

ITEM 6

Public Questions submitted for SRA Board Friday 11 September

Question 1

Bryony Sadler, 2 questions,

1. Have the Trigger Points Plan been redone since this last winter 2026 and if so can we have a copy please?

Response provided by the Environment Agency

We're planning to have trigger points updated by the end of September and will be sharing our updated draft with partners shortly. It will be published online here: [Somerset Levels and Moors: reducing the risk of flooding - GOV.UK](#), so is easily accessible to everyone.

2. If both Northmoor and Saltmoor pumping stations are both suffering from the actual point of where the pumps are submerged into the water, not being low enough and need some basin/bowls or just lowering the level in the drain creating to be able to give the pumps a draw of water, why has this not been done yet ahead of this winter when we are facing an Unprecedented El Nino effect which no doubt for us will mean rain, yet this job is an easy, quick and very effective way to start the process of getting water to the actual pumps, could this be looked at urgently?

Response provided by the Environment Agency

Getting more water to Northmoor/ Saltmoor pumping stations so pumps can operate more of the time is on the program of activity being considered via the Somerset Resilience Advisory Group. It's not as simple as repositioning pumps. There is complexity to this challenge as the system has been carefully designed, so making alterations needs to be fully considered.

Question 2

Andrea Hine

Hi

Please can I ask the following questions at the next weeks SRA meeting

1. Has Wessex Water changed any protocol/processes or engineering for Clatworthy Reservoir or any other reservoirs above Taunton after 2014, back then we believe it was risk managed relating to Taunton, the impact on Bridgwater was not assessed. If no changes have been made this really needs to be investigated asap as any controlled

release of water should be using more storage areas rather than just releasing it. The release will affect Taunton but it will then have a longer and bigger effect on Bridgwater and the Levels as this is where this water will sit until it is pumped out. So if there is a release process in the management of the reservoirs then more pumps and a better infrastructure needs to be in place before this happens to move this water out to sea to prevent the flooding of properties downstream and the responsibility and costs should lay with Wessex Water.

Response provided by Wessex Water

No . Wessex Water has not changed any protocol/processes or engineering for Clatworthy or any other reservoirs above Taunton after 2014.

There are 3 reasons why flow from an impounding reservoir like Clatworthy is released.

- **The reservoir is full.** The dams have weir overflows & spillways that allow excess water, that cannot be stored in the reservoir (i.e. when full) to safely pass into the downstream watercourses.
- **Compensation flow.** This is a legal requirement written into the permit and is in place to protect the downstream river ecology.
- **Critical maintenance.** Bi-annually the scour valves are tested for 15-30 minutes, in accordance with the 1975 Reservoirs Act. This is done in accordance with the scour discharge consents. The reason for the short duration tests, is to confirm that the safety scour valves work satisfactorily.

The first reason is determined by nature.

The second reason is determined by the permit set by the Environment Agency.

The third reason is the only one we have any control over, is essential, and lasts for about an hour a year.

2. I would be grateful if the Somerset Rivers Authority could give us an update of the meeting/workshop to investigate the effects of cumulative house building in Somerset.

Many thanks

Andrea Hine

Response provided by Somerset Rivers Authority Manager.

A meeting of the working group was scheduled to take place on 19th August at Somerset Council offices in Taunton. Unfortunately, Somerset Council was suffering problems with its IT systems on this day so the meeting room and IT facilities required to run a hybrid meeting were not available. The meeting had to be postponed. The meeting is being rearranged and will report back to the Board in December.

Question 3

Good afternoon,

I live on the banks of the Axe at Cocklake (BS28 4HH). Recently contractors have flailed the top metre of one bank and carried out a weedcut with an excavator but have left a 400 yard stretch at Bartletts Bridge (BS28 4HH) uncut with the promise (from the banksman/supervisor) that they were coming back with a weed boat (this was promised on 2 occasions). A contact at the SRA doesn't believe the boat has been ordered. As my concerns were quoted in the SRA Annual Report for 2025-26 on this very subject (and last year's cut by boat made a vast difference to flow over the winter) I feel strongly that the weed boat is required this year. The two years that the cut didn't take place saw the weed dam the river and water was pushed in reverse around the minor drainage ditches on the surrounding moors leading to flooding of agricultural land, giving proof that when cut the rhyme system works perfectly, when weed is left it fails completely.

Can the Board confirm that a boat will be deployed this year please, if a boat won't be deployed please advise the reasons why, when it has been proven to make a major difference to flooding in this area.

Kind regards

Christina Brown, Wedmore

Response provided by the Environment Agency

The EA is exploring if it can adjust other plans to make the weedboat available. The EA will update the enquirer when they have a definitive answer

Question 4

Hi there,

I would like to ask the following question:

The Flood Resilience project for Rode was part-delivered in 2021 – 2023. The outstanding work is fundamental to the overall success of the project, and includes repairs to an attenuation tank and drains at the junction of Straight Lane and Crooked Lane at the south-west end of the village. The project was funded by the SRA, and we (Rode Parish Council) has received repeated assurances that the remaining funds (not yet spent) have been “ring-fenced” for the project completion. Unfortunately the creation of the Unitary Authority (Somerset Council) and the demise of Mendip District Council led to the project falling into a “black hole”. Despite numerous attempts, we are still no closer to the project being completed. This is a vital project to provide flood resilience in a small village, where over 50 properties are at a HIGH RISK of surface water flooding.

We would like to understand when the project will be completed.

Best regards, Jim McAuliffe (Parish Councillor, Rode)

Response provided by Somerset Council

The Rode Parish Project is a complex one. It has several challenges that we still are trying to overcome. First is capacity to be able to deliver the project. The parish will be aware that we have had some challenges recruiting the personnel into the service for both engineering and project manager. We now have new engineer starting in November and we are trying to recruit a project officer since the services establishment growth bid was accepted.

The other issue includes the original project not being set up correctly through procurement and the correct permissions not being obtained with highways. The project needs a restart from reviewing the scope of the project, resource set up, ensuring permissions are in place and procurement process in place. This could be done again by the Council as and when resource is available or the funds could be presented back to the SRA and a new lead partner appointed.

Funds are still there and available for this project, it is capacity and the need to review the project which is holding up the delivery.

One option with our limited capacity is to outsource the work to our consultants but this will increase the costs but ensure delivery. This is something the Council is exploring to understand costs and timelines.

Question 5

Afternoon

A gravel shoal has built up in front of the Bridge in Exford. The EA will not remove it or will allow access to the river to riparian owners to move it.

All of the residents around the centre of Exford are concerned about not if it floods but when it will flood! We all want to be proactive in removing the gravel and not allowing our homes to flood.

The river has also been diverted due to the shoal and is currently under mining the road bank in some places you can insert a stick well over a metre.

The riparian owners are the White Horse Inn (The bank is a pub garden) The opposite side is Somerset Bridges who are more than happy to allow work to be done but they don't want the cost as it's of no benefit to them.

Regards

Jeremy Hickman

Response provided by the Environment Agency

Enquiry has been sent to Devon and Cornwall EA enquiries team, as this location is not within the responsibility of the Wessex Team, who will be in contact with the enquirer directly.