



South Somerset  
District Council



Committed to be  
Carbon Neutral by  
2030

# GET SuSSed

Sustainable South Somerset Education

Issue no.24 August 2022

## *Hello from Cllr Sarah Dyke, Environment Portfolio Holder,*

I hope you have all been keeping safe in the recent extreme heat as we near the end of summer- hasn't that gone by fast! It's fantastic to see some much needed rain and finally some cooler weather after the record breaking temperatures we have experienced recently.

Earlier this month our Chief Executive, Jane Portman, met with our Environment and Countryside teams from across all three of our Country Park sites for a 'back to the floor' chat about all the amazing work these teams do! You can find out more about our incredible sites at our [Visit South Somerset website](#).

Scroll down to read about all the exciting projects and news for this month, plus some exciting events and opportunities that are coming up!

*Best eco wishes from Sarah x*



## SSDC Green News



### **Green Flag Award Scheme- SSDC introductory webinar for interested parishes, towns and communities!**

SSDC has recently been awarded the Green Flag Award for the 17<sup>th</sup> consecutive year at our Chard Reservoir, Ham Hill and Yeovil Country Park sites. The award scheme helps recognise well managed parks and green spaces across the UK.

But did you know that any green space that is freely accessible to the public and has a site-specific management plan is eligible for a Green Flag Award? One example here in South Somerset is Ash Millennium Wood, which recently received the Green Flag Community Award. Congratulations to Ash Parish Council, Environment Champion Mick Wooden and all the other volunteers in managing this site for nature!

If you would like to find out more about applying for the Green Flag scheme, we will be hosting a webinar on the **12 October** for any interested parishes, towns or communities that have parks or spaces which they may like to enter for an award. We will explain the system, provide information on the judging criteria, as well as a brief overview of how it all works behind the scenes. The next Green Flag application deadline is 14 Feb, so what are you waiting for? **See the event section below for more details.**

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## South Somerset parks and spaces Consultation

We are looking for YOUR thoughts on our wonderful open spaces here in South Somerset. We are lucky enough to have access to over 50 SSSDC owned parks and greenspaces across the district!



During the coronavirus pandemic these spaces were vital to everyone living and working within South Somerset, not just for exercise and relaxation, but also for people's mental wellbeing.

Our Environmental & Countryside Services Team have strived to keep green spaces well maintained and accessible, but we need your help! We want to hear from our residents about how you think our services are performing, how your use of open spaces has changed and what improvements you would like to see in the future. **Please fill out the survey [here](#) to have your say before Monday 17 October.**



## Celebration of our volunteers

Our Countryside team have been working hard this summer delivering a busy and diverse range of public events. In fact, since 2019, when we launched our Environment Strategy, our teams have organised over 162 events with over 10,000 participants!

We also host weekly volunteering events at our Country Parks, including specialist sessions to support physical and mental health needs, as well as work experience placements. It's a great way to get outside, and tasks range from wildlife recording through to habitat management

amongst other things. We are supported by around 2,000 volunteering days per year, equivalent to an additional 8 full time rangers!

To say thanks, our volunteers recently attended the annual 'away day trip', our small way of saying thanks for all of their hard work. We visited Weymouth with a guided bird walk around Lodmoor RSPB reserve followed by a fish and chip lunch. This is about half of the volunteers that attend our weekly volunteering sessions across all three sites!

If you'd like more information on either our events or opportunities to volunteer, click [here](#).

## HVO fuel alternative trial

Transport and vehicle use at SSDC is one of the biggest contributors to the Council's carbon emissions highlighted in our Carbon Calculator. Our long-term aim is to switch our vehicle fleet to all electric vehicles but currently there isn't the availability of vehicle types we need to deliver our work, so in the interim we plan to trial a lower emission vehicle fuel to replace diesel.



Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) is made from waste vegetable oils, which are processed to create a hydrocarbon with similar properties to diesel. Research suggests that HVO will reduce green house gas emissions by 90% if switching from fossil fuel diesel, which will help significantly reduce the Council's carbon emission output.

An additional benefit of using HVO is it uses a waste product that is often difficult to divert from general waste and can contaminate water and land if disposed of incorrectly.

HVO still emits other forms of green house gases (though substantially less than fossil fuel diesel), so would act as a temporary transition solution for all of our diesel engine vehicles. Our aim is to be carbon neutral by 2030, therefore all SSDC vehicles will need to be electric by this point. Several Councils and local businesses are already converting to HVO to help bring down their carbon emissions, so keep an eye out for further updates!

## In the Community



### Tinkers Bubble eco-community tour- Event review

On Saturday 13 August a group of South Somerset Environment Champions (including a SSDC councillor, planning officer, photographer and other interested locals) all went on a trip to visit the

amazing Tinkers Bubble, a zero fossil-fuel, off grid community nestled in the woods near Ham Hill.

The guided tour was lead by resident Alex, who explained the history and practices within the community, and showed us where they grow food organically that best suits the soil, as well as their orchard from which the apples are turned into apple juice and cider to sell locally. The community use bicycles with trailers to transport their produce, removing the need for fossil fuelled vehicles. Their buildings are made from timber sourced from their woodland and any energy they require is sourced from solar panels. The food is cooked on rocket stoves and they have a few cows for milk and meat.

