

Somerset Rivers Authority Board Paper

Title: Update on Sowy-King's Sedgemoor Drain enhancements

RECOMMENDATIONS

The SRA Board is asked to:

1. Note and support the development of design for further enhancement of the Sowy-King's Sedgemoor Drain system,
2. Support the joint working of key partners and stakeholders in agreeing the necessary revised Water Level Management Plan actions and the control structures required for ecological mitigation.

Purpose of the item:

To update the Board on the progress of the Sowy-King's Sedgemoor Drain (KSD) enhancements scheme.

Background and context

The SRA Board agreed that works to enhance the Sowy-KSD should continue with an incremental approach, with Phase 1 of the main channel improvements to be constructed by April 2021. Work on reducing specific local flow restrictions also continues.

Latest status

Following the completion of the de-silting works at Parchey and Dunball Bridge, re-seeding operations of the banks are now planned for spring 2019. Final outturn costs for the de-silting works are not expected to exceed the forecast cost. More material than expected was removed, including a load of builders' rubble and assorted debris from the KSD.

Development of the Phase 1 scheme design is ongoing for the channel bank restoration improvements on the Sowy and KSD. Work to demonstrate compliance with environmental legislation continues, so that these channel works can take place in summer/autumn 2020.

There have been further discussions about the proposals for control structures for ecological mitigation. These need to be cognisant of the likely changes to the Water Level Management Plans (WLMP) which must be made to allow the scheme to be legally compliant. All partners are working towards this goal. Construction work on

these control structures can start in autumn 2019 in cases where agreement can be easily reached, with remaining structures to follow before the end of Phase 1.

Work is ongoing by designers engaged on finding a local solution to the need to further smooth and protect the right bank of the KSD just upstream of the A38 road bridge. The location, difficult access and rapidly changing water levels make this a technically challenging problem. The Board will soon be asked to confirm its acceptance of the way forward. Construction of these 'smoothing' works is planned for autumn in 2019.

Consenting

It has been previously reported that changes to the WLMP must be agreed before the enhanced scheme can operate. This is not within the remit of the Environment Agency's delivery team. The Board is asked to support key partners and stakeholders in their work agreeing necessary changes to operating protocols and updating of WLMPs to enable the enhanced scheme to operate.

Risks

Failure to reach a timely decision agreeing the required control structures will delay the development of the Phase 1 designs with negative knock-on effects to meeting the funding programme's timetable.

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