Appendix 1

Descriptions of schemes and activities in proposed Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) 2026-27 Enhanced Programme

River Parrett maintenance: Water Injection Dredging (WID), upper bank dredging and silt monitoring

Proposed grant: £775,000
Workstream 1 (Dredging and River Management)
SRA reference: IDB19-27

A proposal to fund more maintenance dredging and silt monitoring along 3 miles (4.8 kilometres) of the River Parrett downstream of Burrowbridge. The plan – led for the SRA by the Parrett Internal Drainage Board (IDB) – is to use a Water Injection Dredging vessel in combination with an excavator mounted on a floating pontoon in the river. This pair would shift an estimated 25,000m^3 of solidified sediments from the central parts of the river's channel and the higher parts of its banks. The aim is to increase the river's capacity to convey flood water.

Dredging this part of the Parrett would help to reduce flood risks for around 1,300 homes and businesses, and around 7,500 hectares of land, including 5.3 miles (8.5 kilometres) of A-roads (A372 Bridgwater-Westonzoyland, A372 Langport, A361 Othery-Athelney, A378 Wrantage), 30 miles (48 kilometres) of minor roads and 5 miles (8km) of main line rail network.

The Parrett is a tidal river. Enormous volumes of sediments flow in from the sea and from the river's big catchment, which is roughly 478 square miles in size, or 770 square kilometres. When sediments build up along the river channel, there is less space left for water, and this lessened capacity can have bad consequences for the area through which the Parrett flows. Since the devastating floods of 2013-14, a lot of dredging has been done to increase and then maintain the Parrett's capacity.

Because it allows more water to be conveyed, dredging helps to delay the running of spillways and the filling up of moors, and to create possibilities for earlier pumping. SRA funding for dredging also helps to bring peace of mind to people, especially given recent record-breaking periods of intense rain.

Water Injection Dredging (WID) uses the Parrett's own tidal power. As it moves along the river, a WID vessel pumps out high volumes of water targeted at build-ups of sediment which have been identified through regular silt monitoring and channel surveys (funded by the SRA and organised by the Parrett IDB). Sediments are forced off the riverbed and then dispersed through natural processes, downstream

as the tide goes out. WID is much cheaper and quicker and has much less environmental impact than traditional dredging techniques.

WID is effective in removing sediments from lower central parts of the Parrett's channel. For example, in January 2023, 37,000 cubic metres were shifted. However, deposits do tend to accrete along the higher parts of banks which WID cannot reach. Over time such build-ups make it harder to maintain an acceptable cross-sectional river area.

A short trial of Enhanced Water Injection Dredging was therefore successfully carried out in January 2024. An excavator moved material from upper bank sections and placed it in the path of the WID vessel for washing out to sea on the outgoing tide. A similar combination was again used successfully – and much more extensively – in January 2025, when nearly 24,000 cubic metres of silt and dense vegetation were removed, and in January 2026 (final results awaited from silt monitoring).

In September 2025, the SRA Board agreed in principle to keep funding Water Injection Dredging for another five years (2026-27 to 2031-32).

Bridgwater Tidal Barrier (contribution)

SRA funding to date: £3.37million
Proposed grant: £50,000
Workstream 1 (Dredging and River Management)
SRA reference: EA17-27

Bridgwater Tidal Barrier is a major project led by the Environment Agency and Somerset Council. Designed to help protect more than 11,300 homes and 1,500 businesses, it has three main elements: a tidal barrier on the River Parrett at Chilton Trinity, 2.67 miles (4.3km) of new flood defence banks and 1.74 miles (2.8km) of raised banks downstream at Chilton Trinity, Combwich and Pawlett, and fish and eel passage improvements at 12 sites upstream of the barrier, the furthest up being Bradford-on-Tone beyond Taunton, and Ham Weir between East Lambrook and Martock. Other planned enhancements include a new cycle and foot bridge over the Parrett, and the creation of up to four hectares of wetland habitat and up to eight hectares of open water in borrow pits (pits from which suitable material has been taken for bank-raising). Links for walkers are to be established with the Parrett Trail, the South West Coast Path, and wetlands at Steart Marshes.

Most of the money for this major project – one of the biggest in the country – is coming from central government major project funding. However, some local match funding is required to secure the national funding. As in previous years, Somerset Rivers Authority is proposing to make a local contribution in recognition of the important role that Bridgwater Tidal Barrier will fulfil in protecting Somerset residents, homes and businesses.

