

ITEM 6

Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) Board Paper

Somerset Rivers Authority Annual Report 2024-25

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Review and comment on the Somerset Rivers Authority Annual Report 2024-25.
2. Approve the publication of the Somerset Rivers Authority Annual Report 2024-25.

Purpose

The Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) Annual Report 2024-25 gives a detailed account of SRA activities between the start of April 2024 and the end of March 2025. The report's publication and extensive distribution would show partners, MPs, councillors, stakeholders and Somerset residents the range and variety of SRA-funded works across the county.

Background and context

The first SRA Annual Report was produced after the end of the 2015-16 financial year, primarily for Government ministers, Somerset MPs and the SRA Board to show how the SRA had spent its initial 2015-16 funding. This funding included £1.9million from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) and a total of £800,000 from Somerset County Council, the five district councils that then existed (Mendip, Sedgemoor, South Somerset, Taunton Deane and West Somerset), and the Parrett and Axe Brue Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs).

Since 2016-17, Somerset council-tax payers have provided the SRA with annual funding, and the two IDBs have continued to provide £10,000 a year each. This being so, it is important to show people the range of what is being achieved by the SRA and to demonstrate a willing attitude towards accountability. All annual reports since 2015-16 have therefore provided a detailed account of the SRA's activities, with localised facts given along with some context. This year's report is the ninth. Were all SRA annual reports to be put together, they would now total 469 pages.

Latest status (2024-25 report)

This year's report is, in its main illustrated form, 48 pages long. It concentrates on things that actually happened between the start of April 2024 and the end of March 2025. It largely follows the pattern established in previous years, with some introductory materials, including a foreword from the SRA Chair, sections about the five SRA workstreams, and a financial summary. New this year is a short account of the launch of the SRA's Community Flood Action Fund, and there are three simple maps to show

the locations of 24 SRA-funded Natural Flood Management schemes, 20 Trees for Water Action Fund plantings, 37 inspections of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), and 74 places supported by the SRA's community engagement officers.

As an alternative to the main report, it is also intended to produce a plain and simple text version. The entire contents will also be set out as separate pages on the SRA website. This allows for extra photographs to be used, and for hyperlinks between sections and other sources of information.

The core team of SRA staff has also been working on the production of online mapping for the SRA website showing all the works the SRA has ever funded. Ongoing publication of this mapping is planned for the second half of this year. For map-viewers who may want more information, links are generally being provided to relevant sections of different annual reports. In such ways, annual reports serve to provide a useful skeleton of knowledge about Somerset Rivers Authority.

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Date: 29 May 2025

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