

## Appendix 2

# SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP REPORT AND ACTION PLAN

Tavistock Town Council declared a climate emergency in September 2019 and established the sustainability and the environment working group to enable the council to review what is being done by other councils nationally, what the council already does to reduce its environmental impact, and to help the council improve sustainability and biodiversity locally through partnership initiatives and identifying priority projects as well as funding that may be available for projects in this area.

Due to the unfortunate intervention of the COVID crisis, the group, which held its first meetings at the beginning of 2020, was unable to meet regularly throughout the pandemic. For a full description of the group's activities, see the **Chair's Statement, Appendix A**.

However, the work stream identified has continued to be actioned through partnership working, the operational commitment of the Town Council's Works Manager and General Manager, and the individual councillors involved.

This report summarises the workgroup's findings and efforts from 2019 to 2022, identifies the priorities for council that the group and the council have identified for 2022-2023 and looks at funding streams available to support any additional work in this area. In future reports, it is proposed that both the top three priorities and potential sources of funding should be included to assist council in addressing the climate emergency.

### PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED FOR 2022-23

- Protection of Market Road due to undercutting within the Tavy River wall caused by erosion.
- Event sustainability for returning events like Goose Fair.
- Encouraging active travel through cycle rack installation in the town.

### POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES IDENTIFIED 2022

<https://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/grant-funding-emergency-flood-resilience>

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/climate-action-fund-programme>

<https://www.rewildingbritain.org.uk/support-rewilding/the-rewilding-network/rewilding-innovation-fund>

### EXISTING PROGRAMMES AND ACTIONS 2019-2022

The council has a number of programmes already underway, including a green burial ground, replacing standard lighting with LED lighting; operation of cardboard and rubbish compactors to reduce cost, improve recycling efficiency and reduce landfill requirements; measures to

make council premises more energy efficient; an extensive management plan around biodiversity for Whitchurch Down which will be undergoing review in the next year; ongoing tree management works and rewilding efforts in greenspace managed by the council throughout the town.

### **Events Sustainability**

Interventions in large-scale, council-led events like Goose Fair with regard to plastic use, waste recycling and instructions to stall holders have been adopted as practice and encourage sustainable events with less waste.

### **Light Pollution Review**

Recently changed all timer clocks for uplighters etc around Pannier Market/Guildhall, and reduction in duration of Christmas lights for 2022. For instance, the Christmas lights not being on during the day, as agreed with Tavistock BID.

### **Contracts and Tender Review**

Utility tender review looking at and evaluating green options. Consider using recycled materials if appropriate for items like picnic tables or play park equipment. Adopting best practice to request tenderers to evidence their commitment to sustainability within their own services.

### **EV Charging Points on Council Property**

As part of the recent redesign of the Guildhall car park, electric cables capable of supporting EV charge points have been laid in anticipation of the need for this technology as more of the public embrace this type of vehicle.

### **Works Vehicle & Equipment Replacement Program**

The works vehicle review now includes consideration of replacing vehicles with EV options. The Works Manager is also looking at the equipment portfolio in its entirety i.e. the efficiency of electric trimmers.

### **Buildings**

Regular improvement and review of Tavistock Town Council capital estate to reduce the carbon footprint of the council. This includes replacement of lighting with more efficient LED bulbs, the increase of insulation within the heritage setting as much as possible and improving and replacing inefficient heating systems with more efficient systems.

### **Active Travel**

One of the priorities identified for active travel is having more cycle racks available for green commuters, whose location could be signposted on town maps, as well as a suggestion whether lockers for cyclists and tourists would also encourage green transport. Through Devon County Councillor Debo Sellis, Tavistock Town Council acquired and installed a bike rack near the Phone box at the end of Market Rd which appears to be well-used.

Additional locations throughout the town for cycle parking would be useful, not all of which are on Town Council land and therefore partnership working with both the Borough council and private landholders should be considered. The potential for organising a group purchase amongst interested parties at a discounted rate is one method that was discussed. Tavistock

BID and Tavistock Travel Action Group have suggested signage throughout the town to support existing pedestrian routes as well as longer routes promoted by Slow Ways and other groups would be welcome.

