

ITEM 8

Somerset Rivers Authority Board Paper

Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) Strategy 2024-2034 and Flood Action Plan

RECOMMENDATION

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

1. Review and approve the SRA Strategy 2024-2034 for publication.
2. Note the proposed approach to preparing a Flood Action Plan to accompany the Strategy.

Purpose of the item

To request that SRA Board Members review the draft SRA Strategy 2024-2034 and approve it as the final strategy for publication. To set out the steps and timeline for developing a Flood Action Plan to accompany the Strategy.

Background and context

The Somerset 20 Year Flood Action Plan (FAP) was produced in 2014 in response to the extensive flooding that occurred during the summer of 2012 and the winter of 2013-14. Since it was created, the SRA has overseen delivery of the 20 Year Plan. The new Strategy will set the purpose and objectives specifically for the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) into the future.

The stated aim for the final Strategy was to provide a clear road map consisting of a set of guiding principles that defines actions that the SRA Partners and others should take and the things the SRA should prioritise to achieve desired SRA objectives.

Current Status

A final draft of the SRA Strategy has been produced and circulated to Board Members.

The final Strategy is a result of the input from a wide range of organisations and different representatives of those organisation. The process started with a workshop with SRA Board Members and concluded with a workshop with Board Members in February 2024.

The process included workshops with SRA Board Members, one-to-one interviews with technical officers, workshop sessions with SRA Technical Group and online sessions with stakeholders and the wider community. Between 17 November 2023 and 14 January 2024, the website www.srastrategy.co.uk was available to capture feedback on the draft Strategy and details of local flood issues. The website received over 10,000 visits, over 250 flood

issues were reported, and over 160 people responded to the online survey about the Strategy.

Feedback received throughout the process was reviewed and taken account of when preparing the final document. Key points that emerged were:

- There was majority support for what is proposed as the core purpose, principles and themes that will shape the work of the SRA.
- Lots of recommendations that communities should be part of the conversation and that communities can be a great source of knowledge and they want to help themselves
- Oftentimes, for every person that thought the SRA should do more of something, someone else thought we should do less of it.
- Respondents wanted to see more maintenance on existing infrastructure that plays a part in reducing flooding.
- Some respondents more investment reducing highway flooding is needed whilst others this should not be part of the SRA's remit.
- Climate change impacts are being felt now and a greater focus on resilience and adaptation is needed. But, adaptation should not be at the expense of continuing with maintenance and actions that protect where appropriate.
- Details on how delivery of the Strategy will be monitored is needed.
- More clarity is required on what the SRA is, what it does and what it does not do.

Amendments were made to the Strategy based upon feedback. Reflecting on the feedback it can be seen that the Themes (below) we set out in the Strategy provide the scope to address the key points that emerged from engaging with stakeholders and the public.

- Working with communities
- Strengthening operations, boosting maintenance
- Building resilience, encouraging adaptation
- Conserving and enhancing the special environments of Somerset
- Protecting the economy from flooding

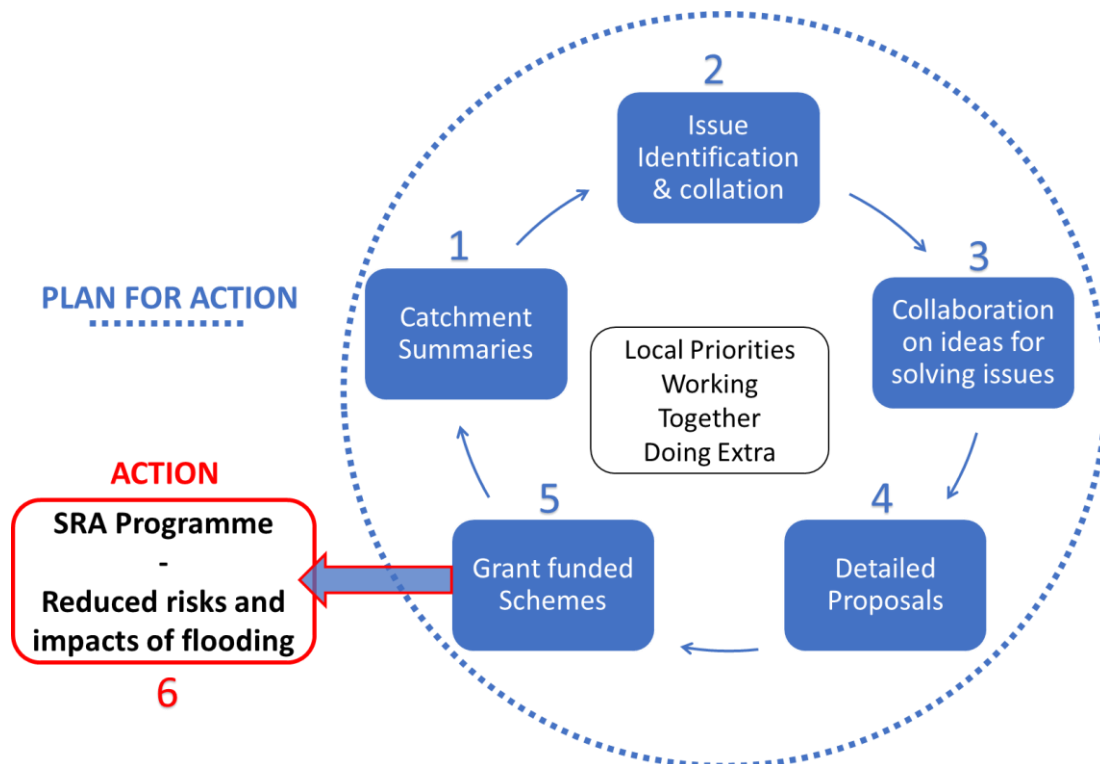
The final Strategy sets a clear purpose that all SRA-funded activities will contribute towards – reduce the risks and impacts of flooding – but how this is achieved will take different forms in different circumstances. The Strategy is explicit that the SRA operates on the principles of acting on local priorities and partners working together so that Somerset benefits from extra actions that reduce the risks and impacts of flooding.

The Strategy will ensure the SRA continues to fund and deliver a wide range of schemes and activities to reducing the risks and impacts of flooding.

Delivering the Strategy

Further work is required to complete a Flood Action Plan based upon the principles and objectives set out in the new Strategy.

The Action Plan will be made up of several components which together will generate a pipeline of potential schemes and activities that directly support the objectives of the SRA. The components are summarised below. Key to this is that the catchments, issues and ideas are assessed through the prism of the SRA’s principles to identify issues and ideas that can be addressed through the SRA.



The process will be dynamic and based upon expertise of the SRA partner organisations, SRA Technical Group and knowledge gained through working with local communities. Catchment by catchment we will build our knowledge about issues the SRA can help address, and generate ideas for solutions that maximise opportunities for partnership working. These ideas will act as a pipeline of potential projects that can be picked up and further developed into detailed proposals. The way ideas become action will be by submitting a detailed proposal to the SRA for grant funding for the project.

Timeline to completion:

- By June – steps 1, 2 and 3 completed
- By November step 4 completed
- By March 2025 step 5 completed
- April 2025 onwards implementation of grant-funded schemes

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Date: 28 February 2024

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