ITEM 10

Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) Board Paper

Proposed 2027-28 SRA Enhanced Programme and Draft Budget

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Provisionally approve the proposed 2027-28 SRA Enhanced Programme and Budget.
2. Approve SRA Workstream Leads developing a proposal for making use of unallocated funds for the Board to consider at the next meeting in March 2027.

Purpose of the item

To review and provisionally approve the proposed 2027-28 SRA Enhanced Programme and draft budget.

Background and context

2027-28 will be the thirteenth year of funding for the SRA Enhanced Programme of works to reduce the risks and impacts of flooding for Somerset residents and businesses. This additional protection is funded through a shadow precept raised through council tax, alongside annual contributions of £10,000 each from the Parrett and Axe Brue Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs). The combined income from the shadow precept and IDB contributions for 2027-28 is estimated at £3.242m, with the final figure to be confirmed in March 2027.

Latest status

In September 2026, twenty-five grant applications were submitted, with a combined value of just under £5.3m.

Grant applications were assessed against criteria reflecting the purpose and objectives set out in the SRA Strategy 2024-34. SRA Workstream Leads reviewed all applications and met on 16 October to agree which to recommend to the SRA Technical Group and the proposed funding for each application. Technical Group members were invited to comment at a meeting on 4 November. The SRA's Management Group then reviewed Workstream Leads' recommendations and Technical Group feedback at a meeting on 13 November. What is recommended to the Board below takes full account of all views and feedback.

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Eleven projects are recommended for grant funding in 2027-28.

At this stage, the Board is asked for provisional approval for the 2027-28 SRA Enhanced Programme. Final approval cannot take place until the SRA's 2027-28 funding is confirmed as part of Somerset Council's council tax setting process in February 2027. SRA Board members will be asked to provide final approval at the SRA Board meeting in March 2027.

2027-28 Draft budget summary

Table A below presents the draft 2027-28 budget. The estimated income of the shadow precept, available contingency, and IDB contributions combined, is £4.274m.

The available contingency shown in Table A is based on the forecast in the Quarter 2 2026-27 Finance Paper (see ITEM 8a), assuming approval of the recommendations in Part 2.

Following the assessment process, the level of contingency within the draft 2027–28 budget remains high. Workstream Leads will therefore be asked to further develop proposals for the effective use of these funds, for consideration as part of the final SRA Enhanced Programme for 2027–28, due to be approved in March 2027.

Table A

Forecast Income and Contingency	
2027-28 shadow precept - estimated	£3,222,000
IDBs' contribution	£20,000
Available contingency - estimated[1]	£1,032,000
2027-28 Available Funds	**£4,274,000**
Proposed Expenditure and Starting Contingency	
Partnership Team Staff (4 FTE) and overheads, legal, finance, governance, audit, etc.	£312,000
Community Engagement Staff (2 FTE) including project costs and overheads	£150,000
Community Flood Action Fund	£200,000
Proposed 27-28 SRA Enhanced Programme	£2,799,612
Starting contingency - estimated[2]	£812,388

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Total	**£4,274,000**

1. Based on Quarter 2 2026-27 Finance Report with all recommendations approved

2. ITEM 9 – requesting additional funds will reduce this contingency amount to £692,725

Table B below lists the actions that are recommended for approval. The 'location' column refers to the location an action takes place, but in many instances the benefits of actions are realised across a wider area and in more than one location.

SRA Reference	Title of Action	Proposed Grant Amount	Work stream	Location
EA17-28	Bridgwater Tidal Barrier - *contribution*	£50,000	W1	Bridgwater
FWLM01-28	Hills to Levels: Somerset Land Management and Natural Flood Management (NFM)	£410,000	W2	Across Somerset
EA20-28	Frome Headwaters Natural Flood Management (NFM) Programme - *contribution*	£50,000	W2	Somerset East near Witham Friary
IDB19-28	River Parrett Maintenance: Extended Water Injection Dredging, upper bank dredging and silt monitoring	£1,300,000	W1	Somerset North
LHA128-28	Highways asset upgrades at frequently jetted sites	£250,000	W4	Across Somerset
IDB36-28	Main River Maintenance	£300,000	W1	IDB Areas
FWML09-28	Community sub-catchment Natural Flood Management (NFM) community advice	£115,000	W5	Across Somerset
FWML03-28	Somerset Trees For Water Action Fund	£136,000	W2	Across Somerset
SWT01-28	Adapting Somerset	£60,000	W5	2 Somerset Communities
WS5-6	Post-flood mental health support network	£48,500	W5	Across Somerset
SWT04	River Pitt Catchment: Aviaries Stage Zero NFM Project	£80,112	W2	Somerset South – south-west of Bruton in River Pitt headwaters

