In December 2021. The Heritage Fund released the Tree's Call to Action (TCTA) fund a £6 million fund which awarded between £250,000 - £500,000 to partnerships to deliver large scale tree and woodland planting in response to the UK Governments England Trees Action Plan.

A Somerset wide bid led by Somerset Wildlife Trust on behalf of the LNP was submitted which required £25,000 match funding. This was agreed to be met by the five Somerset Council's split evenly five ways as active delivery partners should we be successful. One of the main objectives of the bid was to use part of the funding to develop a Somerset Wide Tree Strategy which could then be delivered with the remaining funding.

Unfortunately, due to the highly competitive nature of the TCTA fund with over £26 million worth of funding requested across 64 applications, Somerset was unsuccessful. However, the commitment for funding was still there from the five councils and therefore the decision was made to press on with developing the strategy and look for future funding opportunities for delivery.

Currently there are a number of groups, individuals, landowners and organisations carrying out fantastic work across Somerset when it comes to tree planting and maintenance with the idea of the strategy being to help coordinate and bring everyone together with a clear vision and implementation plan for trees and treescapes in Somerset moving forward.

Additional funding was provided by The Woodland Trust, LNP, Forestry Commission, Quantock Hills AONB, Exmoor National Park & The Environment Agency. Procurement for the consultant to write the strategy took place in June & July 2022 led by Somerset Wildlife Trust in partnership with the five Somerset Council's. Evolving Forests were appointed in August 2022 to write the strategy and a wider steering group comprising of members of the LNP along with other interested parties across Somerset formed to guide the development of the Strategy, including The Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission, FWAG SW, AONB's, Reimagining the Levels, Exmoor National Park and The Environment Agency amongst others.

A public consultation was run in Autumn 2022 and widely circulated by the steering group on what residents, businesses and other interested parties would like to see from the strategy and how they would use it. There was a fantastic response rate with 752 responses submitted to the consultation.

A final draft was then circulated at the end of December across all members of the steering group for comments for before being finalised at the end of January 2023. This was presented to the Policies, Environmental Scrutiny Committee in March 2023 with the final document completed for adoption in April 2023.

Background Papers

26. The three documents that form the Somerset Tree Strategy are attached

Appendices

- Appendix A Somerset Tree Strategy 2023-2033
- Appendix B Somerset Actions & Objectives 2023-2033
- Appendix C Somerset Tree Strategy Evidence Document

Report Sign-Off (if appropriate)

	Officer Name	Date Completed
Legal & Governance Implications	David Clark/Scott Wooldridge	24/05/2023 25/05/2023
Communications	Chris Palmer	22/05/2023
Finance & Procurement	Nicola Hix	22/05/2023
Workforce	Chris Squire	16/05/2023
Asset Management	Oliver Woodhams	10/05/2023
Executive Director / Senior Manager	Mickey Green	23/05/2023
Strategy & Performance	Alyn Jones	22/05/2023
Executive Lead Member	Cllr Sarah Dyke	24/05/2023
Consulted:	Councillor Name	
Local Division Members	n/a	
Opposition Spokesperson		
Scrutiny Chair	Cllr Martin Dimery	29/03/2023



Somerset Tree Strategy 2023 - 2033



This strategy has been developed by



With the support of  Evolving Forests



Trees People Place

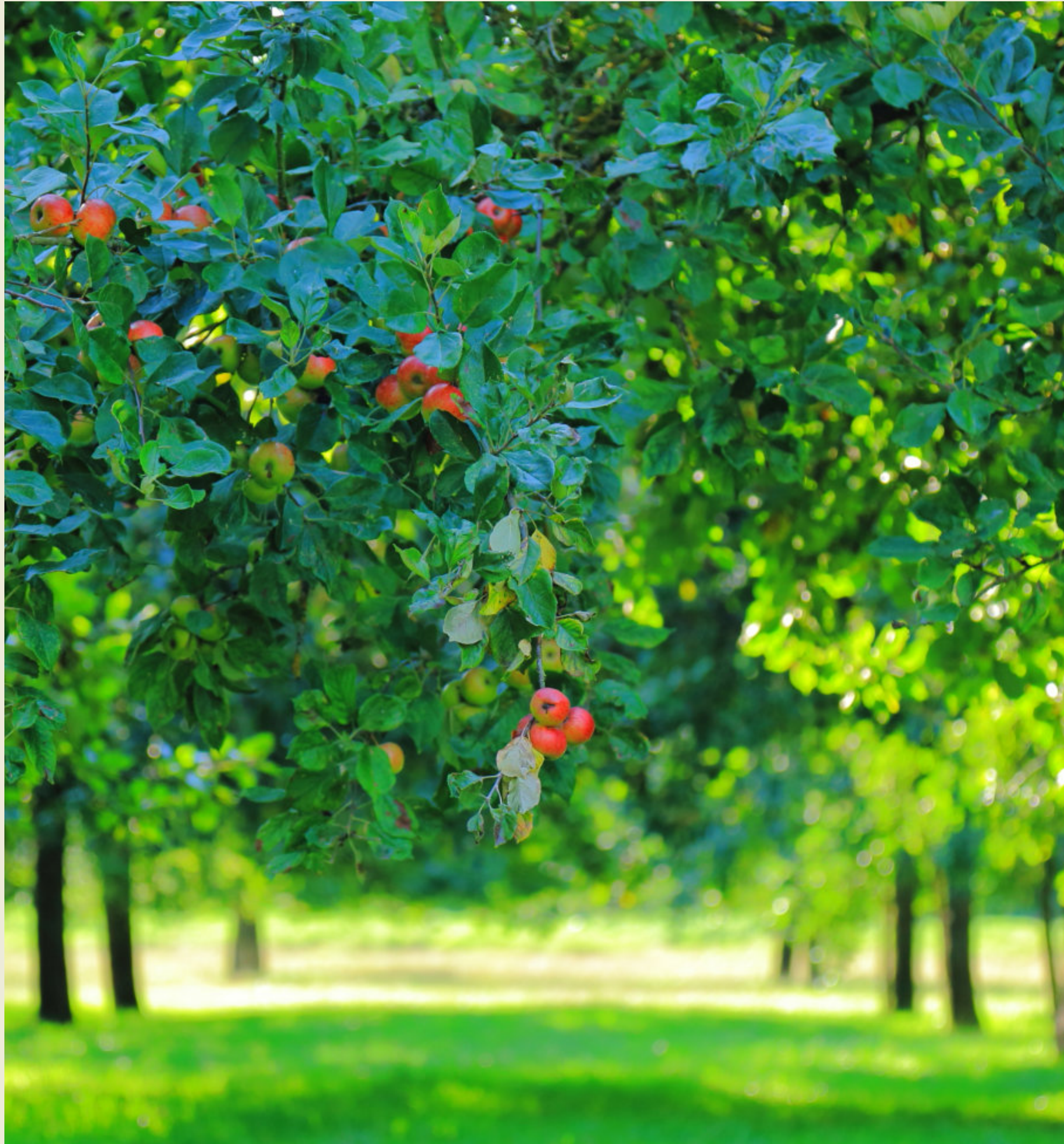
Treescapes are undergoing a time of unprecedented change globally, nationally, and regionally. This strategy sets out how Somerset's treescapes can embrace ecology, climate, community and how the county can manage and protect its existing and future trees.

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.





Somerset's Trees Today

Where this strategy begins

Somerset has a deep history of woodland management and innovation. It has the oldest and tallest trees in the country and a history of wood-use dating back to the Bronze Age.

Via its long history of orchard creation, Somerset is an unacknowledged leader in progressive forms of woodland management such as agroforestry.

Somerset has a high diversity of landscapes to manage and a wide variety of treescapes creating resilience.

Somerset's Future Trees

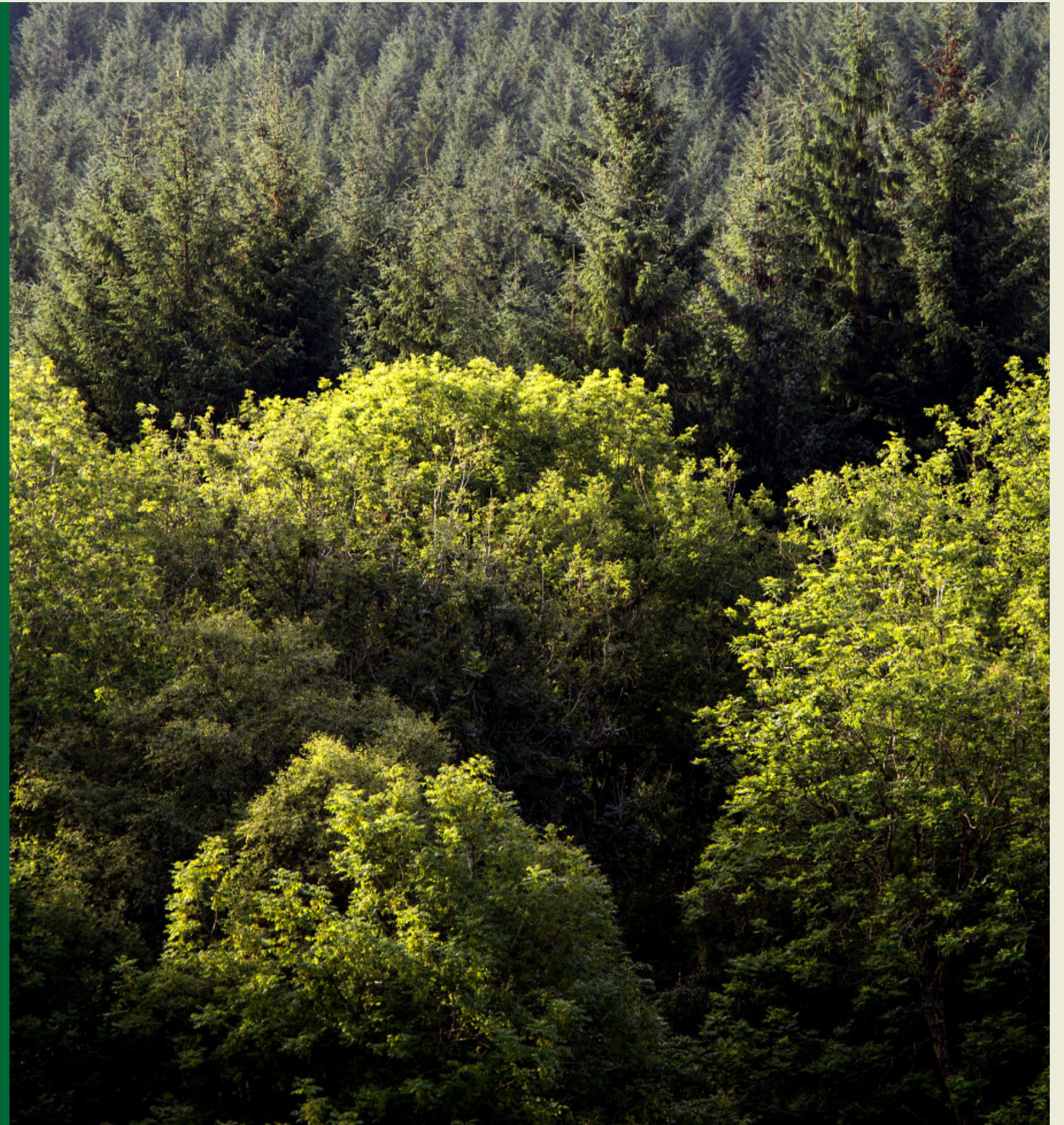
Where this strategy will take us

Somerset's climate is changing and its diverse treescapes will be resilient enough to adapt to these changes.

Everyone across Somerset will be engaged with trees in their daily lives.

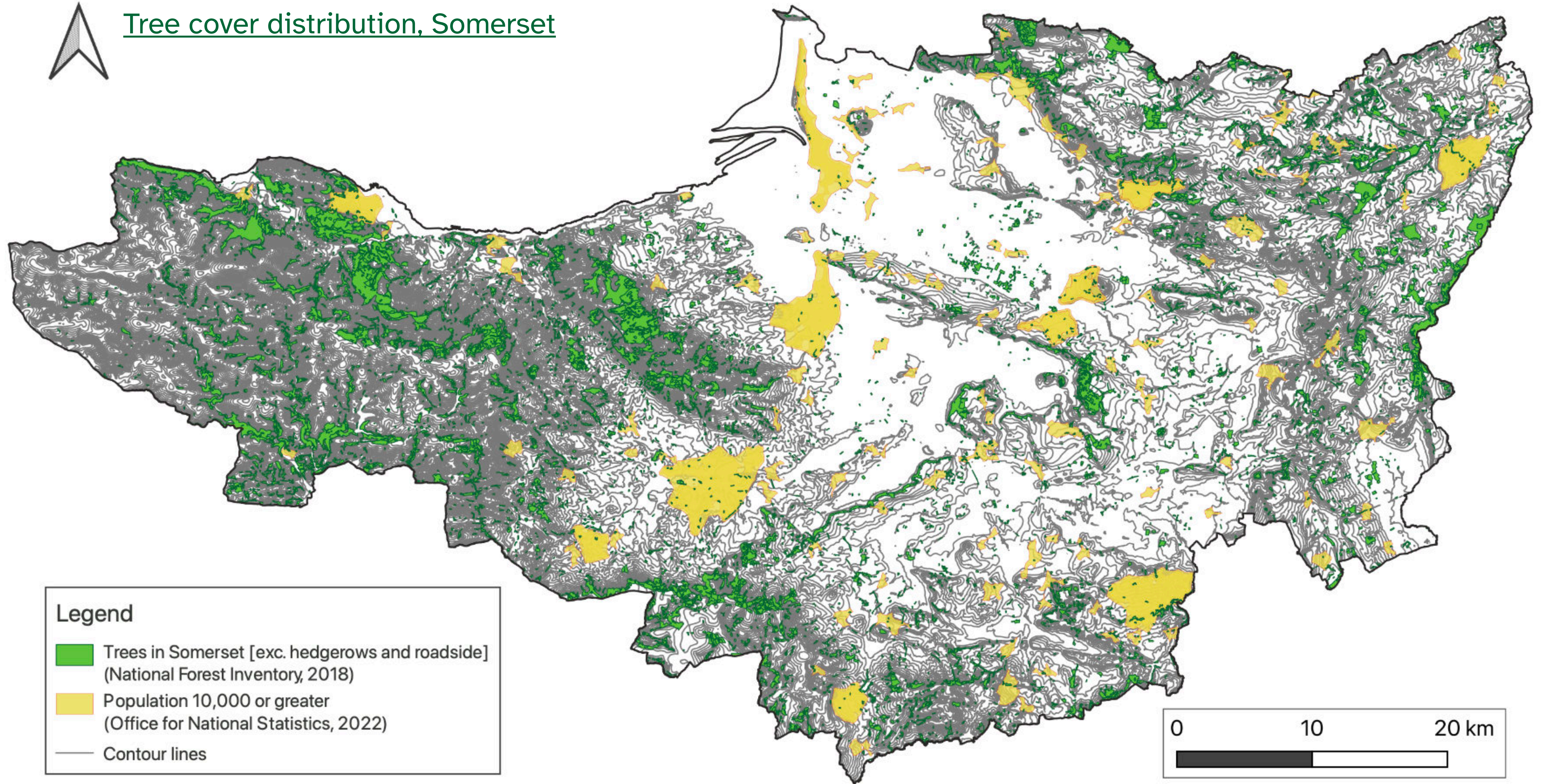
Somerset exceeds the national average of tree cover with diverse types of planting.

Biodiversity within Somerset has the chance to move across landscapes via ecologically rich connected corridors.








Tree cover distribution, Somerset

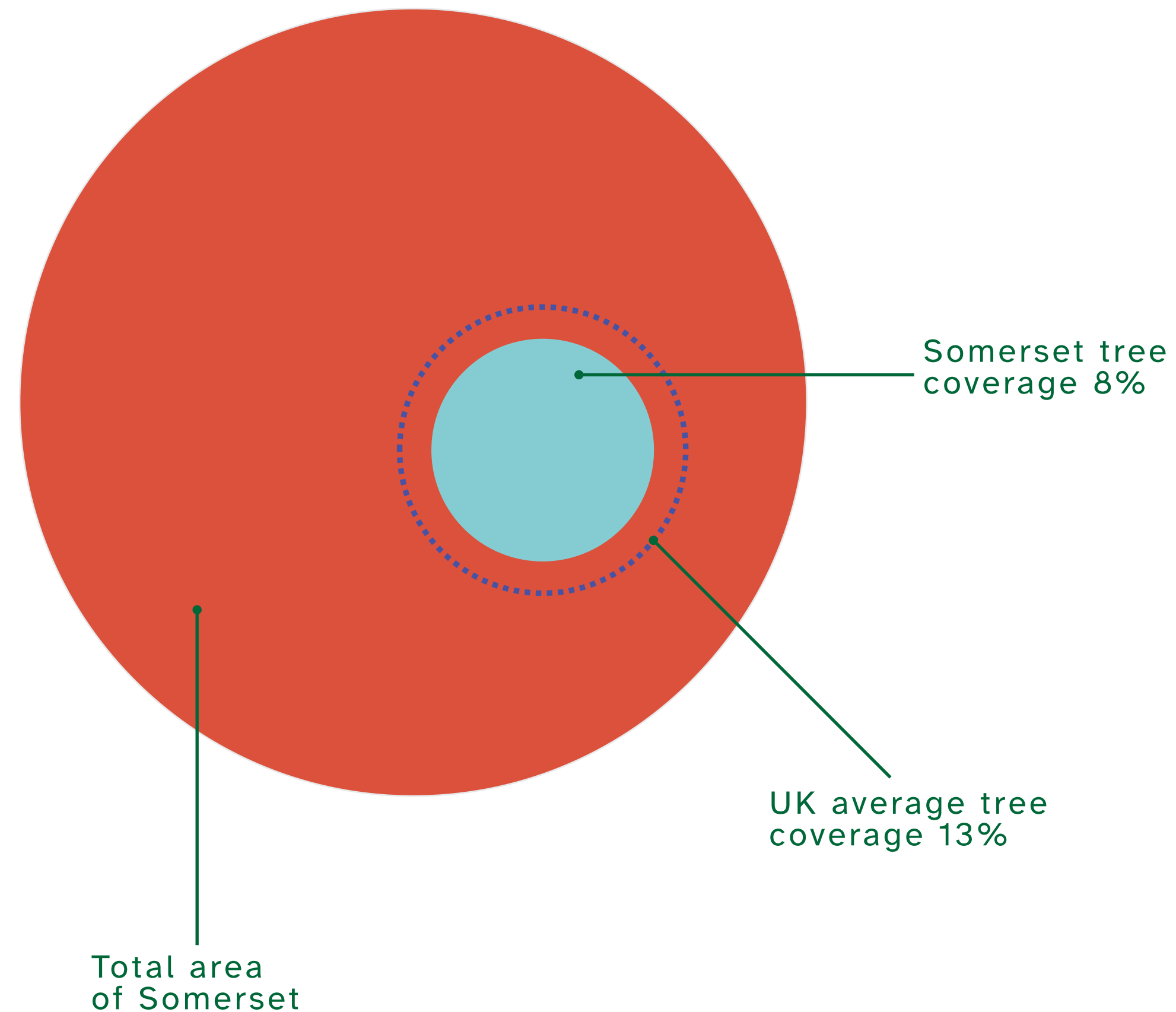


Legend

-  Trees in Somerset [exc. hedgerows and roadside] (National Forest Inventory, 2018)
-  Population 10,000 or greater (Office for National Statistics, 2022)
-  Contour lines



Tree cover averages by area, UK and Somerset



The broader picture

Somerset recognises its role in tackling the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Tree cover across the UK increased from 3-13% in a century. Somerset's tree cover by area is below the national average (8%).

Rates of new planting in England 2017-22 have remained relatively low (average 1,912ha/ year). Government target for tree-planting in England by 2024-25 is 7,500ha/ year.

Just 59% of woods in England are in legal and sustainable management.

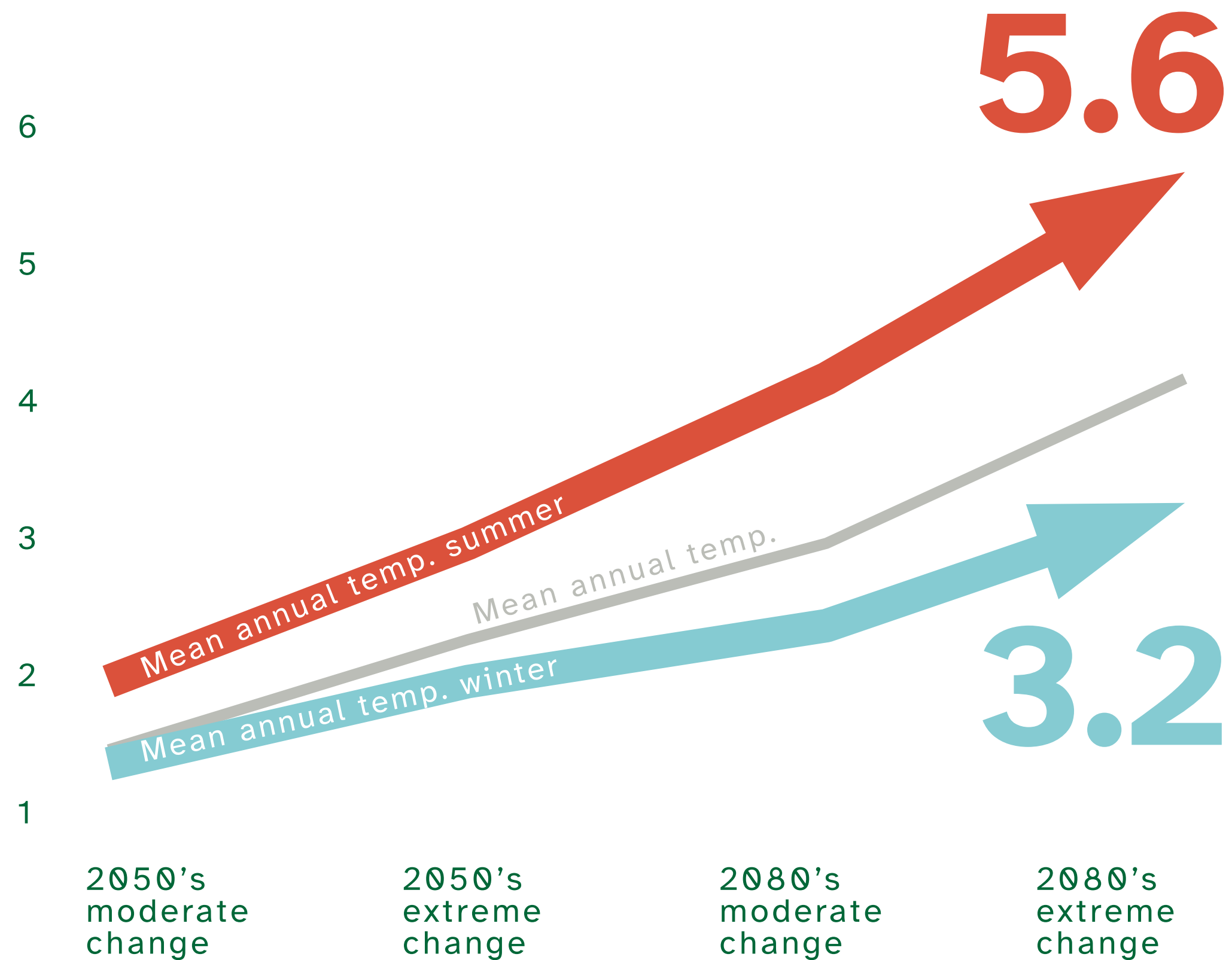
A strategy governed by climate and resilience

At a landscape level, woodland size, diversity, and connectivity need to increase

There needs to be a diverse range of management practices that improve woodland quality and flexibility in the range of species being planted in rural and urban areas. This will enable Somerset's trees and woodlands to be resilient to changing climate, sea level rise, disease and pests, and to increasingly complex land uses.

This is as true for our urban trees as our rural trees; our forests and our orchards; our timber producers, our farmers, our urban planners, and our floodplain managers. Improving our treescapes will help protect and enhance our biodiversity. It will provide connected corridors to allow habitats to flourish, migrate, and adapt.

Predicted temperature increase changes in the South West (°C)



Somerset's climate is changing

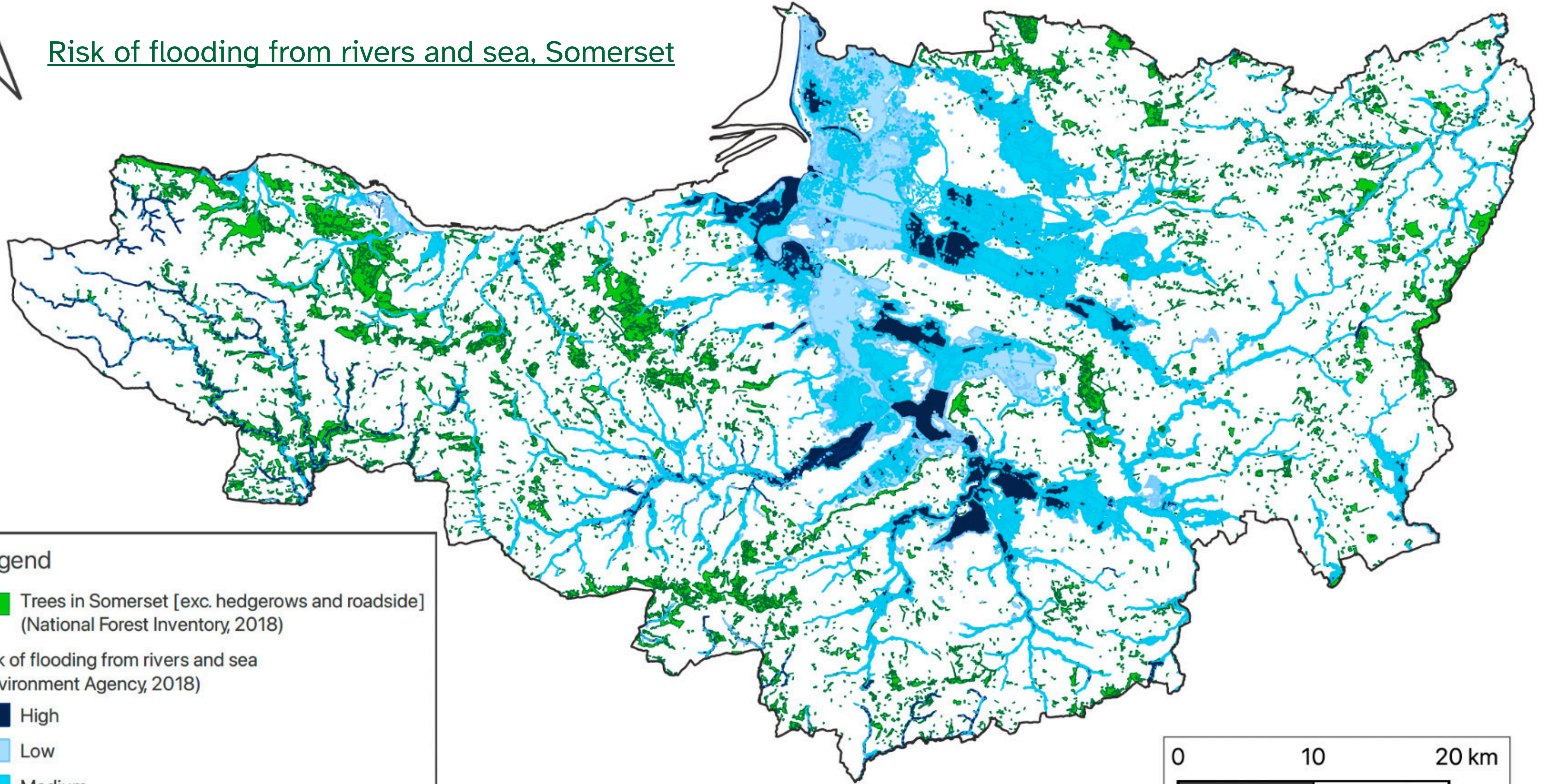
We will see warmer conditions with increased frequency of extreme weather events such as heavy rainfall and drought. Our trees and people need the resilience to cope with this. Many trees will suffer but some will benefit.

Models show a range of temperature increase possibilities and Somerset needs to manage its treescape flexibly so that it can adapt to any scenario.

The approach to building a resilient treescape needs to be flexible and adaptable.



Risk of flooding from rivers and sea, Somerset



Legend

 Trees in Somerset [exc. hedgerows and roadside] (National Forest Inventory, 2018)

Risk of flooding from rivers and sea (Environment Agency, 2018)

 High

 Low

 Medium

0 10 20 km



Somerset's strategy for the next 10 years will be to:

- 1** **Create a wood culture** where everyone understands the importance of trees to the County, its natural environment, and its communities.
- 2** Make our trees **resilient and adaptable** to climate change by protecting, expanding, managing, and diversifying our existing treescapes.
- 3** **Expand the number of trees** in Somerset in urban and rural areas through planting initiatives to create cohesive connected treescapes that include woodland, parks, roadsides, and urban spaces.
- 4** Create a range of **services and products** that allow our treescapes to contribute to society through local supply chains and creating natural capital opportunities.
- 5** Create a **sustainable and flexible governance** structure that ensures successful implementation of the strategy over the next ten years.



This is **YOUR** strategy

This is Somerset's strategy to help trees be a thriving part of our landscape, our ecology and our society.

This strategy belongs to all of us in Somerset.

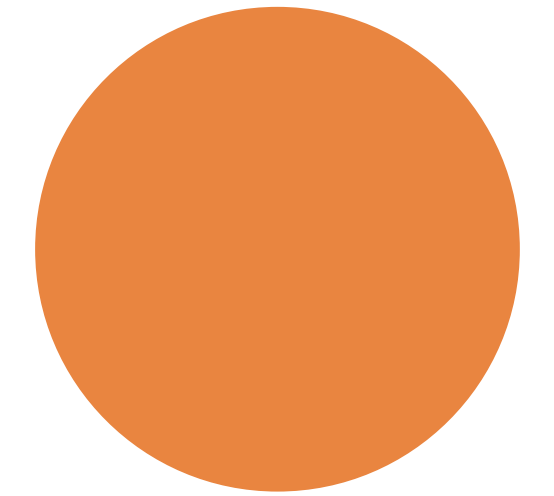
We all have a role to play in making sure it happens.

Theme 1

Create A Wood Culture

Over the next 10 years Somerset will invest in creating a wood culture amongst its population. This means everyone notices and cares about the trees they share the landscape with.

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.



