ITEM 9

Somerset Rivers Authority Board Paper

Requests for additional funding and re-allocation of funding

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) Board is asked:

1. To approve the reinstatement of £150,000 of funding previously allocated to the River Sowy - King's Sedgemoor Drain Enhancements Scheme (Phase 1). This is to fund remediation works that were required due to washout damage on King's Sedgemoor Drain caused during the Major Incident of flooding in winter 2026.

2. To approve an additional £100,000 of funding to cover an increase in costs for pre-works dredging surveys and to get the dredging project's contingency back up to 15%.

3. To re-allocate the remaining funding linked to the Brue modelling project (£55,000) to the Axe Brue Internal Drainage Board, to develop a project completion plan for some of the recommended outputs of the Brue modelling project and to test further opportunities for flood resilience works.

Part 1: King's Sedgemoor Drain Bank Raising Works: 2025-26

Purpose of the item

To request the reinstatement of £150,000 of funding previously allocated to the River Sowy- King's Sedgemoor Drain (KSD) Enhancements Scheme (Phase 1). The £150,000 is required to fund KSD bank repairs and remediation works that were completed by the Parrett IDB in August 2026. These works repaired sections of KSD banks that suffered washout damage during the major flooding incident in January-February 2026.

Background and context

The River Sowy – King's Sedgemoor Drain (KSD) Enhancements Scheme was a key project identified in the original 2014 Somerset Flood Action Plan, and it has been in delivery since June 2018 by the Environment Agency and since November 2023 by the Parrett Internal Drainage Board (IDB). The project has been extensively reported on to the Board, with full details available through the SRA website.

In March 2025, the SRA Board approved an allocation of up to £915,000 to the Parrett IDB to deliver the remaining 1.9km of bank raising works that completed Phase 1 of the Sowy-KSD Enhancements Scheme. Construction commenced in July 2025 and was substantially completed on 3 October 2025 with some minor works remaining. The work was completed under budget by approximately £150,000. The Parrett IDB then entered a 12-month defect correction / maintenance period with anticipated handover to the

Environment Agency in autumn 2026 of the raised banks as a formal flood defence asset.

In November 2025 the Parrett IDB agreed to release the £150,000 of underspend for use in the wider SRA programme.

In January and February 2026, there was a significant flood event which resulted in the loss of topsoil and creation of some low spots along the back of the 1.9km upgraded by the IDB. The banks themselves withstood the flood water well. The banks did not overtop. The subsequent remediation works required 135 loads of topsoil to be imported to make good the damaged areas. These works were completed in August 2026.

As referred to above, as well as the flood remediation works, there are some minor works that are due for completion in November 2026. These minor works were delayed from the spring to enable the remediation works to be completed. The minor works are already budgeted for within the original project delivery scope and consist of:

- Weed removal, additional seeding, cross fencing reinstatement, agree compensation payments, remove temporary fencing and handover of land back to landowner.

The £150,000 of funding requested is only to cover the remediation works. Approving this would reinstate the original bank raising delivery budget of £915,000 that was allocated by the SRA Board in March 2025.

Current Grant Status

The table below shows the original grant allocation, the amount claimed to date, and the remaining grant balance. The proposed additional funding would increase the total grant allocation to £915,000.

Action	**Original Grant Allocation**	**Grant Claimed**	**Grant Balance**
King's Sedgemoor Drain Bank Raising Works (Phase One Completion – remaining 1.9km)	£765,000	£765,000	£0

Part 2: River Parrett Water Injection Dredging (WID) with Enhanced Shoulder Works 2026-27

Purpose of the item

To request an additional £100,000 of funding to cover increased costs for pre-works surveys, which have used up the agreed 15% project contingency.

Background and context

Preparatory works for the annual Water Injection Dredging (WID) have been underway since January 2026. The usual environmental and topographical surveys have been completed. Consultation with the Environment Agency on the methodology and schedule of works for inclusion in the Public Sector Co-operation Agreement (PSCA) is largely complete.

A change of vessel from the IDB's Framework Contractor has required more work to assess and agree the methodology with the Environment Agency. This has involved more extensive environmental surveys and site visits with the Environment Team to agree the right approach. There has also been a slight increase in costs from contractors compared to last year's budgets. These changes have reduced the 15% contingency to 1%. The Parrett IDB is requesting that the board approves an additional £100,000 to reinstate a 15% contingency level as we head into the delivery stage of the works.