In total in previous years, the SRA has contributed £3.37million towards the Barrier project, including £2million of Growth Deal funding that came through the SRA from the now-defunct Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership.

Hills to Levels: Somerset Land Management and Natural Flood Management (NFM)

Proposed grant: £425,000
Workstream 2 (Land Management including Natural Flood Management)
SRA reference: FWLM01-27

Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) is proposing to keep funding a wide range of land management and natural flood management (NFM) activities across Somerset, as part of the multiple award-winning Hills to Levels project. Such works continue to have two main aims. Firstly, to reduce local flood risks for people, properties, businesses, and roads in upper and middle catchment areas. Secondly, to help protect vulnerable lower areas from flooding, by slowing the flow of water down through the catchments of the Tone, Parrett, West Somerset Streams and Somerset Exe, Brue, Axe and Somerset Frome.

For 2026-27 four main strands of activity are planned, all to be delivered for the SRA by the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest (FWAG SW).

1. Designing and implementing up to 20 NFM schemes to hold back water in upper and mid catchments and reduce peak flows of water down to vulnerable areas. Several schemes are expected to stem from direct involvement with communities, for example from local people working together with FWAG SW's SRA-funded community sub-catchment enabling officer(s).

2. Increasing the uptake of land and soil management techniques which improve the infiltration of water into the ground, reduce the run-off of water and lessen compaction and erosion.

3. Responding to referrals of cases from a range of sources, chiefly Somerset Council's Highways Department, its Flood and Coastal Management team, SRA staff, Wessex Water, parish and town councils and formally established flood groups. FWAG SW advisers can choose to assist in cases where it is felt that better land management or natural flood management, or both, could help to reduce flooding, for example along roads because of run-off from fields. The SRA's view has always been that it makes sense to address causes as well as symptoms. An important part of the SRA's role is also to enable partners to work together on problems that go beyond organisations' usual limited remits.

4. Modelling and monitoring at sub-catchment scale to demonstrate the effectiveness of NFM measures that have already been installed (for example at Merriott). Tools

would include flow gauges, data loggers and trail cams to record flows before, during and after storms and to measure volumes of water stored. Anecdotal feedback is also encouraged. In places where it makes sense to do so, evidence is shared with the ongoing SRA-funded project to install localised flood warning systems *(see pages 10-11)*.

Plans sometimes change for reasons beyond SRA partners' control, but examples of places currently expected to feature across all four strands are:

Ashington, Barton St David, Batcombe, Brent Knoll, Bruton, Chilton Cantelo, Chard, Cheddon Fitzpaine, Combe St Nicholas, Cothelstone, Crowcombe, Cudworth, Frome, Ilminster, Kingston St Mary, Knole, Merriott, Mudford, North Brewham, North Curry, Odcombe, Pitcombe, Shepton Beauchamp, Somerton, Roadwater, Seavington, Spaxton, Williton, Witham Friary, Wiveliscombe.

Hills to Levels is also funded through Wessex Water's Enforcement Fund, the Environment Agency's Cam Valley Headwaters project, Wessex Water's initiative to reduce phosphate through NFM, South West Water's Headwaters of the Exe scheme and Bristol Water's Upstream Thinking. To make SRA funds go further, suitable opportunities for match funding schemes will be explored.

Community sub-catchment Natural Flood Management community advice

Proposed grant: £80,000
Workstream 2 (Land Management including Natural Flood Management)
SRA reference: FWML09

Continued funding is proposed for a project that helps Somerset groups and communities turn ideas into action. This in-demand strand of Workstream 2 was first funded by the SRA in March 2022. It began because, in more and more places, SRA staff and partners were meeting highly motivated people who wanted to reduce their own local flood risks but lacked technical expertise, experience and confidence. To help establish which measures could work best, where they should be located, and how they should be designed and delivered, a project officer was to be employed through FWAG SW to provide technical input and support for effective sub-catchment activities. Close collaboration was expected with SRA staff, SRA partners and other relevant organisations.

A key principle of this project has always been that work should be initiated by communities. More and more places have been choosing to act for themselves to reduce flood risks, in part encouraged by initiatives such as the SRA's own Community Flood Action Fund. At the peak of sub-catchment enabling activities so far, 55 places across Somerset have been involved.

