

ITEM 10

Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) Board Paper

River Sowy - King's Sedgemoor Drain (KSD) Enhancements Scheme: KSD banks and outfalls

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- Note the substantial completion of the King's Sedgemoor Drain (KSD) outfalls – Back Ditch and Chedzoy Tilting Weir.
- Note the substantial completion of the KSD bank raising works.

Purpose of the paper

To update the SRA Board on progress with the final stages of work on the River Sowy – King's Sedgemoor Drain (KSD) Enhancements Scheme (Phase 1).

Background

The River Sowy – King's Sedgemoor Drain Enhancements Scheme was a key project identified in the original 2014 Somerset Flood Action Plan and it has been in delivery since June 2018 by the Environment Agency and since November 2023 by the Parrett Internal Drainage Board (IDB). The objectives of the project are to increase the volume of managed flow through the system, allowing earlier upstream pumping in some areas and reducing the need for pumping in others. Once complete the project will benefit a large geographical area and reduce the depth and duration of future flooding events. Works have included the creation of two-stage channels where possible, strengthening and raising flood banks, desilting under bridges and improving key water control structures.

In November 2023, SRA Board members agreed to allocate up to **£100,000** of additional funding to review the works required to complete Phase 1. This included 1.8km of bank raising on the King's Sedgemoor Drain AND improvements to two outfall structures (Chedzoy Tilting Weir and Back Ditch Outfall) to better control movement of water to and from the KSD. The Project Completion Plan for these works was completed in March 2025 at a final cost of **£59,542.99**.

The SRA Board then approved a further allocation of **£250k** to deliver the two outfall structures (with construction work commencing in April 2025) and an allocation of up to **£915k** to deliver the bank raising works (with construction work commencing in July 2025).

Back Ditch Outfall

The contract was awarded to Bernard Perry in February 2025 for the two outfalls.

Contractors commenced on site at Back Ditch on 28 April 2025, once ground conditions allowed. Works were completed on 12 May 2025 with the contractor moving straight across to Chedzoy Tilting Weir.