## REWILDING/BIODIVERSITY EFFORTS

### Green Burial Ground

Tavistock Town Council has been providing the increasingly popular green burial service at our Plymouth Road Cemetery since 1999, with the first burial taking place in January of that year. The concept of a green burial meadow is to provide a peaceful resting place in a manner which is friendly towards nature, wildlife and the environment.

Our meadow allows for remains to be interred in consecrated land using biodegradable materials such as a cardboard or wicker coffin. All graves are marked with a small microchip and are individually numbered which allows our Cemetery staff to keep an accurate burial register as well as a plan of the area, to enable family and friends to locate where their loved ones are laid to rest. The policy in full is available on the Town Council website. **(Appendix B)**

This is managed by the council mowing a single path through the grass, to encourage families of their loved ones as well as visitors to wander through the meadow, enjoying its tranquillity and to pay their respect. Arising from the passion of an individual lead volunteer, **Hilli Mole**, who initiated the project, the Town Council now each year organise the environmentally-friendly method of scything as the preferred method to manage the burial ground. The mown hay is raked and removed, to prevent the ground becoming enriched with nutrients, which our native wildflowers dislike. In summer, the meadow buzzes with grasshoppers, many lying insects, including pollinators and slow worms love this undisturbed habitat.

The approach in the green burial ground is working. In 2021, the first helleborine and orchid appeared. An absence of the clouds of grasshoppers was observed, at scything. An increase in the number of amphibians and reptiles was noted, providing circumstantial evidence of recovery of the food chain. In 2022, the helleborine has reappeared and an increase of ten orchids has been recorded. The site supports a variety of butterflies and moths, too. The meadow has been judged to be Outstanding in four consecutive years by Royal Horticultural Society regional judges, as part of the town's entry into South West in Bloom.





**Tavistock Community Gardening Partnership  
Report Prepared by Ali Sedgwick**

The Tavistock Community Gardening (TCG) team has been working with Tavistock Town Council for more than a decade. Tavistock Community Gardening's aims: to grow edible plants in unused parts of the town, improving food security and promoting biodiversity. Two major projects have been undertaken in 2022 within the environmental brief: the restoration of Celle Garden and the refurbishment of the Canal Beds.

**Celle Garden**

A historic map provided the solution to bringing the area of gravel back into cultivation. Heathers were planted in 2020, giving a long flowering period, to benefit pollinators. The original planting scheme was dated, so more modern cultivars, with contrasting heights and foliage were established to give year-round interest and improve the first impressions of visitors entering from the north.

**Canal Beds**

The existing canal bed area was labour intensive for both Tavistock Town Council and Tavistock Community Gardening volunteers and did not achieve its potential, visually.

A new planting scheme involving a wildlife-friendly, native planting approach was agreed. Crab apple trees will echo the blossom on Cherry Walk, alongside the canal. Crab apples will be eaten by birds and not attract wasps, to irritate tennis players. Each tree will be underplanted with a group of shrubs to provide a long flowering season: black willow, to fix nitrogen; flowering currant, spirea and sedum complete this permaculture grouping. Meadowlands Leisure Centre has sponsored an extension of the shrub planting, along the edge of the gym, bringing this area of the Meadows into the Blue Campaign for rewilding.



*1 Tavistock Canal Beds, Pippa Howes, Artist*

### **Tree planting**

Trees are a vital contribution to alleviate the impact of climate change. Tavistock Town Council performs regular tree surveys of trees on its land, the Council also maintains a tree register. Many of the trees in the town are protected either because they fall within the Conservation Area or because they have a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) placed upon them.

