

Somerset Rivers Authority Joint Scrutiny Panel

Flood Action Plan Review

RECOMMENDATION

The SRA Joint Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

1. Note and comment on progress on delivery of actions within the current Flood Action Plan.
2. Note and comment on the proposed approach to preparing, and scope of, a new Flood Action Plan.

1 Purpose of the item:

This paper updates the Panel on the latest progress with delivering the current Somerset 20 Year Flood Action Plan and also summarises progress with preparing a new Flood Action Plan.

The current Flood Action Plan can be accessed on the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) website - [Somerset's 20 Year Flood Action Plan - Somerset Rivers Authority](#)

2 Background and Context

The Somerset Rivers Authority is seeking to review the Somerset 20 Year Flood Action Plan (FAP) and produce a new plan that will shape the activities of the Somerset Rivers Authority for the foreseeable future. The current FAP was published in 2014 whilst Somerset was still in the midst of dealing with the devastating floods of the 2013/14 winter.

The new plan will have to take account of the views of all the SRA partners, stakeholders, and the public. The SRA is funded through council tax and as such it is important that the plan reflects the priorities of the residents of Somerset. The plan should not duplicate plans strategies which already exist.

The SRA was established to deliver an extra level of flood risk and resilience for Somerset. The SRA does not substitute for the roles and responsibilities of flood risk management authorities in Somerset. The SRA plan should be developed specifically to ensure that the SRA delivers an additional level of protection from, and resilience to, flooding. The plan should set out SRA aims and objectives that consider the short medium and long-term needs of Somerset in responding to the risks of flooding.

The current Flood Action Plan established six key objectives in response to the 2013/14 flooding. Requests for funding from the SRA are assessed against the six objectives.

- Reduce the frequency, depth and duration of flooding
- Maintain access for communities and business
- Increase resilience to flooding for families, agriculture, businesses, communities, and wildlife
- Make the most of the special characteristics of Somerset (with internationally important biodiversity, environment and cultural heritage)
- Ensure strategic road and rail connectivity, both within Somerset and through the county to the South West peninsula

SRA Grant Guidelines were updated in March 2021. Addressing the impacts of climate change was added as a criteria which bids to the SRA will be assessed against. The SRA will ‘encourage projects which directly support Somerset’s response to climate change by increasing resilience and encouraging adaptation to the effects of climate change.’

3 Progress with delivery of the current Flood Action Plan

The current Flood Action Plan has approximately 61 separate actions listed within it. The number is approximate because many of the actions listed in the plan are actually quite high level objectives which actually require many separate actions to complete. Many of the actions set out in the existing plan have been completed, the majority of the rest are in progress and a few have yet to begin.

Workstream	No. Actions	No. Complete	%
Dredging & River Mgt	20	15	75%
Land Management	11	5	45%
Urban Run-off	8	2	25%
Resilient Infrastructure	6	6	100%
Building Local Resilience	8	6	75%
Complex, interrelated & unfunded	14	6	42%
Total	67	40	60%

A further 19 (28%) of the 67 Flood Action Plan actions are currently in progress towards completion.

4 Preparing a new Flood Action Plan

Work on preparing a new plan is expected to get underway by the end of July. Consultancy support is being commissioned to aid in the preparation of the plan. The consultants will be closely managed by the Somerset Rivers Authority team. Regular updates will be given to the SRA Board.

The scope of the commission is to review and update the Somerset 20 Year Flood Action Plan (FAP) with the final output being the publication of a successor to the existing plan. To successfully complete the task it will be necessary to undertake a review of the existing FAP; understand the roles and responsibilities of each risk management authority in Somerset, consult with SRA partner organisations, stakeholders and the general public; understand the role of the SRA within the flood and water management sector in Somerset; and, in consultation with the SRA Board produce a strategy / plan which clearly defines how its aims and objectives will be realised over the lifetime of the plan.

The target date for completion of a new plan is April 2022.

Preparation of a new Flood Action Plan will be an opportunity to reflect on the existing FAP objectives and actions and assess whether the objectives need to be changed or added to; review the actions not yet being delivered to assess whether they still need to be delivered or whether alternative solutions now exist; reflect on what are the short, medium and long-term priorities for Somerset in relation to flood risk; and, understand where the SRA can offer the greatest level of additionality to help address that flood risk.

The SRA has a wide range of important stakeholders which includes, but is not limited to, local flood groups across the county, National Farmers Union, individual landowners, Somerset Catchment Partnership, community groups on the Somerset Levels and Moors, Wessex Water, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Exmoor National Park Authority, National Trust, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Flooding on the Levels Action Group, West Country Rivers Trust. The views of stakeholders will be captured to inform the preparation of the plan.

Scrutiny Panel members will have the opportunity to feed into the development of the plan as part of the wider consultation through their parent organisation. The next Joint Scrutiny Panel meeting is scheduled for January 2022. A well-developed draft of a new plan will be available for review by the Scrutiny Panel at this meeting. Scrutiny comments will then be passed on to the SRA Board at its March 2022 meeting in advance of production of the final version of the new plan.

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Date: 24 June, 2021

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