

Draft Climate Adaptation Plan



Somerset
Wildlife Trust

Funded by



THE POLDENS
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Guy Edwardes/2020VISION

Draft

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The climate emergency poses many threats to the Poldens. Sea levels are rising, and winters are becoming warmer and wetter, therefore increasing flooding risks. Whereas hotter and drier summers are enhancing the risk of droughts, heatwaves and wildfires.

Adapting to these changes is essential to reduce the impacts on green spaces, buildings and the daily life of the Poldens residents.

Through collaborative events, residents have identified four key priorities for how the Poldens should adapt to the changing climate:



Improving and Increasing Green Spaces



Reducing Flooding Risks



Sharing Knowledge and Raising Awareness



Local Empowerment and Community Planning

This plan:

- reflects the priorities of the communities.
- outlines the adaptation actions under each priority.
- gives guidance on taking action.
- highlights the co-benefits of taking action on each priority, such as providing habitats for wildlife.



Explore this plan to discover the actions you and your community can take to adapt to climate change. Your support and contributions will be vital to ensure we can build a better adapted, resilient and connected future for the Poldens.

**To find out how you can get more involved contact the
Polden Environmental Network - poldensgroup@outlook.com**



INTRODUCTION

Since March 2024, funding from Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) has facilitated Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT) to work with the Polden Environment Network (PEN), Parish Councils, and the local community to address the following challenge:

"How can we help the Poldens adapt to climate change?"

The impacts of the climate emergency are already unfolding. As well as rising sea levels, Somerset is likely to experience more flooding, extreme heat, droughts and wildfires. Thankfully, there are many ways that communities can act together to be better prepared for the changes and build a positive future where people and nature can thrive.



The Poldens have a long-standing commitment to environmental action and have made strides in tackling the climate and ecological emergencies. But with climate change already impacting the parishes, there is an urgent need to adapt.

Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT) has been raising awareness of adaptation and encouraging communities across the county to develop plans. In a unique collaboration with PEN and the Parish Councils, a locally tailored **Climate Adaptation Plan** is being developed for the Poldens.



Beginning with a Climate Adaptation Training event at the Cossington Village Hall, the [‘Act to Adapt’](#) process has brought together residents, community groups, councillors and SWT’s [Climate Adaptation](#) team to:

- Talk about climate change projections for Somerset.
- Discuss the need for adaptation in the Poldens.
- Co-create a bespoke climate adaptation plan, using the [Climate Adaptation Toolkit](#) for communities.

This plan shares the key priorities and adaptation actions chosen by the Poldens councillors and residents, and offers advice on how to make these actions happen. We have also highlighted the adaptation benefits of taking action on each priority and additional ‘co-benefits’ – such as supporting biodiversity – to demonstrate how they will support the Poldens in becoming better adapted and resilient to our changing climate.



SHAPING THE POLDENS PLAN

Following our initial event, we compiled participants' suggested adaptation priorities and actions, and turned these into a Draft Climate Adaptation Plan for the Poldens. To ensure that the plan better reflects the needs and priorities of the Poldens, we organised a consultation period to gather feedback on the existing priorities and ideas for new adaptation actions from more residents.

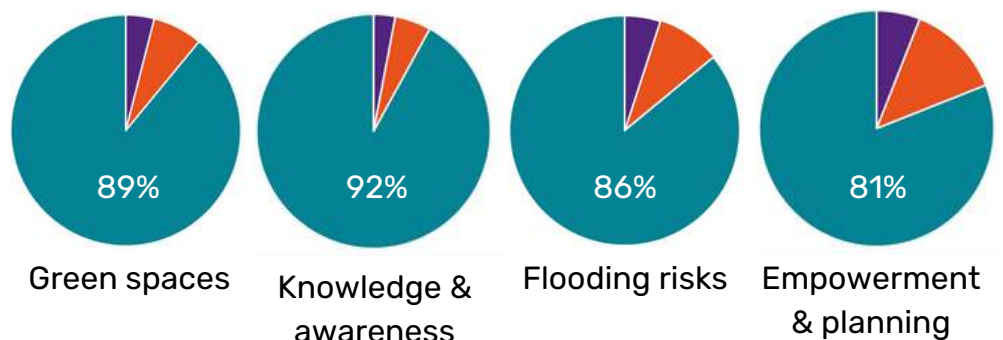
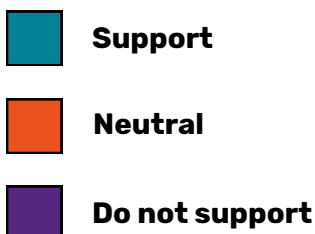
In August 2024, we held an in-person session where residents could learn more about climate adaptation and help shape the full plan by completing a survey and sharing their ideas. For those unable to attend these events, we also created an online survey and opportunities to provide more detailed feedback by email.



Survey respondents reported which of the adaptation priority areas they felt were most important for the Poldens. In order from most to least important, these were:

1. Improving and increasing green spaces
2. Sharing knowledge and raising awareness
3. Reducing flood risks
4. Local empowerment and community planning

43 respondents also provided feedback on how strongly they **support** each priority:



See Appendix I for more information about consultation responses.

However, to ensure this plan stays flexible and best serves the Poldens, residents should have regular opportunities to suggest additions, changes and improvements. If you have any suggestions for the plan, get in touch at poldensgroup@outlook.com



1. IMPROVING AND INCREASING GREEN SPACES

Actions to improve and increase green spaces across the Poldens could provide the following adaptation benefits and co-benefits to the local community:



1.1 - Protect and Enhance Existing Green Spaces



Where:	When:	Who:
• Chilton Polden playing field • Edington Village Hall • Edington Willow Plantation • Woodland Trust Forest • Along the A39 into Woolington	TBC	• Parish Councils • Polden Environment Network (PEN) • National Highways • Somerset Council Tree Officers • Housing Associations “community connectors”: Homes in Sedgemoor, LiveWest, etc. • Reimagining the Levels • Woodland Trust

How:

Conduct regular tree health surveys: Establish a schedule for monitoring tree health throughout the Poldens. Train local volunteers and work with Somerset Council's Tree Officer to perform these assessments. Document findings to track changes over time and identify potential issues early.

Organise community green space clean-ups: Plan regular events to maintain and improve green areas in Polden villages. Coordinate with parish councils to provide necessary tools and organise volunteers.

Create wild areas in playing fields: Identify portions of existing playing fields suitable for rewilding. Plant native wildflowers and shrubs to enhance biodiversity. Install informational signs explaining the importance of these wild spaces to educate the community.

Protect and promote orchid sites: Implement measures to safeguard known orchid locations, such as those near Bawdrip Garage and Knowle Inn. Work with local nature groups to monitor these sites and develop guided walks during flowering seasons to raise awareness. Install informational signs explaining the importance of these orchids and why they are unique to educate the community.

