

Joint Scrutiny Panel of Somerset Rivers Authority (virtual meetings)

Monday 28 February 2022
10.00 am Virtual meeting



To: The Members of the Joint Scrutiny Panel of Somerset Rivers Authority
(virtual meetings)

Cllr S Coles (Chair), Cllr J Cousins (Vice-Chair), Cllr J Nash, Cllr Smedley, Cllr Betty, Cllr A Groskop, Cllr J Hunt, Cllr L Lisgo, Cllr R Pailthorpe, Cllr P Maxwell, D Vigar and W Welland

All Somerset County Council Members are invited to attend meetings of the Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees.

Issued By Scott Wooldridge, Strategic Manager - Governance and Risk and Monitoring Officer -
Date Not Specified

For further information about the meeting, please contact Jamie Jackson on 01823 357628 or
Email: jajackson@somerset.gov.uk or

Guidance about procedures at the meeting follows the printed agenda.

This meeting will be open to the public and press, subject to the passing of any resolution under Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

This agenda and the attached reports and background papers are available on request prior to the meeting in large print, Braille, audio tape & disc and can be translated into different languages. They can also be accessed via the council's website on

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AGENDA

Item Joint Scrutiny Panel of Somerset Rivers Authority (virtual meetings) - 10.00 am
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****Public Guidance notes contained in agenda annexe****

1 **Membership updates**

2 **Apologies for absence**

3 **Declarations of Interest**

Details of all Members' interests in District, Town and Parish Councils can be viewed on the Council Website at [County Councillors membership of Town, City, Parish or District Councils](#) and this will be displayed in the meeting room (Where relevant).

The Statutory Register of Member's Interests can be inspected via request to the Democratic Service Team.

4 **Minutes from the previous meeting held on Friday 2 July 2021** (Pages 9 - 14)

The Committee is asked to confirm the minutes are accurate.

5 **Public Question Time**

The Chair will allow members of the public to ask a question or make a statement about any matter on the agenda for this meeting. **These questions may be taken during the meeting, when the relevant agenda item is considered, at the Chair's discretion.**

6 **SRA Funded Highways Enhanced Maintenance Programme** (Pages 15 - 26)

Possible exclusion of the press and public

PLEASE NOTE: Although the main report for agenda item 6 is not confidential, a supporting appendix available to the Panel contains exempt information and is therefore marked 'confidential – not for publication'. At any point if the Panel wishes to discuss information within the Appendix, then the Panel will be asked to agree the following resolution to exclude the press and public: -

Exclusion of the Press and Public

To consider passing a resolution having been duly proposed and seconded under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the press and public from the meeting, on the basis that if they were present during the business to be transacted there would be a likelihood of disclosure of exempt information, within the meaning of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972: Reason: Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

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(including the authority holding that information)

7 **Update on SRA Community Resilience Activities** (Pages 27 - 32)

8 **Quarter 2 2021-22 Finance Report** (Pages 33 - 38)

Possible exclusion of the press and public

PLEASE NOTE: Although the main report for agenda item 8 is not confidential, a supporting appendix available to the Panel contains exempt information and is therefore marked 'confidential – not for publication'. At any point if the Panel wishes to discuss information within the Appendix, then the Panel will be asked to agree the following resolution to exclude the press and public: -

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9 **2022-23 Enhanced Programme and Budget** (Pages 39 - 50)

10 **Flood Action Plan Review - update on progress and programme for programme for review of the Flood Action Plan** (Pages 51 - 54)

11 **Date of Next Meeting**

Friday 8th July 2022 10.00 – 13.00.

12 **Any other urgent items of business**

The Chair may raise any items of urgent business.

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General Guidance notes for Somerset County Council virtual committee meetings

1. **Virtual Council Public Meetings**

Please be advised that this committee meeting is not subject to the 1972 Local Government Act and therefore can continue to take place virtually.

2. **Inspection of Papers**

Any person wishing to inspect minutes, reports, or the background papers for any item on the agenda should contact Democratic Services at

democraticservices@somerset.gov.uk or telephone 01823 357628.

They can also be accessed via the council's website on

www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers.

3. **Members' Code of Conduct requirements**

When considering the declaration of interests and their actions as a councillor, Members are reminded of the requirements of the Members' Code of Conduct and the underpinning Principles of Public Life: Honesty; Integrity; Selflessness; Objectivity; Accountability; Openness; Leadership. The Code of Conduct can be viewed on the council website at [Code of Conduct](#)

4. **Minutes of the Meeting**

Details of the issues discussed, and recommendations made at the meeting will be set out in the minutes, which the Committee will be asked to approve as a correct record at its next meeting.

5. **Public Question Time**

If you wish to speak, please contact Democratic Services by 5pm 3 clear working days before the meeting. Email democraticservices@somerset.gov.uk or telephone 01823 357628.

A slot for Public Question Time is set aside near the beginning of the meeting, after the minutes of the previous meeting have been agreed. However, questions or statements about any matter on the agenda for this meeting may be taken at the time when each matter is considered.

At the Chair's invitation you may ask questions and/or make statements or comments about any matter on the Committee's agenda – providing you have given the required notice. You may also present a petition on any matter within the Committee's remit. The length of public question time will be no more than 20 minutes in total.

You must direct your questions and comments through the Chair. You may not take a direct part in the debate. The Chair will decide when public participation is to finish.

If there are many people present at the meeting for one particular item, the Chair may adjourn the meeting to allow views to be expressed more freely. If an item on the agenda is contentious, with a large number of people attending the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

An issue will not be deferred just because you cannot be present for the meeting. Remember that the amount of time you speak will be restricted, to three minutes only.

In line with the council's procedural rules, if any member of the public interrupts a meeting the Chair will warn them accordingly.

If that person continues to interrupt or disrupt proceedings the Chair can ask the Democratic Services Officer to remove them as a participant from the meeting.

6. **Meeting Etiquette**

- Mute your microphone when you are not talking.
- Switch off video if you are not speaking.
- Only speak when invited to do so by the Chair.
- Speak clearly (if you are not using video then please state your name)
- If you're referring to a specific page, mention the page number.
- Switch off your video and microphone after you have spoken.
- There is a facility in Microsoft Teams under the ellipsis button called turn on live captions which provides subtitles on the screen.

7. **Exclusion of Press & Public**

If when considering an item on the agenda, the Committee may consider it appropriate to pass a resolution under Section 100A (4) Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the basis that if they were present during the business to be transacted there would be a likelihood of disclosure of exempt information, as defined under the terms of the Act.

If there are members of the public and press listening to the open part of the meeting, then the Democratic Services Officer will, at the appropriate time, ask participants to leave the meeting when any exempt or confidential information is about to be discussed.

8. **Recording of meetings**

The Council supports the principles of openness and transparency. It allows filming, recording and taking photographs at its meetings that are open to the public - providing this is done in a non-disruptive manner. Members of the public may use Facebook and Twitter or other forms of social media to report on proceedings. No filming or recording may take place when the press and public are excluded for that part of the meeting. As a matter of courtesy to the public, anyone wishing to film or record proceedings is asked to provide reasonable notice to the Committee Administrator so that the relevant Chair can inform those present at the start of the meeting.

We would ask that, as far as possible, members of the public aren't filmed unless they are playing an active role such as speaking within a meeting and there may be occasions when speaking members of the public request not to be filmed.

A copy of the Council's Recording of Meetings Protocol is available from the Committee Administrator for the meeting.

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JOINT SCRUTINY PANEL OF SOMERSET RIVERS AUTHORITY

Minutes of a Meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Panel of Somerset Rivers Authority held virtually on **Friday 2 July 2021 at 10.00 am**

Present: Cllr S Coles (Chair Somerset West & Taunton), Cllr J Cousins (Mendip), Cllr J Nash (Mendip), Cllr Smedley (Sedgemoor), Cllr A Betty (Sedgemoor), Cllr A Groskop (Somerset CC), Cllr John Hunt (Somerset CC), Cllr L Lisgo (Somerset West & Taunton), Cllr R Pailthorpe (South Somerset) and Cllr P Maxwell (South Somerset) D Vigar (Parrett Internal Drainage Board)

Other Members present: Cllr M Caswell, Cllr D Hall, Cllr T Munt and Cllr R Williams – Somerset CC

Apologies for absence: W Welland (Axe Brue Internal Drainage Board)

1 Membership update and Terms of Reference of the Panel - Agenda Item 1

The Chair welcomed the following new Scrutiny Panel members to their first meeting – Cllr Jon Cousins (Mendip Council), Cllr Janine Nash (Mendip Council) and Cllr Robin Pailthorpe (South Somerset Council).

The current terms of reference of the Panel were NOTED.

2 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 3

The following declarations of interest were made at the meeting: -

- (a) Cllr A Betty – Sedgemoor DC representative – personal interest – member of the Parrett Internal Drainage Board.
- (b) Cllr J Cousins – Mendip Council representative – personal interest – member of Axe Brue Internal Drainage Board; Glastonbury Town Council.
- (c) Cllr T Munt – Somerset County Councillor – in attendance – personal interest – member of 'Reimagining The Levels'.

3 Appointment of Vice Chair for 2021 - Agenda Item 4

The Panel resolved that, subject to clarification from the Monitoring Officer, Mendip Council regarding membership on the Panel and the Axe and Brue Internal Drainage Board, the appointment of Cllr Jon Cousins as Vice Chair of the Panel for 2021 be AGREED.

4 Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 12 February 2021 - Agenda Item 5

The minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 12 February 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

5 **Public Question Time** - Agenda Item 6

There were no public questions.

6 **Draft SRA Annual Report** - Agenda Item 7

The Panel received a report and PowerPoint presentation from Jonathan Hudston, Communications Manager, SRA, which invited the Panel to review and comment on the draft 2020-21 Annual Report. The Panel noted that because some end-of-year financial information has only very recently been finalised, the financial section in the report has not yet been completed. Details on the financial performance during the 2020-21 financial year are contained within the 2020-21 Finance Report detailed elsewhere on the agenda for the meeting.

