



Environment Action Plan 2022-2023

South Somerset District Council

April 2022





Contents

Introduction.....	3
Overarching Plan	4
Carbon footprint and decarbonisation.....	5
Carbon reduction.....	6
Energy Efficiency and Retrofitting	7
Transport	8
Resources: Minimise waste, recycle more	8
Natural Environment.....	9
Enabling change and engagement.....	11
Long-term projects/ aspirations for the new Somerset Council	13
On-going Work (Business as Usual)	14



Introduction

A welcome from our Environment Portfolio Holder, Councillor Sarah Dyke to the South Somerset District Council Environment Action Plan 2022-23.

In May 2019 we formally recognised a climate and ecological emergency and in October of that year we adopted an [environment strategy](#) that set ambitious targets to protect & conserve the environment and ecology. Sitting behind the strategy was a comprehensive action plan that set out all the tasks that needed completing over the next two years, driving us towards our goal of being carbon neutral by 2030; reducing our carbon emissions across our own operations and landholdings. The list of our achievements at the end of that 2-year period is available to view on our [South Somerset Environment website](#).



Whilst delivering our initial plan, we have also supported the production of the countywide Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy & County EV Charging Strategy.

For this year the environment is a top area of focus within our Council Plan and is already embedded as a priority project that sets targets to keep South Somerset clean, green, and attractive, with targeted improvements where we have identified them.

In this third year of delivering our environmental strategy, we have shaped a new action plan for 2022/23 which sets out what we aim to deliver during the next year.

Below you will see our tables of targets and actions under seven categories: overarching plans, carbon footprint, energy efficiency & retrofitting, transport, resources and recycling, natural environment and enabling change through others. Later in the plan, we have also highlighted all the work that has now become Business as Usual for the environment team and wider Council; things like the monthly popular Get Sussed newsletter and supporting the network of parish environment champions.

We are proud of what has been achieved so far at SSDC, but the challenge remains, and we have also identified some items of work that need to flow into the Local Government Re-organisation programme to support the work to shape a new sustainable Somerset Council.