*One attendee said "... I chatted with several of the residents and volunteers and came away hoping that others would be able to form similar communities showing us how we can do without or take less of the resources we take for granted."*

To find out more about Tinkers Bubble and how you can support their fundraiser to fix their wood-powered saw, please visit their website [here](#). We are hoping to arrange another visit so please register your interest by emailing us [here](#) or look out for their next open day in October.



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## Wilder churches initiative

Get to know the wildlife around your local church!

A relatively new partnership between Somerset Wildlife Trust and the Diocese of Bath and Wells has been created and they are looking to support communities to understand what wildlife is present in their local churchyards, and help them find ways to increase the value of these very special sites. The sites are very often species rich with a variety of wildflowers and can act as key habitat within urban/suburban areas.



Join SWT and start the journey to making your local church wilder! Please see details and resources, including a series of online training and guidance, [here](#).

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## Another EV charging station activated in South Somerset!

Another SSDC Car Park now has its Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Station activated. Millbrook Car Park in Castle Cary joins the 3 dual socket EV Charging Stations located outside Chard Leisure Centre, as the newest edition to the South Somerset EV charging programme.

SSDC already has 3 Rapid Charging stations at Wincanton, Ilchester and Ilminster SSDC car parks and next week Bruton's Tolbury Mill Car Park will have their charging station activated, giving residents further accessibility to EV charging points across the district. For a full list of where the 27 EV Charging Stations will be installed in 2022, please [click here](#).

## For the Community

### Somerset Retrofit Accelerator

The Somerset Retrofit Accelerator project is over half way and there's still some ways to engage. You can watch the first Somerset Green Open Homes webinars showcasing four South Somerset homeowners retrofit projects [here](#). There are also **a few places left on the free training for contractors** so if you are or know a Somerset-based contractor interested in getting skilled in retrofit, please [sign up here](#).



Finally, if you would like to **take up one of the last discounted Retrofit plans** for your home to know what needs to be done to make it more energy efficient, healthy and comfortable to live in, please [sign up here](#).

## Parish Environment Champions



### Chilthorne Green Steps

The community of Chilthorne Domer have set up the [Chilthorne Green Steps](#), a local Environmental Action Group, working in partnership with the Parish Council and the local Recreational Trust. The group offers an opportunity for locals who are interested in the environment to get together to discuss ideas and make them happen. Recent projects have included:

- circulating a regular community [environment e-newsletter](#).
- creating a wildflower area on a roadside verge in the village.
- planting a small community apple orchard on an area of grass that was previously mown short but is now allowed to grow long, as well as encouraging an area of unmown grass to flourish on the Recreational field.

- taking part in Somerset Wildlife Trust's **Wilder Churches** initiative, to help protect and increase the wildlife value of the churchyard.
- created community compost bins, which help to deal with the grass, hedge cuttings and dead floral tributes from the churchyard. In addition, the grass is left un-cut in areas to encourage wildflowers and pollinators.
- circulated a pack of wildflower seeds to all houses in the village via the newsletter, whilst also producing DIY bee hotels for every household that requested one.
- the group also have plans for tree-planting projects for the village and surrounding farms, working in collaboration with local landowners.

*"We recommend taking on board everyone's point of view and being flexible, if the community isn't ready for a big change try a small but well managed change!"*



## Environment Events

Check out our [events](#) page on the [South Somerset Environment Website](#) for full details:

**Soils and sustainable farming incentive- Thursday 1 September, 6.30pm-9.30pm (virtual)- FREE**



One of Somerset's less visible but important assets is soil, which helps provide the raw material for both food production and the environment we all enjoy.

Maintaining and improving soils will be a feature of the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELM's) that Defra will be introducing over the next 3 years. 2022 brings the first element of this change with the introduction of grassland and arable soils standards under the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) which is open to all farmers.

This free workshop will cover the requirements of the SFI soil standards, what you already have on farm to help comply with the scheme, how to make assessments and take samples and creating or improving your soil management plan. To sign up to this workshop, [click here](#).



**21 September 2022**

10am to 1pm

Queens College, Taunton

Learn, share, be inspired. Book your place now:  
[www.somerset.gov.uk/summit](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/summit)

**Somerset Business  
Climate Summit 2022-  
Wednesday 21  
September, 9:30am-  
1pm, Taunton**

Join businesses from across Somerset to learn, share and be inspired about reducing the climate impact of our companies – working together using small steps to deliver collective big wins! Hear local firms share impactful case studies as we come together to raise awareness of the opportunities and challenges for businesses as we shift toward a low carbon economy. [Book your space here.](#)

### **Bat Walk- Friday 30 September, 6:30-9pm, South Petherton**

Join Somerset Wildlife Trust's Yeovil & District local group for a bat walk at Frogmary Green Farm, South Petherton.

We will meet and talk about bats, have a bat related activity and then go and find some bats. Waterproof footwear is advisable, as well as torches. Booking is essential, please email [helenhawke@gmail.com](mailto:helenhawke@gmail.com) to reserve your spot.



### **SSDC Green Flag Award Webinar: Knowledge share- 12 October, 7-8pm**

If you would be interested in finding out more about the Green Flag Award scheme, we will be hosting an introductory webinar for any interested parishes, towns or communities that have parks or spaces which they may like to enter for an award. We will explain the system, provide information on the judging criteria, as well as a brief overview of how it all works behind the scenes. Please email [ssdcenvironment@southsomerset.gov.uk](mailto:ssdcenvironment@southsomerset.gov.uk) to reserve a space. The Zoom link to join the webinar can be accessed