

ITEM 15b

Somerset Rivers Authority Board paper to note

Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviations Improvements Scheme (TSFAIS) Quarterly Key Project Update

Purpose of the item

To summarise the current status of Phase 3 of the Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviations Improvements Scheme (TSFAIS).

Background and context

To protect existing property in Taunton, and to allow the town to develop safely, a holistic and strategic solution is required. Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWTC) and the Environment Agency (EA) are working together to provide a long-term strategic solution to reducing flood risk to Taunton and where possible to the wider catchment.

Phase 1: Studied flood risk and identified a combination of (i) improved flood defence walls in the town and (ii) an area for storing flood water upstream, to provide capacity for the long term (100 years). This study was completed in 2014. This solution require major engineering work to provide the desired level of protection. The capital cost and ongoing maintenance of this is estimated to be upwards of £50million.

Phase 2: Provided a Project Delivery Plan (PDP) with phased local intervention solutions to provide a useful increase in flood capacity pending the longer-term delivery of the larger flood risk reductions identified in Phase 1. The local interventions are a combination of flood defences and storage which provide protection against:

- an extreme flood event today, where a significant amount of water enters the river system and would cause severe flooding, this is called 1% annual exceedance probability (AEP) or a 1 in 100 Years flood event and has a 1% chance of occurring in any one year;
- significant changes in water levels as a result of climate change in the medium term, that could see peak flows in the river increased by 20% compared to what we would experience today in an extreme flood event; and
- significant changes in water levels as a result of long-term climate change, that could see peak flows in the river increased by 30% compared to an extreme flood event we would experience today.

The local interventions also have:

- no significant impact to third parties, including on the Levels and Moors;

- recommended timing of delivery or “triggers” for delivery (short, medium or long term);
- established benefits of the components, individually and together;
- estimated costs (capital and full-life) and possible funding sources;
- potential alignment with other programmes/development.

Phase 2 work was undertaken between July 2016 and August 2019.

The Phase 2 deliverables were discussed with the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) Technical Group in August 2019 and duly shared with the SRA Board in January 2020. Board members endorsed the TSFAIS recommended strategic and long-term approach to the management of flood risk in Taunton and confirmed their ongoing support of the project and its wider objectives.

SWT Full Council on 26 February 2020 endorsed:

- the strategic and long-term approach set out in the Phase 2 works;
- continued partnership working with the Environment Agency to detail and deliver the TSFAIS short-term measures;
- £6million capital funding and dedicated project management capacity to support three of the short-term measures;

The TSFAIS programme has a high profile within Somerset West and Taunton Council and sits within the External Operations Directorate and the SWTC Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience workstream; and it is supported by the Development and Place Directorate.

The three short-term measures collectively referred to as Phase 3 are:

1. TTC5 River Tone Left Bank Flood Defences – a combination of repair, replacement or new flood defences between Frieze Hill and Town Bridge to provide reduced flood risk to key transport routes including the A3027 Bridge Street, A3027 Staplegrove Road and the A3087 Station Road, and the North Town and Firepool areas of Taunton. Partnership between the EA and SWTC;
2. TTC10 Firepool Lockgate and associated bund between the River Tone and Bridgwater to Taunton Canal – raising levels of the lockgates and the area around them in conjunction with creating an earthen bund defence between the canal and the river from Firepool to Obridge which will prevent flows entering the canal. This provides reduced flood risk for Priorswood and Crown Industrial Estates and Bathpool. Led by SWTC with Environment Agency support;
3. LRM Longrun Meadow flood attenuation improvements – optimisation of the existing flood storage area at Longrun Meadow through new embankments, inlet and outlet to remove excess water from the river and control when the water is put back into

the river. This reduces flood risk in Taunton town centre and further downstream including areas of North Town, Firepool, Priorswood and Crown Industrial Estates, Bathpool and benefitting tributary flows reducing flood risk in Tangier area. Led by SWTC with Environment Agency support.

Current Status

The programme has seen adjustments to its original timetable as a result of market forces and resourcing impacts of Covid-19, but these have been successfully managed within the project by the EA and SWTC teams.

- Since the last update, £300,000 of Garden Communities Local Infrastructure Funding has been secured towards the TSFAIS TTC5 and TTC10 project development. Funds to be spent by end of March 2023.
- TTC5 Project: In Feb 2022 the Collaborative Agreement between SWTC and the Environment Agency was signed and Binnies were appointed for the detailed design, consents, and permissions work through an Environment Agency Framework. Works completed to date include: Evaluation of data and GAP analysis, Ecology Survey, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) Survey, Landownership update and Newts water sampling. Other Surveys and Data gathering ongoing includes the Topographic Survey and Bat phase 2 survey. The current contract timetable is for a planning application to be submitted Q2 2023 (between July and September) to enable construction to commence to the original timetable of 2023-24.
- TTC10 Project is led by SWTC with EA advice. Project management moved back in-house in June 2022 with support from J Price Consulting who had been appointed Project Manager (PM) since late 2020. The contract for detailed design, consents and permissions was let to WSP in August 2021. WSP completed preliminary studies (ecology, heritage, landscape, etc.) over the spring of 2022 to support the scheme. Outline design started April-May 2022. Pre-application and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) advice has confirmed that there is not a requirement for an EIA. The milestone of 20% of the outline design has been met and meetings with stakeholders have continued during this time. [Public consultation](#) on the proposed defence alignment, landscape and ecological mitigation is on the SWTC website. Current timetable is for planning permission to be secured during Q3 2022 (between October and December) which would see the original 2023 commencement of construction being retained.
- LRM Project will be assigned a Project Manager in due course.

Date: 22 June 2022

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