

## ITEM 9

### Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) Board Paper

#### 2026-27 Proposed SRA Enhanced Programme and Budget

##### RECOMMENDATION

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

1. Approve the proposed 2026-27 SRA Enhanced Programme and Budget.

##### Purpose of the item

To review and 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 SRA precept and IDBs' contribution for the financial year 2026-27 will total approximately £3.2m.

##### 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.

Following the December 2025 Board meeting expressions of interest were sought to make use of funds that had not yet been allocated to projects. Nine expressions of interest to a value of £0.8m were submitted and considered by Management Group on 27 February.

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

Somerset Council Full Council Budget Setting meeting took place on 4 March 2026. At this meeting it was confirmed that the SRA precept of £3.2m will be raised to fund the SRA for 2026-27. The Board is asked to approve the 2026-27 Enhanced Programme.

## 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 £4.06m.

The available contingency amount in Table A has been forecasted from the Quarter 3 2025-26 Finance Paper (see *ITEM 8a*).

**Table A**

<b>Forecast Income and Contingency</b>	<b>£</b>
2026-27 precept	3,190,293
IDB contributions	20,000
Estimated available contingency	850,000
<b>2026-27 Available Funds</b>	<b>4,060,293</b>
<b>Proposed Expenditure and Starting Contingency</b>	
Partnership Team Staff (4 Full Time Equivalent) and overheads, legal, finance, governance, audit, etc.	308,000
<sup>1</sup> Community Engagement Staff (2 FTE)	111,000
Community Flood Action Fund	240,000
<sup>2</sup> Committed Projects	205,000
Proposed 26-27 Enhanced Programme	2,744,880
Contingency	451,413
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>4,060,293</b>

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 two projects that deferred drawing down on their grant allocations in 2025-26 in order to allow their funds to be temporarily re-allocated to other projects. These two projects will now have their grant allocation returned to them as part of the 2026-27 budget.

**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 Enhanced Programme Schemes and Activities

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
EA21	Bathpool Pumping Improvements	150,000	W3	Taunton
IDB36	Main River Maintenance	270,000	W1	Levels and Moors
IDB37	Dunball Sluice Pumping Pre-Feasibility Study	30,000	W1	Dunball
LHA136	Flood Reduction Works A358 Donyatt Hill	100,000	W4	Donyatt
CFAF-27	Community Flood Action Fund	240,000	N/A	Across Somerset

	Total	£2,984,880		
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### Committed Projects

SRA Reference	Title of Action	Grant Amount (£)	Work stream	Location
IDB32	East Brent asset improvements	£100,000	W1	East Brent
ENP01	Upper Barle catchment restoration	£105,000	W2	Exmoor
	<b>Total</b>	£205,000		

**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 among 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. This Somerset Rivers Authority enables more to be done in Somerset than would otherwise be possible.

### 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	£1,125,000	38%
W2	Land Management including NFM	£484,750	16%
W3	Urban Water Management	£290,000	10%
W4	Resilient Infrastructure	£600,000	20%
W5	Building Local Resilience	£245,130	8%
CFAF	Community Flood Action Fund	£240,000	8%
		£2,984,880	100%

### Summary

The 16 actions in Table B are recommended for approval as part of the 2026-27 SRA Enhanced Programme.

### RECOMMENDATION

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

1. Approve the proposed 2026-27 SRA Enhanced Programme and Budget.

**Date:** 10 March 2026

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