SPONGE 2020

Co-creating a climate-resilient Somerset

The SPONGE 2020 project is an Interreg 2 Seas project, part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund, which is working across Europe to use nature-based solutions to prevent flooding and make communities more resilient to climate change.

About the project

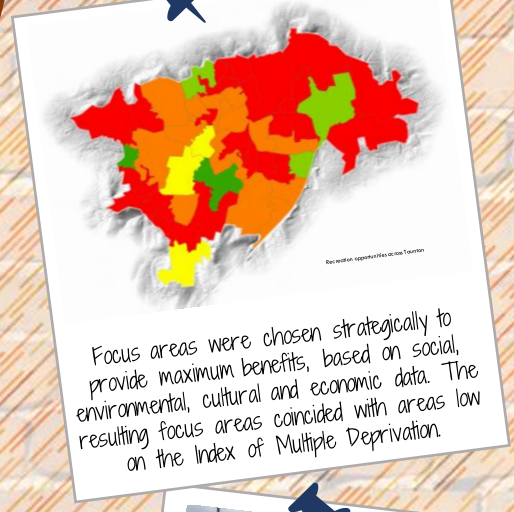
In the Somerset pilot, we are working across Taunton to implement solutions which:

- Hold **4,500m³** of water
- Save **10%** compared to traditional solutions
- Provide **multiple benefits** especially in deprived areas
- Develop **community led** partnerships

Our work is evidence-led, participatory and place-based – community involvement and using local knowledge is essential.

Nature-based solutions bring additional benefits for aesthetics and wildlife

Education and engagement is key to the success of the project



Focus areas were chosen strategically to provide maximum benefits, based on social, environmental, cultural and economic data. The resulting focus areas coincided with areas low on the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Stakeholders & engagement

The Somerset pilot is led by **Westcountry Rivers Trust** and **Somerset County Council** and we have engaged with

- Schools
- Volunteer Groups
- Garden Centres
- Wessex Water
- Borough Councils
- Neighbourhood Groups

Measures & solutions

We are creating a range of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) in schools, community spaces and residential areas, including:

- Swales
- Raingardens
- Planters
- Filter strips
- Water butts
- Ponds

Involving local volunteer groups helps ensure the long-term success of the project outputs

Raingarden planter created with residents

Building retention ponds at Longrun Meadow

Case Study: Selworthy Special School

Issue: Selworthy school is within a surface water flood zone, which means it is at risk of flooding during heavy rain.

Action: When we first visited the school we worked with staff and identified an area where water runs off the playground, builds up and causes issues at the emergency access area. It was decided that building a raingarden in a nearby grassed area could take water from the paved area and reduce this flood risk, while also providing a space for the children to play and learn and a habitat for wildlife.

Once we had an initial plan, we held sessions with the staff, students and parents. The students were encouraged to test diff erent smells, textures and colours, learn about seeds and types of plants, and use paint, craft materials and pictures to create a collage of what they wanted in their raingarden.

The second session was a drop-in for staff and parents. Posters explained about SuDS and showed a conceptual design for the raingarden. Attendees were invited to note down any concerns and suggestions. Responses were very positive, and the attendees had a wealth of creat ive ideas that added value to design, not only aesthetically but also in terms of the benefits the children will be able to gain from the space.

After the main construction work was completed, a final session was held to get the students and parents involved with planting up the raingarden. Children of all abilities took part, and there was a great turn out of enthusiastic family and friends.

Outcome: The finished raingarden is now an accessible and interactive part of the school grounds, with interesting colours, textures and smells creating a sensory and educational space, while also reducing the risk and impact of surface water flooding.

Finished raingarden at Selworthy school