Best eco wishes from Sarah



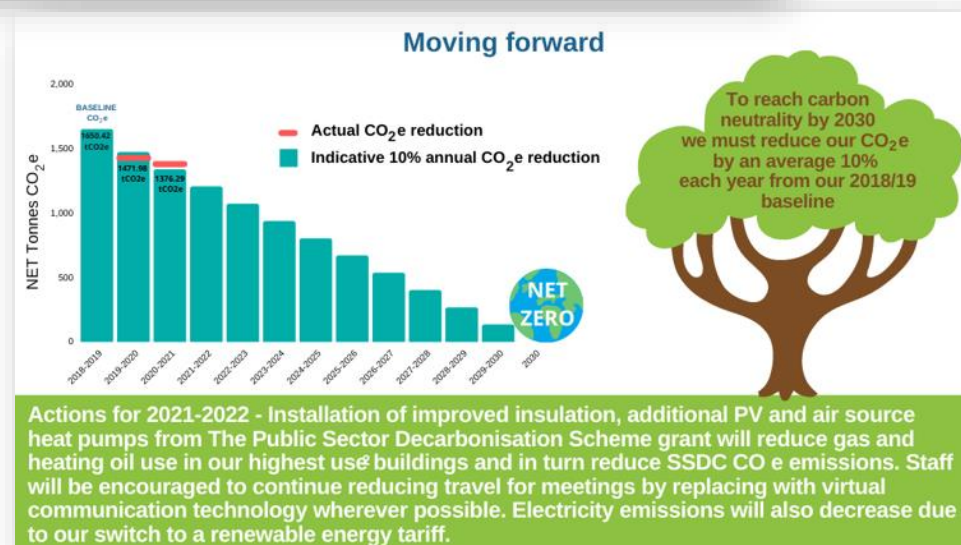
Overarching Plan

Targets and action	
Carbon Calculator: SSDC's annual carbon footprint target	Continue to drive down SSDC's carbon footprint and target a 10% reduction year on year.
Enable and signpost grant funding opportunities for environmental initiatives	Provide support, alongside partners, for communities and parishes to access existing funding for environmental initiatives, including renewable energy.
Planning: Engage and support planning team to ensure that development applications are considered from a climate resilience, mitigation, and adaptation perspective	Engage and support the SSDC Planning team to undertake a review of planning policy and ensure decisions consider climate resilience, mitigation, and adaption, especially for larger developments. This will include support through training opportunities around this subject.
Planning: Support the planning team in producing Climate Change Guidance document and checklist for developers as part of the planning process	Support the planning team in producing a Climate Guidance document to support the planning process. To include creating a planning checklist for climate change.
Procurement: Embed environmental decision making into the procurement system (TOMS)	Embed a procurement system to include TOMs (i.e., social value, sustainability, and environmental indicators) to inform all SSDC procurement decisions. To include training for relevant procurement staff.
Procurement: Review SSDC spend profile to inform environmental improvements	Undertake an analysis of SSDC's spend profile to identify potential opportunities to contribute to the delivery of environmental targets. Investigate if this can inform Scope 3 emission calculations for developing the carbon calculator in future.
Support the environment and climate work streams as part of the LGR process.	Provide support to the environment and climate work streams as part of the LGR process and ensure that these elements are represented appropriately in the new organisation.
Support county-wide Climate Strategy (Climate Resilient Somerset)	Support the Climate Resilient Somerset strategy across all work streams where relevant.



Carbon footprint and decarbonisation

SSDC's annual carbon footprint target is to reduce CO₂e emissions by 10% year on year to reach net-zero carbon by 2030. After a successful year last year, SSDC is working hard to continue this downward trend and reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.





Carbon reduction

Targets and actions	
Identify options for further carbon savings across SSDC	Analyse carbon calculator results on an annual basis and identify options for further carbon savings across SSDC.
Decarbonisation of SSDC estate through energy efficiency improvements and electrifying heating and lighting away from fossil fuels.	Complete the decarbonisation programme across the SSDC estate and look at further opportunities for installing renewable energy technology and expanding the program to other buildings. Undertake a review of opportunities across the wider estate via the facilities/property team.
Electric battery-powered/rechargeable machinery - transition across SSDC estate	Stop purchasing fossil-fuel-powered machinery/vehicles and update SSDC's procurement policy to support the transition to electric equipment. This will help reduce fossil fuel usage at Lufton and elsewhere, which is one of the largest contributors to our carbon footprint.
EV vehicle/ fleet transition.	Continue the transition of SSDC's vehicle fleet to EV. In addition, review the options for alternative fuel sources such as HVO to assist the transition to EV.
Monitor opportunities to switch to a fully Renewable Energy Tariff	SSDC's electricity was switched to REGO tariff by existing supplier EDF (following a contract review with SCC). Continue to monitor opportunities to switch to a fully renewable supplier/ tariff. Also need to address gas contract and reducing gas use, plan to move over to all-electric. Prompt Property to ensure REGO tariff applied in 2022/23.
Undertake feasibility assessment for small-scale Anaerobic Digester plant at Lufton Depot	Consider the feasibility of installing a small-scale anaerobic digester plant at Lufton, utilising the 'green cuttings'. Undertake a feasibility assessment to inform future property management decisions as part of the new authority. Potential carbon savings through the production of biogas for use at the site.
Investigate the feasibility of a small-scale anaerobic digester to service countryside sites and street scenes	Consider the feasibility of installing a small-scale anaerobic digester plant at countryside sites to utilise dog faeces. Logistical challenges to be considered around usage and provision of biodegradable receptacles for use. Other options such as composting/bio-digesting are to be considered.



Energy Efficiency and Retrofitting

What is retrofit?

Retrofit is the process of making changes to an existing building to reduce energy consumption and emissions. Retrofit should also bring the benefit of a more comfortable and healthier home. Examples of retrofit measures include the installation of loft or wall insulation and double or triple glazing.

Targets and actions

Retrofitting: gain an understanding of existing housing stock across district so that SSDC are ready to apply for funding opportunities

Prepare to apply for funding opportunities for retrofitting when they present themselves, engaging with Somerset County Council to provide a centralised, Somerset based source of high-quality information regarding measures that can be taken on properties and the types of support available to people to undertake them.

Invest with other councils to set up a database of houses, EPCs, and condition survey details.

Retrofitting: Review the success of the Thermal Imaging Project and expand the pilot project in Winter 2022/23

Re-run thermal imaging camera lending scheme as part of engagement on retrofitting to improve energy efficiency within existing properties. Partnership with the Bruton Retrofit Scheme.

