

## Somerset Rivers Authority Board Paper

### SRA Enhanced Programme 2021-22 additional proposals

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

- Note the opportunity to fund additional projects by using SRA contingency funds as well as the SRA's 2021-22 shadow precept funding.
- Note the second tranche of proposals submitted for the SRA Enhanced Programme 2021-22.
- Task the SRA's Technical Group and Management Group with producing a costed list of second-tranche scheme proposals for SRA Board members' approval at the final SRA 2021-22 budget-setting meeting on 5 March 2021.

#### Purpose of the item

This paper follows on from Item 6 (Quarter 2 2020-21 SRA Finance Report) and Item 7a (2021-22 Enhanced Programme and Budget). It sets out plans for continuing work on the SRA's Enhanced Programme 2021-22, before the Board's next meeting on 5 March 2021.

#### Background and context

Item 6 on today's agenda explained the build-up of £1.09m in the SRA's contingency fund. Item 7a sought the Board's approval for allocating £2.13m of the SRA's annual ringfenced shadow precept to the 10 proposals in the first tranche of the SRA's Enhanced Programme for 2021-22 and the costs of staff and overheads.

When the £1.09m in contingency is combined with the remaining £0.77m of the SRA's shadow precept, there is £1.89m to invest in the second tranche of the SRA's Enhanced Programme for 2021-22.

#### Current Status

A further 13 proposals for the SRA 2021-22 Enhanced Programme have been received from the SRA's partners and network of stakeholders. The total value of these bids is £3.7m.

All 13 proposals are summarised for the Board at the end of this paper in Table A. Bids include traditional engineering measures (e.g. Bridgwater Tidal Barrier, Dunball sluice, King's Sedgemoor Drain smoothing at Dunball, Westhay pipes), innovative land and natural flood management programmes (e.g. river restoration in west Somerset, water storage on the Somerset Levels), and a range of studies (e.g. covering Moorlinch and Westmoor

Raised Water Level Areas to help support the Strategic Mitigation needed for Sowey-KSD enhancements and River Parrett dredging, the development of wetland biomass fuel, the possible re-introduction at carefully selected sites of beavers).

### **Next steps**

All these proposals need to be fully assessed against Flood Action Plan objectives according to the SRA's usual procedures. As the total amount being bid for (£3.7m) is greater than the sum available (£1.9m), views will have to be taken by the SRA's Technical Group and Management Group about which projects should be funded and to what extent.

The SRA Board is asked to task the SRA's Technical Group and Management Group with this exercise.

Recommendations for the SRA's 2021-22 Enhanced Programme can then be brought back to the SRA Board at the meeting scheduled for 5 March 2020, when it will be up to Board members to take the final decisions.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The SRA Board is asked to:

- Note the opportunity to fund additional projects by using SRA contingency funds as well as the SRA's 2021-22 shadow precept funding.
- Note the second tranche of proposals submitted for the SRA Enhanced Programme 2021-22.
- Task the SRA's Technical Group and Management Group with producing a costed list of second-tranche scheme proposals for SRA Board members' approval at the final SRA 2021-22 budget-setting meeting on 5 March 2021.

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**TABLE A**

Proposer	Title & Description	Request £000's
<b>RSPB</b>	<p><b>Floodplain Restoration Case Study - contribution</b></p> <p>Match funding for an investigation into floodplain restoration at two locations on the Levels (Moorlinch and Westmoor), tied in with the SRA's development of a Strategic Approach to Mitigation for delivering flood and water management projects across the Levels and Moors and beyond. The study would look at developing alternative solutions to the current management of Raised Water Level Areas, making better use of floodplains to accommodate the effects of climate change, and supporting operating authorities in making greater use of gravity drainage.</p>	£6
<b>Wildfowl &amp; Wetland Trust</b>	<p><b>Doniford Catchment Parish Natural Flood Management (NFM) Project</b></p> <p>A project designed to empower communities to undertake NFM activities across four parishes in west Somerset. Engagement with parish councils and communities will result in the creation of parish NFM opportunity maps based on local knowledge and digital modelling. The project will also provide opportunities to equip local communities and stakeholders with the skills required to deliver nature-based solutions. The project will complement the Two Valleys project which is already working with farmers, landowners estates, businesses and the general public to bring back natural features whilst also slowing the flow of water downstream.</p>	£50
<b>Westcountry Rivers Trust</b>	<p><b>Westhay Moor water management network re-connection</b></p> <p>Westhay Moor, National Nature Reserve (NNR) in the Avalon Marshes: A project to upgrade pipe networks and balance the reserve's hydrology. The aim is to soak up more water on the site, thereby reducing local flooding problems and water flows downstream, and increasing local resilience for farmers and wildlife. In line with the Flood Action Plan objective of 'making the most of the special characteristics of Somerset', this project would improve biodiversity at the National Nature Reserve, as part of a longer-term plan to establish a Super NNR in the area.</p>	£52