Further funding is now proposed for activities that, in practice, include:

- Supporting the setting-up of local flood groups
- Providing mapping and research, focused on elements such as flow pathways, historic features, and various forms of land management
- Visiting sites to better understand issues, ground-truth problems and explore practical solutions
- Providing soil husbandry and land management advice
- Helping working groups to run smoothly, and giving and arranging useful presentations
- Supporting the design and delivery of flood risk reduction works

Existing SRA grant programmes and a range of funds from other bodies are used to help deliver schemes.

Somerset Trees for Water Action Fund

Proposed grant: £59,750
Workstream 2 (Land Management including Natural Flood Management)
SRA reference: FWML03-27

Another year of SRA funding is proposed for the popular Trees for Water initiative, which helps communities across Somerset to reduce flood risks arising from surface water run-off flow pathways. The project is led by Reimagining the Levels (RtL), working in collaboration with the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest (FWAG SW). At the time of writing (12 March 2026), more than 160 planting schemes have gone ahead since the Trees for Water Action Fund was set up in 2020. Around 64,000 trees and shrubs have been planted by an enthusiastic squad of over 100 regular volunteers.

Trees for Water is designed to suit strategically important sites not large enough for capital grants from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and not special enough in conservation terms to concern Natural England. Landowners say they like it because it is bespoke, forward-thinking and un-bureaucratic.

As in previous years, it is anticipated that the Woodland Trust will provide free trees and shrubs (worth £5,000), while the value of the labour of over 100 RtL volunteers is judged to be £15,000. Planting is usually carried out by landowners and numerous volunteers.

The more trees, shrubs and hedges grow, the more they help to reduce water run-off.

After plantings, follow-up visits are made by RtL's tree officer or an experienced RtL volunteer. For the first couple of years, RtL provides replacement trees for any that perish. The aim of monitoring is to ensure that lessons can be learned and shared

about successful times and techniques for planting and aftercare, and furthermore so that the benefits arising from sites can be assessed over time.

Catchment modelling: understanding how development affects flood risks in Somerset

Proposed grant: £140,000
Workstream 3 (Urban Water Management)
SRA reference: LLFA30

One of the concerns that people in Somerset most frequently and forcefully express about flooding is that new housing and commercial developments make flooding worse downstream. Current national guidelines are designed to prevent such worsening. They stipulate that peak water flows from new sites should not exceed those that would have occurred when those sites were greenfield. They require that even a major storm – of the kind expected just once in a hundred years – should not result in more water being discharged.

The problem is that existing drainage guidance is based on assumptions that do not always hold true in Somerset. For example, in very flat areas like the Levels and Moors, water can linger for days - or even months - rather than flowing quickly away. Across different sub-catchments, many factors – soil type, infrastructure, rainfall patterns – interact in complex ways that current standards do not fully address.

To tackle this, Somerset Council is asking Somerset Rivers Authority to fund an ambitious study into how water really behaves across Somerset's catchments. This project would look at runoff volumes, discharge timings, the effects of climate change, and local infrastructure conditions.

The aim would be to build a better evidence base so that planners can update guidance, developers can design smarter drainage systems, and communities face less flood risk.

Consultants would model several Somerset catchments and produce a technical report, policy recommendations, and practical guidance for integrating catchment-specific considerations into planning. This could lead to new standards – for example, requiring developments to hold water for longer and release it more gradually.

This study would build on the success of Somerset's Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) guidance, which was funded by the SRA and was produced as a result of several years of SRA-funded research.

It is hoped this new study could set a national example for reducing flood risks through smarter planning, and serve to inspire other Lead Local Flood Authorities.

Highways enhanced proactive gully cleansing across Somerset

Proposed grant: £350,000
Workstream 4 (Resilient Infrastructure)
SRA reference: LHA03-27

Gullies in places most at risk of flooding across Somerset are currently cleansed once a year by Somerset Council's Highways Department. Extra SRA funding would mean that around 25,000 gullies could be emptied twice a year.

The main aims of this proposed work would be to:

- help keep roads open in places that are highly susceptible to flooding
- make them safer
- preserve access for communities
- safeguard properties from flooding

All these aims accord with the objectives of Somerset's 20 Year Flood Action Plan and the SRA's Strategy for 2024-34. These works would benefit residents, businesses, and visitors.

Major roads that would benefit include the A358 at Ashill and Chard, the A38 at Pawlett and Wellington, and the A39 at Carhampton.