Every school child and adult will have the chance to connect with and learn about their County's trees and be a vital part of their future.

We will ensure and create local options to take up tree-based education, professions, and research to make Somerset a leader in tree management.

We will work with developers and planners to make sure trees become a priority in the built and rural environment.

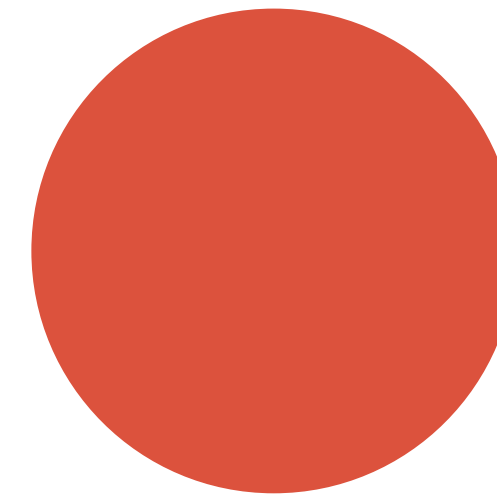


Theme 2

Resilient and Adaptable Trees

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.

This diversity will include greater structure, age, and species diversity ensuring new generations of trees thrive. Diversity means increased resilience to pests, disease and the impacts of climate change. It will create greater ecological diversity and adaptability in the landscape.



To do this we need to manage the trees we have more effectively. Bringing under-managed woodland back into management will be a priority as will taking care of our street trees and dealing current & future pests and disease threats.

We will make sure that anyone involved in managing trees, from planners to planters, managers to communities, can draw on expert tree management advice and will feel comfortable accessing that advice.

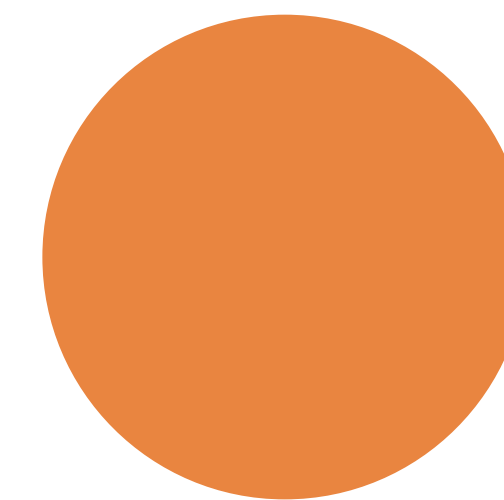


Theme 3

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.

We want to create ambitious corridors of treescapes that traverse the County and connect its landscapes. These corridors will be made up of linear features like hedgerows and verges, of conventional woodland, of urban planting, and agroforestry systems that link habitats and provide corridors for nature.



To meet our contribution to national targets for woodland creation we will plant a minimum of 240ha new woodland a year. We will aim to increase our woodland cover from 8% to the national average 13%.

We will ask those planting trees to show that their plans are the right plans for place, to demonstrate they add to the resilience of our County's treescape, and to prove that the ecological condition of an area will be enhanced.

By providing impartial expert advice we will work to remove the blockages to woodland planting that exist.

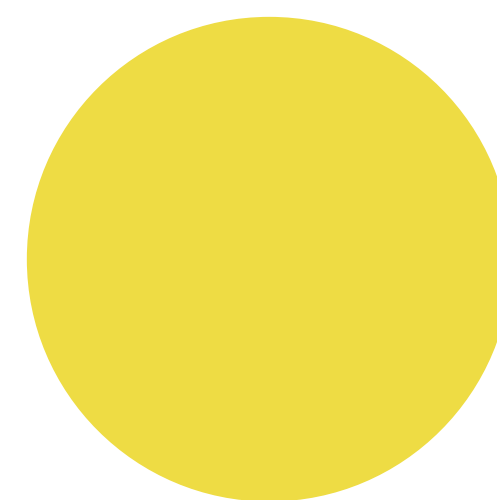


Theme 4

Woodland Services

We will protect and enhance our trees and in return they help protect and enhance our communities. As part of the wood culture we create we will work towards increasing the diversity of woodland products and services our treescapes sustainably provide.

Key to this is building a culture of local provision of solutions. Whether it is optimising carbon storage within sustainable management systems; building with local materials; ensuring flood mitigation; providing shade in town centres, trees will be used to create local solutions.



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.



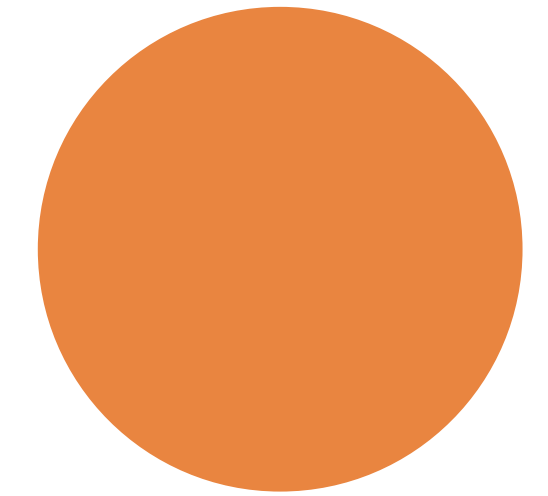
Theme 5

Governance

Everyone should have the chance to be part of our treescapes.

Somerset Council will lead on ensuring that this strategy is implemented. The council will be held to account by a steering group of experts who meet regularly. The steering group will review the strategy annually and create a flexible approach to how it evolves.

Alongside this strategy, the council, the steering group, and public bodies will ensure regulatory compliance and where necessary bolster this with Somerset-specific planning documents.



When strategy actions are put in place they will be implemented within the context of the UK Forestry Standard, the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and other relevant regional policies.

Most importantly this strategy aims to create a wood culture where enhancing our treescapes is seen as a moral responsibility of everyone in the County.

In ten years time community groups, farmers, individual owners, agents, developers, ecologists, school children should all see themselves as being part of the governance of this strategy.



Somerset Tree Strategy 2023 - 2033

Objectives & Actions



The strategy objectives and actions have been developed by



With the support of  Evolving Forests



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

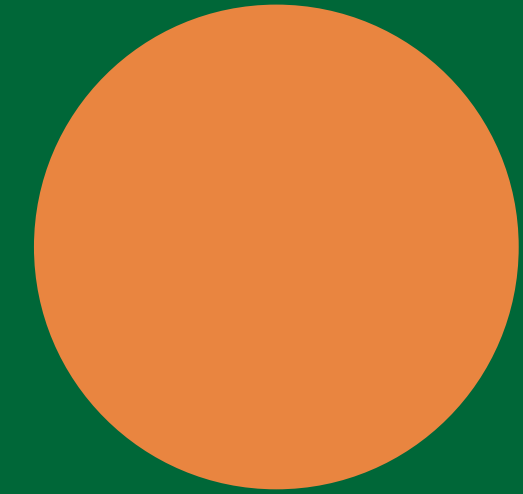
- Create a contract with the Steering Group and the CC to outline roles and responsibilities.
- Increase urban tree cover in parks and on roadside.
- Aim to plant 240ha/ year in Somerset.
- Identify unmanaged woodland and encourage owners.
- Identify areas where more carbon planting may take place.
- 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 products 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
<p>Engage communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 its 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.
<p>Expand opportunities to connect people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<p>Engage young people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<p>Identify training opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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
<p>Understand treescap opportunities & issues</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Use stakeholder consultation to understand ongoing issues with treescap 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.
<p>Identify unmanaged woodland</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<p>Increase catchment scale diversity</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.



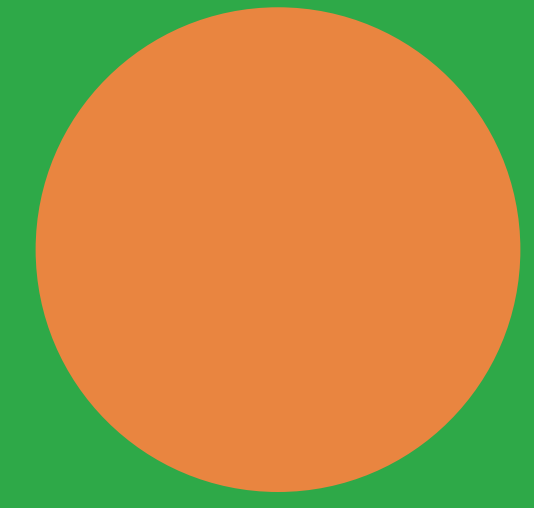
Resilient And Adaptable Treescapes

Objectives	Actions
<p>Increase awareness of tree origins</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<p>Ecologically sensitive products & services</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<p>Consistently challenge status quo</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Create a 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.



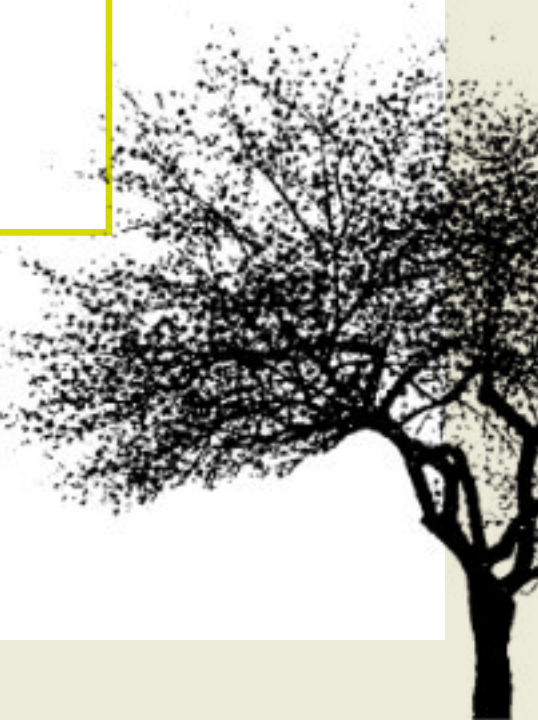
Expanding Tree Cover

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.



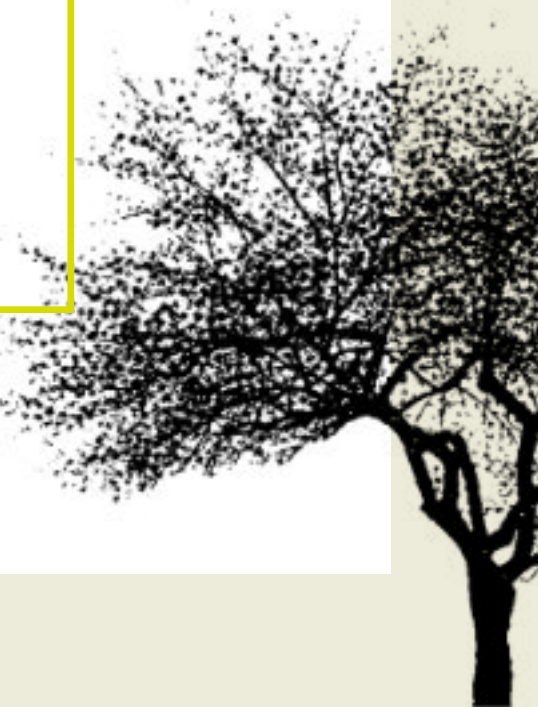
Expanding Tree Cover

Objectives	Actions
<p>Nature recovery</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<p>Create a minimum 240ha / year</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Provide County wide support in the form of expert silviculturists and arboriculturalists to advise owners and managers. 2) A mechanism will be put in place to support those planting trees with knowledge of post-planting care for the first fifteen years after planting. 3) 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. 4) 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. 5) 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. 6) Monitor tree loss in woodland systems and urban settings (for instance for new developments). 7) Ensure that these losses are reflected in targets for increased tree cover. 8) 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.



Expanding Tree Cover

Objectives	Actions
<p>Increase urban tree cover</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<p>Encourage specialist planting</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<p>Trees adapted for shading</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ol style="list-style-type: none">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 Further Education 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	<ol style="list-style-type: none">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	<ol style="list-style-type: none">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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ol style="list-style-type: none">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	<ol style="list-style-type: none">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.

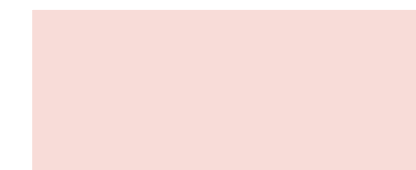
The results give a broad indication of the type of treescape management that might be appropriate in each area.



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	Light	Dark	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light
Increase tree cover	Light	Light	Dark	Dark	Light	Light	Light	Dark
Create linear features	Light	Light	Dark	Light	Dark	Light	Light	Dark
Be open minded about species and origin	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark
Opportunity for agroforestry	Light	Dark	Light	Dark	Light	Dark	Dark	Dark
Increase urban tree cover	Light	Light	Light	Light	Dark	Light	Light	Dark
Trees in urban developments	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Dark
Ensure all woodlands are in management	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Light	Dark	Dark	Dark
Increase tree based carbon stocks	Light	Dark	Light	Dark	Light	Dark	Dark	Light
Contribute to home-grown timber	Dark	Dark	Light	Dark	Light	Light	Light	Dark

This page is intentionally left blank

Somerset Tree Strategy

Evidence Document

January 2023





This strategy has been developed by



Charity number: 294344
Company no. 01982873
The Woodland Trust
Kempton way
Grantham
NG 31 6LL



With the support of



Contents

1. Introduction to the Strategy

Governance	6
Rationale	6
Format	7
2.2 Online consultation	8

2. Methodology

2.1 Consultation with steering group	8
2.3 Woodland cover	9
2.4 Literature review	10
2.5 GIS	10

3. The wider national and international context

3.1 International	11
3.2 National	11
Afforestation and agroforestry	11
Bioenergy crops	12
3.3 Recent relevant strategies and targets	13

4. Climate and future treescape resilience

4.1 Predicted climate & environment change	14
Temperature	14

Climate analogues	15
Sea level rise	16
Extreme weather	16
Reducing future risk	17
4.2 Adapting Somerset's trees	17
Biodiversity	17
Species suitability study	18
Management	19
Connectivity	21
Woodland cover	22
Rural tree cover, Somerset	22
Urban tree cover	22
Current and future age demographic	24

5. People

Education and future generations	25
Education for all	27
Community	27
Urban treescape	29
Woodland access	29

6. Services

6.1 Carbon	32
Carbon storage potential of timber	32
Carbon sequestration	32
The role of woodland management	33
6.2 Water management	33

Contents

Flood mitigation	33
Right tree right place	35
Regulation of water courses	35
6.3 Agroforestry	36
6.4 Biodiversity	37
Woodland ecosystem biodiversity	37
Biodiversity net gain opportunities	37
Connected landscapes	38
Urban biodiversity	38

7. Governance

7.1 Objectives	39
Achieving the objectives	41
Statutory responsibility for tree cover	42
7.2 Steering Group	42
7.3 Marketing and promotion	43
Veteran trees and agroforestry	43

Appendixes

A1 Results of survey	44
A2 Examples of tree management	51
A3 Regional and national documents	52
Regional	52
National	52
A4 Steering Group workshop results	53-56



Tables, maps and figures

Table 1	Survey respondents	8
Table 2	Projected changes to the South West's climate	14
Table 3	Predicted sea-level rise baseline to 2100	16
Table 4	Example of predicted ecological site classification for selected sites	19
Table 5	Species 'very suitable' - 'suitable' across the sites studied	20
Table 6	Set of objectives developed from evidence presented	40
Table 7	Trees and woodland priorities by Steering Group scoring (1 = highest)	41
Map 1	Tree cover distribution, Somerset	10
Map 2	Predictions for annual mean temperature across South West England	15
Map 3	Climate matching tool predictions for Somerset 2051-79	15
Map 4	Projected impact sea level rise in 100 years	16
Map 5	Overheating and humidity risk for Somerset	17
Map 6	Storm damage failure	17
Map 7	Proportion of population aged 65 and over, 2013	25
Map 8	Proportion of population aged 65 and over, 2033	25
Map 9	Woodland >5ha within the Somerset boundary	31
Map 10	Woodland >5ha within 1 mile of major urban centres in Somerset	31
Map 11	Proximity of woodland to flood risk area	34
Map 12	Density of traditional orchards in England	36
Figure 1	Internal Somerset migration by age group (2016)	24
Figure 2	Proportion of different age groups that responded to the consultation survey	25
Figure 3	Responses to survey question asking how to engage more people tree strategy	26
Figure 4	Survey respondents' interaction with trees outside of work	28

1. Introduction to the Strategy

Treescapes are undergoing a time of unprecedented change globally, nationally and regionally. Somerset is no different. Its incredibly varied landscape from the Somerset levels to the uplands of Exmoor provide great complexity and great opportunity to respond to these changes. Similarly it has a dispersed demographic that is spread from farmstead to major towns, all of whom view treescapes differently. Where many regions have a homogeneity of character, Somerset has complexity. At one time this may have been viewed as an issue but today can be seen as an opportunity to create resilient treescapes.

Somerset has a deep and rich history in managing its trees. The “Sweet track” and other bronze age structures on the Somerset levels represent the earliest known examples of substantial volumes of timber use in the UK, likely from managed resources. A history of coppicing and willow growing goes back to the middle ages and more recently the volume of orchards in the County can be seen as a pioneer of the new wave of agroforestry systems.

This strategy sets out how treescapes can evolve in the new unitary authority of Somerset. It is backed by an Objectives and Actions document which sets out how the strategy can be delivered.

Rationale

The Strategy has been developed to be Somerset focussed. There are many national initiatives, strategies and regulations that govern the development of treescapes and these have been referenced where necessary but do not form part of this strategy explicitly. This strategy sets out how Somerset and its residents can work with its treescapes to create resilient tree-based systems in its rural and urban areas.

Treescapes have the potential to provide mitigation measures alongside emission cuts from fossil fuels and wider decarbonisation aims. Investment supporting the right kinds of activity can help address the biodiversity crisis, enhance carbon removals, protect existing carbon stocks and support adaptation to climate change while simultaneously offering a host of further reaching socio-economic benefits. From improved soil health, water and air quality, to urban cooling, flood prevention, noise reduction, recreation and amenity. Jobs in ecosystem restoration as well as physical and mental health benefits; investments in nature-based solutions have potential for profound societal returns.

In efforts to expand tree cover and protect existing trees it is vitally important to understand that approaches to management for climate change may also lead to negative trade-offs. **“The right tree in the right place”** is crucial messaging for industry.

Governance

The Strategy has been led by a steering group comprising: Environment Agency; Exmoor National Park; The Forestry Commission; FWAG SW; Mendip District Council; Mendip Hills AONB; Quantock Hills AONB; Sedgemoor District Council; Somerset County Council; Somerset Local Nature Partnership; Somerset West & Taunton District Council; Somerset Wildlife Trust; South Somerset District Council; The Woodland Trust.

It has been prepared on behalf of the Steering Group by Evolving Forests Ltd.

The Strategy has been written at a pivotal time as Somerset’s Local Authorities merge into one unitary authority and has been written with this in mind.

Format

The Strategy is set out as three documents:

- **The Strategy.** A short document outlining the main themes and objectives of the Strategy. What the situation is, why it needs to be addressed and how it will be addressed.
- **Objectives and Actions.** The way the Strategy will be taken forward actioned.
- **Evidence.** This document is a long form paper that sets out the rationale and implications of the evidence gathered for the Strategy. It sets out the main themes of the Strategy and the reason for them.



2. Methodology

The Strategy draws on a number of areas of evidence:

- Consultation with the Steering Group
- Wider consultation with communities in Somerset
- Analysis of national programmes affecting treescapes
- Analysis of past Somerset initiatives
- Geographic analysis of existing tree cover

2.1 Consultation with steering group

The Steering Group met every other week during the Strategy formulation. Given the short length of time for the Strategy to be developed (four months) it proved crucial to have regular informal meetings during which the members could drop in and out for a review of progress and input ideas.

A draft of the Strategy was used to inform a detailed workshop in late November 2022 during which the Action Plan was picked apart and concentrated into key areas. The methodology of the workshop was intended to highlight the complexity of strategising for treescapes and the importance that proper governance was given to the Strategy in the future.

During the workshop a set of 25 objectives were presented to the Steering Group who were divided into 5 groups, each group acting as advocates for the 5 main themes of the Strategy:

- Wood culture
- Resilient and adaptable treescapes
- Expanding tree cover
- Woodland services
- Governance

The advocates were asked to rank priorities for their theme. These priority scores were then amalgamated. Difference in priorities between the themes and collective total prioritisation could then be assessed. A similar exercise was conducted against the eight main character areas that lie within Somerset:

- Blackdown Hills
- Exmoor
- Levels and Moors
- Mendip Hills
- Mid Somerset Hills
- Quantock Hills

- Vale of Taunton
- Yeovil Scarplands

The results of these consultations inform the prioritisation in the Objectives and Actions.

2.2 Online consultation

A survey was sent out as an online consultation to inform the Strategy. The intention was to gain an understanding of what the local people of Somerset's relationship with trees in their environment is, and help understand who the Strategy is for. It proved to be an effective method of consultation receiving 752 responses (Table 1).

Respondent type	No. of respondents	Proportion of quantitative sample
Member of the public	555	75%
Woodland owners/ managers	79	10.7%
Work in part with trees	49	6.6%
Work in ecology / the environment	45	6.1%
Local authority	43	5.8%
Forestry agent / consultant	11	1.5%
Work with urban/ roadside trees	7	0.9%
Contractor in woodlands / forests	6	0.8%
Tree surgeon	5	0.7%
Arboricultural consultant	3	0.4%

The survey was live for six weeks through September and October 2022 and was distributed as widely as possible concentrating on:

- Forestry professionals
- Woodland and forestry owners
- Those whose work relies on woodlands
- Community woodland groups
- Charities & NGOs
- Public sector with responsibility for trees
- Protected landscapes
- Social media
- Via school liaison staff within local authorities

As results came in, ongoing analysis showed a very small number of respondents under 40 years old and no respondents in younger age groups. With this in mind a second survey was put together aimed at school age groups but was too late to make any real impact on the results.

The findings are given in detail in appendix 1, the summary being:

- The majority of respondents were over the age of 50, and were non-professionals/ members of the public.
- Respondents thought that overall Somerset does not have enough trees.
- Ecology and the environment was voted as the most important role of trees and woodlands in Somerset now and in the future.
- There were large amounts of uncertainty over whether Somerset's woodlands are resilient to a changing climate.
- The majority of respondents felt that a County-wide strategy meant planting more trees and increasing tree cover.
- They also thought the Strategy should include increasing tree cover, biodiversity, and maintaining existing trees.
- Education was the most commonly mentioned way to engage people in the vision.
- Professionals envisaged using the Strategy through woodland creation and management schemes.
- Somerset County Council received the highest mentions when considering who should be responsible for the Strategy.

2.3 Woodland cover

To assess the benchmark of current tree cover two main datasets were used:

National Forest Inventory data was used to assess rural tree cover. Its advantages are the accuracy of the resource which uses satellite imagery and a dedicated team of researchers at Forest Research. The national dataset was inputted to a Geographic Information System and the Somerset area extracted. This includes all woodlands as well as gaps/glades in woodland but excludes hedgerows.

Some woodland very recent woodland, for instance Somerset Wood, planted by the Council, may not appear in the mapping as it post dates the last inventory.

For urban assessment the i-Tree system was used. Tree canopy cover (TCC) as measured by the i-Tree Canopy (iTCC) tool and also referred to as 'urban canopy cover' or 'urban tree cover', can be defined as the area of leaves, branches, and stems of trees covering the ground when viewed from above. This measure of cover differs somewhat to that reported by NFI which does not cover trees found in hedgerows, parks and gardens, or as small wood features in agricultural and urban landscapes.

Forest Research produce a five-yearly assessment of "Trees Outside Woodland". This was last completed in 2017 and being updated in 2023 using much more robust methodology. The 2023 results could have a significant impact on Somerset's woodland cover estimates.

2.4 Literature review

There are very many strategies and actions plans, white papers and policies on a local, regional, national and international level, all of which could be relevant. A rapid assessment was undertaken of what could be most relevant and these were analysed for data that would be Somerset specific or important to the future of Somerset's trees. These included:

- National Forest Inventory
- Forestry Commission statistics
- National Office of Statistics demographic data
- Met Office climate change modelling
- Past tree strategies for Somerset
- Local Nature Recovery Strategies

These were used to provide an indication of direction and to ensure that this Strategy sits neatly within them. Of significance is the 2010 Woodland Strategy for Somerset. This document provides an excellent base that is still very relevant. It focuses on woodlands rather than the wider treescape and, given its relevance, can be used in conjunction with this Strategy. It gives a more detailed overview of silvicultural imperatives focussed on managing high-forest and short-rotation forestry in the County.

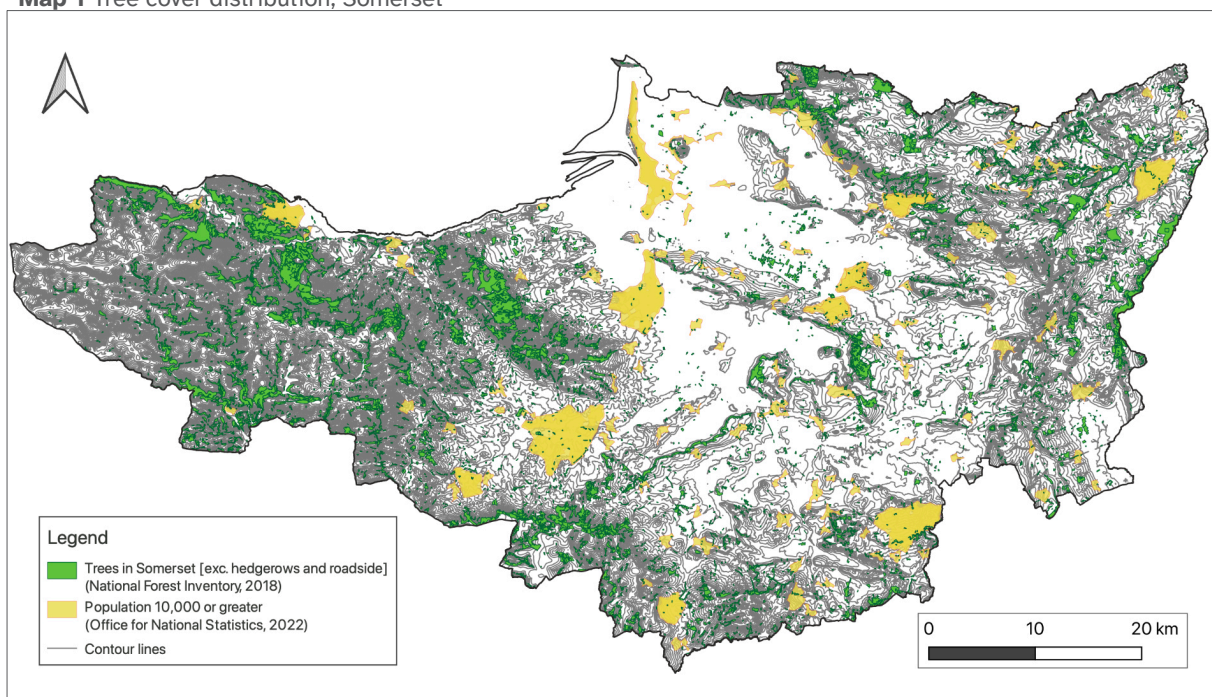
A fuller list of documents is in appendix 3.

2.5 GIS

Use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for data analysis and representation has become the norm. It allows fast assessment of data and acts as an easily digestible gateway to understanding complex information. A GIS package was the first task in understanding the context of Somerset's trees. The steering group were asked to submit datasets they owned and these were put against national datasets such as the National Forest Inventory and demographic information.

The biggest issue was the inconsistency of data held between local authorities; however this will be overcome once Somerset becomes a unitary authority. There are, however, discrepancies between areas with some having a great deal of tree-based geographical data and others not.

Map 1 Tree cover distribution, Somerset



3. The wider national and international context

This Strategy sits within a context of growing national and international interest in trees for a wide variety of reasons from ecological through carbon, to construction and landscape services.

3.1 International

Given the wide spread announcements of Climate Emergency plans from the United Nations to local parishes, the idea that treescapes can exist in a “business as usual” way has given rise to rapid strategy making to ensure resilience and adaptability.

Reflected in both the growing scientific literature and in the perception and experiences of people worldwide the United Nations’ body for assessing the science related to climate change the ‘Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’ (IPCC) highlights the increasingly apparent, unequivocal, and widespread influence of human activity on the Earth’s climate.

The UK has legislated a target to reduce GHG emissions to net zero by 2050 via the communication of its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in line with Article 4 of the Paris Agreement. The contribution of nature to the net zero target is partially captured by actions within the land use, land-use change and forestry sectors (LUCFC). This sector, unlike many others, is unique in its ability to be both a source and sink for GHG emissions and removals respectively. Sequestering CO₂ drawn down from the atmosphere in vegetation and soil carbon, and releasing it.

Mitigation options in forest and tree-based industries include the increase of tree cover available to absorb CO₂, the extension of carbon retention in harvested wood products, product substitution within industries such as construction, and the production of biomass for bio-energy. Removing carbon from the atmosphere and making it available to meet society’s needs via timber, fibre, and energy; trees play a vital role in meeting NDC aims and realising the UK’s net-zero target for 2050.

The conservation, protection and restoration of existing ‘natural’ forest and woodland

alongside sustainable forest management, diversification, and adjustment of tree species compositions are all adaptations anticipated by the IPCC and Forest Research (FR) to build resilience, and manage increased risks from threats of drought, pests, diseases, wind, and wildfires. In addition to this the committee note the significance of cooperation, and inclusive decision making, with local communities in such adaptation measures (IPCC, 2022).

Effective ecosystem-based adaptation has the potential to reduce a range of climate change risks to biodiversity, people, and ecosystem services with multiple co-benefits. Urban greening using trees and other vegetation can provide local cooling, natural river systems, wetlands and upstream forest ecosystems reduce flood risk by storing water and slowing water flow; and coastal wetlands can protect against coastal erosion and flooding associated with storms and sea level rise (IPCC, 2022).

3.2 National

In January 2020, the Committee on Climate Change¹ (CCC) published their report ‘Land use: Policies for a Net Zero UK’². This report outlined policies and quantified actions that would be necessary for the UK to achieve Net Zero by 2050, and built on the land use scenarios from the Committee’s previous Land Use report³, which described how land use could be improved in order to help meet the climate goals agreed by government and committed to through the UN Climate Change Conference (COP).

