

‘Towards a Climate Resilient Somerset’ – Somerset’s Climate Emergency Strategy

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Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek District Executive Committee approval of the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy - “Towards a Climate Resilient Somerset” and to agree its progress to Full Council for adoption.

Forward Plan

2. This report appeared on the District Executive Forward Plan with an anticipated Committee date of 5th November 2020.

Public Interest

3. In accordance with the motion passed to declare a Climate Emergency by South Somerset District Council in 2019, and similar motions declared or recognised by the three other District Councils and Somerset County Council, this Strategy has been developed in order to identify ways in which Somerset can achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 and to make the county resilient to the inevitable effects of Climate Change in the longer term.
4. The Strategy sets out the current context via an evidence base, outlines the goals and outcomes that we want to achieve and provides an initial, high-level action plan to deliver the activities required to achieve those aims.
5. The Strategy has been co-produced by SCC and the four District Councils along with a wide range of academic, sectoral and subject experts and partner organisations. It is planned that this Strategy will be adopted by SCC and the four District Councils of Somerset before the end of 2020 and will inform policy and funding decisions over the coming years.

Recommendations

6. That District Executive approves



- i. The Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy – “Towards a Climate Resilient Somerset” and
- ii. Its progress to Full Council for adoption.

Background

7. In 2019, the five Somerset Local Authorities each recognised or declared a ‘Climate Emergency’ and agreed to collaborate in producing a joint Climate Emergency Strategy. Whilst each declaration is slightly different, all aspire to achieving carbon neutrality in their own operations and to work towards achieving this across the geography of their administrative area. Given the alignment of the declarations, it was agreed that a cross-authority Strategy be developed to identify ways in which the county of Somerset can become ‘Carbon Neutral’ by 2030.
8. Experts from the field of academia, industry, climate activism and subject matter experts from across the Somerset Local Authorities worked together to develop the scope of a high-level Framework document. It described how we planned to approach this work and identified the key areas of focus and to help members of the public understand the scale of the challenge set by the ambitious targets within the ‘Climate Emergency’ and to inform the resulting Strategy and local Action Plans
9. The Framework document identified a number of key themes and proposed actions and an initial planned direction of travel for the Strategy. It recommended the work would be carried out through a number of discreet yet interdependent work streams made up of local authority and industry experts. The role of these work streams would be to understand the international, national and local context and impacts of Climate Change and to begin to focus, on the challenges ahead, the Outcomes we would need to achieve and to identify specific actions and activities to deliver the Strategy’s Goals and Objectives.

Strategy Development

Consultation

10. Somerset Climate Action Network (SCAN) was commissioned to support a comprehensive public consultation on the Framework document during January and February 2020. The public feedback was overwhelmingly positive on the direction of travel proposed and the emerging foci for the Strategy. The consultation report noted overwhelming public agreement with the majority of actions being proposed receiving a 90%-plus approval rating as being a ‘priority’ or ‘major priority’, in the public view.
11. Of the 33 proposed actions the least popular was still regarded as a ‘priority’ or ‘major priority’ by 76% of respondents.
12. The overwhelming message was that the Somerset adults and young people who took part in the consultation wanted the Councils to take Climate Change action as soon as possible, provided it was proven to be effective, communicated and, where possible, taken forward in collaboration with local communities.

