



## **SSDC Environment Strategy Update**

Executive Portfolio Holder:	Sarah Dyke, Environment
Strategic Director:	Clare Pestell, Commercial Services & Income Generation
Lead Officers:	Katy Munday, Leisure and Recreation Manager Vicki Dawson, Lead Specialist (Environment)
Contact Details:	Katy.munday@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462522 Vicki.dawson@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462546

### **Introduction**

As with all areas of work the Environment Strategy team have had to review priorities in light of the Covid pandemic. There have been some opportunities that we have been keen to grasp and build upon, such as reduced transport emissions and wildlife re-colonising spaces whilst some other areas of the delivery plan have been reviewed and re-prioritised.

Our Community of Practice continues to meet regularly (on-line) to ensure our network of environmental specialists stay in contact and continue our work to deliver the strategy aims.

### **Carbon Footprint**

Following the recognition of a climate emergency one of the key aims of our Environment Strategy was for our own estates and operations to be carbon neutral by 2030. In order to track our progress on this target the team developed a carbon calculator tool. We worked out that our baseline net emissions in 2018-19 were 1650.42 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>e). That equates to 4.68 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e per FTE staff member. The breakdown can be seen in the attached info graphic.

We have recently completed compiling all the data for 2019-20 and can now report that our net emissions have reduced. The total was 1471.98 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e (3.94 tonnes per FTE staff member). That's a 10% reduction.

Whilst this is great news we need to remain slightly cautious as this could simply be due to a warmer winter and lower heating requirements. Nonetheless it is a great start and we need to keep this momentum. To reach our targets we need to continue to reduce emissions by 10% each year



## **South Somerset District Council**

### **Energy Audit and next steps**

As has been identified in our carbon calculator work, energy use in our buildings is one of our highest generators of carbon emissions. In order to help us identify the best way to reduce our emissions we engaged the services of Engie to carry out an energy audit of our top ten energy using buildings. We received the final report from Engie in early September. This identifies options for steps we can take to get each of those buildings to carbon neutrality.

The team, along with property services, are now considering the report recommendations and planning how we can make the improvements required. This will of course require some investment, however, through reducing energy costs this will also off-set the financial impact. Some of the improvements already have capital funding allocated and we will also be working to identify grants and other funding streams that may be available.

There will be a 9 to 10 year plan to reduce emissions within our target period.

### **Green Transport**

#### **Electric Vehicle Deletti project**

We have been progressing our work to deliver EV charging points across the district at some council owned car parks. Our aim is to identify 25 sites across the district.

We have been able to join with the Devon Low Carbon Energy and Transport Technology Innovator (DELETTI) EV Charging project to progress this work with colleagues in Devon. An invitation To Tender (ITT) is due to go out by the end of this week (2nd Oct) with the award expected to be in place before 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020. All installation of phase one and two is due to be completed by Feb 2022 – a detailed timeline of installations will be part of the bids.

The sites will be provided with dual chargers which will be 1x 22kW with a 1x 50kW DC if connection is viable. If a site is not viable for a 50kW DC for rapid charging (20-40mins) it will be a dual 22kW 3 phase AC charger which can charge many 3 phase compatible EVs in 1-2 hours. Where sites are of high use and prime for multiple EV charging opportunities and grid connection allows we could get up to 3 dual chargers installed but this will be subject to installer/operator review.

#### **E-scooter trial**

We are delighted to announce that we have been successful in our application to take part in an initial trial on allowing the use of e-scooters in our community. Currently e-scooters are not widely permitted and this is a national trial to assess



## South Somerset District Council

whether they are useful mode of low carbon transport. They will only be allowed where bikes can go and not within pedestrian only areas.

We see this trial as an important part of the delivery of our Environment Strategy. It will help us to research and develop a broad portfolio of active and electric travel options for our residents as we seek to provide alternative non fossil fuel modes of transport.

E-scooters can be used by residents from their front door for local journeys such as:

- Commuting to work
- Travelling to school or college
- Visiting a convenience store
- Socialising

There are a number of benefits of participating in the scheme, which are likely to be popular with many who live in the trial area:

- Speed – they're one of the quickest ways to travel around an urban environment
- Low infection risk – where users have their own scooter, there's very low Covid-19 risk
- No parking issues – you can fold it and take it with you, or lock it up on a bike rack
- Practical – Less need for dedicated clothing and showers at work, compared to cycling
- Cheap – over time they're more economical than public transport
- Eco friendly – you'll be helping clean the air that we breathe by not emitting CO, NOX or particulate matter
- Freedom – you go where you want, when you want, no timetables or routes

We are now in discussion with our trial partners to set the scheme up which should be in place in the next couple of months

### Community Engagement

A communications plan has been rolling out on a weekly basis to raise awareness about national campaigns and local issues. Social media posts about recycling, air pollution and littering aim to keep residents aware of how they can get involved or increase understanding of both local and national issues. The most popular theme in the past six months was around littering. The total campaign of 8 messages reached over 38,000 people and was shared 337 times.