Implement reduced mowing for verges: Coordinate with Somerset Council and parish councils to adopt a reduced mowing schedule for roadside verges. Identify priority areas for wildflower growth and adjust maintenance practices accordingly. Educate residents about the benefits of this approach for local biodiversity.



Useful links:

1. [Somerset Tree Strategy - Somerset Council](#)
2. [Report Suspected Tree Pests and Diseases - Forestry Commission](#)
3. [Keep Britain Tidy](#)
4. [How to Create a Wildflower Meadow - Natural England](#)
5. [Biodiversity Action Plan - Leicestershire Wildlife Trust Case Study](#)

1.2 - Launch Community Tree-Planting Initiatives



Where:	When:	Who:
• Public Green Spaces • Chilton Polden Playing Field • Edington Village Hall • Chedzoy Fields • 'Old' Railway Line • Along Public Rights of Way • Schools	TBC	• Parish Councils • Polden Environment Network (PEN) • National Highways • Somerset Council Tree Officers • Housing Associations • "community connectors": Homes in Sedgemoor, LiveWest, etc. • Woodland Trust • Reimagining the Levels • Sustrans • Local Schools

How:

Develop a tree protection and replacement programme: Survey existing trees in the Poldens, identifying areas for new plantings or replacements. Consult with local landowners to gauge interest in tree-planting initiatives on their properties.

Choose climate-resilient tree species: Consult with local experts or the Somerset Council's Tree Officer to identify species that will thrive in future conditions. Aim for a diverse mix to enhance resilience against pests and diseases.

Planting trees along footpaths: Recruit and coordinate volunteer teams to plant diverse native tree species along public footpaths throughout the Poldens, enhancing natural corridors and providing shade for walkers.

Planting trees on village greens: Organise community-led initiatives to plant appropriate tree varieties on village greens across the Poldens, beautifying communal spaces and creating focal points for local gatherings.

Replant the 'Old' Railway line in Bawdrip: Develop a targeted plan to address ash dieback and rejuvenate the tree cover along this historic route. Consider a phased approach, replacing affected ash trees with a variety of suitable native species.

Explore community orchard potential: Investigate the feasibility of establishing a community orchard on Parish Council land. Consider revitalising historic orchards, such as those near Bawdrip or Catcott.

Parish councils accepting gifts of land: Explore opportunities for parish councils to take on management of land parcels from Somerset Council. This could include green spaces, verges, or small woodland areas.

Set parish tree planting targets: Establish a goal for each parish in the Poldens to plant 25 trees annually. Consider creating a friendly inter-parish competition to encourage engagement and track progress.

Promote garden tree planting: Launch a campaign encouraging residents with gardens larger than 5m² to plant at least one tree.



Useful links:

1. [More Trees - BANES Case Study](#)
2. [Free Trees for Schools and Communities - Woodland Trust](#)
3. [Tree Planting Advice - Plant Trees - Woodland Trust](#)
4. [Managing and Caring for Trees - Tree Council](#)



1.3 - Promote Sustainable Gardening Practices



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Where:	When:	Who:
• Woolavington Village Hall • Shaw Community Garden • Puriton Allotments • Shapwick Allotments • Cossington Forest Garden/Community Wood • Cossington Church • Shapwick Church • Edington Church • Community Garden around Chedzoy Village Hall	TBC	• Parish Councils • Polden Environment Network (PEN) • Growing Groups • Ashcott Garden Club • Catcott Village Open Gardens • God’s Gardens • Love Your Churchyard • Plant life - No Mow May • Polden Post • The Leveller • Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT)

How:

Launch a campaign to discourage paving over gardens and using artificial turf:

Work with local publications, like the Polden Post and The Leveller, to run a series of informative articles. Highlight the environmental impact of garden paving and artificial turf, focusing on issues, such as increased flood risk.

Offer workshops on creating wildlife-friendly gardens: Cover topics such as planting native species, creating habitats for hedgehogs and birds, and establishing wildflower areas. Hold these workshops in village halls or partner with local garden centres. Collaborate with TeamWilder (teamwilder@somersetwildlife.org) to include sessions on creating small ponds and choosing the best native plants for pollinators.

Provide resources on water-efficient landscaping: Develop a comprehensive guide tailored to the Polden's climate and soil conditions. Include information on drought-resistant plants, rainwater harvesting, and efficient irrigation methods. Work with TeamWilder to add sections on sustainable water features and rain gardens that benefit local wildlife.

Develop a "Green Spaces" educational programme: Include interactive lessons on local ecosystems, hands-on activities, such as building bug hotels, and field trips to nearby nature reserves. Develop a scheme where students can earn badges for eco-friendly actions. Partner with TeamWilder to incorporate tree planting activities and pond creation projects into the programme.

Host workshops on urban greening and biodiversity: Organise a monthly series of talks featuring guest speakers, such as SWT representatives, local landscape architects, and climate scientists. Hold these sessions at various locations across the Poldens, such as Bawdrip Village Hall or Woolavington Village Hall, as well as online.



Useful links:

1. [The UK Rain Gardens Guide: Managing Water in our Towns and Cities](#)
2. [Green Roof Advice - RHS](#)
3. [How to Build a Pond - The Wildlife Trusts](#)
4. [Pond Creation Toolkit - Freshwater Habitats Trust](#)



1.4 - Collaborate with Farmers for Sustainable Land Use



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Where:	When:	Who:
Local Farms	TBC	- Parish Councils - Polden Environment Network (PEN) - Growing Groups - Local farmers - Farm Clusters - The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) - Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group South West (FWAG SW) - Somerset Young Farmers - Organic research centre

How:

Collaborate with farmers on hedgerow planting: Approach local farmers to discuss enhancing biodiversity through tree and shrub planting in hedgerows and field margins. Offer support in sourcing appropriate native species.

Work with farmers to implement agroforestry practices: Identify suitable areas for integrating trees with existing crops or pastures. Consult with experts from organisations like the Organic Research Centre to provide guidance on tree species selection and planting patterns.

Support the transition to less intensive farming methods: Develop a support programme for Polden farmers interested in adopting regenerative agricultural practices. Offer workshops on techniques such as no-till farming, cover cropping, and rotational grazing. Explore funding opportunities through schemes like Environmental Land Management (ELM) to assist farmers during the transition period.

Identify poorly performing field edges for alternative ecological uses: Conduct a survey of agricultural land in the Poldens, working with farmers to map out low-yield areas, particularly field margins. Work with farmers to develop plans for converting these spaces into wildlife corridors, wildflower meadows, or beetle banks.

Upcoming PEN Event - Sustainable Farming Practices (February/March 2025):

This comprehensive event will focus on sustainable farming practices across the Poldens. PEN have partnered with FWAG SW to deliver expert presentations and workshops. The program will include key sessions on soil health, water management, and biodiversity enhancement on farms. Exact date and venue to be confirmed.