The following questions / comments were made: -

- The Chair welcomed the good report and for information provided on the diverse work undertaken across the county, especially in current pandemic restrictions;
- Natural Flood Management - 6 Triple C schemes across Somerset, and at Montacute – Mr Hudston said that he would be happy to arrange for the Panel to visit at a later stage;
- Noted that of £13.049m awarded in 2014, 91% spent, rest to go on River Sowy and King's Sedgemoor Drain Enhancements Scheme and that the latest phase is due to begin at Cossington Way later in the day;
- Cllr Smedley asked a question about the impact of the Bridgwater Tidal Barrier on navigation of the River Parrett. David Mitchell Senior Manager, SRA advised that he would contact the Environment Agency for a response. The Chair asked that responses to queries raised at the meeting are shared to all Panel members attending the meeting;
- Cllr Munt asked about the trees for water schemes and the management of the trees going forward – David Mitchell referred to the terms and conditions attached to a grant whereby there is a commitment for the grant recipients to maintain them for 25 years. He also agreed to provide further information to the Panel about access to locations;
- Cllr Hunt asked questions about the funding of the Selworthy Scheme – David Mitchell advised that the scheme comes under the National Trust Riverlands Work and the SRA is providing match funding, along with the National Trust and the Environment Agency and that the scheme is being led by the National Trust;
- With regard to urban water management, Cllr Hunt asked about the tree pits installed at Coal Orchard riverside redevelopment site in Taunton and that he would find it helpful to visit the site;
- Noted that the SRA funds a small number of grants for equipment and training given to communities by Somerset Prepared and that one grant

was given in 2020-21 - mention made about how best can promote the community grants scheme.

The Panel: -

1. NOTED the draft Annual Report which outlined the achievements of the SRA and its partners in 2020-21.
2. AGREED that any further thoughts and comments on the format / progress / achievements to David Mitchell as soon as possible to help inform future reports.
3. AGREED that the PowerPoint presentation be circulated to the Panel following the meeting.

7 Update on work of the SRA Board since last meeting of the Scrutiny Panel
- Agenda Item 8

The Panel considered a report from David Mitchell, Senior Manager, SRA, which provided an update on key actions of the SRA Board since the Scrutiny Panel's last meeting in February 2021. The SRA Board had held one meeting since the last Scrutiny Panel meeting.

The Panel NOTED: -

1. The key actions of the SRA Board since the last meeting of the Scrutiny Panel.
2. That the confidential 2020-21 Enhanced Programme List with costs had been circulated to the Scrutiny Panel.

8 Flood Action Plan Review - Agenda Item 9

The Panel considered a report from David Mitchell, Senior Manager, SRA, which provided an update on progress on delivery of actions within the current 20 Year Flood Action Plan and asked for views on the proposed approach to preparing, and scope of, a new Flood Action Plan.

Mr Mitchell highlighted that the 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. Work on preparing a new plan is expected to start by the end of July and consultancy support is being commissioned to aid in the preparation of the plan and the target date for completion of a new plan is April 2022.

In response to a query in the report, Mr Mitchell said he would provide clarification on the objectives / workstreams of the current plan.

The Panel NOTED: -

1. The significant progress made on delivery of actions within the current Flood Action Plan.
2. The proposed approach to preparing, and scope of, the new Flood Action Plan and that a draft version of the plan will be brought to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Panel.

9 **Key project updates** - Agenda Item 10

The Panel received a PowerPoint presentation from John Rowlands, SRA, which updated the Panel about the River Sowey / King's Sedgemoor Drain enhancements scheme and the Phase 1 channel works.

In the presentation, Mr Rowlands highlighted: -

- key piece of infrastructure – to west of Bridgwater, and the scheme benefits
- outlined works which have been completed
- outlined the key organisations and suppliers involved
- key constraints, requiring mitigation method statements
- all enhancement works will be carried out on Environment Agency land
- outlined mitigation action plan
- forecast project timeline and that the 'on the ground' work will start on 2 July (vegetation clearance)
- the environmental statement and appendices are open for [consultation for 1 month from 3 July](#).
- That some works still to be programmed
- The LEP funding agreement allocation for the scheme will be spent by end of 2022 financial year.

Cllr Betty thanked the SRA for their consultation with the local public and said that he had been very impressed.

The Scrutiny Panel NOTED the information and thanked Mr Rowlands for the detailed presentation. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation will be circulated following the meeting.

10 **Annual Finance Report** - Agenda Item 11

The Panel considered a report from Ian Tier, Finance Manager, SRA, which provided information on the financial position at the end of quarter four of 2020 – 21. With regard to information provided in Table A – local partner funding 2020-21 summary, David Mitchell, Senior Manager, SRA, advised that, as detailed in key project update earlier in the meeting, that the SRA Board, held on March 2021, had approved moving £1m from contingency to the Sowey/KSD project. With regard to information provided in Table B - Growth Deal funding Mr Mitchell highlighted that the underspend on Pioneer

Dredging, which was completed in February 2021, has now been reallocated to the Sowy/KSD enhancement scheme.

The Panel NOTED: -

1. The financial performance as at the end of Quarter Four 2020-21.
2. The 2020-21 detailed commercially sensitive update had been circulated separately to the Panel.

11 **SRA precepting legislation update** - Agenda Item 12

The Panel received an update from David Mitchell, Senior Manager, SRA, who outlined the situation with regard to the precept for the SRA.

David Mitchell referred to sections in the draft Annual Report discussed earlier at the meeting and that the SRA is an Unincorporated Association, hosted by Somerset County Council and has no independent legal status. The SRA continues to maintain its dialogue with Defra – that the SRA needs to have legal standing and certainty this will bring – and whilst the Minister is supportive, she has advised that there is currently no Parliamentary time available to consider how will move forward the precepting legislation.

The Chair supported the work by the SRA Board, pushing for the SRA to become a precepting body.

The Panel NOTED the update.

12 **Any other urgent items of business** - Agenda Item 13

Jonathan Hudston, Communications Manager, SRA, said that he is keen to take the Scrutiny Panel members to visit sites and will be in contact with members shortly, asking which sites they would find most beneficial / rewarding and interesting.

There were no other items of business raised.

13 **Proposed Meeting Dates for 2022** - Agenda Item 14

The Panel AGREED the following meeting dates: -

- Friday 28 January 2022 10.00 – 13.00
- Friday 8th July 2022 10.00 – 13.00

The meetings will continue to take place virtually, via MS Teams.

(The meeting ended at 12.05 pm)
CHAIR

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Somerset Rivers Authority Joint Scrutiny Panel Paper

Title: The Highways Enhanced Maintenance Programme, (W4) – Resilient infrastructure.

RECOMMENDATION

The SRA Joint Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- Note, review and comment on the Highways Enhanced Maintenance Programme

Purpose of the item;

The SRA Joint Scrutiny Panel is asked to note, review and comment on the below paper, which seeks to use available data to evidence the benefits, both direct and indirect, of delivering an annual programme of Enhanced Highway Maintenance.

(a) Enhanced Maintenance Programme – background and context;

The SRA has funded an Enhanced Maintenance Programme for a number of years. Initially works included 'Enhanced Gully Emptying' and 'Enhanced Drain Jetting'. More recent additions include 'Enhanced Silt trap Emptying' and 'Enhanced Trash Screen Clearance'.

The Enhanced Maintenance Programme is intended to provide an extra level of flood protection and resilience. The programme reduces localised highway flooding, with associated safety benefits to highway users, keeps roads open, communities accessible and safeguards properties from flooding.

Enhanced Gully Emptying;

The SRA funding has supported the delivery of an enhanced mechanical clean to the SCC pre-identified highest priority gullies (Flood susceptible). SCC clean these assets annually. The SRA funding enables approximately 25,000 high risk gullies to benefit from a biannual cleaning programme.

SCC's annual planned gully emptying programme consists of approximately 70,000 gullies.

Enhanced Drain Jetting;

The SRA funding has supported the delivery of an enhanced drain jetting service. This represents a separate, and additional service. It does not replace or backfill elements of the

service that may have been removed as part of in-house adjustments to SCC's service level provision.

In 2020/21, the SRA funded drain jetting works to 251 locations, countywide.

Enhanced Silt trap Emptying;

The SRA funding has supported the development of a dedicated enhanced cleansing programme to specifically target approximately 100 silt-traps, countywide, as part of a proactive annual programme of maintenance.

Enhanced Trash Screen Clearance;

The SRA funding has supported the development of a dedicated enhanced cleansing programme to specifically target approximately 40 trash screens in the Somerset West and Taunton Deane area, as part of a proactive annual programme of maintenance.

(b) Review of available data;

SCC Highways data does not enable a direct analysis of mitigation of flood risk and/or an overall assessment of benefit. The highways data is more aligned to enabling an understanding of asset condition which subsequently contributes to wider asset management strategy of the highway network.

However, conclusions can be drawn from the data about the effect of SRA investment in reducing flooding on and near the highway albeit with some caveats.

It is acknowledged that whilst the report discusses all aspects of the Enhanced Maintenance Programme, the data captured predominantly relates to asset condition of highway gullies rather than specific silt traps, trash screens or complete drainage systems.

That said, silt traps and trash screens would be included in this data, albeit referenced as a highway gully due to architecture of the SCC reporting system (Confirm).

Not all road closures and/or lane closures are recorded in relation to flooding events. Not all flooded roads are reported by the public, observed by the highway's teams. The requirement to undertake closures, due to flooding, is typically in an emergency situation rather than a planned, co-ordinated event. Further still, where roads are recorded as flooded, the extent of flooding, cause and duration are not recorded.