Spring 2022, Tavistock Town Council has planted seven semi-mature trees in the Meadows, as part of the Queen's Green Canopy. In the Autumn, 12 crab apples will be planted as part of the canal beds project and a further seven, native saplings, donated by Devon Wildlife Trust, will form the basis of a new copse in Bannawell Park. Future plans include a replanting scheme on Whitchurch down, as well a further 30 trees to be planted throughout the town in partnership with West Devon Borough Council, for which a grant application has been made.

### **Reuse of Green Materials**

One source of green materials for plantings originates in the waste created by established works department programs dealing with tree waste created by storm damage or regular maintenance. Tavistock Town Council works team produces in-house wood chipping and has upcycled logs for seating.

### **Encouraging Birds**

Collaboration between Tavistock Community Gardening and Tavistock Men in Sheds has enabled the construction of 27 bird boxes, sited across Tavistock Town Council's wildlife areas and within local school grounds.

Tavistock Community Gardening focussed on provision for birds in 2022. The planting scheme throughout the town creates living bird tables, with amaranths flax and sunflowers, whose seeds are edible. The idea of pocket parks, planters containing trees, alongside seating areas has also been developed. Tavistock Men in Sheds have made three new planters for public benefit. The three new planters contain rowan trees and a strawberry tree, for edible berries.

### **Sustainable Weed and Invasive Control**

Training and certification of staff in wildlife friendly approach to control weed control, including specific training around the threat of glyphosate to local wildlife in the waterway. This has led to the use of injection glyphosate for invasive species like Japanese Knotweed.

### **Blue Hearts Campaign**

Through the Blue Hearts Campaign, Tavistock Town Council along with partners Tavistock Community Gardening has identified areas of council land which can be left to grow wild with little cutting, no spraying, and only annual intervention with a view to increase the wildlife corridor in town. This project has been ongoing since 2019 and has resulted in improved public acceptance of more unkempt green spaces.

1. The bank closest to bus stop opposite Tavistock College
2. Mrs Wedds Arboretum backing onto the bmx track
3. The canal bank including the bug house
4. A section we leave adjacent to St Johns Well near the skate-park in Bensons Meadow

5. The banks either side of St Johns Walk

Additional areas include:

1. Land opposite Plantations adjacent to Market Rd
2. Part of the Plantations nearest to Abbey Bridge
3. The steep section in Dolvin Rd Cemetery opposite St Rumens
4. The green section in Plymouth Rd Cemetery
5. Whitchurch Down
6. The wetland and boundary areas at Bannawell park

## **WASTE MANAGEMENT AND RECYCLING IMPROVEMENTS**

### **Recycling Plastics**

Tavistock Town Council working with SHARE Recycling for Charity volunteers established a base for the group in a ships container on council property for sorting, compiling, and sending hard to recycle plastic materials to Terracycle. In exchange for their efforts, the SHARE team has raised £1203.45 in the six months to October 2021 for Kicks Counts, a charity which aims to reduce the UK's high stillbirth and neonatal death rate by raising awareness of baby movements.

In addition, the Council reviewed its office arrangements to implement a system specific to paper recycling, as well as processes specific to compaction of general waste, compaction and bailing of cardboard, glass recycling and other initiatives specific to upcycling and recycling of green waste at Plymouth Road Cemetery.



### **Paper Use**

One recommendation identified was the effectiveness simply reducing the amount of paper printed or copied at the council by making more documents available online. Council now publishes certain council documents online rather than printing as standard. (Ex. Check Register) IT improvements in the pandemic period have made the process of accessing online documents easier and overcome resistance. Future improvement could be made using a digital program for publishing council agendas and reports specifically designed for councils and similar to that used at WDBC, but this project would be a significant expense and needs to be planned into the council's workstream over at least a two year period.

## ENERGY PROJECTS



### **Warmer Bedford Cottages Project**

With funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, West Devon Borough Council (WDBC), Tavistock Town Council (TTC), Tavistock Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) and Tamar Energy Community (TEC) worked together to develop a guide for enhancing Bedford Cottages and similar properties in ways that are both consistent with good conservation practice and affordability. The Warmer Bedford Cottages Residents' Guide was launched at the Energy Fest on November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

#### Background

About 164 Bedford Cottages were built in Tavistock in the 19th Century as healthy homes for industrial workers. There are about another 140 Bedford Cottages in the surrounding area. Most, but not all, of these are listed properties. Today, many of these homes require enhancements to be healthy, comfortable and economic in the 21st Century.