Useful links:

1. [About Agroforestry - Agroforestry Research Trust](#)
2. [How Agroforestry can Deliver for Nature - Cranfield University](#)
3. [Agroforestry: An Opportunity for Sustainability - Sustainable Food Trust](#)

1.5 - Implement Urban Greening Projects



Where:	When:	Who:
• Community buildings • Village halls • Private residences	TBC	• Parish Councils • Polden Environment Network (PEN) • Gravity

How:

Promote installation of green walls: Partner with local businesses, such as Gravity, to showcase the benefits of vertical gardens. Use a Village Hall as a pilot project, installing a green wall on its exterior to demonstrate the environmental advantages.

Encourage residents to grow climbers and vines: Create an informative brochure showcasing suitable climbers for the area, such as clematis, jasmine, and ivy. Organise plant swap events at Village Halls where residents can exchange cuttings and share growing tips.

Create educational seasonal wildflower displays: Select a prominent location near a Village Hall for a flagship display, featuring native wildflowers that change with the seasons. Design informative signage explaining the importance of each species to local ecosystems and pollinators. Involve local schools in planting and maintaining these displays. Organise guided walks from the village hall.

Transform roundabouts into attractive green spaces: Work with Somerset Council's highways department to redesign roundabouts with low-maintenance, drought-tolerant plants that provide year-round interest. Use the roundabout in Puriton as an example project, creating a pollinator-friendly planting scheme that can be replicated across the area.



Useful links:

1. [Green roof advice - RHS](#)
2. [How to Grow Climbers and Wall Shrubs - RHS](#)
3. [How UK Cities are Getting Greener - Greenpeace](#)

2. REDUCING FLOODING RISKS

Working to reduce flooding risks across the Poldens could provide the following adaptation benefits and co-benefits to the local community:



Reduce stormwater runoff

Mitigate the urban heat island effect

Slow the water flow during heavy rain

Increase water storage

Provide habitats for wildlife

Improve water quality

Provide a water source for gardens during dry summers

Benefit health and wellbeing



2.1 - Develop Upstream Water Management Solutions



Where:	When:	Who:
Uplands across the Poldens	TBC	- Parish Councils - Polden Environment Network (PEN) - Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) - Somerset Catchment Partnership (SCP) - Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG)

How:

Investigate opportunities for creating upstream storage ponds and reservoirs:

Conduct a survey of the Polden catchment area to identify suitable locations for water retention features. Consult with local landowners, particularly those in the upper reaches of the hills, to assess their willingness to participate. Consider sites such as the agricultural land north of Shapwick or the slopes above Chilton Polden.

Implement 'slow the flow' techniques in upper catchment areas: Work with local farmers and landowners to implement 'slow the flow' measures, e.g., leaky barriers in streams, offering guidance and potential financial incentives. Use the wooded areas near Knowle Hill as a pilot site to demonstrate the effectiveness of these techniques.

Engage with Somerset Catchment Partnership (SCP) and Somerset Rivers

Authority (SRA): Encourage parish representatives to attend SRA and SCP meetings and contribute local insights. Maintain cross-parish coordination to present a unified voice in regional discussions. Leverage the expertise and resources of larger organisations to enhance local flood management efforts while ensuring Polden Hills' needs are addressed within the context of broader regional water management strategies.



Useful links:

1. [Pond Creation Toolkit - Freshwater Habitats Trust](#)
2. [Slow the Flow - Shropshire Wildlife Trust Case Study](#)
3. [Community-based Catchment Planning - Somerset Council](#)

2.2 - Promote Water Retention Solutions



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Where:	When:	Who:
• Parish council land • Individual gardens • Local farms	TBC	• Parish Councils • Polden Environment Network (PEN) • Parish Council Planning Committees • Somerset Council Planning Office • Local residents • Developers • Contractors • Wessex Water • Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) • Somerset Catchment Partnership (SCP) • Reimagining the Levels • Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) • Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT)

How:

Organise bulk-buying schemes for water butts: Coordinate with local suppliers to secure discounted rates on water butts for Poldens residents. Offer installation workshops and promote experienced users helping neighbours with installation.

Encourage pond installation: Showcase exemplar ponds at public spaces, such as creating a demonstration pond near a Village Hall. Collaborate with parish councils to establish a grant scheme for residents installing wildlife-friendly ponds. Partner with TeamWilder (teamwilder@somersetwildlife.org) to provide guidance on pond design and best practices for maintaining pond ecosystems that support local wildlife.

Create a dew pond near the A39 bridge: Develop plans for a dew pond installation near the A39 bridge to support local flood mitigation and enhance biodiversity. Design the pond to capture surface runoff, reducing flood risk downstream while creating a valuable wildlife habitat. Present the project to the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) for potential support and alignment with regional strategies. Use local volunteers for construction and maintenance, fostering community engagement.

Promote permeable driveways: Work with local planning authorities to encourage the use of permeable materials in new developments, including projects like Gravity. Partner with local landscaping companies to offer discounts on permeable materials.

Exemplify SuDS and water retention at village halls: Install a Sustainable urban Drainage System (SuDS) at a Village Hall to showcase examples of rainwater harvesting, strategically placed soakaways, rain gardens and a pond that doubles as a retention basin.



Useful links:

1. [How to Install a Water Butt - B&Q](#)
2. [How to Build a Pond - The Wildlife Trusts](#)
3. [Pond Creation Toolkit - Freshwater Habitats Trust](#)
4. [Permeable Paving - PavingExpert](#)
5. [Sustainable Drainage Systems \(SuDS\) - Susdrain](#)



2.3 - Implement Natural Flood Management Techniques



Where:	When:	Who:
• Across the Poldens • King Sedgemoor drain	TBC	• Parish Councils • Polden Environment Network (PEN) • Somerset Council • Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT) • Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) • Farming and Wildlife Advisory group (FWAG) • Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium • Reimagining the Levels • Environment Agency (EA) • Sustrans

How:

Plant riparian trees along rhynes and waterways: Focus on native species, such as willow and alder, known for their water management properties. Engage local conservation groups and schools in community planting days. Create a volunteer group to monitor and maintain the newly planted areas.

Create 'wiggly rivers' and oxbow lakes: Identify suitable stretches of straightened waterways within the Poldens for re-meandering projects. Use the area near Gold Corner Pumping Station as a pilot project, creating a series of meanders and an oxbow lake. Develop walking trails around the new features to educate the community about natural flood management.

Establish withy beds in collaboration with local farmers: Partner with local farmers to establish pilot withy plantations, providing guidance on cultivation techniques. Organise workshops at locations like Shapwick Village Hall to teach willow weaving and other crafts, creating a market for locally grown withy.

Develop flood plains and water storage areas: Conduct a survey of the Poldens to identify natural floodplain areas and potential sites for water storage. Consider the fields east of Catcott as a potential site, creating a mosaic of shallow scrapes and deeper retention ponds. Work with landowners to implement sensitive farming practices in flood-prone areas, such as cultivating flood-tolerant crops. Collaborate with organisations to ensure these new habitats support key species and contribute to wider Somerset Levels and Moors conservation goals.

