

The Stream

Somerset
Rivers Authority

Progress Update - January 2016

Sowey / King's Sedgemoor Drain proposal offers Somerset greatest benefits of any scheme in 20-Year Flood Action Plan

Somerset Rivers Authority is proposing a multi-million pound scheme to protect the Somerset Levels and Moors from flooding. Following on from the major work (*pictured below*) at Beer Wall on the A372, further improvements are being discussed for the River Sowey and King's Sedgemoor Drain, from Monk's Leaze Clyse near Langport down to Dunball sluice north of Bridgwater.

A public drop-in session about this scheme is being held at Othery Village Hall on Wednesday, 3 February, 2.30pm-7.30pm. Read more about the Sowey / KSD on page 2.



Photo: Steve Rogers, Skanska Project Manager

Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) exists to provide higher standards of flood protection than ordinary national funding allows for. This edition of The Stream details some of the work the SRA has recently been involved with and some important schemes coming up in 2016.

For more information about the SRA - or if you'd like to receive future copies of The Stream - call 01823 357824 visit www.somersetiversauthority.org.uk or email sra@somerset.gov.uk The next issue will appear in February.

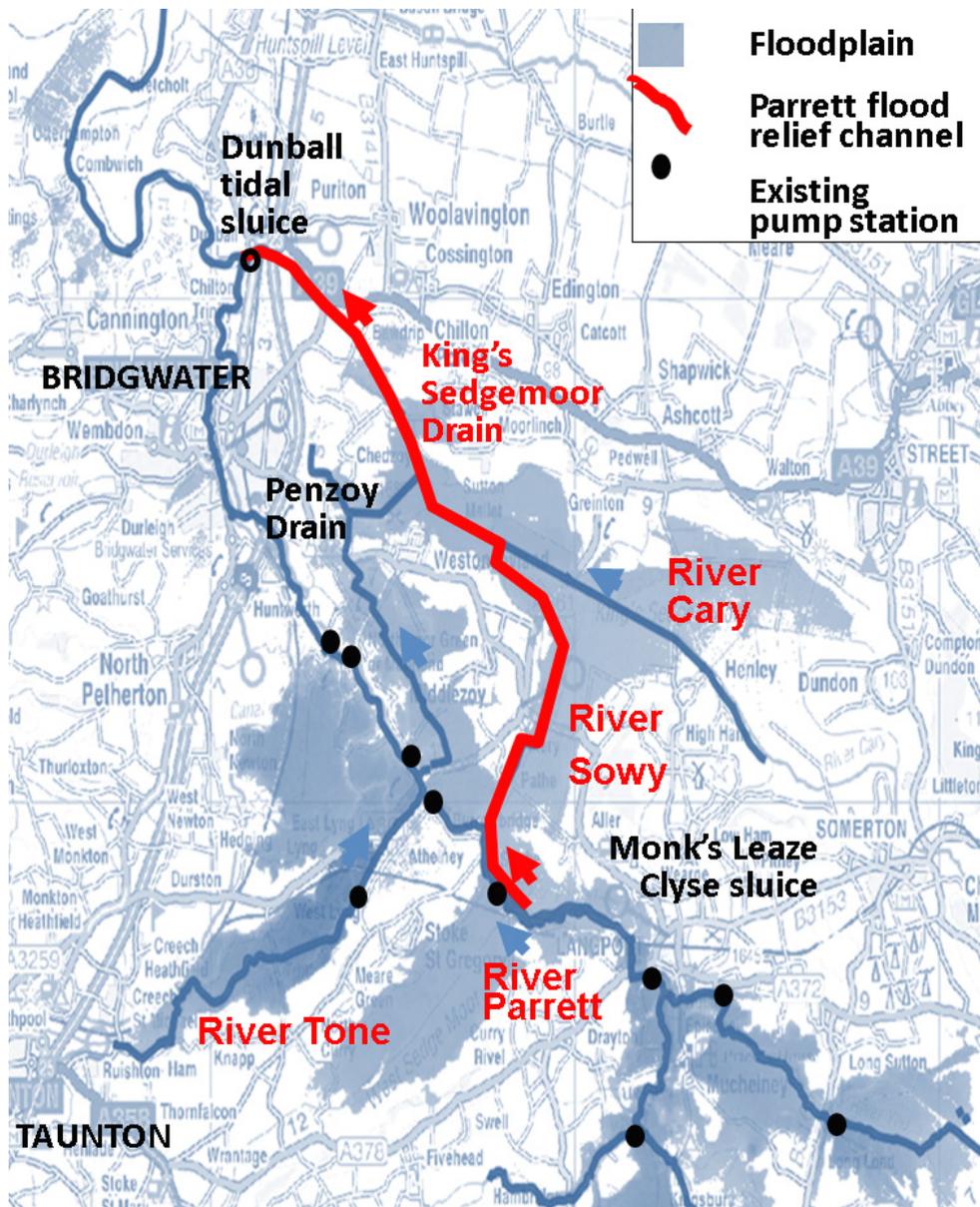
Sowy / KSD: how and why

The River Sowy is a man-made river conceived after the floods of 1960 as a relief channel to the River Parrett.

The Sowy was dug in 1969 but - to save money - only to 57% of the water-carrying capacity originally planned.

The aim now is to widen the Sowy by 2 to 4 metres, desilt King's Sedgemoor Drain and raise banks (where need be) so the Sowy and KSD can take more water.

