

## ITEM 7d

### Somerset Rivers Authority Board Paper

**Title:** Sowy KSD Enhancement Scheme

#### RECOMMENDATION

The SRA Board is asked to:

1. Note the continuing progress towards delivery of the scheme.
2. Acknowledge the complexities relating to stakeholder buy-in.
3. Accept the challenges likely to arise during engagement with landowners.
4. Note that an optimistic date for tendering is Christmas 2017, with preparatory works starting in late summer 2018; pending progress on compensation,

#### Purpose of the item:

To update the Board on the progress of the Sowy KSD enhancement scheme.

#### Background and context

At the March SRA Board meeting, the Board requested that details of the Habitat Regulations Assessment mitigation proposals and requirement for landowner engagement be considered by the SRA Management Group on 7<sup>th</sup> April.

Subsequently, an extraordinary meeting of the SRA Management Group was convened on 19<sup>th</sup> May to consider the challenges facing the Sowy scheme in terms of environmental impact and mitigation, compensation and landowner engagement. A series of actions for stakeholders to address were agreed, relating to terms of acceptance of the scheme and mechanisms of engaging landowners in the Sowy corridor.

It was also noted at this meeting that all of the challenges affecting the Sowy scheme would equally affect any large SRA flood management project, including the proposed pioneer dredge.

#### Latest status

1. Progressing de-silt works at Parchey and the Rail bridges, with a formal instruction to the Contractor to carry out the works to be issued imminently. These works will increase flow capacity by a small amount whilst minimising temporary environmental impacts.
2. Tender pack and supporting environmental documentation for the main works was prepared at the end of 2016. This will be shared with Galliford Black and

Veatch and Land and Water in an Early Supplier Engagement exercise aimed at gaining greater certainty over project costs, and determining the most effective approach to managing construction related risks.

3. A number of areas of ecologically sensitive land were previously identified through modelling as being potentially impacted by changes to the fluvial flood regime following implementation of the scheme. Mitigation measures have been developed with partners, and, once finalised with all environmental partners, a budget and delivery strategy will be developed. We aim to resolve by the end of September.
4. A conceptual monitoring strategy to support the mitigation has been drafted. Potential mechanisms for delivery, along with associated costs, are currently under development.
5. We are continuing to develop a potential approach to landowner engagement. We are in the process of identifying the landowners that may be directly impacted as a consequence of the minor changes to flood regime as well as those who may need to be consulted over changes to winter water level management to support the ecological mitigation strategy. Potential partners for engaging with landowners have been approached, but it remains a challenge to gain consistent stakeholder support and we do not yet have a clear path or preferred partner with whom to undertake the engagement. We hope to commence engagement with priority landowners from late summer, pending approval of compensation arrangements (see item 6).
6. Alongside the landowner engagement plan is the approach to potential compensation for the changes, which will be detailed in a separate paper to the Management Group in July.
7. The project remains extremely challenging and disproportionately time consuming for the team to deliver. Partners continue to question the detail with which they are familiar and challenge positions that they have previously agreed with the team.

**Recommendation:**

SRA Board is asked to:

1. Note the continuing progress towards delivery of the scheme.
2. Acknowledge the complexities relating to stakeholder conflict.
3. Accept the challenges likely to arise during engagement with landowners and in finding fair mechanisms to compensate.

4. Note that an optimistic date for tendering is Christmas 2017, with preparatory works starting in late summer 2018; pending progress on compensation, landowner engagement and environmental mitigation.

**Date: 6th July 2017**

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