

## ITEM 9a

### Somerset Rivers Authority Board Paper

### River Sowy – King’s Sedgemoor Drain Enhancements Scheme

### Quarterly Key Project update

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

##### The Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) Board is asked to:

1. Note that consultation on the Addendum to the Environmental Statement is live until 1 August.
2. Note that Phase 1 channel works are scheduled to begin in early August soon after the Environmental Statement Addendum Consultation has closed.
3. Note the ongoing project risks and their mitigation strategies, which have the potential to delay some aspects of the planned works until mid to late summer, if they materialise.

#### Purpose of the item

To update the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) Board on the progress of the River Sowy – King’s Sedgemoor Drain (KSD) Enhancements Scheme.

#### Background and context

The SRA Board has previously approved Phase 1 of the Sowy-KSD scheme which comprises: raising low spots in banks, forming new banks where they don’t exist at present, some excavation to the river banks and upgrade-works to certain outfall structures on the side streams. This phase is a step towards the full scheme that could allow the Sowy to take greater flows when it is under managed conditions during a flood. The scope of the first phase has been chosen to fit the available budget and meet complex environmental constraints.

Last October the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) agreed a variation request that will allow this phase of the scheme to continue to draw down LEP Growth Deal funding beyond the original deadline of March 2021. We now have until November 2021 to complete construction works. Using this extension of time means more work can be completed in the summer months, reducing risks of cost increases.

#### Sowy-KSD Channel Works

- Notices of entry were sent to all landowners in early March, granting access for all the works.

- Enabling works commenced in early July. This comprised testing of piles on structures along the KSD, further vegetation management and low-spot filling on upper Sowy banks.
- The consultation on the Environmental Statement Addendum started on Saturday 3 July using the Citizen Space on-line system. The Addendum is an opportunity to comment on minor changes proposed since the original Environmental Statement consultation took place in 2020. The Addendum concluded that there weren't any significant residual environmental effects over and above the assessment recorded in the original Environmental Statement. Consultation will close on Sunday 1 August in time for starting construction of the main bank-raising works soon afterwards.
- Plans for the main bank-raising works are being made with the Environment Agency's framework contractor, Kier.
- Further pre-construction ecology surveys are required in advance of main channel works, in line with best practice. These commenced in July.
- Surveys were completed in June on the three additional Internal Drainage Board outfalls, downstream of Parchey Bridge, to determine their levels in relation to the proposed new flood banks. These outfall structures are below the scheme's design level so modifications will be required. We are considering the complexity of the likely modifications and the best solutions to raise these structures, that hopefully can be incorporated into the project.

As previously reported, the Somerset Levels is a highly designated site for environmental and archaeological reasons. These designations present significant challenges when delivering construction works. The key risks that continue to require careful monitoring and management are:

- Achieving Scheduled Monument Consent for works within Sedgemoor battlefield and acceptance of plans to manage archaeology risks elsewhere.
- Protected species appearing in the site during construction.
- Construction resources and personnel are generally in short supply at present.
- Severe weather during the main earth-works August/September/October.
- Being unable to complete all the works within the constrained construction window (August/September/October) as result of cumulative delays from managing all the project risks.

Each of the risks is being managed and mitigated as much as possible to reduce the likelihood of them coming to pass or limiting the impact if they do happen.

### Refurbishment Works (Environmental Mitigation)

Final works at Westmoor (tilting weirs) are planned for late July.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**Date: 15 July 2021**

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