Amongst the actions identified in the 2020 report, two related to trees and woodlands:

Afforestation and agroforestry

Increasing UK forestry cover from 13% to at least 17% by 2050 by planting around 30,000 hectares or more of broadleaf and conifer

¹The Committee on Climate Change (CCC) is an independent statutory body established through the Climate Change Act 2008, with the purpose of advising UK and devolved governments on emission targets. They also report to Parliament on progress made in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparations for and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

²CCC (2020). Land use: Policies for a Net Zero UK

³CCC (2018). Land Use: Reducing emissions and preparing for climate change.

woodland each year. Together with improved woodland management this would deliver annual emissions sequestration by 2050 of 14 MtCO₂e in forests with an additional 14 MtCO₂e from harvested materials. Planting trees on agricultural land, while maintaining their primary use ("agro-forestry"), could deliver a further 6 MtCO₂e savings by 2050. Sustainably managed forests are important for reducing emissions across the economy. They provide a store of carbon in the landscape and harvested wood can be used sustainably for combustion and carbon sequestration in the energy sector (e.g. when used with Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) technology) and as timber in construction, creating an additional stock of carbon in the built environment.

Bioenergy crops

Expanding the growing of energy crops by around 23,000 hectares each year would deliver 2 MtCO₂e emissions savings in the land sector and an extra 11 MtCO₂e from the harvested biomass (e.g. when used with CCS). Bioenergy crops are faster growing than new woodlands and are needed as part of the overall mix of land-based measures. However, risks of negative impacts of bioenergy crops need to be managed.

At the same time as the CCC were developing their Land Use reports, Government was outlining their response to a proposal from the [Natural Capital Committee](#) to provide a 25-year framework to maintain and improve natural capital. [The 25 Year Environment Plan](#) was published in 2018 and the [Environment Act](#) legislated for in 2021. The Act introduced legally binding environmental targets and requires public bodies to consider environmental principles in policy making.

Both of these initiatives were set against a background of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union, and resulting proposals in England to replace the support for agriculture and rural development with a series of measures, including the Environmental Land Management Scheme, which would replace direct area based payments with payments for public goods.

In 2021, the [England Tree Action Plan](#) (ETAP) set out how Government would respond to the

twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change through the creation and management of trees, woodlands and forests, supported by the Nature for Climate Fund. Government accepted the 30,000ha p.a. new planting target for the UK outlined by the CCC, and also outlined measures to promote the sustainable management of woodland in England.

The ETAP includes a section on 'Expanding and connecting our trees and woodlands' which describes a package of measures to increase tree planting to benefit nature, water, and towns and cities. The Plan also included measures to build tree nursery capacity and support for knowledge and science for trees and woodlands.

Launching the England Tree Action Plan in [May 2021](#), the Secretary of State for the Environment committed to a new target of 7,000ha of new woodland to be created in England by the end of the current Parliament (May 2024), as England's contribution to the UK's woodland creation targets.

[Zero Carbon Britain](#) sets out targets for forest area to be doubled to 24% of the land area of the UK – with roughly one third unharvested and two-thirds harvested for timber. These forests, the wood products they produce, and the restoration of 50% of UK peatlands, could result in the capture of around 47 MtCO₂e on average every year. This is required to balance the residual emissions in the scenario and so make the UK net zero carbon. Such changes would also provide more room for biodiversity.

Beyond these, national policy cites a range of documents that must be adhered to for treescapes to be assumed to be resilient and adaptable. These include the [UK Forestry Standard](#) which sets out the best approach to a range of management interventions and also the need for approved management plans and felling licences for trees to be considered managed in a legal and sustainable way.

3.3 Recent relevant strategies and targets

On 16th December 2022, DEFRA published legally binding targets relating to the environment. This included a commitment to 'increase total tree and woodland cover from 14.5% of land area now to 16.5% by 2050.' At the same time, it was announced that the Government would publish its Environmental Improvement Plan in January 2023 setting out in more detail how these targets, including interim targets, will be achieved.

In 2024, there are plans to roll out the new Local Nature Recovery (LNR) strategy to replace the Countryside Stewardship scheme, with some additional elements that will help to widen the appeal so it can deliver more and better outcomes, in a less bureaucratic and more supportive way. In August 2020, DEFRA launched five pilots of the scheme across England, and plans are to make an early version of the scheme available to a limited group in 2023, for further testing before the full roll out by the end of 2024. There are multiple themes of the LNR strategy that align with Somerset's Tree Strategy, including 'managing and creating trees and woodlands, including agroforestry, traditional orchards and tree planting on areas of farm' and 'nature-based solutions for water - such as creating and managing in-field vegetation, buffer strips and swales to reduce and filter runoff and contribute to natural flood management'. The payments are open to farmers, foresters and other land managers who can deliver the land management activities the scheme pays for on their land. The roll out of the LNR scheme will therefore be an important way for individuals to contribute to improving Somerset's treescape.

The Somerset Local Nature Partnership (LNP) is a broad multi-sector coalition that represents a range of economic, social, political and environmental interests from across the County. In February 2020 it was relaunched with a Nature Conference, which involved consulting directly on the priorities for the LNP and the Natural Environment work-stream. The LNP is determining strategic priorities for the County to develop an Action Plan that focuses on natural solutions to climate change. The Action Plan will focus on protecting biodiversity, habitats,

natural processes and carbon stores and restoring nature at scale to double the amount of land to achieve 30% in positive management for biodiversity and natural processes in Somerset.

The Somerset Tree Strategy is aligned with all six of the proposed Natural Environment work-stream outcomes, which are being delivered by a combination of the Local Nature Partnership and Somerset Wildlife Trust. Some of the proposed actions that will directly contribute to the Somerset Tree Strategy are listed below:

Quick wins (0-1 year)

- Agreed toolkit for community tree planting based on Nature Recovery Network
- Agreed strategic approach to woodland regeneration to mitigate the effects of ash dieback (up to 90% of woodland lost in some areas such as Mendip)
- Hedge motorways: a plan for linking and creating a biodiversity transport network linked to existing beelines and Somerset Pollinator Plan

Long-term

- Agreed woodland regeneration approach including establishing tree nurseries to ensure diseases are not brought into the County
- Deliver a coherent, resilient, NRN across Somerset
 - a. produce and deliver signature projects for different habitats and landscapes in next three to ten years e.g. Levels and Coast wetlands,
- Somerset Forest (ring around the Levels).
 - b. Long-term land acquisition plan and fund to support communities and landowners

4. Climate and future treescape resilience

Global temperatures are predicted to rise by at least a degree over the next two decades, and by the end of the century, they could rise by up to 4 degrees above pre-industrial levels. To ensure Somerset's trees and woodlands are resilient to the uncertain future climate, there is a critical need to plan for both the current climate, and the predicted future climate.

Somerset's trees have developed in a predictable and stable climate, leaving them vulnerable to fast change. Somerset has declared a climate and ecological emergency and so this section will first consider what the predicted changes to the climate and environment are for Somerset. Then it will explore how to reduce the risk associated with such changes, through building a resilient treescape that is able to resist, recover, and adapt to future disturbance and stressors.

Whilst it may seem obvious, if trees die from drought they don't produce timber, fruit or nuts or provide a home for wildlife. As temperatures rise trees provide us shade for free, increased storminess leads to windthrow and disruption to roads and rail networks. Tree species unable to respond to the rapid change in climate (genetically selected for conditions 100 years ago) become more stressed and prone to disease. However we can plant trees fit for both today and the future. Change in woodland structure and management makes trees less likely to succumb to environmental stresses.

4.1 Predicted climate & environment change in Somerset

This section examines how the climate is predicted to change in Somerset over the next 60 years, including the impact of sea level rise, and the areas that have analogous climates to the future projections for Somerset. In order to adapt and be resilient to change, there needs to be a better understanding of the predictions and their potential impacts on Somerset's trees.

Temperature

Projected temperature changes for the South West were taken from the UK Climate

Projections (UKCP18) Key Results dataset produced by the Met Office. The standard baseline for calculating projected future temperature anomalies used was the period 1981-2000. The emissions scenarios chosen to report on were RCP 6.0 and RCP 8.5, which are medium and high emission scenarios respectively.

The mean annual temperature for South West England is predicted to rise by up to 2.2 degrees by 2050, under the highest emission scenario (RCP 8.5, 50% probability), and up to 1.2 degrees under the lowest emission scenario (RCP 2.6, 50% probability).

Table 2 Projected changes to the South West's climate (based on medium and high emissions scenarios, at 50% probability)

Change compared to 1981 - 2000 baseline	2050's (Medium scenario)	2050's (High scenario)	2080's (Medium scenario)	2080's (High scenario)
Mean annual temperature	1.4°C	2.2°C	2.9°C	4.1°C
Mean summer temperature	1.9°C	2.9°C	4.1°C	5.6°C
Mean winter temperature	1.3°C	1.9°C	2.3°C	3.2°C

Map 2 Predictions for annual mean temperature across South West England, based on the Met Office UKCP18 dataset.

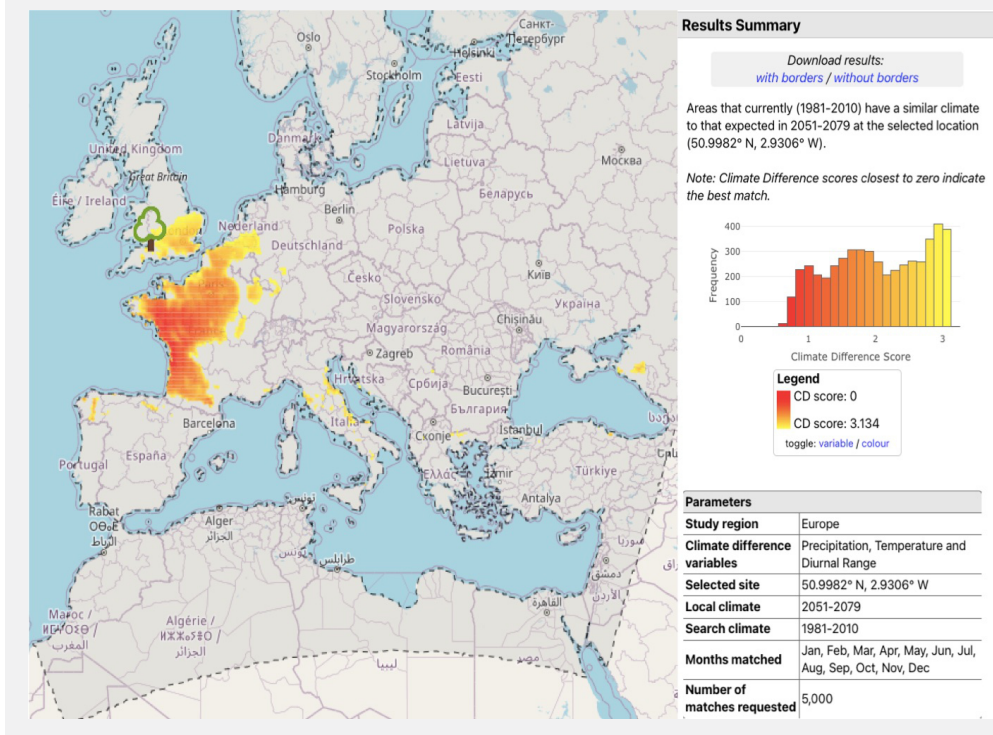


Climate analogues

Climate analogues show areas with current climates similar to the predicted climates for a chosen area. This gives an indication of the climate that trees are likely to experience in the future.

Forest Research’s climate matching tool was used to demonstrate what the projected climate of a chosen site in Somerset will be in the future, by suggesting similar analogue areas in the current climate. The tool is designed as complementary to the Ecological Site Classification (ESC) tree selection tool (which does not take into account adaptation). The concept behind the need for a climate matching tool is that by sourcing seeds from future climate analogues future forest resilience under climate change may benefit. The tool is underpinned by UKCP18 climate data at a 12km resolution, using RCP 8.5 pathway in future projections, and similar sites are identified based on mean monthly temperature, diurnal temperature range and rainfall.

Map 3 Climate matching tool predictions for Somerset 2051-79

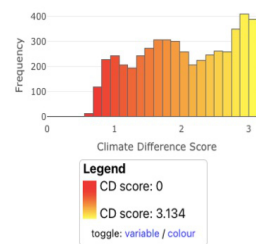


Results Summary

Download results:
[with borders](#) / [without borders](#)

Areas that currently (1981-2010) have a similar climate to that expected in 2051-2079 at the selected location (50.9982° N, 2.9306° W).

Note: Climate Difference scores closest to zero indicate the best match.



Parameters

Study region	Europe
Climate difference variables	Precipitation, Temperature and Diurnal Range
Selected site	50.9982° N, 2.9306° W
Local climate	2051-2079
Search climate	1981-2010
Months matched	Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec
Number of matches requested	5,000

The example results shown in Map 3 demonstrate the climate difference score for areas in Europe, compared to the chosen location in Somerset. Areas of dark red are predicted to be the most similar to the average climate of the selected site between 2051-2079. In this example, the baseline comparison is the climate across Europe during 1981 - 2010. This baseline was compared with the average predicted climate of a point in Somerset (50.9982 °N, 2.9306 °W) in 2051-2079, matched across all months. The climate difference variables used to determine the results were precipitation, temperature and diurnal range.

Sea level rise

Somerset is particularly at risk from sea level rise, with some of the lowest ground levels in the UK. Areas such as the Somerset Levels are often below sea level at spring tides, and rivers are required to carry high levels of rainfall. Sea level rise is important to consider in the Tree Strategy as it will additionally affect the species that are suitable. The tree species will need to be resilient to high levels of salinity in some areas.

Trees will play a part in mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change, such as taking up water and preventing flooding. The Risk Zone Map (Map 4) by Climate Central shows the projected impact of sea level rise for Somerset in 100 years, under an emission scenario of unchecked pollution.

Extreme weather

As the planet warms, extreme weather events are predicted to become more intense and frequent. It is often through the increase in extreme weather events that climate change impacts first affect us, with such events causing the greatest stress to environmental systems.

For Somerset, the greatest damage is likely to be related to heavy rain and flooding events, heatwaves and droughts. The UN IPCC report predicts the UK to receive 10% more rainfall on average per year by 2100 compared to 1986-2005 (IPCC 5th Assessment Report Summary for Policymakers, p20). Heavier rainfall events are also predicted to increase in frequency, which when combined with sea level rise increases the likelihood of storm surges breaching coastal defences. With the increase in frequency of unavoidable flood events, there is a need to adapt to the effects of flooding so the treescape can be more resilient. Heatwaves and droughts will also become more frequent and intense during summer periods. With temperatures frequently varying by large amounts, trees become vulnerable to cellular damage, drought stress, and a reduced ability to take up nutrients.

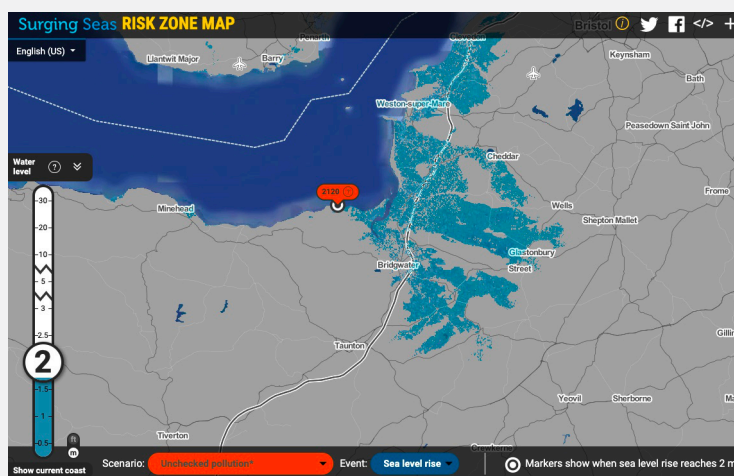
These conditions, alongside increasing globalisation will also increase the threat of disease and pests. In the period 1992 - 2019, tree imports have risen by 700% and at the same time 267 non-native plant pests have become established. The changing climate

Table 3 Predicted sea-level rise baseline to 2100

Climate Scenario	Mean sea level rise at 2100 (m) - Cardiff
RCP2.6	+ 0.27 - 0.69
RCP4.5	+ 0.35 - 0.81
RCP8.5	+ 0.51 - 1.13

Source: [UKCP18 Marine Report \(2018\)](#)

Map 4 Projected impact sea level rise in 100 years



conditions may be suited to new pests that arrive with imported trees. Furthermore mild winters, along with increased heavy rainfall and flooding will increase suitability for the establishment of new pests and diseases, as well as susceptibility to existing pests and diseases. For example, the spread of ash dieback has been driven/exacerbated by the climate crisis, as more mild and wet winters provide ideal conditions for the disease to spread, and drought and flooding also leaves trees more stressed.

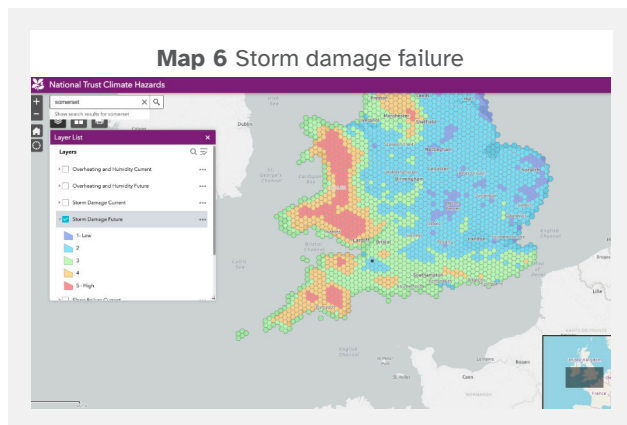
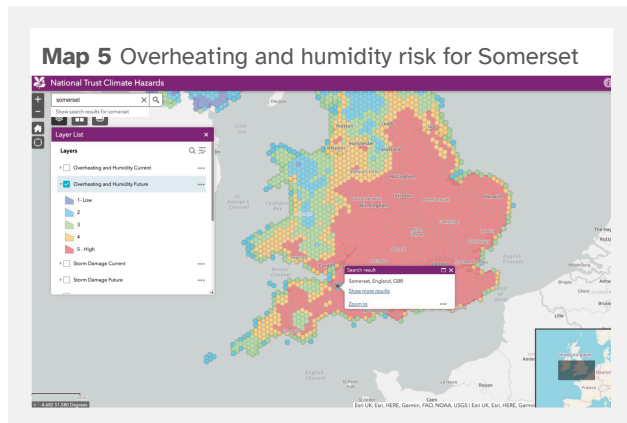
In the Mendips, the impact of ash dieback is predicted to lead to the loss of up to 90% of some woodlands, so approaches such as that of Somerset's Climate Emergency to agree on a strategic method for woodland regeneration to mitigate the effects of ash dieback will be essential alongside considering which tree species can replace ash contributing to existing Special Area of Conservation goals. Projections of the climate hazards and extreme weather events from the National Trust Climate Hazard tool for Somerset are shown in Map 5.

Reducing future risk

What does a resilient treescape for Somerset look like?

A resilient treescape is one that is able to readily adapt to, and absorb a range of disturbances and remain healthy into the future. Building resilience involves both managing risk, but also exploiting potential benefits of climate change. Resilience is key to helping Somerset's trees cope with the predicted increasing frequency and intensity of shocks and stressors, such as increased flooding risk and periods of drought.

The approach to building a resilient treescape also needs to be resilient itself. Key to creating a resilient treescape for Somerset is being able to observe, respond and adapt to changing conditions. There needs to be flexibility in the diversity of species being planted, and a range of management practices that improve woodland quality through increasing heterogeneity, including forward-thinking silvicultural systems. At a landscape level, woodland size and connectivity need to be increased. This will enable Somerset's trees and woodlands to be resilient to increasing temperature, sea level rise, disease and pests, and to competing land use demand.



4.2 Adapting Somerset's trees

In the climate and ecological emergency that Somerset is facing, Somerset's treescapes need to be resilient and adaptable. This includes their structure and ecology. On a national level this is set out in Forest Research's [Adapting Forest and Woodland Management to the Changing Climate](#) paper.

Biodiversity

The UK is in the midst of a worsening biodiversity crisis, where almost half of its biodiversity has been lost since the 1970's ([State of Nature 2016](#)). Woodland wildlife in particular is at risk, with one of the lowest woodland covers in Europe, 1 in 10 woodland wildlife species are at risk of extinction in the UK.

Biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems are heavily linked. Increasing the species diversity in the treescape will improve resilience to increasing stresses resulting from extreme weather, pests & disease and societal needs. For example, if a disease spreads that affects a specific species, the more diverse the

network of trees, the less significant impact this will have on the wider population. Beyond resilience, improving tree species diversity can be expected to increase the range of timber and non-wood products that can be harvested, and improve recreational opportunities. There is also substantial evidence showing more diverse forests to have a greater positive impact on the mental health of recreational users ([Methorst et al, 2021](#)). These factors are as true in urban as in rural contexts.

While increasing the diversity of tree species planted across Somerset, consideration needs to be made for the tree species historically not widespread, that may become more suitable under predicted climatic change. A resilient treescape for Somerset must therefore involve careful consideration of the tree species that will be best adapted to climate change.

Beyond species diversity, it is additionally important to consider genetic diversity. Greater genetic diversity increases the likelihood of disease resistant individuals that can survive stressors, and provides treescapes with greater potential to adapt to new environmental conditions, through natural selection. Maintaining and increasing genetic diversity is a vital part of enabling adaptation, and subsequently improving resilience. Simple ways to increase gene flow include linking and expanding native woods through natural regeneration, and planting with stock that is well-adapted. With predicted climate change, assisted migration, where seed is sourced from better matched varieties from southerly provenances, will improve woodland resilience.

It is likely that the current genetic stock taken from local seedlings will survive, though perhaps not necessarily thrive in future climates. While different origins of stock of existing species may offer alternatives or even, in limited circumstances, new species that provide focussed benefits to carbon, or other products.

Species suitability study

The Forestry Commission (FC) Ecological Site Classification (ESC) tool was used to predict tree species that will be best suited to

planting in forestry sites under predicted climate change. The ESC is a predictive tool that is designed to aid forestry decision making, through the provision of a quick assessment of site character, with the ability to explore the effects of predicted climate change to a site. It rates the suitability of tree species to the selected site conditions, with options to contextualise site conditions such as soil moisture, soil nutrients such as phosphate content, wind and climate.

The climate scenario used to model the data here is the Medium-high 2080 Available Water Capacity (AWC) model. The model was run for 60 tree species, including both broadleaves and conifers. **It is important to note that the ESC is not suited to urban tree planting or urban forestry, and is not a substitute for forestry best practice, knowledge and experience.** It is purely an indicative tool that may help managers on a site by site basis.

Four sites were selected to provide a wide ranging basis across Somerset. The selected sites were in South Somerset, the Mendip Hills (AONB), the Somerset Levels and on Exmoor National Park. It is important to note that the tool is highly sensitive, and the sites selected here are used as examples of how the tool can be used. The species selected are specific to the sites inputted, and should not be applied to other sites within Somerset.

The tool scores tree species based on suitability, which describes the likely success of a tree species growing to maturity at a given site. Suitability is grouped into four categories: Unsuitable (ESC score 0 - 0.29), Marginal (0.3-0.49), Suitable (0.5-0.74) and Very Suitable (0.75+). Higher values mean that a particular factor such as accumulated temperature, or soil moisture regime, is unlikely to prevent tree growth. Species with a score equal to or greater than 0.5 (Suitable) were chosen as the cut off for species selection. All species that were shown to be suitable or very suitable at each location were counted, and totalled to give a number of occurrences across the four sites.

Table 4 is extracted from ESC results produced by the [Forest Research Ecological Classification Tool](#).

Table 4 Example of predicted ecological site classification for selected sites

Site region	Site grid reference	Site class	Soil moisture regime	Soil Nutrient Regime
South Somerset	ST390189	Very warm - Sheltered - Slightly dry	3.0 (Very moist)	3.0 (Medium)
Mendip Hills	ST549525	Very warm - Moderately exposed - Slightly dry	5.0 (Fresh)	5.0 (Very rich)
Exmoor National Park	SS810418	Very warm - Highly exposed - Moist	5.0 (Fresh)	2.0 (Poor)
Somerset Levels	ST375442	Very warm - Moderately exposed - Slightly dry	3.0 (Very moist)	5.0 (Very rich)

Only four tree species were predicted to be suitable at all four sites in 2080, three of which are conifer species, and one broadleaf. Eighteen species were suitable at three of the four sites, and seven species were suitable for just two sites. Twenty-one tree species were only suitable on one of the four sites tested. Species only suitable to one site included species commonly found across Somerset, such as Beech, Sweet chestnut, Silver birch, Sessile oak, Alder, and Wych elm.

Again, it should be noted that this is an example of a tool that should be carried out only in a forestry specific context. The results from any ESC model must be taken into account alongside guidance from experienced foresters, and alongside ecological guidance, such as that provided by DEFRA and organisations such as Bee Happy Plants & Seeds, to plant native species that will simultaneously improve biodiversity levels in managed forests.

Management

Woodlands across the UK, including Somerset, are declining in ecological condition and quality, and this is largely due to neglect and a lack of management. Despite a gradual increase in woodland cover, woodland wildlife has simultaneously decreased. **Therefore where woodland cover is extensive, the management of Somerset's woodlands should be a priority over establishing new woodland.**

As deforestation occurred across the UK, reaching its zenith in the 1920s, much structure was lost in Somerset's woodlands and street trees. Only those areas unmanageable tended to remain and for many agriculture areas and townscapes this meant a reduction in the structure and diversity of trees in the landscape. From the 1920s a fashion for conifer monoculture developed and from the 1980s this was overtaken by a fashion for mixed broadleaf planting. The resulting Somerset woodland landscape is lacking in structural heterogeneity, where woodlands have low species diversity, and a limited range of age classes. This has detrimental effects on biodiversity, and leaves woodlands with limited resilience and adaptation potential. The complex ecosystem interactions that maintain ecosystem function start to degrade when species are removed from ecosystem networks, and woodlands that have greater biodiversity are better able to withstand and adapt to changing conditions and disturbances. Woodland management is therefore an essential part of the tree strategy, and management strategies need to be able to readily adapt to changing conditions.

Bringing woodland into management allows for monitoring regimes to be put in place to monitor influx of pest & disease and react quickly. Management needs to include protecting newly planted woodland from pest damage, such as squirrel and deer damage to natural regeneration, as this presents a

Table 5 Species 'very suitable' - 'suitable' across the sites studied
(species in **bold** are 'very suitable')

South Somerset	Mendip Hills	Exmoor	Somerset Levels
Corsican pine	Corsican pine	Grey alder	Corsican pine
Macedonian pine	Lodgepole pine	Rowan	Macedonian pine
Western red cedar	Macedonian pine	Lodgepole pine	Western red cedar
Coast redwood	Scots pine	Macedonian pine	Coast redwood
Hornbeam	Nordman fir	Scots pine	Hornbeam
Lodgepole pine	Sycamore	Sitka spruce	Lodgepole pine
Monterey/Radiata pine	Rowan	Sitka spruce (Imp.)	Monterey/Radiata pine
Scots pine	White willow	Pacific fir	Scots pine
Oriental spruce	Maritime pine	Downy birch	Oriental spruce
Serbian spruce	Monterey/Radiata pine	Sycamore	Serbian spruce
Grand fir	Weymouth pine	Wild service tree	Grand fir
Lawson's cypress	Norway spruce		Lawson's cypress
Sycamore	Oriental spruce		Sycamore
Pedunculate oak	Serbian spruce		Ash
Red oak	Sitka spruce		Pedunculate oak
Black poplar	Sitka spruce (Imp.)		Red oak
Common alder	European larch		Black poplar
Italian alder	Western red cedar		Common alder
Shining gum	European silver fir		Italian alder
Wild cherry	Grand fir		Wild cherry
White willow	Pacific fir		White willow
Holly	Leyland cypress		Holly
Willow (SRC)	Giant redwood		Willow (SRC)
Eucalyptus glaucescens (SRF)	Coast redwood		Eucalyptus glaucescens (SRF)
	Silver birch		
	Norway maple		
	Beech		
	Roble beech		
	Ash		
	Pedunculate oak		
	Sessile oak		
	Aspen		
	Black poplar		
	Rauli beech		
	Common alder		
	Grey alder		
	Italian alder		
	Cider gum		
	Wild service tree		
	Black walnut		
	Common walnut		
	Hornbeam		
	Small-leaved lime		
	Wych elm		
	Wild cherry		
	Sweet chestnut		
	Holly		
	Willow (SRC)		
	Eucalyptus glaucescens (SRF)		

serious issue in establishing new woodland.

Grey squirrels negatively impact trees and woods through bark stripping, which causes wounds and stress, eventually leading to tree death. They target mostly young broadleaved trees, between 10-40 years in age. Species that are more susceptible to squirrel damage include biodiverse species such as oak, hornbeam, beech and sweet chestnut. Therefore along with management of the trees themselves, Somerset must include actions to actively reduce squirrel numbers in woodlands to protect the treescape.

It is important to recognise there is no silver bullet silvicultural approach that should be followed, and future silviculture needs to be part of management plans that are able to adapt and respond to changes in conditions. Innovation on a county scale will be essential, with consideration of processes such as assisted migration and dispersal, in order to provide future generations with the knowledge that allows a continuous adaptation to the changing climatic conditions.

The types of woodland management strategies used need to be varied and have clear goals of improving biodiversity, and increasing woodland structural diversity. Silvicultural techniques such as continuous cover forestry promote a more uneven age structure in woodland, which is accompanied by increased structural complexity and heterogeneity. It is likely that the more complex a forest system, the more resilient it is going to be. This is due to the greater number of interactions between species, and increased likelihood of species replacing those that are removed to keep the ecosystem in equilibrium. Techniques such as natural regeneration, coppicing and hedge-laying are all important in increasing the structural complexity of woodland ecosystems, and should be considered and applied where suitable.

Connectivity

Trees play an important role in connecting a range of habitats across the landscape. A successful tree strategy involves considering the planting of trees not just on a tree by tree basis, but on a landscape scale. Hedgerows, and trees planted to connect a range of

treescapes provide corridors connecting urban and rural landscapes, enabling wildlife to travel between habitats.

However, Somerset woodlands are experiencing an increasing amount of habitat fragmentation. To improve connectivity, trees outside of woodlands need to be given more consideration, ensuring the right trees are planted in the right place, and that they are managed to maintain the value of the services they provide. Trees that connect up woodland ecosystems will directly contribute to improving the health of the woodland ecosystems themselves, through providing corridors for biodiversity to move between habitats and maximising their ecosystem service contributions.