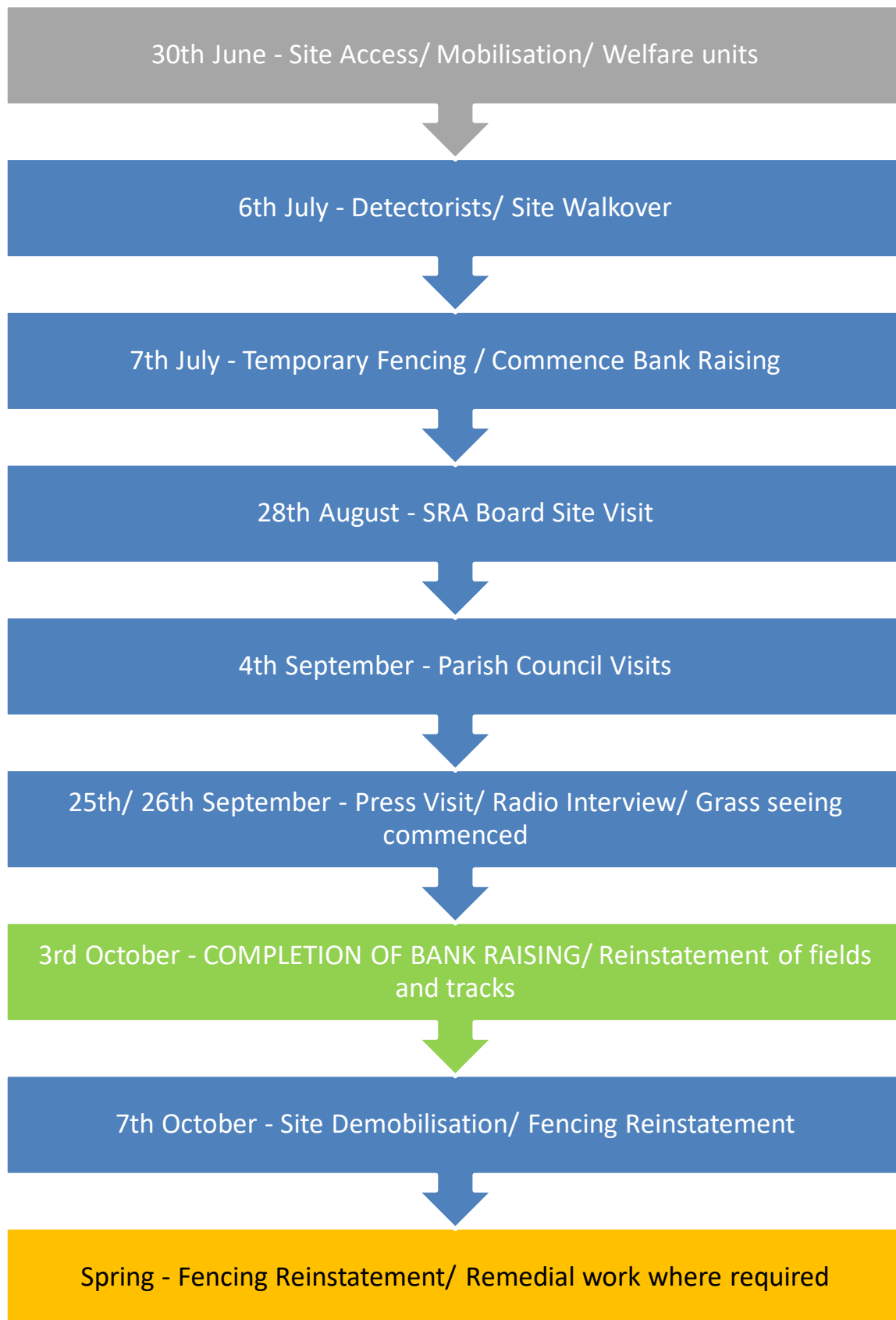
Chedzoy Tilting Weir and Headwall

The Contractors commenced works on 14 May 2025 and completed by mid-July. There still remains some monitoring through the winter of the germination of seed before we can confirm final completion of the project.



KSD Bank Raising Works

Contractors WM Longreach were appointed as the Main Contractor for the works and had access to the site from **Monday 30 June 2025** with an estimated programme of **12 weeks**. The diagram below shows the progression of works throughout the summer. Works were able to commence in earnest on **7 July 2025** and substantially completed on **3 October 2025**.





Following a very dry late September and early October, the seed on the raised banks was slow to germinate but the rainfall in mid-October saw a significant improvement in germination which has been aided by warm temperatures.



Risk Management

There were a number of risks identified at the outset that were carefully managed by the project team to minimise impact on programme and cost. The biggest of these was the possibility of there being a shortfall of material, which was a recognised risk based on previous experience of works of this type in this environment.

1. The pre-commencement survey and initial setting out for the works measured the length of the works to be 1.96km which is greater than the 1.8km indicated within the Environment Agency specification.
2. There is a short stretch of about 100m where the existing flood bank intersects a feature known as **'the mound'** (aerial photo from 1942 below) which is a potential Anglo-Saxon burial ground where a dugout canoe was found in the late 1950s. To avoid any impacts on the historical **'mound'** we adjusted the works to avoid disturbing the ground in the vicinity of this feature.
3. We have had an extremely dry summer. This has been fantastic for delivery but it has meant that the material we have been working with is unusually dry which resulted in more consolidation than anticipated.
4. Wessex Water commenced emergency works on a rising main close to the construction site in August 2025. As their work area was within our work area this meant we had to adapt and reduce the amount of soil we excavated in these locations.
5. The volume of topsoil removed from the existing banks was not adequate to get the required 150mm depth of topsoil for reinstatement over the newly profiled banks.

The above items in combination meant that we have had a shortfall of material which had to be sourced to achieve the design profiles set out in the specification.

The team had identified various potential sources for this eventuality and so were able to move quickly to source over 2000m³ of imported material to site. This equated to over 250 trucks of material delivered to site through September.

Remaining Works/ Next Steps

- We now enter a 12-month defect correction/ maintenance period where defects will be addressed accordingly. We anticipate a handover to the Environment Agency in autumn 2026 as a formal flood defence asset;
- Monitoring of temporary fencing with due consideration for farming stock requirements;
- Landowner liaison will continue with discussions on compensation payments and return of land and removal of temporary fencing in Spring 2026 with due consideration of land management plans through the winter and spring;
- Parish Council liaison will continue with a final newsletter being created and sent out.

Completion of the Bank Raising work will result in a widescale reduction in flood risk across a significant part of Somerset. It will provide the flexibility to manage water in a more controlled and enhanced way. The improvements to the structures at Chedzoy Tilting weir and Back Ditch outfall will also provide a reduction in flood risk but to a more local geographical area.

The watercourses in this project – that was started by the Environment Agency and completed by the IDB as an SRA partnership enterprise – are called the Sowey and King's Sedgemoor Drain, but it is important to realise that together they form the Parrett Flood Relief Channel: - and the completion of a whole suite of works will ensure that it lives up to its name.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Note the substantial completion of the KSD Outfalls – Back Ditch and Chedzoy Tilting Weir.
2. Note the substantial completion of the KSD bank raising works and ongoing reinstatement works.

Date: 27 November 2025

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