Address Eastside Lane flooding: Form a dedicated task force including Sustrans representatives, local residents, and farmers to tackle flooding on Eastside Lane. Explore innovative solutions, such as permeable cycle path surfaces, strategically placed swales, and improved roadside drainage.



Useful links:

1. [Help Us Create More River Woodland - Woodland Trust](#)
2. [Natural Flood Management - West Cumbria Rivers Trust](#)
3. [Slow the Flow - Shropshire Wildlife Trust Case Study](#)
4. [How Nature Can Help Prevent Flooding - The Wildlife Trusts](#)
5. [Oxbow Lake - National Geographic](#)





2.4 - Improve Drainage Infrastructure



Where:	When:	Who:
Across the Poldens	TBC	- Parish Councils - Polden Environment Network (PEN) - Planning committees - Somerset Council - Somerset River Authority (SRA) - Developers - Sustrans - Local farmers - Environment Agency (EA)

How:

Establish regular drain and gulley clearing: Create a schedule for drain and gulley maintenance across the Poldens. Focus on known problem areas, such as the gully by the new A39 bridge over the old railway line. Implement a twice-yearly clearing programme, with additional checks after heavy rainfall events.

Organise community clean-up events: Plan bi-annual community rhyme and ditch cleaning days, coinciding with the farming event where possible. Rotate locations across the Poldens to ensure wide coverage.

Create a local drainage task force: Form a group of volunteers to monitor and report blocked drains. Provide training sessions at village halls on identifying and safely assessing drainage problems. Establish a clear communication channel with relevant authorities for swift action on reports.

Engage farmers in ditch management: Incorporate ditch maintenance into the planned PEN farming event. Offer guidance on best practices for ditch management, including timing of clearance to minimise wildlife disturbance. Establish a farmer-led initiative for cooperative ditch maintenance along shared boundaries.

Collaborate with Environment Agency: Establish a local liaison group to work directly with the EA on main river maintenance. Arrange annual walk-throughs of key waterways with EA representatives to identify and prioritise maintenance needs.

Locate and address problematic drains: Conduct a survey of drainage systems across the Poldens, identifying blocked or filled-in drains. Create a publicly accessible map of drain locations and their responsible parties to facilitate reporting.



Useful links:

1. [Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan - Wessex Water](#)
2. [Drains and Gullies - Somerset Council](#)
3. [Sedgemoor Drains and Sewer Responsibility - Somerset Council](#)
4. [Sustainable Drainage Systems \(SuDS\) - Susdrain](#)



2.5 - Encourage Sustainable Land Management

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Where:	When:	Who:
Across the Poldens	TBC	- Parish Councils - Polden Environment Network (PEN) - Local farmers - Somerset Wildlife Trust Consultancy (SWTC) - Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT) - Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) - Reimagining the Levels - Woodland Trust - Developers

How:

Implement farm water storage solutions: Integrate water storage discussions into the planned farming event. Organise farm visits to demonstrate working examples, such as winter water capture for summer irrigation.

Promote strategic tree planting: Discuss strategic tree planting in conjunction with the PEN farming event. Work with the Woodland Trust and Reimagining the levels to secure saplings and planting advice. Organise community planting days, involving local schools and volunteer groups.

Discourage floodplain development: Develop a flood-resilient construction guide for developers and homeowners, outlining best practices for building in flood-prone areas.

Promote Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes: Use the farming event to highlight opportunities within the new ELM schemes. Invite speakers from DEFRA or local agricultural colleges to explain how flood management and water retention projects can align with ELM objectives.

Address greywater runoff: Develop an information pack for households on simple measures to reduce contaminated runoff, such as using eco-friendly cleaning products and proper disposal of oils and chemicals.



Useful links:

1. [Somerset Tree Strategy - Somerset Council](#)
2. [Help Us Create More River Woodland - Woodland Trust](#)
3. [Natural Flood Management - West Cumbria Rivers Trust](#)
4. [How Nature Can Help Prevent Flooding - The Wildlife Trusts](#)

2.6 - Enhance Community Flood Resilience



Where:	When:	Who:
Across the Poldens	TBC	- Parish Councils - Polden Environment Network (PEN) - Environment Agency (EA) - Somerset Prepared - Communities Prepared - Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) - Local Community Networks (LCNs) - Emergency Volunteers Action Group (EVAG)

How:

Implement a community flood warden scheme: Recruit and train volunteer flood wardens from the local community. These individuals can act as key points of contact during flood events and help disseminate information about flood preparedness. Work with the EA to establish or improve local flood warning systems.

Develop and practice concise emergency plans: Create a simple yet effective double-sided A4 emergency flood plan for residents and businesses. Include key information such as emergency contact numbers, evacuation routes, and immediate actions to take when flooding is imminent. Distribute these plans widely throughout the community and make them easily accessible online. Organise regular community drills to practice activating the plan, ensuring that residents are familiar with their roles and responsibilities during a flood event.

Create educational resources: Develop a range of educational materials about flood resilience measures for both residents and businesses. These could include leaflets, online resources, and video guides covering topics such as property-level flood protection, emergency planning, and insurance considerations. Organise workshops, talks, and hands-on events to educate residents about natural flood management techniques and their benefits.

Create a flood resilience demonstration area: Set up a public space showcasing various flood resilience measures, such as permeable paving, rain gardens, and property-level protection. Use this as an educational tool for the community.

Encourage property-level resilience measures: Provide guidance and potentially financial incentives for residents and businesses to implement property-level flood protection measures, such as flood barriers, non-return valves, and waterproof wall treatments.

Establish a community flood helpline: Collaborate with LCNs to set up a dedicated helpline for vulnerable residents during flood events. Train a team of volunteers to staff the helpline and create a database of vulnerable individuals requiring priority support.

Connect with Floodline: Promote EA's Floodline service across the Poldens.



Useful links:

1. [The UK Rain Gardens Guide: Managing Water in our Towns and Cities](#)
2. [Prepare Against Flooding - Somerset Rivers Authorities](#)
3. [Prepare for Flooding - Government Website](#)
4. [Check for Flooding - Government Website](#)
5. [How Nature Can Help Prevent Flooding - The Wildlife Trusts](#)



3. SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND RAISING AWARENESS

Sharing more knowledge of climate change, adaptation and Nature-based Solutions (NbS) across the Poldens could provide the following adaptation benefits and co-benefits to the local community:



3.1 - Foster Local Knowledge-Sharing



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Where:	When:	Who:
• Online platforms • Local newspapers • Info boards in key locations ◦ Behind Puriton Sports Centre - Seed of Hope ◦ Parish notice boards ◦ Church notice boards • Village halls • Churches	TBC	• Parish Councils • Polden Environment Network (PEN) • Sustainability experts • Community organisations • Engine Room, Bridgewater • Parish Councils • Garden clubs • Allotments • God’s Gardens • Love Your Churchyard • Plant Life - No Mow May • Ramblers • Somerset wildlife Trust (SWT)

How:

Local newspaper engagement: Develop a regular column in local papers. Feature a mix of educational content, event announcements, and community success stories.