13. Further consultation was undertaken with the business community of Somerset; an event held at Taunton Rugby Club in January 2020 was attended by over 100 delegates from businesses across Somerset who were invited to feedback their priorities regarding climate change, the barriers to implementing initiatives and to share best practice.
14. Another event hosted by the South West Councils and sponsored by WSP Consulting was also successfully held earlier in February 2020 providing further insight and expertise to leading edge thoughts on tackling Climate Change.
15. Due to the overwhelmingly positive feedback on the Framework document and the express wish of the public for the Strategy to be completed and implemented as soon as possible, the decision was taken to revise the original plans and dispense with the requirement for a second consultation on the final draft Strategy document itself.
 - a. Following the consultation, work began on shaping the Strategy based on the feedback received and analysis of the changes required for Somerset to become carbon neutral and increase our resilience to the risks posed by Climate Change at a local level.
 - b. To utilise the knowledge available within the County, a wide range of partners with sector expertise were invited to inform and lead several work streams within the Strategy along with input and review from a range of key organisations with Climate Change and sustainability sector intelligence and expertise. To ensure the approach taken was on a sound scientific basis further guidance was also taken from academics at Exeter University and experts from Somerset Climate Action Network (SCAN).
 - c. A joint, cross-authority Scrutiny Task & Finish (T&F) Group comprising nominated members from each of the 5 Local Authorities was set up in 2019 to oversee development of the Strategy and to provide guidance to the Strategic Management Group of Officers responsible for bringing the Strategy together. The T&F Group has met on six occasions between September 2019 and September 2020. These meetings have included a number of work stream-based breakout sessions, the consideration of work stream progress reports and provided an opportunity for Members to discuss and give advice and support on:
 - the scope of the Strategy
 - the guiding principles to guide the work and direction of travel
 - the Somerset Climate Emergency Framework document and consultation process
 - the Goals and Outcomes
 - the draft Somerset-wide Strategy
 - d. With support and guidance from a range of organisations and individuals with sector knowledge, the Strategy was developed to:

- i. Provide an evidence base, setting out how our climate is changing and the challenges and opportunities we face.
- ii. Provide the beginnings of a policy framework, outlining our goals and ambitions for tackling Climate Change here in Somerset, and
- iii. Inform a high-level action plan, setting out the critical actions needed to deliver our goals, enabling us all to adapt and thrive in the future.

Strategy Focus

16. The Climate Emergency Strategy for Somerset is built around 3 goals:

Goal 1: To decarbonise Local Authorities, the wider public sector estates and reduce our carbon footprint

Goal 2: To work towards making Somerset a Carbon Neutral County by 2030

Goal 3: To have a Somerset which is prepared for, and resilient to, the impacts of Climate Change

17. Work was undertaken to understand where Somerset's carbon emissions are generated, and to begin to understand our wider carbon consumption, identifying nine sectors which are impacted by Climate Change and have a major impact upon our ambition to become a carbon neutral County by 2030.

18. These nine sectors are:

1. The **Energy** we use, the emissions produced from its use and the types of energy we will look to harness in future
2. Our **Transport** networks, when and where we travel, and the means we choose to make these journeys
3. The **Built Environment** - where and how we live and work, the types of homes we live in, our commercial and industrial buildings and what we want for buildings in the future
4. Our local economy, specifically our **Business, Industry and Supply Chains**
5. Our **Natural Environment** - how we can protect it and utilise it to reduce the harmful impacts of Climate Change
6. Our **Farming and Food** - what, where and how we produce our food and crops, vital to the rural economy of Somerset
7. Our **Water** resources - how they are managed to minimise the impacts of flooding and drought on our residents, buildings and landscapes
8. The management of our **Waste and Resources**

9. How we **Communicate** and Engage with Somerset's citizens to enable us all to make life choices which reduce our impact on the environment locally, nationally and globally

19. Specialists from the Local Authorities and partner organisations led work on each of the nine themes or sectors, analysing and prioritising current and future issues, considering local and UK Government policy implications, analysing opportunities and challenges each would face in achieving our Goals and identifying a series of actions needed to minimise emissions and build resilience within each area of work.
 - a. The Strategy outlines a wide range of objectives and outcomes that each sector will need to deliver in order to cut emissions and to adapt and build our County's resilience to the adverse impacts of Climate Change in the immediate, medium and longer term.
 - b. A summary of the opportunities and benefits and barriers and challenges in each of the sectors are documented within the main body of the Strategy, with more detailed analysis within respective sectoral documents that are appended to the main Full Strategy document.
 - c. Whilst the majority of the technical detail is contained within the appendices, the Strategy is still a complex and lengthy document. In order to ensure accessibility to the general public a much shorter 'Summary' Strategy Document has also been developed. This Summary document focuses more on the issues of climate change, what it will mean for Somerset and what we are going to do about it. It also focusses on some suggestions on how residents can get involved and what they can do to address some of the issues.