Engagement and case study visits of energy efficiency retrofits and eco-buildings in South Somerset

Organise tours of case study examples of homes and businesses having retrofitted and installed eco-solutions to encourage others to do likewise. Undertake a public workshop or webinar, alongside the Retrofit Bruton coordinator with Environment Champions and community groups.



Transport

Targets and actions	
Complete E-Scooter trials in Yeovil	Support the completion of the Department for Transport e-scooter trials in Yeovil and share reviews and learnings.
Implement further EV Charging Infrastructure	Implement further on-street EV charging infrastructure across the district to facilitate the transition out of fossil fuel vehicles. Complete Deletti EV project and review further need on SSDC land. Review options of how to build on what we have achieved so far, how to improve EV infrastructure, and support SSDC's EV fleet.
Electric Vehicle opportunities - review following the adoption of county-wide Electric Vehicle Strategy (SCC)	Take forward the key recommendations from the county-wide EV Strategy and work with SCC to increase on-street EV charging infrastructure. This is to support the increasing levels of electric vehicle usage through a network of accessible charging points.
Electric-bike Strategy (SCC)	Support Somerset County Council with producing a county-wide e-Bike strategy. Explore initial opportunities for e-bike sharing schemes and parking infrastructure across the district.
Support active travel options, including support for Chard & Wincanton Local Cycling Walking Plan (LCWIP)	Support active travel options through the funding for additional LCWIPs across South Somerset.
Area East feasibility studies - Shared User Paths (Active Travel)	Undertake South Somerset Area East feasibility studies into shared user paths as part of a review of active travel opportunities.

Resources: Minimise waste, recycle more

Targets and actions	
Single use plastic - engagement to help reduce the use of single use plastics across SSDC estate and different service areas	Aim to reduce the sale/ use of single use plastics from SSDC offices, meetings and hospitality and engaging a network of internal staff environment champions within service areas to assist with sharing the message.



Natural Environment

Targets and Actions	
Verge management	Roll out the successful 'No Mow' conservation verge trials across the district, including amenity grass and verges, etc. This project is linked to improved grassland management for biodiversity. SSDC also aims to engage more with stakeholders to share data and expand the programme.
Digital technology/ data contribution to natural environment work	Work with the Digital Technology team to explore opportunities for data mapping and creating files that are easy to share with our communities particularly around the Nature Recovery maps.
Local Nature Partnership	Take forward local nature mapping and share it with communities to inform the delivery of Nature Recovery Networks. SSDC will identify target sites and management work with local parishes, landowners, and other partners for delivery.
Natural Flood Management	Support partnership work and seek funding opportunities for tree planting and natural flood management schemes across the district. Identify and help secure funding for local parishes to assist with natural flood management and support delivery partners.
Sharing information on community resilience against flooding	Enable and share information with communities and parishes on flood resilience and plan-making options, including the Environment Agency's Flood Plan template.
Adopt Play and Open Spaces Standards for South Somerset	Refresh the standards, based on a new evidence base, enabling Development Control to make informed and justifiable requests at the point of Planning consent.
Peat-free trials to reduce the use of peat across the SSDC estate	Review opportunities for undertaking peat-free trials at Lufton, review barriers and challenges, and investigate zero usage of peat-based products. Create communications and case studies to share best practices.
Phosphates reduction/ Planning	Explore solutions to the phosphates issue such as the phosphates calculator for planning, as well as appropriate mitigation options. Undertake engagement with local communities on the issue.
Somerset Rivers Authority - engagement on funding and river-based projects	Identify and explore potential projects and bid for the SRA funding to support local river-based projects. Undertake engagement with communities to review requirements.
Review sustainable land management across SSDC estate	Review SSDC policies on sustainable land management and continue dialogue with partners to positively influence them on the subject.



