

## ITEM 11

### Somerset Rivers Authority Board Paper

#### River Brue Modelling Project

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Note the latest position on the River Brue Modelling Project.
2. Note that April was the final meeting of the Steering Group and actions are now being led by individual organisations.

#### Purpose of the item

To provide the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) Board with an update on the work of the Brue Modelling Steering Group.

#### Background and context

The SRA has invested extensively in improving the understanding and evidence base on the operation of the lower Brue since early 2022, when it funded an update to the base model. In January 2025, Somerset Council commissioned further work using the updated base model to investigate options for reducing flood risk in the lowland Brue catchment.

In previous presentations to the SRA Board, details have been provided of the hydraulic assessment of those potential options. The purpose of the work to date has been to create an evidence base to support any organisation wishing to develop projects to address flooding concerns in the lower Brue area.

#### Latest status

In January 2026 the Board was given a summary of the modelling report findings.

The table at the top of page 2 summarises the options considered and the economic benefits related to flood risk and the estimated costs for each combination option, along with the benefit cost ratio. It is difficult to build a positive business case based on flood risk benefits alone because of the low density of property and infrastructure in the area of study. The presentation that was given can be found [here](#):

Option number and description	Benefits over Baseline (£k)	Total Cost (£k)	Benefit Cost Ratio
Combined Option 1: River Brue conveyance improvements	£570k	£290k	1.9
Combined Option 2: River Brue conveyance improvements and Huntspill lowering	£1,050k	£1,290k	0.8
Combined Option 3: River Brue conveyance improvements, Huntspill lowering, and Highbridge Clyse expansion	£1,090k	£11,290k	0.1
Combined Option 4: River Brue conveyance improvements, Huntspill lowering, and setback flood banks	£1,060k	£7,590k	0.1
Combined Option 5: River Brue conveyance improvements, Huntspill lowering, and Decoy Rhyne conveyance improvements	£910k	£1,340k	0.7

It was recommended that **Combined Options 1 and 2** be considered for taking forward as projects which could provide a positive balance of cost versus benefit. Reducing the cost of Combined Option 2 will be required to deliver a positive cost benefit on this project. The cost of this will be heavily impacted by the extent of consultation required to agree any changes.

The Brue Modelling Steering Group met on 21 April 2026 to consider the report findings and discuss “next steps”. Information gained from the major rainfall events of January and February 2026 informed the discussion.

The group focused on how the modelling findings could translate into practical action. Having considered the full list of report options, the Brue Modelling Steering Group focused on three as having greatest potential for progressing:

1. formalising future pre-lowering procedures for the River Huntspill in advance of significant rainfall events;
2. addressing low spots in the River Brue banks; and
3. scoping and undertaking a short development study to identify and cost potential “pinch point” conveyance improvements downstream of the Cripps River.

The Brue Modelling Steering Group emphasised the need to link the modelling outcomes with other relevant initiatives and studies underway in the catchment (including work connected with the Agratas project and Somerset Council's environmental studies such as the Local Nature Recovery Strategy). Partners noted that a joined-up long-term strategic approach is required but is unlikely to be progressed immediately; revisiting this in 6–12 months was recommended, once other studies have advanced.

## **Actions**

1. Huntspill pre-lowering procedures: Environment Agency to confirm capacity and timeframe to undertake work to formalise procedures for lowering the Huntspill in advance of flood events (including trigger points that will initiate this). Review to include Natural England and Internal Drainage Board input and consider short- and long-term environmental impacts.
2. River Brue bank low spots: Environment Agency assessing if maintenance funding exists to address known low spots.
3. Lower Brue conveyance improvements: Axe Brue Internal Drainage Board has been asked to consider whether it has capacity to commission a short development study to identify pinch-point locations that are feasible to address. Assessment to be based on such things as hydraulic benefit, environmental impacts, access and constructability. Environment Agency and Natural England to be closely involved.

## **Summary**

Steering Group meetings were established to inform the modelling work that has now been completed, so these will now cease.

Individual organisations will progress the actions listed above and collaborate with other organisations as required. Should SRA funding be required to progress any of these actions, it will be possible for partner organisations to submit grant proposals as part of the normal grant-giving process. The SRA Board will be kept informed as things progress.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

1. Note the latest position on the River Brue Modelling Project.
2. Note that April was the final meeting of the Steering Group and actions are now being led by individual organisations.

**Date:** 27 May 2026

**Author:** David Mitchell, Somerset Rivers Authority