Climate change workshops: Host climate sessions at village halls. Invite local climate scientists and environmentalists to present. Use interactive activities to demonstrate local impacts. Encourage residents to record seasonal changes.

Guided nature activities: Establish regular nature events, including a variety of activities like moth and bath walks, flora and fauna identification, iNaturalist app workshops, sweep netting and pond dipping. Providing equipment and guidance. Consider pairing interested older residents with local youth groups or schools. Rotate locations across the Poldens. Train local volunteers to lead future sessions. Species booklets from Wild about Gardens could also be distributed!

Family-friendly climate events: Organise climate fun days combining education with activities. Include interactive displays, eco-craft workshops, and climate-friendly food stalls.

Uncut grass benefits campaign: Collaborate with organisations to create informative materials. Produce eye-catching signage for participating areas explaining benefits. Support No Mow May with competitions for the most diverse meadow. Feature success stories in local media.

Ditch maintenance information sessions: Hold workshops and invite drainage board representatives and local farmers to share expertise. Create a simple guide on riparian responsibilities. Organise practical demonstrations of good maintenance techniques.

Create a garden competition: Create a photo series showcasing beautiful, low-maintenance natural front gardens. Offer free consultations with local gardening experts. Organise a competition with prizes for the most improved natural space.



Useful links:

1. [Five Tips for Living More Sustainably - UN Environment Programme](#)
2. [Tips for Encouraging Sustainability in Your Community - Sustainable Living Association](#)
3. [9 Ways to be More Sustainable at Home - One Tree Planted](#)
4. [iNaturalist App Information](#)
5. [Introduction to Bat Detection - Bat Conservation Trust](#)
6. [Wildlife Benefits of Uncut Grasslands - Manchester Wildlife Trust](#)
7. [Beginner's Guide to Gardening - Royal Horticultural Society](#)
8. [Wild About Gardens - The Wildlife Trusts](#)



3.2 - Utilise Community Spaces for Information Sharing



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Where:	When:	Who:
• Cafes • Libraries • Town hall • Doctors • Village halls • Bus stops • Churches • Village shops • Pubs	TBC	• Parish Councils • Polden Environment Network (PEN) • Church committees • Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT) - Wilder Churches

How:

Install educational boards: Develop a series of engaging, weather-resistant information boards for key locations. Publicise each new board installation, involving local communities in unveiling ceremonies.

Place informative posters: Design a cohesive series of nature and climate posters for indoor display. Rotate content seasonally to maintain interest. Topics could include local wildlife spotting guides, water conservation tips, and climate change impacts specific to the Poldens. Create an online repository where all poster designs can be freely downloaded and printed by community members.

Design bus stop displays: Partner with local authorities to secure permission for bus stop displays. Commission local artists or school groups to create nature-themed artwork for each stop. Promote local businesses to support ongoing maintenance.

Create green space signage: Develop a unified green space signage system to create bespoke signs that highlight the unique features of each site. Promote and inform of the benefits of any work carried out, species to look for, and co-benefits of the green space. Work closely with parish councils and church committees to ensure appropriate content and placement.



Useful links:

1. [Signage Sustainability - Landmark](#)
2. [National Cycle Network - Sustrans](#)
3. [Eco Friendly Signs - UK Sign Shop](#)
4. [Create a Design - Canva](#)

3.3 - Engage Local Businesses and Organisations



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Where:	When:	Who:
Across the Poldens	TBC	- Parish Councils - Polden Environment Network (PEN) - Puriton Allotment Association - Women’s Insitute (WI) - U3A - Somerset Age UK - Pubs - Cricket club in Shapwick - Angling clubs - Garden centres - Builders merchants - Mole Valley - GWilliam - Co-Op

How:

Partner with garden centres and builders' merchants: Create attractive, easy-to-understand posters explaining drainage solutions and the benefits of tree planting to display. Work with staff to explore the benefits of nature-based solutions and permeable paving so they can pass this advice and knowledge on to customers. Negotiate special offers on eco-friendly drainage solutions and native tree species.

Collaborate with community groups for climate awareness: Work with pubs to host monthly nature events, combining talks with social networking. Partner with the WI to organise workshops on sustainable living, such as reducing household water usage. Engage U3A members to share their observations of environmental changes.

Collaborate with the Puriton Allotment Association: Cover topics such as water conservation, organic pest control, and composting techniques. Create a guide featuring sustainable gardening practices. Establish a mentoring programme pairing experienced gardeners with newcomers.

Engage with angling community: Organise seasonal meetings with local angling clubs and the wider fishing community to discuss water quality, conservation efforts, and the impacts of climate change on local fish populations. Collaborate on citizen science projects monitoring water levels and quality in key fishing spots.

Collaborate with the Willow Youth Theatre: Engage children with the climate emergency in creative and impactful ways. This could involve creating performances that explore climate issues or running drama workshops that encourage students to express their thoughts and feelings about the environment.



Useful links:

1. [10 Ways To Make Marketing Leaflets Relevant - B&B Press](#)
2. [5 ways to create leaflets and flyers with impact - LinkedIn](#)
3. [Top 9 Leaflet Marketing Mistakes To Avoid - Dor-2-Dor](#)
4. [Puriton Allotment Association - Parish Council](#)
5. [Working with Community Groups - National Lottery Community](#)
6. [8 Strategies for Connecting Communities - Community Circles](#)

3.4 - Partner with Educational Institutions



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Where:	When:	Who:
Across the Poldens and Somerset	TBC	- Parish Councils - Polden Environment Network (PEN) - Puriton Primary - Catcott Primary - Brownies - Cubs - Guides - Duke of Edinburgh Schemes - Crispin - Chilton Trinity - Haygrove - Bridgwater College - The Levels School - Somerset Art Week - Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT)

How:

Organise climate workshops for schools around the Poldens: Climate workshops which are tailored, engaging education for students of all ages. Focusing on local ecosystems like the Somerset Levels and Avalon Marshes, these workshops would incorporate hands-on activities and field trips. The program would encourage collaboration between schools, adapt to seasonal changes, and empower students to develop their own climate initiatives with the hope to create a community-wide understanding of climate issues specific to the Polden Hills area, fostering environmental stewardship among the region's youth.

Arrange teacher training sessions: Invite environmental groups to lead workshops for teachers on development days, sharing insights on local ecosystems and observed climate impacts. Compile information on nearby outdoor learning locations and provide this to teachers during training. Introduce teachers to existing citizen science projects that monitor local wildlife or weather patterns, showing how these can be incorporated into lessons.