Somerset Enhanced Maintenance: Drain jetting

Proposed grant: £150,000
Workstream 4 (Resilient Infrastructure)
SRA reference: LHA04-27

Extra SRA-funded drain jetting targets places across Somerset at high risk of flooding. Drains are usually only jetted by Somerset's Highways Department on a reactive basis: that is, once they have become blocked. Pro-active jetting is designed to stop drains from getting blocked in the first place, by removing silt and debris. Around 125 places are expected to benefit, depending on various unpredictable factors such as the weather.

Adapting Somerset

Proposed grant: £75,130
Workstream 5 (Building Local Resilience)
SRA reference: SWT01-27

Further funding is proposed for a Somerset Wildlife Trust project to help increase resilience - and to help people and places adapt - to flooding and other risks linked to climate change. This project would follow on from Adapting the Levels, which was

jointly funded by the EU and the SRA between 2019 and 2023, and SRA-funded initiatives called Adaptations and Associations on the Somerset Levels & Moors in 2023-24 and Adapting Somerset in 2024-25.

SRA-funded climate adaptation plans have so far been produced for Glastonbury, the Poldens, Wells, Spaxton, the Martock area and Frome. An SRA-funded plan is (at the time of writing) being produced for Chard.

In its latest iteration for 2026-27, this project would have four main strands:

1. Community climate adaptation planning

In collaboration with the SRA, Somerset Council, and the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest, Somerset Wildlife Trust would like to work with four more communities on plans that combine climate science with local knowledge. It is intended that places should be selected partly by calling upon information contained in a new Resilience Dashboard. This uses data from sources such as Somerset Intelligence, parish surveys, and water flow pathway maps to rank areas according to the risks they face and their resilience.

The tried-and-tested process then would be that initial awareness sessions are held to introduce climate projections and adaptation possibilities. Participants are encouraged to identify local climate risks, combining their own historical local flooding knowledge with future climate data and, where available, real-time flood monitoring data from local telemetry installations. This mix of people's own experiences, science, and data is intended to help communities understand how local flood patterns may change and intensify.

Organised discussions then prioritise a range of local actions. Town and parish councils are helped to develop Climate Adaptation Plans, for example through public consultation exercises and events.

In areas that have already produced plans, 80% of session participants have said they feel more confident about taking local climate-related and flood resilience actions.

2. Implementation seed funding

A grant of £1,000 would be given to each of the four new communities taking part. This is intended to help with practical measures such as rain gardens, tree planting, ‘slow the flow’ measures, or other nature-based solutions identified in Climate Adaptation Plans.

3. Case studies

Case studies would be produced to systematically document processes, plans and actions taken. Case studies would be shared through Local Community Networks,

online platforms, and partner organisations. The goal is that they should gradually form a library that can help to inspire other places across Somerset.

4. Enhanced Climate Adaptation Toolkit (Version 2)

It is proposed to revise and update the Climate Adaptation Toolkit originally produced through Adapting the Levels in 2022-23. The aim of this new Toolkit would be to enable communities to develop Climate Adaptation Plans with minimal external support. Enhanced resources could include more flood-focused guidance, step-by-step planning templates, and materials designed to help people carry out practical schemes and activities to make places more resilient.

Regular networking between communities is proposed, online and in person, to help share knowledge and ideas, sustain people's interest and commitment, and inspire more places to take part.

Building Local Resilience project fund

Proposed grant: £50,000
Workstream 5 (Building Local Resilience)
SRA reference: WS5-4 27P

The SRA's community team helps large numbers of people to plan and prepare for possible flooding, and – when flooding does occur, as somewhere in Somerset it always will – to reduce its impacts, respond well and recover quickly. The team helps to strengthen communities (and the SRA partnership itself) through a wide range of activities and events.

To do their jobs effectively, the team needs to be able to pay for some useful things. Such as:

- hiring venues for community events
- buying equipment and supplies for engaging people's interest and demonstrating particular points about flooding-related issues
- occasionally renting special facilities like the Flood Pod which shows how homes can be made more resilient to flooding
- initiating and testing selected local projects

Examples include:

- a pilot project being developed with Somerset Council's highways department and six local communities which will allow local people to temporarily close roads known to regularly flood badly, leading cars to be abandoned and lives to be endangered. This will require buying some road signs.
- lessons about flooding for schools, an initiative expanding from primary to secondary schools to help meet GCSE Geography stipulations

- establishing flood group networks across the River Parrett, Tone, Axe-Brue and Somerset Frome catchments, to help connect people, places, ideas and sources of funding across catchments
- developing the Alham Catchment Project, which covers places such as Alhampton, Batcombe, Ditcheat, Evercreech, Lamyatt and West Bradley, and is trialling a whole sub-catchment approach to community resilience
- running flood cafes to nurture the mental health of people in communities affected by flooding, to help them build up different kinds of resilience (for example, emotional)

A Somerset resilience dashboard is being created. This is ranking every parish and town council area in Somerset according to its strengths and weaknesses. It is planned to use the dashboard to help make decisions about which areas would benefit most from targeted support and deeper engagement.

