

Somerset Rivers Authority Joint Scrutiny Panel Paper

Title: Heart of The South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Project Spend

RECOMMENDATION

The SRA Board is asked to:

1. Note and comment on the latest position regarding LEP funded projects.

Purpose of the item:

To update the Panel on progress with Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) funded projects recognising that financial year 2020 - 21 is the final year for use of LEP funds.

Background and context

In 2015 the Heart of the South Wes LEP allocated £13.049m of 'Growth Deal' funding to the 'Somerset Flooding' project. The project was described in the funding agreement as:

Phase 2 of the Somerset Levels and Moors 20 Year Flood Action Plan and consists of a package of measures to reduce the duration, depth and frequency of flooding on the Somerset Levels and Moors. This will safeguard houses, commercial premises, communities and infrastructure on the Somerset Levels and Moors and increase business confidence, contributing to the creation of new jobs and new houses.

The project funding was split across four distinct categories:

| Category | Growth Deal £m | Status |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Dredging and river management | £2.45 | In progress |
| River Sowy / Kings Sedgemoor Drain enhancements (including Beer Wall and Chedzoy) | £7.984 | In progress |
| Bridgwater Tidal Barrier | £2.0 | Spend complete |
| Land Management | £0.55 | Spend complete |
| Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation Improvements | £0.065 | Spend complete |
| Total | £13.049 | |

LEP funding is provided by central government. Government has set a hard deadline for spending of LEP funds of the end of March 2021. LEP funding must be spent by this deadline.

Latest status

The financial year 2020 – 2021 will be the final year of the LEP funding allocation. The SRA Board and delivery partners are now very focussed on ensuring that all LEP funding is used by the set deadline. The SRA Board will be closely monitoring progress over the coming months

To date £9.24m of the £13.049m of LEP funding has been spent.

The remaining £3.8m is primarily allocated to further dredging, River Sowy / Kings Sedgemoor Drain enhancements and their associated mitigation actions. There are also some other projects in receipt of smaller allocations. The remaining funds break down as follows.

| Project | Value | Delivery Partner |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|---------------------------------|
| Further pioneer dredging and mitigation (Oath to Burrowbridge & Northmoor to M5) | £0.7m | Parrett Internal Drainage Board |
| River Sowy / Kings Sedgemoor Drain enhancements and mitigation (Phase 1 main channel improvements) | £2.8m | Environment Agency |
| North Drain Pumping Station Improvements | £0.17m | Environment Agency |
| Field Way, Highbridge (contribution £1.5m surface water flooding scheme) | £0.10m | Wessex Water |
| Total | £3.77 | |

Detailed project information can be found on the SRA website - <https://www.somersetiversauthority.org.uk/> .

Project Status

- Oath to Burrowbridge – 2.2km of river dredged during October and November with 21,000m³ of material removed and placed at the rear of the river bank. Majority of works complete. Contractor will return when weather improves to undertake reinstatement works.
- Northmoor to M5 – trial dredge using water injection dredging occurring January 2020. Aim is to undertake additional dredging using the WID method during 2020-21.

- River Sowy / KSD – extensive planning and design work undertaken. Consultation with landowners January 2020. Preparing to tender for delivery of mitigation structures. Channel works taking place during 2020-21.
- North Drain Pumping Station – works planned for summer 2020.
- Field Way – public engagement events January 2020. Work to begin February 2020.

Summary:

Most projects are either under way or at the final stages of planning and design before implementation. There is a degree of uncertainty associated with the proposed dredging between Northmoor and the M5. This is a result of the need to undertake some trials to confirm the water injection method is suitable for this section of river.

The largest portion of unspent LEP funds are allocated to the River Sowy / KSD enhancement project. The Environment Agency project team are well advanced in the design and planning for this project with a high level of confidence that the LEP spending deadline will be met.

As we enter the final year of LEP projects SRA Officers and the Board will be closely monitoring progress to ensure all projects meet the LEP deadline.

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Date: 23 January 2020

Author: David Mitchell