Action Plan

20. An initial high-level Action Plan has been created setting out a list of actions that have been identified which will be required to start us on the journey to carbon neutrality.
21. Where known, these actions have been costed, key lead organisations identified and timescales for delivery set. Other actions require further work to understand in more detail the quantum of the task ahead and to define associated costs. In some areas more detailed feasibility studies are required and project funding is still to be identified. The Action Plan is a 'live' document which will be reviewed and updated regularly to monitor progress, new technologies and innovations, national and local policy, legislative change, and funding streams as they become available or cease.
22. Projects within the strategic Action Plan will be prioritised through an assessment of:
 - Strategic fit with the Goals of the Strategy



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- Activities which can be taken forward quickly
 - Scale of impact
 - Deliverability risk
 - Timescales to completion
 - Resources and capacity to deliver
 - Funding required and available to initiate and enable the activity
 - Costs of projects against return on investment (in terms of carbon saved and progress towards achieving our agreed goals and outcomes);
 - Benefit to Somerset and
 - Sustainability.
23. The ability of the Somerset authorities to deliver on these actions is entirely dependent on our ability to:
- Secure and maintain partnership buy-in and ownership of the Somerset-wide Strategy;
 - Engage all segments of our Community in contributing; and
 - Lobby for, and secure Government support, national policy change, funding and resources.
24. Discussions are ongoing regarding the future governance and funding arrangements for the actions to be delivered by the five Local Authorities.

Delivery

25. The Strategy identifies that it will be essential to prioritise actions and project delivery. It proposes further work to develop a Marginal Abatement Cost Curve (MACC) tool (which essentially illustrates the cost effectiveness of different actions by presenting their cost per tonne of CO₂ saved and the total amount of CO₂ that could be saved). MACC assessments are a powerful tool for understanding the best place to put funding in order to deliver carbon savings. It is likely that MACC analysis will influence future iterations of the Action Plan as well as the evolving strategic action plan for the Somerset-wide Strategy.
26. The Strategy highlights a number of issues where a pan-Somerset, wider than single authority or multi-agency approach, is required or would otherwise be beneficial. The strategy also notes that as local authorities we have limited reach in terms of our powers and influence. For this reason, the engagement and commitment of every organisation, business, community and resident of Somerset is required. The Somerset-wide Strategy sets out that we will collectively work with communities, communicate effectively with them, and lobby Government to enable this.
27. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be developed at a programme level to monitor actions and review progress. Progress will subsequently be reviewed and reported to each local authority annually.



28. The Strategy recognises the need to set up strong governance processes to ensure delivery of the actions identified. It states that a steering group, committee or task-force combining Officers and Members from across the Local Authorities and representatives from key organisations, will be needed to oversee the delivery of these actions. They will also advise on future courses of action, agree funding priorities and help communicate the successes and challenges that Somerset faces as we aim for a carbon neutral County by 2030.
29. Exmoor National Park Authority is supportive of the Strategy and is working with relevant thematic groups and partners to identify where they can work together on actions to deliver the shared ambitions of their climate response.

Views of the Joint Scrutiny Task & Finish Group/Portfolio Holders and approval process

30. As noted earlier, a Joint Scrutiny Task & Finish (T&F) Group was set up in 2019 to oversee development of the Somerset-wide Strategy.
31. The draft Somerset-wide Strategy was first presented to the T&F group at a meeting on 13th August 2020 and subsequently revised to take account of comments made by the group and officers. Subsequently the final draft document has been discussed again with the T&F members and Portfolio Holders on 21 September 2020.
32. The Task & Finish Group have produced a joint, cross authority statement declaring their support for the Strategy.

“The Climate Emergency Scrutiny Task and Finish Group gave support, guidance and advice to the cross-Local Authority group of Officers who prepared this Climate Emergency Strategy and its associated Action Plans. The Strategy outlines Somerset’s first steps towards meeting the urgent challenges which the Climate Emergency and Climate Change present.

What is being considered today is the result of a year’s worth of research, analysis, consultation and debate, all of which has informed and enabled the writing of this evidence-based Strategy. Officers from all 5 Authorities worked in collaboration with a host of partner organisations, sector experts and local activists, drawing on their expertise, every one passionate about tackling the effects of the Climate Emergency.

The Strategy is robust and ambitious. While individual Members of the Task and Finish Group may support elements of the Strategy and Action Plan to differing degrees, we all agree that the time for Somerset to take action to minimise our environmental impact is now.

This is a Strategy for the whole of Somerset, not just our 5 Local Authorities. It will take the efforts of every community, business, adult and child in Somerset to commit to the aims of the Strategy if we are to make swift progress towards carbon neutrality, and aid Somerset’s resilience to the impacts of the Climate Emergency.