Connectivity will be increasingly important under climate change. Species will need to disperse across landscapes, adjusting their distributions to match the changing climate. Through increasing the connectivity between woodlands, and using trees to support habitat corridors, it enables species to adapt to climate change through dispersal. Improving quality, size, and connections of woodland habitats at a local level is considered to be essential in buffering the predicted effects of climate change (Hopkins et al., 2007).

As prioritised by the Somerset Local Nature Partnership, it is essential to determine where woodland, hedgerow and orchard regeneration is beneficial, through the Nature Recovery Network spatial map, before determining where the additional tree planting or natural regeneration of woodlands is required. This again refers back to the 'right tree in the right place' approach.

Woodland cover

Previous woodland cover aims and previous work

The County Council's 'Local Agenda 21' document set a target to increase broadleaved woodland in the county by 70% between 1999-2015. A bold but somewhat unrealistic aim, this target was ultimately unachievable due to a lack of government funding able to provide enough aid to support such a vast increase of planting rates. Recognising the flaws of prior aims, a revised

woodland cover target set by the 2010 'Somerset Tree Strategy' put forward aspirations to increase woodland area in Somerset (South Somerset, Mendip, Sedgemoor, Taunton Deane, and West Somerset) from 7% to 8% by 2030.

Data available from the National Forest Inventory (NFI, 2018) indicates that this aim was achieved within 8 years. The current woodland cover for the district authorities of Somerset West & Taunton Council, Mendip, Sedgemoor, and South Somerset District Council is estimated to be 8%, 29,951 ha of a total ~375,230 ha land available. It is unlikely that this figure has drastically changed in the past four years.

Contrary to overly-ambitious aims of the 1999-2015 document, the 2010 strategy demonstrates an acutely more conservative approach to increasing woodland area. Alongside this it offers a comprehensive analysis of Somerset's woodland resource, a thorough review of the various activities of organisations involved with woodland management, and also identifies gaps in policy. The document serves as an excellent place to build a bolder, more resilient, adaptable and experimental tree strategy for Somerset.

Rural tree cover, Somerset

Woodland cover in England recorded March 2021 was 1.32 million hectares or 10.1% of land area (DEFRA, 2022). Although woodland cover has doubled over the past century it is still significantly lower than in Wales (15%), and Scotland (19%) and the EU which has an average of 40% cover. During periods of previous woodland planting in the UK the highest rate of woodland expansion since 1924 was seen in 1971, with 6,500 ha achieved in a year.

An average of approximately 5,000 ha/yr cover increase was maintained across the UK between 1993 and 2006 but planting rates have very much declined since 2005, with an average of just 1,720 ha planted in England (DEFRA, 2022). If woods less than 0.5 ha in area, groups of trees, individual trees and linear features (TOW - trees outside woodland) are included in tree cover numbers the figure potentially rises up to 14.5%, however for the

purposes of this strategy and analysis the most recognised figures from the National Forest Inventory and Forestry Commission statistics have been used.

An ambitious target of creating 30,000 ha of new woodland a year across the UK has been set; 7,500 ha of which are targeted in England (England Trees Action Plan, 2021). Based on the current estimates for woodland cover in Somerset a 1% increase in woodland cover would equate to approximately 3750 ha of land planted (as blocks, linear features, or other systems). To bring Somerset to the UK national average of 13% would require 7,500 ha of new planting or 750 ha/yr over ten years. Based on the percentage of land area Somerset makes up of England (3.2%), the county's contribution to a proportion of the 7,500 ha/year target of new planting would require 240 ha/yr new planting.

Urban tree cover

Average canopy cover according to the citizen science-led i-Tree Canopy (iTC) for England has been recorded at 15.8% (Forest Research, 2016). The paper published from the 'Trees, People and the Built Environment 3 (TPBE3, 2017) Conference' hosted by the Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF) and Urban Forestry & Woodland Advisory Committee (FWAC) recommend a minimum target of 20% canopy cover for UK towns and cities; acknowledging a cover target of 15% for coastal locations (Doick et al., 2017). Towns and cities already recording at least 20% canopy cover have been recommended to set targets to increase cover by at least 5%.

The average ward canopy cover, calculated using the iTC for Somerset, is 7.2%. Some of the best performing wards already near or bettering the 20% target include:

- Coleford and Holcombe, Mendip - 19.6%
- Cheddar and Shipham, Sedgemoor - 19.8%
- Neroche, Taunton Deane - 23.1%

Some of the lower performing wards include:

- Huntspill and Pawlett, Sedgemoor - 2%
- Wincanton, South Somerset - 4%

- Glastonbury St Benedict's, Mendip - 5.7%

To bring the Huntspill and Pawlett ward (5994 ha) up to the 20% canopy cover target would require an additional 1,078ha canopy coverage. Whereas Wincanton standing considerably smaller at 1149 ha would only require additional coverage of 184 ha to reach said target. And Glastonbury St. Benedict's (219 ha) would require just 31.3 ha increase.

To remain ambitious with planting targets the example ward of Neroche, Taunton Deane (283 ha) could strive for 25% canopy cover (using iTC tool) by increasing cover by just 5.35 ha. Scale of wards and tools used for assessment have a significant impact on interpretation of results and targets to be set and aimed for.

Much work has been undertaken nationally on urban tree canopy cover, for instance in Torbay in Devon and the [South Somerset Tree Canopy Cover](#) study. These, along with tools such as [i-tree](#) assessments provide methodologies for monitoring what are complex silvicultural systems of urban forestry with multiple issues around species, underground infrastructure, competing objectives and Health & Safety for instance. They are often more complex than traditional forestry. Specialist knowledge is required of arboriculturalists to manage these and the competing interests of communities, councils, highways etc. The Council and Steering Group need to ensure that urban forestry is fully integrated into the Strategy. Most importantly the Strategy needs to bring together groups with a vested interest and groups which should have more of an interest, to grasp what are often seen as "issues" of trees in urban settings, finding ways to create solutions and opportunities for increasing urban canopy cover.

5. People

Understanding the demographic of the population of Somerset, and their interaction with trees, is crucial to developing a tree strategy that reflects the needs and wants of Somerset, alongside the needs of the trees themselves. Around 48% of Somerset’s population live in areas classified as “rural” against an England average of 18%. Despite this it is the younger population, based largely in urban areas, that will be responsible for managing Somerset’s trees of the future. This section will explore current opportunities for people to interact with trees in Somerset, and provide evidence for the actions that are required to create a wood culture for Somerset.

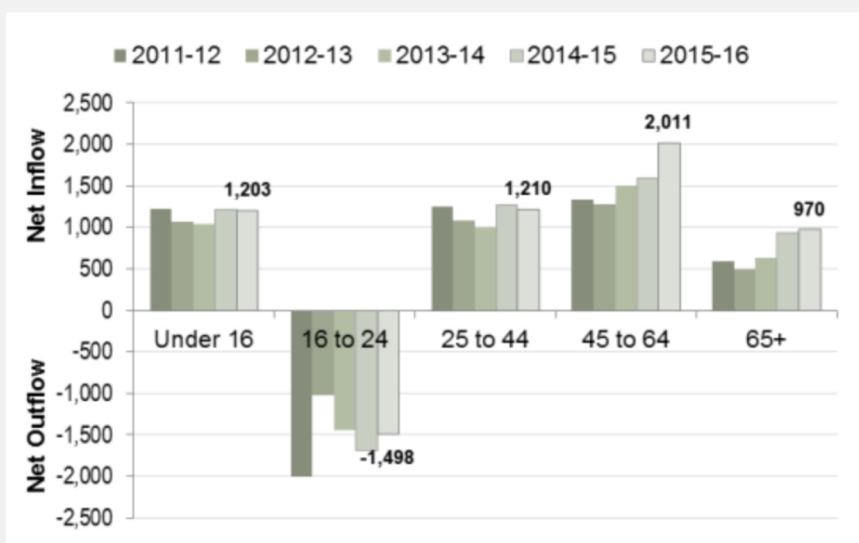
Current and future age demographic

Somerset has a population of around 560,000 (ONS data, 2019) relatively evenly spread between age groups, 20% being below 15 and 25% being over 65. Despite this, West Somerset has the highest percentage of people aged over 65 in the UK (33%), and the average age of Somerset’s population in 2020 was estimated at 43.4. At the same time, Somerset has a below average proportion of 20-39 age groups than England as a whole. Somerset’s population is predicted to rise by a further 12% over the next 20 years, to 624,800. Within this predicted growth the 75+ group is greatest, predicted to double to almost 117,500 by 2041. Additionally, most of Somerset is likely to have at least 25% of the population over 65 by 2033, demonstrated visually by the figure below. This increasingly ageing population is predicted to result in

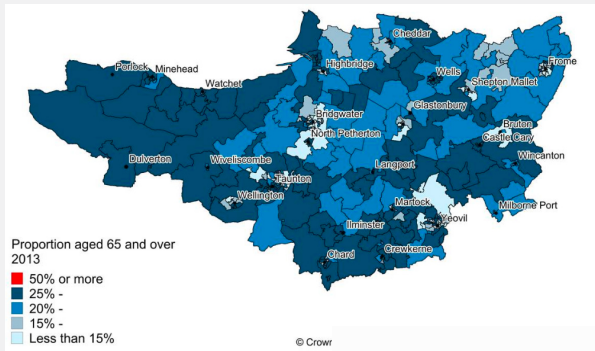
there being a similar number of those in their 20s as in their 80s. A large contribution to the ageing population is the net migration of younger age groups out of the County for education, and work. The only age group with a net outflow is 16-24, largely a result of the 18-20 age group leaving for University, of which 2100 are leaving annually. This is likely driven initially by the County’s lack of universities, and then following this, limited numbers returning to Somerset post-university.

Somerset’s ageing workforce is important to consider in the tree strategy as it demonstrates the challenges in creating a young workforce that are driven to protect and maintain Somerset’s treescape.

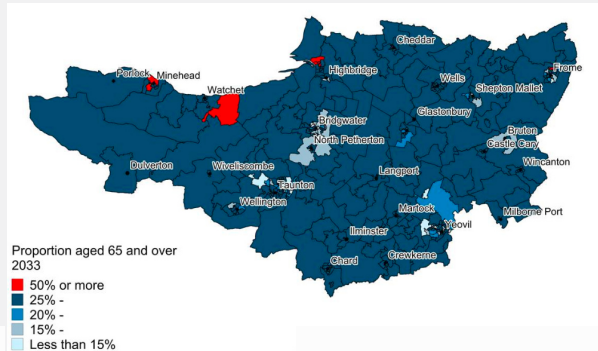
Figure 1: Graph extracted from Somerset Intelligence.org.uk demonstrating the internal Somerset migration by age group (2016)



Map 7 Proportion of population aged 65 and over, 2013



Map 8 Proportion of population aged 65 and over, 2033



These population statistics are mirrored in the survey that was undertaken and are a critical part of a strategy for trees in the County. Most critically whilst at least half the population are under 40, very few of this age group responded to the survey (10% response). **Somerset's engagement with trees is majority ageing, but Somerset's trees rely on younger generations to take an active part in their future and likewise, younger generations will be impacted most if the Somerset's trees are not managed in a resilient way.**

Education and future generations

The future of Somerset's treescape lies in the hands of future generations. At the same time, it is the younger generations that are decreasingly connected to trees. To engage the people of Somerset in the strategy's vision, education needs to play a significant role. The survey results demonstrate this, where the most popular suggestions for how to engage more people in the strategy / vision were education, through schooling initiatives (20%) and educating across all age groups (13%).

Figure 2 Pie chart showing the proportion of different age groups that responded to the consultation survey

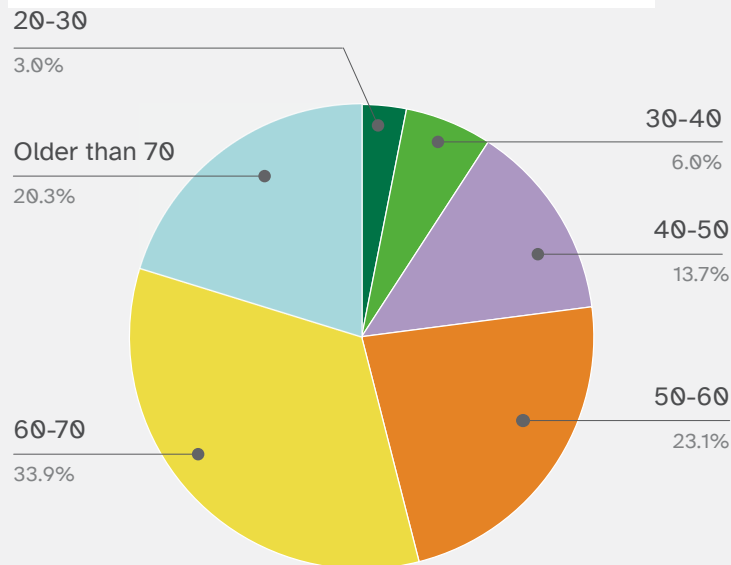
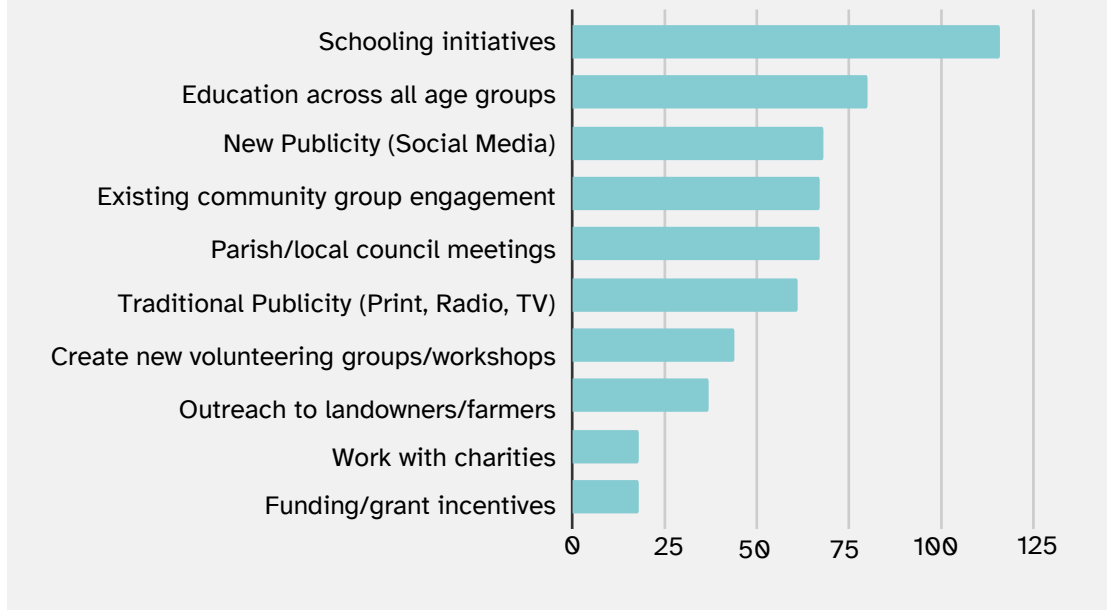


Figure 3 Responses to the survey question asking how to engage more people in the vision of Somerset's tree strategy



Currently, within the National Curriculum, there is limited content related to trees, beyond discussion of plant biology, and carbon sequestration. Young people therefore finish school with little understanding of the importance of trees on a range of levels. This poses a significant problem to the care of Somerset's current and future trees. There is also a level of tree literacy that is required for people to experience the extended range of benefits of being exposed to trees. Without an understanding of the ecology, as well as cultural importance of trees, people are unlikely to venture out into woods and experience such benefits.

Beyond the classroom, Forest Schools offer young people the opportunity to develop a lifelong relationship with the natural world through time spent learning in woodlands. Through several hours learning in woods spread out across the seasons, it enables students to develop a strong positive relationship with the environment that they can continue to explore into adulthood. The Forest School organisation in the UK originated in Somerset, when in 1993 nursery nurses at Bridgwater College learnt of the open air culture in Denmark and how essential early years education is, inspiring them to set up the first forest school for children. From this a BTech in Forest School was also

initiated. Despite being once at the forefront of forest school education, there are limited opportunities for school age students to experience forest school education in Somerset. With over 300 schools (primary, secondary and private), there are only 3 Forest Schools registered with the Forest School Association in Somerset, and 19 within the first three pages of a Google search. An expansion of Forest School groups could provide students with important easy access to an education that integrates care for the natural world with discovery and play in natural environments.

For those finishing school, clear and direct education pathways are essential to improve the skills force working with trees. Further and Higher education courses ensure skills can be developed and students sent in the right directions to pursue careers that will aid in making Somerset's treescape healthy and productive, for many years into the future. There are four main colleges in Somerset, the largest of which is Bridgwater and Taunton College, which also operates the University Centre Somerset. Although there are a range of courses offered in agriculture, including a BSc in Agricultural Management, there is just one Forestry and Arboriculture course at the Bridgwater and Taunton College, at Diploma level 3. There does not appear to be any HE

provision in forestry, or woodland management. With 40% of woodland unmanaged in England, and ambitious plans to expand Somerset's treescape by 240ha/yr, Somerset would benefit from introducing a higher education course and/or apprenticeship (level 5 and above) in Forestry / Arboriculture. Such targets are unachievable without a stronger workforce and education supporting people to both work and spend their time volunteering with trees.

There is a new Level 3 qualification commencing in 2023 called T-Levels. A T-Level is a two year programme equivalent to three A-Levels, for students who have recently completed their GCSEs. T-Levels cover a variety of vocational skills, with aims to help students into skilled employment, higher study or apprenticeships. From September 2023, there will be a T-Level course in 'Agriculture, Land Management and Production', which will support students into a variety of related careers including becoming a Forestry Worker, Arboricultural Officer and Tree Surgeon. However, when searching for local T-Level schools or colleges in Somerset, there are no colleges planning to offer this course for either September 2023, or 2024, and the closest colleges are in Dorset and Wiltshire. Somerset and its treescape would therefore benefit from its colleges, potentially the Bridgwater and Taunton College, transitioning to being able to deliver the T-Level course in the near future.

Education for all

It is important that education and awareness of the importance of trees has a more extensive reach beyond school leavers. With education programmes currently directed mainly at school leavers, in addition to more degree level forestry and arboriculture education, there needs to be pathways to enable people to switch careers to work with trees, and education alongside related jobs, in order to bring about the planned ambitious changes to Somerset's treescape.

The survey revealed that respondents' opinions on the way Somerset should manage its tree strategy reflect a need for further education of the general public. For example a large proportion of respondents commented that they were against the inclusion of any

commercial forestry in the strategy. This demonstrates a gap in education related to Somerset's trees, potentially linked to a lack of understanding of the importance of wood as a sustainable building material. There was also evidence that communities and individuals don't understand the concept of woodland resilience, as 50.7% of respondents stated they were unsure as to whether Somerset's trees are resilient to a changing climate. Developing a wider understanding of the carbon and biodiversity debates around the growth of forests, and use of wood as a sustainable building material will be essential to promote behaviour change. Additionally, where people engage in sustainable consumption through using wood products, it will support the development of local skills, enterprise and innovation of wood.

Within forestry education, there needs to be consideration of the content, and types of forestry approaches that are taught. The only available forestry and arboriculture course focuses on traditional methods of tree felling techniques, and timber processing etc. There is an opportunity for new forestry education courses that are innovative and teach new progressive approaches to tree management, including digital skills.

Additionally, to ensure that material use in construction is aligned with the materials available, it is important to connect the professionals who use trees with those who grow them. Currently the professional woodland community in Somerset is widely dispersed, and there are limited opportunities for sharing knowledge and expertise. There needs to be a network for those who work in forestry, woodlands and wood products to connect, to enable collaboration and build a more sustainable wood culture. Developers, architects and landscape architects need to take treescapes seriously, understanding the impacts of their design choices on the treescape and its natural environment. Part of this involves increasing the understanding of the opportunities and issues of treescapes in developments beyond just the aesthetics.

Community

Community involvement in woodlands and urban forestry is essential to generate a wood culture amongst a population, especially

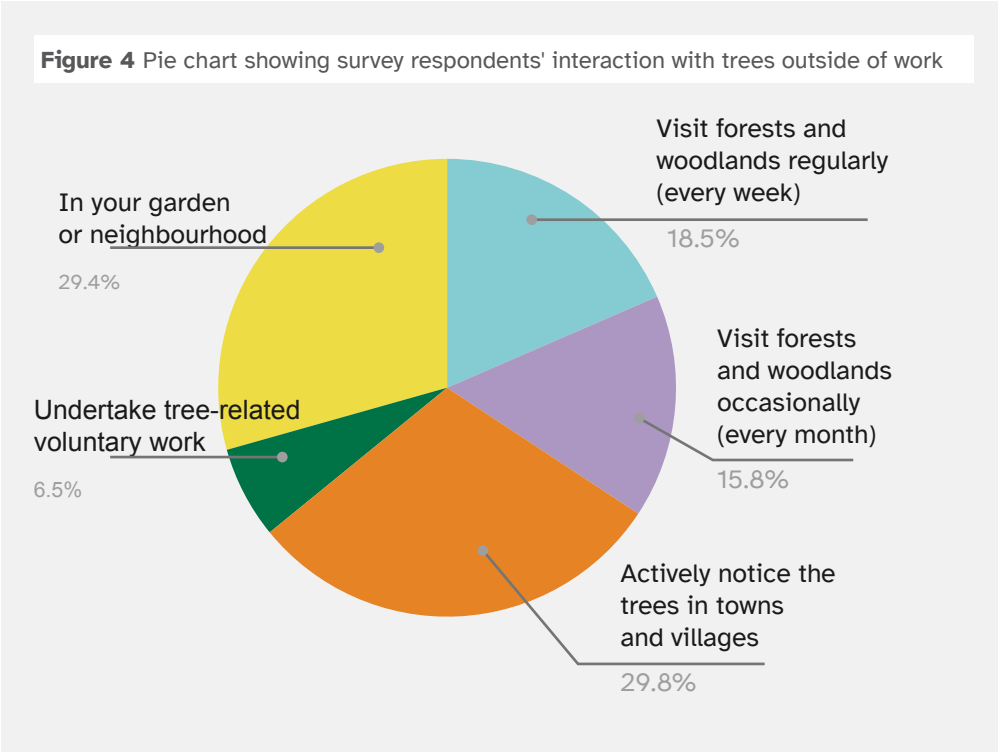
getting young people involved in trees and tree care. There are various kinds of community woodland, from urban regeneration, to a community resource, which accompany a variety of ecological and socioeconomic benefits as a result. In a review by Lawrence & Ambrose-Oji (2015) they found the majority of community woodlands to be urban regeneration programmes which are often on public land. A common feature of community woodland projects is that despite not always meeting planting targets, they are consistently achieving improvements in woodland management.

Community woodlands will be an important part of improving the overall quality of Somerset’s treescape. Beyond the biophysical impacts, evidence from case studies in England and Wales (Morris and Doick, 2011; Owen et al., 2008) also showed community woodland members felt more relaxed as a result, and that the woodlands brought the community together. Interestingly, in Scotland, frequency of visits to local woodlands managed by communities increased by up to 20%, with a strong increase for those located in deprived areas.

Within Somerset County however, there are only 3 community woodlands that appear when conducting a Google search (see next paragraph). Increasing the number of woodlands in management for biodiversity is a central part in improving woodland quality. Increasing the number of community woodlands across the county will enable this to go hand in hand with improving access to woodlands. This is key to a wood culture where there is stewardship of woodland and use of forest produce for a sustainable future.

It is important to note that whilst only three community woodlands appear in a Google search there are a number of “hidden” community woodlands and orchards including Herne Hill, Longrun Meadow, North Curry and others. There is a need to make these existing community initiatives more public and by doing so accessible to a wider community.

With Somerset Authorities declaring a climate and ecological emergency, there is an increased awareness from individuals of the importance of tree planting. One way to increase the likelihood of community woodland formation is through initially increasing opportunities for volunteer tree planting programmes. Enabling volunteers to



get involved with tree planting provides opportunities for concerned communities to contribute to combating climate change. Through such programmes, there are the added advantages of educating volunteers about trees, enabling healthy lifestyles and improving mental health. Once individuals within communities have learnt the steps to planting and maintaining trees, volunteers will then be able to initiate their own community planting schemes, enabling treescape expansion through a bottom-up method as opposed to top-down. This will be aided by the Natural Environment plan actions, as part of the Somerset Local Nature Partnership, to create a toolkit for community tree planting based on the Nature recovery Network.

An example of a previously successful community project in Somerset working with schools and orchards is the Fruit-full schools outdoor learning project: [Learning through Landscapes](#). The charity taught pupils about their local apple heritage, how to graft their own apple trees, and invited the local community to share the orchards in a community event. At the end of the project, at least 11 schools, across primary and secondary, had established orchards in their school grounds. This project was active 10 years ago, but shows potential for the success of community orchard projects to connect students and the community with trees.

Urban treescape

Urban tree cover plays an important role in providing people with access to trees. The urban forest includes all trees from individual street trees, to riparian, hedgerows and parks and woods. Despite being one of the ten most rural authorities in England, Somerset still has over half of its population in urban areas (52.8% - ONS 2011 census). To mirror this in terms of access to trees, about half of the trees planted / addressed in the strategy should be within urban areas. In addition to this, the survey results show that urban areas are simultaneously where Somerset is most in need of trees, and where the majority of people are interacting with trees. For example, outside of work, respondents most commonly interact with trees in urban areas, when noticing them in towns or villages (30%), and in their garden and neighbourhoods (30%). Then, when asked whether Somerset needs

more trees, the area that received the highest number of votes was in villages, towns and cities, which was voted for by 89% of respondents.

Woodland access

An essential part of connecting more people with trees is through increasing access to trees. In considering where trees are being planted, it is vital to ensure their proximity to people, and their accessibility. Access to woodlands enables people to gain the recreational benefits associated, including improved physical health, and mental wellbeing, alongside an overall increased quality of life. The ability to access woodland also contributes to a wood culture, as people become more aware of the woodland environment and interested in the prospect of maintaining these ecosystems.

In England, 397,149 ha of woodland is considered 'accessible woodland'. The Woodland Trust's Woodland Access Standard aspires that no person should live more than 500m from at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 2ha in size. Currently in England, just 16.2% of the population is considered to have access to a 2ha+ wood within 500m (Woodland Trust, 2020). The average for Somerset is significantly lower, with just 6.4% meeting the Woodland Access Standard goals. West Somerset⁴ has the greatest access to woodlands, but this is still just 25% with access to a 2 ha+ wood within 500m, and Taunton Deane has the least woodland access, at 3.4%. 71% of the Somerset population require new woodland in order to be able to access a 20 ha+ wood within 4km, compared to just 11.8% for the England average. Again there is evidence here to show the importance of a focus on trees in urban areas, as the district with least access to trees is one of the most urban in Somerset (Maps 9 and 10).

Additionally, woodlands that are outside of urban areas are often more remote, and can only be accessed with a car, further disconnecting and detaching people from the treescape. The survey results showed that those who responded, who are likely to engage with woodlands more than the average person, still rarely visited woodlands. 19% of respondents visited woodlands every

⁴Note this data is from 2016, and so it is prior to the merging of West Somerset and Taunton Deane to become Somerset West and Taunton.

week, whilst 16% said they visited woodland at least once a month. Focussing on maintaining and increasing urban woodland cover, already considered important by survey respondents, also offers an efficient way to connect more people, and on a wider scale with trees. In particular it is essential to increasing the equality of access to woodlands, offering spaces where people from disadvantaged areas can access woodlands by foot.

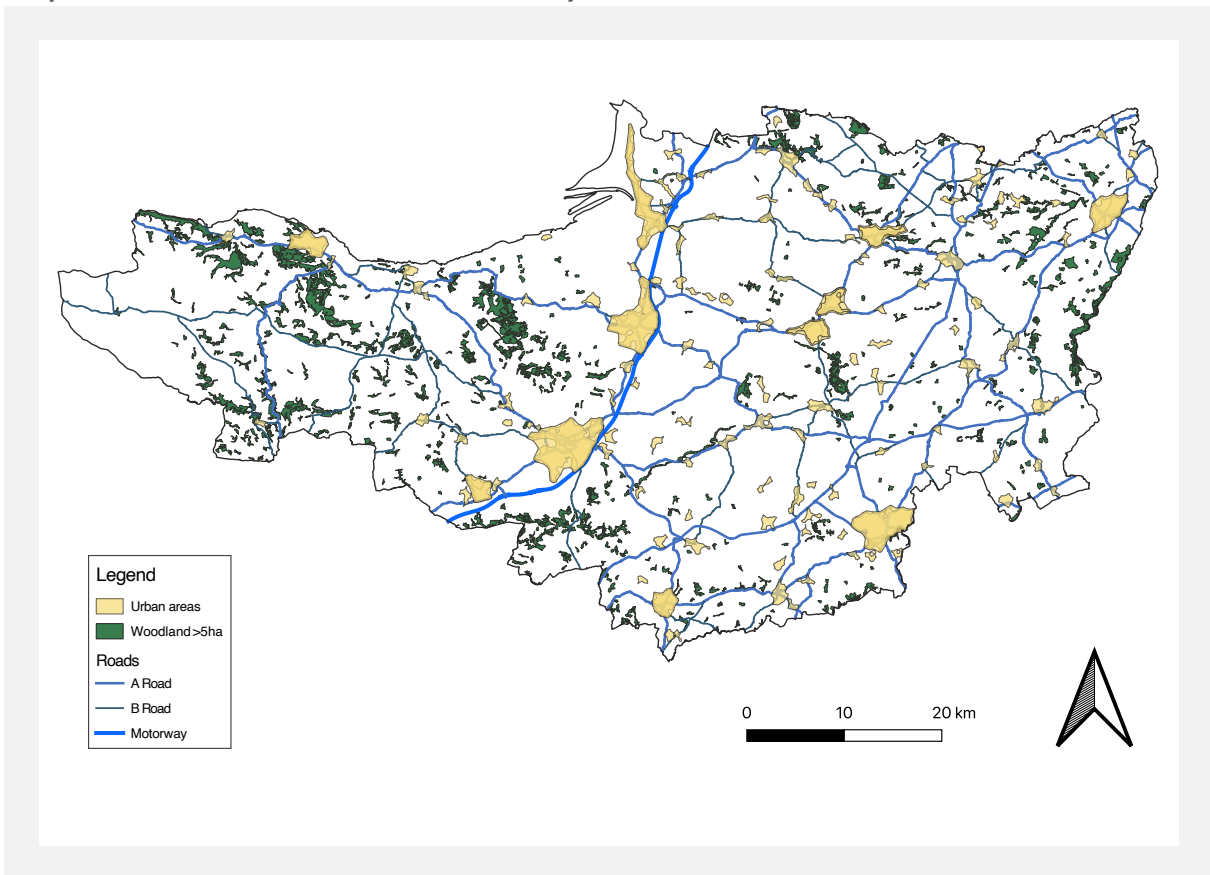
Communities also play an important role in the protection of urban trees. Trees planted within urban spaces enable people to be able to engage constructively with the planning and management of urban trees. Tree planting programmes within urban spaces will enable a greater integration of the community, and enable the implementation of ongoing management more effectively.