Reinstating the contingency fund will allow the Parrett IDB to proceed with work confident that it has funds available should they be needed. Without the contingency in place, the IDB risks having to pause work and seek SRA Board agreement before committing to spend beyond the approved budget. As the working window is so limited, this could risk the project not being completed as planned. The Parrett IDB cannot expose itself to unacceptable financial risk when undertaking these Main River operations.

Current Grant Status

The table below shows the original grant allocation, the amount claimed to date, and the remaining grant balance. The proposed additional funding would increase the total grant allocation to £875,000.

Action	Original Grant Allocation	Grant Claimed	Grant Balance
River Parrett Maintenance: Enhanced Water Injection Dredging including enhanced shoulder work	£775,000	£25,704.50	£749,295.50

Part 3: River Brue Improvements

Purpose of the item

To re-allocate the remaining budget linked to the Brue modelling project (£55,000) to the Axe Brue Internal Drainage Board, to develop a project completion plan for some of the recommended outputs of the Brue modelling project and to test further opportunities for flood resilience works. The project completion plan will be used as evidence to support a request for funding to the Somerset £50m Flood Resilience Programme to deliver works.

Background and context

The SRA funded the development of a hydraulic model to assess and review the key benefits of delivering various combinations of improvements and opportunities along the River Brue Catchment. The outputs from the River Brue modelling outlined several options, as noted in the table extract on the next page. At the final Brue Modelling Steering Group meeting in May, the group recommended asking the 'Axe Brue Internal Drainage Board to consider whether it has capacity to commission a short development study to identify pinch-point locations that are feasible to address.' The release of the £55,000 will allow the IDB to fulfil this request.

The Axe Brue IDB will focus on developing a delivery plan for those elements that result in improved conveyance. It is not proposed to include all the options in the table in the project completion plan.

As part of the Somerset Council £50million Flood Resilience Fund, emerging projects on the River Brue could be considered for grant funding. To inform this process and enable a more defined project scope to be presented to Somerset Council, the Axe Brue Internal Drainage Board is requesting that unspent funding from the Brue Modelling work is re-allocated to the Axe Brue IDB to develop a Project Completion Plan for key deliverable options on the River Brue

Table 1

Option reference number (for Figure 1 map of locations)	Option	Conclusion
1	Lower River Brue conveyance improvements – addressing localised slumping and channel narrowing at Bason Bridge and Hackness Sluice	Minor flood risk benefits. Recommended to take forward as a stand-alone project.
2	Lower River Brue conveyance measures – wider improvements between Cripps River and Highbridge Clyce	Major flood risk benefits. Recommended for further assessment.
3	Highbridge Clyce gates expansion	Some flood risk benefit, but excessive cost. Not recommended to be taken forwards at this time, but to be considered as part of longer-term asset planning.
Not shown on Figure 1	River Brue topping up of low spots	Small flood risk benefits, and no disbenefit in doing the topping up. Recommended to take forward as a stand-alone project by either landowners or the Environment Agency.
6	Mid River Brue conveyance improvements – main benefits shown from works between North Drain and Cripps River	Some flood risk benefit. Recommended for further assessment.
10	Huntspill River lowering – retained water level lowered in advance of flood events	Major flood risk benefits, but potential challenges in terms of environmental and water abstraction impacts. Recommended for further assessment subject to further surveys and consultation.
11	Clyse Hole weir removal – opportunity to remove structure and re-naturalise channels and reduce flood risk	Minor flood risk benefits, but major environmental benefits. Recommended for further assessment as part of a wider project that is not just considering flood risk.
Shown in Figure 1 as 'Set Back'	Set back of flood banks	Minor flood risk benefits, but major environmental and operational/maintenance benefits. Recommended for further assessment as part of a wider project that is not just considering flood risk.

The assessment of deliverable options will be based on such things as hydraulic benefit, environmental impacts, access and constructability, with the Environment Agency and Natural England closely involved to ensure the necessary consents are covered.

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Date: 26 November 2026

Authors: Caroline Murray, Calm Engineering; David Mitchell, Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium.