

2025-26 Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) Local Memorandum of Understanding & Constitution

<p>1. Background and Context</p>
<p>1.1 The Parties</p> <p>Somerset Council (SC), the Axe Brue and the Parrett Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs), the Environment Agency, Natural England, Wessex Regional Flood & Coastal Committee and Wessex Water (together the “Parties”) comprise the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA). These Parties, to whom this Local Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) applies, are those agreed to be represented on the SRA Board.</p>
<p>1.2 The Somerset Flood Action Plan</p> <p>The Parties, together with Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government - are committed to reducing flood risk and increasing resilience to flooding in Somerset via implementation of the Somerset Flood Action Plan, including the delivery of its Vision for the Levels and Moors (<i>Appendix One</i>). The SRA Board agreed that this will require additional expenditure on water and flood risk management and that this should be secured via an SRA precept.</p>
<p>1.2a the Somerset Rivers Authority Strategy 2024 – 2034</p> <p>During 2023 and 2024 the parties worked together to produce a new <i>Somerset Rivers Authority Strategy 2024-2034</i> and committed to developing an action plan which follows on from the original 2014 Flood Action Plan and sets new objectives for the SRA. The Parties are committed to continuing to work together as the Somerset Rivers Authority to deliver this strategy.</p>
<p>1.3 Memorandum of Understanding 8 December 2014 and sustainable funding mechanism</p> <p>Pursuant to the commitment in para 1.2 above, on 8 December 2014, a Memorandum of Understanding was agreed by the local authorities, the IDBs, Defra and MHCLG which confirmed funding totalling £2.7m available to the SRA for 2015-16. That MoU included a commitment to work together to review the options for a sustainable local funding solution for the work of the SRA from 2016-17 onwards and provide an assessment of the options for consideration by Ministers in July 2015.</p> <p>In September 2015, it was decided that the preferred funding mechanism was the establishment of the SRA as a precepting body and the Chairman of the SRA wrote to both the Secretaries of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and for Communities and Local Government with a view to discussing and agreeing how to implement this as soon as possible.</p>

The government in its response to the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Efra) Committee report on Future Flood Prevention, published in February 2017, gave a commitment to put the long-term funding of the SRA on a statutory basis when parliamentary time allows.

1.4 Local Government Finance Settlement 2016-17

The Local Government Finance Settlement 2016-17 included the provision of alternative notional amounts for council tax levels so that pending the establishment of the Somerset Rivers Authority as a precepting body, Somerset County Council and all Somerset district councils (now a single unitary authority Somerset Council) could set a shadow precept of up to the equivalent of a 1.25% increase in Council Tax, for the purpose of funding the Somerset Rivers Authority. This funding remains in the council tax base as long as it is raised for the purposes of the SRA.

The actual amount raised through council tax per household has remained tied to the level agreed in 2016-17. The effect of this is that the charge is no longer a % of council tax levels. The amount charged is a flat rate that remains the same each year. This amount is set at £14.65 for a band D property. The total amount raised increases slightly each year as new properties are constructed and council tax is paid. £14.65 is equivalent to 0.9% of 2025-26 band D council tax.

1.5 This Local Memorandum of Understanding (Local MoU)

This Local MoU document is not intended to be legally binding on the Parties, but the Parties agree to the Local MoU, intending to honour their obligations set out in it. It will cover the period up to 31 March 2026. Section 2 of this Local MoU sets out a constitution for the SRA. Information on background papers, technical terms and acronyms, can be found in Appendix Two.

1.6 Term & Amendment

This Local MoU shall come into effect on 1 April 2025 and shall continue in force unless terminated in accordance with this Local MoU. It will be reviewed before the end of the financial year, no later than 31 March 2026.

Proposals for amendments should be communicated to the SRA Senior Manager, no less than 30 days ahead of any Board meeting at which they would need to be considered. Proposals would then be circulated for comment, and any recommendations made to the SRA Board would, in accordance with its decision-making arrangements, be decided by a simple majority.

1.7 Previous Arrangements

Prior to this Local MoU, the Parties have worked collaboratively in relation to the Somerset Rivers Authority through a Local MoU dated March 2024. Those arrangements will be superseded by the arrangements put in place under this Local MoU.

Signed by **Cllr Graham Oakes**
Lead Member for Public
Health, Climate Change and
Environment on behalf of
Somerset Council

Date

Signed by **Cllr Mike Stanton**
as a representative of
Somerset Council

Date

Signed by **Tony Bradford** on
behalf of the
Parrett Internal Drainage
Board

Date

Signed by **Rebecca**
Horsington as a
representative of the
Parrett Internal Drainage
Board

Date

Signed by **Ian Withers**
on behalf of the
Environment Agency

Date

Signed by **Cllr Nick Cottle** as a
representative of **Somerset**
Council

Date

Signed by **Jeff Fear**
on behalf of the
**Axe Brue Internal Drainage
Board**

Date

Signed by **Andrew Gilling** as a
representative of the
**Axe Brue Internal Drainage
Board**

Date

Signed by **Claire Newill**
on behalf of **Natural England**

Date

Signed by **David Jenkins**
on behalf of the
**Wessex Regional Flood &
Coastal Committee**

Date

Signed by **Cllr Nick O'Donnell**
as a representative of
Somerset Council

Date

Signed by **Cllr Mike Caswell**
as a representative of
Somerset Council

Date

Signed by **Cllr Harry Munt** as
a representative of **Somerset
Council**

Date

Signed by **Cllr Ros Wyke** as a representative of **Somerset Council**

Date

Signed by **Vicky Farwig** on behalf of Wessex Water

Date

2. Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) - Constitution

2.1 Legal Status of SRA

The SRA will continue as an unincorporated association. This does not require any new statutory powers. In participating in this association, the Flood Risk Management Authorities (FRMAs, see para 2.3.1) are acting in accordance with the co-operation duty under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, Section 13.

The SRA Board has agreed it is committed to enabling the necessary legislation to be enacted to establish the SRA as an independent precepting body.

The government in its response to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Efra) Committee report on Future Flood Prevention, published in February 2017, gave a commitment to put the long-term funding of the SRA on a statutory basis when parliamentary time allows.

2.2 Purpose of the SRA

2.2.1 To bring together and co-ordinate the Environment Agency, the Somerset Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs), the Lead Local Flood and Highway Authority (Somerset Council - SC) and Wessex Water in their roles as FRMAs and Natural England to reduce the risk and impacts of flooding in Somerset.

2.2.2 To provide a strategic overview of the continued delivery of the Somerset Flood Action Plan, the Somerset Rivers Authority Strategy 2024-2034 and its associated action plan.

2.2.3 To provide a strategic overview of flood risk and water level management in Somerset, a public forum and single point of contact for collective decision-making in respect of Flood Risk and Water Level Management in Somerset.

2.2.4 To identify, prioritise, find funding for, and oversee the delivery of additional flood risk and water level management work across the whole of Somerset, over and above that which the FRMAs are able to perform within their existing funding streams.

2.2.5 To prepare an annual programme detailing such work as that set out in 2.2.4, to raise the necessary funds and to oversee its delivery.

2.2.6 To enable increased collaboration between the FRMAs, to ensure that Somerset's flood risk and water level management activity benefits from the collective wisdom, experience, and knowledge of all its members.

2.2.7 To undertake the detailed planning and, with government, put in place the necessary arrangements for the establishment of the SRA as a precepting body or other appropriate permanent legal entity.

2.2.8 To achieve long-term sustainable flood risk management funding for Somerset.

2.3 Scope of Activities

2.3.1 The geographic scope of the SRA is the whole of the area administered by Somerset Council.

2.3.2 The SRA does not lessen the responsibilities of the individual Parties or those of riparian owners. The existing FRMAs and their existing associated funding streams, responsibilities and accountabilities continue, and their existing powers and discretions are unaffected. However, opportunities will be taken to join up delivery where agreed.

2.3.3 The SRA prepares an annual Enhanced Programme detailing the additional work which compliments and does not duplicate the planned work of the FRMAs. The SRA provides grant funding for the delivery of such actions, details of which in respect of the 2025-26 Enhanced Programme, can be found in Appendix Three.

2.3.4 The SRA co-ordinates the implementation of the outstanding actions of the Somerset Flood Action Plan. The SRA oversees and coordinates the delivery of the new Somerset Rivers Authority Strategy 2024-2034 and its associated action plan.

2.3.5 Public Sector Co-operation Agreements under the Flood & Water Management Act 2010 section 13(4) will be used as appropriate.

2.3.6 Where works are undertaken by a Party, the practices and procedures of that Party shall apply. Each of the Parties shall take responsibility for its own liabilities, including insurance: for example, through appropriate insurance cover or indemnity of Members and officers.

2.3.7 The SRA will not include within its scope activities associated with emergency response and recovery.

2.3.8 The SRA will not generally include within its scope of activities issues associated with coastal flood risk. In instances where the SRA Board agrees that a coastal flood risk project supports Flood Action Plan objectives, grant funding could be considered.

2.4 Funding

2.4.1 New funding totalling £3,132,887 will be available to the SRA for 2025-26, raised by Somerset Council and the Parrett and Axe Brue IDBs as follows:

Authority	Contribution
Somerset Council	£3,112,887
Somerset Internal Drainage Boards	£20,000
Total	£3,132,887

2.4.2. Somerset Council will account for the use of all funds to the Parties as set out in para 2.7.

2.5 Host Authority

2.5.1 As recipient and accountable body for the funding contributions, Somerset Council shall act on behalf of the SRA Board as Host Authority.

In particular it shall:

- Provide the services of its Chief Financial Officer and Monitoring Officer at no cost
- Provide accounting, financial analysis, accounts payable and receivable
- Provide procurement services to all contracts SC awards on behalf of the SRA and, on request, on those of the SRA's delivery partners as required
- Employ any Host Authority staff and provide Human Resources (HR) and Information Technology (IT) services in support of them and the SRA website
- Respond to requests for information
- Carry out such other functions as may be agreed

2.5.2 The costs of the Host Authority in this role shall be covered by the funding available to the SRA and shall be separately identified in the SRA budget for the year as shall any interest accruing in respect of funding made available at the beginning or during the year.

2.5.3 The SRA shall, where relevant and unless otherwise agreed, operate in accordance with Host Authority practices and procedures, including the following:

- Procedural standing orders for the conduct of meetings
- Financial regulations
- Equalities policies
- Policies for dealing with access to information and data protection
- Employment policies
- Formal decision-making procedures

2.6 Conduct of SRA Board Members

Members of Somerset Council, IDBs and Regional Flood & Coastal Committees are bound by their own codes of conduct, as are staff of the Environment Agency, Natural England and Wessex Water.

SRA Board members, including any co-opted members, will in particular need to comply with the principles of the Host Authority's Members' code of conduct as it applies to the declaration of interests, and compliance with the principles of public life set out by the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life.

2.7 Obligations

2.7.1 As the accountable body for the funding, Somerset Council shall ringfence the funding, provide quarterly information on spend to date against budget and interest accrued to the SRA Board. In particular, Somerset Council will apply its normal financial probity and accountability controls, and will maintain reliable, accessible and up-to-date accounting records with an adequate audit trail for at least six years.

2.7.2 Other Parties shall pay to the Host Authority their contribution (see para 2.4.1) following receipt of an invoice from the Host Authority.

2.7.3 All parties shall provide timely information relating to progress, costs, benefits and impacts in connection with their roles as delivery partner in relation to the SRA Enhanced Programme (see Appendix Three).

2.7.3 The Parties shall, by 31 March 2025, agree the budget for 2025-26 arrangements as to the ways in which SRA funding for 2025-26 shall be spent, managed, and accounted for. These shall include mechanisms for handling any underspends against budget, for managing the risk of cost increases, and for facilitating the flow of funding from Somerset Council to meet agreed expenditure incurred by another Party.

2.7.4 Somerset Council will settle all payments within 30 days of agreement and submission.

2.8 Member Organisations (The Parties)

Somerset Council, the Axe Brue and the Parrett IDBs, the Environment Agency, Natural England, the Wessex Regional Flood & Coastal Committee and Wessex Water.

2.9 SRA Board

2.9.1 Composition of Board: 6 representatives from Somerset Council, 2 representatives from the Parrett Internal Drainage Board, 2 representatives from the Axe Brue Internal Drainage Board and 1 representative each from the Environment Agency, Natural England, Wessex Water and the Wessex Regional Flood & Coastal Committee. The Board will consist of 14 members.

2.9.2 Authority of Board: The SRA Board has the authority to:

- Agree the SRA annual Enhanced Programme and authorise Somerset Council to release SRA funding for the delivery of its current year's activities
- Endorse programmes that reduce both the risks and impacts of flooding and other activities to be carried out by the Parties. The programmes will support the delivery of the Vision and remaining actions in the original Flood Action Plan and the Somerset Rivers Authority Strategy 2024-2034 and its associated action plan.
- Determine the scope of services provided by Somerset Council as Host Authority. This will include the staffing structure and budget required to support the Board and proper functioning of the Somerset Rivers Authority.

2.9.3 Appointment of Board Members and Period of Office: The Parties have appointed representatives to serve as members of the SRA Board. Board members shall hold office until written notification of their removal and/or replacement is received

by the Host Authority or shall cease with immediate effect if they cease to hold office within that member organisation.

2.9.4 Nomination of Deputies to Attend Meetings: Each of the Parties shall nominate a deputy for its appointed Board member, to attend and to vote at any meeting of the Board in place of the appointed Board member, who for any reason is unable to attend.

2.9.5 Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair: The SRA Board will elect a Chair and a Vice-Chair who are members of the Board. Thereafter, and until the SRA is set up as a separate precepting authority, they will hold office until they cease to be members of the Board or at the two-year anniversary of the last election, whichever is the earlier. If neither the Chair nor Vice-Chair is present, then a member shall be elected from those present to act as Chair for that meeting.

2.9.6 Co-option of additional Board Members: The SRA Board shall have the power to appoint additional non-voting members to the Board. The process for co-option is to invite expressions of interest following agreement to do so by the SRA Board. Any expressions of interest would need to be accompanied by a curriculum vitae setting out relevant skills and experience of the invited individual or representative of the invited organisation. To ensure that adequate time is available for consultation on any co-option proposal any expressions of interest should be forwarded to the SRA Senior Manager, for circulation to Board Members for comment no less than 30 days ahead of any Board meeting at which they would need to be considered. Proposals would then be put as recommendations to the SRA Board, and in accordance with its decision-making arrangements, be decided by a simple majority.

2.9.7 Voting: Decisions to be made by a simple majority of voting members attending. In the event of a tied vote, the Chair shall have a casting vote. In the event of a disclosable pecuniary interest and/or a prejudicial interest arising, a member will need to abstain from participation in accordance with normal practice.

2.9.8 Quorum: A minimum of 9 voting members, including the accountable body for the funding.

2.9.9 Access to Meetings and Information: SRA Board meetings will be open to the public. Papers will be published on the SRA website five clear working days prior to meetings. Minutes of Board meetings will also be published on the website.

2.9.10 Public Speaking and Questions: A slot for Public Question Time is set aside near the beginning of the meeting. Questions or statements about any matter on the agenda for this meeting may, at the chair's discretion, be taken at the time when each matter is considered. Full guidance is published on the SRA website www.somersetiversauthority.org.uk

2.9.11 Frequency of Meetings: A calendar of meetings for each Board year will be approved by the Board and published by the beginning of each financial year. Full Board meetings are held quarterly, and extra meetings will be called in the event of an urgent decision.

2.9.12 Attendance at Meetings: Each of the Parties shall be responsible for meeting any remuneration, costs and expenses associated with attendance at meetings where the purpose is to represent their parent organisation.

2.9.13 Where a Board representative is required to attend meetings or functions on behalf of the SRA travel and subsistence costs will be met by the SRA. Expenses and costs will be refunded in accordance with Somerset Council's travel and subsistence policy.

2.10 Officer Support and Availability of Information

2.10.1 Where appropriate, the Parties shall make such of their officers and their information available for the purposes of the SRA, and for the Host Authority to meet its responsibilities, and in particular for updating and implementing the original Flood Action Plan, the Somerset Rivers Authority Strategy 2024-2034 and its associated action plan and the outstanding works of all SRA Enhanced Programmes.

