

ITEM 13a

Somerset Rivers Authority Board Paper (for information)

Bridgwater Tidal Barrier Key Project Update

Purpose of the item

To update the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) Board on progress with development work and with obtaining the legal powers needed to enable the construction of the Bridgwater Tidal Barrier.

Background and context

The Environment Agency and Sedgemoor District Council are working in partnership to deliver a tidal barrier and improvements to downstream defences to better protect Bridgwater and downstream communities. The scheme will deliver significant flood defence improvements and an increased standard of protection from tidal flooding for thousands of houses and businesses. 11,300 homes (built pre-2012) and more than 1,500 businesses will benefit from long term reduced tidal flood risk provided by the scheme.

Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) Application

The Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) application was submitted to the Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) on 19 December 2019. On 8 January 2021 Defra confirmed the TWAO application for consent to construct the scheme would be passed to the Defra Secretary of State for a decision. There is no timetable or time limit for the determination process, though we anticipate a decision soon. Assuming the Minister confirms that the Order will be granted, we should expect a further six months before the Order takes full effect and all conditions relating to the project are established.

Outline Business Case (OBC)

The Outline Business Case (OBC) considers the technical solution and its value for money. It has been assured by Environment Agency specialists and Defra's Investment Committee. The OBC has been submitted to HM Treasury for approval to continue. The project will be re-submitted to Treasury later once contract prices are established, i.e. the Full Business Case stage.

Work underway

Environmental surveys relating to the improved flood banks are underway as is regular silt monitoring by boat that will inform design of the barrier. Further ground investigation for bank improvements is being planned. Our construction advisors are working on the

design of the barrier and downstream defences with the particular aims of speeding delivery and reducing carbon.

Programme

We are planning to start setting up the site in late 2022 to enable construction to start early 2023, dependent on achieving approvals and consents. The process of approvals and the conditions we may have to meet will dictate the pace of delivery.

Funding

All partners continue to seek additional funding which is helpful in establishing contingency, especially in the face of rising construction inflation. There has been some success in the last quarter where an initial award of £750,000 was achieved from the Government's "Other Government Departments" funding stream. This acknowledges the benefits the barrier project will bring to public infrastructure.

Date: 14 July 2021

Author: Graham Quarrier, Environment Agency project executive