

Somerset Rivers Authority Board Paper (DRAFT)

SRA Enhanced Programme and budget 2021-22

RECOMMENDATION

The Board is asked to:

- Provisionally approve the proposed 2021-22 Enhanced Programme and budget, subject to final approval after funding is confirmed in February 2021.

Purpose of the item

To review and approve the proposed 2021-22 Enhanced Programme and budget, subject to funding being confirmed in February 2021.

2021-22 Enhanced Programme – background and context

2021-22 will be the seventh year that the SRA will fund an ‘enhanced programme’ of projects to provide an extra level of flood protection and resilience for Somerset residents. This extra level of protection is funded by a shadow precept raised by the County and District Councils. The Parrett and Axe Brue Internal Drainage Boards (IDB) also contribute £10,000 each per annum. The final figure will be confirmed in February 2021, but it is estimated that the shadow precept and IDB contribution for the financial year 2021-22 will total £2.932m.

2021-22 Enhanced Programme – latest status

An initial 10 proposals with a total value of £1.88m were submitted by SRA Delivery Partners in August 2020. All proposals were scored against criteria reflecting Flood Action Plan (FAP) aims and objectives. They were then reviewed by SRA Technical Group members at a meeting on 13 November, and by SRA Management Group on 20 November.

The effects of the coronavirus pandemic have had an impact on the creation of the SRA’s Enhanced Programme 2021-22. All the principles and procedures established in previous years are still being followed, but the process of building a programme is having to be extended, because various restrictions and changes have slowed some matters down. More proposals have been received from SRA partners and stakeholders and they are being reviewed, but that process is not yet complete. So, this paper covers the programme’s first stage, and a second paper b covers the programme’s second stage.

2021-22 Proposals

SRA projects are sorted into five workstreams as set out in the Flood Action Plan, though in practice different elements sometimes overlap. For example, the proposed drainage improvements in Beckington (W4, Resilient Infrastructure) would be accompanied by some

upstream natural flood management works designed to reduce the amounts of sediment and debris getting into culverts (W2). In ways like this, SRA partners seek to fulfil their overarching purpose of tackling flooding problems collectively and effectively.

Table A: workstream summary

Workstream	Title	Value (£000s)	% of total
W1a	Dredging and River Management	£550	29%
W2	Land Management	£470	25%
W3	Urban Water Management	£60	3%
W4	Resilient Infrastructure	£675	36%
W5	Building Local Resilience	£125	7%
	Total	£1,880	

There are currently two proposals in **Workstream 1** (W1, Dredging and River Management).

The first is for a contribution to the Environment Agency’s major scheme to repair and refurbish **Dunball Sluice**, where King’s Sedgemoor Drain flows into the River Parrett north of Bridgwater. Dunball Sluice was built in 1969-71. Dunball Sluice is crucial to the effective management of flood risks in the River Parrett catchment – which covers 1050 square miles – and a thorough overhaul will help to keep it working well for another 35 years.

The second proposal is for a study of how flood risks in **Dulverton** could be reduced by restoring the town’s medieval weir and the Leat that loops off it. Both the weir and the Leat are eroded and damaged. Somerset West and Taunton Council, which owns the weir and Leat, wants to use SRA funding to establish exactly what repairs and improvements need to be done, how they should and could be done and what they would cost. If all goes well, a second phase of extensive repairs and improvements will follow.

There is currently one proposal in **W2** (Land Management including Natural Flood Management - NFM). The single proposal contains many separate elements. This bid includes specific proposals in the Mendip District Council area, following on from earlier SRA-funded sub-catchment analyses across Mendip. There are seven main elements, including the design and implementation of 20 small-scale NFM schemes countywide, and four nature-based schemes in Mendip. Other W2 elements include match-funding for five major NFM projects led by other bodies, land management initiatives to help stop roads flooding, a range of activities to promote better soil management, an online NFM auction encouraging farmers and landowners to bid for funding, and modelling and monitoring of works done.

There is currently one proposal in **Workstream 3 (Urban Water Management)**. This is a Sedgemoor District Council bid for an investigation into flooding problems in the large area that feeds into the lakes at Apex Leisure & Wildlife Park and Haven Holiday Park in

Burnham On Sea. The aim is to identify improvements that will provide better protection against flooding and more effective long-term management of local drainage systems. Around 100 properties in the Maple Drive area of Burnham could particularly benefit.

There are currently five proposals in **Workstream 4 (Resilient Infrastructure)**. The first is for a Mendip District Council project that follows on from a major SRA-funded investigation into almost every aspect of flooding and foul sewer problems in **Beckington** near Frome. This project will reduce the risks of future widespread flooding in the village by designing and delivering drainage system improvements. Wessex Water will design and fund sewer improvements. An intensive educational campaign about riparian responsibilities will also be run, to make Beckington residents realise what they must do in future to look after their improved drainage and sewerage systems.

Also, under W4 four programmes of enhanced maintenance are being planned for the SRA by Somerset County Council’s Highways Department. The aim is to help keep roads open in places highly susceptible to flooding, make them safer, preserve access for communities, and safeguard properties from flooding, all in line with the objectives of Somerset’s 20 Year Flood Action Plan. There are three countywide programmes covering enhanced gully emptying, enhanced drain jetting and enhanced silt trap jetting and an enhanced trash-screen clearing programme within the Somerset West and Taunton area.

Workstream 5 (Building Local Resilience) is focused on getting Somerset better prepared for flooding. The main element is funding for the continued employment until March 2023 of the SRA’s Community Engagement Officer and Community Engagement Support Officer. The officers will undertake an extensive programme of activities across Somerset. The programme will include working with small businesses, schools, flood groups and an international insurance industry initiative called Climatewise. Climatewise is based at Cambridge University and researchers have expressed an interest in studying the economic impacts of climate change and flooding in Somerset through the lens of insurability. The Community Engagement team will help SRA partners to encourage greater understanding of flood risks, the implications of climate change, and the responsibilities of property owners and land managers.

Confidential Appendix 2 lists all proposals submitted in prioritised order with further detail and costs for Board Members.

Provisional SRA staff and overheads budget

Spend Category	£000s
Staffing	£178
Overheads, legal, finance, governance, audit etc.	£40
Natural England support	£12
Small projects and studies	£20
Total	£250,000

Summary

The total value of the 2021-22 Enhanced Programme and SRA staff and overheads budget is £2,130,000. The estimated value of the shadow precept and IDB contributions for 2021-22 is £2,932,000. Based upon the value of proposals received at August 2020 and SRA budget request there is opportunity to allocate a further £802,000 to projects as part of 2021-22 Enhanced Programme.

An additional set of project proposals have been received from SRA partners and stakeholders. These proposals have yet to be reviewed and assessed against Flood Action Plan objectives hence they are not included in the current programme for approval. Further detail on these additional proposals is contained within Item 7b.

RECOMMENDATION

The Board is asked to:

Provisionally approve the proposed 2021-22 Enhanced Programme, subject to final approval after funding is confirmed in February 2021.

Date: 01/12/2020

Author: David Mitchell, Senior Manager Somerset Rivers Authority

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Confidential – 2021-22 Enhanced Programme List – with costs

Appendix 2: 2021-22 Enhanced Programme List – no costs