

New dredging on the River Parrett – update

At the last SRA Board meeting the Board agreed to defer the decision on further Pioneer dredging until the next Board meeting at which time the implications of the Maintenance dredge tenders would be available to inform the decision. The results of the tender process are now available, and a preferred contractor has been identified.

Discussions have taken place at the SRA Management Group about the potential for reducing the Pioneer dredging costs in the light of this. However there are a number of procurement and other issues that would need to be resolved as part of the work to identify the scope for achieving savings and it has become clear that there is insufficient time to establish a firm price for an alternative solution to the Pioneer dredge before the 21st October. The SRA Management Group, reluctantly, advise that the risk associated with trying any further to join the maintenance and pioneer dredge together is that neither one is done in a timely manner.

If the Board make a decision to proceed with the 750m pioneer dredge on the 21st October then the earliest the project can mobilise on site is mid-February. This is assuming good weather and an assumption that all consents and licenses are in place. If the decision to dredge is delayed again, then it is unlikely that the EA's preferred contractor will be available to deliver the work. As a result, the third option outlined at the previous SRA Board meeting, namely to defer a decision to allow consultation with the communities in and around Northmoor to gauge their opinion on the options above, has been withdrawn.

The Board is therefore faced with the two remaining options below:

Recommendation

The SRA Board are asked to decide the way forward, from the following two options;

1. Go ahead with the 750m dredge downstream of Northmoor Pumping Station as planned, at a cost of £2.14m (incl. of £200k of client held risk), recognising the limited additional physical benefits that these works provide in terms of flood risk reduction on Northmoor. As this option would require bringing forward some of the 2016/17 LEP funds earmarked for dredging, this option includes investigating more cost effective dredging techniques and sites before deciding on the dredging programme beyond this financial year.
2. To defer the Parrett dredge decision until next year and investigate more cost effective dredging techniques and sites in the meanwhile. SRA 'interim funding' for 15/16 to be set aside for this and future dredging, and the 15/16 Growth Deal 1 money to be used as a contingency for the Sowy/KSD improvements.