Community flood warning systems

Proposed grant: £40,000
Workstream 5 (Building Local Resilience)
SRA reference: WS5-4 27

Continued funding is proposed for the fourth phase of a pilot project working with communities on very localised early flood warning systems. SRA money would be used to pay for another year's licensing costs for the web platform (Community Flood Hub: https://cfh.aquaticinformatics.net) that underpins this initiative and brings data and people together.

The SRA Board approved a partial grant for the fourth phase of this project in the SRA's Enhanced Programme of works for 2025-26. A further grant now would allow for more systems-testing across a second winter (2026-27 as well as 2025-26), and a clearer, more detailed view of how communities benefit. It would also allow more time for developing a model for funding these systems in the future that is not so dependent upon the SRA. Greater involvement and commitment is being sought from other agencies, authorities and communities, so a long-term funding base can be secured.

During 2026-27, what is being tested will be extended. SRA funding given in previous years will be used to provide very localised early flood warning systems in and around South Petherton, Ilminster and Chard. These are all places which have flooded in recent years. Previously provided SRA funding will also pay for training sessions showing local people how to use their new flood warning systems, and - near the end of this project – there will be a series of 'lessons learned' events. These events will be designed to tie in with other community self-help and preparedness activities, and local flood resilience planning.

Getting early warnings of flooding allows people to take pre-emptive action. This can reduce the impacts of flooding and leave people able to recover more quickly, with less harmful consequences for their property and mental health.

Timely and accurate localised data can also help communities during flooding. For example, it may help people to identify which roads are impassable and which can still be driven along.

This project began in West Somerset in 2019 (Phase 1) and was then expanded to include places in South Somerset and Mendip (Phase 2) and the River Cam valley in the east of Somerset (Phase 3). It is managed by the SRA's community engagement team, with valuable technical support from the Environment Agency.

Its spur was people wanting much more localised information than they could get through the Environment Agency's existing system of flood alerts and flood warnings. Because – particularly in 'rapid response' catchments where water levels can rise very quickly during heavy rain – flooding can put people's lives at risk.

Local people using local knowledge have therefore been picking out hotspots for gathering vital details about what is happening in catchments during very wet times and what is therefore likely to ensue downstream. These hotspots have been kitted out with rainfall and flood gauges and other equipment linked to the online Community Flood Hub so that local people can monitor what is going on, get alerts and put previously developed Community Emergency Plans into action. Communities' own spin-off projects have included setting up community rain gauges to help provide information for alerts, creating WhatsApp Channels for alerts, and devising their own alert systems based purely on rainfall data, which can help to provide warnings about surface water flooding.

The service overall has grown to be deeply appreciated by communities involved while the web platform used is now flexible and robust enough to support collaboration from other agencies. A neighbouring local authority has also joined.

Main river maintenance

Proposed grant: £270,000
Workstream 1 (Dredging and River Management)
SRA reference: IDB36

A proposal for the SRA to continue funding quite a large amount of maintenance work along the rivers Brue, Parrett and Tone and across their catchments. In 2025-26, extra SRA-funded main river maintenance work was done by the Environment Agency; for 2026-27, the Parrett and Axe Brue Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) are prepared to take on some additional work.

The IDBs' concept for 2026-27 is to employ local contractors - previously approved for IDB watercourse work - while drawing upon Environment Agency support and knowledge, for example in judging where best to focus efforts.

The maintenance envisaged by the IDBs will primarily consist of vegetation clearance, weed cutting and tree clearance. Within the constraints of the SRA funding allocated, the focus will be on key watercourses that have not been maintained in recent years and other watercourses that are critical for the impact they can have on flooding. The aim is to ensure that clear and effective conveyance routes are available for conveying and evacuating water from the lower Somerset Levels & Moors. The floods of early 2026 were a heavy reminder of the importance of this principle.

