

Somerset Rivers Authority Joint Scrutiny Panel Paper

Title: Building Local Resilience update

RECOMMENDATION

The Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

1. Consider and comment on the latest position with work stream 5 and the actions planned for 2019.

Purpose of the item

To update the Scrutiny Panel on the progress with SRA workstream 5.

Background and context

Work Stream 5 is called Building Local Resilience. It is intended to deliver outcomes against FAP objective 3: increase resilience to flooding for families, agriculture, businesses, communities and wildlife.

Progress with some activities has been slower than anticipated during 2018 due to the departure of the Community Resilience Officer but several promising projects are underway, and the opportunity has been taken to refocus the work stream.

Last year, the Board had the opportunity to comment about the development of flood networks and this paper includes an update on progress and proposed approaches for the current year for this and other projects.

Flood networks

The aim of this project is to identify, map, and where necessary, develop links between existing flood groups and encourage them to link together on a District and / or catchment basis so that the communities can engage with the SRA through attendance at the Somerset Water Management Partnership. The West Somerset Flood Group is a good example of effective community engagement. Outcomes from the project will be more resilient communities and groups that are able to support each other both in planning for and dealing with flooding.

During 2018, with assistance from the members of the SRA Technical Group, information was collected on known flood groups and areas were identified where there appeared to be gaps in coverage. The departure of the Community Resilience Officer has delayed further progress however the success of the Somerset Prepared community resilience conference in October shows that people are interested in being prepared.

During 2019, it is proposed to develop the flood networks approach through a project plan to include:

- Raising awareness:
 - o Media coverage under the SRA banner to attract people who are thinking about or might be encouraged to set up a local flood group;
 - o Emails to all existing flood groups whose contact details are known to the SRA partners;
 - o Linking in with other groups and networks eg environmental groups
- Engagement
 - o "Drop-in" sessions in local communities, supported by pieces in parish newsletters.
 - o Follow up conversations with communities who sent representatives to the Somerset Prepared conference.
 - o Hold network events at key locations where there are active groups who might form the nucleus of a local network eg Langport.

Other projects and activities - achievements during 2018:

- Increased the number of SRA projects that include community engagement by running a workshop for SRA Technical group partners (March) and refreshing the bid scoring criteria.
- Ran an engagement project with residents of Chadmead to support the Somerset Drainage Board's assessment of the potential for a ring bank
- Part funded and supported the Somerset Prepared Community Resilience event in October attended by over eighty delegates from across Somerset. Event included presentations from the EA, Met Office and community representatives.
- Carried out a survey in November and December through the Community Council for Somerset to investigate whether access to affordable flood insurance continues to be an issue for residents following the introduction of Flood Re. The survey also asked general questions about residents' attitude to flood risk and their awareness of SRA activities. Report is due in February 2109. I would like to bring a full report of findings to the Board in due course with recommendations from the Technical and Management Groups.
- Carried out a pilot project with volunteers from Rotary International to test new approaches to promoting and supporting household resilience. Pilot took place in November 2018. It included advance information to the community via the parish

newsletter backed up by door-to-door canvassing by Rotary volunteers with input from the parish council. Evaluation is due during February 2019. Once we have reviewed the outcomes of the pilot in Misterton, we are planning to extend this project by working with Rotary International in communities in the other Districts.

- Supported communities with information, advice and access to CRISP grants to support the purchase of resilience equipment.

Current status

The SRA has been funding a Community Resilience and Recovery Officer to work with the flood-affected Level and Moors communities. The CRRO left in September 2018 and I have taken the opportunity to address:

- ways to increase the pace of delivery under work stream 5;
- need for increased focus on projects to engage with businesses and to support formation of community networks;
- need for resource to encourage, support and facilitate more community projects and initiatives that will build local resilience.

I am about to recruit a fixed-term (two year) SRA Community Engagement Officer plus support.

New projects planned for 2019/20

- Engagement with the business and farming communities. Planning a roundtable meeting in the first quarter of 2019 with key stakeholders.
- Another community resilience event.
- Participation in the EU funded Co-Adapt project (subject to confirmation of funding. Decision due in February).
- Plus any spin-off projects to address needs identified by the insurance survey.

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Date: 18th January 2019

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