Engage with youth groups: Develop a nature scheme that aligns with existing badges of local Brownies, Guides, and Cubs. Organise joint activities, such as building bug hotels in community spaces or conducting litter picks. Collaborate to create climate family fun days where groups can showcase their environmental projects.

Add school representatives in the Polden Environment Network (PEN): Establish dedicated positions for primary and secondary school representatives within the PEN. Support them in creating student eco-councils to gather input and ideas from pupils.



Useful links:

1. [Exploring Climate Action in the Classroom - British Council](#)
2. [Sustainability and Climate Change: a Strategy for the Education and Children's Services Systems - Government Website](#)
3. [Education is Key to Addressing Climate Change - United Nations](#)
4. [Organisations that can Help You Take Action - Let's Go Zero](#)
5. [Schools Responding to the Climate Change Challenge - Government Website](#)
6. [Schools Climate Action Planner - Transform Our World](#)

3.5 - Utilise Local Events and Shows



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Where:	When:	Who:
• Bath and West Show • Puriton Flower Show • Green Scythe Fair • Village Fairs • Woolavington Eco-Festival • Ashcott Garden Show • Village coffee mornings	TBC	• Parish Councils • Polden Environment Network (PEN)

How:

Host stalls at local events: Design an eye-catching, interactive climate stall for use at various local events. For the Bath and West Show, focus on broader regional climate impacts and solutions. At the Puriton Flower Show, highlight climate-resilient gardening techniques and native plant species. For the Green Scythe Fair, emphasise traditional land management practices that benefit biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

Use parish coffee mornings to conduct mini climate workshops: Develop a series of bite-sized climate sessions for village coffee mornings. Create a set of engaging 15-20 minute presentations on climate and nature topics. Design simple, hands-on activities that can be done at a coffee table, such as calculating personal water usage or identifying climate-friendly food choices.

Organise a sponsored Polden Hills event: Launch an annual climate-related challenge that combines physical activity with environmental awareness. Design a route showcasing key ecological features and areas vulnerable to climate change. Partner with local businesses for sponsorship and to provide eco-friendly refreshments. Use funds raised to support specific Polden environmental projects, allowing participants to vote on which initiatives to fund.



Useful links:

1. [Royal Bath & West Show](#)
2. [Puriton Flower Show](#)
3. [Green Scythe Fair](#)
4. [Set Up Fundraising - JustGiving](#)

3.6 - Enhance Digital Engagement

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Where:	When:	Who:
• Facebook • Instagram • LinkedIn • Interactive climate adaptation websites ◦ WeAdapt	TBC	• Parish Councils • Polden Environment Network (PEN)

How:

Enhance parish council environmental communication: Work with each Polden parish council to develop a dedicated environmental section on their websites. Help councils craft clear, achievable environmental pledges and display these prominently online. Use Stawell's website as a best practice example. Work with PEN to keep their council's online content current.

Create a dedicated online presence: Establish active social media accounts to share regular updates and engage with the community. Create a monthly green e-newsletter to keep subscribers informed of upcoming events and recent achievements. Engage and train volunteers to help maintain online content.

Raise awareness of PEN online presence: Launch a targeted campaign to boost engagement with PEN's Facebook page and WhatsApp group. Encourage existing members to invite friends and neighbours.

Promote iNaturalist app usage: Launch a campaign to encourage widespread use of iNaturalist. Organise hands-on training sessions at village halls and local nature spots. Create an iNaturalist with monthly themes (e.g., spring wildflowers, summer insects) to maintain engagement. Develop a local leaderboard to recognise top contributors.



Useful links:

1. [iNaturalist App Information](#)
2. [PEN Facebook Group](#)
3. [Make It Local: Acting on Climate Change - Local Government Association](#)

4. LOCAL EMPOWERMENT AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

Working to link climate risks to local policies and planning structures, using the following actions, could provide the Poldens with these adaptation benefits and co-benefits:

Enhance community resilience

Support economic growth

Reduce climate risks

Foster stakeholder engagement

Support local innovation

Promote public health

Enable informed decisions

Amplify advocacy efforts



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4.1 - Strengthen Parish Council Involvement



Where:	When:	Who:
Across the Poldens	TBC	- Parish Councils - Polden Environment Network (PEN) - Local Community Networks (LCNs)

How:

Appoint Parish Council Environmental Ambassadors: Establish an Environmental Ambassador role within each Polden parish council work links in with the PEN meeting. Sharing and networking environmental ideas across the Poldens.

Increase parish council environmental engagement: Create an environmental pledges record for each Parish outlining key areas for local action. So that Parish are aware of each other's key actions and can support and help other complete there adaptation actions.

Organise regular environmental briefings: During PEN meetings have a knowledge sharing section for the Environmental Ambassadors from the parish councils. Invite local experts, representatives from environmental organisations, and relevant council officers to present on key topics.

Climate adaptation on parish council agendas: Advocate for all Polden parish councils to include Climate Adaptation as a standing item on meeting agendas. Create a shared adaptation tracker for councils to log their ongoing initiatives and challenges. Organise an annual summit for councils to review collective progress and set new goals for adaptation.

Link with Local Community Networks (LCN): Establish a formal connection between PEN and relevant LCNs. Work to include Climate Adaptation Progress as a standing item on LCN agendas. Develop a standardised reporting template.



Useful links:

1. [How To Respond to Planning Applications: An 8-Step Guide - Campaign to Protect Rural England](#)
2. [Mendip Local Plan \(still applicable until Somerset Council produce one\)](#)
3. [Puriton Parish Council](#)
4. [Ashcott Parish Council](#)
5. [Building and Maintaining Relationships with your Local Authority - Advice Services Alliance](#)



4.2 - Improve Community Communication Systems



Where:	When:	Who:
Across the Poldens	TBC	- Parish Councils - Polden Environment Network (PEN) - Villages Together Facebook page - Local Newspapers - The Mendip Times, The Leveller - Individual Facebook groups - Local Community Networks (LCN)

How:

Integrate PEN across the Poldens: Develop a series of engaging, shareable posts introducing the Polden Environment Network (PEN) and its initiatives. Establish a rota of PEN members to attend parish council meetings across the Poldens. Formally invite each of the 17 Polden parishes to nominate a representative for PEN meetings.

Develop a communication strategy: Have communications at a standing agenda item for PEN meeting and aim to get 2 /3 communications to the community from every meeting. Create templates for various communication types (e.g., press releases, social media posts, newsletter articles) to ensure coherent messaging across all channels.

Increase transparency of community engagement: Post more regular PEN updates that include agendas and meeting minutes to encourage the engagement of discussions from the community. This process can also help to increase the inclusivity of PEN by incorporating a wider range of ideas.