The IDBs are also keen to identify sections of river along the Brue and Tone that could benefit from future conveyance work.

The works proposed for this year are also of potential future significance. They could inform future decisions on alternative arrangements for carrying out main river maintenance for the public good on the Somerset Levels and Moors. As the Environment Agency has announced its intention to stop maintaining some sections of main rivers in Somerset, chiefly on the grounds of lack of money, the IDBs are particularly keen to explore other ways of getting works done.

Dunball Sluice pumping pre-feasibility study

Proposed grant: £30,000
Workstream 1 (Dredging and River Management)
SRA reference: IDB37

A Pre-Feasibility Study is proposed into the idea of siting permanent pumps at Dunball, at the interface of the River Sowy - King's Sedgemoor Drain (KSD) system with the River Parrett north of Bridgwater.

The time is right to explore the impacts that such a scheme could have on catchment flood risks. Reasons for this include the Environment Agency's recent £10million refurbishment of Dunball Sluice (part-funded by the SRA), the recent completion of the SRA's £10million Sowy-KSD Enhancements Scheme (Phase 1), and in February 2026 the temporary installation of ultra high-volume pumps at Dunball to help relieve the flooding that followed Storm Chandra. Pumps were also used at Dunball in 2014. In recent years, Monk's Leaze Clyse at the head of the River Sowy and the Sowy-KSD system have been used more often in ways that go beyond historic agreements relating to their operation as flood defence assets. While this benefits some important parts of the wider River Parrett catchment, it disadvantages areas on the receiving end of more water.

The Parrett IDB has therefore asked the SRA to fund an initial study that will include three main elements. Firstly, a review of the benefits that pumping at Dunball provided in 2026 and 2014 (drawing upon recent data from the Environment Agency and historic information, in collaboration with the Environment Agency). Secondly, a summary of potential improvements in upstream areas and an approximation of the capacity needed. Thirdly, a summary of next steps for further project development, with some outline costs and a reckoning of all known risks and constraints.

A358 Donyatt Hill flood reduction works

Proposed grant: £100,000
Workstream 4 (Resilient Infrastructure)
SRA reference: LHA136

A proposal from Somerset Council's Highways department for works to reduce flooding along the busy A358 at Donyatt, between the A30 at Chard and the A303 at the Southfields roundabout / Horton Cross near Ilminster.

This section of road has often been forced to close in recent years, as water has run off from nearby land and drains have been overwhelmed, leaving the carriageway frustratingly and inconveniently impassable.

The council is therefore proposing a series of works.

Existing highway surface water drainage systems at Donyatt have outfalls into the River Isle, which is a tributary of the River Parrett.

Highways summarise suggested works thus: “Work required to re-establish the points of outfall into the Isle. Significant vegetation clearance required along with removal of debris/detritus and silt from the watercourse. Full jetting and CCTV survey of the existing highway drainage systems in the area will be required to ensure infrastructure is fit for purpose. Remediation works required where identified. The scheme seeks to reduce the likelihood of implementing road closures due to flooding and as a result, reduce the disruption caused by the need to divert traffic during such events… With operational surface water outfalls reinstated, it is anticipated that the duration of the flood events could be reduced.”

Bathpool pumping improvements

Proposed grant: £150,000
Workstream 3 (Urban Water Management)
SRA reference: EA21

In the wake of Storm Chandra in late January 2026, at least 16 properties flooded in Bathpool, which is close to the River Tone on the north-eastern side of Taunton. This flood was the latest in a long series: one home is known to have flooded 17 times. An SRA grant is therefore being proposed to help the Environment Agency install two permanent electric pumps to reduce flood risks. These pumps would be sited close to the outfall of the old River Tone.

This location is significant because several watercourses (Kingston Stream, Maiden Brook, Allen's Brook, Dyers Brook) all join the River Tone at Bathpool, via the Old River Tone outfall. Unfortunately, when water is high in the river Tone, the Old River Tone outfall flap closes. The Old River Tone thus becomes a river with a dead end: a dead end that blocks the release of water from the Bathpool area and thereby causes parts of Bathpool to flood.

Since 2017, the Environment Agency has deployed a temporary trailer-mounted diesel pump to help with the discharge of water from the Old River Tone. This arrangement has had positive effects. However, anecdotal observational evidence from a Flood Warden living close by in Bathpool suggests that water levels in the Old River Tone have risen higher more often since the building of new homes was completed upstream in the catchment of Dyers Brook. The Environment Agency also says that it cannot guarantee the continued deployment of the diesel pump and its metal discharge pipe, and deployment presents several logistical and Health and Safety challenges for Environment Agency staff.