**1. Has the number of gully enquiries reduced as a result of SRA investment?
(Appendix 2).**

Total number of enquiries received by the public against the specific link and sections related to assets supported by the SRA Enhanced Maintenance Programme appears to be consistent across the available data range.

It is noted that of all enquiries received, 68%-73% of all asset link and sections received zero (0) enquiries – 'No concerns'.

It is noted that of all enquiries received, 98%-99% of all asset link and sections received 1-4 enquiries – 'General Concerns' and 'No concerns'.

Summary;

Given the location of 'flood susceptible' assets, (highway drainage systems, gully, trash screen or silt trap), enquiries are likely to be received in response to storm events, periods of high rainfall. In general, residents are aware of the importance of the highway drainage systems and the need for regular maintenance. Therefore, it is common for SCC to receive service requests related to the performance of the highway gullies and assets at such locations on a regular basis, irrespective of a need for intervention.

Relevant FAP Objective(s) – 1 & 2.

**2. Has the number of service requests reduced as a result of SRA investment?
(Appendix 3).**

SCC can respond to enquiries in several ways, 'no action' or a 'Service Request' is raised for intervention.

Service requests are raised by the Highways Superintendent following an ad-hoc inspection or after an enquiry has been received by a member of the public. Typical service requests include;

- Jetting (e.g., mechanically clearing the drainage systems).
- Gully cleansing (e.g., hand-digging, mechanical emptying, grip clearing).

The total number of service requests generated against the specific link and sections related to assets supported by the SRA Enhanced Maintenance Programme appears to have fallen considerably across the available data range. (1144 in 2015/16 to 728 in 2019/20 – 26% reduction).

That said, for clarity, a single service request can be variable in terms of cost, scope and nature of the works required. A service request is attributed to any order raised by the Highways Team. (e.g., if the intervention is to clean 1x number highway gully, that is a service request. If the intervention is to mechanically jet 100m of drainage system, that is also a service request).

It is acknowledged that there are peaks in the data between 2015/16 and 2019/20.

Summary;

Storm Angus (late Nov 2016). Strong wind across the South of England and heavy rain causing flooding to parts of the South West England. Legacy felt into 2017.

Given their location, 'flood susceptible' assets, (highway drainage systems, gully, trash screen or silt trap), service requests are likely to be generated in response to storm events, periods of high rainfall. In general, residents are aware of the importance of the highway drainage systems and the need for regular maintenance. Therefore, it is common for SCC to receive service requests related to the performance of the highway gullies and assets at such locations on a regular basis, irrespective of a need for intervention.

Relevant FAP Objective(s) – 1, 2 & 5.

3. Has the number of recorded 'flooding interventions' reduced as a result of SRA investment? (Appendix 4).

SCC can respond to enquiries in several ways. This can include 'no action', raise a 'Service Request' or action an 'Intervention'.

Issues such as flooding can also be identified and actioned by Highways Superintendents on an ad-hoc basis when undertaking their daily duties.

Interventions are actioned by the Highways Superintendent following an on-site inspection and assessment of risk. Typical reactive Interventions include;

- Full road closure.
- Part closure/Lane closures actioned with Traffic Management set up (e.g., temporary traffic signals).
- Road remains open, warning signing to be erected on site (e.g., 'FLOOD').

Total number of interventions actioned against the link and sections related to assets supported by the SRA Enhanced Maintenance Programme appears to be consistent across the available data range. 94%-97% received zero (0) interventions.

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Total number of interventions actioned against the A and B road network link and sections related to assets supported by the SRA Enhanced Maintenance Programme appears to be consistent across the available data range. 90%-95% received zero (0) interventions.

It is acknowledged that the data provided for 2017/18 appears to be an outlier.

Summary;

Given the location of 'flood susceptible' highway assets, (highway drainage systems, gully, trash screen or silt trap), and in particular those on the A and B road network, the work of the SRA Enhanced Maintenance Programme ensures critical drainage assets receive regular maintenance and therefore, interventions are minimalised and 'connectivity' is maintained.

It is acknowledged that specific locations warrant regular and continuous intervention (e.g., Pibsbury Bends, A372 Huish Episcopi – South Somerset).

Relevant FAP Objective(s) – 1, 2, 5 & 6.

4. Have the recorded silt levels with highway gullies reduced as a result of SRA investment? (Appendix 5).

The Kaarbontech Gully Smart Software system was introduced into the highways maintenance contract in 2017/2018. Asset information is provided by the gully emptying operatives by way of the use of a handheld tablet. Asset condition data is recorded on arrival and prior to cleaning taking place.

Across the available data range, it has been recorded that between 24%-44% of all gullies inspected then cleaned were observed to contain 25% or less debris within the unit.

Across the available data range, it has been recorded that between 59%-89% of all gullies inspected then cleaned were observed to contain 50% or less debris within the unit.

Across the available data range, it has been recorded that between 11%-41% of all gullies inspected then cleaned were observed to contain 75% or above debris within the unit.

It is acknowledged that the data appears to peak in the 2019/2020 financial year.

Summary;

Data provided by the gully operatives is subjective as it is based on a visual inspection of the internal condition of the highway gully, outlet pipe and sump.

The recorded data is specifically related to the asset condition of highway gullies. The data does not record asset condition of silt traps or trash screens.

Relevant FAP Objective(s) – 1 & 2.

(c) Conclusions;

Measuring the success of the Enhanced Maintenance programme is difficult given the multitude of variables with which come in to play. (e.g., weather events, timing of clean/emptying in relation to weather event(s), nature of the weather event(s), nature of flooding event(s), modifications to off highway, private land (change of land use), modifications within local catchment area etc).

Whilst outside the scope of the paper, consideration should be given to the impacts of climate change, and more specifically its impact on Somerset. Given the understanding that we are now in a period of more frequent rain/storms events, one would suggest that the SRA Enhanced Programme ensures that additional flood resilience and asset capacity is provided to those flood susceptible locations.

It is possible that cessation of the Enhanced Maintenance Programme may prompt an increase of 'service requests', 'reactive services' and 'interventions' attributed to those assets which currently benefit from this proactive work.

Finally, the Enhanced Maintenance Programme provides positive exposure for the SRA across the whole of Somerset. The gully emptying, jetting, silt trap emptying and trash screen clearance operations are visible 'on the ground' services.

RECOMMENDATION

The SRA Joint Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- Review and comment on the Enhanced Maintenance programmes.

Date: January 2022.

Author: Neil McWilliams, Highway Service Manager, Somerset County Council

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Location plan – SCC Planned gullies & SRA Enhanced Gully Emptying assets.

Appendix 2: Enquiries received - SRA Enhanced Maintenance Assets.

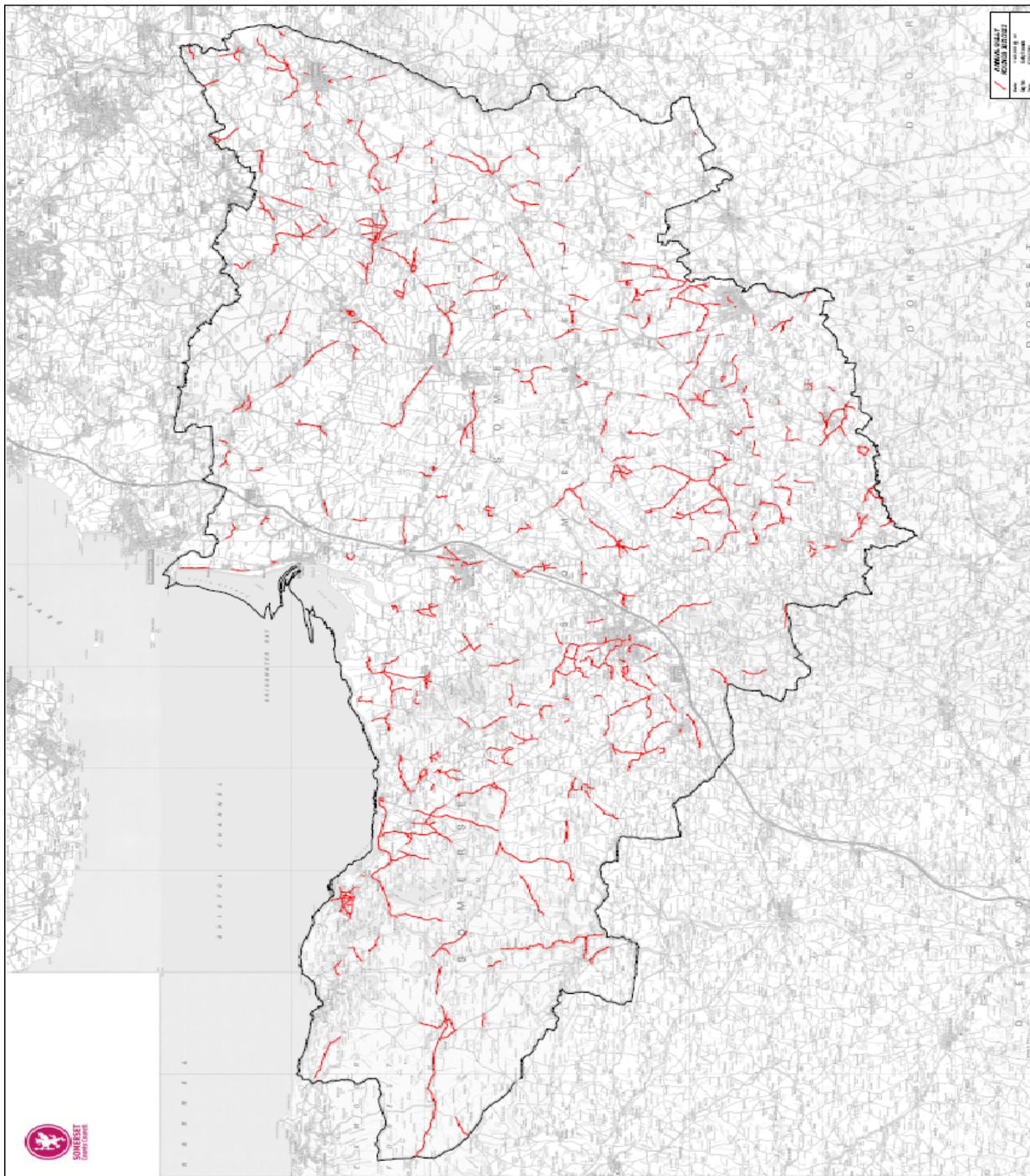
Appendix 3: Service Requests generated - SRA Enhanced Maintenance Assets.