New technologies of home repair, insulation, heating, ventilation, lighting and control systems are making greater efficiencies possible. Older homes will remain a significant proportion of our housing stock and we need to maintain their value to the wellbeing of our community.

#### Benefits

The guide addresses the key issues raised by households, such as; dealing with damp, ventilation, insulation, heating, lighting, repair and maintenance. Often problems are made worse by poor or inappropriate repairs. Good conservation practices can deliver improved performance.

Households will be able to check what is worth doing in their property, the performance benefits and the details of such enhancements. The guide can also provide links to approved specifications and methods for measures that would receive a Listed Building Consent.

## APPENDIX A

### CHAIR'S STATEMENT

The Sustainability and Environment Workgroup held our first meeting in October 2019 and agreed to hold an information session for Town Councillors and invite interested community groups to tell us about the work they were undertaking as part of climate change initiatives.

As part of our initial research, members of the workgroup took part in the Tamar Energy Fair in November 2019 and asked the local community to write down any ideas they had for the town council to consider. Another member of the group spoke with Tavistock College students about environmental issues. We held the information session and presentation evening on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2020 with 10 community groups already involved in sustainable environmental initiatives invited to inform the council of their activities. As part of our action plan it was agreed we should research best practice in waste and recycling and the built environment. Reports were prepared by members of the workgroup and did inform waste management practices at the council.

The Covid 19 pandemic curbed our activities and the workgroup was put on the back burner however, as chairperson I continued in lockdown to attend online courses available through the county as well as other courses to further my own learning and understanding. Reports from these courses were circulated to council members.

Of particular importance has been information provided by Devon Communities Together, whose website can be found at: <https://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/devon-community-resilience-forum>.

I took part in a Climate survey in 2021 and the results of this can be found here: <https://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/sites/default/files/users/Bradley%20Hall/Folder/pdf/esizer.com-pdf-resize.pdf>

As well as looking at case studies, including one of Crediton and their flood resilience planning, Devon Communities Together has also provided expertise in the development of Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan, and their role in working across the county in a range of towns and villages, many of whom will be of a similar make up to Tavistock is invaluable. Funding is also available through DCT for Community Resilience Plans, although they must include planning for flood resilience.

The clear message from our experience as a workgroup is that it is essential that every community must deploy all the tools and techniques available to us to help address the climate emergency locally. The importance of working together and building support across the wider community to deliver cooperative solutions is essential. This will enable us all to take practical steps today for ourselves to help reduce the impact of climate change on both our immediate and wider environment.

CLLR Lesley Crawford

Chair, Sustainability and Environment Working Group

July 2022



## WORKING GROUP CALENDAR

### November 2019

#### Community Consultation, Tamar Energy Fair,

**Question presented: What do you think Tavistock can do to reduce energy use and help the environment?**

#### Responses:

LED street lights

Bring the TRAIN back to Tavistock

Car sharing –via social media

Appreciate what Tavistock Town Council does that is of benefit to environmental concerns

Carbon neutral fuel for steam engines

EAUC sustainability leader for Education

Turn it into a sports centre

Use a wheelbarrow/shopping trolley instead of a car

Work with WDBC and DCC to get an integrated low carbon transport plan = 33% CO2

Encourage English Heritage to change policies on conservation issues within the housing stock

Solar panels in a conservation area. Needs consideration to encourage people towards renewable power

Increase access for bikes! Places to park them

MORE...cycle paths! Yes to this!

Cutting back on meat and dairy

Turn down the heat in Butchers Hall!

