

ITEM 10

Somerset Rivers Authority Board Paper

Unallocated 2026-27 Enhanced Programme funds

RECOMMENDATION

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

1. Approve funding of two new grant applications and two requests for additional funding using £350,000 of funds that are no longer required for the project they were originally intended for.

Purpose of the item

To seek approval from the Board to re-allocate funds from a previously approved project that no longer requires funding support from the SRA to alternative projects.

Background and context

On 20 March the Board approved the 2026-27 SRA Enhanced Programme. The programme included Somerset Council Highways' enhanced gully cleansing with a grant of £350,000. It was reported to the Board in March that due to Somerset Council increasing the amount it invests in gully cleansing in 2026-27 it might no longer require the grant it applied for. This has since been confirmed.

Current Status

SRA partner organisations were asked to submit Expressions of Interest to make use of the £350,000 in advance of the 15 May SRA Management Group meeting where they would be considered. Four are recommended by Management Group for funding.

New Proposals:

Frome Headwaters Natural Flood Management (NFM) Programme: **£26,500**

SRA funding is proposed for the second phase of a project designed to reduce flood risks around Witham Friary and Frome by slowing and storing water in the upper headwaters of the River Frome in Somerset.

Phase 1 saw extensive Natural Flood Management (NFM) works delivered at Heal Somerset near Witham Friary in 2025-26, part-funded by the SRA, and significant NFM works funded by the Environment Agency at Long Ham nearer Frome.

The Environment Agency now wants to get to a position where these works can be complemented and extended across other nearby landholdings. The Frome Headwaters programme is included in the Environment Agency's Medium-Term Plan

for 2027-28, and it is therefore potentially well-placed to get future national Flood and Coastal Risk Management NFM delivery funding.

But, for 2026-27, there is a gap in funding. This is why SRA funding is being proposed, so that designs can be developed in 2026-27 that are then even better placed to win national NFM funding for actually delivering schemes in 2027-28 onwards.

Community Flood Investigation Reports – Pilot: **£20,000**

This project will provide the technical expertise required to work directly with communities in flood risk areas to identify a suite of practical, deliverable options for local flood risk mitigation. Integration with Risk Management Authority (RMA) expertise will be key to aligning community aspirations with RMA planning.

Additional Funding Requests:

Bathpool Pumping Improvement Project – additional contribution: **£100,000**

At the March meeting the Board approved a £150,000 contribution for this project. This will be an additional £100,000 towards the total project cost. £550,000 has also been secured through a Section 106 commitment.

When water is high in the river Tone, the Old River Tone outfall flap closes, limiting release of flood waters from the Bathpool area. This can cause extensive property flooding. Previously, temporary Environment Agency pumps have been used to help alleviate this. The improvement project is investigating the installation of two 6 or 8 inch static electric pumps on EA owned land on the south side of the railway, adjacent to the Old River Tone outfall. The value of the addition of a more permanent pumping solution at this location was identified as part of the Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation Improvements Scheme and confirmed as required by more recent studies such as the Taunton Integrated Catchment Study funded by the SRA. This project aims to deliver a greater pumping capacity from static mains electric powered pumps.

Additional Main River Maintenance

Management Group recommends an additional **£30,000** towards the Main River Maintenance scheme which was approved at the March meeting. This project originally requested £300,000 but was only allocated £270,000 in March. This project will enable the Internal Drainage Boards to undertake targeted maintenance on main rivers that was previously undertaken by the Environment Agency.

Not recommended for funding:

Community Flow Monitoring – Cam Valley Pilot - was not recommended for funding. It is hoped that an alternative source of funding can be identified for this work.

Funding Summary

As reported in Item 9b 2026-27 Finance Summary, £1,084,000 of contingency funds are available. If approved, the projects listed above will be funded from this contingency. A total of £176,000 will be taken from contingency leaving £908,000, which is assessed to be more than sufficient for the purposes of the SRA.

Recommendation:

The SRA Board is asked to:

1. Approve funding of two new grant applications and two requests for additional funding using £350,000 of funds that are no longer required for the project it was originally intended for.

Author: David Mitchell, Somerset Rivers Authority

Date: 27 May 2026