



South Somerset
District Council



Committed to be
Carbon Neutral by
2030

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Sustainable South Somerset Education

Issue no.19 March 2022

Hello from the Environment Team

Spring has sprung and how beautiful it is! A time of hope, inspiration and appreciation of nature!

Here at SSDC it has been a productive month, which included meeting Parish Environment Champions at two events – hedge laying lessons at Ham Hill and a visit to Wyke Farms near Bruton to hear about their flagship anaerobic digester and renewable energy plant. We've also produced a video to showcase our environmental achievements since declaring a climate emergency in 2019, created a brand new Community Biodiversity Toolkit and are ready to issue free wildflower seeds to successful applicants of the Parish Wildflower Giveaway. Read on to find out more and hear about grants, future events and more.

Best eco wishes from the SSDC Environment Team x



SSDC Green News



Welcome to the team Tamara

We would like to introduce you to our new team member Tamara McKay. 'Tam' has joined us as our new Environment Communications Officer.

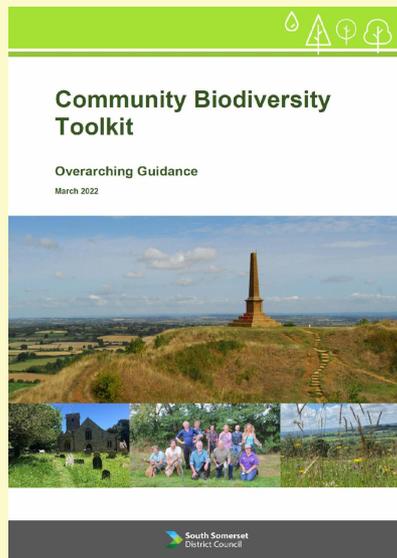
"I have recently graduated from the Arts University Bournemouth with a BA in Creative Events Management, where I focused on marketing, sustainable events and human behaviour.

My role within SSDC will consist of showcasing the incredible work the organisation is undertaking to make South Somerset a more sustainable place to live. This includes communicating new strategies with residents of the area through social media, press releases and our environment

website. I look forward to helping drive change and improving public understanding of sustainable behaviours."

SSDC Environment Achievements

We've been creating the new 2022-2023 environment action plan. It's given us the opportunity to reflect on what's already been achieved to date. Here are some of the highlights – there were too many to showcase them all, but it provides a snapshot of some of the great work delivered so far. Thanks for all your involvement and support.



Community Biodiversity Pack

Welcome to the South Somerset Community Biodiversity Pack. Our new Toolkit has been developed to allow our communities to take the lead in preserving and restoring biodiversity in their community!

The toolkit is designed for use by community groups, local landowners, Parish and Town Councils, schools and youth groups and it provides a structure for how local communities can better understand what they already have in terms of biodiversity, as well as how to plan for developing greater

biodiversity in the future. The Toolkit also provides a series of practical tips for how you can manage your land for biodiversity.

Within the pack you can see both the obligations to protect biodiversity and also the opportunities available to us all, in terms of existing projects and good practice carried out locally. There is so much great work being delivered across South Somerset that this also gives us the opportunity to showcase some of those case studies and celebrate progress to date. Our thanks to all the contributors!

We hope that you find the pack useful, and feel free to share this guide more widely within your communities.

[Click here to download the pack](#), and if you have any questions contact us via SSDCEnvironment@southsomerset.gov.uk

Urban Tree Challenge to local landowners

We believe our private landowners across South Somerset could really progress urban area's access to trees and the benefits they provide, including cleaner air, reduced flooding risk and increased biodiversity. [The Urban Tree Challenge Fund](#) (UTCF) allows anyone with full management of their land to apply for a minimum of £10,000, supporting tree planting projects which lie within the 'Urban' mapping which can be checked [here](#), using the 'UTCF Trees Close to People' layer. 50% of the costing must be match funded, but these costs can be matched using labour in addition to money. The UTCF is now open for new applications until **midnight on 31 May 2022**. If you are interested in this fund please contact Joshua.bennett@southsomerset.gov.uk.

Expanding urban forests: The Urban Tree Challenge Fund

Planting trees for people in our towns and cities



New water refill point comes to Yeovil

Local people and visitors to Yeovil can now top up with tap water for free, thanks to a new Wessex Water refill point.

To coincide with UK Nutrition and Hydration Week (14 to 20 March), the water company has switched on its new water refill station in Middle Street. It will be cleaned, maintained and inspected regularly to ensure the highest standards of hygiene.

Wessex Water is working with councils and businesses across its supply region to install refill units in public spaces, encouraging people to drink more tap water and avoid using single-use plastic bottles. You can find other refill point locations [here](#).

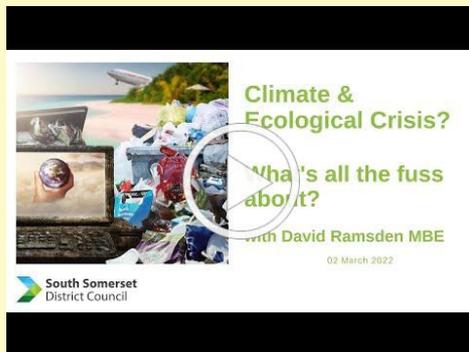
Thermal Imaging Camera Trial comes to an end

Thank you to all the parishes who took up this trial opportunity, which has now come to the end. 14 Parishes have trialled the thermal imaging cameras in their communities. We will soon be sending out a questionnaire survey to those who trialled the cameras to find out their experiences and if their use has helped homeowners identify where their homes could benefit from improved



insulation and draught-proofing, signposting them to support and potential grants to implement retrofit improvements. Further energy saving tips can be found [here](#).

