

Climate Change Budget Information

Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) declared a Climate Emergency in February 2019 and reinforced its commitment by appointing a Portfolio Holder for Climate Change. The Council is working towards achieving carbon neutrality and climate resilience by 2030. It has also declared its authority boundaries as a fracking free zone.

There are lots of projects in the pipeline of which we have included £75K in the 2020/2021 budget to move these forward, on top of the £25K from the 2019/2020 budget.

As the Climate emergency is being embedded into all that we do, there are many projects that are taking shape. We are proposing to spend this year alone, in excess of **£10m** on infrastructure projects including:

- £6m for flood alleviation and mitigation schemes, funded through a combination of New Homes Bonus (NHB), Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and S106 contributions
- £1.5m contribution to J25 of the M5 improvements and potentially another £1m towards Toneway improvements, which will reduce congestion, ease traffic flow, reduce emissions and improve air quality
- £0.5m match funding support to Housing Infrastructure Fund bid to provide rapid bus link
- £1.5m contribution to cycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements encouraging better health and wellbeing as well as alternatives to other transport modes
- £2m contribution to public transport infrastructure improvements funded by CIL

Major Improvement Projects:

- Planned investment in Firepool – Members have seen the design concepts with an extra £8m+ included in indicative costings to address environmental factors
- £45m regeneration in North Taunton replacing poor performing housing stock with new, energy efficient properties
- Housing stock – investing £6m plus each year on major works and improvements to maintain decent homes standards. This includes significant investment in things like replacement of doors, windows that will improve thermal efficiency and help reduce fuel poverty
- The Coal Orchard project will have more town centre living accommodation with less parking, encouraging reduction in car usage and more footfall in town centre
- Garden Town – The Garden Town Vision was specifically bolstered to refer to the climate emergency and ambition to reach carbon neutrality. The TGT Design Charter & Checklist set out what we expect from new development in relation to sustainability and environmental standards, within the context of existing planning policies. The district-wide Design Guide builds on this to spread these expectations to the district as a whole.

Reducing the Council's Carbon Footprint:

- We plan to switch to a renewable energy provider for Council buildings as soon as possible resulting in a minimal additional energy cost
- Taunton Swimming Pool, Blackbrook Swimming Pool and Blackbrook Tennis centre have all had solar PV installations
- Deane House was refitted in 2018/19 with significantly improved energy efficiency through new Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning and solar PV installation
- Opportunities are being explored for the Council vehicle fleet to be replaced with Electric Vehicles when new fleet is acquired being mindful of infrastructure limitations and ensuring that the business case stacks up financially
- Use of technology by officers and members means that we have reduced paper use massively by no longer printing 1000s of pages of committee papers that quickly become waste material

What we have already achieved:

- Using council tax powers together with other Somerset councils to help generate £2.8m per year for the Somerset Rivers Authority to progress the countywide 20-Year flood action plan
- Investment of £1.2m in variable messaging and pay on exit facilities in car parks, which helps direct traffic to park and ride and available off street parking, all aimed at reducing congestion and thus emissions as well as providing a better service for customers
- Installation of solar PV panels on 247 council houses in 2015/16 at a cost of around £1.5m. The panels now provide renewable electricity, and generate an income for the Council through Feed in Tariff receipts. Initial projections suggest that the panels might save in the region of 11,015 tonnes of carbon over a 20 year period
- In 2016, through Wellington Warmer Homes we retrofitted 111 non-traditional homes in Wellington (plus 20 further non-traditional homes in Taunton at no extra cost) bringing them up from Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings of E/F up to C. Total project cost £1.4m and resulted in approximately £14k coming back to us in ECO payments
- Loan to Bridgwater YMCA to enable them to transform a long term derelict building into boutique hotel offering social benefits etc. Great Western Hotel estimate that locating the hotel next to the station and customers avoiding taxi journeys has avoided 44,640 miles of pollution saved (journeys to hotel rooms alone!) and 8,000,000 grams of CO2 prevented since opening last year

Future projects include:

- Continuing to subsidise Park & Ride in Taunton with funding of £235k in 2020/2021
- Undertake a strategic review of parking provision with the aim of encouraging more use of the Park & Ride, and actively working with Somerset County Council (SCC) and bus operators to improve uptake
- The Local Plan Review Issues & Options document focuses on carbon neutrality as a primary objective and sets out the issues and options for how we will tackle it through the new Local Plan

- Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) will be rolling out the recycle more scheme across Somerset in the next two years and information can be found on the website <https://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/recycle-more/>
- Identifying strategies for the creation of green wedges and land acquisitions to plant more trees across the District for carbon offsetting
- Tree planting has taken place at Nerrols Country park more tree planting is planned
- We submitted a bid to the Urban Tree Challenge Fund which was unfortunately unsuccessful, but has helped us to move things forward and now in process of identifying deliverable urban tree planting projects in Taunton and Wellington ready for future funding bids