Taunton, the county town of Somerset, has also been selected to be the 'Garden Town' of Somerset. This presents an opportunity for the council's garden town vision to be aligned with the tree strategy, and become a flagship for urban tree planting. One of the core needs required to deliver the vision for the garden town is to 'grow our town greener, transforming the open spaces and streets'. Plans to create a garden grid network of green corridors and greener streets Taunton, will enable green spaces to be highly connected forming a network that is accessible to all. Trees will play a core part in connecting such networks, alongside bringing the community together through the planting of mini-orchards, supporting Somerset's identity as 'County of Orchards'.

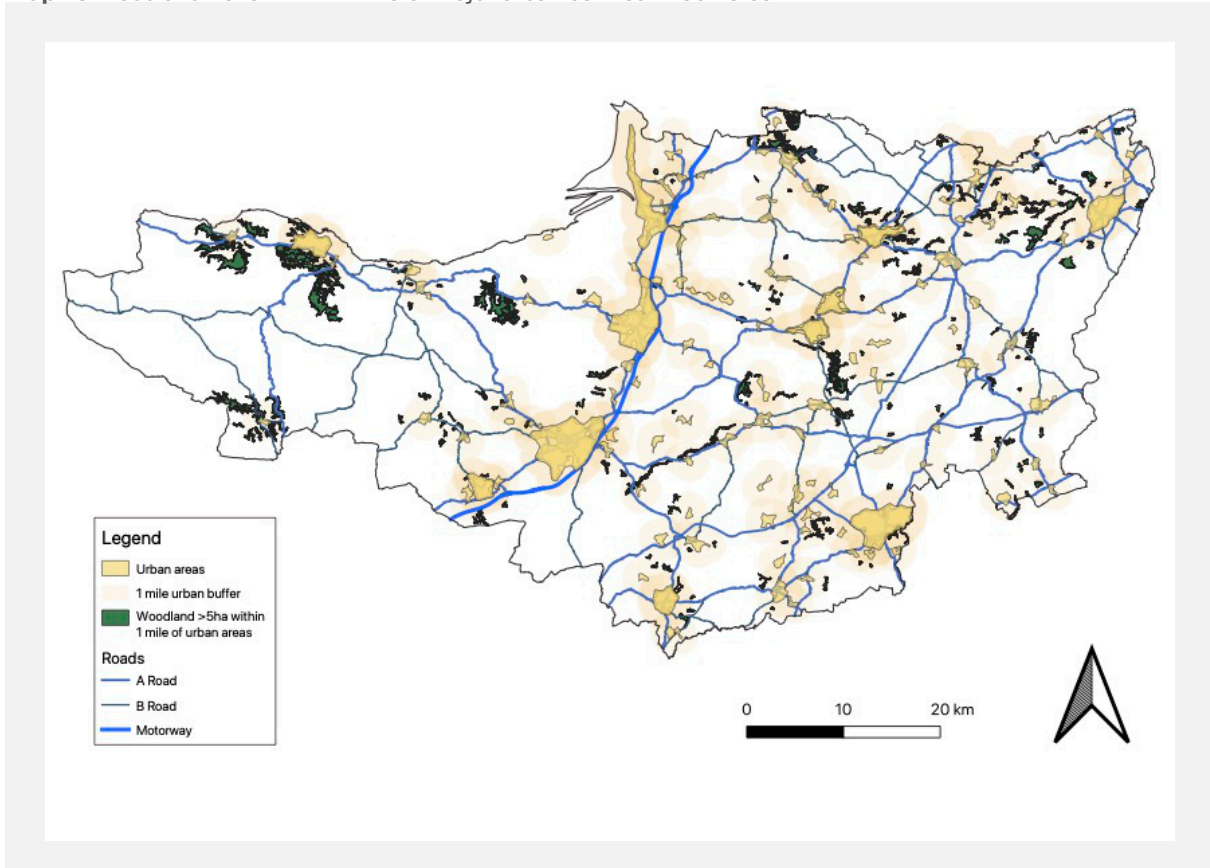
Furthermore, trees along streets make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments. The National Planning Policy Framework states that 'Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments, that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible'. The strategy will support this through plans to ensure all new streets are tree-lined, and that these trees are maintained, in order to provide both aesthetic and climate controlling

benefits to Somerset's urban spaces. Trees in urban areas, including street trees, need provisions to ensure that they have the best opportunity to thrive in urban environments. This includes adequate provision of tree pits, pavement support systems to extend root areas, and irrigation during hotter and drier weather periods.

Map 9 Woodland >5ha within the Somerset boundary



Map 10 Woodland >5ha within 1 mile of major urban centres in Somerset



6. Services

6.1 Carbon

Carbon storage potential of timber

As pressure around global emissions tighten in line with climate change mitigation commitments, harvested biomass will be utilised most productively where it maximises the removal and minimises the release of carbon into the atmosphere. This can be realised through the enhancement of sequestration in woodland and soils combined with harvested biomass in large-scale permanent or long-lasting stores, such as wood in construction (Committee on Climate Change, 2018). With current commitments striving for an increase to 16% woodland cover by 2050 the CCC new land-use scenarios explore the possibility of pushing this up to 19% by 2050. The delivery of which would be undertaken while maintaining food production and multiple other services required of land. Achieving these higher levels of afforestation could remove and store an additional 21 MtCO₂e per year against current levels - equivalent to approximately 5% of the UK's current Green House Gas (GHG) emissions.

With its ability to create multi-decade stores of carbon, increased timber use and substitution of more carbon-intensive materials can contribute to net zero aims. Timber-framed houses and engineered wood systems currently make up around 15-28% of total construction materials in UK new homes. In the 'Sixth Carbon Budget' scenarios produced by the CCC GHG emissions savings from increased use of timber in construction could reach 40% by 2050, removing 0.25 MtCO₂/year by 2035 and 0.44 MtCO₂/year by 2050 (CCC, 2020).

The timber frame construction market continues to grow with an annual average increase of just over 7% since 2016. 2026 forecasts are for the total timber frame construction market to reach just over £1 billion in the UK reflecting growth of approximately 26% in the next 4 years (MTW Research, 2022). Offsite timber frame construction continues to rise with the market benefitting from advanced building technologies that lend themselves to

construction techniques focussed on speed of build, faster completions, design flexibility, reduced onsite time and cost, as well as enhanced environmental credentials, quality control, and energy efficiency. These benefits have been identified as potential key drivers by the Government as a means to boost productivity, increase environmental credentials and efficiencies whilst simultaneously boosting the housebuilding sector.

Somerset's Housing Strategy 2019-2023 sets out bold initiatives aimed at "a local Economy that provides opportunity for all". Priority 4 'Upskill the local labour force' and priority 5 'Creating sustainable homes and places in Somerset' strive for the introduction of off-site/ modular construction (MMC) as well as low carbon design. This is something that increased tree cover and well-managed forests could complement, providing Somerset the opportunity to be at the forefront of MMC/ offsite training and delivery of buildings utilising local timber.

Carbon sequestration

Typically growing faster in their early life, conifers absorb more carbon dioxide much earlier compared to broadleaf woodlands. However, broadleaf woodlands have the ability to store much larger amounts of carbon over an extended period time, as these forests commonly stand for longer. Even larger amounts of carbon have the potential to be stored when managing a woodland to provide continuous canopy cover. Within these systems young, fast-growing trees will capture carbon dioxide at a faster rate, while mature trees can act as carbon stores for hundreds of years. Selection of appropriate tree species and sustainable woodland management techniques are imperative to realising carbon benefits.

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of trees outside forests (TOF) for their carbon sequestration and storage potential noting that 21% and 17% respectively are from TOF (Zellweger et al., 2022). Particularly high contributions were found to be in England (higher than Wales and Scotland combined). Such findings point to

the significant contributions trees found in field margins and hedgerows might make toward net zero ambitions. Indication that the relative contribution of below ground root carbon storage of TOF may be larger compared to forests. TOF in particular, are closely related to a range of ecosystem services such as increased biodiversity and connectivity, as well as other regulating, cultural and provisioning services ([Rouquette and Holt, 2017](#)).

The Somerset Local Nature Partnership (LNP) supports Somerset's Climate Emergency by acting as the Natural Environment work-stream. The LNP recognises that while not the panacea for all our immediate climate change challenges, especially as newly planted trees cannot mature quickly enough to mitigate the carbon in the crucial time before 2030, it is important that we continue to plant where appropriate in the hope that we get past 2030 without any climate tipping points.

The role of woodland management

Considered and conscious forest management has a pivotal role to play in efficient and effective carbon sequestration and has the potential to increase the overall amount of carbon being removed from the atmosphere. Upon reaching their full growth potential forests begin to saturate, reaching the limit of their ability to absorb carbon. Whereas poorly planned and executed tree planting has the potential to actually increase CO₂ emissions and have long-term detrimental impacts on landscapes, biodiversity, and livelihoods (Di Sacco et al., 2021). Nature-Based Solutions Initiative (2020) note that declining removals from UK woodlands and forests resultant from changes to age-class structure are partially responsible for increases noted in LULUCF emissions in 2017.

Combining growth with selected harvesting allows for carbon to be stored in long-term stores such as timber, while new planting and/or natural regeneration allows for ongoing carbon sequestration within the forest. Such an approach can also help mitigate risks that standing forests (carbon stocks) carry by increasing their resilience to climate change through diversity of age. Bringing degraded forests under management has both

biodiversity and GHG benefits and can help enhance resilience to a changing climate and increased pests and diseases (CCC, 2018). Part of CCC 'Biomass in a low-carbon economy' recommendations for building carbon stores includes the commitment to bringing 67% of England's forests back under active management (from 59% currently), with ambition to extend this target further where the evidence supports this.

6.2 Water management

Trees are integral to water management across the Somerset landscape, from mitigating flooding risk, to regulating water courses, and maintaining lower river temperatures.

Flood mitigation

Flooding is one of the greatest extreme weather risks for Somerset, now and in the future under predicted climate change and sea level rise, and from major river flooding. The Somerset floods of 2013-2014 are estimated to have cost over £147 million, and with 18% of Somerset below average tide level, and some of the lowest land in the UK, Somerset's trees will play an essential role in reducing flood risk, when the right tree is planted in the right place. Flood mitigation is therefore a key role for tree and hedge planting in Somerset.

Trees, whether within a woodland, planted along rivers or as hedgerows, offer a multitude of benefits when it comes to mitigating and reducing the effects of flooding:

1. Direct interception of rainfall

Under high levels of rainfall, trees are important in intercepting rain. This has two important effects, firstly the effect of heavy rain will be spread out over a longer period, as the water takes longer to reach the ground. Additionally, whilst rain collects on leaves, some of the water is able to evaporate back into the atmosphere, and hence reducing the total amount that reaches the ground.

2. Higher soil infiltration rates

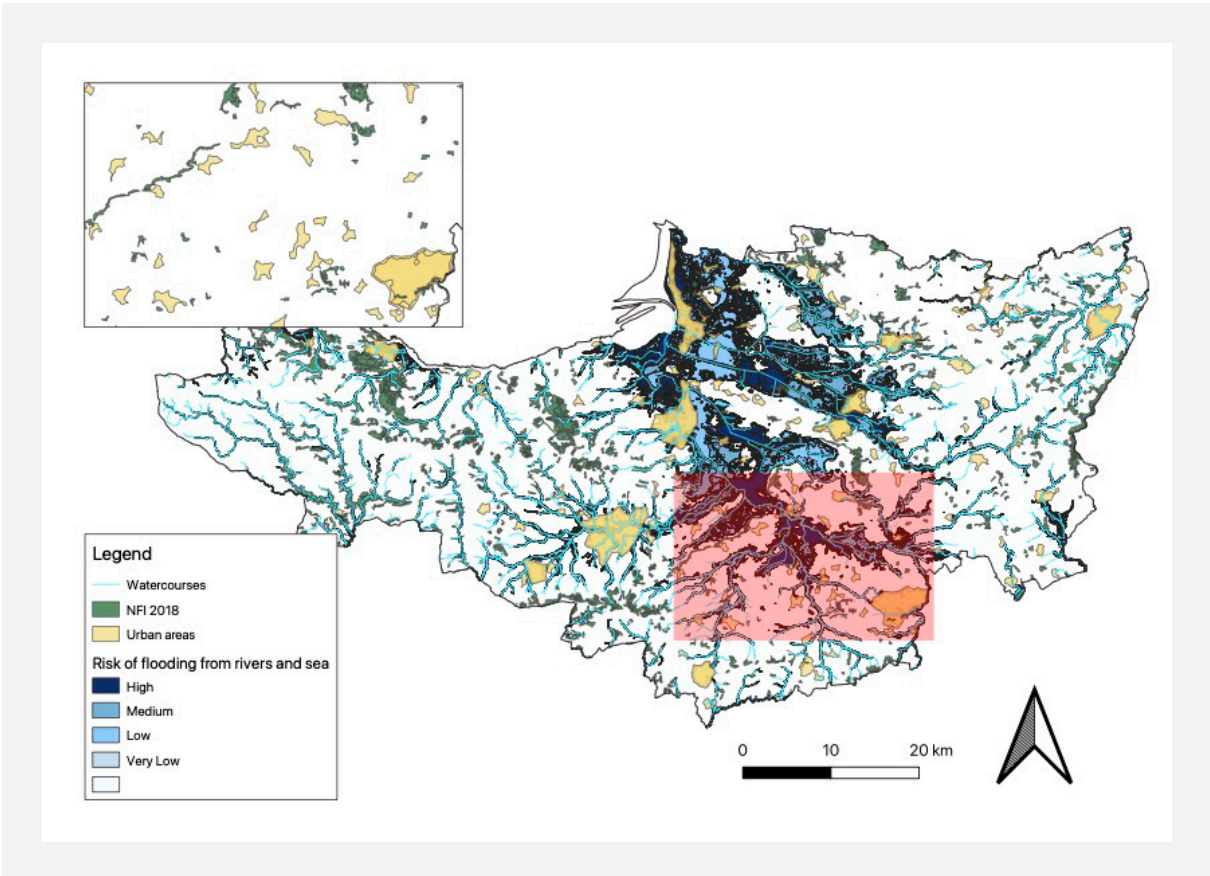
At the ground level, trees' extensive root systems speed up the penetration of water deep into the soil. The roots create channels that heavy rain water can flow through instead of over surfaces leading to floods. This

absorption is additionally important for absorbing run-off from agricultural land, of which Somerset has 275,000 hectares of (Mendip.gov.uk). Surface water run-off is also a problem in urban areas, where the increase in impermeable surfaces such as concrete and tarmac, leads to greater surface run-off. For example in the severe UK-wide flooding in 2007, around two-thirds was identified as resulting from surface water run off. Planting trees, even as single street trees with bare ground surrounding them could significantly reduce the runoff in such built up areas. In some urban areas, there is asphalt surrounding street trees. Here, asphalt removal provides a quick and easy solution to increasing the absorption of more rainwater and again reducing surface runoff.

runoff volumes reduced by 78%, where trees are planted compared with grassland (Marshall et al, 2014). Interestingly, the report by Marshall et al 2014, found that it is likely that tree age is an important factor in improving soil hydraulic properties. Although further work is needed, initial results suggest that mature trees, and certain tree species, will enable greater speeds of infiltration.

There is strong evidence to demonstrate that trees are significantly more powerful at both speeding up soil infiltration and reducing surface runoff volumes than alternative green space such as grassland. Soil infiltration rates have been found to be 67x faster, and surface

Map 11 Proximity of woodland to flood risk area



Right tree right place to reduce flooding

The ability of trees to mitigate flood risk relies heavily on their location, and the species of the tree that is planted. Different tree species have different root structures. Some trees have deeper, and more extensive root systems, and so are better at stabilising the soil and reducing the risk of erosion. For example beech trees have shallow root systems and actually increase the risk of landslides, whereas oaks and birches are deep rooted so aid in reducing soil erosion. However at the same time, some trees are more resilient to flooding, and so in areas that are naturally more riparian, or more likely to be regularly covered in floodwater, this must also be taken into consideration. In these cases species such as alder and willow may be more suitable (Forestry Commission, 2022).

In terms of where to plant trees, there are several areas that will provide the greatest flood mitigation. The Somerset levels extend across 60,000 ha, and is composed of mostly floodplains. Planting trees in floodplains has been studied by both the Environment Agency and Forestry Commission in its use as a soft-engineered aid to control flooding. Woodland in floodplains is able to absorb and delay the progression of floods downstream. Not only does planting trees in floodplains significantly reduce flooding and improve water storage, but it has the added improvements of better water quality, and nature conservation. Planting along upper and middle river catchments is also important in ameliorating downstream flooding.

There is research to suggest that targeted tree planting in the upper catchment can reduce peak flood flows by up to 40 percent (Woodland Trust, Pontbren Project). Additionally, planting trees in urban areas will create permeable surfaces, and reduce the flood risk that arises as a result of new development. By strategically planning tree planting within and alongside areas at high risk of flooding, joining upstream sites to downstream floodplains, it will provide a natural solution to aid in alleviating major flooding incidents.

Currently, Reimagining the Levels are leading an initiative in Partnership with Somerset River Authority, to slow the flow, and reduce local floods through planting more trees.

Again the question of the right tree in the right place comes into mind, and the Reimagining the Levels team are offering expert advice on which planting will be most impactful and beneficial for each landscape.

On a UK wide scale, the first ever UK woodland [natural flood management guide](#) has just been published by Forest Research, which outlines how our forests and woodlands can reduce the damaging effects as well as financial impact of flooding on vulnerable communities. The guide includes detailed advice on how to modify woodland design to enhance flood benefit, and amend the scale and timing of woodland operations to minimise flood risk, as well as the use of leaky dams to slow flood flows.

Regulation of water courses

Beyond flood control, trees are also important in water management when planted along water courses, especially in regulating river temperature. River fish are highly sensitive to river temperature, with temperatures above 23 degrees celsius causing thermal stress to some species (Jackson et al, 2018). Planting trees alongside rivers reduces river temperature through shading, reflecting solar radiation, and helps to maintain high oxygen levels in the water. Deadwood and fallen trees also play an important part in creating a dynamic river, by trapping sediment, slowing and altering the flow, creating new habitats for river wildlife such as otters and brown trout.

Agricultural runoff

Trees have an increasingly important role to play in ameliorating agricultural runoff, especially phosphates and nitrates, by acting as sediment collecting barriers in the soil profile that may impede and trap contaminated runoff. The formation and positive impacts of tree-based buffers to trap agricultural sediment is dealt with in more detail in the Woodland Trust report “Planting Trees to Protect Water”.

6.3 Agroforestry

Agroforestry is the combination of trees and farming in a landscape. It includes traditional forms such as wood pasture, hedges and orchards as well as newer forms of silvo-arable and silvo-pasture systems. It also includes the little used concept of forest-gardens and of growing crops within wooded environments.

Somerset is a leader in agroforestry by way of its extensive network of orchards and the income they generate through apples and pears. As a density map, Somerset is only surpassed by Gloucestershire and Kent in its area of orchards. These orchards have a long tradition, however little seems known of their size or condition. The Natural England orchard dataset shows 2766 traditional orchards covering 1700ha however this was last updated in 2016 and many records date from much earlier. The England in Particular website (supported by research from Common Ground) suggests orchards cover 0.4% of Somerset and that 50% have disappeared in the last 50 years. There is also a legacy and existing network of willow withy beds making use of the Somerset Levels that can also be considered an agroforestry system.

There seems to be a danger of this legacy being lost or Somerset failing to build on its history as agroforestry becomes more widespread and there is a case for building a baseline of extent and condition of orchards in the County. This could be via the 15-20 community orchards in the Orchard Network and a business survey of the many cider producers in the County.

Looking beyond traditional orchards, agroforestry is becoming increasingly important within whole-farm plans and regenerative agriculture. It can provide a number of critical benefits that are otherwise provided by mechanical or chemical input such as:

- Shading for shade tolerant agriculture (i.e. most herbs, pigs, poultry etc).
- Wind breaks.
- Soil health through, for instance, nitrate fixing.
- Host predators (typically bird populations) of insects feeding off arable crops.
- Enhance ecological corridors.
- Grow specific tree based crops such as nuts that

also need wide avenues for harvesting machinery to access.

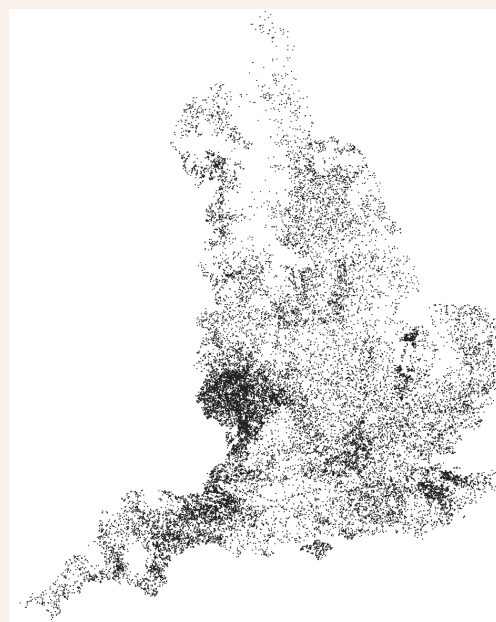
- Grow a timber crop.
- Provide flood mitigation and water retention in soil.
- Stop soil erosion on sloped sites.

The Agroforestry Handbook produced by the Soil Association provides a comprehensive guide to agroforestry, establishment, economics and advantages. It gives a breakdown of gross margins for agroforestry systems in a wide variety of types, most of which can be found within Somerset.

When asked to prioritise the development of woodland typologies in the Somerset Character Areas, agroforestry came in the top third of priorities in all areas of the County except the Levels and Vale of Taunton.

With an existing legacy, an interest today and the diverse landscape character areas of Somerset there appears to be a clear opportunity for the County to place itself as a leader in protecting existing traditional systems and developing new systems.

Map 12 Density of traditional orchards in England



Source: Natural England Open Data (2017)

6.4 Biodiversity

Biodiversity is the variety of plant and animal life, measured by the variation at the genetic, species and ecosystem level. High levels of biodiversity are crucial to the provision of ecosystem services, boosting ecosystem productivity and stability, and increasing ecosystem resilience under predicted climate change. Biodiverse ecosystems also act as a nature based solution to the increasing extreme weather risk, buffering natural disasters such as floods and storms. Biodiversity lies at the heart of all woodland ecosystem services, as it underpins species interactions, affecting species functional characteristics, and is therefore integral to overall ecosystem functioning.

Woodland ecosystem biodiversity

Biodiversity is an important ecosystem service provided by woodlands. Global declines in biodiversity are reflected in the UK, where biodiversity indices such as woodland bird populations have declined by 29% between 1970 and 2018 (BTO, RSPB). It is important to understand the causes of such biodiversity loss in order to make changes that will curb the loss and improve biodiversity in years to come. Woodland and forest ecosystems harbour the greatest biodiversity levels, in comparison with individual trees. There has been significant research to show that woodland biodiversity tends to increase with stand age, where mature woodlands harbour greater diversity of species.

The ecological basis of ancient woodlands harbouring greater biodiversity is based on the effects of woodland ageing, woodland structure and heterogeneity. As woodlands age, they naturally become more complex and heterogeneous in structure, as older trees die and open up areas of the canopy for younger growth, as well as providing deadwood habitats. These structural changes provide more habitats for woodland species to forage and nest in, and are especially important to woodland specialist species. For example, woodland specialist birds, which rely on woodland specific conditions, have declined by 41% since 1970, partly as a result of poor woodland management and quality.

Somerset's ancient woodland and woodland of high conservation value also includes the very rare Temperate rainforest habitat, which is often mainly attributed to Devon and Cornwall in the

South-West. Horner Wood, for example, on Exmoor, is an ancient temperate rainforest that is recognised as part of the Lost Rainforests of Britain campaign. It contains rare and unique elements of woodland biodiversity, with lichen covered ancient oaks, including being considered the most important woodland for fungi after the New Forest.

Protecting what is left of Somerset's ancient woodland is therefore essential to maintaining biodiversity services, but there are also ways to improve biodiversity levels of younger woodland systems, through woodland management. Woodland management, such as coppicing, or promoting deadwood can offer a way to speed up the natural ageing process that contributes to increased biodiversity levels. Woodland management needs to focus on increasing woodland diversity in order to be effective at improving diversity levels. For example, 'cleaning-up' management that might involve removing deadwood in an attempt to make a woodland will act to reduce habitat diversity.

Meanwhile thinning, when done in consideration of the species and woodland type, creates varied light levels that allow growth of understory, and natural regeneration of species that provide habitats for woodland specialists. Understory and ground vegetation play a particularly important part in habitat creation for woodland species, hence improving woodland biodiversity levels, with understory vegetation often making up the greatest part of plant diversity in woodland ecosystems. In woodlands that are composed of a single age class and limited species diversity, the canopy is often too regular and closed to allow development of important understory growth, hence why thinning and other silvicultural techniques that open the canopy, and increase the diversity of tree age classes is an effective way of improving woodland biodiversity.

Biodiversity net gain opportunities

As woodland and forest ecosystems harbour high levels of biodiversity, they provide an easy way to reach biodiversity targets such as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). BNG is an approach to development, where the natural environment is left in a measurably better state than before the development took place. BNG can be achieved through enhancing biodiversity on the development site, or in some cases, through creating new habitats off

site. Although currently not mandatory in England, the Environment Act has set out the key components of mandatory biodiversity gain to include a minimum of 10% gain required which is calculated using the Biodiversity Metric, and that the habitat is secured for at least 30 years (Environmental Act, 2021).

The mandatory requirement is set to come into effect in winter 2023/24. Even the planting of an individual tree can provide a habitat and resources for a wide range of species, and therefore improve biodiversity. For example one oak tree alone can host 280 different species of insect. Mature oaks also host 716 different types of lichen which offer nesting material, food and shelter (Woodland Trust). Therefore planting trees as part of reaching BNG goals is an effective way to increase the numbers of trees in Somerset, whilst contributing to increasing overall biodiversity and ecosystem health. It will act as a significant incentive for tree planting.

Connected landscapes

Ecological networks of connected habitats provide the basic infrastructure that allows biodiversity to recover and become resilient to climate change, delivering important social, environmental and economic ecosystem services (Localism Bill, 2011). Trees outside of woods, such as copses, hedgerows and street trees make important contributions to forming ecological networks through connecting biodiverse habitats across the landscape. Trees act as stepping stones for species, allowing them to disperse, and counteracting the effects of habitat fragmentation. Using trees to expand existing ecological networks is therefore an effective way to maintain functional connectivity for woodland species across multi-functional landscapes like the variety of habitats present across Somerset. This is particularly important for woodland specialists, who rely heavily on specific woodland characteristics and so require connected woodland habitats in order to disperse. Under predicted climate change, connected habitats allow species to adapt by shifting their range, for example to cooler areas higher up such as the Exmoor uplands. Ecological networks can provide a connected

collection of refuges for wildlife when managed in the appropriate manner. This improves the resilience of woodland species, reducing the chance of population collapse and extinctions, therefore improving biodiversity levels.

Urban biodiversity

Urbanisation is contributing to rapid biodiversity loss. As a result, there is an increasing demand for urban biodiversity, which is often addressed through tree planting. Urban tree species themselves are an important part of floristic diversity, but have been criticised due to the high levels of non-native species being planted. In general, cities which have a higher diversity of tree species show higher levels of biodiversity. However, native tree species provide the most biodiversity-friendly environments for urban areas, and the selection of street tree species is generally based on their aesthetic, economic cost and ability to reduce air pollution, without considering the role that street trees play in increasing local biodiversity (Liu & Slik, Landscape and Urban Planning, 2022).

Non-native and native trees can have similar contributions to regulating services, and in some cases non-native trees generate greater cultural services than native, but when it comes to biodiversity, native trees support significantly greater numbers of native animals such as birds and insects, through providing foraging and habitat resources. In some cases, non-natives can be carefully selected so they do contribute to urban biodiversity, but this must be controlled and monitored, to reduce the risk of invasion to non-urban areas.

7. Governance

With the Strategy comes a need for action. The themes of the strategy need objectives and these need a mechanism for prioritisation and monitoring. The key delivery mechanism will be via Somerset Council which will need to not only sustainably manage the Council's own trees and those it manages by agreement but also to raise awareness of trees being a vital community asset, through promoting continued research, through education via the provision of advice and through partnership working. It will need to foster a resilient tree population that responds to the impacts of climate change and urban expansion and to make efficient and strategic use of the Council's regulatory powers for the protection of trees of current and future value.

7.1 Objectives

These objectives in Table 7 were presented to the Steering Group and ranked across the main themes of the Strategy:

- Wood culture
- Resilient and adaptable treescapes
- Expanding tree cover
- Woodland services
- Governance

An exercise was undertaken to explore where there may be core priorities across all themes and where complexity of decision making may lie:

- There is a core priority across all the themes of engagement and of a people centred strategy that aims to create a wood culture.
- Following this were the objectives around increasing tree cover and bringing woodland into management.

The scores were analysed for the difference in priority given by each theme. For instance if one theme gave a highest priority score of 1 and another theme gave a lowest priority score of 25, the objective would score a 24. This helps identify where there is consistency or where there may be conflicts between objectives in meeting a theme:

- The lowest scores were in the people and engagement category showing that across all 5 themes this is seen as a critical area.

- Objectives around new planting, though coming out as relatively important objectives, had large differences between groups (some scoring very high and some very low). This acknowledges the fact that Somerset has a high landscape variability and there is cause for concern in some geographic areas around new planting. This was also reflected in the wider survey.
- 'Bringing woodland into management' though scoring in the lower third of the priorities, also had a low difference score showing that there is consistency across themes in bringing woodland into management. The role of agroforestry in Somerset was scored in a similar way.

The Steering Group was asked to score a range of tree focussed actions across the landscape character areas of Somerset (see Table 8).

This was to get a sense of relative importance as it became quite clear that the different areas may require different approaches to management and new planting. Each area received between 4-6 responses with Vale of Taunton and Exmoor receiving the most. This particular exercise may be skewed by a number of factors:

- Limited responses for some areas
- Not being clear in some areas. For instance we suspect "increase in diversity" which we meant to mean structural diversity may have been interpreted as species diversity.
- The composition of the steering group.

