Title

Somerset Sustainable Futures: Inspiring Green and Digital Skills in Secondary Schools.

Brief Summary

The Somerset Sustainable Futures event took place at Taunton Rugby Club on Monday 9th February 2026, welcoming Secondary and Special Schools pupils from across Somerset for a day dedicated to green skills, digital innovation, and youth voice. The event aimed to help young people explore future career pathways in sustainability and technology, while giving them a platform to share their ideas for shaping a greener future.

The wider Somerset Sustainable Futures initiative supports schools and teachers to embed a meaningful green curriculum and raise awareness of emerging green careers. This is achieved through the co-creation of relevant learning experiences and resources in partnership with Somerset businesses, local stakeholders, and—most importantly—the young people of Somerset themselves.

Context

The Somerset Sustainable Futures event brought together employers, educators, and young people to explore emerging career pathways in digital innovation and sustainability. Through interactive exhibitions and student-led presentations, exhibitors were able to showcase their industries, spark curiosity in future careers, and build meaningful connections with the next generation of Somerset's workforce.

To set the scene, pupils were welcomed with an introductory video from **Neil Trevett**, Vice President of NVIDIA, who spoke about sustainable futures and the importance of developing green and digital skills for tomorrow's world. This was followed by a session led by **Dr Beth Lane**, who introduced children to the fundamentals of artificial intelligence—helping them understand what AI is, what it is not, and how it already shapes the world around them.



Challenge

The central challenge posed to pupils at the Somerset Sustainable Futures event was the thought provoking question: *“Does Rapid Technological Advancement Support or Threaten a Sustainable Future?”*

Children were asked to prepare and deliver their own presentations exploring this theme, encouraging them to think critically about the role of technology in society. This activity placed young people’s voices at the heart of the discussion—celebrating their ideas, creativity, and problem solving skills. By considering both the benefits and potential risks of technological development, pupils were able to explore how innovation can support environmental sustainability while also reflecting on the responsibilities that come with digital advancements.



Solution

In their presentations, children highlighted that sustainability is the practice of meeting current essential human needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet them.

Pupils also explored how AI is impacting our world in both a positive and negative way. The pupils explained that AI can take over job opportunities, it can also support AI companies to make commitments to sustainability, for example: AI could design better renewable energy sources. This is good for society, but it can create a much bigger carbon footprint and uses millions of litres of water. This isn't good for sustainability as many countries cannot get clean water. We need to focus on this instead of wasting opportunities to help other countries.

Impact

The event had a strong impact on pupils, giving them the opportunity to come together, collaborate in small groups, and confidently present their ideas. Children enjoyed taking part in the careers fair, where they could explore a wide range of industries and listen to presentations from other schools. The interactive nature of the fair made it particularly engaging and memorable—with pupils especially enthusiastic about the hands-on activities and the free resources they were able to take away.

Their feedback reflected the variety of learning experiences that captured their interest throughout the day:

- *"We learnt lots about different ways to be sustainable and how other businesses are sustainable."*
- *"Different ways to make product in a more friendly way and there are lots of opportunities for jobs and different ways to do college."*
- *"Yes, I learnt to be more sustainable by recycling more."*
- *"I learnt that there are many opportunities and jobs that I am very interested in that I didn't know about before"*
- *"Yes, I learnt what there is to do with jobs and how sustainability in future can help"*

Employers also highlighted the value of the event. One exhibitor shared:
"Brilliant, it was interactive and offered a range of experiences from different sectors. I think having the students go around the careers fair in small groups made the encounters more meaningful, as each student had the chance to speak 1:1 with employers and ask specific questions. The kids were delightful—really polite and asked interesting, engaging questions—so I felt they took something positive out of the day, which is lovely!"

Together, these experiences helped spark curiosity, broaden horizons, and build excitement around future green and digital career pathways.




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Reflection

Pupils left the event with a deeper understanding of sustainability, technology, and the wide range of careers connected to both. Many reflected on new learning about clean energy, how ocean depth is measured, and the surprising number of jobs that

rely on technology. Children also explored the positive impacts of technology, learning how it can support the environment as well as everyday life. They shared new insights into artificial intelligence, recognising the many different perspectives on how AI helps society. Importantly, pupils recognised that even in natural environments, technology plays a vital role. They also gained clarity about future job interests and the skills they may need to pursue them.

Dr Beth Lane from AI In Schools shared " *AI in Schools was delighted to be involved in both the Primary and Secondary Somerset Sustainable Futures events. The energy and enthusiasm from the pupils was fantastic, and it was inspiring to see such thoughtful presentations and research from young people already engaging with important global challenges. It was particularly encouraging to see a strong focus on the environmental impact of technology and the role innovation and AI can play in building a more sustainable future. With so many employers involved and a wide range of hands-on, engaging activities, the events created a brilliant opportunity for pupils to explore real-world careers and ideas. Initiatives like this are incredibly important because young people need the opportunity to develop AI literacy, understand how technology is shaping the world around them, and feel empowered to become creators and problem-solvers in the future. It was a real pleasure to be part of such an inspiring and impactful initiative"*

Next Steps

Building on the success of the event, the next steps include expanding the Somerset Sustainable Futures programme by offering additional workshops, resources, and school based activities throughout the year. During the event, pupils identified several Somerset businesses they would like to invite into their schools to deliver more -in-depth sessions about their industries. This creates a clear opportunity to strengthen direct employer engagement and support children's curiosity through -real-world, hands-on- learning experiences.

Future plans also include developing more practical digital and green skills projects, deepening partnerships with local employers, and creating opportunities for pupils to revisit their learning through follow- up challenges. These continued activities will help embed sustainability and digital literacy more deeply within the curriculum while ensuring young people remain- at the heart of shaping Somerset's green future.