Milk refills- glass bottles available now in town – no single use plastic

In supermarkets/grocery outlets put a transfer point near checkout to move bought produce into paper bags and leave plastic container behind for them to recycle

Plant more living walls and roofs

Dartmoor Prison: Re-roof when closed with appropriate solar tiles to power Princetown

Support local XR groups

Support local business

Walk to town more

### February 2020

Consultation with Tavistock College Students – Climate Change 2020

### March 2020

Meeting at Town Council offices with organisations identified as working on sustainability or environmental practices in the area.

Groups that presented: Tamar Energy Community, Transition Tavistock Travel Action Group, Transition Tavistock, Tavistock Community Gardening, Plastic Free Tavistock, Precious Plastics, Recycle Devon (DCC), Tavistock Scrapstore, Tidy Tavi, Recycling for Charity

**Courses attended by Chair of SEWG:**

July 2019

Carbon Footprint Workshop – DCC and University of Exeter

August 2019, June 2021, September 2021, March 2022

West Devon Borough Council Climate Change Community Forums

May 2020

Plymouth Climate Summit

September 2020

Rebuilding Sustainable Communities - NALC course

October – November 2020

Climate Change Solutions, 4 week course with Future Learn Open University, University of Exeter.

December 2020 – February 2021

Webinars presented by Devon County Council, as part of Interim Devon Carbon Plan Tamar Energy Community and Mount Kelly Renewable Energy project.

January 2021

Local Councils and Climate Change Emergency workshop

February 2021

Rural Services Network, Rural Transport

May 2022

Devon Community Resilience Forum

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Plymouth Road Cemetery Green Burial Meadow Policy**

Before municipal cemeteries were introduced it was common practice for burials to take place in woodlands, meadows and on private land. There are many individuals today who are concerned about the potential environmental impacts of modern funerals such as loss of trees, wild flowers and wildlife and wish to return to a natural form of interment.

Aware of the concerns of the community and wishing to support and contribute to an environmentally aware lifestyle Tavistock Town Council have set aside the south eastern corner of the cemetery to create a wild flower meadow where natural or green burials can take place. We have been providing a green burial service since 1999, with the first interment taking place in January that year.

A green burial is an alternative to the traditional church burial of the deceased whereby the deceased returns to earth in the most sustainable manner possible. The ethos behind a green burial is to reduce the environmental impact of interment of the deceased.

The concept of our green burial meadow is to provide a peaceful resting place in a manner which is friendly towards nature, wildlife and the environment.

Our meadow is on a gently sloping ground surrounded on three sides by a variety of mature trees. There are two oak trees which have been planted to mark the entrance to the meadow, and a dry stone wall has been built by Town Council staff, to define the meadow from the main Cemetery.

We are keen to ensure that the burial ground remains true to its ethos and it is important that the meadow can be enjoyed as a place of peace and quiet reflection for the bereaved and future generations.

Our meadow allows for remains to be interred in consecrated land using biodegradable materials such as a cardboard or wicker coffin. The burial is simple and the area is left much as nature intended without headstones or clearly marked out graves. As with all interments the location of the grave is recorded on the cemetery plans, and in the Register of Burials in

accordance with the Registration of Burials Act 1864, Births and Deaths Registration Act 1926 and 1953, Registration of Births and Deaths Regulations 1987. Burial records are available to view at the cemetery office on request.

To identify the grave a micro-chip with its own unique serial number is placed by each burial plot. This allows the Cemetery Administrator to update our plan of the area and to enable family and friends to locate where their loved ones are laid to rest.

Those who choose a meadow burial will be contributing towards creating a haven for wildflowers, insects, birds and mammals.

### **Memorials**

To maintain the meadow as natural as possible and to encourage wildlife, wildflowers and trees to thrive certain restrictions will be necessary.

Visitors must take care to create as little disturbance as possible to the flora and fauna therefore walking to individual graves is not encouraged as this causes pathways which damage the wildlife.

The placing of flowers and memorials on graves is not permitted. The meadow itself is a natural memorial for all to appreciate.

