

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.

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Date: 14 January 2022

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: 2022-23 SRA Enhanced Programme project summaries

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