<b>Westcountry Rivers Trust</b>	<b>Watertight - school to home project</b>	Workshops to educate and get pupils involved in co-creating and delivering SuDS for their schools A key objective would be to take schools as much 'off grid' as possible. Other aims would include getting pupils and staff to understand how they and their families could reduce their water use and costs. The project would work with schools to reduce water use and reduce their impact on the local sewer and combined sewer overflow system.	£85
<b>Sedgemoor District Council</b>	<b>Bridgwater Tidal Barrier contribution</b>	Project delivery underway with construction work planned to start 2023. A shortfall in local funding needs to be addressed to increase confidence in securing the national funding. SRA funding in 2021-22 would contribute towards the preparation of the outline business case, Marine Management Organisation (MMO) licence application, Transport and Works Act Order determination, detailed design, environmental assessment, legal and estates work, works information and tender process and estuary monitoring.	£2,100
<b>Environment Agency</b>	<b>Dunball Sluice Refurbishment</b>	An existing SRA grant application for 2021-22 is seeking £500k. Following a review of project costs there is a current estimated shortfall of £160k. However, costs could rise as the scheme develops, so an additional £300k is being requested.	£300
<b>Environment Agency</b>	<b>Sowey-King's Sedgemoor Drain (KSD) Dunball Smoothing</b>	By removing the concrete structure which reduces the capacity of the river channel near Dunball Sluice, this project will complement other Sowey-KSD works already funded by the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership and the SRA.	£800

<b>FWAG SW</b>	<b>Expansion of Environmental Land Management Trial</b>	<p>The SRA has previously approved a project which is now targeting 600 hectares of the Levels and Moors and testing approaches to paying landowners for delivering a service such as storing flood water. This project will inform future government proposals for the replacement of current agri-environment funding. This request is to top up the project’s current budget to increase the likelihood of successful take-up of the trial.</p>	£20
<b>FWAG SW</b>	<b>Countywide NFM mapping and site identification</b>	<p>Working with Westcountry Rivers Trust to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Map ALL existing Somerset Natural Flood Management (NFM) schemes by type of intervention.</li> <li>2. Identify suitable sites for different types of NFM and Land Management in different parts of catchments (depending on slope, soil type, catchment type, etc).</li> <li>3. Ground-truth larger NFM sites to determine feasibility - check in-field and make initial contact with landowners.</li> </ol>	£50
<b>FWAG SW</b>	<b>Somerset Beaver Strategy</b>	<p>Develop a countywide strategy for determining the best locations and methods for beaver re-introduction. To be delivered in conjunction with Somerset Wildlife Trust.</p>	£15

<b>FWAG SW</b>	<b>Wetland Biomass - Fuel Actualisation</b>  A follow-up to previous SRA-funded studies, aimed at producing marketable fuel: 1. Lab-test pelleted fuel - not been done with pellets which is most saleable/usable form of fuel 2. Research and cost current harvesting machinery availability 3. Define and cost type of pelleting plant that can cope with production on landscape scale 4. Identify, design and cost fuel storage facilities 5. Identify and line up local markets for pelleted material 6. Develop Levels Biomass brand and use biodiversity net gain credits to help fund	£24
<b>National Trust</b>	<b>River Aller Stage Zero expansion</b>  Match-funding for an expansion of the nationally-recognised and pioneering ‘Stage 0’ project of river restoration being run in west Somerset by the National Trust. This would complement several other initiatives already part-funded by the SRA. The project is the first of its kind in the country on a main river, and it would deliver significant flood risk and environmental benefits.	£95
<b>National Trust</b>	<b>National Trust drainage improvements and NFM across Somerset (6 strands)</b>  Fyne Court – restoration of natural hydrological function and cross flow pond creation. Hydrology drains towards road network. Quantocks – ditch/stream and NFM potential in the combs. Glastonbury (Poldens, Langport and Curry Rivel) – NFM and ditch regrading. Mendips (Cheddar and Crook Peak) - NFM and ditch regrading. Blackdown Hills – Quarts Moor – extend conservation grazing, restore hydrological function – to develop natural hydrological and ecological function. Porlock, Hawkcombe Stream – re-naturalise a lower section of the Hawkcombe Stream, lowering the bank to let water flow out across a National Trust field and in to the inter-tidal area. This would allow for a more natural flow in the lower reach of the stream and create an important wetland habitat.	£102
<b>Total of requests</b>		<b>£3,699</b>

