

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
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- 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

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Date: 19 January 2022

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