

The Stream

Somerset
Rivers Authority

Progress Update - June 2016



Somerset Rivers Authority to get precepting legislation

The Government is proposing to introduce legislation to Parliament this autumn which will enable Somerset Rivers Authority to be established as a separate legal entity able to raise its own funding from council tax payers in Somerset (a power known as precepting).

The SRA has been told by two Cabinet ministers – Greg Clark at the Department for Communities & Local Government and Liz Truss at the Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs – that more details will be worked out over the summer.

One route to legislation could be through the Local Growth and Jobs Bill.

Cllr John Osman, chair of the SRA, said: “This is very good news. It offers Somerset a long term local funding solution for tackling flooding problems across the county and getting the extra protection and resilience that we need for Somerset’s people, businesses and environment.”

Maintenance key to 2016/17 SRA council tax spending

For 2016/17, the Government gave Somerset County Council and the five district councils the power to raise council tax by up to 1.25% for the funding of Somerset Rivers Authority, pending legislation enabling the SRA as a precepting body.

The county council and district councils in West Somerset, Taunton Deane, South Somerset and Mendip voted for the 1.25%; Sedgemoor chose to contribute an equivalent sum from its reserves. Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium gave £20,000, making a total locally-raised sum of £2,777,409.

Nearly £2.5million is being used to fund 34 schemes (28 maintenance, 6 key projects) - and this issue of *The Stream* picks out some of the work you are getting for your money, particularly in urban areas.

More schemes and more detail can be found on the SRA’s website in a big new section called [Flood Risk Work](#).

Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) exists to provide higher standards of flood protection than ordinary national funding allows for. The Stream details past, present and future work.

For more information about the SRA - or if you’d like to receive future copies of The Stream - call 01823 357824, email sra@somerset.gov.uk or visit www.somersetriverauthority.org.uk



SRA work to improve rivers, roads, structures

The SRA's top 2016/17 priority is ensuring extra maintenance to rivers, roads and hundreds of different structures, as existing funding is not enough to cover the county's needs.

Work across Somerset will include dredging and de-silting, modelling, trials and monitoring; the maintenance and repairs of rivers, watercourses and flood risk management assets such as sluices, trash screens and bridges; the enhanced maintenance of highways drainage systems, targeting thousands of extra gullies and 700 more culverts; improved enforcement and evidence-gathering (CCTV surveys of privately-owned drains); natural flood management in West Somerset and Frome catchments; new real-time flood alert systems.

Communities, households, businesses and landowners across Somerset will be

encouraged and enabled to become more resilient and resistant to the impacts of flooding.

Plans for six key projects are:

- contributing to a £4m scheme in Cannington near Bridgwater, enabling it to go ahead, and bringing protection to 200 houses
- improving or replacing almost 240 water-level control structures on the floodplains upstream of Langport, to bring extra benefits to farming and wildlife for 25-30 years
- upgrading Wirral Park pumping station in Glastonbury, built in 1989, so that it works well for another 25 years and continues to protect more than 200 homes and four hectares of industrial estate
- pumping station repairs and improvements
- temporary pump platform at Andersea
- Brue banks project (*more about this on p.4*)

SRA Board meetings on June 20 & July 27

An SRA Board meeting will be held at 10am on Monday, 20 June in the Wyndham Room at County Hall, Taunton, TA1 4DY. There will be a verbal update about the SRA and precepting legislation, then a confidential item.

The Board meets again at 2pm on Wednesday, 27 July at Sedgemoor District Council's offices, just off King Square, Bridgwater, TA6 3AR. For agendas, minutes and decisions, visit the SRA's website for [Board Meetings & Papers](#). Members of the public and press are welcome to attend SRA Board meetings.

Focus on urban SRA projects

Somerset Rivers Authority is using council tax money to strengthen its urban water management work. It's seeking to reduce urban run-off (to complement the many activities to 'slow the flow' in upper and mid catchments being done in partnership with the Hills to Levels project). The SRA is also determined to get sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDs) operating properly across the county. SUDs are a natural approach to managing drainage in and around properties and other developments.

Taunton: The Upper Tone Strategic Flood Management Scheme aims to store 1.8 million cubic metres of water above Taunton in times of flood, so as to reduce peak water levels downstream. Having extra capacity near Bradford on Tone would allow for planned developments to be safely brought forward around Taunton, enabling 10,000 new jobs and 4,350 new homes.