The Environment Agency has £550,000 earmarked for improved pumping at Bathpool. This money came through a Section 106 planning agreement relating to upstream residential development at the former Hartnell's Farm site earlier this decade. The Environment Agency says that more could now be done to help Bathpool more quickly if more funding were available through the SRA. A larger pump selection; a new supply of mains electricity to the site: these are among the issues where progress could be made, for the benefit of local people, properties, businesses, roads and rail.

Community Flood Action Fund

Proposed grant: £240,000
Workstreams 1 to 5 (potentially)
SRA reference: CFAF-27

The SRA launched a Community Flood Action Fund (CFAF) in December 2024. It has since attracted a lot of interest across Somerset.

The Fund offers small grants for works to reduce flooding directly to Somerset communities. The idea is to help people with good local knowledge of flooding problems take the initiative and get things done.

The Fund is aimed at not-for-profit organisations, such as town and parish councils, charities, social enterprises and community benefit societies. They are being urged to concentrate on practical actions that can be achieved quite quickly, with obvious flood risk reduction benefits.

Application packs for CFAF grants of between £3,000 and £20,000 are available through the Grants section of the Somerset Rivers Authority website.

At the time of writing (12 March 2026), 14 grants have been given. Grants are awarded quarterly.

Committed projects

SRA Board members agreed that for 2025-26 some previously allocated funding could be re-allocated from two projects and spent on other SRA schemes and activities primed to go ahead sooner, with the proviso that funding should be returned to those two original projects for action in 2026-27.

Here are brief descriptions of those two original projects, based on what was published when they were first approved, with a few changes covering various developments since.

East Brent asset improvements

Grant: £100,000
Workstream 1 (Dredging and River Management)
SRA reference: IDB32

A scheme to help protect homes, businesses and farmland in and around East Brent. SRA funding will enable the Axe Brue IDB to partially replace and repair unstable stone-filled cage defences along Brocks Pill rhyne, East Brent's main watercourse for drainage. Following an initial investigation done for the IDB, other local systemic improvements are also now being pursued, for example an important culvert is to be CCTV-surveyed. Beneficiaries of the resulting final package of works will include 12 homes and a holiday cottage business, Brent Area Medical Centre, the B3140, and around 20 hectares of agricultural land.

Upper Barle catchment restoration

Grant: £105,000
Workstream 2 (Land Management including Natural Flood Management)
SRA reference: ENP01

At the March 2025 meeting of the SRA Board, members awarded Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) £105,000 for a study of how to reconnect part of the River Barle to its historic floodplain, so that water is slowed and spread out, to help reduce flood risks downstream and bring about numerous environmental improvements. At the June 2025 meeting of the SRA Board, members heard that, since March, ENPA had got alternative funding for this study from the Government's Water Restoration Fund. The Board therefore decided that SRA funding for this project should be deferred until 2026-27, so that it could be used for actual works on the ground. ENPA's project team say that, over the last year, investigations by specialists in hydro-geomorphology, ecology, landscape and heritage have been progressing well, with several detailed options being developed, so there is now a case for returning SRA funding to this project.

The site where works are being planned is directly south of the B3223 at Simonsbath, and a small distance downhill from part of the Two Moors Way. The Barle here was artificially straightened in the 18th century. The section being considered for restoration is 0.53 miles long (850 metres), its floodplain 3.5 hectares.

The Park Authority's project has several aims. The main one is to store and hold back water, to help reduce flood risks as far down as places such as Dulverton and Brushford, which between them have flooded 14 times since 1980. Also downstream, showing the power of the Barle in spate, the scheduled ancient monument and popular visitor spot Tarr Steps has been damaged several times by flood water, with rebuilding required in 2012, 2016, 2017 and 2023.

This project is also being designed to create and tie in with a wide range of environmental improvements in a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a National Park, in line with the SRA Strategy's fifth objective, which is to "conserve and enhance Somerset's special environments".

Educational and economic benefits are also anticipated. As the area for restoration sits within land owned by Exmoor National Park Authority, which also includes an outdoor education centre at Pinkery, it is intended to engage with local communities, around Simonsbath and across Exmoor, and also with visitors.