



SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN COUNCIL

Green Initiatives Policy

Version	Adopted Policy Date	Minute Reference	Review Date
V3	October 2023	FC 142-23	October 2024



Canopy of trees at Bridge End Gardens, providing a beautiful natural environment.

At its Full Council meeting on 8th April 2019, Saffron Walden Town Council (SWTC) resolved to declare a climate emergency and committed to the following:

1. To continue to work with the local community, business, schools, district and county councils, with the intention to make Saffron Walden and Essex Carbon Neutral by 2050 following recommendations from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).
2. To commit to continued working with other local authority organisations and appropriate government departments to determine and implement best practice methods to limit Global Warming to less than one and half degrees Celsius.
3. Determines to place this issue on future agendas to agree strategies and action plans.

In considering local initiatives and actions, the Council further agreed that it should:

- aim to create a truly green town, with new open spaces, more trees, reduced use of plastics and improved connectivity for walking and cycling;
- aim to ensure that new homes are built to high environmental standards to reduce carbon emissions and to make them affordable to run;
- take positive measures to reduce the illegal levels of pollution by improving monitoring, cycling and public transport, increasing vehicle charging points and pushing for road changes, noting the Public Health England advice that they are no safe levels of air pollution;

- support allotments and local food production;
- continue to move towards the use of electric rather than petrol- or diesel-powered vehicles and tools;
- endeavour to hold other authorities to account for their part in this.

In October 2019 and in light of the growing need for communities to act, and to act now, the Town Council amended its resolution; aiming to be carbon neutral by 2030.

Recognising that words are cheap and easy, the Town Council is aware that a climate change declaration must be backed up and supported by actual, local tangible action; otherwise, there is no point. To that end, SWTC has undertaken the following:

- Reduced mowing and hedge cutting in its public open spaces, allowing the growth of flora and fauna
- Working with the local church in its furtherance of becoming an “Eco-Church”, in the creation of wildflower areas
- Prohibited the use of glyphosate in Town Council managed green spaces
- Planting of new hedges and trees. The Council hosted tree planting days in November 2019 and November 2021, attracting over 50 community volunteers - A great time was had by all.
- Purchase of battery-operated gardening tools and equipment (rather than petrol); this is not only having a positive impact on the environment but also is of benefit to our employees
- Replacement of petrol and diesel vans and cars with electric vehicles
- To continue supporting allotments and the provision of local food produce. We will provide allotments to both the public and the community. We will continue working with Dig-it Community Group in their outreach projects with the provision of allotment space. We will support local food producers through our market and retail sales at the Tourist Information Centre
- Built and installed bird and bat boxes in Bridge End Garden and the cemetery
- Supported litter campaigns and local walk to school days
- Removed the use of plastic cups in all our venues
- Installed 10 drinking fountains in and around the town centre

Whilst we do not have any power or authority over the creation of green spaces, we lobby developers and the local planning authority to improve the quality and value of public spaces in new developments. As a principle, the Town Council will adopt new public open space to ensure that it is maintained and managed in an appropriate and environmentally friendly manner.

SWTC lobby Essex County Council (the local Highway Authority) to improve connectivity for walking and cycling in and around town. We are clear and forthright about what action must be taken to achieve a greener, cleaner town. We make representations in new planning applications to try to ensure the Department of Transport's hierarchy of use is maintained in putting pedestrians first and cyclists second. We ask developers to provide porous and easy access from their development into town.

We work alongside and support local community groups and activity related to environmental protection and preservation. We supported local young people in 2019 when they held a climate change demonstration, we engage with an environmental community group, Saffron Walden Against Climate Change (SWACC).

SWTC promoted the "Clean Air Day" in October 2020, and June 2022 raising local awareness and asking people to make a change or commitment to their way of life to improve local air quality. Our market stall was very well received with residents pledging to make tangible changes to their ways of life in order to protect our world.

In 2021 a carbon audit report was commissioned to assess the Council's current carbon footprint, to identify the particular areas where further improvements can be made in our working practices and how we can achieve our net zero target.

SWTC acknowledges there is still much to do but that every little step and every individual contribution helps towards reducing our global impact on climate change. To quote from David Attenborough "*Real success can only come if there is a change in our societies and in our economics and in our politics*". Saffron Walden Town Council remains committed to reducing its carbon emissions and will continue to work with and support individuals and community groups in their efforts to this same goal.

Pictorial evidence of environmental initiatives introduced by SWTC from 2018 to date



Bee hives introduced into Bridge End Gardens, providing locally produced honey which is then sold in the Tourist Information Centre (managed by the SWTC)

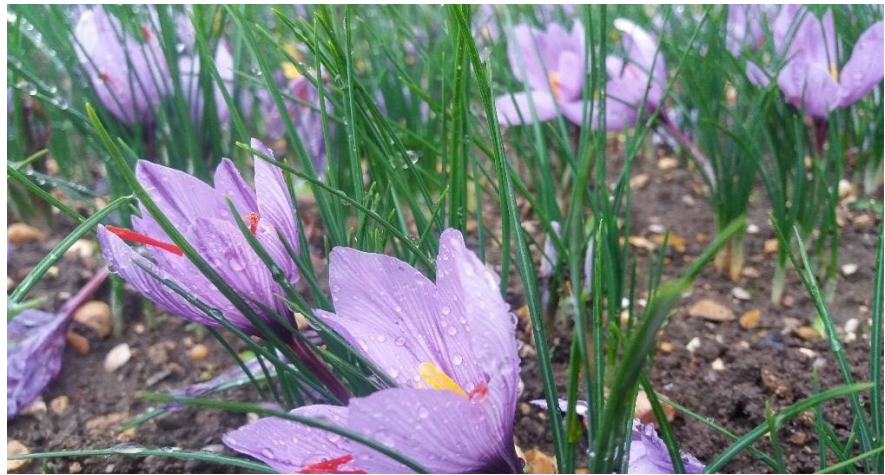


Panoramic view of Town Council greenhouses where seeds are cultivated and grown.