Appendix 4: Interventions Actioned - SRA Enhanced Maintenance Assets.

Appendix 5: Recorded silt level - SRA Enhanced Maintenance Assets (Gullies).

Appendix 1: Location plan – SCC Planned gullies & SRA Enhanced Gully Emptying assets.

Red lines on the map below indicates the locations of the SCC Flood susceptible highway gullies. The high-risk assets receive a biannual clean as a consequence of the SRA Enhanced Gully Emptying workstream.



Appendix 2: Enquiries received - SRA Enhanced Maintenance Assets.

The highway network is built up by many individual components, of varying length. These components are referred to as 'Link and Sections' (L&S). Any work that is undertaken by SCC (planned or reactive) is recorded against the respective Link and Section as a means of recording asset condition data. (e.g., number of potholes reported/repaired etc).

Each enquiry (Enq) is assigned a specific location relevant to the issue identified and consequently a pre-determined asset Link and Section (L&S).

2015/16		2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		
No. Enq	No. L&S	No. Enq	No. L&S	No. Enq	No. L&S	No. Enq	No. L&S	No. Enq	No. L&S	
813	575	859	605	859	603	863	634	878	599	0 enquiries
344	229	383	247	379	243	326	214	247	260	1-4 enquiries
45	9	47	7	94	13	83	15	115	19	5 or more enquires
	575		605		603		634		599	Total '0' Enq (No concerns)
	71%		70%		70%		73%		68%	
	804		852		846		848		859	Total '1-4' Enq (General concerns)
	99%		99%		98%		98%		98%	
	9		7		13		15		19	Total '5 or more Enq (Concerns)
	1%		1%		2%		2%		2%	

Appendix 3: Service Requests generated - SRA Enhanced Maintenance Assets.

SCC can respond to enquiries (Enq) in several ways. This can include 'no action' or a 'Service Request' is raised if work is deemed necessary.

Each Service Request (SR) is assigned a specific location relevant to the issue identified and consequently a pre-determined asset Link and Section (L&S).

	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
	No. SR's	No. SR's	No. SR's	No. SR's	No. SR's
Drain Jetting (Reactive)	577	492	560	440	461
Gully Cleaning (Reactive)	567	743	802	629	267
Total No. SR's	1144	1235	1362	1069	728

Appendix 4: Interventions Actioned - SRA Enhanced Maintenance Assets.

SCC can respond to enquiries (Enq) in several ways. This can include 'no action', generate a 'Service Request' or action an 'Intervention'.

Each intervention is assigned a specific location relevant to the issue identified and consequently a pre-determined asset Link and Section (L&S).

	Total network No. L&S's	No. L&S with '0' SR's	No. SR's raised	% L&S's with '0' SR's
15/16	813	773	48	95%
16/17	859	810	70	94%
17/18	859	859	0	100%
18/19	863	835	35	97%
19/20	878	821	71	94%
	Total A & B network No. L&S's (Enhanced Gully Emptying Assets)			% L&S's with '0' SR's
15/16	267	250	24	94%
16/17	265	237	45	90%
17/18	265	265	0	100%
18/19	265	252	16	95%
19/20	264	246	21	93%

Appendix 5: Recorded silt level - SRA Enhanced Maintenance Assets (Gullies).

SCC, in partnership with its term maintenance contractor uses a gully asset management office system (Kaarbontech) to monitor in real time the progress of gully cleansing programmes, access historical records of all gully inspections, cyclical maintenance as well as review asset condition data (silt levels and defects).

In relation to recording silt levels, the Kaarbontech software functionality allows operatives to record the silt level of any given asset at the time of arrival and prior to cleaning. It is this data that has been summarised below.

	Recorded silt levels in highway gullies						Total No. Gullies cleaned
	Nil	0%	25%	50%	75%	100%	
21/22	1639 6%	731 3%	9070 35%	6792	6674	960	25866
			11440 44%	26%	26%	4%	
20/21	556 3%	602 3%	5042 25%	5615	7525	876	20216
			6200 31%	28%	37%	4%	
19/20	616 2%	1037 4%	6593 25%	12356	4920	543	26065
			8246 32%	47%	19%	2%	
18/19	520 2%	1968 7%	6638 24%	14549	3040	693	27408
			9126 33%	53%	11%	3%	
17/18	274 1%	1642 7%	7027 30%	11977	2026	414	23360
			8943 38%	51%	9%	2%	
All	3605	5980	34370 43955 36%	51289 42%	24185 20%	3486 3%	122915

Somerset Rivers Authority Joint Scrutiny Panel

Update on SRA Community Resilience Activities

RECOMMENDATION

The SRA Joint Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

1. Note and comment on progress on delivery of Workstream 5 (Community Resilience) activities.

1 Purpose of the item:

This paper updates the Panel on the recent work and future plans of the SRA Community Engagement Team.

2 Background and Context

In autumn 2019, Emma Giffard, Community Engagement Officer, and Dawn James, Community Engagement Support Officer, were employed in order to progress the SRA's Workstream 5 (WS5) objectives. It was recognised that with a number of years having passed since the floods in 2013/4, the team would not just focus on the Somerset Levels and Moors, but would look at increasing resilience to flooding across the whole county.

The Community Engagement Team is managed by Nicola Dawson, WS5 lead and Manager of the Somerset Local Authorities' Civil Contingencies Unit. As well as supporting communities, the team also supports partners with delivery of other SRA funded projects. They liaise closely with the Environment Agency engagement team and the SCC Flood and Water Management team, and are involved with the work of the Somerset Prepared partnership, playing a fundamental role in the promotion of the community grant scheme and running of annual events.

3 Highlights of work undertaken by the Community Engagement Team in 2020 & 2021

Before the pandemic, Dawn and Emma were focussed on building relationships with communities across the county. They undertook a series of visits to Parish and Town Council meetings to introduce themselves and offer support.

In Langport, the team supported the development of a community flood group, running a successful and well attended recruitment event just before covid restrictions came in.

The team also supported the partnership project Co-Adapt, a project working with communities to look at climate change and adaptation on the Somerset Levels and Moors.

Working alongside project officers from Somerset Wildlife Trust and Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group South West (FWAG), they delivered two very successful public events, attended by hundreds of people in Langport and Wedmore, as well as a series of workshops on climate adaptation.

When the pandemic arrived, the team had to rethink their engagement strategies. Both staff were redeployed on Covid response (with staff costs funded by SCC), with Dawn supporting the pop-up care home for several months. Emma supported Somerset Waste Partnership for a number of weeks, and later joined the Contact Tracing team as a part-time redeployment alongside her SRA work.

The focus turned to adapting ways of working in order to continue effective engagement in the midst of the pandemic. The team created a series of videos for an online event held under the Somerset Prepared banner in October 2020. In October 2021, this event was once again held online, with live presentations as well as video content. The team also worked on developing a mobile app called 'Somerset Trails' with Co-Adapt, which uses a walking trail to deliver content about flooding and water management. This is available for free on the Google Play and App store and the team continues to develop further trails in other areas of the county, as well as with partners such as the National Trust's Holnicote Estate.

Following the flooding in Chard in June and North Petherton in July 2021, the team supported the Flood and Water Management Team to gather information about the events and to reach out to communities to offer support. The team are not involved with emergency response, but aim to support communities to be better prepared should flooding happen again. In November 2021, following further flooding in South Somerset, Emma and Dawn once again supported the FWM team to field enquires and offer support to flooded residents. This has helped to develop relationships with those communities and has been crucial in developing plans for community flood group networks going forward.

4 Current and future plans

The development of community flood group networks has long been an ambition of the SRA. In West Somerset, a well developed flood group network exists that enables parishes to work together through regular meetings, and facilitates effective communication between communities and authorities. Networks in other areas of the county could resemble this, but as a grassroots initiative they would take on the characteristics that best suit local needs.

However, many communities have historically not seen flooding as a priority concern, and in some areas there has not been local capacity to create community resilience groups or develop relationships with neighbouring communities. Recent flooding events, as well as increased awareness of the risks of climate change, has focussed people's minds and there is now more appetite in the wider community for flood group networks.

The community engagement team are working with or in discussion with the following communities to support the development of local resilience arrangements, as well as nurturing networks where there is an appetite:

- Shepton Mallet cluster – including Shepton Mallet, Croscombe, Darshill, Bowlish, Lamyatt
- Chard cluster – including Chard, Chaffcombe, Coombe St Nicholas, Forton & Tatworth
- Ilminster
- North Petherton
- Langport
- Martock
- Ruishton & Ham
- Roadwater & Monksilver (part of West Somerset Flood Group)
- Rode & Beckington (working in partnership with Mendip DC)
- Burrowbridge, Moorland & Chadmead (working in partnership with the Environment Agency)

Many of these groups are new, and the community engagement team are providing resources such as training and literature, helping organise meetings and speakers, and helping recruit volunteers. Other groups, such as Martock, have well established flood groups, or have flooding as a long-standing concern of the parish council, and Dawn and Emma support these communities as needed.

The community engagement team have also looked at ways of widening interest in flooding and emergency preparedness. With this in mind, they have developed a project with Somerset Film, who have produced a short documentary featuring flood groups across the county. This will be screened at 10 locations in Somerset alongside a selection of archive films related to community resilience in February and March (see appendix). This is intended to inspire new groups and strengthen local resilience arrangements. The development of Local Community Networks as part of the unitary changes may also help develop relationships between neighbouring towns and parishes.

