

Somerset Rivers Authority Board Paper

2023-24 SRA Enhanced Programme and budget

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) Board is asked to:

1. Approve the proposed 2023-24 SRA Enhanced Programme
2. Approve the 2023-24 SRA Budget

Purpose of the item

To consider and approve the proposed Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) 2023-24 Enhanced Programme and budget.

2023-24 SRA Enhanced Programme

Background and context

2023-24 will be the ninth year that the SRA funds an 'Enhanced Programme' of projects to provide an extra level of flood protection and resilience for Somerset residents. SRA funding is currently collected via a 'shadow precept' of 1.25% on council tax. This 'alternative notional amount'¹ (ANA) was granted by government explicitly for the purpose of funding the SRA. It is separate to other council tax funds and does not impact on the funds available to the council for core business. The Parrett and Axe Brue Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) also contribute £10,000 each per annum.

For the past 8 years the shadow precept has been raised by Somerset County Council and the four district councils: Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West and Taunton and South Somerset. The Parrett and Axe Brue Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) also contribute £10,000 each per annum. As of the 1st of April 2023, all the councils listed will be replaced by a single unitary authority – Somerset Council. Council tax levels were set by Somerset County Council on behalf of the new Somerset Council on 22 February.

The final amount of the SRA 2023-24 shadow precept was confirmed on 22 February 2023 as £3,010,000. The Parrett and Axe Brue Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) are also contributing £10,000 each. Item 9 on this agenda - 'Quarter 3 2022-23 SRA Finance

¹ The shadow precept raised for Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) by Somerset County Council and Somerset's four district councils is set at 1.25% of 2016-17 council tax rates. It is enabled through an Alternative Notional Amount mechanism approved by a resolution of the House of Commons in February 2016. The SRA's shadow precept can only be used for funding the work of the SRA. The level of the charge has not increased since 2016-17. It has been part of the council tax base since 2016-17

Report’ – further stated that £975,000 of contingency funds will be available this coming year for use on SRA activities.

The combination of the shadow precept, IDB funds and contingency funds provides up to **£4,005,000** for delivery of the 2023-24 Enhanced Programme, SRA staff and overheads costs, and an allowance for contingency.

Latest status

In July 2022, due to cost increases on other projects, the SRA Board agreed to defer delivery of four schemes from the current Enhanced Programme. Deferral of these four schemes released funds to cover the cost increases. The SRA Board agreed that funding for the deferred schemes would be drawn down from the 2023-24 precept. The total value of the deferrals is £864k. The deferred schemes are listed below:

- Bridgwater Tidal Barrier contribution
- Taunton Flood Action Plan
- Brocks Pill Rhyne, East Brent Asset Improvements
- Land Management and Natural Flood Management in the Mendip area

Sixteen grant proposals with a total value of £2.545m were submitted by SRA delivery partners in August 2022. All proposals were scored against criteria reflecting the aims and objectives of Somerset’s 20 Year Flood Action Plan (FAP). They were then reviewed by SRA Technical Group members at a meeting on 9 November. Following the Technical Group review, 12 schemes were taken forward for consideration by the SRA Board. On 20 January 2023, the SRA Board provisionally approved these 12 schemes for inclusion in the 2023-24 SRA Enhanced Programme subject to funding being confirmed at Somerset County Council’s budget setting meeting. Funding was confirmed at the 22 February 2023 meeting.

Recommendation to the Board

Table A below lists all the grant proposals that are proposed for inclusion in the 2023-24 Enhanced Programme. The ‘location’ column simply refers to the location an activity takes place, in many instances benefits of projects are realised across a wide area and in more than one district.

SRA Reference	Title	Workstream	Location
LHA04-24	Somerset Enhanced Maintenance: Drain Jetting.	W4	Across Somerset
LHA03-24	Somerset Enhanced Maintenance: Gully Emptying	W4	Across Somerset

FWCOAD3-24	Adaptations and Associations on the Somerset Levels & Moors	W2	Levels and Moors
EA17-24	Bridgwater Tidal Barrier	W1	Bridgwater
FAPW501-24	Building Local Resilience across Somerset	W5	Across Somerset
LHA01-24	Desilting Structures	W1	Taunton, Wellington
FWLM01-24	Hills to Levels – Somerset Land Management and Natural Flood Management (NFM)	W2	Across Somerset
LLFA27	Chard Urban Run-off Butts (CURB)	W3	Chard
SC04-24	Enhanced maintenance and restoration works in Mendip	W3	Across Mendip
IDB10-24	River Parrett Maintenance Dredging and silt monitoring	W1	Sedgemoor
SC03	SUDS inspections, mapping and monitoring	W3	Across Somerset
SC05	Tonedale Feasibility Study	W1	Wellington

Appendix 1 provides detailed descriptions for each proposal listed above.

Table B: Workstream summary

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

Workstream	Title	Value (£000s)	% of Total
W1	Dredging and River Management	£950	44%
W2	Land Management	£580	27%
W3	Urban Water Management	£100	5%
W4	Resilient Infrastructure	£375	18%
W5	Building Local Resilience	£130	6%
		£2,135	100%

2023-24 Budget Summary

Table C below presents the proposed SRA 2023-24 budget. The SRA income from the shadow precept and IDB contributions for 2023-24 is £3.030m. The available contingency of £975k is the amount indicated in the Quarter Three 2022-23 Finance Paper.

Table C

Income and available contingency	£000's
2023-24 shadow precept and IDBs' contribution	£3,030
Available contingency	£975
Sub Total	£4,005
Proposed expenditure, starting contingency & deferrals	
SRA core staffing (4.2FTE) and overheads, legal, finance, governance, audit etc.	£280
2023-24 proposed Enhanced Programme (<i>Table B</i>)	£2,135
Starting contingency	£726
2022-23 Refund to deferred schemes	£864
Sub Total	£4,005

Summary

Twelve proposals are proposed for inclusion in the 2023-24 SRA Enhanced Programme.

The total forecast value of the 2023-24 SRA proposed Enhanced Programme, SRA core staffing and overheads, starting contingency fund and refund of deferred schemes is £4,005m. Forecast income is £4.005m.

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Date: 23 February 2023

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: 2023-24 SRA proposed Enhanced Programme project summaries.

Appendix 2: Confidential – 2023-24 SRA proposed Enhanced Programme project summaries - with costs