Saffron Walden Town Council plants over 3000 plants and shrubs per annum with many being grown locally and/or in the Town Council's own greenhouses. This is not only more economically viable for the Council but also negates the need for van and lorry movement involved in the purchase of mature plants



Planting of new trees on The Common to complement the existing, mature trees on site.



Saffron Walden Crocus – the plant from which the town is named. Grown in Bridge End Gardens to ensure continuation of this historic and important plant to the town. Given its considerable value (£75 per gramme) only a few are grown and these parts of the gardens are locked at night time.



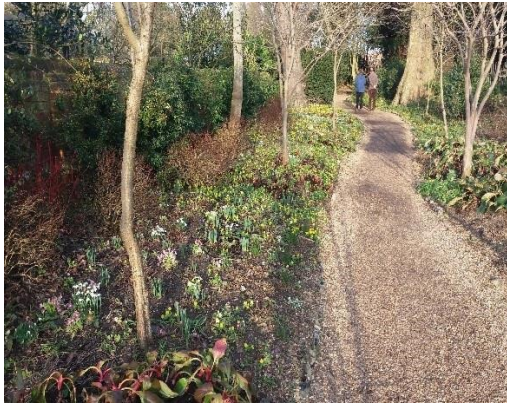
Auricula Theatre displaying plants grown from seed by Town Council staff





Ponds at Bridge End Gardens – a haven for wildlife





A range of spring and summer planting – note those areas intentionally left wild. SWTC works very hard to achieve the right balance of ensuring that gardens and public open spaces look tidy and well kept, along with allowing nature to grow; encouraging wildlife into the gardens.





The stunning rose gardens, a haven for bees, bugs and wildlife



In April 2019, Saffron Walden Town Council purchased a range of battery-operated machinery. These replace petrol or diesel operated equipment and are

friendlier to the environment as well as being more user-friendly for the operatives; reducing the risk of Hand Arm Vibration (HAVs).





Seven new drinking fountains installed at various locations around the town. These provide free drinking water to all; people can either drink directly from the fountain or refill water bottles. Locations include outside community centres and in play areas. The fountain in Market Square has also been refurbished, providing clean drinking water.



Bird boxes installed in the Cemetery, managed and operated by Saffron Walden Town Council



SWTC's first electric van, purchased October 2018 – with a second one purchased in January 2022. The Council has committed to replacing its fleet of petrol and diesel vehicles with electric as they are renewed under the Council's asset replacement programme.



The Town Council has installed a number of new recycling bins around the town, encouraging recycling of paper, glass and plastic.



Composting is the primary method of disposing of green waste.
Pictured, new compost bins built by Town Council staff



Willow fence being built by Town Council staff using branches from Town Council willow trees which had required pruning or cutting back



Water troughs to collect rain water. These are placed throughout the Town Council gardens and public open spaces (always in a safe and secure area) and used for watering plants



Footpath being installed in June 2019, using recycled paving taken up from a hospital in London. This recycled paving not only helped to reduce the cost but also to reuse these lovely paving stones which would otherwise have been crushed and used as hardcore / rubble. The weathered look also helped the paving to blend into the existing environment.



Since 2019, SWTC has planted over 1000 new trees and whips across the town, this includes at Anglo-American Playing Fields, Herbert's Farm, The Common and Lime Avenue.

Local residents and community volunteers have been involved with over 50 at the tree planting in October 2020.





A further well supported community tree planting took place in November 2021 at Lime Avenue to create a further wild-life haven and natural resting place for bugs, birds and bees. This project formed part of the Council's commemoration plans for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June 2022. The woodland was planted on half the land between the new football pitches and the Slade, with the other half being left as a wildflower meadow. Over 500 British native trees were planted.

In 2020, the Town Council finished its programme of refurbishment works to The Common, this included upgrading all footpaths, new streetlights and gym equipment. The new and lit paths, encourage walking (rather than driving) into the town centre, providing a safer pedestrian route. Whilst walking, people can also stop off at the newly installed gym to get fit!





The Town Council manages 2 allotment sites and encourages all allotment holders to support positive climate change action and initiatives. To support this practice, the Council hosts an annual “Allotment Award” with prizes awarded for a range of projects, including most environmentally friendly plot and most sustainable plot. (Winners from October 2021, with the former Mayor Cllr Richard Porch)



The Town Council undertook a two phase Road Closure Consultation with residents in August 2021 and December 2021. Overwhelmingly, residents voted for the Market Square to be used for other activities rather than parking in phase one. Phase two concentrated on how this should be managed. A majority of residents voted for the Market Square to be closed to vehicles with this decision now progressing, it is hoped this outcome will be reached in 2023. Not only will the space be safer, more sociable and support the local economy it will recognise reduced CO₂ emissions in the centre of town supporting initiatives for cleaner air.



SWTC supporting and promoting Clean Air Day in June 2022; The Town Mayor, Cllr James de Vries chatting with a resident

Asset Management

Since 2019, the Town Council has been upgrading lighting in all of its buildings, including the town hall, Golden Acre Community Centre and street lights. New lights are energy efficient; LEDs and solar panels are being considered for community buildings to make support the Council's carbon neutral ambition.