



Somerset Rivers Authority Joint Scrutiny Panel Paper

Title: Flood Action Plan Review and future strategy

RECOMMENDATION

The SRA Joint Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider and comment on progress to date with reviewing the Somerset Flood Action Plan and provide any recommendations to help shape the work.

Purpose of the item:

The purpose of this item is to provide Scrutiny Panel with an update on progress with delivering each of the actions within the original 20 Year Flood Action Plan and to set out the next steps for updating the plan.

Background and context

In January 2014 the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs visited Somerset to see the effects of the flooding. He challenged Somerset to develop an Action Plan for a long-term sustainable future for the Somerset Levels and Moors.

The Somerset Levels and Moors 20 Year Flood Action Plan was published on 6th March 2014. It focussed on the catchments of the rivers Parrett, Tone, Axe and Brue.

A vision for the Somerset Levels and Moors was agreed by stakeholders, namely:

We see the Somerset Levels and Moors in 2030 as a thriving, nature-rich wetland landscape, with grassland farming taking place on the majority of the land. The impact of extreme weather events is being reduced by land and water management in both upper catchments and the flood plain and by greater community resilience.
(Reference: The Somerset 'Task Force', 2014)

It was recognised at the time that determining the long term sustainable future for the Somerset Levels and Moors (SLM) would require careful assessment of the options and evidence and difficult decisions around investments and how the community can adapt.

The plan was broken down into 5 workstreams with lists of actions.:

- Dredging and river management
- Land management – recognising that what happens in the upper and mid catchment has an impact on the lowlands
- Urban run-off

Mitigation actions:

- Infrastructure resilience (road, rail, sewerage, power and telecommunications)
- Building local resilience

The original plan had a total of 60 individual actions identified under the 5 workstreams. In addition there were 14 additional actions under the heading of complex, interrelated and unfunded.

In order to take the plan forward it was recognised that, a renewed, coordinated and joined-up approach to addressing flooding and resilience issues upon the Somerset Levels and Moors was required. **The Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) emerged directly from this recognition.** The SRA was launched on January 31, 2015 to play a key role in flood protection for the whole of Somerset.

Latest status

It is almost 5 years since the original Flood Action Plan was published and almost 4 years since the SRA came into existence. It is the right time to reflect on the original plan to assess what has been achieved; what has yet to be achieved; consider whether some of the actions are still the right actions and, consider what changes need to be made to the plan to ensure it is fit for purpose into the future.

There are significant political changes underway which will shape the way in which flood risk is managed in the future. These include, but are not limited to, the Brexit process, the publication of Defra’s 25 Year Plan and forthcoming legislation such as the Agriculture Bill and the Environmental Principles and Governance Bill.

Next Steps

The Plan has been reviewed with regards to what actions have been completed; which are underway and which are yet to be started. See table A.

Workstream	No. Actions	No. Complete	%
Dredging & River Mgt	20	15	75%
Land Management	11	5	45%
Urban Run-off	8	2	25%
Infrastructure Resilience	6	6	100%

Building Local Resilience	8	6	75%
Complex, interrelated	14	6	42%
Total	67	40	60%

The more challenging piece of work will be identifying what else needs to be in the plan to deliver the shared vision of the SRA for the next 20 to 25 Years. This will require the SRA partners and stakeholders coming together to agree a shared vision for Somerset, an agreed plan that underpins that vision and a clear strategy for delivering the plan. It is anticipated this work will take several months, starting in January 2019

Phase 1 'dates'	Phase 2 'dates'	Phase 3 'dates'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the plan line by line with SRA partners (technical review) Update to reflect changes to schemes Remove items no longer relevant e.g. addressed another way Remove items deemed no longer necessary / deliverable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess what's left against current context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brexit Government legislation SRA Partner strategies and policies Climate change predictions Review aims & objectives with Partners Identify the gaps short, medium, long term Draft high level plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with stakeholders and wider community Update the high level plan Flesh out the detail and identify short, medium and long term priorities Draft updated FAP in consultation with SRA partners Consult with wider community on detailed plan Finalise and publish the plan

Recommendation:

The SRA Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider and comment on progress to date with reviewing the Somerset Flood Action Plan and provide any recommendations to help shape the work.

Date: 7th January 2019

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