



SHAFTESBURY
TOWN
COUNCIL

Sustainable Shaftesbury



Vision Statement and Masterplan 2024–31

Shaftesbury's response to the climate and nature emergency

'Think Global, Act Local'

Produced by *Sustainable Shaftesbury Advisory Committee* for *Shaftesbury Town Council*

Adopted: February 2024

Updated: March 2026

Review date: March 2028

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The Vision

The purpose of this policy document is to support Shaftesbury and its community in meeting the challenges of a world threatened by a changing climate and biodiversity loss following the maxim '**Think Global, Act Local.**' In so doing it endorses the belief that humanity is, in the words of Sir David Attenborough, 'not apart from nature but is part of nature', and that a healthy natural world is the cornerstone to human health and happiness as well as its very survival.

Our Vision is a future where Shaftesbury is enabled to meet the challenges of a changing world under threat from climate change and nature loss by recognising that a healthy natural world is the cornerstone to humanity's very survival as well as human health and happiness.

Our Mission is to work with the local community to address and adapt to the climate and nature emergency through a comprehensive plan of action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect and restore nature, working towards a resilient future for Shaftesbury residents and the planet.

The vision and mission are supported by a Sustainability Action Plan (see [Appendix A](#)).

Why do we need a Sustainable Shaftesbury Vision and Action Plan?

Our town, like communities across the UK and around the world, is facing an unprecedented climate and nature emergency. This challenge is no longer abstract or distant: the planet is heating rapidly, ecosystems are under strain, and the effects are being felt from global to local levels.

Globally, the warning lights are flashing. The past **eleven years are the warmest ever recorded**, and **2025 ranked as the third-warmest year on record**. Heat stored in the oceans has reached record levels, polar ice and glaciers continue to shrink, and extreme weather is becoming more frequent and damaging - signs of a climate system under intensifying stress. These trends make heatwaves, floods and droughts are more likely and more costly for people everywhere. At the same time, nature is under severe pressure: the **Living Planet Index shows an average 73% decline in monitored wildlife populations since 1970**, a clear signal that the world's life-support systems are being eroded. Leading assessments also show that current global policies still put the world on course for **dangerous levels of warming this century**, unless action accelerates sharply—another reason local choices matter.

Nationally, the UK is feeling the impacts and faces a clear imperative to act.



Recent years rank among our warmest on record, bringing more heatwaves, stronger storms and periods of drought reported by households across the country. The UK is also **among the most nature-depleted countries in the world**, sitting in the **bottom 10% of nations for biodiversity intactness**, with only **around half of its original nature left**—a legacy of long-term habitat loss and other pressures. Independent advisors have warned that **preparedness for climate impacts remains inadequate**, underscoring the need to step up adaptation as well as rapid emissions cuts. And while the UK's environmental economy is growing, official statistics show continued declines in wildlife abundance and rising exposure to weather extremes—strengthening the case for urgent, joined-up action.

Here in Dorset, the global and national picture is mirrored locally. Dorset Council has declared a **nature emergency** and pledged to manage **30% of council land for nature recovery by 2030**. The county's **Local Nature Recovery Strategy** sets out a coordinated plan to restore habitats, connect green and blue spaces, and build resilience to climate risks—providing a practical framework for partners across Dorset. Local emissions and ecological reporting also track pressures and progress, helping to focus effort where it will have the biggest impact.

The science is clear: **every fraction of avoided warming and every hectare of nature restored makes a difference**—to health, safety, livelihoods and the places we love. What we do here—in our homes, businesses, green spaces and community projects—**protects our town and contributes to the global effort** to stabilise the climate and revive nature.

By adopting this vision and action plan, the Town Council recognises both the seriousness of the threat and the responsibility we have to act. This document sets out our commitment to **cut emissions, protect and restore nature, and prepare for the changes already underway**. It provides a framework for decision-making, investment and community partnership—grounded in the belief that urgent action today will secure a healthier, more resilient and more equitable future **locally and globally**.

This is a collective endeavour. By working together—residents, businesses, community groups and the council—we can protect our local environment, strengthen our economy and **play our part in safeguarding the planet for future generations**.