Table 6 Set of objectives developed from evidence presented

Objectives	Ranking by priority score	Ranking by difference in theme groups
Engage communities	1	1
Recognise the need for the 'tree strategy' to be a living document. Do not let it stagnate	2	9
Engage young people	3	8
Encourage increasing structural diversity on a woodland scale	4	10
Any new combined authority Strategic planning documents must recognise the roles of trees	5	6
Create linear features to allow connectivity and movement of biodiversity	6	11
Increase the understanding of the opportunities and issues of treescapes in developments beyond just the aesthetics	7	5
Bring people in the profession together regularly	8	9
Rationalise documents and remove (as much as possible) relic documents	9	3
Create a contract with the steering group and the CC to outline roles and responsibilities	10	5
Increase urban tree cover in parks and on roadside	11	11
Aim to plant 210ha/ year in Somerset	12	12
Identify unmanaged woodland and encourage owners	13	4
Identify areas where more radical carbon planting may take place	14	15
Become a centre of excellence for agroforestry practice	15	2
Be open minded about species origin and provenance	16	7
Increase diversity of woodland types on catchment scale	17	16
Engage FE and HE colleges and apprenticeship opportunities	18	14
Ensure increased tree cover is monitored	19	2
Encourage thinking on the origin and provenance of stock	20	9
Be flexible and responsive to emerging opportunities. Use this action plan as a basis for funding bids	21	7
Create a Somerset First policy for timber use in developments	22	8
Ensure woodland product and services are ecologically sensitive	added after workshop, not scored	
Ensure support mechanisms for interested parties	added after workshop, not scored	
Trees adapted for shading for people and animals	added after workshop, not scored	
Recognise decline of old orchards & orchard creation in orchards	added after workshop, not scored	
Challenge status quo, an open discussion for new ideas on woodland management	added after workshop, not scored	

Table 7 Trees and woodland priorities by Steering Group scoring (1 = highest)

Objectives	Levels and Moors	Mendip Hills	Yeovil S'plands	Exmoor	Vale of Taunton	B'down Hills	Q'tocks	Mid S'set Hills
Diversify woodland types	5	2	4	3	5	3	4	3
Increase tree cover	5	3	2	2	3	3	5	2
Create linear features	5	3	2	4	1	5	3	2
Be open minded about species and origin	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	1
Opportunity for agroforestry	4	1	3	2	5	2	2	2
Increase urban tree cover	3	4	5	5	2	7	7	4
Trees in urban developments	4	3	6	4	3	6	6	5
Ensure all woodlands are in management	1	1	2	1	3	1	1	2
Increase tree based carbon stocks	6	2	3	2	4	2	2	3
Contribute to home-grown timber	2	2	3	1	3	4	4	2

Achieving the objectives: Putting in place the mechanisms for change

The objectives and actions of this strategy are set out in their own document. Whilst it is easy to create objectives and actions, achievement will need to be a balance of budget, human resources and buy-in from the all stakeholders. There will be a hierarchical structure to oversight that will see Somerset Council taking overall budgetary control and responsibility. The Council will delegate to a Steering Group (see next section) the responsibility for delivery.

This Strategy has not attempted to budget the objectives and actions as this will need to be reviewed on an ongoing basis. The Strategy is produced at a time of rising inflation and economic uncertainty making 10-year budgeting a highly speculative task. There will be, however, a number of key funds to draw upon or consider:

- Land management schemes as they come to full functionality, including [ELMs](#), new [planting](#) schemes and woodland management grants that will be open to private and public parties.
- The local authority specific [Treescape Fund](#) and [Forestry Innovation Fund](#) may provide funding for more innovative parts of the Strategy, especially around wood culture and connectivity.
- Any further rounds of the [Treescapes](#) funding would allow links to be made with academic institutions.

The funding from the Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund of £300,000 in late 2022 will be a key part of delivering the strategy and the project officers it supports will be an instrumental link between the Steering Group and ensuring tree planting components of the Strategy.

The objectives around wood culture will require more than the ten years of the Strategy's life to come to fruition. To create a deeply embedded culture within a society is a long-term ambition however the actions outlined in the Objectives and Actions document are aimed at delivering the start of this and making significant moves towards establishing this culture.

The Tree Strategy is not a standalone document and needs to be seen as working in partnership with other local, regional and national groups. Amongst these the Climate Strategy for Somerset which this strategy has been closely aligned to and the Local Nature Recovery Partnership which already exists and shares many of the aims of this strategy.

7.2 Steering Group

In the survey and within the Steering Group there is a presumption that the actions of the Strategy will be led by the Council, using the Steering Group as a delivery mechanism. How this will be translated into practicalities will need to be determined as the new combined Council is put together and begins operating.

Somerset's strategy is different from many others in how it has prioritised the development of a wood culture. This has come out of the survey and the Steering Group but presents challenges in delivery. Working with communities to develop wood culture is a largely qualitative benchmark compared to simpler metrics of say, woodland creation and the Steering Group will have to be aware of this. It may be that the Steering Group is bolstered with social scientists to help the delivery of this part of the Strategy.

The Steering Group is currently made up of around thirty members and we would recommend these numbers be reduced down, possibly by first identifying the skills needed and then forming a revised group based on those needs. Ideally a core high-level Steering Group is formed who can meet regularly and have the full support of the Council. They will create a wider group of experts that cover all aspects of tree management, ecology and community, from which it can draw, including but not restricted to:

- Representatives of the Council Environment groups
- Representatives of the Council Planning & highway groups
- A representative of the protected landscapes within Somerset
- A representative from the Forestry Commission
- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- Historic England
- A town/landscape planner/architect
- A woodland manager holding Institute of Chartered Forester status
- An arboriculturalist holding Arb Association membership
- One representative representing the views of all the environmental NGOs (Woodland Trust, Wildlife Trusts, National Trust etc)
- A representative of community woodlands
- A sawmiller/carbon trader, someone representing the forest industries, possibly a regional member of the Confederation of Forest industries
- An owner representative, possibly from the Royal Forestry Society
- Ecological representation
- Community representation
- Education representation

It has been suggested that the steering group be joined by an "ethics committee" of knowledgeable people that could adjudicate on contentious planting schemes and issues in Somerset and add their support (or not) to planning applications and planting schemes. This would, we believe, be unique in the UK.

Statutory responsibility for tree cover

The Strategy cannot ignore the continued need to ensure public and private bodies fulfil their statutory obligations to tree cover. These obligations regarding Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) and Tree Works Applications (TWA) along with national legislation ensuring woodlands are replanted come to either the Council or national bodies such as Forestry Commission to enforce and administer.

These obligations need to be reviewed regularly as they underpin the governance of the Strategy. Those officers working on achieving the goals of the Strategy need to be in close communication with those in the Council with responsibility for TPOs and TWAs as well as with Forestry Commission Woodland Officers.

It may be that to ensure closer working between the statutory responsibilities and those involved in tree work, the publication of the Strategy is a good moment to review the consultation process around tree works; draft enforcement protocols and create a supplementary planning document relating to trees and development sites.

7.3 Marketing and promotion

The focus of this strategy is creating a wood culture in Somerset, to bring the residents of the County on a journey. To do this will require exceptional marketing a promotion focussing on all demographics.

There are a number of tools that can be used to do this, some tree related, others promotional.

Social media

Social media, especially Instagram and Tik Tok as well as a new focus on in-game promotion is unused for specific purposes around Somerset's trees. As the new tree officers in the County are recruited it should be with them and with the Steering Group to bring together a marketing strategy that matches user groups with media types.

This strategy needs to use rich imagery and messaging. We would recommend bringing in some form of market development expertise to start to create this wood culture.

Veteran trees and agroforestry

As a sub group of Somerset's treescape, veteran trees and agroforestry act to transcend the boundaries between urban and rural, woodland and agroforestry. They can be used as a thread to draw together the elements of the Strategy in an engaging way given their importance.

Somerset has 3114 trees in the Ancient Tree Inventory, though many of these records date back to a 2006 survey:

- 357 are on private ground with no access or visibility from a path; 265 are visible though on private land and the rest, 2056 have some form of access. This opportunity could be harnessed as a promotional tool for Somerset's trees, drawing on their past to look at their future.

- 487 were recorded as having some threat, largely from cultivation, development, vandalism or over-shading.
- They cover a wide variety of landscapes from urban (6), church grounds (148), wood pasture, parkland & historic gardens and woodland (c.2,000)

These veteran trees can be used as a handle to draw in people through promotion, through, citizen-science surveying, through a new inventory and survey, through an interactive map of those that are accessible with information on their ecology, their history and their importance.

Connecting landscapes

An objective of the Strategy is to start to weave a connected web of ecologically resilient woodlands. An ambitious goal has been set to create two completely connected corridors across Somerset and this can form the backbone of a second strand of long-term promotion. Creating buy-in from public, landowners and policy makers to achieve this aim will have the knock-on effect of promoting the much wider remit of the Strategy to create a resilient and adaptable wood culture in Somerset. The details of these corridors will be developed over the initial years of the Strategy.

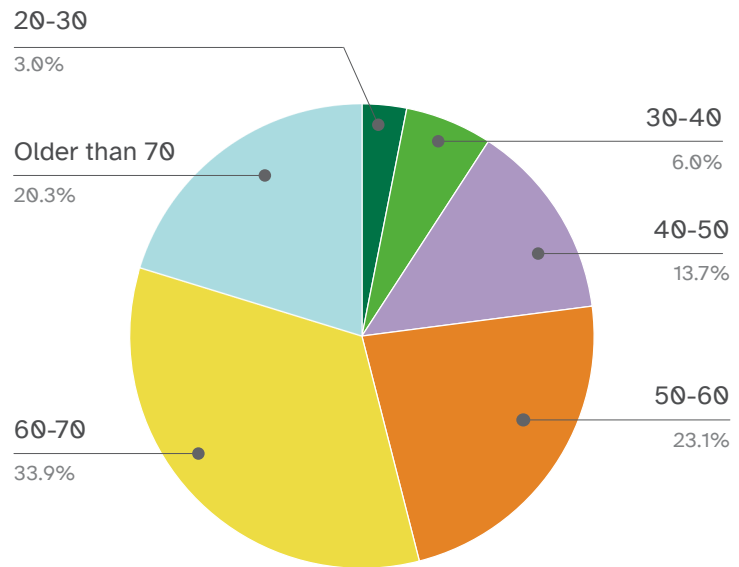
Appendixes

A1 Results of survey

Part 1: Who answered the survey?

Q1: Age group

Total number of responses: 735
 77% of the respondents were over the age of 50, and just 10% under 40.

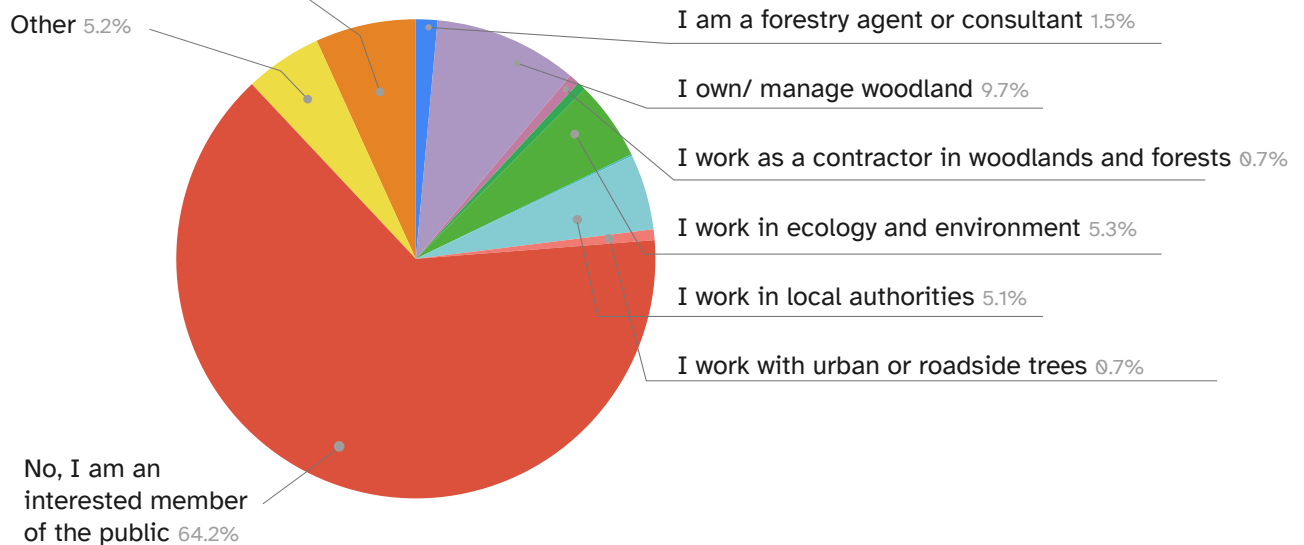


Q2: Does your work involve trees?

Total number of responses: 740

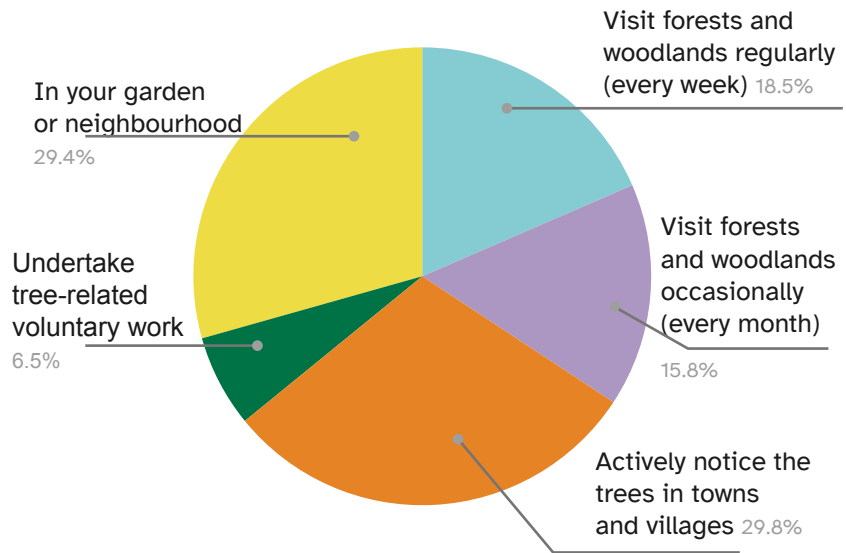
The majority of respondents were interested members of the public who do not work with trees (64%). Although 10% who answered were owners/ managers of woodlands.

Trees are a part of my remit but not the whole of my work 6.8%



Q3: Do you interact with trees outside of work?

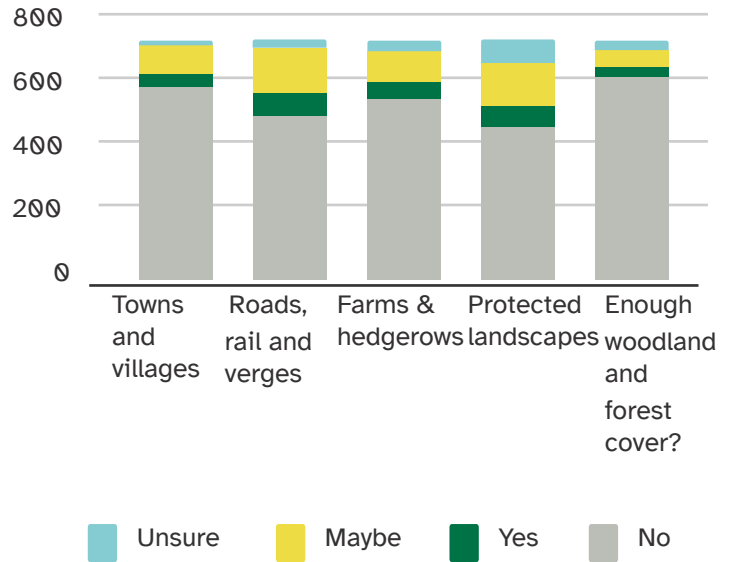
Total number of responses: 745
 The most common way for respondents to interact with trees outside of work, was through actively noticing them in towns and villages, followed by interacting with them in gardens or the neighbourhood.



Part 2: Somerset's current trees

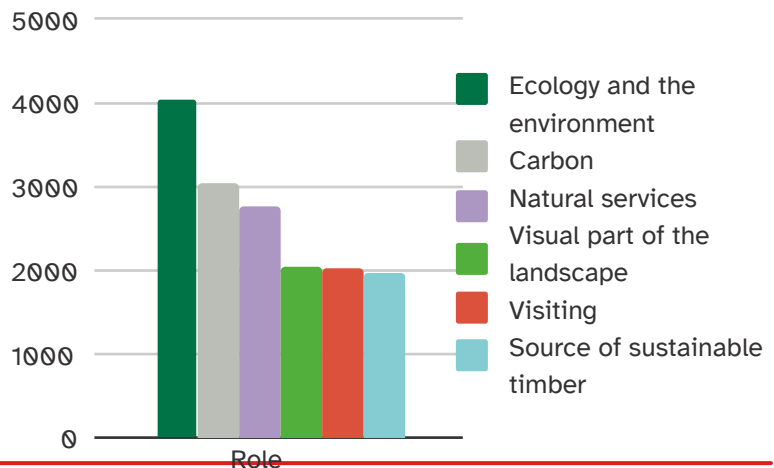
Q4: Does Somerset have enough trees?

Total number of responses: 752
 The survey results showed that overall respondents think that Somerset does not have enough trees across all areas. The strongest areas selected for not having trees were overall woodland and forest cover, followed by towns and villages.



Q5: Rank the role of trees and woodlands in order of importance

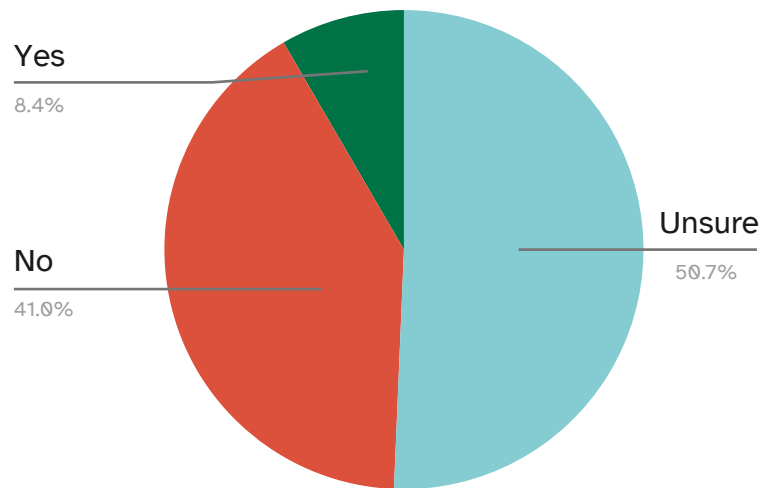
Total number of responses: 752
 The most important role of current trees and woodlands was voted as ecology and the environment (74%). Meanwhile sustainable timber (30%) and visiting trees and woodlands (25%) were rated as the least important role of trees and woodlands.



Q6: Are Somerset's woodlands resilient to a changing climate?

Total number of responses: 752

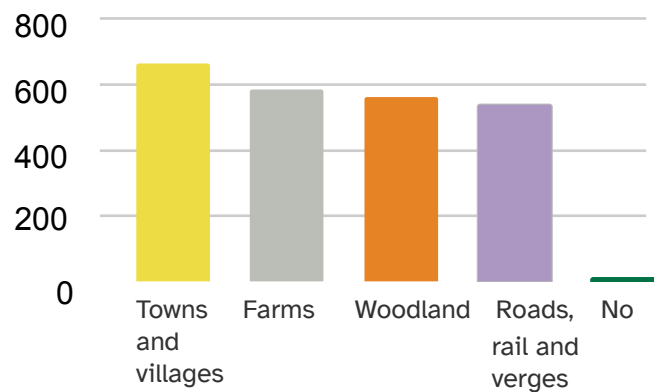
The survey results show significant uncertainty in the respondents' views on whether Somerset's woodlands are resilient to a changing climate. 41% of respondents voted the woodlands as not resilient to climate change, whilst 51% voted they were unsure, and



Q7: Does Somerset need more trees?

Total number of responses: 749

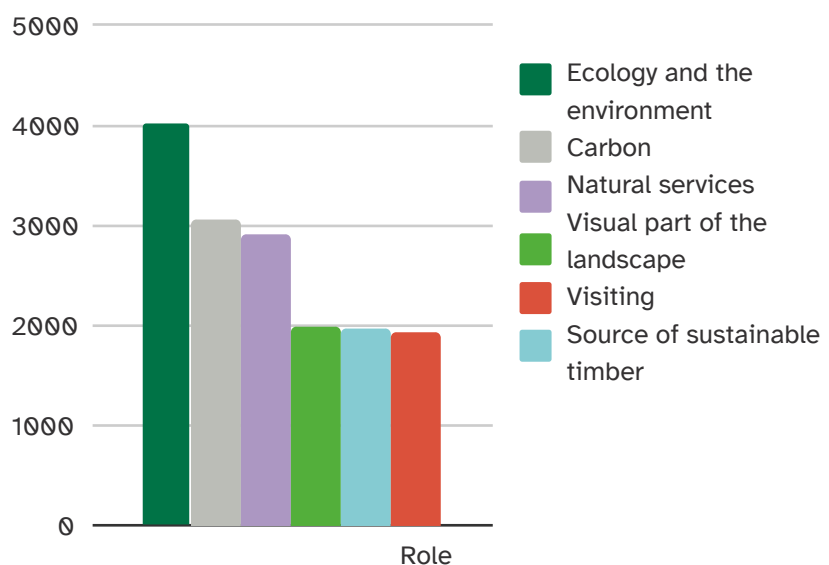
Respondents felt that overall Somerset needed more trees. In particular, 89% of respondents felt that Somerset needed more trees in villages, towns and cities.

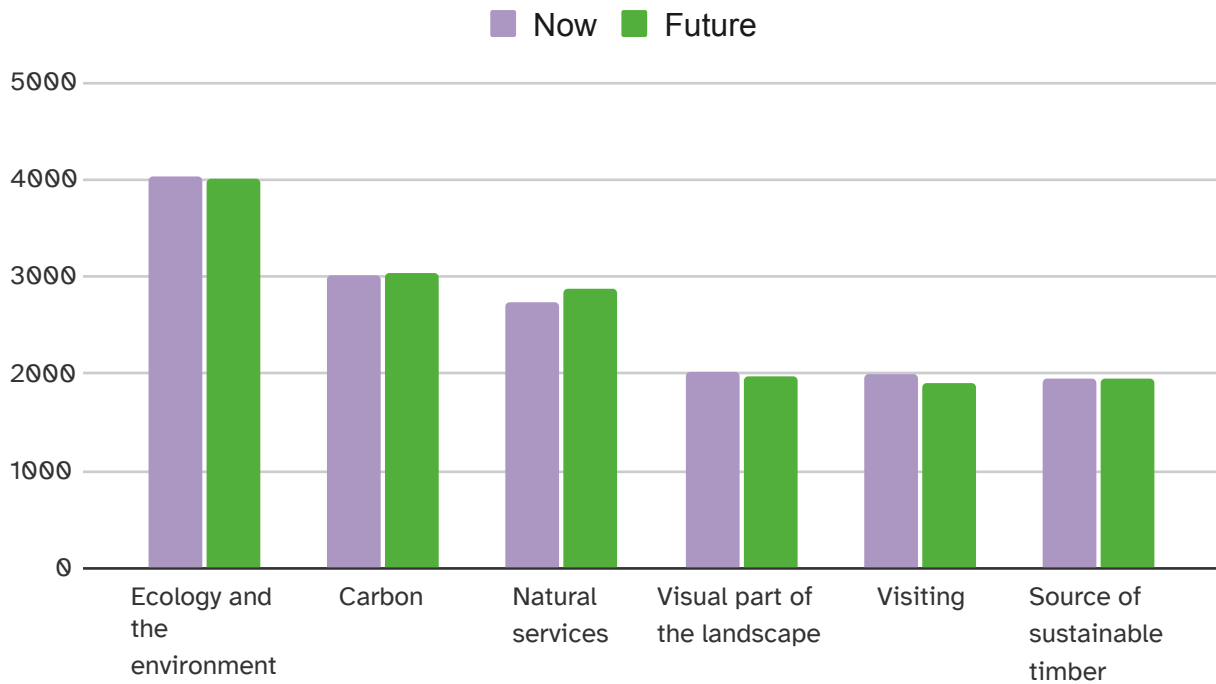


Q8. In the future what are the most important services trees should be providing to us in Somerset?

Total number of responses: 752

When asked about the future role of trees, ecology and environment was rated as the most important, followed by carbon and natural services. The future role rankings were highly similar to the current rankings, shown in the figure to the right.





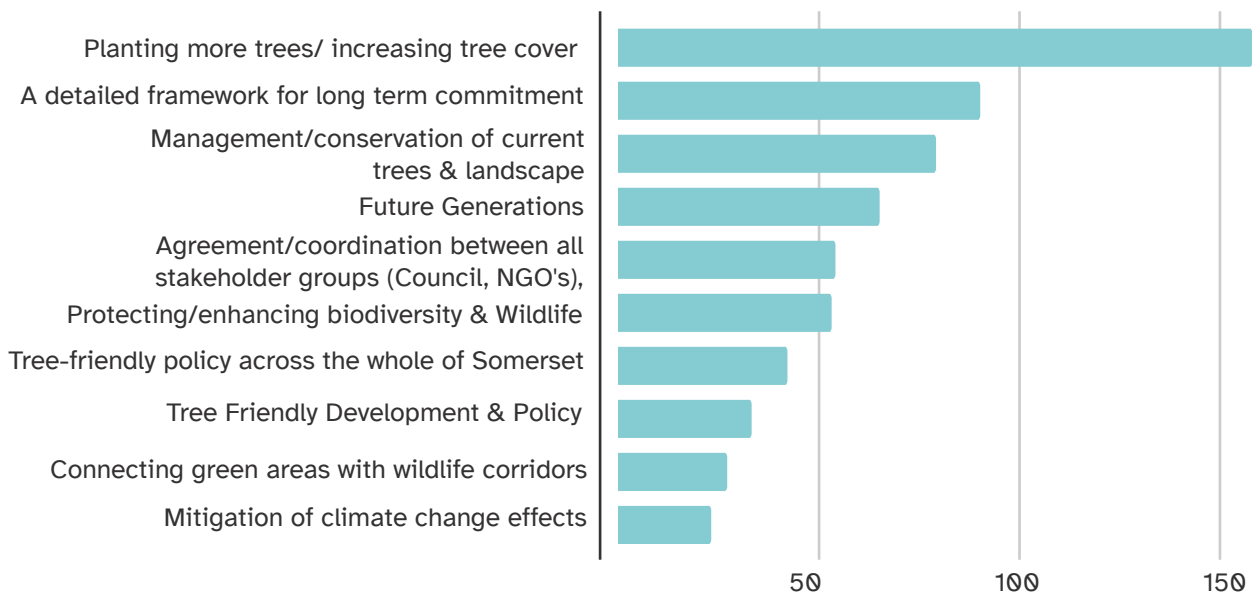
Part 4: The Strategy

Thematic Analysis Results

Q9. What does a County wide strategy mean to you?

Total number of responses: 668

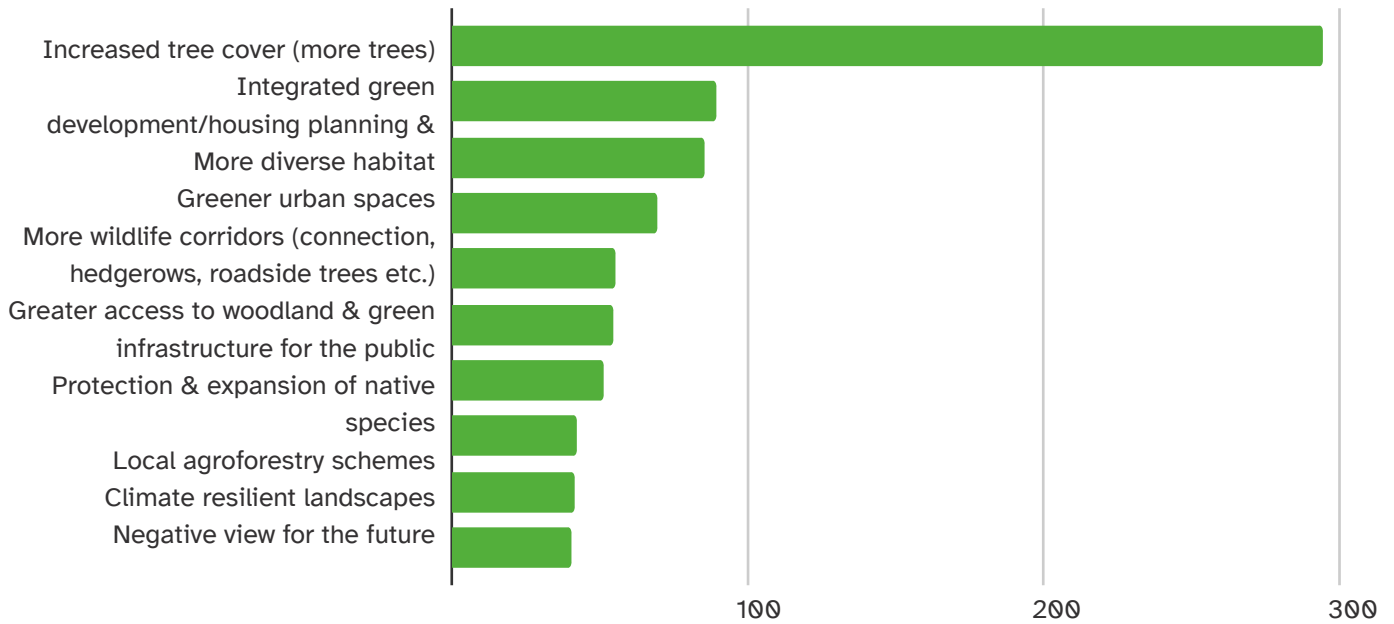
Over one quarter of the responses mentioned planting more trees or increasing tree cover. Long term commitment and a detailed framework were mentioned around one in seven times. Key phrases that came up include planting the right trees in the right places, as well as appropriate considerations for different areas. Other key aspects included future generations, agreement/coordination between all stakeholders, and connecting green areas with wildlife corridors.



Q10. In 20 years and beyond, what does Somerset's landscape look like?