Useful links:

1. [Five Good Ideas for Building Effective Relationships Between Community Organizations, Governments, and Businesses - Maytree](#)
2. [Building and Maintaining Relationships with your Local Authority - Advice Services Alliance](#)
3. [Climate Adaptation Toolkit - Somerset Wildlife Trust](#)



4.3 - Engage with Local Organisations



Where:	When:	Who:
Across the Poldens	TBC	- Parish Councils - Polden Environment Network (PEN) - Bath University - Bath Spa University - Engine Room, Bridgwater

How:

Collaborate with local shops and services: Create an easy-to-use environmental checklist for small businesses to evaluate their current practices and support in how to improve them. Organise informal quarterly meet-ups where business owners can share eco-friendly ideas. Develop a simple recognition scheme with different levels to celebrate and encourage environmentally-friendly efforts in the community.

Facilitate meetings between stakeholders: Establish a forum to bring together parish councils, farming communities, local businesses, environmental groups and relevant authorities (Highways agency, Environment Agency ect.). Host quarterly meetings rotating between different Polden locations. Develop a structured agenda template ensuring all stakeholder concerns are addressed. Create local stakeholder partnerships: Bring together representatives from parish councils, farming communities, local businesses, and environmental groups. Host quarterly roundtable discussions to identify collaborative opportunities. Create a standardised feedback mechanism for community members to share concerns and ideas with agencies. Establish a follow-up system to ensure community input is actioned.

Work with the Environment Agency (EA): Organise site visits for EA representatives to assess local conditions and engage with community members. Develop a streamlined process for community groups to propose and implement EA-supported projects.



Useful links:

1. [Five Good Ideas for Building Effective Relationships Between Community Organizations, Governments, and Businesses - Maytree](#)
2. [Puriton Allotment Association](#)
3. [Environment Agency: Creating a Better Place](#)
4. [Beginner's Guide to Gardening - Royal Horticultural Society](#)
5. [Climate Adaptation Toolkit - Somerset Wildlife Trust](#)



4.4 - Develop Community Emergency Plans



Where:	When:	Who:
Across the Poldens	2024 - 2026	- Parish Councils - Polden Environment Network (PEN) - Residents - SRA Communities Team - Somerset Council - Somerset Prepared - Communities Prepared - Somerset Village and Community Agents

How:

Assist villages in creating action plans: Develop a preparedness toolkit tailored for each village. Organise workshops in each community to guide residents through the process of creating localised action plans. Establish village-level emergency response teams with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Organise information sessions in each village to walk residents through the plans and answer questions. Create a simple one-page summary of key emergency contacts and procedures for residents.

Designate community emergency hubs: Assess potential buildings in each Polden village for suitability as emergency hubs (e.g., village halls, schools, churches). Work with building owners to ensure necessary facilities are in place (e.g., backup power, communication equipment). Create standardised signage clearly identifying these locations as community emergency hubs and conduct annual reviews.

Conduct regular drills and protocol updates: Establish an emergency preparedness calendar, scheduling regular drills and review sessions. Organise biannual community-wide emergency simulation exercises, rotating scenarios (e.g., flooding or extreme heat). Develop a checklist for evaluating drill effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement. Encourage ongoing community feedback.

Create and distribute emergency plans: Develop comprehensive, easy-to-understand emergency plans for flooding, heatwaves, and road closures tailored to the Polden area. Implement a multi-channel distribution strategy including:

- Direct mail to all Polden households.
- Availability at key locations (e.g., libraries, GP surgeries, parish council offices).
- QR codes on community noticeboards linking to online plans.
- Integration into local school curricula to ensure family awareness.

Organise volunteer support groups: Establish volunteer teams that link with the flood wardens in each village, trained to assist vulnerable residents during extreme weather events.



Useful links:

1. [Somerset Prepared](#)
2. [Prepare for Flooding - Government Website](#)
3. [Communities Prepared](#)
4. [How to Conserve Water - The Wildlife Trust](#)
5. [Save Water - Waterwise](#)
6. [Check for Flooding - Government Website](#)

4.5 - Enhance Local Environmental Policies



Where:	When:	Who:
• Developments on the Edge of Puriton and Woolavington	TBC	• Parish Councils • Polden Environment Network (PEN)

How:

Lobby for stricter environmental standards: Use neighbourhood and local plans to push for higher standards for energy efficiency, water conservation, and biodiversity protection in new developments.

Implement a tree replacement policy: Create a simple reporting system for planned tree removals. Set up a community tree nursery to provide low-cost saplings for replacement planting.

Support Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG): Familiarise the group with local BNG requirements. Create a simple register of local green spaces and their key habitats to help inform BNG assessments. Hold informational sessions for councillors and residents to explain BNG and its implications for local development. When new planning applications are submitted, review the BNG plans and provide community feedback to the local authority. Maintain a public record of promised BNG measures for developments and encourage residents to help monitor their implementation.

Hold Gravity to account: Establish a group to monitor progress on Gravity's green commitments and the promised rail link. Regularly engage with Gravity representatives through formal meetings and site visits.

Engage with local MPs: Form an environmental advocacy group to liaise with local Members of Parliament. Invite MPs to participate in significant local environmental events and initiatives.



Useful links:

1. [How to Respond to Planning Applications: An 8-Step Guide - Campaign to Protect Rural England](#)
2. [Influencing the Planning Process \(England\) - Commons Library](#)
3. [Information Requirements for Planning Applications - Somerset Council](#)

CONCLUSION

This plan shares the community's priority actions for helping the Poldens thrive through our changing climate. Some can happen quickly, like planting trees, to give an instant adaptation boost. Other actions, such as advocating for climate-adapted planning policies, are longer-term projects that will significantly enhance the Poldens' adaptation.

Every action in this plan will also bring many other benefits to the Poldens. These "co-benefits" include:

- improving community health and wellbeing.
- making space for wildlife.
- mitigating climate change.

By working on these actions together, you can also strengthen community links, which are vital for making the communities well-adapted and resilient.



The Poldens Climate Adaptation Plan should be seen as a living document, at the starting point of a wider process. The plan should:

- be reviewed regularly.
- be updated as needed.
- reflect the changing climate and the changing priorities of the community.

By staying flexible and continuing to listen to the Poldens' residents, the plan can best guide the community in adapting to climate change.

Now it is time to act! Everyone can play a role in making the Poldens better adapted. To find out more about how you can get involved in implementing this plan, contact the Polden Environment Network (PEN) or Somerset Wildlife Trust.

NEXT STEPS

Through our “Shaping a Plan for the Poldens” events and online survey, we are gathering more ideas and feedback on how you think your villages can better adapt to climate change.

We want to make sure this plan reflects your priorities for your community so please get involved!

Once we’ve collected your feedback, we will compile it into a “final, living” Climate Adaptation Plan for the Poldens .

We aim to launch the plan with a community event where Parish Councillors and local people can come together to discuss how they would like to take climate action.



Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who shared their ideas to create such a positive and ambitious Climate Adaptation Plan for the Poldens. In addition to the many community members who shaped this plan, we would like to thank the Polden Environment Network (PEN) and the Parish Councils and for their work to develop the Poldens’ Climate Adaptation Plan.

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Disclaimer

The links provided in this document are intended to serve as information and advice, and do not reflect a recommendation from Somerset Wildlife Trust, or our partners and funders, for particular companies, products or services.

Consultation responses to green spaces



60% of respondents highlighted their concerns of prioritising development over green spaces. A common sentiment was the need to ensure green spaces are left with every new development. Many voiced strong opposition to housing being built on green belt land, emphasising the importance of preserving green spaces for wildlife and local well-being. Respondents also called for stricter limits on development, particularly in villages, to ensure green spaces remain intact and green corridors between built-up areas are preserved.

There was concern that developers prioritise profit over environmental needs, with calls for more protection of green spaces rather than focusing solely on improvements. Some also highlighted the need for better management, such as ensuring new plantings in housing developments are properly watered and maintained. While there was acknowledgment of the need for more affordable housing, many stressed that it shouldn't come at the cost of green spaces.



Respondents also highlighted several policy-related concerns. A key suggestion was to integrate the protection and enhancement of green spaces into the core planning strategy, ensuring that green spaces are prioritised during development. There were calls for stricter enforcement of hedging laws, with a recommendation that any hedges removed for housing developments should be replaced with an additional 25% more. Additionally, respondents supported the need for greater awareness and consideration of environmental impacts before any building takes place.

Several innovative suggestions were also proposed. Protecting privately owned woodlands, particularly near Puriton and Woolavington, was seen as a priority, with an emphasis on creating walkways through woods for better access to green spaces. Others idea involved creating ponds at local schools or village halls to promote environmental awareness, increasing the number of native trees, and ensuring accessibility for disabled people with better parking near green spaces – the need for parking was stressed.



Reopening the old railway line from Bawdrip to Glastonbury for cycling was also proposed as a way to encourage outdoor activities. Involving young families in these efforts was seen as essential to fostering knowledge and commitment in local communities. Encouraging youth participation in green space projects was highlighted as a vital way to engage the next generation in environmental conservation.

Consultation responses to flooding risks



In the public consultation on reducing flood risks, there was a call for increased education on the impacts of paving over front gardens, highlighting the need for clear guidance on permeable alternatives (an example includes Sustainable urban Drainage Systems, or SuDS). Participants also stressed the importance of ensuring that flood risk reduction measures do not disrupt local ecosystems and wildlife.

In the public consultation on flood risk management, strong concerns were voiced about excessive building on green spaces and flood plains. Participants urged for the preservation of these areas, emphasising their importance for natural water absorption and flood mitigation. There were calls to reduce new housing developments and improve run-off provisions to address flood risks effectively.



Specific worries were also raised about the proposed deliberate flooding near Pawlett by Hinkley Point, intended to protect fish populations affected by the plant's filter system, with concerns about its potential impact on local flood management and land use. Overall, the feedback demonstrates the need for strategic planning that balances development with flood risk management and environmental preservation.

Potential actions suggested include increasing dredging to improve water flow and installing more water butts to capture rainwater. Participants advocated for creating additional natural habitats on flood plains to enhance manage flood risks. There were also calls for extra funding to support the construction of tidal barriers if necessary. Concerns were also raised about Natural England's control over water management, with a push for a more balanced approach that incorporates practical solutions. The community emphasised the need to restore effective drainage practices to flood management strategies.



For managing flood risks, several tree-related actions were proposed. Participants suggested relocating felled trees and considering natural solutions like beavers to enhance water management. There was a strong emphasis on planting trees, particularly on higher ground, to slow down water runoff and mitigate flooding in lower areas. The importance of maintaining clear waterways and strategically moving tree planting efforts was also highlighted to ensure effective flood management.

Consultation responses to raising awareness



Respondents acknowledged how effective knowledge sharing and raising awareness are crucial for addressing environmental issues. Keeping the community well-informed ensures everyone stays updated on relevant developments. Respondents felt that it was important for information to be accessible and understandable for all ages, enhancing overall comprehension. Clear, concise communication helps clarify complex problems and foster greater engagement. This approach will significantly contribute to a well-informed and proactive community.

Respondents suggested a comprehensive approach to raising awareness and sharing knowledge. They emphasised the importance of regular meetings and discussions with local groups to foster engagement. Utilising social media campaigns tailored to different age groups was highlighted as a key strategy. Local communication channels, such as village newsletters (e.g., Polden Post) and Facebook pages, should be used to promote initiatives. Including a dedicated page in the Polden Post was specifically recommended for ensuring consistent information, therefore the community can be kept updated.



Another recommendation involved engaging schools and community groups in raising awareness. They suggested enhancing current efforts by connecting with Geography leads in schools and expanding the outreach to include other local organisations, such as the Women's Institute (WI). Additionally, involving groups like Brownies and local businesses was advised. By strengthening these connections, the initiative can broaden its impact and effectively communicate key messages to a wider audience.

Further responses involved the idea that developers should actively consider residents' views to ensure community concerns are addressed. Efforts to connect with local groups, such as the Wildlife Trust, RSPB, and Hawk and Owl Trust should be strengthened. Additionally, exploring partnerships with other organisations, for example Springwatch, was recommended to broaden outreach and enhance the effectiveness of collaborative initiatives. This approach will help create a more inclusive and informed community.



Consultation responses to empowerment



Respondents raised significant concerns regarding local empowerment and community planning. Many feel that opportunities for involvement in local councils have diminished, with people increasingly detached from village activities due to busy lifestyles. Historical community engagement, such as village shows, has declined according to response, contributing to a lack of local involvement. There is scepticism about the effectiveness of community efforts, with concerns that even if a large group of people were mobilised, they might not be willing or able to contribute financially to drive meaningful change.

In Puriton, while a Neighborhood Plan exists, there are fears that it may lack sufficient power to withstand potential changes in planning law. Respondents also expressed concerns about local communities being marginalised in favour of large-scale developments, which threaten the countryside. Overall, there is a strong sentiment that local voices are often side-lined.



Respondents stressed the need for greater transparency and engagement from local authorities regarding planning and environmental issues. There is concern about developers sitting on planning committees, which may influence decisions without adequate consideration of community and environmental impacts. Regular updates from parish councils and county councils are essential, particularly regarding their commitment to wildlife and environmental matters.

Engaging schools in discussions and initiatives was highlighted as important for fostering broader community involvement. Additionally, local councillors responsible for environmental issues should be encouraged to share insights from their meetings and actively listen to local concerns. Respondents also emphasised the need for local authorities to be open to alternative perspectives and innovative approaches, moving beyond traditional views to address contemporary challenges effectively.



The importance of increasing engagement with local groups was strongly supported, such as with the Guides, Brownies, and Rainbows. They encouraged continuing current efforts to connect with these organisations, suggesting that ongoing involvement is valuable. Strengthening ties with these groups will enhance community outreach and participation in local initiatives.