2.10.2 An officer Management Group has been set up to oversee the delivery of the SRA's Enhanced Programmes, the outstanding actions of the Flood Action Plan and the Somerset Rivers Authority Strategy 2024-2034 and its associated action plan. Their terms of reference are set out in Appendix Four and members of the SRA Management Group are senior officers as follows:

- James Divall, Head of Climate & Natural Environment (Chair), Somerset Council
- Donna Gowler, Natural England
- Iain Sturdy, Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium
- Ross Edwards, Environment Agency
- David Mitchell, Somerset Rivers Authority Manager
- Neil Ogilvie, Somerset Council, Flood and Water Management Service Manager
- Vicky Farwig, Wessex Water
- TBC - Somerset Council Highways representative
- TBC - Emergency Planning Preparation and response Service Manager

2.10.3 An officer Technical Group has been set up in support of the Board. This group's terms of reference and membership are set out in Appendix Five.

2.11 Delegations / Urgent Business

2.11.1 The SRA delegations are outlined in Appendix Six.

2.12 Dispute Resolution

2.12.1 All disputes between the Parties on the meaning and interpretation of the constitution, and all disputes or differences in any way arising from the constitution, shall in the first instance be referred to the next meeting of the SRA Board for resolution.

2.12.2 In the event that the dispute is not resolved through this mechanism, it shall be referred to a mediator in accordance with the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR) Model Mediation Procedure.

2.12.3 All parties shall use their reasonable endeavours to conclude the mediation with 40 business days of referral of the dispute to mediation.

2.12.4. If the dispute is not resolved in accordance with para 2.12.2 within 40 business days, it shall be referred to an arbitrator to be agreed between the parties in dispute, and failing agreement, to an arbitrator appointed by the President of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, and the Arbitration Act 1996 shall apply to any such arbitration.

2.13 Withdrawal / Termination

2.13.1. In order to withdraw from the SRA, any Party shall give not less than 3 months' notice in writing to the Host Authority to expire on 31 March in any year.

2.13.2. The Parties may agree to wind up the SRA through a decision of the SRA Board by giving not less than 3 months' notice to the Host Authority.

2.13.3 If a Party serves notice to withdraw under para 2.13.1 above, or the Parties agree to wind up the SRA under para 2.13.2 above, the Host Authority shall arrange with that Party or the Parties, such operational, administrative, and financial arrangements as may be agreed between the Parties.

2.13.4. A Party withdrawing from the SRA, or the Parties winding up the SRA, shall be entitled to receive a fair share of any assets held, offset by any liabilities, to be agreed between the Parties, at the date of the withdrawal or winding up, to be received when those assets are able to be realised.

2.13.5 In the event of the Parties winding up the SRA all redundancy liabilities for directly employed SRA staff will, in the first instance, be met using remaining SRA funds. Should the SRA funds be insufficient then the funding partners (as set out in paragraph 2.4.1) will share the remaining liabilities across the funding partners in the same proportion as their annual contribution as at the start of that financial year.

2.14 Overview and Scrutiny

2.14.1 SRA scrutiny function will be provided by the Somerset Council Climate and Place Scrutiny Committee. The work of the SRA will be considered at least once per year or by request by the Committee Chair.

2.14.2 Representatives from the Parties will be invited to attend scrutiny meetings but will not be members of the committee.

