

ITEM 9

Somerset Rivers Authority Board Paper

2026-27 Proposed SRA Enhanced Programme and Budget

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Provisionally approve the proposed 2026-27 SRA Enhanced Programme and Budget.
2. Approve SRA Workstream Leads developing a proposal for making use of unallocated funds for the SRA Board to consider at its meeting on 6 March 2026.

Purpose of the item

To review and provisionally approve the 2026-27 SRA Enhanced Programme and Budget.

Background and context

2026-27 will be the twelfth year that the SRA funds an 'Enhanced Programme' of actions to reduce the risks and impacts of flooding for Somerset residents and businesses. This extra level of protection is funded by a shadow precept raised through council tax. The Parrett and Axe Brue Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) also contribute £10,000 each per annum. The final figure will be confirmed in March, but it is estimated that the 'shadow' precept and IDBs' contribution for the financial year 2026-27 will total approximately £3.142m.

Latest status

Fourteen grant applications with a total value of over £3.3m were submitted in September 2025.

Grant applications were assessed using criteria reflecting the purpose and objectives set out in the SRA 2024-2034 Strategy. Workstream Leads reviewed all applications, then met on 21 October to discuss them and agree which should be recommended to the SRA Board and how much funding each should be granted. SRA Technical Group members' comments were sought on 5 November. Workstream Leads' recommendations and Technical Group feedback were then reviewed by the SRA Management Group on 14 November. The recommendations to the Board below have taken full account of all views and feedback.

Twelve projects are recommended for SRA grant funding in 2026-27.

At this stage the Board is asked for provisional approval for the 2026-27 Enhanced Programme. Final approval cannot take place until the SRA's 2026-27 funding is confirmed

as part of Somerset Council's council tax setting process in February 2026. SRA Board members' will be asked to provide final approval at the SRA Board meeting in March 2026.

2026-27 Budget Summary

Table A below presents the proposed 2026-27 budget. The estimated income of the shadow precept, available contingency, and IDB contributions combined, is £3.142m.

The available contingency amount in Table A has been forecasted from the Quarter 2 2025-26 Finance Paper (see *ITEM 8*).

Table A

Forecast Income and Contingency	
2026-27 precept - estimated	£3,122,226
IDB contribution	£20,000
Estimated available contingency	£750,000
2026-27 Available Funds	£3,892,226
Proposed Expenditure and Starting Contingency	
Partnership Team Staff (4 FTE) and overheads, legal, finance, governance, audit, etc.	£308,000
¹ Community Engagement Staff (2 FTE)	£111,000
Community Flood Action Fund	£240,000
² Committed Projects	£205,000
Proposed 26-27 Enhanced Programme	£2,194,880
Contingency	£500,000
Subtotal	£3,558,880
³Unallocated Funds	£333,346

1. SRA Community Staff costs are shown separately as this will be the first year that the roles are funded as part of the SRA's core running costs. These roles were previously funded via grant applications.

2. 'Committed projects' refers to those projects that deferred drawing down on their grant allocation in 2025-26 to allow those funds to be temporarily re-allocated to other projects. Those projects will have their grant allocation returned to them as part of the 2026-27 budget.

3. Following the assessment process, some unallocated funds remain. Management Group proposes that Workstream Leads are tasked to develop a proposal, or proposals, to make

use of these funds in time for consideration when the final SRA Enhanced Programme for 2026-27 is approved on 6 March 2026.

Table B lists the projects that are recommended for approval. The ‘location’ column refers to the location a project takes place, but in many instances the benefits of projects are realised across a wide area and in more than one location.