Parish Environment Champions



What's all the fuss about?

We were thrilled to welcome David Ramsden MBE to a recent Parish environment Champions webinar where he delivered his inspiring "Climate & Ecological Crisis - What's all the fuss about". We implore everyone to watch it!

Parish Environment Champions can work together to make a difference

A reminder that we are looking to expand our Parish Environment Champion network! Parishes can have more than one environment champion so if you are unsure about committing, why not team up with someone else in your area?



Parish Environment Champions can make a difference together!

Our Environment Champion network is a growing group of local residents, passionate about the environment, who are willing to volunteer their time to share best practice and support each other to deliver local eco projects in their community. Volunteers act as the 'eyes and ears' in their local areas as well as acting as a pathway for sharing initiatives such as our Great Parish Wildflower Giveaway!

For more information of how to get involved and to see a list of where our Champions are currently located [click here](#).



Wyke Farms Sustainable Energy Visitor Centre Tour

27 members of our Parish Environment Champions and local businesses joined us on a tour around Wyke Farms flagship sustainable energy visitor centre and anaerobic digester plant near Bruton.

Our aim was to share knowledge of the sustainability and energy efficiency measures that Wyke Farms are implementing as part of their journey to carbon neutrality. Here's what we learnt:

- Wyke are one of the UK's largest independent producers of green biogas, generating enough to be self-sufficient; additional gas is then sold back into the grid to power local homes;
- The system links into their manufacturing operations through a combined heat and power unit;
- They generate the majority of their own electricity from solar PV;
- Produce and sell natural fertilisers for local farms using waste effluent from the digestate;
- Recover up to 90% of their water usage from operations; and
- Have integrated a *Green Business Strategy* supporting their suppliers financially to be more sustainable;
- The first cheese producer to receive a carbon neutral accreditation for one of their cheeses *Ivy's reserve vintage cheddar!*

"The key is to be a progressive business that doesn't stand still, to continue to challenge ourselves to find more sustainable ways to operate to enable us to farm and run a business for generations to come." Richard Clothier, CEO.

It wasn't all business however; we ended the session with a cheese tasting session afterwards. Yum!

You can watch an extract of Richard Clothier's presentation from the Circular Economy seminar October 2020 [here](#). Just click play.



Hedge laying at Ham Hill

We had a great day learning from Paul, our Ham Hill Country Park Ranger, how to hedge lay and why specifically we learnt the Midlands-style (the most common). This included how to sharpen a billhook, checking for wildlife (especially sleeping

dormice), clearing and preparing a hedge and then the act of laying.

7 champions attended the day, all leaving with new found confidence that they can go into their communities or land and begin their hedge laying journeys! We will run this event again when the season restarts October – March to ensure we don't bother any nesting birds!

You can watch this video to learn more about the Midlands-style of hedge laying.



South Petherton Tree and Wildlife Group (TWiG)

Environment Champion, Kath Brace, alongside the South Petherton Tree and Wildlife Group (TWiG), has successfully planted up 2 new stretches of hedgerow in the parish. Funding for the project was

obtained from the Parish Council as well as a grant from the Tree Council's [Community Hedge Fund](#).

TWiG is a Parish Council led working group and is well supported by both councillors and local residents. Their next project is to plant more hedge in the village and to create a wildflower meadow on an acre of parish council owned land next to the allotments in the village. Great work!

To read about other local case-studies, visit the Community Projects page of our website [here](#).

Future Environment Champion Events

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

6 April 2022 - South Somerset Rivers: Restoration and Climate Resilience

Join us for our next SSSC Environment webinar to hear about our local rivers and some of the adaptations and solutions required to help provide climate resilience for our communities.

We will hear from the Yeovil Rivers Community Trust (YRCT) on river restoration, Langport Town Council and the Somerset Rivers Authority on their flood warden scheme, and Phil Brewin on the challenges that climate change pose to the spread of invasive species! The session is free to attend. An invitation will be sent out; if you are not part of the Environment Champion network and would like to join this webinar, [please get in touch](#).





30 April 2022 - River Restoration and Channel Management (10.30-12.30)

Following on from our River's webinar, join us for an in-person walk at Dodham Brook, Yeovil Country Park and hear from our Yeovil Rivers Community Trust (YRCT) representative about the work they have been undertaking.

We will also have a number of other guest speakers. Interested? Get in touch [here](#).

In the Community

Somerset Climate Action Network's Insulating Somerset webinar

Insulating our homes better is not only key to managing rising fuel prices and temperature changes, it is also crucial to helping us reach net zero carbon emissions.

Getting a retrofit assessment done by a qualified assessor will ensure that when you make the necessary changes, you can do them with the confidence that you will not be causing any other issues, such as damp and mould, which can occur if the measures aren't done to the correct standards.

To find out more you can watch [Somerset CAN's](#) webinar, however please be aware that there was a glitch in the recording so only the second half is provided.



The Somerset Retrofit Accelerator project is offering 50 discounted retrofit assessments and plans are available to householder in Somerset who wish to share their retrofit journey with others – to apply click [here](#).

If you have already made energy efficiency changes to your property you can share your experiences with others through a series of online open home events. Please click [here](#) to sign up!