Appendix 1: A Vision for the Somerset Levels & Moors in 2030

- We see the Somerset Levels and Moors in 2030 as a thriving, nature-rich wetland landscape, with grassland farming taking place on the majority of the land. The impact of extreme weather events is being reduced by land and water management in both the upper catchments and the flood plain and by greater community resilience.
- The landscape remains one of open pasture-land divided by a matrix of ditches and rhynes, often bordered by willow trees. Extensively managed wet grassland dominates the scene with the majority of the area in agriculture in 2010 still being farmed in 2030.
- The floodplains are managed to accommodate winter flooding whilst reducing flood risk elsewhere. These flood events are widely recognised as part of the special character of the Levels and Moors.
- The frequency and duration of severe flooding has been reduced, with a commensurate reduction in the flood risk to homes, businesses and major roads in the area.
- During the summer months there is an adequate supply and circulation of high-quality irrigation water to meet the needs of the farmers and wildlife in the wetlands. On the low-lying peat moors, water levels have been adopted which conserve peat soils and avoid the loss of carbon to the atmosphere. Water quality has improved and meets all EU requirements.
- The Levels and Moors are regarded as one of the great natural spectacles in the UK and Europe with a mix of diverse and valuable habitats. Previously fragmented habitats such as fen and flower-rich meadows have been re-connected and are widely distributed. In the north of the area over 1,600 hectares are managed as reed-bed, open water, and bog. Elsewhere the populations of breeding waders exceed 800 pairs. Each winter the wetlands attract large numbers of wintering wildfowl and waders regularly exceeding 130,000 birds. Wetland species such as Crane, Bittern and pollinator populations flourish.
- Optimum use is being made of the agricultural potential of the Levels and Moors, particularly on the higher land, whilst unsustainable farming practices have been adapted or replaced to secure a robust, sustainable base to the local economy.
- New businesses, including those based on 'green tourism', have developed, meeting the needs of local people and visitors alike, while brands based on the area's special qualities are helping farmers to add value to the meat, milk and other goods and services that they produce.

- The internationally important archaeological and historic heritage of the area is protected from threats to its survival and is justly celebrated, providing a draw to visitors and a source of pride and identity to local communities.
- Farmers and landowners are rewarded financially for the public benefits and ecosystem services they provide by their land management including flood risk management, coastal management, carbon storage and the natural environment.

Somerset Levels and Moors Task Force, 31 January 2014.

Appendix 2: Background Papers, Glossary of Terms & Acronyms

A1.1 Background Information and previous meeting papers

- Background information and previous papers can be found on the Somerset Rivers Authority website at www.somersetiversauthority.org.uk

A1.2 Technical Terms

- **Prejudicial Interest** - An interest of an individual Board member, which could be perceived to represent a conflict of interest with any matter considered by the Board.
- **Public Sector Co-operation Agreements** - The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 enables a Flood Risk Management Authority (FRMA) to arrange for a flood risk management function to be exercised on its behalf by another risk management authority. This can be done under a Public Sector Co-operation Agreement.
- **Riparian Owner** - An owner of land or property adjoining a watercourse.

A1.3 Acronyms

- CEDR Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution
- MHCLG Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government
- Defra Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- FRMA Flood Risk Management Authority
- HR Human Resources
- IDB Internal Drainage Board
- IT Information Technology
- MoU Memorandum of Understanding
- SC Somerset Council
- SRA Somerset Rivers Authority

Appendix 3: 2025-26 Enhanced Programme

TO BE ADDED ONCE APPROVED

SRA Reference	Title	Workstream	Location

Appendix 4: Terms of Reference – SRA Management Group

The SRA Management Group is a key part of the SRA structure providing a useful forum for consultation and information sharing between partners and the SRA Senior Manager about SRA progress and the business of the SRA Board. Members of the Group are drawn from senior officers of each of the SRA partners. The Group also oversees the delivery of SRA-funded activities and the outstanding actions of the Somerset Flood Action Plan, and delivery of the Somerset Rivers Authority Strategy 2024-2034 and its associated action plan.

The Group is involved with these programmes of work:

1. The SRA current year's Enhanced Programme. This comprises the flood risk management works for which funding has been agreed by the SRA Board.
2. The outstanding actions of the Somerset Flood Action Plan that are not included in 1. above.
3. The outstanding works of prior years' Enhanced Programmes.

The Group will:

- With regard to the delivery of all the SRA-funded programmes:
 - Monitor overall progress and explore in more detail where delivery/progress is flagged red (using a RAG status) with a view to aiding projects to get back on track.
 - review key risks and issues and identify additional actions where these are insufficiently mitigated.
- Monitor, update and review the framework for SRA Enhanced Programmes and prioritisation criteria, advise the SRA Board and direct the Technical Group accordingly.
- Review all proposals for change to the agreed SRA Programmes that are outside the SRA scheme of delegation and provide a recommendation to the SRA Board.
- Review and comment on all the other work of the SRA Board.
- Review, comment and share information on all matters relating to the work of the SRA.
- Review the individual Flood Action Plan workstreams – overall content and progress.