The team continue to engage with the growing network of Environment Champions (50) that we are fostering across the district. Mostly champions are nominated on a



## South Somerset District Council

parish basis, but some are independent of parishes. We had planned a series of networking events starting April but as a result of Covid are moving these online from October; starting with joint presentations with colleagues at Somerset Wildlife Trust about Nature Recovery Networks. The team (after issuing a GDPR survey to confirm champions were happy to have their details shared) have started linking up champions to help projects on the ground and groups like Reimagining the Levels will be providing knowledge sharing and opportunities at more regionally focussed events for our champions.

As a result of Covid the team developed the Get Sussed newsletter that is issued monthly to environment champions, SSDC officers, Parish and Town clerks and Members. The newsletter aims to provide a range of articles to help champions advance environmental matters in their patch and promote opportunities like the SSDC community grants scheme (which now has added criteria in support of green projects).

What we have found as a result of Get Sussed and due to the range of emerging schemes is that the team would like to be able to endorse and promote certain trusted schemes, signposting people in the community, from home owners to businesses, to opportunities to help them reduce their carbon footprint and halt biodiversity loss.

An example of providing constructive advice would be for SSDC to endorse the Solar Streets project <https://www.iddea.co.uk/what-is-solar-streets> where, if around 8 people in a community with suitable roof spaces want to install PV panels they can purchase discounted PVs & installation from IDDEA. This scheme is already successful in Frome, Wells and Glastonbury and is being endorsed by the district and town councils which helps to increase uptake by homeowners. Each installation also generates £50 donation to a local environment fund.

The team will create a new South Somerset Green Directory (like the recent food directory for Covid19) of other renewable energy, insulation solutions, EV charging etc. installers and associated businesses plus info on grants, funding etc. which can help people make the choices to act on their climate and ecological footprint. The directory would be held online and updated by the environment team as new opportunities emerge.

### Trees and Woodland

Last winter's Great Parish Tree Giveaway saw 61 parishes plant 3,050 trees across South Somerset. The scheme was well received and we have learnt from last year and taken on board suggestions and comments. A scheme for this year will be



## **South Somerset District Council**

launched in October, providing to groups and parishes a way to carry out active improvements to their area.

Last winter the countryside team planted 1,300 trees at Ham Hill, Ninesprings and Chard Reservoir with further plantings completed by the Environment Services team. Yeovil Recreation Centre planted 2,600 trees in a significant scheme to try and improve the drainage on site but also enhance the aesthetics of the site. In total 4,000 trees were planted across our own estate last winter.

Looking forward to this winter, three submissions were made to the Urban Tree Challenge on the 30<sup>th</sup> June. Overall the submissions included a potential 1,300 trees across four locations; from natural riverside open spaces to more formal parks. So far we have received confirmation that Martock's scheme has been successful and are awaiting the outcomes on the other two (Chard – Redstart Park and Mitchell Gardens and Yeovil – Arnewood Gardens).

In the coming winter months, a new planting area will be created at the bottom of Wyndham Hill in Yeovil; funded by the Postcode Local Trust and delivered in partnership with the Friends of Yeovil Country Park.

### **Open Spaces Strategy**

As identified in the Environment Strategy South Somerset needs an Open Spaces Strategy to coordinate and align the authorities thinking about the open spaces it owns and manages and to provide aspirational thinking around the future needs of our district.

The strategy is in draft format and has been developed around three outcomes; providing a resilient, healthy and liveable South Somerset.

Our draft vision is that by 2030 South Somerset will be recognised for the high quality and accessibility of its excellent open spaces, championing biodiversity and community resilience promoting economic prosperity and healthy lifestyles.

The draft strategy is currently being checked by officers from the Community of Practice and after input from the Strategy and Commissioning team will be with Members for comment later this autumn.

### **Joint Working**

To progress our ambitions for Nature Recovery Networks and tree planting the team have been engaging with a wide range of partners to help develop a more resilient district against the impacts of climate change and species decline. Organisations and



## **South Somerset** District Council

groups include Re-imagining the Levels, Somerset Wildlife Trust, the Local Nature Partnership, Somerset County Council and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty teams. Everyone is delivering great work, but collaboration to create a more cohesive and connected plan is essential.

We are also engaging with partners around the built environment, including the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) in particular where we are working to look at energy efficiency measures and addressing fuel poverty in our communities.