The team have also made plans to engage with schools and businesses, and in November 2020 visited primary schools in Bridgwater and Catcott. Further school visits are planned when Covid rules permit, beginning with Beckington, Rode and Norton St Philip, and

Croscombe schools. Business engagement has been challenging with focus on Covid recovery, but the team are developing plans for engagement later in 2022.

RECOMMENDATION

The SRA Joint Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

1. Note and comment on progress on delivery of Workstream 5 (Community Resilience) activities.

Date: 17 January, 2022

Author: Emma Giffard, Community Engagement Officer, Somerset Rivers Authority

Appendix

Free Film Events About Flooding to Celebrate Somerset Community Resilience

A new Somerset film called *Down by the River* premieres in February, with ten free screenings countywide.

Each event will also include an entertaining and thought-provoking selection of Somerset archive films.

Down by the River is a documentary about the inspiring ways that communities across Somerset have responded to flooding, celebrating the extraordinary work of local volunteers. It was commissioned by Somerset Rivers Authority from Bridgwater-based charity Somerset Film.

Archive films include historic Somerset floods, local groups like the Home Guard in World War Two, and fundraising carnivals. The exact mix will vary from place to place, but all the films show what Somerset people can do when they put their minds to it, and illustrate how valuable past experiences can be in responding to challenges such as climate change.

Each event will last about two hours, with free tea and cake.
The screening schedule is:

Glastonbury Town Hall, 4 February, 7pm
Cheddar Village Hall, 12 February, 7pm
Martock Parish Hall, 19 February, 7pm
Shepton Mallet Whitstone School, 2 March 7pm
Minehead Regal Theatre, 5 March, 2pm
Taunton Creative Innovation Centre CIC, 9 March, 7pm
Burrowbridge Coronation Hall, 12 March, 7pm
Yeovil Westlands, 16 March, 7pm
Bridgwater Arts Centre, 18 March, 7pm
Roadwater Village Hall, 20 March, 7pm

To reserve your free seat, visit www.somersetfilm.com/get-involved.

The SRA community engagement team would love to hear from anyone who would like to be involved, to look at new resilience groups, recruiting volunteers, or strengthening existing groups. Contact egiffard@somerset.gov.uk for more information.

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Somerset Rivers Authority Joint Scrutiny Panel

Quarter 2 2021-22 Finance Report

RECOMMENDATIONS

The SRA Joint Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

1. Review and comment on the financial performance as at the end of quarter two of 2021-22.

Background and context

This report provides information on the financial position at the end of quarter two which is the latest period full financial data is available.

Somerset Rivers Authority does not deliver projects, instead the partners that make up the SRA partnership deliver projects on behalf of the SRA and reclaim funding after contractors / suppliers are paid. This results in a delay between what SRA delivery partners have spent and how much has been claimed from the SRA. This means that the amount claimed may not reflect the amount of work which has been completed by SRA partners.

There are two main sources of funding which the SRA draws on:

- a. Local Partner Funding – money raised annually by an additional amount on Council Tax and direct contributions from the Internal Drainage Boards.
- b. Growth Deal Funding – £13.049m of funding allocated in 2014 through the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (HotSWLEP) for specific large-scale capital projects.

1. Local Partner Funding Financial Performance

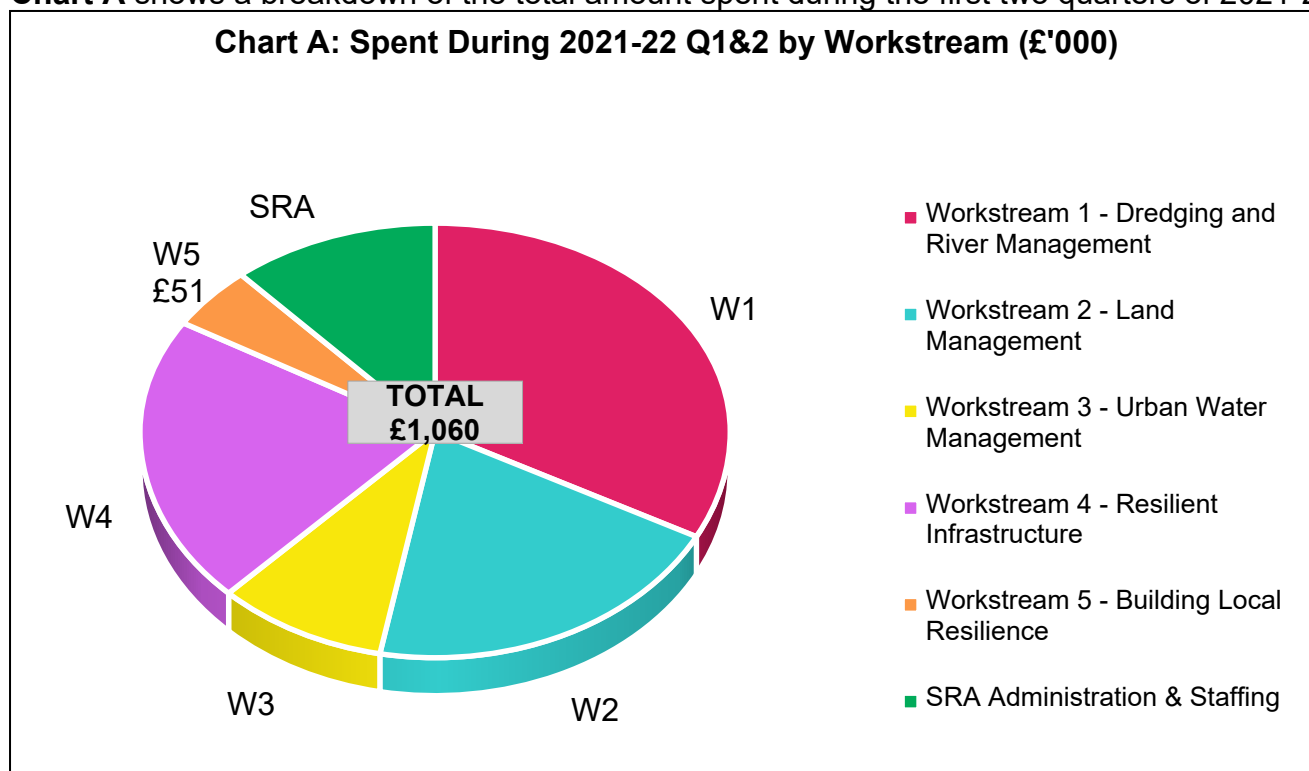
Table A shows that the total available funds at the start of the year were £10,388k. Of this amount £7,446k was carried forward from 2020-21 and £2,942k was raised in the 2021-22 precept.

TABLE A: Local Partner Funding Summary at end of Quarter 2 2021-22							
Area of spend	2021/22 Funding Allocation £,000	Spent		Forecast			Re-allocations required £,000
		2021/22 Q1 £,000	2021/22 Q2 £,000	2021/22 Q3 £,000	2021/22 Q4 £,000	2022/23 Onwards £,000	
Enhanced Programme	9,039	182	750	1,068	1,625	5,316	-98
Core work and Development	250	0	0	10	25	215	0
Administration & Staffing	286	53	75	72	86	0	0
Contingency	813	0	0	0	0	813	0
TOTALS	10,388	235	825	1,150	1,736	6,344	-98

As at the end of Quarter Two:

- 3% of funds are forecast to be spent on the administration and staffing of the SRA.
- 2% will be spent on SRA core work and development.
- 8% is held as contingency.
- 87% is allocated to specific projects and activities within the Enhanced Programme.

Chart A shows a breakdown of the total amount spent during the first two quarters of 2021-22.



The primary activity in W1 Dredging and River Management (red) is the River Sowy – King’s Sedgemoor Drain Enhancements Scheme. £332k of the Local Partner allocation has been spent; this is over and above the LEP Growth Deal funds spent on this project. For detail on Growth Deal spend please See Part 3 Table C below.

There has been considerable delivery on the W2 workstream – Land Management (blue) in Quarters One and Two, with £161k spent on Hills to Levels: Somerset Land Management and Natural Flood Management, and £21k on Trees for Water.