Appendix 5: Terms of Reference – SRA Technical Group

The SRA Technical Group is a key part of the SRA's structure. It consists of technical officers from the SRA Partners and associated bodies (such as the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest) who can contribute expertise towards a co-ordinated and efficient programme of flood risk management works.

The Group helps with the delivery of Flood Action Plan actions.

SRA Technical Group responsibilities include the following:

- Work together to identify opportunities for cost-savings through joining up activities from partner organisations and considering joint/alternative delivery approaches.
- Identify opportunities for schemes with multiple benefits that a single organisation may not be able to justify in isolation.
- With reference to SRA Enhanced Programmes:
 - Identify and bring forward potential schemes for funding.
 - Review the viability of schemes put forward, with respect to benefits, costs, environmental impacts and deliverability, using a set of scoring criteria derived from the main objectives of Somerset's 20 Year Flood Action Plan and the SRA Strategy 2024-34.
 - Prepare programmes of works from partners for approval by the SRA Board, taking demonstrable account of funding criteria and identifying delivery partners.
 - Be accountable to the SRA Management Group for the delivery of SRA Enhanced Programme activities and provide information as required on progress with delivery.
 - Provide a technical challenge (procurement strategy, flood risk management, project management) to implementation plans and performance.
 - Identify any potential changes to Enhanced Programmes for recommendation to Management Group, and thence the Board.

With reference to funding of new projects during the financial year:

- Consider proposals for funding new projects where a submission to the Main Grants or Community Flood Action Fund is not a suitable option.
- Make a recommendation to either add a proposal to the programme (tolerance up to £20,000) or reject a proposal.
- Discuss issues of mutual interest in flood risk management with a view to improving practices and service delivery in Somerset.

- Lead the delivery and regular monitoring of performance of actions in the Somerset Flood Action Plan and of actions associated with the new Somerset Rivers Authority Strategy 2024-2034.

The Group has a “critical friend” role and as such officers from other organisations can be part of this Group to maximise the value it brings to the process.

Membership

The Group will consist of a balanced mix of officers, including those from the following organisations, many of which contribute schemes to SRA Enhanced Programmes:

SRA Partners

- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium
- Somerset Council – (Flood and Coastal, Highways, Emergency Planning Preparation and Response)
- Wessex Water

Other organisations

- Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest
- Somerset Catchment Partnership
- Somerset Wildlife Trust

SRA Technical Group meets every 8 weeks.

In addition to the roles above, the Group can also make comment or recommendations on other activities such as consultation requirements for particular schemes, etc.

Appendix 6: SRA Scheme of Delegation

1. SRA decision-making processes

1.1 For as long as the SRA remains an informal partnership and not a legal entity, any decisions of the SRA Board are decisions 'in principle' and are subject to formal approval by its host authority and the accountable body for the funding it has access to. The host authority and accountable body for all the SRA funding is Somerset Council, which makes the necessary formal decisions with regard to programmes of work and spend according to the Somerset Council decision making processes including the Somerset Council scheme of delegations. These decisions, however, are informed by the SRA Board's decisions, and the decisions it makes under its own scheme of delegation; it is expected that Somerset Council's decisions will follow the SRA Board's decisions, unless they are either illegal, would put the host authority at undue financial risk, or go against Somerset Council's own code of conduct.

2. SRA Delegations

2.1 The general principles guiding the SRA's scheme of delegations are as follows:

- The SRA Board approves all programmes of work.
- No works in any of the Board-approved programmes can be deleted without SRA Board approval.
- No change can be agreed that means the total SRA expenditure exceeds the total funding available across all programmes.
- All individual works within programmes have tolerances set.
- These delegations will be kept under review and amended as deemed necessary.

3.1 The programmes of work to which these delegations apply are shown below:

- The SRA's current year Enhanced Programme. This comprises the flood risk management works for which funding has been agreed by the SRA Board on 7 March 2025.
- Outstanding works from previous years of the SRA's Enhanced Programmes.