Total number of responses: 580

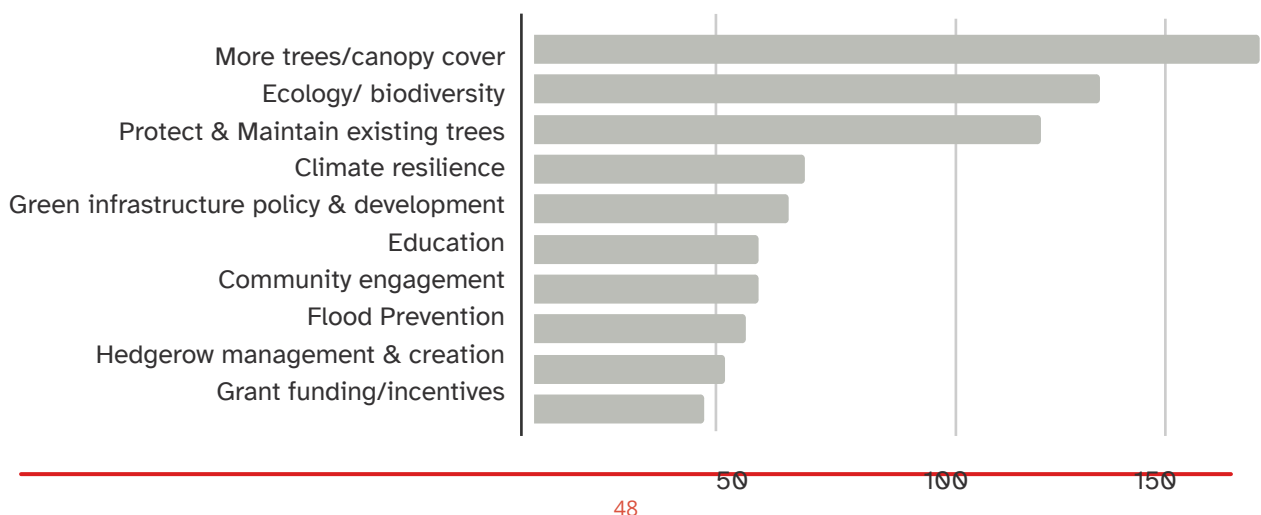
This question had a significant focus on increased tree cover, with over 50% mentioning more trees. Other responses were less strongly divided, but focussed on integrating green development and legislation (15%), for habitats to be more diverse (15%), and greener urban spaces (12%). Wildlife corridors were also mentioned as in the previous question. This also links in a pattern of key phrases mentioning there being currently isolated natural nodes, that are ecologically fragile as a result of not being joined up, and so a need for a joined up landscape where trees and hedges link up across the county. A restored relationship with trees was also a key message.



Q11. What should the strategy cover?

Total number of responses: 629

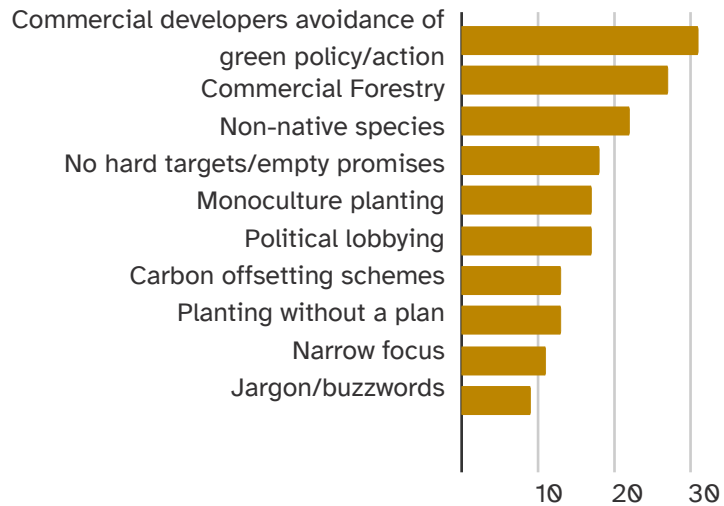
Again, for the third question in a row, more trees and increased canopy cover came up as the strongest response for this question (27%), but was closely followed by ecology and biodiversity (21%) and protecting and maintaining existing trees (19%). Just 10% of respondents mentioned climate resilience. Key ideas additionally included community projects involving trees, and community orchards.



Q12. Is there anything that shouldn't be in the Strategy?

Total number of responses: 349

Commercial activity was strongly voted against in this question, where commercial developers avoiding green policy was suggested by 9% of respondents, and commercial forestry by 8%. However it is important to note here substantially less people answered this question, so the scale of responses is altered. The most common responses to this question still only had 20-30 mentions, compared to previous questions which had several hundred.



Q13. How do we engage more people in that vision?

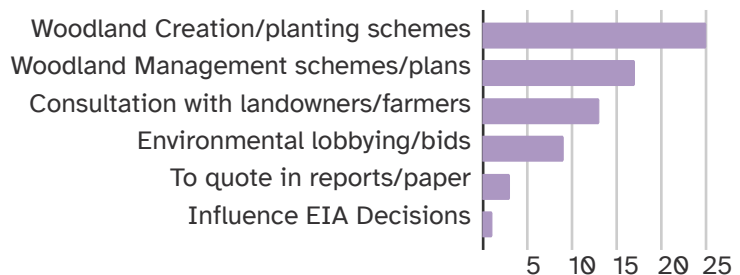
Total number of responses: 594

The most popular suggestions for how to engage more people in the strategy / vision were education, through schooling initiatives (20%) and educating across all age groups (13%). New publicity i.e. social media was also mentioned by 11% of respondents. Key ideas were linked to social media, encouraging schools to be tree nurseries, and again working with community groups.

Q14. If you are completing this as a professional, how would you envisage using the strategy ?

Total number of responses: 258

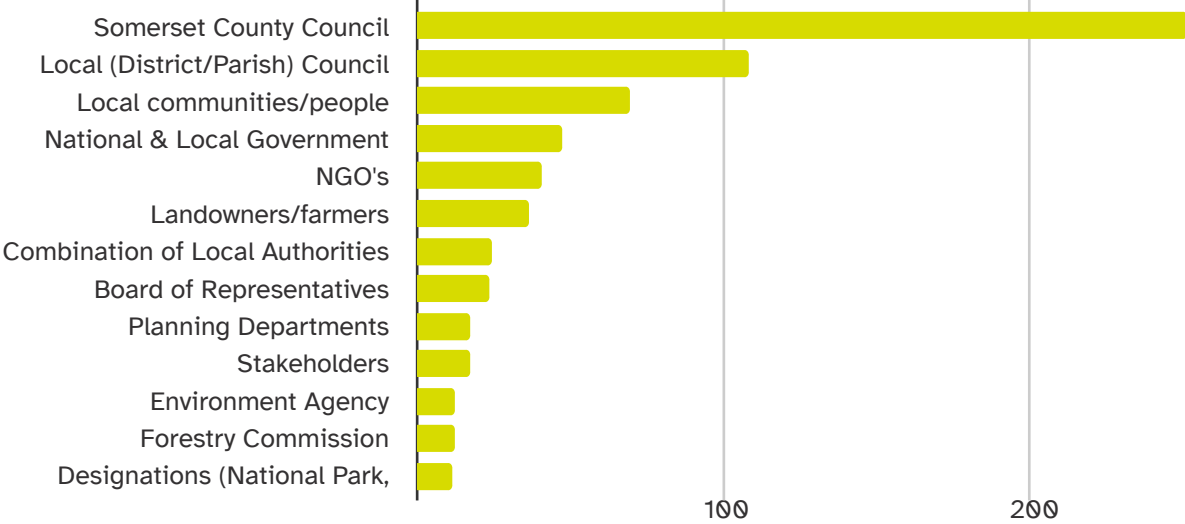
Of the professionals working with trees, woodland creation schemes were the predominant way they envisaged using the strategy (10%). Following that woodland management was also suggested (7%), and consultation with stakeholders (5%). Some key themes that came up were targeted woodland creation, informing EIA decisions and lobbying partnerships to expand and broaden thinking on trees.



Q15. Who should be responsible for the strategy?

Total number of responses: 563

There was a strong preference for Somerset County Council to be responsible for the strategy, despite the fact that Somerset is soon moving to become a unitary authority. Other groups mentioned were the local council, local communities and national and local Government. There was also a preference for a partnership approach, and potentially setting up a committee to include public/professionals and council representation.



A2 Examples of tree management

List of places seen by the Steering Group as representing good and bad examples of how trees should be managed in Somerset.

Location	Good	Bad
Nutcombe Bottom – home to England’s Tallest tree or Ashbrittle Church – home to England’s oldest tree are absolute musts. We have some of the most amazing trees in the country!!!!	1	
East Exmoor valley woodlands – ‘temperate rainforest dripping with lichens’ - Burr ridge Woods and/or North Hill woodlands	1	
Castle Neroche, Blackdowns Hills, on a misty autumn morning. Big trees and open grass beneath, views out over the Vale of Taunton - can be quite magical	1	
Anywhere with clusters of ancient trees. Some of the best examples: Piddle oaks (Blackdown Hills), Nettlecombe Court (Exmoor) Fyne Court (ash dieback) (Quantocks)	1	
Areas where woodland & open landscapes merge harmoniously/ fairly naturally, southern fringe of the west Mendip Hills is particularly nice - Kings Wood (ash dieback)	1	
Any stand of Continuous Cover sustainably managed mixed species forest - Forestry England woods on the Blackdowns - Wych Lodge	1	
The woodlands and avenues around Rexton Gorse and Crowcombe Heathfield Station	1	
The “Avenue” (outgrown beech hedgebanks) on the Quantock Hills, north-west of Triscombe Stone carpark	1	
Impressive oaks and oak parkland on the Nettlecome Estate	1	
Commercial orchards at Sheppy’s cider	1	
Sweet chestnut parkland at Nynhead Court nursing home	1	
Oak coppice on either side of Five Lords Lane (north side of the Quantock Hills east of Holford.	1	
Community orchard in Carhampton	1	
Traditional orchards around Brandish Street, Allerford	1	
Alders beside the river in Combe Florey	1	
Village trees and mixed woodland (scenery) around Combe Florey.	1	
Holly hedges north of combe florey.	1	
Deep hedges around Pitminster.	1	
Impressive stand of poplar north of the former Sandhill Park gatehouse near to the junction the B3224 / A358	1	
Vivary Park., Taunton	1	
Wellspring open Space, Taunton	1	
Netherclay local nature reserve, Bishops Hull Taunton	1	
Wellington Park, Wellington	1	
Swains Lane Local Nature Reserve (orchard)	1	
Terry’s Community Woodland near Wedmore	1	
Places with ash dieback – the Mendip ash woodlands is heart-breaking - Kings Wood (ash dieback)		1
Areas of industrial farming that have no woodlands, no field trees, manicured hedgerows. I can think of a number, but the Vale of Taunton around Wellington is where I would suggest finding this		1
Any even aged monoculture – either an unmanaged new native monoculture or a stand of productive conifer – either are how we should not be managing woods in the future		1
A stand of squirrel damaged beech (not very Somerset specific but		1
I might be quite controversial when I say this but: the middle of the Somerset levels!		1
Taunton Town centre		1

A3 Regional and national documents

Regional

Adapting to Climate Change on the Somerset Levels
Mendip District Council District-wide Carbon Management Plan
North Somerset Green Infrastructure Strategy
North Somerset Local Plan 2038
NRO 149 - Ecosystem Interactions on the Somerset levels
Reimagining the Levels main report 2016
Reimagining the levels, making Connections Technical Annexe 2016
Sedgemoor Climate Emergency Strategy 2020
Sedgemoor District Council Climate Emergency Strategy
Sedgemoor, and Somerset West and Taunton, District Councils' Joint Ecological Emergency Vision Document
Somerset carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan
Somerset's Climate Emergency Strategy
Somerset County Council Transport Policy habitat Regulations Assessment 2010
Somerset's Future Transport Plan
Somerset Housing Strategy 2019-23
Somerset Woodland Strategy 2010
Somerset West and Taunton Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan 2020
Somerset-west-and-taunton-ecological-emergency-action-plan
South Somerset DC Tree canopy cover report 2021
South Somerset DC Environment Action Plan 2022-23
Taunton Garden Town 2040 Prospectus

National

The England Trees Action Plan 2021-2024
England Tree Strategy Analysis of consultation responses
Forestry and Climate Change partnership Action Plan (DEFRA)
Forestry Commission Adaptation Reporting Power: Third round report 2022
NFI provisional estimates for woodland in the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership area (Forest Research)
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (DEFRA)
Responding to the climate emergency with new trees and woodlands: A guide to help local authorities and landowning businesses achieve net zero
The Canopy Cover of England's Towns and Cities: baselining and setting targets to improve human health and well-being
Tree Health Resilience Strategy: Building the resilience of our trees, woods and forests to pests and diseases (DEFRA)
Woodland cover target: Detailed Evidence report 2022 (DEFRA)

A4 Steering Group workshop results

Overall ranking of Objectives

Objectives	Ranking by priority score
Engage communities	1
Recognise the need for the 'tree strategy' to be a living document. Do not let it stagnate	2
Engage young people	3
Encourage increasing diversity on a woodland scale	4
Any new combined authority Strategic planning documents must recognise the roles of trees	5
Create linear features to allow connectivity and movement of biodiversity	6
Increase the understanding of the opportunities and issues of treescapes in developments beyond just the aesthetics	7
Bring people in the profession together regularly	8
Rationalise documents and remove (as much as possible) relic documents	9
Create a contract with the steering group and the CC to outline roles and responsibilities	11
Increase urban tree cover in parks and on roadside	11
Aim to plant 240ha/year in Somerset	12
Identify unmanaged woodland and encourage owners	13
Identify areas where more radical carbon planting may take place	14
Become a centre of excellence for agroforestry practice	15
Be open minded about species origin and provenance	16
Increase diversity of woodland types catchment scale	17
Engage FE and HE colleges and apprenticeship opportunities	18
Ensure increased tree cover is monitored	19
Encourage thinking on origin and provenance of stock	20
Be flexible and responsive to emerging opportunities. Use this action plan as a basis for funding bids	21
Create a Somerset First policy for timber use in developments	22
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	*

* added after workshop

A4 Steering Group workshop results

Ranking by theme

Objectives	Ranking by priority score	
Create linear features to allow connectivity and movement of biodiversity	6	Expanding tree cover
Increase urban tree cover in parks and on roadside	11	Expanding tree cover
Aim to plant 240ha/year in Somerset	12	Expanding tree cover
Identify areas where more radical carbon planting may take place	14	Expanding tree cover
Recognise the need for the 'tree strategy' to be a living document. Do not let it stagnate	2	Governance
Any new combined authority Strategic planning documents must recognise the roles of trees	5	Governance
Rationalise documents and remove (as much as possible) relic documents	9	Governance
Ensure increased tree cover is monitored	19	Governance
Be flexible and responsive to emerging opportunities. Use this action plan as a basis for funding bids	21	Governance
Create a contract with the steering group and the CC to outline roles and responsibilities	10	Governance
Ensure support mechanisms for interested parties	*	Governance
Encourage increasing structural diversity on a woodland scale	4	Resilient and adaptable treescapes
Increase the understanding of the opportunities and issues of treescapes in developments beyond just the aesthetics	7	Resilient and adaptable treescapes
Identify unmanaged woodland and encourage owners	13	Resilient and adaptable treescapes
Be open minded about species origin and provenance	16	Resilient and adaptable treescapes
Increase diversity of woodland types catchment scale	17	Resilient and adaptable treescapes
Encourage thinking about origin and provenance of stock	20	Resilient and adaptable treescapes
Ensure woodland product and services are ecologically sensitive	*	Resilient and adaptable treescapes
Trees adapted for shading for people and animals	*	Resilient and adaptable treescapes
Challenge status quo, an open discussion for new ideas on woodland management	*	Resilient and adaptable treescapes
Engage communities	1	Wood culture
Engage young people	3	Wood culture
Bring people in the profession together regularly	8	Wood culture
Engage FE and HE colleges and apprenticeship opportunities	18	Wood culture
Become a centre of excellence for agroforestry practice	15	Woodland services
Create a Somerset First policy for timber use in developments	22	Woodland services
Recognise decline of old orchards & orchard creation in orchards	*	Woodland services

A4 Steering Group workshop results

Workshop ranking by theme

Objectives	WC	WS	G	RA	ET	Tot.	Difference between high & low score
Engage communities	1	4	6	3	4	18	3
Recognise the need for the 'tree strategy' to be living doc.	13	14	2	1	3	33	13
Engage young people	2	14	3	3	13	35	12
Encourage increasing diversity on a woodland scale	15	2	12	1	7	37	14
Any new combined authority Strategic planning documents must recognise the roles of trees	8	9	11	1	8	37	10
Create linear features to allow movement of biodiversity	16	1	12	7	2	38	15
Create linear features that connect the landscape	18	1	12	7	2	40	17
Increase the understanding of the opportunities and issues of treescapes in developments beyond just the aesthetics	5	14	9		12	40	9
Bring people in the profession together regularly	4	14	1	9	14	42	13
Rationalise documents and remove relic documents	9	10	12	6	6	43	6
Create a contract with the steering group and the CC	6	14	12	5	11	48	9
Be open minded about species origin and provenance	11	14	12	6	6	49	8
Increase urban tree cover in parks and on roadside	3	14	5	10	18	50	15
Aim to plant 240ha/year in Somerset	17	14	12	8	1	52	16
Identify unmanaged woodland and encourage owners	14	14	12	6	6	52	8
Identify areas where radical carbon planting may take place	21	14	7	2	10	54	19
Become a centre of excellence for agroforestry practice	12	14	12	7	9	54	5
Be open minded about species origin and provenance	7	6	12	13	18	56	11
Increase diversity of woodland types catchment scale	25	14	3	1	19	62	24
Engage FE and HE colleges & apprenticeship opportunities	23	14	12	8	5	62	18
Ensure increased tree cover is monitored	10	14	12	14	15	65	5
Increase diversity of woodland types catchment scale	19	14	12	4	17	66	15
Encourage thinking on origin and provenance of stock	20	7	12	16	15	70	13
Be flexible and responsive to emerging opportunities	22	14	12	11	16	75	11
Create a Somerset First policy for timber use in dev.	24	14	12	15	20	85	12
Ensure woodland product & services ecologically sensitive		3					
Right support mechanisms for interested parties		5					
Planning docs recognise role of trees		8					
Trees adapted for shading for people and animals		11					
Urban trees increase.		12					
Recognise decline of old orchards & creation in orchards							
Form an ethics committee relay with EIA decisions			8				
Challenge status quo, open discussions			10				

A4 Steering Group workshop results

Character area by ranking

	Levels and Moors	Mendip Hills	Yeovil S'lands	Exmoor	Vale of Taunton	B'down Hills	Q'tocks	Mid S'set Hills
Diversify woodland types	5	2	4	3	5	3	4	3
Increase tree cover	5	3	2	2	3	3	5	2
Create linear features	5	3	2	4	1	5	3	2
Open minded species/ origin	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	1
Agroforestry opportunities	4	1	3	2	5	2	2	2
Increase urban tree cover	3	4	5	5	2	7	7	4
Trees in urban developments	4	3	6	4	3	6	6	5
Woodlands into management	1	1	2	1	3	1	1	2
Increase tree-based carbon stocks	6	2	3	2	4	2	2	3
Contribute to home-grown timber	2	2	3	1	3	4	4	2

Decision Report - Executive Decision

Forward Plan Reference: NA

Decision Date – 7 June 2023

Key Decision – no



Early Careers Strategy

Executive Member(s): Cllr Theo Butt Philip - Lead Member for Transformation and Human Resources

Local Member(s) and Division: All

Lead Officer: Alyn Jones - Executive Director

Author: Misha Liddiatt

Contact Details: Misha.Liddiatt@somerset.gov.uk / 01823 355448

Summary / Background

1. The Early Careers Strategy for Somerset Council has been created building upon the work of the positive work of Somerset's five former councils. At its heart it is a strategy designed to bring young people into the workforce at Somerset Council; in direct response to our ageing workforce and the threat of losing skills and experience. The programmes mentioned are already well established across the organisation and have been successfully used by several service areas, meaning a strong legacy exists to build upon. Our aim is to re-launch the Early Careers Strategy now we are a unitary authority and ensure all managers are aware of its importance and utilise all initiatives to enhance our workforce.
2. Throughout the development of the Early Careers Strategy key stakeholders have been consulted, such as colleagues from Education Service and Unions, alongside the Young People themselves, both from mainstream and SEND establishments.

Recommendations

3. The Executive agrees;
 - a. to endorse the Early Careers Strategy and its roll-out across Somerset Council;

- b. to receive updates annually from the Organisational Development team on Early Careers activity across Somerset Council.

Reasons for recommendations

4. The Early Careers Strategy has been proven to support workforce development across Somerset Council. Prior to the previous 2017-2020 strategy; there were 40 apprentices employed across local authority organisations within Somerset. This has since increased to a consistent level of approximately 300 apprentices, at any one time. A continuation of this work, which is broader than just apprentice recruitment, is required to maintain the numbers of younger colleagues within Somerset Council and to ensure we have strong succession plans in place for the future.

Other options considered

5. NA

Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan

6. Successful implementation of the Early Careers Strategy will support the delivery of the Council Plan vision and priorities. Some examples include;

A Greener, More Sustainable Somerset - in the majority of instances we use local training provision within Somerset.

A Health and Caring Somerset – we ensure all our young people are supported both inside the workplace through robust line manager, mentoring programmes and working well networks. Alongside this, we expect a high level of support from our training providers through specific tutors and assessors for each apprentice.

A Fairer, Ambitious Somerset – we encourage all our young employees to strive to reach their potential and have large ambitions for their futures; through the young employees network we offer continuous professional and personal development opportunities.

A Flourishing and Resilient Somerset – we aim to celebrate all our apprentices and young employees and ensure to shout about their achievements through internal and external communications.

Financial and Risk Implications

7. Organisations that have an annual pay bill of more than £3m pay an apprenticeship levy. This levy can only be used by organisations to fund the qualification elements linked to an apprentice. These qualifications range from £4k to £27k.

Somerset Council will pay an annual levy of approximately £1.2m. Should Somerset Council not utilise the levy (not recruit enough apprentices) it is lost to the Treasury.

8. A key strand within the Early Careers Strategy is the Pathway to Employment scheme. This scheme has an annual budget of £200k and is managed within the HR&OD team, it is to be used to support young people from vulnerable and/or disadvantaged backgrounds into education and careers.

Legal Implications

9. NA

HR Implications

10. NA

Other Implications:

Equalities Implications

11. Please see Equalities Impact Assessment below.

Community Safety Implications

12. NA

Climate Change and Sustainability Implications

13. NA

14. NA

Health and Safety Implications

15. NA

Health and Wellbeing Implications

16. NA

Social Value

17. The Early Careers Strategy supports the following Social Value priority;

- Developing employment, skills and training opportunities, particularly for hard-to-reach/disabled/target groups

Social Value is a key aspect of our apprenticeship procurement exercise and is a scoreable question within the evaluation tender. All 20 training providers that we work with are contracted to offer social value to our apprentices but where possible the entire workforce and community of Somerset.

This can be through the method of additional learning resources, fully funded qualifications, additional qualifications added onto the basic apprenticeship curriculum or access to national online resources via memberships.

Our training providers are also committed to engaging with NEETs and supporting them into meaningful education or employment opportunities.

Scrutiny comments / recommendations:

18. The Early Careers Strategy has been presented to the Somerset Council Implementation Board and HR Committee.

Background

19. The Early Careers Strategy aims to establish Somerset Council as an employer of choice for young people across Somerset and in our neighbouring counties. Bringing young people into our organisations has been a long-standing objective to counteract the ageing workforce we have within Somerset Council. Prior to the inception of Somerset Council, all five of Somerset's councils were utilising the various strands to differing degrees; meaning there is a legacy to build upon and develop, maximising

the opportunities to strengthen our workforce and recruit and retain apprentice, graduates and work experience students.

Background Papers

20. NA

Appendices

- **Early Careers Strategy**
- **Equality and Impact Assessment.**

Report Sign-Off (if appropriate)

	Officer Name	Date Completed
Legal & Governance Implications	David Clark	22.05.2023
Communications	Chris Palmer	22.05.2023
Finance & Procurement	Jason Vaughan	22.05.2023
Workforce	Chris Squire	23.05.2025
Asset Management	Oliver Woodhams	NA
Executive Director / Senior Manager	Alyn Jones	23.05.2023
Strategy & Performance	Alyn Jones	23.05.2023
Executive Lead Member	Cllr Val Keitch /	22.05.2023
Consulted:	Councillor Name	
Local Division Members		
Opposition Spokesperson	Opposition Spokesperson for Transformation and Human Resources – Cllr Faye Purbrick	25.05.2023
Scrutiny Chair	Corporate and Resources – Cllr Bob Filmer	25.05.2023

Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

Before completing this EIA please ensure you have read the EIA guidance notes – available from your Equality Officer

Organisation prepared for	Somerset Council		
Version	3	Date Completed	23.05.2023

Description of what is being impact assessed

The Organisational Early Careers Strategy for Somerset Council – setting out our commitments for encouraging and supporting young people into meaningful careers within Somerset Council.

We will look to re-launch the Early Careers Strategy during the summer of 2023.

Our Early Careers Strategy will encompass our ambitions and aims in relation to various initiatives, including apprenticeships, traineeships, graduate programmes and pathway to employment funding which looks to support those vulnerable and/or disadvantaged young people across Somerset.

Evidence

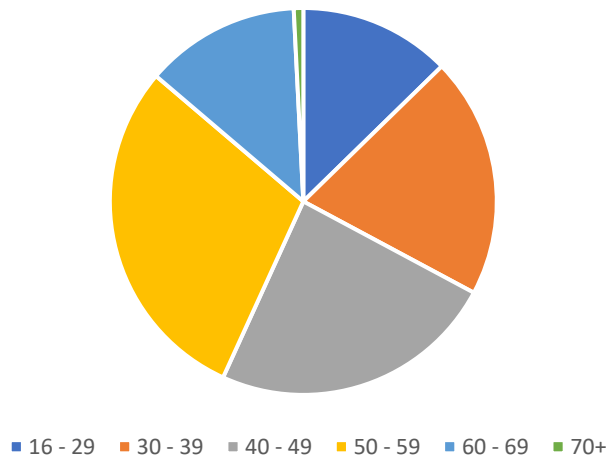
What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups? Sources such as the [Office of National Statistics](#), [Somerset Intelligence Partnership](#), [Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis \(JSNA\)](#), Staff and/ or [area profiles](#), should be detailed here

Data has been gathered by each organisation around the age brackets of their current workforce so we can highlight the number of people this strategy may affect already in the organisations. This is shown in the below pie chart where it is highlighted that only 13% of the total workforce across the 5 organisations are aged 16-29.

Our Early Careers Strategy will predominantly be aimed at those aged 16-26.

- 16-29: 13%
- 30-39: 20%
- 40-49: 24%
- 50-59: 29%
- 60-69: 13%
- 70+: 1%

Age Brackets - Somerset Council Workforce



Data has also been used from the Youth Voice Census 2021 and the Somerset Youth Board to inform the strategy we have designed to support young people into work and education.

All opportunities, offered, within the ECS are open to all young people from any background or personal circumstance. Accessibility needs are met whenever necessary to ensure an equitable process.

The ECS will be used to ensure inclusivity within Somerset Council through targeted supported employment opportunities in conjunction with other partner organisations such as supported employment colleagues and job coach organisations, such as Discovery.

As of June 2019, 17.4% of Somerset's population were young people aged 0-15. This shows that over the coming few years, we, as a large employer, have a responsibility to offer high quality opportunities for early careers and in partnership with other organisations, educational options. We also must acknowledge the dissemination of information to young people within primary and secondary settings is imperative to ensure they are well informed and able to make their future aspirational decisions.

Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups? If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?

The strategy was initially drafted in partnership by colleagues from Somerset County Council, Somerset, West and Taunton District Council, South Somerset District Council Sedgemoor District Council and Mendip District Council.

It was shared with Young People within the participation groups, SICC and SLICC – for their views on if we were encompassing all protected groups and to ensure our plans were accessible to all.

The ECS was brought to and approved by the LGR Implementation Board and HR Committee.

Final sign off/endorsement will be sought at the Public Exec meeting on the 7th June 2023.