SRA Reference	Title of Action	Grant Amount	Work stream	Location
EA17-27	Bridgwater Tidal Barrier - contribution	£50,000	W1	Bridgwater
FWLM01-27	Hills to Levels: Somerset Land Management and Natural Flood Management (NFM)	£425,000	W2	Across Somerset
WS5-4 27P	Building Local Resilience project fund	£50,000	W5	Across Somerset
LLFA30	Catchment Modelling: Understanding How Development Affects Flood Risk in Somerset	£140,000	W3	Across Somerset
IDB19-27	River Parrett maintenance: Water Injection Dredging (WID), upper bank dredging and silt monitoring	£775,000	W1	Somerset North
WS5-4 27	Community flood warning systems	£40,000	W5	Across Somerset
LHA03-27	Highways enhanced proactive gully cleansing across Somerset	£350,000	W4	Across Somerset
LHA04-27	Somerset Enhanced Maintenance: Drain jetting	£150,000	W4	Across Somerset
FWML09	Community sub-catchment Natural Flood Management community advice	£80,000	W5	Across Somerset
FWML03-27	Somerset Trees For Water Action Fund	£59,750	W2	Across Somerset
SWT01-27	Adapting Somerset	£75,130	W5	4 Locations TBC
CFAF-27	Community Flood Action Fund	£240,000	N/A	Across Somerset

Appendix 1 provides detailed descriptions for each action listed above.

In 2026-27, the SRA continues its investment in extra maintenance to the infrastructure that is essential to minimising flooding and its associated disruption, misery and devastation. The SRA will fund water injection dredging (WID) on the River Parrett. The WID has an influence on flooding across a wide area of the Levels and Moors, way beyond the location

of the work itself. Extra maintenance will be undertaken on drains and gullies to reduce the likelihood of road flooding and of flooding of properties adjacent to the highway. SRA funding means that high risk gullies are emptied more often, and drains can be cleared proactively rather than reactively. The award-winning Hills to Levels project will again receive funding for Natural Flood Management (NFM) and land management interventions across the county that tackle the sources and not just the symptoms of flooding by slowing the flow. The Trees for Water Action Fund will continue to identify and plant woodlands that will slow the flow of water into watercourses and help to mitigate flood risks. These NFM approaches complement the work on highways and river maintenance in the lower catchments.

2026-27 will see significant investment in supporting local communities to help themselves be more resilient and adapt to increased flood risk. The SRA community team will continue their diverse work programme developing flood group networks, supporting those emotionally affected by flooding, developing flood plans, starting a road closure pilot, working with schools and expanding the community-focused localised flood warning project amongst many other actions. Natural Flood Management advisors will help groups and communities turn ideas into action. The Adapting Somerset project will work intensively with four communities to help them develop and implement their own local adaptation plans. The Community Flood Action Fund will enable self-starter groups to get hands on and take action by themselves.

Somerset Council will be undertaking a study that has the potential to shape planning policy for new developments. Responding to local concerns about the cumulative impact of new housing and business developments on flood risk, the project will seek to better understand the real world impacts of these developments. The aim is to build a better evidence base so planners can update guidance, developers can design smarter drainage systems, and communities face less flood risk.

The 2026-27 Enhanced Programme will see £3.5m of locally raised funding invested in delivering on local choices and priorities to address the risks and impacts of flooding. The majority of these actions would not happen if not for the funding provided by the SRA partnership.

Table C: Workstream summary

SRA actions are categorised into five workstreams, though in practice different elements sometimes overlap.

Workstream	Title	Grants (£s)	% of Total
W1	Dredging and River Management	£825000	34%
W2	Land Management including NFM	£484,750	20%
W3	Urban Water Management	£140,000	6%

W4	Resilient Infrastructure	£500,000	21%
W5	Building Local Resilience	£245,130	10%
CFAF	Community Flood Action Fund	£240,000	10%
		£2,434,880	100%

Summary

The 12 actions in Table B are recommended for provisional approval as part of the 2026-27 SRA Enhanced Programme.

SRA funding will be confirmed during Somerset Council's 26 February budget setting meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Provisionally approve the proposed 2026-27 SRA Enhanced Programme and Budget.
2. Approve SRA Workstream Leads developing a proposal for making use of unallocated funds for the SRA Board to consider at its meeting on March 6, 2026.

Date: 27 November 2025

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: 2026-27 SRA proposed Enhanced Programme action summaries with grant amounts