

Somerset Rivers Authority Board Paper

Sowy-King's Sedgemoor Drain (KSD) Enhancements Scheme progress report

RECOMMENDATIONS

The SRA Board is asked to:

1. Note and comment on the latest position with the Sowy-King's Sedgemoor Drain Enhancements Scheme.
2. Note that the Environmental Statement for the project is currently being consulted on and that the consultation will close on 13 September.

Purpose of the item

To update the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) Board on the progress of the Sowy-King's Sedgemoor Drain (KSD) Enhancements Scheme.

Background and context

The completed detailed design was shared with affected landowners in July 2020. No questions or objections to the design were received.

The Environmental Statement has been completed. The consultation for this has been moved wholly online in light of coronavirus restrictions. With this innovation, the team achieved its planned milestone date (15 August 2020) to commence the 30-day public consultation period (as per Environmental Impact Assessment regulations). Notices advertising the consultation are in local newspapers and have been shared with parish councils and land agents. The consultation is due to close on 13 September 2020. The risk of receiving objections remains until the consultation closes. If an objection is received, it could delay the project.

The Environment Agency, Internal Drainage Board and Natural England have jointly developed and agreed the Mitigation Action Plan. Outlining of mitigation actions within the Mitigation Action Plan, and agreement to implement these actions, are required for legal compliance for both the Sowy-KSD scheme and the Oath to Burrowbridge dredging scheme. Letters have been sent to landowners who may be impacted by changes to operational practices associated with implementation of the Mitigation Action Plan.

As the project moves closer to construction, environmental constraints remain challenging, predominantly in the KSD area of the works. Examples include dealing with

new badger setts and satisfying requirements for working in the vicinity of the Battlefield Scheduled Monument. These challenges are likely to produce further constraints on how the works are carried out. Various permits and consents are in the determination process and otherwise remain on track. On 28 August 2020 tenants moved livestock off Environment Agency land as agreed in preparation to facilitate the works

The Environment Agency is negotiating with its framework contractor on the details of the contract. It is anticipated that some works will be undertaken in the autumn, working until the weather or ground conditions are unsuitable. Remaining channel works will be completed spring/summer 2021.

Environmental Mitigation

Refurbishment works in three areas - Egypt's Clyse and the Moorlinch and Westmoor Raised Water Level Areas (RWLAs) – to support environmental mitigation for the Sowy/KSD scheme have been progressing. The team is pleased to report that all planned works at Moorlinch were completed in July 2020. Works included refurbishment to 21 structures, installation of new walkways, fencing and culvert clearing.



Pictured above: completed Trench Sheet Dam at Moorlinch

Works to the remaining two areas (Egypt's Clyse and Westmoor) are on track for a mid-September start. Works are expected to last for five to six weeks at both areas. The completion of the full package of works is integral for ensuring no detrimental effects to the Special Protection Area and legal compliance for the scheme.

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Date: 1 September 2020

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