

## **SRA PARTNERS WORK TO REDUCE SOMERSET FLOOD RISKS**

Somerset Rivers Authority is to spend £3.44 million on 21 projects giving Somerset residents greater flood protection and resilience.

Towns, villages and rural river catchments across Somerset, from Dulverton in the west to Beckington in the east, will benefit from the SRA's 2021-22 Enhanced Programme of works.

The programme includes new investments in major schemes to reduce flood risks from rivers, reinforced by a significant number of measures to help slow the flow of water down through catchments.

SRA partners will also tackle road flooding problems, develop urban action plans and support local communities and businesses

The money comes from three sources:

- £2.66 million of the 2021-22 council tax raised for the SRA by Somerset County Council and Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West and Taunton, and South Somerset district councils;
- £20,000 contributed by the Axe Brue and Parrett Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs);
- and £780,000 moved especially from the SRA's contingency fund to allow more projects to proceed.

The SRA's share of the council tax charge has not increased since 2016, when it was introduced. The SRA's local funding has so far enabled Somerset to benefit from an extra 199 schemes and activities designed to reduce the severity and impact of all types of flooding.

Cllr David Hall, Chair of Somerset Rivers Authority, said: "Different parts of Somerset have different challenges with flooding, so we need to tackle those challenges in appropriate ways, and bring people together to achieve the best results.

"Our new Enhanced Programme gets more partners than ever before working together on a range of SRA-funded activities. For example, around Shepton Mallet and Croscombe, where flooding occurred last October, we're going to be looking in great detail at the entire River Sheppey catchment to try to address what needs to be done there to help protect people's homes and businesses.

"I'm hugely proud of the work of the SRA. It's a great example of real partnership working in action."

The main partners in Somerset Rivers Authority are the county council and the four district councils, the two IDBs, the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Wessex Regional Flood & Coastal Committee.

Other bodies involved with the SRA's 2021-22 Enhanced Programme include the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest, Wessex Water, the National Trust, the Beaver Trust, Exeter University, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Westcountry Rivers Trust, the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, town and parish councils, flood groups, moor associations, local societies, farmers and businesses.

All SRA activities are designed to deliver the objectives of Somerset's 20 Year Flood Action Plan, which was drawn up during the devastating floods of 2014.

The 2021-22 Enhanced Programme therefore includes contributions to the Bridgwater Tidal Barrier project, led by the Environment Agency and Sedgemoor District Council, and to the SRA's own River Sowey-King's Sedgemoor Drain Enhancements Scheme, as these two initiatives will help to protect thousands of homes and businesses.

In addition the SRA is part-funding the design of a 125-hectare floodplain restoration scheme in the upper catchment of the River Aller in West Somerset, which will help the National Trust to reduce flood risks for nearly 100 properties downstream in places such as Allerford and Bossington.

Places to benefit from drainage improvements will include part of the busy A358 near Combe Florey, Creech St Michael near Taunton, and Beckington near Frome. Work in Beckington follows a major SRA-funded investigation into almost every aspect of flooding and foul sewer problems around the village.

New studies in 2021-22 will focus on Dulverton's damaged Weir and Leat, the whole of Minehead, and the large part of Burnham-on-Sea that feeds into the lakes at Apex Leisure & Wildlife Park and Haven Holiday Park.

The SRA is also part-funding the development of a Somerset Beaver Strategy, because while beavers' activities can help to reduce flood risks and bring many benefits, in some places and situations they can have undesirable consequences. The SRA's aim is that people on all sides of the debate about beavers should be well-informed, so that evidence-based and science-led decisions can be taken about possible courses of action, and suitable planning and management agreed.

Some parts of the 2021-22 Enhanced Programme will take more than a year to design and deliver. More information can be found in the Flood Risk Work section of the Somerset Rivers Authority website: [Somerset Rivers Authority Enhanced Programme 2021-22 - Somerset Rivers Authority](#)

**TEXT ENDS**