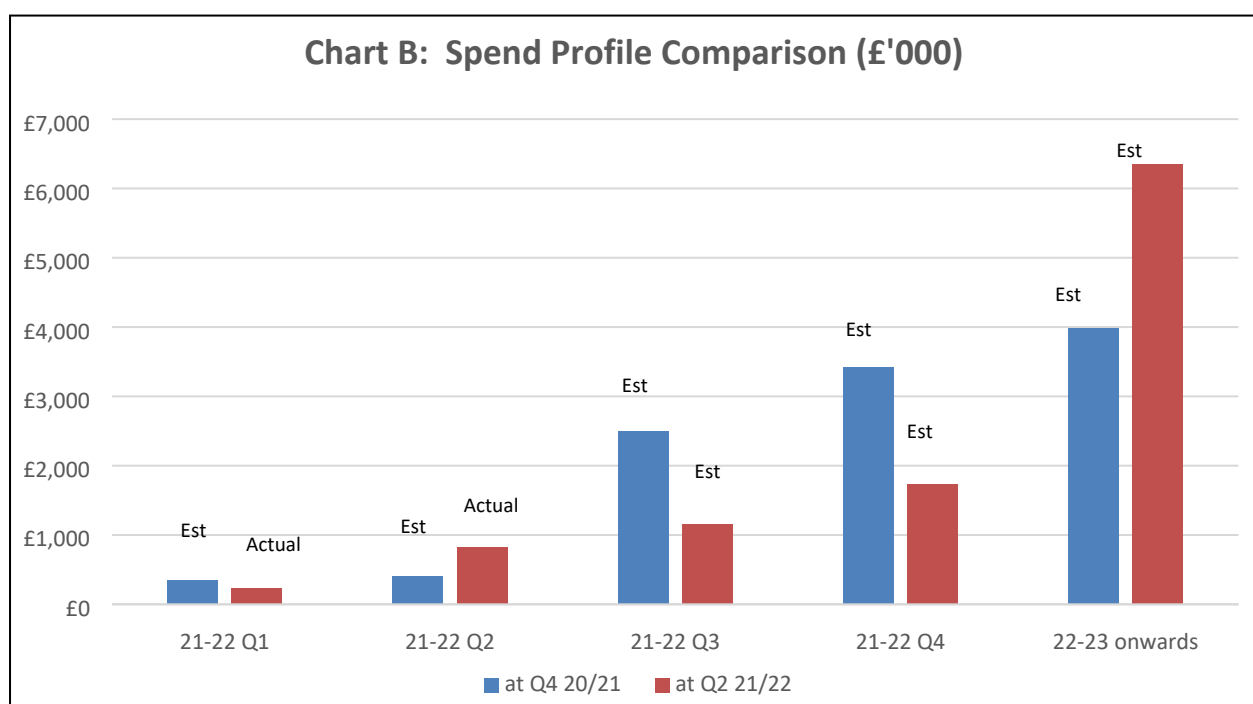
Claims for completed works in the Resilient Infrastructure W4 workstream (pink) were received in Quarter 2. This spend included £96k on desilting of structures, £62k for gully emptying and £46k on drain jetting. W4 now represents 21% of the spend to date (it was 3% of spend at the end of Quarter One)

1a. Spend Profile Summary

Chart B below shows SRA spend by quarter as forecast at the beginning of the financial year (blue) and the current profile (red) of SRA spend throughout the financial year.

For example: the Quarter Two (Q2) spend for 2021-22 was originally estimated to be £411k as forecast at the end of Quarter 4 (Q4) 2020-21, however the actual spend in Q2 was £825k.

It should be noted that £2.26m of spend on workstream W1 – Dredging and River Management, that was originally predicted to be incurred in in 2021-22, is now forecast to be spent in 2022-23 onwards. Similarly, £374k of spend on workstream W3 – Urban Water Management has slipped into 2022-23.



2. Re-allocation of Local Partner Funding

Final claims returned by delivery partners during quarter two identified the following underspends as shown in Table B below.

Table B: Re-allocation of funds to contingency			
Project/Activity	SRA Delivery Partner	Reason	Amount £,000
Countywide Enhanced Drain Jetting	SCC Highways Dept	Underspend from 2019-20 enhanced programme of works. At the December 2020 SRA Board meeting these funds were held back for 'extra' work identified in the Mendip area. It is understood that SCC Highways reviewed the request, and no extra works were required.	22
Preston Brook, Yeovil Enhancement Implementation Scheme	Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest	Preparation work for Phase One complete. Agreement with Preston Academy for construction of the pond (Phase Two) has not reached a conclusion. A grant proposal may be submitted in the future once this is in place.	48
Wetland Biomass Feasibility Study	SCC Highways Dept	Project now complete, small underspend.	3
Hill Lane, Carhampton	Somerset West and Taunton Council	Hill Lane is an unadopted road; it has not been possible to resolve issues of ownership and future maintenance of the upgraded asset. Alternative NFM measures could be investigated to reduce the run off from the steep hills above to try and reduce the surface water flooding issue.	25
Amount reallocated to contingency			98

Following approval by the SRA Board in December of the movements in Table B the contingency increased by £98k from £813k to £911k. This means that contingency funds would equal 8.8% of Local Partner funds (currently 8%), with the remainder allocated to specific schemes.

At its December meeting the SRA Board approved allocating approximately £350k of contingency funds towards the 2022-23 Enhanced Programme. This will allow more schemes to be funded. Further detail on the proposed 2022-23 Enhanced Programme is provided under Item 6.

3. Growth Deal Funding Financial Performance

The full amount of £13,049k Growth Deal funding has now been claimed from the SRA by delivery partners. The total claimed during Quarter Two was £830k.

TABLE C: Growth Deal Funding Summary - Quarters 1 & 2 2021-22					
Project	Funding Agreement Allocation	Claimed to end of 2020-21	Actual Claims 2021-22 Q1	Actual Claims 2021-22 Q2	Total Claims
	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000
River Sowy-King's Sedgemoor Drain Enhancements Scheme	8,204	7,045	329	830	8,204
Pioneer Dredging, River Parrett	2,230	2,230	0	0	2,230
Land Management	550	550	0	0	550
Bridgwater Tidal Barrier	2,000	2,000	0	0	2,000
Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation Improvements Scheme	65	65	0	0	65
TOTAL	13,049	11,890	329	830	13,049

Although the Growth Deal funding has been claimed, the overall Somerset Flooding project continues to be delivered using SRA Local Partner Funding. These projects are the three local intervention schemes as part of the Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation Improvements Scheme due for completion in 2024, the remaining works of the River Sowy-King's Sedgemoor Drain Enhancements Scheme to be completed in 2022, and the Bridgwater Tidal Barrier continues to wait for approval of the Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) before commencing to the construction phase.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The SRA Joint Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

1. Review and comment on the financial performance as at the end of quarter two of 2021-22.

Note:

The detailed commercially sensitive update for Quarter Two 2021-22 has been circulated to the Panel separately.

Date: 14 January 2021

Author: Ian Tier, SRA Finance Manager, David Mitchell, SRA Senior Manager

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Somerset Rivers Authority Joint Scrutiny Panel Paper

2022-23 SRA Enhanced Programme and budget

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Somerset Rivers Authority Joint Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- Review and comment on the draft 2022-23 Enhanced Programme proposals and budget.
- Consider any recommendations they wish to make to the SRA Board in relation to the 2022-23 Enhanced Programme.

Purpose of the item

To review and comment on the draft 2022-23 Enhanced Programme and budget in advance of the SRA Board considering the proposals for final approval at their meeting on 4 March.

2022-23 SRA Enhanced Programme – background and context

2022-23 will be the eighth year that the SRA funds an ‘enhanced programme’ of projects to provide an extra level of flood protection and resilience for Somerset residents. This extra level of protection is funded by a shadow precept raised by the County and District Councils. The Parrett and Axe Brue Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) also contribute £10,000 each per annum. The final figure will be confirmed in February 2022, but it is estimated that the shadow precept and IDBs’ contribution for the financial year 2022-23 will total £2.972m. The SRA currently holds approximately £0.9m in contingency funds.

2022-23 Enhanced Programme – latest status

Eighteen proposals with a total value of approximately £5.35m were submitted by SRA delivery partners in August 2021. All proposals were scored against criteria reflecting Flood Action Plan (FAP) aims and objectives. They were then reviewed by SRA Technical Group members at a meeting on 11 November. Two proposals have been deferred. These proposals are ‘smoothing’ works on the King’s Sedgemoor Drain near Dunball as these works will not be deliverable in 2022-23, and Dulverton Weir and Leat restoration while further investigations are carried out to determine the level of flood risk caused by the Weir and Leat being in a state of disrepair and the increased flood protection the structure might provide once restored. On 14 November the SRA Management Group agreed with the advice from the SRA Technical Group and the remaining 16 proposals were put forward to

the SRA Board for provisional approval. Final approval occurs in March 2022 after the SRA precept is confirmed by the councils.

2022-23 Proposals

SRA projects are sorted into five workstreams as set out in the Flood Action Plan, though in practice different elements sometimes overlap.

Table A: workstream summary

Workstream	Title	Value (£000s)	% of total
W1	Dredging and River Management	£1,290	47%
W2	Land Management	£720	26%
W3	Urban Water Management	£211	8%
W4	Resilient Infrastructure	£400	14%
W5	Building Local Resilience	£135	5%
	Total	£2,756	

Table B lists all grant proposals that are recommended for approval. The 'location' column simply refers to the location of physical works, in many instances benefits of projects are realised across a wide area and in more than one district. Appendix 1 provides descriptions for each project. Confidential Appendix 2 also includes estimated project costs for Panel members.

Table B

SRA Proposed Enhanced Programme 2022-23	LOCATION	Workstream
Bridgwater Tidal Barrier	Sedgemoor	W1
Dunball Sluice refurbishment	Sedgemoor	W1
Hills to Levels – Land Management and Natural Flood Management	Across Somerset	W2
Somerset Levels & Moors peat trial	Sedgemoor, South Somerset, Mendip	W2
Somerset Trees for Water Action Fund	Across Somerset	W2
Wellhams Brook water storage study	South Somerset	W2
Wells catchment management study	Mendip	W3

Wedmore Village Hall SuDS Investigation	Sedgemoor	W3
East Brent asset improvement	Sedgemoor	W3
Burnham-on-Sea desilting	Sedgemoor	W3
Somerset Enhanced Maintenance: Drain Jetting	Across Somerset	W4
Somerset Enhanced Maintenance: Gully Emptying.	Across Somerset	W4
Somerset Enhanced Maintenance: Silt-trap Emptying	Across Somerset	W4
Somerset Enhanced Maintenance: Desilting Structures	Across Somerset	W4
Somerset Enhanced Maintenance: Trash Screen Clearing	Across Somerset	W4
Ham and Ruishton flood signs	Somerset West and Taunton	W5

This proposed SRA programme covers towns, villages and rural river catchments across Somerset. It benefits residents, businesses and visitors. Through close involvement with communities, landowners and volunteers it makes things happen that local people want to see happen.

It makes people's lives safer and easier. It does this in many different ways. For example, people across Somerset know from experience how important it is to maintain, repair and improve flood defence assets so they perform reliably when required. Most activities address this need, along rivers, watercourses and roads. One aim is to help fix problems for which other bodies have not previously had enough funding. If whole systems work better now, that helps to prevent more costly and troublesome difficulties in the future, especially as climate change is expected to make some matters much worse.