Targets and Actions	
Support county-wide Tree Canopy Strategy	Support the county-wide Trees Call to Action bid which includes funding for the Somerset Tree Strategy. Grant also includes funding for ancient woodland mapping, engagement activities, and ash die-back planning. The aim is for 17% coverage by 2045.
Tree canopy targets to be established	Finalise and issue Market Town Canopy Cover reports, working to support towns with achieving local tree canopy cover targets through new schemes.
Tree planting on SSDC land	Continue to plant trees on SSDC land where appropriate e.g. Ham Hill woodland expansion (connecting fragmented existing woodland), whilst also reviewing funding opportunities.
Tree planting support	Continue partnership work with Reimagining the Levels and other organisations/ landowners and seek funding for tree planting and natural flood management opportunities. Consider whether there is demand from local parishes (with available land) to complete the Great Parish Tree giveaway.
SSDCs Parish Wildflower Giveaway	Support the creation of biodiverse grassland habitats by enabling communities and parishes to develop wildflower projects as part of SSDC's Great Parish Wildflower Giveaway.
Wildflower and grassland creation	To support the creation of biodiverse grassland habitats across the SSDC estate and remove grass cutting where not essential. This should include a review of the SSDC estate for any larger-scale grassland creation opportunities.
Somerset County Council Pollinator strategy	Support the delivery of the county-wide Pollinator Strategy through nature recovery actions. To then be promoted to networks and through SSDC projects.
Pesticide & herbicide use	Conduct a review of existing pesticide/ herbicide use and adopt a new policy stance moving forward, potentially as part of the pollinator strategy actions.
Queen's Green Canopy	Provide communications to local parishes as to what they can do as part of the QGC tree planting initiative.



Enabling change and engagement

Targets and actions	
Complete Carbon literacy training and rollout toolkit across organisation	Carbon literacy training for staff identified as a necessary step to achieving SSDC's net zero target. Roll out carbon literacy and energy behaviour training across SSDC staff, following initial training to a select group of staff provided by a specialist climate change training company (CAT). Roll out a toolkit or knowledge share/ lunch and learn sessions to disseminate information to wider teams. This will allow service areas to discuss positive actions for each team.
Business engagement regarding the climate emergency	Undertake business engagement to feed from the outputs of SSDC's Green Business Survey. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Include a green section in the monthly Economic Development and Environment Newsletter with relevant content. - Provide comms on net-zero and 'green USP' opportunities. - Support county-wide business Net Zero conference led by SCC. - Support the creation of content for a central hub of net-zero business information on the Resilient Somerset website. - Share carbon accounting tools with local businesses. - Share a green business toolkit, including the central source of information on SCC's website.
Great Green Directory - increase the number of eco businesses operating in South Somerset included in the directory	Promote and expand the public directory accessible on the South Somerset Environment website to signpost people to local eco businesses to help on their decarbonisation and biodiversity improvement journey.
Business waste reduction/ Circular economy - share best practice	Engage with SMEs (industrial, construction, and manufacturing) to understand barriers to change by reducing waste and recycling (including working with SWP and waste suppliers). Investigate undertaking a circular economy case study at a specific location similar to the Chard Bin It Waste Project; share best practice examples of circular economy in business.
Business - Explore grant opportunities	Identify, create, or share external grant opportunities for businesses to support green initiatives. For example, Sedgemoor and Devon County Council environmental business grants; innovation grants; SWMAS eco-programme providing support to businesses looking at waste and circular economy.
Business - Engagement with key stakeholders/ chambers	Engage key business stakeholders around the zero-carbon agenda: Yeovil Chamber; Crewkerne/ Ilminster/ Wincanton business groups; Mhub. Share information on support and grants. Support a business focused event looking at good practice opportunities and networking.



Targets and actions	
Support local production, including food and craft markets	Progress the Food Directory (visitsouthsomerset.com website) and Great Green Business Directory to promote local producers. Economic Development team to look at support for markets and other producers across the district.
Staff engagement/ awareness protocol	Roll out an awareness protocol to SSDC staff, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - new starter packs (green induction), - strategy lunch and learn sessions, - IT homepage pop-ups etc. - Share environmental content at monthly Staff Briefing.
Staff induction training on climate emergency ('Green Induction')	Work with the People team to review the feasibility of creating a staff induction module on the climate emergency. For example, a compulsory 'Green induction/ carbon literacy' pack for new starters as part of their induction/ onboarding process.
Staff Green Pledges	Introduce staff green pledges linked to Carbon Literacy training.
Tourism team to produce a series of green visitor itineraries	Share green visitor itineraries on the Visit South Somerset tourism website and promote them more widely.
Community Environment Toolkit	Launch Community Environment Toolkit to environment champions and parishes to support the existing work and encourage additional environmental projects across the district.
Citizen science - air quality, water pollution, and floral surveying	Roll-out engagement programme to progress survey opportunities for communities/ parishes. Explore ideas with Parish Environment Champions; for example, the Water Guardians.