The analysis of the feedback from our comprehensive consultations over the last year has revealed overwhelming support for the actions and approach being proposed in the Strategy, coupled with a message, that came through loud and clear, that we as local authorities and community leaders must start taking action on climate change as soon as possible, provided that it is effective, communicated and, where possible, done in collaboration with local communities. The adoption of this Strategy would be an important step in the enabling of the coordinated necessary actions that we must all be taking.

As the foreword to the Strategy says, this is the start of the journey. We won't have included everything that we need to do, or got everything right first time. Policies will change and our understanding of the challenges ahead will increase. We don't have all the answers yet, but we are committed to taking the necessary actions.

The Task and Finish Group are proud to be associated with this Strategy and recommend to this Committee that it progresses to Full Council for adoption”.

33. In addition the five council Portfolio Holders have also issued a joint statement as follows

“The 5 Cabinet Members responsible for Climate Change are delighted to recommend to you the Climate Change Strategy ‘Towards a Climate Resilient Somerset’.

This is a very important piece of work which we are proud to be associated with which starts us on our journey to making this county resilient to the impacts of Climate Change.

We have liaised closely with the Task and Finish Group and Officers from the Local Authorities across the county who have all worked extremely hard to develop this Strategy and to give us what we feel is an ambitious but deliverable route map for the way forward.

We would ask that this Full Council formally adopts this Strategy so implementation on the ground can commence as soon as possible.

34. In a separate meeting on 25th September 2020, the Leaders and Chief Executives Group approved for the Strategy to be taken through the relevant governance meetings.
35. As a result, the Strategy is now being taken through each of the Somerset Councils' democratic pathways along the following timescales.
36. The intention is for the Somerset-wide Strategy to have been adopted by each of the Councils by the end of-November 2020.



	SW&T	SDC	MDC	SSDC	SCC
Scrutiny	14 th Oct	16 th Nov	19 th Oct	3 rd Nov	14 th Oct
Executive / Cabinet	20 th Oct	25 th Nov	2 nd Nov	5 th Nov	9 th Nov
Full Council	26 th Oct	25 th Nov	9 th Nov	19 th Nov	18 th Nov

Conclusion

37. The Strategy has been produced jointly by the Somerset local authorities as a joint strategic response to each Council's Climate Emergency Declaration. It sets three strategic goals, provides the strategic context, evidence and exploration of issues associated with delivery against those goals and identifies the outcomes needed to work towards carbon neutrality as well as a strategic action plan.
38. The Strategy is recommended for adoption by the Council as a corporate strategy to guide project development and delivery and inform local policy, budget setting processes and as a means to engaging with our communities, businesses and partners on how we are working towards our carbon neutrality target.
39. The Council is already committed to working towards carbon neutrality for the Council and the county as a whole by 2030. How we get there and when carbon neutrality can actually be achieved by depends on the scale and pace of radical action. Members should be under no illusions that meeting the target of carbon neutrality by 2030 will be extremely difficult and we have to be cognisant that it relies heavily on action beyond our own control, but it is important that we do everything we can within our power to work towards achieving it.
40. We must be clear, that the 2030 target we committed to working towards through our Climate Emergency Declaration is not informed by detailed evidence of what can be achieved locally. Without significant changes in wider society and national Government regulation, policy, funding and action, (things beyond our immediate control) achieving this target will be near impossible.
41. At this stage, the carbon impact of delivering the actions contained within the Action Plan have not been fully quantified. This is a conscious decision to focus on implementation of the plan and delivery of the actions within it. This means that we cannot yet identify the specific pathway that all of the actions contained within the plan would result in. Despite this, we know that the actions being proposed are based on assessment of the issues, opportunities and what the Committee on Climate Change and others deem to be necessary to reach carbon neutrality, and we are frontloading delivery of these actions wherever possible so that we can do everything within our sphere of influence to push us towards the Paris-aligned trajectory and compliance with our cumulative CO2 budgets.