There is also funding in this programme for a trial exercise on the Somerset Levels & Moors and three studies and investigations. Here the aim is to look at challenges and opportunities in new ways.

The guiding spirit of this SRA programme is to connect different people and places, different organisations and sources of funding so that collectively more can be achieved for Somerset. The result will be better lives and a better environment.

2022-23 Provisional SRA staff and overheads budget

Spend Category	£000s
Staffing (4.4 fte)	£218
Overheads, legal, finance, governance, audit etc.	£45
Natural England advice	£12
Small projects and studies	£20
Total	£296

Summary

The total value of the 2022-23 SRA Enhanced Programme and SRA staff and overheads budget is £3.047m. The estimated value of the shadow precept and IDB contributions for 2022-23 is £2.972m. The SRA currently has approximately £0.9m of contingency funds available. It is proposed to use £75k of contingency to cover the difference between the 2022-23 precept and the proposed budget.

Contingency

It is estimated that if the Enhanced Programme and budget are approved as suggested there will be £0.911m of contingency funds for 2022-23. A contingency fund of approximately £0.5m will be sufficient for starting the 2022-23 financial year leaving £0.411m of funds that can be allocated to other projects. At its December Board meeting the SRA Board approved making use of the additional contingency funds by requesting further project proposals for possible inclusion in the 2022-23 Enhanced Programme. Any proposals submitted will be assessed by the SRA team and then presented to the SRA Board for consideration at its March 2022 meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

The Somerset Rivers Authority Joint Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- Review and comment on the draft 2022-23 Enhanced Programme proposals and budget.
- Consider any recommendations they wish to make to the SRA Board in relation to the 2022-23 Enhanced Programme.

Date: 14 January 2022

Author: David Mitchell, Senior Manager, Somerset Rivers Authority

Appendices:

Appendix 1: 2022-23 SRA Enhanced Programme project summaries

Appendix 2: Confidential – 2022-23 SRA Enhanced Programme project summaries - with costs

Draft 2022-23 SRA Enhanced Programme

Workstream 1 – Dredging and River Management

Bridgwater Tidal Barrier

Bridgwater Tidal Barrier is a major £100million project led by the Environment Agency and Sedgemoor District Council. Designed to help protect more than 11,300 homes and 1,500 businesses, it has three main elements: a tidal barrier on the River Parrett at Chilton Trinity, 2.67 miles (4.3km) of new flood defence banks and 1.74 miles (2.8km) of raised banks downstream at Chilton Trinity, Combwich and Pawlett, and fish and eel passage improvements at 12 sites upstream of the barrier, reaching into the districts of South Somerset and Somerset West and Taunton.

Most funding for this major project will come from central government major project funding. However, some local match funding is required to secure the national funding. Somerset Rivers Authority is making a local contribution in recognition of the important role that Bridgwater Tidal Barrier will fulfil in protecting Somerset residents, homes and businesses.

SRA reference: EA17-23. Location: Sedgemoor, with improvements also in South Somerset and Somerset West and Taunton.

Dunball Sluice refurbishment

A £3.575million project led by the Environment Agency to refurbish Dunball Sluice, an important structure used to control flows of water from the River Sowey-King's Sedgemoor Drain system into the River Parrett north of Bridgwater. The sluice is in a poor state of repair, with numerous defects. Part-funding from Somerset Rivers Authority will help the Environment Agency to extend the working life of Dunball Sluice by 35 years.

This project will complement the SRA's ongoing River Sowey-King's Sedgemoor Drain Enhancements Scheme (Phase One). It will benefit homes, businesses, roads, infrastructure, farmland and internationally important sites for wildlife across a large area of the Somerset Levels and Moors.

SRA reference: EA18. Location: Sedgemoor.

Workstream 2 – Land Management including Natural Flood Management

Hills to Levels: Somerset Land Management and Natural Flood Management

Somerset Rivers Authority continues to fund the biggest range of natural flood management (NFM) activities in the UK, as part of Hills to Levels. Plans for 2022-23 include more schemes in the Mendip District Council area, following on from earlier SRA-funded sub-catchment analyses across Mendip.

There are seven main elements, all to be delivered for the SRA by the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest (FWAG SW), except for the NFM schemes in Mendip (see below) for which Mendip District Council will take responsibility, while working in partnership with FWAG SW.

1 NFM schemes countywide: Design and implementation of 20 small-scale and natural flood management capital works to hold back water in upper catchments and reduce peak flows. Some parishes are being trained to identify possibilities for NFM measures and helped to implement them, for example in Cheddon Fitzpaine, West Monkton and parts of West Somerset.

2 NFM schemes in Mendip: Four nature-based schemes in sub-catchments with flooding problems analysed for the SRA in two earlier Mendip-wide investigations. In partnership with Mendip District Council, these projects will deliver a range of NFM measures including (where appropriate) 'Stage Zero' techniques of river restoration. Elements of existing infrastructure will be inspected to see if they need repairs or improvements in capacity, or if they could be re-naturalised (for example, could a stream be de-culverted?).

3 Highways referrals: Funding for responding to 30 referrals of cases where better land management could help to fix problems such as roads flooding because of run-off from fields. In such cases it makes sense to address causes as well as symptoms. Extra SRA funding enables this to happen with partners working together to tackle issues beyond their usual limited remits.

4 Soil husbandry: Funding for increased uptake of better soil management techniques and cropping changes to improve the infiltration of water and reduce run-off on 25 farms. Initiatives include split field trials, soil husbandry reports and workshops.

5 Online NFM auction: An online auction, excepting only land in lower-lying Internal Drainage Board areas, as the main purpose of natural flood management (NFM) activities in Somerset is to slow the flow of water down through higher parts of river catchments. Farmers will be able select for themselves different NFM activities, pick out parts of their land where they believe those activities will produce the best flood prevention results for themselves and for local communities and then bid for funding for those activities. Previous auctions have led to hundreds of successful bids for various extensive improvements.

6 Modelling and monitoring: Modelling and/or monitoring at sub-catchment scale to demonstrate the effectiveness of natural flood management measures that have already been installed. Special attention will be paid to the Merriott Stream de-culverting project to assess its value in reducing flood risks.

7 Match funding: As with the Merriott Stream de-culverting project, which was mainly funded through an Environment Agency Water Environment Grant, in several cases SRA

funding is used as match funding for ongoing projects that hold back water and reduce peak flows, such as:

- the Environment Agency's Hills to Levels Multi-Benefits project in the sub-catchments of the Upper Washford, Merriott Stream, North Petherton Stream, Back Stream and Halse Water
- the Environment Agency's Somerset Frome Water Environment Improvement Fund
- the Environment Agency's River Brue Water Environment Improvement Fund

At the time of writing, decisions are awaited on potential partnership schemes involving the River Sheppey and the Wallbridge area of Frome.

SRA reference: FWLM01-23. Location: Across Somerset.

Somerset Levels & Moors peat trial

Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) is to part-fund the running of a trial scheme of payments for the preservation and restoration of peat in 2-4 small areas of the Somerset Levels & Moors. The proposed system of payments will be based on a sliding scale of incentives for progressively higher water tables and compatible types of land management. Areas of wet low-lying land are important to the SRA because they can act as a buffer against flooding.

Lessons learned from the trial will help SRA partners (chiefly the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Internal Drainage Boards) to review, update and refresh Water Level Management Plans (WLMPs). Revised WLMPs are required as part of the SRA's ongoing development of a Strategic Approach to Mitigation for flood risk reduction activities on the Somerset Levels & Moors, such as dredging and River Sowby-King's Sedgemoor Drain enhancements.

Lessons learned will also help the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) to develop Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs) that promote Landscape Recovery. Defra is keen to invest in schemes "that reward farmers and land managers for producing public goods", such as preventing carbon dioxide (CO₂) loss from lowland peat and moving towards carbon sequestration.

The SRA's ambition is that future payment systems designed by Defra will be right for Somerset, because lessons from Somerset fed into their design.

SRA reference: FWML08. Location: Sedgemoor, South Somerset, Mendip.

Somerset Trees for Water Action Fund

A third year of SRA funding for the popular Trees for Water initiative, following successes in 2020-21 and 2021-22. This tree and hedge planting action fund helps local communities reduce flood risks arising from surface water run-off. The project is led by Reimagining the Levels, working in collaboration with the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest (FWAG SW).

Trees for Water is particularly designed to suit strategically important sites not large enough for Countryside Stewardship grants and not special enough in conservation terms to concern Natural England. This Action Fund is meant to be flexible, bespoke and un-bureaucratic.

On top of the funding awarded by the SRA, free trees worth £20,000 are provided by the Woodland Trust. Planting is usually carried out by landowners themselves and many local volunteers.

SRA reference: FWLM03-23. Location: Across Somerset.

Wellhams Brook water storage study

A study to assess the feasibility of creating a 4-acre storage pond on land near Wellhams Mill in the Wellhams Brook catchment between Yeovil and Martock. Wellhams Brook flows down into the River Parrett. A new pond could be combined with a series of upstream scrapes and small wetland areas, plus the partial re-instatement of the old Mill leat as an enhanced swale with an outlet for the controlled release of water. Benefits could include reduced flood risks for many people and properties around Martock and roads including the A303, as well as the creation of better habitats for wildlife and improved water quality through measures to remove excess phosphates. At certain times of year water stored in the pond could also be used for agricultural irrigation.

Constructing all these new features would not be cheap or easy. For example, existing infrastructure such as electricity poles could have to be relocated.

The idea was put forward to the SRA by Martock's flood wardens and the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest, with the support of the landowner. One impetus is the large amount of new housing and commercial development upstream at Houndstone and Lufton, prompting fears downstream of increased run-off. SRA funding for a feasibility study will allow for a detailed assessment to be made of the pros and cons of the scheme proposed, its value for money and issues such as maintenance and operation.

