

Thornhackett PC Environment Champion Report October 2026.

1. Preparedness or Resilience

The Prince of Wales recently visited Ilminster. He is promoting the “Ready Together” initiative. There is a Ready Together website, helping communities prepare for emergencies and extreme weather. The National Emergencies Trust has prepared a free toolkit available from the website, the Prince is their Patron.

Dorset Council have launched their Climate Adaptation plan and are currently populating a steering group. They are presenting a workshop on Climate Ready Communities at the Dorset COP, which is on the 14th November at Kingston Maurward. Local collaborations with parish councils and community groups will be key to distributing information and assisting with building resilience to all the changes in the climate and environment that will impact us. The event is free to attend although a donation is welcome.

Next year is forecast to be hotter than 2026, if El Nino is as damaging as predicted.

The creation of a cool space, such as in the village hall, for local residents to gather, when required, would be ideal. Many residents reported that they struggled to cool their homes during the extreme heat this summer. <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/tackling-the-climate-emergency/cutting-emissions-from-our-own-operations/climate-adaptation/community-groups-can-help-in-a-heatwave/> some guidance can be found here from South Oxfordshire Council with helpful links on creating cool community places.

I recommend that a proactive stance be taken on this initiative, to be prepared for next summer. I am happy to work with the appointed councillor on this.

Community Emergency Resilience Plans are being prepared by other Town and Parish councils, there is guidance on the Government website. The commencement of a community resilience process, with an initial stage of a local area risk assessment, could be undertaken by the PC here.

2. Environment and Local Plan. The revised NPPF I believe presents an emerging importance for Parish Councils role in the planning process, and was discussed in September’s report. Dorset Council are now preparing a new Local Plan with a new Scoping Consultation on their website, submissions to which close on the 26th October. It broadly seeks ideas on what the plan should cover, how Dorset should grow, and how people should be involved. I recommend that we can try to protect and promote the PC’s Green Action Plan and Biodiversity Policy, through comments in this consultation. I recommend that Councillors as Individuals and the Parish as a Community body consider responding, if not already. I recommend that the PC share their thoughts on the Biodiversity Policy and the Local Plan process in an agenda item at a future meeting.

3. Green Action Plan: Avenue of Trees. The last report sought formal support from the PC to request access to local land for tree planting to accord with the GAP, can assistance be identified and confirmed by the PC please?

4. Habitat protection: Some members of Sustainable Thornford have been taking part in the Great Big Dorset Hedge Project, organised by Dorset CAN. We have had a busy Summer surveying hedgerows, farmers benefit from a free initial report on the areas surveyed, which assists and supports their stewardship and funding initiatives. Volunteers are always welcome to this worthwhile project! Please search dorsetcan.org for details. Hedge planting and some experience of hedge laying is planned for this winter.

The founder of the project states that “hedges are like linear forests”, vitally important habitats in our countryside for wildlife and also for carbon sequestration.

Wessex Water/Water Storage: Wessex Water reported that at the 5th October reservoir levels were at 27% of their capacity. Groundwater levels are below long term averages. A Rain water storage initiative locally should be another priority for the PC in my opinion. I would like to suggest that the Watermark town route with a water storage initiative and replicating the Wriggle Action group activities of storage linked to the Allotments be investigated and pursued by the PC