

Somerset Rivers Authority Board Paper (for information)

Quarterly Key Project Update – River Parrett Dredging: Northmoor to M5

Purpose of the item

To inform SRA Board Members of dredging work on the River Parrett due to commence in January 2021.

Background and context

The Somerset Levels and Moors Flood Action Plan includes a programme of dredging to reduce flood risk. This was presented in the October 2016 report by HR Wallingford “Opportunities for further dredging in Somerset” and included five locations for dredging relating to the River Parrett catchment. Three of these reaches have been dredged: Northmoor to confluence, Parrett up-river of confluence (Oath to Burrowbridge) and the Tone. The Environment Agency will be undertaking works on the River Sowey (also known as the River Parrett Flood Relief Channel) next year. Channel enlargement of the Parrett downriver from Northmoor to the M5 is the final River Parrett stretch identified in HR Wallingford’s report to be dredged.

This project is using Growth Deal funding from the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership. It has been designed and developed for the SRA by the Parrett Internal Drainage Board under a Public Sector Cooperation Agreement with the Environment Agency.

Scope and Programme

The dredge will cover a 2.2km reach of the river, downstream from the 750m reach dredged by the Environment Agency for the SRA in 2016. It will achieve channel capacity commensurate with the 2016 dredge by removing 22,000m³ of consolidated silt deposits.

Following successful trials in 2018 and 2019, Van Oord’s Water Injection Dredging process will be used for the works. The benefits of water injection dredging methods were presented to the SRA Joint Scrutiny Panel in July this year.

Site preparations get underway on 5 January 2021 for the dredge to commence on 12 January, or earlier if fluvial flows in the river permit. Prevailing fluvial flow will also dictate whether dredging can be carried out during 10hr ‘day shifts’ or be limited to tidal working whereby both ebb tides, day and night, will be worked. Works on the river are timed to take best advantage of January’s high spring tides whilst minimising environmental impact. They will be completed by 31 January.

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