4.1 Changes to the Programmes can be made by the SRA Senior Manager, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the SRA Board, subject to the following:

- Each change requires a formal decision paper, and a record of that decision will be kept.
- A report of all changes made within the previous quarter will be reviewed by the SRA Board at the SRA Board meeting at the end of that quarter.
- The SRA Management Group will review all changes made since the previous Management Group meeting.

5.1 The following changes can be made by the SRA Senior Manager in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the SRA Board:

- Additional works can be added as long as they are the next affordable works on the prioritised list of works of the SRA Board approved Enhanced Programme. Tolerance up to £200,000.
- New works proposed by the Technical Group can be added to the SRA's Enhanced Programme during the course of a year. Tolerance up to £20,000.
- Cost increases to individual works in SRA Enhanced Programmes. Tolerance up to £200,000 or 30% of the original budget for those works, whichever is the smaller.

5.2 The following changes can be made by the SRA Senior Manager:

- Cost increases to individual works in SRA Enhanced Programmes. Tolerance up to £20,000 or 30% of the original budget for those works, whichever is the smaller.

Appendix 7: SRA Grant Guidelines

SRA grant guidelines are approved by the SRA Board and used to ensure a consistent approach to assessing proposals submitted for SRA funding.

1. Geographic scope

- Fundable works can be in or outside the county as long as they deliver Flood Action Plan objectives of benefit to Somerset. Spend outside the county boundary will only be in exceptional circumstances.
- The important factor is where the benefit is gained, i.e. there is no requirement for equal spend geographically across the county.
 - We will develop a programme annually that is balanced, geographically, and by type of activity, and will use judgement to assess this balance
 - The SRA will not generally fund works for protection from coastal flooding, with the coast as defined by The Coastal Protection Act 1949

2. Financial

- The SRA will fund those projects and schemes that deliver our objectives that cannot be funded from current funding streams.
- SRA funding is to deliver extra over and above what would otherwise be affordable. SRA funding cannot be used to replace existing funding.
- The SRA will expect that partners and other applicants have tried to secure other sources of funding before seeking SRA funding.
- The SRA will encourage proposals which will lever in additional funding from other sources (i.e. jointly funded projects / works).
- The SRA does not fund emergency response and recovery actions which are the responsibility of the agencies best placed to respond to such emergencies.

3. The long view

- The SRA will assess proposals for funding against the following:
 - a) Whole life costs – to understand if there will be ongoing costs and how they will be funded.
 - b) Community benefits / disbenefits – to understand what additional benefits a scheme may deliver and if there could also be negative impacts.
 - c) Economic benefits / disbenefits – to understand how a proposal will support the local economy and also if it could have a negative impact on it.
 - d) Environmental benefits / disbenefits – to understand what benefits or possible negative impacts a proposal may have on wider environmental issues.

- e) Addressing the Climate Emergency – to encourage projects which directly support Somerset’s response to climate change by increasing resilience and encouraging adaptation to the effects of climate change.
- f) Long-term strategic plans – to understand how the proposal can support the strategic plans and objectives of other organisations.

4. Flood risk and evidence

- The SRA will support proposals that meet one or more of the Somerset Rivers Authority Strategy 2024-2034 objectives.
- Concurrent with taking action and delivering works on the ground the SRA will take the opportunity to gather evidence and monitor the impacts of its actions and activities.
- The SRA will rely on technical professional judgement from SRA partners, combined with existing modelling, where appropriate, to assess in-combination effects across the catchments.

5. Responsibilities

- The SRA only funds and undertakes works / projects that benefit the wider community.
- The SRA expects property owners (land, buildings and infrastructure) to make themselves and their property more resilient and put plans in place to manage their flood risk.
- The SRA will seek to raise awareness about riparian responsibilities and encourage riparian owners to fulfil those obligations and responsibilities.

6. Relationships and weightings

- The SRA uses a scoring mechanism, based on the Somerset Rivers Authority Strategy 2024-2034’s objectives to determine the relative importance of different types and scales of need, flood risk management work and different benefits /disbenefits