

ITEM 6b

Somerset Rivers Authority Joint Scrutiny Panel Paper

Title: Oath to Burrowbridge Pioneer Dredging

Recommendation:

- The Joint Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider and comment on the latest position in progress towards the delivery of a full Oath to Burrowbridge pioneer dredging scheme, aiming to dredge in autumn 2019.

Purpose of the item:

To provide a progress update on the delivery of a full Oath to Burrowbridge pioneer dredge.

Background and context

Oath to Burrowbridge project work commenced in late 2017. It has so far included design, bathymetric and topographic surveys, numerical modelling and the production of environmental surveys and reports.

Design cross-sections have been produced that sensibly maximise the additional flow achievable in the River Parrett, within physical, environmental and budgetary constraints. Hydraulic model results show improved flood flow conveyance achieving similar hydraulic benefits to the Environment Agency's earlier, less detailed modelling. To achieve the greatest hydraulic impact, work should be focused between Stathe and Burrowbridge.

Overall, results indicate that flood risk will be reduced to 65km² of land in the Parrett Catchment, and an additional 200 properties currently at direct risk of flooding.

Latest status (Summary)

It was not possible to deliver this project in autumn 2018. This was because the project team had not been able to finalise a proposal which it was confident would be accepted as legally compliant by regulatory bodies, and supported by all SRA partners.

This issue is further discussed below.

Assessment of Environmental Impacts

Comprehensive assessment of the existing environment and the likely impacts of the scheme has been completed, but due to the uncertainties regarding the acceptability of

the scheme through discussions with SRA partners and Regulators, we have not yet been able to conclude the Environmental Impact Assessment and Statement.

The scope of the project was considered by the SRA Board in December 2018.

Flood Risk

Computer hydraulic modelling of the proposed design has indicated reduced flood risks to 65km² of land in the catchment of the River Parrett and to an additional 200 properties currently at direct risk of flooding.

One result of dredging between Oath and Burrowbridge may be some minor increase in flood water on Curry Moor and North Moor. However, no properties are predicted to flood in North Moor as a result of this scheme, nor would any more properties in Curry Moor flood. Moreover, because of other 20 Year Flood Action Plan schemes carried out since the 2013/14 flood, the overall situation on Curry Moor and North Moor remains considerably improved, compared with how it was before the 2013-14 flood.

Modelling has also shown that – in a more typical flood event such as the one in Spring 2012 – there will be no impact on North Moor from this scheme, and no flooding would occur in Curry Moor (to properties or to New Road).

It was right for the 20 Year Flood Action Plan to focus initially on the areas it did. It is now right to retain acceptable standards of flood risk and look at also improving matters elsewhere.

On this basis, the SRA Board was asked to approve the delivery of a full Oath to Burrowbridge pioneer dredging scheme, aiming to dredge in autumn 2019.

Mitigation and Future Work

Previously, it was considered that the effects of implementing a full Sowy/KSD scheme could wholly offset the relatively small reduced benefits to North Moor and Curry Moor of dredging between Oath to Burrowbridge. They are now partially offset by the current scope of the Sowy/KSD scheme, but the SRA has committed itself to providing funds for more Sowy/KSD works in future which would provide further improvements to Curry Moor and North Moor.

The Environment Agency has agreed to provide additional pumping capacity before the start of dredging between Oath and Burrowbridge and until the delivery of more SRA projects that produce further benefits to North Moor and Curry Moor.

Other works promoted by the SRA through Somerset's 20 Year Flood Action Plan to provide wider flood risk benefits, that could offset the impact of the Oath to Burrowbridge dredge on Curry Moor and North Moor, include:

- Further dredging between North Moor and the M5

- Construction of Bridgwater Tidal Barrier
- Improvements to the River Tone between Hook Bridge and Ham

Delivery dates for these schemes would be after the Oath to Burrowbridge pioneer dredge is complete.

Programme and Risks

The next stage of the project will be to prepare the Environmental Impact Assessment and undertake consultation with stakeholders and local communities affected by the works.

Partners will work together to agree satisfactory details for Water Level Management Plans which should protect the existing environmental conditions and designations in the areas affected by the dredging.

The project team considers that the Oath to Burrowbridge scheme can be delivered within the necessary timescales (ie, by Spring 2021) for spending Growth Deal money from the Heart of the SW Local Enterprise Partnership. With the full backing of the SRA Board and timely, satisfactory conclusion of the Environmental Impact Assessment and Statement, dredging work would be able to commence in autumn 2019.

At the December 2018 SRA Board Meeting the following recommendations were approved.

- Approved the delivery of a full Oath to Burrowbridge pioneer dredging scheme, aiming to dredge in autumn 2019.
- The SRA Board agreed in principle that the SRA would fund temporary additional Environment Agency pumping required to support this scheme (subject to more information on costs).
- The SRA Board agreed that the flood risk baseline used for assessing the impacts of this scheme should be that pertaining before the 2013-14 floods.

Recommendation:

- **The Joint Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider and comment on the latest position in progress towards the delivery of a full Oath to Burrowbridge pioneer dredging scheme, aiming to dredge in autumn 2019.**

Iain Sturdy

Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium

4th December 2018