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	Total	**£2,799,612**		

Appendix 1 provides detailed descriptions for each action listed above.

In 2027-28, the SRA will continue to invest in additional infrastructure maintenance to reduce flooding and its associated disruption, distress and damage. The programme will fund further, extended water injection dredging (WID) on the River Parrett, which influences flooding across a wide area of the Levels and Moors, well beyond the location of the works. It will also include targeted additional bank works up to the M5 bridge and continued support for the Bridgwater Tidal Barrier. The Parrett and Axe Brue Internal Drainage Boards will continue to deliver additional main river maintenance, while Somerset Council Highways will upgrade assets at frequently jetted road sites.

The award-winning Hills to Levels project will receive funding for natural flood management (NFM) and land management interventions across the county, tackling the sources, not just the symptoms, of flooding by slowing the flow of water. The Trees for Water Action Fund will continue for the next two seasons, identifying and planting woodlands to slow the flow into watercourses and help mitigate flood risks. Two further site-specific NFM schemes - the River Pitt Catchment: Aviaries Stage Zero NFM Project and the Frome Headwaters NFM programme - are also proposed for inclusion in the programme. Together, these NFM approaches complement highways works and river maintenance in the lower catchments.

In 2027-28, significant investment will support local communities to build resilience and adapt to increased flood risk. The SRA community team will continue its varied work programme, including developing flood group networks and flood plans, continuing the road closure pilot, working with schools and expanding the community-focused localised flood warning project. A new post-flood mental health support scheme will help people affected by flooding and develop useful networks.

A community NFM adviser will help groups and communities turn ideas into action. The Adapting Somerset project will work intensively with two communities to develop and implement their own local climate adaptation plans. The Community Flood Action Fund will enable eligible organisations, such as parish and town councils, to take action themselves. The 2027-28 Enhanced Programme will see nearly £2.8m of locally raised funding invested in delivering on local choices and priorities to address the risks and impacts of flooding. Most of these actions would not happen were it not for the funding provided by the SRA partnership.

Table C: Proposed 2027-28 budget allocation by workstream and cost category

SRA actions are categorised into five workstreams, though in practice different elements sometimes overlap.

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Workstream	Title	Grants (£s)	% of Total
W1	River Management including dredging [3]	£1,650,000	38.7%
W2	Land Management including natural flood management activities	£676,112	15.8%
W4	Resilient Infrastructure including maintenance of highways drainage systems	£250,000	5.8%
W5	Building Local Resilience; information and practical help to communities, households, businesses and landowners	£223,500	5.2%
CFAF	Community Flood Action Fund	£200,000	4.7%
Core	SRA Team Staffing Costs inc. overheads	£312,000	7.3%
Core	SRA Community Engagement Team inc project costs and overheads	£150,000	3.5%
Cont	Starting Contingency	£812,388	19.0%
	TOTAL	**£4,274,000**	**100%**

3. With additional £250,000 requested (ITEM 9) the % for Workstream will increase to over 40% of the Programme

Summary

The draft budget summary in Table C is recommended for provisional approval as part of the 2027-28 SRA Enhanced Programme. SRA funding will be confirmed at Somerset Council's February 2027 budget setting meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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Date: 24 November 2026
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Appendices:
Appendix 1: 2027-28 proposed Enhanced Programme detailed project summaries
Appendix 2: 2027-28 proposed Enhanced Programme Map

[3] With additional £250,000 this will be over 40% of the Programme