Without such a scheme, Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) and the Environment Agency say that Taunton will face unacceptable levels of flood risk. The estimated cost is £18m; the SRA is helping to fund its early stages.

Recently, the scheme was supported in principle when it went to the national Large Project Review Group. TDBC is now working with the Environment Agency on preparing a brief for consultants, who will be appointed this summer. Local people and organisations will be asked for their views once consultants have drawn up more detailed proposals, with planning approval targeted in early 2018.

The photos show Taunton flooded in 1960.



SuDS: Major developments must use SuDS for surface water drainage, but no authority is funded to inspect schemes to ensure they comply with approved plans. SRA funding will be used to check up on new SUDs and review existing schemes, including: Blackbrook Barton, Chelston Business Park, Farriers Green, Monkton Heathfield, Cotford St Luke (*all Taunton Deane*): East Huntspill (*Sedgemoor*): Houndwood, Street, and North of Wells Road, Glastonbury (*Mendip*): New Barns, Wincanton, Canal Way, Ilminster, Land adjacent to hospital, South Petherton (*all South Somerset*).

Runoff: The SRA is planning a campaign to raise awareness of what individuals can do to reduce runoff in urban areas, especially in places constructed before the advent of SUDs. People can do their bit to cut flooding with water butts, rainwater harvesting, replacing concrete drives with permeable paving, etc.

Planning: A project to explain how planning regulations can determine what developers must do to reduce runoff from properties.

Bridgwater: A public drop-in session about the proposed Bridgwater Tidal Barrier will be held at Bridgwater Arts Centre in September. A shortlist of possible locations for a barrier will be presented. The aim is to protect 10,000 properties and 600 businesses from tidal flooding for the next 100 years or more. The Environment Agency and Sedgemoor District Council are working together on this project, supported by the SRA and - not council tax - but Heart of the SW Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Deal money. A barrier is due to be in place by 2024. Estimated costs start at £32 million. For more info or to comment:

www.bit.ly/BridgwaterBarrier



River Parrett dredging helps keep homes safe

Successful maintenance dredging along the River Parrett is being followed up with 750 metres of new dredging.

Both SRA-funded dredges reduce the risks of flooding and protect Somerset people – their homes, businesses and roads.

The Parrett Internal Drainage Board, as an SRA partner, specified and supervised the 2.2km of maintenance dredging upstream of Northmoor Pumping Station that finished in late March.

It was the biggest dredge the Parrett IDB has ever done. Cllr John Osman, Somerset Rivers Authority chair, said: “Many thanks to the Parrett IDB for managing the delivery of this vital piece of work on time and within budget – and to the Environment Agency for supporting this maintenance dredge on a main river. It’s a splendid example of partners working within the SRA to protect Somerset communities.”

Peter Maltby, Parrett IDB chairman, said: “I’m proud. We’ve done a lot to maintain the benefits of the £6million dredging of the Parrett and Tone that was done after the awful floods in 2014.”

The Environment Agency, as an SRA partner, is now overseeing new dredging downstream of Northmoor pumping station. This work began in April after the Environment Agency awarded a contract to Galliford Try, Black & Veatch and Land & Water. These two companies completed the 8km 2014 dredge of the Parrett and Tone.

Work is on-time and on budget (£2.14m - not 2016/17 council tax money). It is mostly being done from floating platforms, by a 14-tonne long reach excavator secured with chains on top of a pontoon with 8m long spud legs. Silt is loaded into one of three hoppers (moved up and down the river by a Nato Class tug), then off-loaded at Westonzoyland Pumping Station and taken by tractor and trailer to land nearby.

River working costs more, but here it avoids high-voltage overhead cables; reduces disruption to traffic on Huntworth Lane on the south side of the Parrett; and solves the problem of the banks being too narrow for safety (apart from one 150m stretch). Safety is important: another SRA-funded scheme this year involves setting back or widening banks along the Brue. New requirements for bank-top working have been introduced after a death in Lincolnshire, when a machine fell into water.

The SRA is working on a dredging strategy to establish the most cost-effective techniques and sites for future schemes. Consultants HR Wallingford have been speaking to many people involved with dredging, especially from the era when people felt it was being done in a particularly effective way. New technologies are being explored, especially for silt-monitoring.

With Huntworth Lane closed for four weeks from May 31 to allow for 150m of bankside dredging, a drop-in session is being held in Moorland Village Hall on 16 June, 3pm-6pm.