SRA reference: FWLM07. Location: South Somerset.

Workstream 3 – Urban Water Management

Wells catchment management study

Catchment analysis funded by Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) shows 85 properties at risk of flooding in Wells, and 42 previous incidents of road flooding.

The aim of this new city-wide study is to identify joined-up ways of reducing flood risks, increasing resilience and improving the management of water and land. This project will be led for the SRA by Mendip District Council's Flood Risk Consultant, working with a large number of organisations, landowners and residents. Every resident of Wells potentially has a part to play. Previous studies will be incorporated, such as one recently funded by the SRA that covered Knapp Hill, St Andrew's Stream and Keward Brook.

Possible improvements include: re-connecting floodplains, re-naturalising valleys, creating small wetlands and attenuation ponds, planting trees, de-culverting watercourses, reducing soil erosion, lessening pollution, and removing blockages that impede fish.

Particular attention will be paid to areas upstream of the Bishop's Palace moat, but it is also intended that communities downstream should benefit, in the lower catchments of the River Sheppey and the River Brue.

SRA reference: LAMDC08. Location: Mendip.

Wedmore Village Hall SuDS investigation

SRA funding will enable the completion of the ground investigations, detailed designs and community involvements needed for the proposed installation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) features in Wedmore Village Hall's large tarmacked car park. The purpose of SuDS features would be to help reduce run-off from the area around the hall, which contributes to flooding on the B3151 Cheddar Road and affects nearby businesses. A pond to help slow the flow of water down from Lascott Hill may also be created on land owned by the Diocese of Bath & Wells.

This scheme is being led by Somerset Wildlife Trust, working closely with the SRA's community engagement team, the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest and Wedmore Parish Council. It is tied in with Adapting the Levels, a major partnership project funded by the EU's Interreg 2Seas programme and the SRA, which has been particularly busy around Wedmore (and Langport). Earlier stages of this scheme were funded by another EU initiative called Sponge2020.

Partners' aim now is to enable the creation of a SuDS showcase, which combines lower flood risks with better habitats for wildlife, and fuses greener ideas for urban space with a still-very-useful car park. It is hoped to inspire other communities to follow suit.

SRA reference: SLACCP-01. Location: Sedgemoor.

Burnham-on-Sea desilting

A scheme to restore the capacity of a stream extending out of New Rhyne near The Drive in Burnham-on-Sea. Funding from Somerset Rivers Authority will enable the Axe Brue Internal Drainage Board (IDB) to desilt around 110m of the stream, which is currently struggling to cope with heavy culverted flows from roads, and properties built in the 1960s. The aim is to reduce flood risks for around 30 properties and local businesses including a petrol station, caravan repairer and caravan dealer.

SRA reference: IDB31. Location: Sedgemoor.

East Brent asset improvement

A scheme to help protect homes, businesses and farmland in and around East Brent. Funding from Somerset Rivers Authority will enable the Axe Brue Internal Drainage Board (IDB) to replace and upgrade unstable stone-filled cage defences along Brocks Pill rhyne, East Brent's main watercourse for drainage. Beneficiaries will include 12 homes and a holiday cottage business, Brent Area Medical Centre, the B3140, and around 20 hectares of agricultural land.

SRA reference: IDB32. Location: Sedgemoor.

Workstream 4 – Resilient Infrastructure

Five programmes of Enhanced Maintenance

Five programmes of enhanced maintenance are being planned by Somerset County Council's Highways Department. The aim is to help keep roads open in places highly susceptible to flooding, make them safer, preserve access for communities, and safeguard properties from flooding, all in line with the objectives of Somerset's 20 Year Flood Action Plan. These works benefit residents, businesses and visitors. Where possible, they are dovetailed with the Hills to Levels system of highway referrals to reduce run-off from land onto roads.

Somerset Enhanced Maintenance: Gully Emptying

Gullies in places most at risk of flooding across Somerset are cleansed once a year by Somerset County Council. Extra SRA funding means that around 20,000 gullies can be emptied twice a year.

SRA reference: LHA03-23. Location: Across Somerset.

Somerset Enhanced Maintenance: Drain Jetting

Extra SRA-funded drain jetting targets places across Somerset at high risk of flooding. Drains are usually only jetted by Somerset County Council on a reactive basis: that is, once they have become blocked. Pro-active jetting is designed to stop drains from getting blocked in the first place, by removing silt and debris. Around 200 places are expected to benefit, depending on various unpredictable factors such as the weather.

SRA reference: LHA04-23. Location: Across Somerset.

Somerset Enhanced Maintenance: Desilting Structures

Desilting bridges and culverts, and re-aligning channels close to highways structures, improves the flow of watercourses, and increases the volumes of water they can carry. This reduces the risks of flooding for roads, nearby homes and land. Whole systems can work more efficiently when watercourse “bottle necks” are removed.

Sites that would benefit from de-silting are identified by Somerset County Council’s highways department through the use of records kept by local highways officers, or concerns raised by other authorities or members of the public. Somerset Rivers Authority funding is provided as de-silting structures is not done as a routine operation by Somerset County Council.

SRA reference: LHA01-23. Location: Across Somerset.

Somerset Enhanced Maintenance: Silt-trap Emptying

Silt-traps are designed to reduce flood risks by collecting silt washed out from land near roads, so highway drainage systems are not jammed with sludge. Somerset has 105 silt-traps at places known to be susceptible to flooding. Extra SRA funding enables Somerset County Council’s Highways Department to carry out a programme of pro-active cleansing, so that traps themselves do not get blocked up, but work as they should.

SRA reference: LHA122-23. Location: Across Somerset.

Somerset Enhanced Maintenance: Trash Screen Clearing

Extra SRA-funded trash screen clearing targets just under 40 places. Trash screens are usually only cleared by Somerset County Council on a reactive basis: that is, once they have become blocked and already caused people problems. Pro-active clearing is designed to stop screens from getting clogged up in the first place.

SRA reference: LHA131. Location: Across Somerset.

Workstream 5 – Building Local Resilience

Ham and Ruishton flood signs

A new flood warning system for Lane End in Ham and Lipe Lane in Ruishton. Both roads are quite busy with local traffic and motorists seeking to avoid delays on the A358 east of Taunton. Both roads are also regularly troubled with seasonal flooding during which cars quite often get abandoned and driven into ditches. The situation is expected to get worse when works begin within the next three years to dual the carriageway of the A358, prompting more vehicles to seek diversions. Dualling works are expected to last for several years.

To try to deter drivers from risking lives and vehicles, Somerset Rivers Authority is to fund the installation of seven new flood warning signs. Five variable messaging digital signs will be activated by sensors in rising flood waters. Two will be manually operated by local flood wardens. This scheme has been designed for the SRA by Somerset Council's Highways department working very closely with local residents, Ruishton Parish Council, Ham Village Flood Defence Committee, and the SRA's Community Engagement team. Local volunteers will continue to be involved as the scheme progresses. More collaborative arrangements are being formed with highways officers, to help replace a scheme called Operation Gannex that was ended by Avon & Somerset Police in early 2021.

SRA reference: LHA135. Location: Somerset West and Taunton.

Somerset Rivers Authority Joint Scrutiny Panel

Flood Action Plan Review

RECOMMENDATION

The SRA Joint Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

1. 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 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 and 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

It had originally been hoped that a revised Flood Action Plan would be produced by March 2022. Unfortunately, this has not been possible.

3 Preparing a new Flood Action Plan

Work on preparing a new plan is now underway with the consultancy firm WSP awarded the commission to undertake the project. WSP will be managed by the Somerset Rivers Authority team. Regular updates will be given to SRA Management Group and 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 the SRA's aims and objectives will be realised over the lifetime of the plan.

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. When updating the plan we will review any actions not yet being delivered to assess whether they still need to be delivered or whether alternative solutions now exist to address the issues identified in 2014. The SRA will reflect on what are the short, medium and long-term priorities for Somerset in relation to flood risk and assess 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 organisations. A progress update will be brought to the Joint Scrutiny Panel at its July 2022 meeting. The Panel will have an opportunity to formally comment on the draft plan at its January 2023 meeting with any

comments passed onto the SRA Board to be taken account of in advance of final adoption of the Plan in March 2023.

An overview of the process is set out below:

Timescale –draft plan published December 2022; Joint Scrutiny Panel January 2023; adoption by SRA Board March 2023

Consultation and Engagement

- Stakeholder mapping
 - Workshops with SRA Board - 4 x 1.5 hour sessions
 - Workshops with stakeholders - 4 x 1.5 hour sessions
 - Public consultation events – 2 in person ‘village hall’ events
 - Public consultation - 2 x 90 minute online events
 - Online ‘virtual’ consultation room accessible at all time
-
- Phase 1 – data collection and review
 - Review of SRA partner strategies and gap analysis to understand where the SRA can deliver the greatest additionality
 - Phase 2 – assessment of SRA projects delivered to date
 - Assess SRA project delivery and outcomes achieved to date
 - Establish a baseline of SRA delivery to date to build upon through the new Flood Action Plan
 - Phase 3 – Flood Action Plan development
 - Agree content and format for FAP based upon findings from phase 1 and 2 and using best practice examples from the UK flood risk management sector
 - Develop a methodology for preparing SRA future work programme (including measuring outputs / outcomes)
 - Phase 4 – FAP production and publication
 - ‘Adaptation pathways’ type approach to manage uncertainty and offer a range of future approaches to tackling flood risk
 - 5 year, 10 year, 20 year and longer term time horizons
 - Consultations with stakeholders at various stages of plan development

RECOMMENDATION

The SRA Joint Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

1. Note and comment on the proposed approach to preparing, and scope of, a new Flood Action Plan

Date: 19 January 2022

Author: David Mitchell, Senior Manager, Somerset Rivers Authority

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