Financial Implications



- 42. High level assumptions of potential financial costs has been factored into preparation of the Action Plan, however more detailed work is required to understand specific costs of individual actions, and detailed costs are not yet known for every action that has been identified.
- 43. Whilst the delivery of every identified action would clearly have significant financial implications, the commitment to working towards carbon neutrality has already been made through the Climate Emergency Declaration. A range of actions have been identified that will require funding to progress and each is to be considered on its own merit and with an appropriate business case.
- 44. Priority actions will be considered by the service planning and, where appropriate, the budget setting process over the coming months. Annual reviews of the Action Plan are intended to be aligned to budget setting processes. Discussions are ongoing regarding the future governance and funding arrangements for the actions to be delivered.

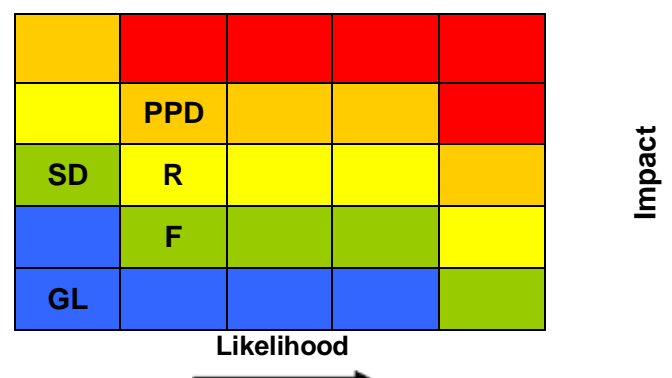
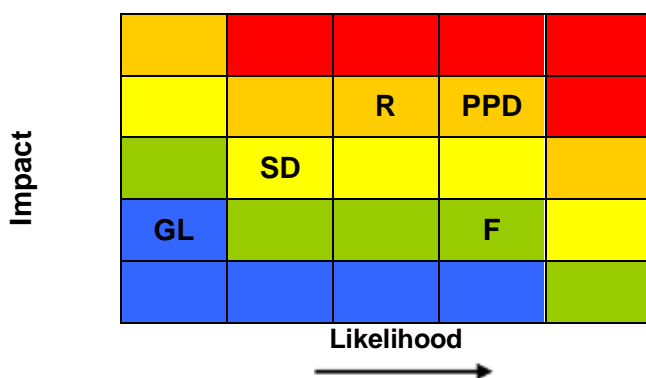
Legal implications and details of Statutory Powers

- 45. There are no direct detailed legal implications associated with the report or the Somerset-wide Strategy. Individual actions may have legal implications associated with their delivery, though at this stage it is not possible to identify exactly what these might be. Accordingly, these will need to be considered in more detail as projects are developed. The strategy and plan are not produced in pursuit of formal statutory requirements, therefore there are no mandatory regulatory or legislative legal requirements to comply with which apply to their production, scope or publication.

Risk Matrix

Risk Profile before officer recommendations

Risk Profile after officer recommendations



Key

Categories	Colours (for further detail please refer to Risk management strategy)
Delivery of Services – SD	Catastrophic impact and likelihood certain
Health and Safety - HS	



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Governance and Legal – GL
Financial - F
Project/Programme Delivery - PPD
Reputation - R
SC - Staffing and Capacity

Significant impact and likelihood probable
Moderate impact and likelihood possible
Limited impact and likelihood unlikely
Minimal impact and likelihood remote

Council Plan Implications

46. Approval of the Climate Emergency Strategy will help the Council deliver the Council Plan Environment theme and associated areas of focus.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

47. The Strategy is intended to directly lead to carbon reductions and improved resilience of our Council and communities to the projected impacts of climate change.

Equality and Diversity Implications

48. A single Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been produced to accompany the Action Plan. Officers with an overview of the Equalities function, who have experience of identifying impacts on those with protected characteristics have been consulted for this initial identification of potential impacts.

49. The assessment identifies at a high level where there is potential for negative, neutral and positive outcomes as a result of the actions identified depending on the detail of actions as projects develop. Generally, actions were expected to have broadly positive outcomes, but would require further assessment and wider external consultation in relation to specific delivery plans for some of the actions within the Action Plan where an individual or group would see or experience a direct physical change as a result of an action.

The EIA is attached at Appendix 1

Privacy Impact Assessment

50. No privacy impacts are anticipated as consequence of this report.

Background Papers

51. For sight of individual background papers, including the detailed appendices, please go to: www.somerset.gov.uk/climate-emergency