Long-term projects/ aspirations for the new Somerset Council

Action/ Responsible Work Stream	Overview
Eunomia Audit of Recycling and Waste (Facilities Management) Asset Optimisation Workstream	Eunomia Audit of recycling and waste to be progressed and completed under the LGR process for the new authority (in partnership with Somerset Waste Partnership). To be reviewed with facilities management.
Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (Conservation and Rivers) Service Alignment and Improvement / Environment Sub-group 2	Green and Blue Infrastructure (Nature conservation / Rivers), and Open Spaces Strategy: agree on the approach and create a strategy for new authority as part of the LGR process. Capture ongoing SSDC work relating to the 'Green/ Blue Infrastructure' development work and ensure that this is taken forward into LGR strategy.
On-street EV Infrastructure Asset Optimisation Work stream	On-street EV infrastructure - continue the roll-out of existing programmes and expand the network across the county.
Decarbonisation of Property Asset Optimisation Work stream	Decarbonisation of property - review opportunities for further decarbonisation of properties and estate for the new authority, including the crematorium.
Renewable Energy contracts Asset Optimisation Work stream	Review energy contracts and ensure renewable (REGO backed) energy contracts are delivered.
Planning guidance & Local Plan review to incorporate Climate Resilience and Mitigation Service Alignment and Improvement / Growth 2: Planning and Enabling	Review and create planning guidance for climate for the new authority (e.g., a Supplementary Planning Document for Climate or a Climate Change checklist etc.). This may form part of a Local Plan review for the new authority and should be a high priority.
Employee engagement on Climate Action, including carbon literacy training Service Alignment and Improvement/ Environment Sub-group 1	Consider opportunities for employee engagement, for example using an app (Pawprint carbon footprint) to engage staff on climate actions. Consider as part of the new authority.
Subject Matter Experts to advise on climate decisions across the new Authority Service Alignment and Improvement/ Environment Sub-group 1	Ensure subject matter experts are available to advise on climate-related decision-making within the new authority.
Green Procurement Policy Finance Workstream	Production of a new 'Green Procurement' policy covering the new authority.



On-going Work (Business as Usual)

We will continue to:

- *drive down our organisational carbon footprint and target, meeting or exceeding the 10% year on year reduction.*
- *deliver our engagement and communications strategy that delivers bespoke materials to and for our communities.*
- *produce our monthly environmental newsletter (Get SuSSed) and website content and grow and expand subscribers.*
- *engage with the SSDC Parish Environment Champion network, including growing the number of parish representatives involved.*
- *promote and support tree planting initiatives across the district, as well as developing a tree planting network (with volunteers), for example through our Great Parish Tree Giveaway and tree planting toolkit.*
- *Sharing communications on tree planting funding opportunities, such as initiatives from the Woodland Trust and the Queen's Green Canopy scheme.*
- *expand our programme of skill-sharing events and case study tours for our Parish Environment Champions network and expand the number of parishes involved.*
- *ensure the Future Homes Standard is incorporated within SSDC Planning Policy.*
- *Engage with communities and signpost the environmental website on Council Tax communications.*
- *engage with and provide volunteering opportunities for 'hard to reach' groups.*
- *promote community sharing and reuse using local Facebook groups and our Parish Environment Champions network.*
- *expand the South Somerset Environment website, including promoting local events, grant funding assistance and case-studies.*
- *engage internally with SSDC staff to raise awareness of the climate emergency and to ensure our response is embedded right across the organisation; this will be supported by the rollout of our Carbon Literacy Training programme.*
- *Provide funding and grant opportunities for parishes and communities, and ensure businesses continue to be listed on the new South Somerset Environment website, in our monthly e-newsletter (Get SuSSed) and within the Economic Development newsletter.*
- *enhance promotion of the SSDC community grants for environmental projects.*
- *share information on how businesses can help themselves to be greener and reach net-zero, including partnership working with the FSB and local Chamber of Commerce.*