

## **Somerset Rivers Authority Board Paper (for information)**

### **Quarterly Key Project Update – River Brue Dredging**

#### **Purpose of the item**

This paper summarises the current status of proposals for dredging work on the River Brue.

#### **Background and context**

As previously reported, in 2015 Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) allocated £500,000 of its Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Growth Deal funding towards delivering dredging on the River Brue. The deadline for claiming LEP funding was set as March 2021. The project was being led by the Axe Brue Internal Drainage Board (IDB). Progress was difficult, in part due to the environmentally sensitive nature of the area of works. In March 2019 it was proposed that the SRA's Local Partner Funding should be used to progress this project, to remove the risk associated with not spending LEP funding; this approach was confirmed at the June 2019 SRA Board meeting. £225k of SRA Local Partner Funding is now allocated for project development.

This change in funding enabled the Axe Brue IDB, supported by a Senior Officer Group from SRA partners, to develop a proposal for dredging in the River Brue. A project scope has been developed but this needs to be updated to reflect the emerging Brue Catchment Plan 2020 to 2025 that is being developed by the Environment Agency.

#### **Current Status**

Additional demands on Senior Officer Group members' time, brought about by Covid-19 restrictions, have delayed convening of a meeting to finalise the project scope and promote incorporation into the Brue Catchment Plan. A meeting scheduled for 20 July could not take place and has yet to be rescheduled.

Design of the dredge originally focused on the reach between Westhay and North Drain Pumping Station that contained around 37,000m<sup>3</sup> of silt. However, the HR Wallingford report 'Opportunities for Further Dredging in Somerset' indicated that the most advantageous work would be achieved down river of North Drain. Inadequacies of the current hydraulic model limit development of a revised dredge design so **it is recommended that:**

1. Water level/flow gauges be installed upstream and downstream of Highbridge Clyce to aid understanding of the impact of tide locking on upstream water levels and the amount of flow that can pass through the sluice at low tides.
2. Bank crest level surveys be undertaken on: South Drain - Glastonbury Canal to Gold Corner; North Drain - Panborough relief channel to River Brue; Cripps

River. The crest surveys will enable better representation of flows between channel and moors and their influence on flood risk.

### **Next Steps**

- Re-convene meeting of Senior Officer Group to develop project scope
- Appoint a project manager to develop the detail, and deliver the work
- Commission work to improve the Brue hydraulic model

The SRA Board will be kept informed of progress through quarterly updates and by consultation with key stakeholders as the project progresses.

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