Analysis of impact on protected groups				
The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.				
Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By improving career opportunities, it is likely to reduce the percentage, we as a county, lose each year of young people. • Young People may lack career aspirations and require support to navigate the opportunities available to them within Somerset. • Employees aged 27 and over may feel excluded from these opportunities. • Young People are less likely to have their own transport, and therefore more likely to use public transport which can impact on where they are able to work. 	□	□	☒
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young People within the County, who have physical or mental health impairments, may not feel that they can join the workplace because of their disability and/or that there may not be appropriate support for them. 	□	□	☒

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young People with disabilities, are likely to require reasonable adjustments. Both within the recruitment process and the workplace. • There will be more opportunities for young people with disabilities through the various supported employment schemes within the ECS. 			
Gender reassignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people who are thinking about transitioning or going through transition may feel that there are barriers in joining the workplace. • Young People who are thinking about transitioning or going through transition may have greater levels of anxiety within the workplace. 	☒	☐	☐
Marriage and civil partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have considered the impact upon this protected group, marriage and civil partnership, and no impact has been identified. 	☐	☐	☐
Pregnancy and maternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Younger parents and expectant mothers may require greater levels of flexibility in the workplace. • This cohort may not be attracted to careers paths within the Council due to their lack of knowledge around what is and isn't available. For example, part time opportunities or term time working. 	☐	☒	☐
Race and ethnicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals who identify as BME may feel there is a lack of diversity awareness across the organisation – which in turn 	☒	☐	☐

	could impact upon their decision to choose the organisation for their early career.			
Religion or belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have considered the impact upon this protected group, pregnancy and maternity, and no impact has been identified. 	☐	☐	☐
Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We recognise that there are some areas within the council that are traditionally seen by young people as male or female roles and that may influence the decisions young people make about their career path. 	☒	☐	☐
Sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young People who do not identify their sexual orientation as heterosexual may feel that there will be a lack of diversity within a council environment. 	☒	☐	☐
Other, e.g., carers, veterans, homeless, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to their caring responsibilities, Young Carers, may feel they are unable to take on a role within the Council. Young people who have spent time in the Armed Forces may need extra support in readjusting to civilian life. May suffer with PTSD. Young People who live in a low income household, may struggle to pay for transport to and from work or not have suitable attire for the working environment. 	☒	☐	☒

Negative outcomes action plan				
Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.				
Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
The Council will continue to create new opportunities and continue with existing opportunities for employees who are excluded from this strategy.	Ongoing	Organisational Development Team	Ongoing – quarterly and annual reviews	<input type="checkbox"/>
Look to increase the number of apprenticeship roles we offer through looking at current vacancies and whether they could be filled using an apprentice.	Ongoing	ECS Team and recruiting managers across the organisation	Ongoing – monitored through quarterly reviews	<input type="checkbox"/>
Offering school leavers an additional opportunity to academic options – apprenticeships, work-based learning.	Ongoing	ECS Team	Ongoing – work experience lead to feedback.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Showcasing the range of apprenticeships now on offer – Level 2 entry level right up to degree and masters Level 7's.	Ongoing	ECS Team	Ongoing – ECS team to feedback.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<p>We will continue to recruit care leavers into the organisation into apprenticeships, on an annual basis.</p>	Ongoing	ECS Team alongside Leaving Care and YOS colleagues.	Ongoing – monthly finance reports	□
<p>Supporting those with physical disabilities, learning disabilities or mental disorders to access high quality educational or career opportunities – through supported programmes and or mainstream programmes with additional recruitment support where needed.</p>	Ongoing	ECS Team alongside SEND colleagues and Special School colleagues.	Ongoing quarterly updates on ECS activity	
<p>Support those on no/low incomes or those who might be homeless to access educational opportunities and work experience placements to strengthen their abilities to begin their early careers.</p>	Ongoing	ECS Team/Recruitment Colleagues alongside local job centres	Ongoing quarterly updates on ECS activity	
<p>Sharing information about inclusivity and diversity of Somerset Council as a workforce to ensure those from all backgrounds and ethnicities feel supported and included in our recruitment opportunities.</p>	Ongoing	ECS Team/Recruitment Colleagues alongside local job centres	Ongoing quarterly updates on ECS activity	
<p>Veterans - Those joining the Council from the Armed Forces are provided with sufficient support in readjusting to civilian life.</p>	Ongoing	ECS Team/Recruitment Colleagues alongside local job centres	Ongoing quarterly updates on ECS activity	

<p>Young Carers – providing flexibly working arrangements and initial application support to encourage applications from young carers and ensure they feel our vacancies are viable options.</p>	Ongoing	ECS Team/Recruitment Colleagues	Ongoing quarterly updates on ECS activity	□
<p>Young Parents - providing flexibly working arrangements and initial application support to encourage applications from young parents and ensure they feel our vacancies are viable options.</p>	Ongoing	ECS Team/Recruitment Colleagues	Ongoing quarterly updates on ECS activity	□
<p>As an action for all Groups, ensuring that there is a robust induction/onboarding process to provide the relevant support for new starters and give Line Managers confidence. Including signposting to relevant staff networks.</p> <p>Promotion of the Young Employee’s Network to all young people who join the council – showcasing the support it can offer as they begin their early careers.</p>	Ongoing	OD Team & Line Managers	Ongoing quarterly updates on ECS activity	□
	Ongoing	Young Employee Network Chairs and ECS Team	Ongoing quarterly updates on ECS activity	
If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.				

Completed by:	Misha Liddiatt
Date	23.05.2023
Signed off by:	Michelle Anderson
Date	23.05.2023
Equality Lead/Manager sign off date:	Michelle Anderson - 23.05.2023
To be reviewed by: (officer name)	
Review date:	

This page is intentionally left blank



Somerset
Council

Early Careers Strategy

April 2023 to March 2027



Opening remarks

As we move into a new era for Local Government in Somerset, our universal pledge to support young people across the County to access high quality work and education opportunities, is at the forefront of our political and organisational agenda.

Somerset Council strives to be an employer of choice and allow all staff to reach their potential and fulfil their aspirations by creating an inclusive culture of continuous development whilst at the same time allowing colleagues to have fun and express themselves.

We recognise the wealth of experience our staff bring to their roles, and we aim to protect and nurture and develop their skills and aspirations through bringing young people into the organisation to assist us in 'growing our own' future leaders. We want to encourage younger employees to build professional and personal relationships with other young individuals across the organisation. We will remove the feeling of isolation for colleagues who can find themselves, often, the youngest in their teams.

Creating a safe space for young employees to share their experiences, gain new skills and build relationships is important; we will also provide opportunities to attend a range of events, so our younger employees can network and make new friends.

We want our younger employees' voice to be heard and will ensure that through the work cited below, we will also ensure that there is a clear link between our newest and youngest employees and our senior leaders.



Duncan Sharkey
Chief Executive



Jess Davis
Chair of the Young
Employees' Network

Introduction

It is often hard for young people to get a foot in the door, let alone two feet on the career ladder.

At Somerset Council we are working hard to change that and aim to build on our established initiatives such as: apprenticeships, graduate schemes, work placements and paid internships whilst also adopting new schemes available to support young people to enter and succeed in the workplace.



Our vision

We believe everyone deserves the opportunity to begin their career. By encouraging and supporting young people into the workplace, we can help build their self-confidence, self-belief, skillsets, and application of knowledge regardless of their start in life. We will bridge the gap between young people of Somerset and potential employers by giving young people a voice and empowering them to be better prepared for the world of work.

Data shows us that, just like the demography of Somerset, our Council is aging. Addressing this is crucial to prevent critical skills and experience being lost from the organisation. If we focus much of our recruitment and training effort on the transfer of skills and knowledge between age groups (because it works both ways!), The Early Careers Strategy will support Somerset Council to build the future workforce whilst also keeping talented young individuals within the county of Somerset.

It is important to remember the value that young people bring into our organisation too. We need to build and maintain a diverse workforce and understand the significance of bringing fresh ideas and new approaches into our working lives. As an organisation who promotes equality and inclusivity, we must practice what we preach and ensure that all sections of society are represented within our workforce. The young people of today are our leaders of tomorrow.

We acknowledge our role as a large employer within Somerset; where appropriate we will influence others to mirror such initiatives to ensure opportunities for our young residents are maximised.

Our aims

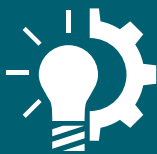
We aim to provide the communities of Somerset with a strong workforce and recognise that the best way of doing this is to build our own workforce from the ground up. **To achieve this, we will focus on five main areas:**

1



Improve our engagement with schools

2



Use data to drive our decision making

3



Maximise the full range of opportunities to support young people

4



Invest in retention initiatives, creating more than just jobs

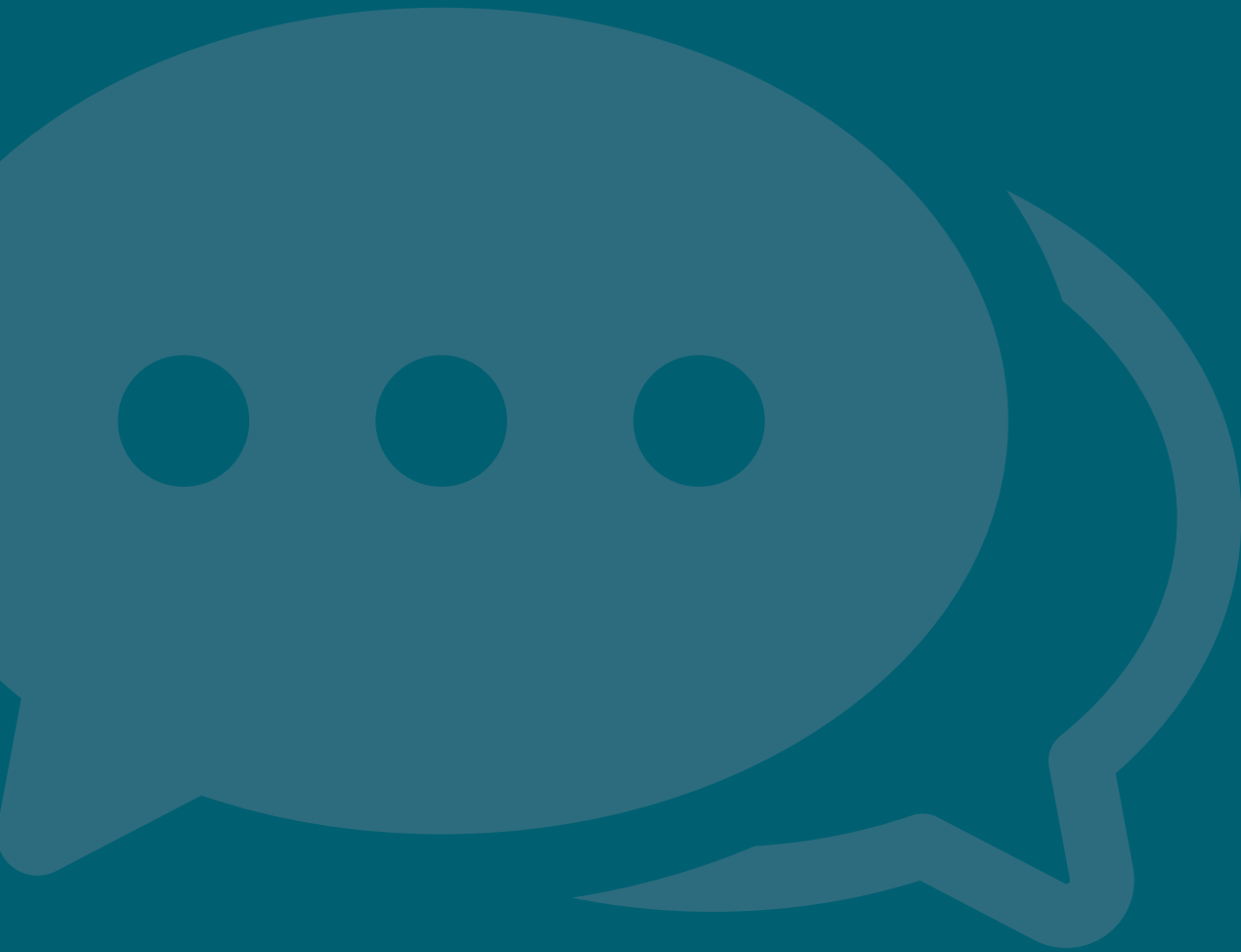
5



Promote inclusivity and diversity whilst championing young people's work

1

Improve our engagement with schools



We aim to work with local schools to ensure that our young people across Somerset get the opportunity to take part in high quality work experience from the earliest possible time. We will build upon established programmes to offer varied and beneficial work experience programmes across the Authority.

Utilising the knowledge and expertise of our colleagues within the Somerset Education Business Partnership and Skill Up Somerset, we will endeavour to build meaningful partnerships with our local schools and ensure that Somerset Council is at the forefront of our young peoples' minds when considering their career options, through encouraging colleagues to support school careers activities such as assembly talks, mock interview events and careers fairs. We aim to inspire and raise the aspirations of our school pupils whilst showcasing roles across Somerset Council and our partner organisations within the County.

Strong relationships will be developed with local schools, colleges, and universities to ensure Somerset Council is an employer of choice and that we work in partnership to open doors for young people at the start of their careers. We understand the importance of doing this both at Secondary school level for work experience and at university level. This will enable us to grow our graduate intake and ensure we have a stream of high-quality graduates who have roots within Somerset and share our vision to improve the lives of our communities.

As one of Somerset's largest employers, we will be able to utilise the skills and experience of our workforce to collaborate with colleges, complementing their curriculums and giving our staff the chance to build upon their own personal and professional skills.

Internally we will continue to work with managers at all levels to share the benefits of these schemes and ensure that our culture reflects the aspiration to bring young people into the workforce and grow our leaders of tomorrow.

2

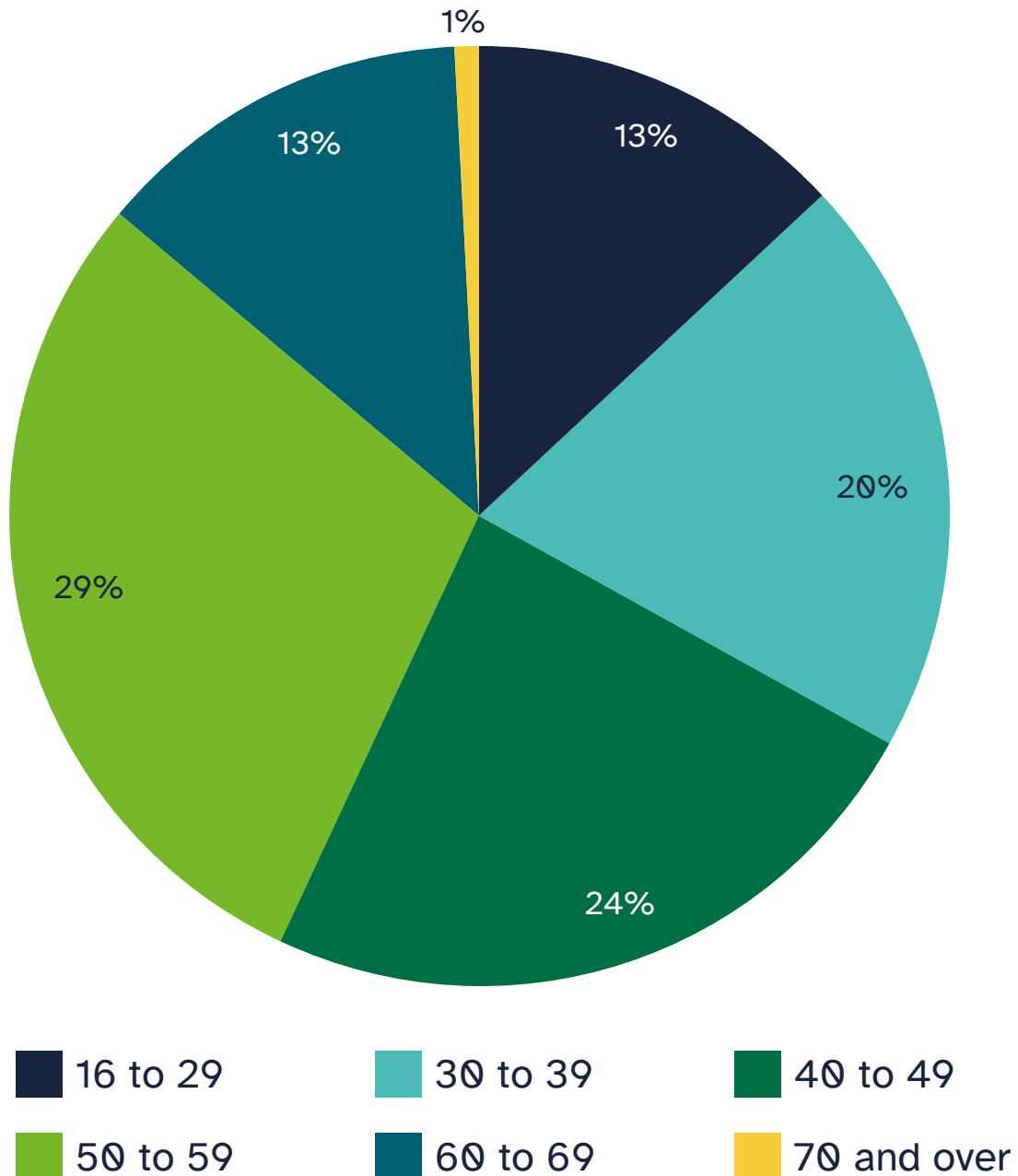
Use data to drive our decision making



Within many local authorities, an aging workforce continues to be a challenge. At Somerset Council we are at risk of losing key expertise and skills as staff near retirement. This is compounded by retention difficulties as the pandemic has given employees increased opportunities to work anywhere geographically so Somerset residents do not necessarily need to be employed within Somerset.

To demonstrate, the pie chart below shows the current workforce of Somerset Council;

Age brackets - Somerset Council workforce



Workforce planning and succession planning will be integral to the success of the smooth running of high quality services.

In order to support decision making about future young people initiatives, a variety of evidence-based practices will be utilised. These will inform recommendations and actions that are based on the most accurate and up-to-date data. **Examples of practices we intend to utilise are:**

- Surveys
- Stakeholder feedback
- Organisational data e.g. turnover, promotions
- Benchmarking externally with other local authorities
- External data statistics e.g. Office for National Statistics

We plan to support service areas through advising on career pathways which will optimise opportunities for young people and the organisation as a whole. An aspiration of our Early Careers Strategy is to bring young people into the organisation at the earliest possible stage and support, guide and develop them to reach their full potential be that at Somerset Council or within other local employers. This will be achieved by implementing various initiatives (see section 3 below). Our commitment to helping young people identify their career path and then developing them as Individuals, both professionally and personally, will result in a fitter, diverse and more effective organisation which is leading the way in youth employment.



3

Maximise the full range of opportunities to support young people



We appreciate the importance of a positive work culture and will work with managers at all levels to help them understand and promote the benefits that bringing young people into the organisation can have.

Fantastic progress has already been made within the previous County and District Councils focusing on the importance of 'growing our own' and bringing fresh skills and knowledge into our organisations, such as our Social Work apprenticeship programme. This enabled unqualified staff to develop their skills whilst continuing in their substantive posts to become qualified as Social Workers.

Equally this can be shown through developing our younger employees through Level 3 management training to give them strong foundations to move into more senior roles accompanied by higher level management qualifications - all through making use of the apprenticeship levy.

As an organisation we are committed to continue building on this approach to ensure that proposed initiatives are at the forefront of all recruitment opportunities.

With the vast array of apprenticeships now available at various levels, there are likely to be appropriate learning opportunities which could support job vacancies. Our intention is to promote a learning culture within Somerset Council which provide opportunities for individuals - internally and externally.

Building upon strong partnerships already developed with our colleagues across the Integrated Care System, we will maximise opportunities across the Health and Social Care sector, offering high quality work experience and further learning opportunities.

Finally, we will look to continue to work with partners across Somerset and the South West, such as the Somerset Education Business Partnership and the Dorset, Somerset Training Provider Network to ensure that our offer to young people is as strong as it can be and showcased in the right places, at the right time.

Early careers strategy - Initiatives

The following initiatives have been designed to deliver on our promise and encourage young people to consider Somerset Council as a rewarding career.

3.1

Work experience and T-Levels

Work experience can often be a Young Person's first experience of the workplace. At Somerset Council we aim to offer high quality and varied work experience placements to students of all ages, starting with those in Year 10 of secondary school.

We already work with local secondary schools to offer work experience weeks to students looking to gain insight into a variety of roles across the Council. These are offered at different points throughout the summer months.

We will continue to offer ad hoc, bespoke work experience placements for students for up to 2 months. These can be within specific teams or rotated around a service area.

T-Levels, introduced in 2020, are specific vocational courses that young people can complete allowing them to study and gain valuable work experience coherently.

The placement element, called an Industry Placement, is made up of 315 hours across the 12-18 month period – this usually equates to 1 or 2 days in the work environment each week.

Currently there are pathways in various sectors from Digital and ICT, Business and Management, Finance and Accounting to Health and Social Care. Somerset Council has supported Industry Placements in their ICT, Business Admin and Climate Teams and will offer further placements across a variety of teams to align with the pathways currently available to students across Somerset.

David Goodman, completed a T-Level student placed in one of our Climate Teams, he reflected on his experience for us;

“I have enjoyed the placement here and feel it has been a great opportunity to work in County Hall. I have learnt a great deal in my time here such as, learning how professional web developers will create webpages and websites. The most enjoyable aspect of this placement for me was being at the Somerset Business Climate Summit and pushing myself outside of my comfort zone by helping others at the summit with the presentation and the Mentimeter Questions. I will take the experience I have gained here and use it whilst I finish my course and use it in my future jobs.”

Laura Jensen, David’s mentor commented;

“David has been an invaluable part of our team since joining us as a T-Level student. He has supported the planning and delivery of a county-wide climate change event for businesses including website design alongside the Digital Team and attending the event to help ensure the smooth running of the event in particular the IT. He has learnt new skills and embraced office life as part of this placement, a highlight being weekly hot chocolate at our favourite café!”

3.2

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships can be a tool to help develop and motivate a workforce; ensuring staff have the right skills and targeted experience. Supporting workforce planning, apprenticeships are an integral way of bringing young people into the organisation. In addition, they are an extremely effective way of developing the workforce through upskilling, continued professional development and the provision of future opportunities for individuals.

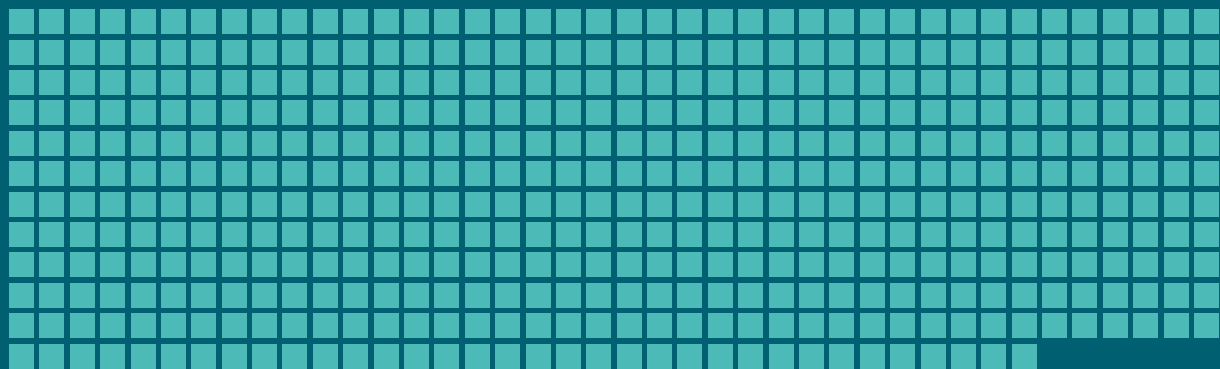
Somerset Council pays into the Government run apprenticeship levy. This allows us to offer opportunities to staff and encourages them to develop themselves and gain nationally recognised qualifications to further develop themselves in their current role or identify further opportunities they may wish to pursue. This benefits their personal and professional development and brings new skills and fresh ideas into the organisation thus strengthening our ability to serve the communities of Somerset.

Apprenticeships are offered at different levels:

- Intermediate Apprenticeships – are equivalent to 5-9 GCSEs (Level 2)
- Advanced Apprenticeships – are equivalent to 2 A-Levels (Level 3)
- Higher Apprenticeships – award Level 4 & 5 qualifications. e.g. Foundation Degrees
- Degree Apprenticeships – award Bachelor (Level 6) and Masters (Level 7) qualification.

474

Apprenticeships started since 2020



102

Recruited and...



60

Upskilled in the last 12 months

98

Apprenticeships completed in the last 12 months



£1,201,525

Total levy committed for the next 12 months

SME Levy Transfers 2020 to 2023: **£1,013,366**



3.3

Paid internships

Internships are an opportunity for Somerset Council to discover the most promising students, primarily post A-Level or via a university placement, and they support our aim of encouraging young people to stay in (or come back to) Somerset after they complete their studies.

Internships could play a vital part in our workforce planning and allows teams to engage with local young people at an earlier stage – allowing for relationships to be built prior to students leaving the County for higher education.

Internships can run from 2 -12 months and are paid at national minimum wage. They are the next step up from work experience and offer young people the chance to immerse themselves into their chosen career field in order to gain valuable work experience and insight that they can take back and apply to their studies.

3.4

Graduate programmes

Graduates have talent and specific knowledge from their degrees. They are fantastic assets to Somerset Council but they can lack workplace skills and experience. Through planned graduate programmes, we can offer graduates from different disciplines the opportunity to work and learn within their chosen sector. They are provided with appropriate support, guidance and development opportunities allowing them to build upon their skills and gain valuable work experience from sector experts.

Within Somerset Council we aim to build upon successful previous schemes and offer a high quality cross-organisational graduate scheme where peer to peer support and continuing professional development are at the heart. We will also consider the use of wider national programmes such as the NHS Graduate Programme and the National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP) which offer graduates a chance to experience various organisations both in the private and public sector.

These programmes can be a fantastic way to fill hard to recruit to roles and bring fresh ideas and up to date practices into the workplace.



“Hiya, I’m Josh and I’m the current Natural Environment Specialist. Having come out of university I felt slightly unsure where I wanted to focus my efforts to get experience around biodiversity, climate change and strategy/ policy writing. I found the Somerset Local Government Graduate Scheme in 2019 and felt this could be a freeing way to explore these topics in a time of significant change regarding climate and ecological emergencies being enacted within local government.

Through being accepted onto that scheme I got to work directly with our countryside ranger team and conduct several projects that provided support for the growing need for specialist knowledge around habitat restoration and species recovery.

Four months into the graduate scheme I was given the opportunity to become the natural environment officer within the council. This really gave me the confidence to progress with the work that previously I felt underqualified for, and so speaking with communities and working directly with elected members wasn’t so daunting.

After 9 months within the job, I was being given more responsibility especially around writing strategies, so the opportunity to apply for a specialist role was suggested by my line manager as an acknowledgement for the extra work being done.

It’s been an amazing couple of years, working on landscape-scale habitat restorations, county-wide nature recovery strategy, community engagement events and hands-on conservation work. I personally don’t think I could have got the freedom and the diversity of opportunities given to me within the roles I’ve occupied in any other organisation or sector.

I just wanted to show that working within local government gives you opportunities and a level of reliance which isn’t often reciprocated in other sectors. Additionally, if you do have an interest in politics, it is fascinating to get a chance to see the inner workings of local government, its structure and how things happen at this scale.

3.5

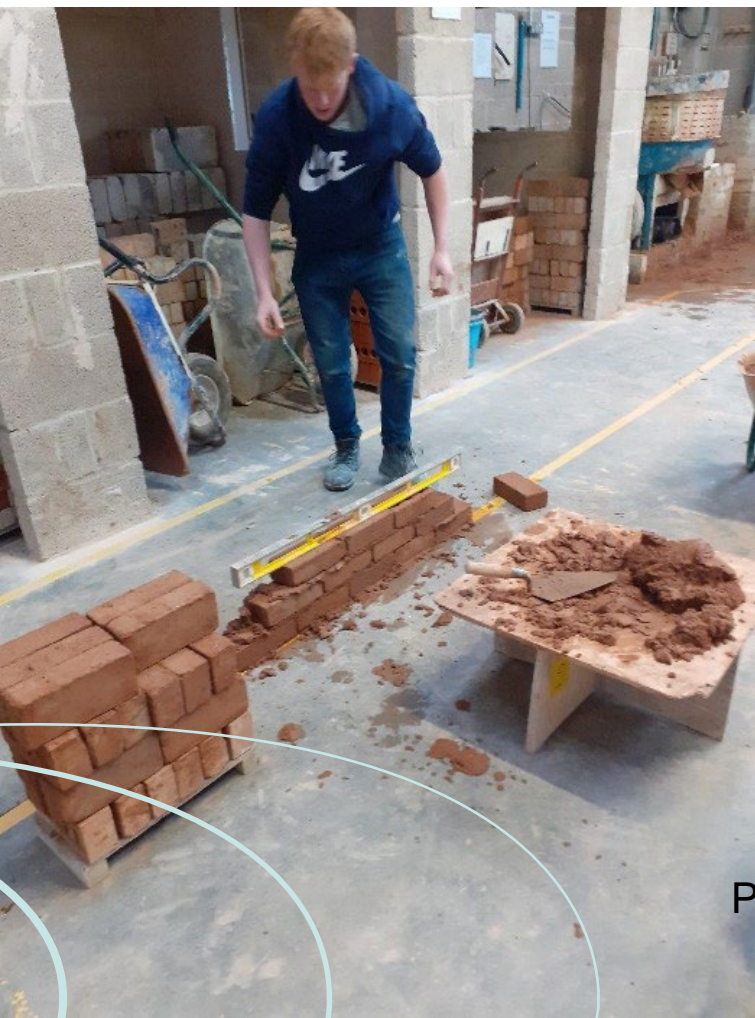
Pathway to Employment (P2E)

P2E is a valuable addition to the Council's armoury in supporting Somerset's vulnerable and/or disadvantaged young people and encouraging them to access education or work-related opportunities.

It is a standalone budget that can be used to support Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) individuals and care leavers into paid positions within Somerset Council but also to encourage and motivate them to engage with education and develop themselves personally and professionally.

We will work with various in-house teams such as Leaving Care, and Supported Employment to promote opportunities to young people alongside working with partner organisations to ensure that support is provided throughout education and early careers.

It is our aim to build upon the work already being carried out in relation to supported apprenticeships for SEND individuals and specific apprenticeships for Somerset Care Leavers.



4

Invest in retention initiatives, creating more than just jobs



At Somerset Council we aim to provide more than just a job to our young people – we want them to feel fully embedded in the organisation and develop personally as well as professionally.

To achieve this, we will give our young people a clear identity and opportunities to feed directly into organisational objectives, develop their employee voice and the chance to feedback to directors and councillors.

Building upon steps taken previously by County and District Councils, we will continue to support a Young Employee's Network which gives our young people the chance to interact informally as peers through virtual and face-to-face support sessions, dedicated CPD and annual conferences. Alongside this internal network, we will also encourage our younger apprentices to join national networks, such as the Young Apprentice Ambassador Apprentice network which allows them the chance to meet peers from across the South West and UK, and gives them valuable experience to run alongside their academic learning.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is imperative to all careers and we will ensure that CPD opportunities are shared with our young people as soon as they join the organisation. Regular communication will be shared regarding internal learning & development and there will be invitations to attend national and regional events.

Currently we have more than 90% retention rate across the organisations for qualified apprentices moving into permanent roles and we would like to see this increase as we move forward into Somerset Council.



“Attending the broadcast of the Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers 2022 was a brilliant experience. I love working within the Council and Support Services for Education (SSE), so was more than happy to talk about the benefits of being an apprentice – especially for such a fantastic organisation.

Speaking in front of a group of people in a situation such as this was definitely out of my comfort zone, but I have always been supported within work and my apprenticeship to pursue each new opportunity.

The other apprentices and I were welcomed by everyone within the studio and it was great to meet people who have shared a similar experience to myself. I hope that others who may have been watching the broadcast recognise that university isn't the only option to starting a career, and that an apprenticeship is a good opportunity to network, gain experience and build industry knowledge and skills, with a qualification secured at the end.”

Jessica Cullen, Business Administration Level 3 Apprentice

5

Promote inclusivity and diversity whilst championing young people's work





Somerset has a diverse and varying population both in terms of age and background. As one of the County's largest employers, we recognise our responsibility to ensure our workforce represents the population that we serve. It is also imperative that employees actively engage with and represent our communities.

The pathway to employment budget ensures that opportunities are given to those young people who come from vulnerable or disadvantaged backgrounds such as Care Leavers and those with SEND.

We will build upon the good foundations already in place to support managers in realising the benefits of supporting young people from all backgrounds. Somerset Council recognises that the individual skills, knowledge and fresh outlook they can bring to the organisation will strengthen our workforce and ensure we can serve the communities of Somerset.