Fresh flowers may be placed in or on the graves during a funeral service, but please remove cellophane, oasis, ribbon or any other non biodegradable wrappings. Tavistock Town Council reserve the right to remove flowers placed on graves as part of routine care and maintenance. Artificial flowers are not permitted and no vases or containers should be left in the meadow.

There is a Book of Remembrance located in the Cemetery Waiting Room to allow a memorial to be recorded; alternatively, you may like to consider providing a wooden bench with memorial plaque in the Tavistock area to commemorate a loved one (with the agreement of the landowner). If you would like to have a memorial arranged, please contact the Cemetery Administrator.

### **Maintaining the Meadow**

The green burial meadow is managed primarily for the benefit of the wildlife and the natural environment. The grass is managed twice a year as required, in order to encourage and protect the local wildlife and is left

as a meadow providing a natural peaceful place to pay your respects. It must therefore be appreciated that the usual neat & tidy appearance of a cemetery will not apply to this burial area.

Visitors are reminded that, in keeping with the natural appearance of the meadow, no litter bins are provided at the burial ground; it is expected that visitors will take their litter home.

Horticultural chemicals will not be used, unless exceptional circumstances dictate otherwise. In this event only a spot treatment will be used.

Tavistock Town Council will carry out any required maintenance of the green burial meadow.

Families and friends that wish for a burial to take place at our green burial meadow must have in mind the following:

- ☒ Tavistock Town Council offers burial plots based on the natural development of the meadow and individual locations cannot be reserved or specified.
- ☒ A deed granting Exclusive Right of Burial will be issued for each burial. This applies to graves which previously were not issued a deed but where there will be future interments.
- ☒ Interments may take place with or without the services of a funeral director. For those who wish to have a non-religious ceremony, a humanist may be used. The Administrator of the Cemetery must be advised beforehand and approve any ceremony and the person conducting it, on behalf of Tavistock Town Council.
- ☒ Prior to each burial, the Cemetery Administrator must be given a copy of the authority to dispose of body (green form). It is illegal for a burial to take place without this.
- ☒ To protect the environment, it is requested that bodies should not be embalmed. The Cemetery Administrator should be advised prior to burial if this has taken place.
- ☒ Only materials that are bio-degradable and preferably from renewable sources may be used for interments, such as wood. Your funeral director can arrange this for you or the cemetery office can provide information on obtaining a bio-degradable coffin. Tavistock Town Council must be advised prior to burial if for any reason the coffin does not meet these criteria.
- ☒ No exhumations will be permitted under any circumstances except by lawful authority.

- ☒ The scattering of seed and planting of trees and other plants in the burial ground is not permitted and is strictly controlled by Tavistock Town Council.
- ☒ No gardening or cultivation whatsoever is permitted.
- ☒ No wildlife shall be introduced into the meadow.
- ☒ This is a natural burial area with no hard standing paths, hand rails or mobility aids provided and so visitors should recognise that they need to take care on uneven and possibly muddy or slippery ground. The meadow is uneven in places and those with wheelchairs and mobility aids may find it a little difficult to move freely around the burial locations. Please discuss any special requirements that you have with the Cemetery Administrator when considering a booking or attending a burial.
- ☒ Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult at all times.

### **Access to the Meadow**

Access to the cemetery and in particular the green burial meadow is 365 days a year from dawn to dusk however but please be aware that at certain times access to individual graves may be restricted, for instance when an adjacent grave is being dug. Any disturbance will be kept to a minimum.

All visitors to the Cemetery must give due consideration and respect to other ceremonies and services that may be taking place at the time of their visit, regardless of the religious or spiritual persuasion concerned.

Tavistock Town Council reserves the right to close all or part of the cemetery at any time and without prior notice if in the interest of public safety.

Tavistock Town Council reserves the right to update and amend the Green Burial Policy as and when deemed appropriate. Significant changes to the policy will be communicated as soon as reasonably practicable.

The Green Burial Policy should be read in conjunction with the Cemetery Rules and Regulations.