

Somerset Rivers Authority Board Paper

Title: Update on Oath to Burrowbridge Pioneer Dredging

Recommendations

- 1. The SRA Board is asked to note progress made since the decision to deliver a full scheme.**
- 2. The SRA Board is asked to note that there are still challenges ahead that are being worked through, and that these need to be resolved to allow delivery of a full scheme in autumn 2019.**

Purpose of the item:

To update the SRA Board on progress with the Oath to Burrowbridge Pioneer Dredging scheme.

Background and context

Oath to Burrowbridge project work began in late 2017. Since that time, design, bathymetric and topographic surveys, numerical modelling and the production of environmental surveys and reports have all been undertaken.

Design cross-sections have been produced to sensibly maximise the additional flow achievable in the river within physical, environmental and budgetary constraints. Previous hydraulic modelling estimated the benefits of the scheme but was based upon a less detailed model. The latest modelling is more detailed and has confirmed the benefits of the proposed works. The current scheme design maximises benefits whilst working within the known constraints and available budget. Modelling has shown that works should be focused between Stathe and Burrowbridge where greatest hydraulic impact can be achieved.

The results indicate that 65km² of land in the River Parrett catchment, and 200 properties currently at direct risk of flooding, will benefit from reduced flood risks.

Latest status

The project team have been focusing on environmental approvals as well as working with the Environment Agency in regard to the Reservoir Act and right bank in Southlake. In particular, meetings were held in January with;

- the Environment Agency asset team and Undertaker in regard to the Reservoir Act; good progress was made and agreement on finer design details reached.
- the Environment Agency ecology team, to gain an understanding of concerns about the proposed works; a productive meeting with actions on the Internal Drainage Board team.
- Natural England in regard to Habitat Regulation Assessment and water level management plans. Again, a productive meeting, with actions on IDB team that are well underway.

Further meetings with the Environment Agency and Natural England have been held in February. A joint Oath to Burrowbridge and Sowey project team meeting was also held to ensure consistency across the two projects in various areas. Further meetings will continue.

Public consultation will be key to the successful delivery of the Environmental Impact Assessment and plans are currently being made for dates and locations to hold these events.

Draft Water Framework Directive and Environmental Impact Assessment documents were issued to the Environment Agency for discussion at a joint meeting on 21 February.

Programme and Risks

A full Oath to Burrowbridge Scheme is able to be delivered within the necessary Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership funding timescales (ie, by Spring 2021). However, a scheme will require a satisfactory conclusion to the Environmental Impact Assessment and Statement in order for work to commence on-site in autumn 2019. Works are progressing well, however there are still challenges ahead.

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Date: 20 February, 2019

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