No other proposal in Somerset's 20-Year Flood Action Plan will bring such big benefits in flood risk reduction to a wide geographical area. Work could start in Autumn 2016, if the SRA's Board decides on February 10 to put the scheme out to tender.



The graph shows the dramatic 80cm drop in flood water levels achieved in two days in February 2014 by fully opening the sluice at Monk's Leaze Clyse at the head of the Sowy (pictured right, branching off from the Parrett).

The Environment Agency is drawing up the next steps for the SRA. One key aim is to balance the interests of farmers and landowners with those of environmentalists and archaeologists. The scheme is also being designed to work in



combination with other projects. This January, for example, contractors begin removing the notoriously obstructive "lump of concrete" from under Dunball old bridge. This job is being supervised by Somerset County Council and SRA-funded using Growth Deal money from Heart of the SW Local Enterprise Partnership.



Miles and miles of dredging across Somerset

Maintenance dredging of the River Parrett began at the start of December, part of a long series of desilting activities across Somerset.

The photo above shows work underway upstream of Westonzoyland Pumping Station Museum, whose distinctive tower you can see in the background. *(Photo: Phil Brewin).*

The purpose of this dredge is to maintain 2.2km of the 8km pioneer dredge of the Parrett and Tone done in 2014. The job is being specified and supervised for the SRA by the Parrett Internal Drainage Board and carried out by contractors WM Longreach. After a break for Christmas and the New Year, work continues throughout January, with one stretch near Westonzoyland being excavated by machines based on platforms floating on the river.

By March, new dredging is due to begin of 750m of the Parrett downstream of Northmoor Pumping Station. This scheme is being managed for the SRA by the Environment Agency (EA) and designed and delivered by Galliford Try, Black & Veatch and Land & Water. This job will mostly be done from floating platforms, although 150m will have to be dredged from the riverside. This means that Huntworth Lane will be closed to through traffic for about four weeks - but it will not be shut all day, every day. It should be open outside of weekday working hours (to try to allow, for example, for school runs in the morning and for people coming home from work) and at weekends. Pedestrians will be let through whenever possible. Full details are still being worked out and will be published on the SRA's website and the EA's social media platforms.

Other recent dredging work has included 4km of Hixham Rhyne near Cheddar, localised sections of the Mark Yeo near Tarnock and of the Yeo around Ilchester and the A303.

The photo below shows the EA using hired excavators to dredge the full 3km of the Cripps River, for the SRA. The Cripps is used by the EA as a channel for moving potentially huge amounts of water from the River Brue down to the Huntspill or from the Huntspill up to the Brue. This helps to prevent flooding in the Brue Valley and to maintain water levels suitable for farming and environmental benefits. Several valuable wildlife sites are nearby.

The Board of the SRA has agreed to investigate more cost-effective dredging techniques and sites before deciding on a dredging programme going beyond the financial year of April 2015 – March 2016.



Slowing the flow

Sixty-six leaky, woody dams are being proposed to help slow the flow of water from catchment areas into rivers. Pictured below is a new dam built near Chillington in South Somerset. Grants are available for building more: contact FWAG SW on 01823 660684 (www.fwag-sw.org.uk)

Other land management work happening as part of the Hills to Levels project includes mapping out the county's soils, according to their water storage capacities, tree planting and investigating the use of filter socks. Improving land management is a key aspect of Somerset's Flood Action Plan, co-ordinated by the SRA.



Controlling the flow

Worn-out pipes and flow control valves are to be replaced at Wirral Park balance pond and pumping station, built in the late 1980s to protect homes and businesses in Glastonbury against flooding. Work starts in mid-January on this Mendip District Council scheme, funded by the SRA. The contractors are Multipump Distribution.

Schemes for West Somerset

Local flood risk management measures starting in January include: Minehead (A39 Hopcott Road drainage improvements & Periton Lane grill), Old Cleeve to Blue Anchor Road (drainage improvements), Washford area (CCTV survey & Huish Lane spillway into watercourse), Combe Florey (culvert upgrade / new trash screen), Holford (Perry Farm lane drainage improvements & Dytch Road carriageway raising), Sampford Brett (Capton Road drainage improvements), Bicknoller (Dashwood Lane drainage improvements).

New flood closure gates

Gates have been installed at eight locations across the Somerset Levels and Moors to close roads and so stop vehicles driving through flood water and potentially getting stranded.

The Somerset County Council-led scheme was carried out as part of Somerset's 20-Year Flood Action Plan, co-ordinated by the SRA.

There are eight sites on four roads: A361, East Lyng; A361, Burrowbridge; Cutts Road, East Lyng; Cutts Road, Athelney; New Road, West Lyng; Moor Lane, North Curry; Langport Road, Muchelney; Muchelney Road, Huish Episcopi (*pictured below*).

The new gates - if and when they are used - will be accompanied by comprehensive diversions and signage.

The gates can be operated by Somerset County Council or the emergency services, based on flood information provided by the EA.

When gates are closed, essential services - along with some local residents and landowners - are being given padlock combination numbers to allow access if strictly necessary.



Calling Friends of the Levels

A year-long series of walks, events and celebrations is being planned for the Somerset Levels and Moors, with the start date pencilled in for February 2: World Wetlands Day.

The idea is to encourage people to share their personal passion for the place, then work together to inform and agree a collective and common vision for the Levels and Moors, then plan how this vision might be realised. For more details throughout the year, keep an eye on www.hillstolevels.co.uk.