Background to Sustainable Shaftesbury

In July 2019 Shaftesbury Town Council (STC) declared a climate emergency in keeping with similar declarations made by Dorset Council and other local authorities across the country. This included the aim that the Council would become fully carbon neutral by 2030.

In January 2021 STC adopted its first Environment Policy that listed its five aims:

Increase environmentally conscious practice and improvement across STC responsibilities and assets for the benefit of the local community.

Promote the importance and value of a *quality** environment, and to support local people in their enjoyment of it.

Carry out its work in such a way that as much as possible eliminates any adverse impact on our environment.

Promote the development of a circular economy: an economy in which each part feeds or supports another to reduce consumer waste.

Integrate environmental considerations into all council decisions and adopt greener alternatives throughout its operations.

* *Quality in this context means an environment in which the protection of nature and biodiversity are the top priorities.*



STC then produced an Environmental Statement that outlined what the Council is already doing to mitigate its impact on the environment and to help clarify its position, promote action, and secure positive outcomes on key environmental issues.

Towards the end of 2022 STC turned to a working group of local environmental experts, activists and volunteers for guidance on the development of a new environmental policy and action plan for Shaftesbury. Provisionally called *Sustainable Shaftesbury*, the group set out to produce a wider, more ambitious and detailed vision and an action plan.

In 2024 The **Sustainable Shaftesbury Vision Statement was adopted**. Based on the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) of March 2023 and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform *Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) 2019 Global Assessment Report.*, it lists ten key solutions needed to mitigate climate change and biodiversity loss, and to create environmental resilience—thus leading to a sustainable future.



UK's Climate Change Committee report

The June 2023 report by the UK's Climate Change Committee (CCC), an independent, statutory body established under the Climate Change Act 2008 chaired by former Conservative cabinet member Lord Deben (John Gummer), published on 28 June 2023, found that the UK Government is not doing enough quickly enough to combat climate change and states that it is 'highly unlikely' that the UK will meet its climate change targets without much more radical and rapid action.

The ten areas are:

- **Ending** energy production from fossil fuels
- **Investing** in clean energy and energy efficiency
- **Retrofitting** and decarbonising buildings
- **Decarbonising** cement, steel and plastics
- **Moving** to electric and hydrogen-powered vehicles
- **Increasing** the use of public transport, cycling and walking
- **Decarbonising** aviation and shipping
- **Halting** deforestation and restoring degraded lands
- **Reducing** food loss and waste and improving agricultural practices
- **Eating** more plants and less meat



In 2024 the first Sustainable Shaftesbury Masterplan was also adopted. Appendices on tree planting, wildflowers and allotments were approved and added during the year 2024-25. Shaftesbury was also declared an Orchard Town in October 2024 and a Nature Friendly Town in April 2025. Also in 2024 work began on the 'Green Wheel' project, an initiative to create a nature-rich circle or 'wheel' of protected countryside around Shaftesbury with wildlife-friendly corridors or 'spokes' into and out of the town centre for the easy movement of flora and fauna along hedgerows, tree lines, footpaths, bridleways, wilderness areas and road verges working in partnership with Dorset Wildlife Trust, the National Trust and Cranborne Chase National Landscape.

STC understands that these ten areas do not cover everything that needs to be addressed and that not all the categories listed can be addressed at a local level. But it believes some items are within the capability of a town council and local people to manage and influence.

STC will implement its vision and action plan by adopting the three ‘pillars’ of: **climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental resilience** reflecting Dorset Council’s and national commitments.

As the parish council for a market town of approximately 9,000 people, estimated to rise to 10,000 by 2031, STC understands it cannot have a major impact on all subject areas but it will do its best in areas it believes it can affect or influence by working in close partnership with national, regional, county, local and community groups with similar aims and objectives. Above all, it agrees with the informed consensus for action based on the concept of a ‘circular economy’ and its support in restoring nature.



The State of Nature report 2023

Put together by more than 60 organisations, including wildlife conservation groups, government agencies and academics, it says the numbers of plants and animals monitored since the 1970s have decreased by an average 19%. The report, published in September 2023, looks back at some 50 years of research and found that natural spaces and the wildlife that depends on them are all in decline in the UK (see www.stateofnature.org.uk).

The Action Masterplan 2023–2031

The action plan is intended to start now and will be working in conjunction with local and national targets.

Taking the IPCC’s ‘ten points’ as its base, the **Sustainable Shaftesbury Vision Statement** focuses on the environmental imperative of the need for a harmonious relationship between human activity and nature. STC’s sustainability action plan therefore aims to meet the urgent global challenge to human society posed by the climate breakdown and biodiversity loss through local action based on the established principle of ‘*Think Global Act Local*’. It is based on the conviction that it is a principal duty of the town council to do whatever it can within its statutory restraints to counter, prevent and mitigate the serious and increasing effects of climate change, biodiversity loss and ecological degradation on all life within its parish boundary.

STC will implement its vision by adopting the three ‘pillars’ of **climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental resilience** proposed in March 2023 by Dorset Council’s *Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023–25 Refresh* (NECES) document and its April 2023 planning consultation document that followed its declaration of a climate emergency in 2019.

As the parish council for a market town of approaching 10,000 people, STC understands it cannot have a major impact on all subject areas but it will do its best in areas it believes it can have an effect or influence by working in close partnership with national, regional, county, local and community groups with similar aims and objectives. Above all, it agrees with the informed consensus for action based on the concept of a ‘circular economy’ and its support in restoring nature.



The Three Pillars of Sustainable Shaftesbury



Climate Change

Cutting our greenhouse gas emissions

STC will adopt a climate change action plan which supports the Dorset target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2045. The plan will aim to match national targets by promoting sustainable travel; promoting sustainable local food production and consumption; campaigning to reduce energy demand; supporting feasible plans to produce green energy; and by providing, where possible, additional charging infrastructure for electric vehicles.



Biodiversity

Helping nature recover by protecting and enhancing our land, rivers and seas

STC will adopt a biodiversity action plan that will seek to help nature to recover in keeping with the *Nature Positive Dorset 2030* declaration, by promoting of rewilding of open spaces and green areas. This includes support for initiatives such as *Orchard Town* and *Nature Friendly Town Shaftesbury* and . This action plan includes a Biodiversity Checklist of actions to be followed by all the town council's contractors and sub-contractors and can also be used as guidance by residents with its *Let's Go Wild* leaflet.



Environmental Resilience

Adapting for the impacts of unavoidable environmental change

STC will adopt an environmental resilience action plan to mitigate the impact of unavoidable environmental change or damage. This includes climate adaptation and support for a circular economy, as well as opportunities for the town council to acquire more open areas for productive community use such as for allotments and horticulture. The action plan will also support positive measures for safe and environmentally-friendly transport and travel as outlined in the *Active Travel England* policy documents.



Delivery, Review & Public Engagement

Delivery and Review

The delivery sees STC working in partnership with other community groups and organisations. This document will be reviewed on an 'as needed' basis but at least biennially.

Other Policies

STC will continue to review all its policies and procedures as they come up for review for their environmentally positive stance in wording, intention and enforcement. *Note: STC has updated its investment strategy to stipulate its reserves are invested prudently in sustainable activities and not in fossil fuel development or its use.*



Public Engagement

To advance this policy STC will:

- promote awareness of, and information about, environmental and ecological issues within the local community
- support, and act as an added voice for, local environmental and ecological concerns within the local community
- partner with local environmental and community groups and allotment holders to spearhead a major cost-of-living mitigation awareness campaign focusing on practical improvements that can be achieved with:
 - ⇒ Energy and retrofitting homes
 - ⇒ Transport, including cycleways and footpaths
 - ⇒ Food production and consumption
 - ⇒ Nature (i.e. biodiversity and habitats)
 - ⇒ Circular economy initiatives to eliminate waste
 - ⇒ Health and welfare (e.g. community work-sheds)
- ensure that everyone involved in the operation of STC (including contractors) are aware of their environmental obligations and responsibilities.

