Somerset Rivers Authority

SRA Annual Report 2025 – 2026

We reduce the risks and impacts of flooding across Somerset

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Acknowledgements

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Front cover: King's Sedgemoor Drain bank raising.
Back cover: Main river maintenance works at Cocklake.

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At a glance

25%

25% more flood water flows through Sowy-KSD after completion of multi-year **£10m scheme**

21

varied NFM schemes in Somerset catchments

2.5 miles of dredging helps to protect **1,300 homes** and **7,500 hectares** of land

23,182 highest-risk gullies received a second round of emptying

26 places with flooding problems assessed for action

£4,534,000

The total amount spent by the SRA during the year – the highest total since 2016-17

Extra main river maintenance work helps to protect **447 commercial properties**, **416 homes**, **2,198 hectares of farmland**

7 Community Flood Action Fund schemes done, **7** schemes started

5,000 people directly engaged

91
visits, **walks** or **workshops** by farm advisors

190
people attended Somerset Prepared Community Resilience Conference

191
events and visits involving the SRA's community team

100%
commitment to emergency plans

2,950 trees and shrubs, 1,386 metres of hedgerow planted to help slow the flow

Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) is a unique partnership

Our partners work together to reduce flooding and achieve more for Somerset

Partner organisations are all represented on the SRA Board, as detailed below, providing governance, strategic direction and accountability

Environment Agency

- Ian Withers

Natural England

- Claire Newill

Somerset Council

- Cllr Mike Stanton **(Chair)**
- Cllr Mike Caswell
- Cllr Nick Cottle (until August 2025), replaced by Cllr Claire Sully
- Cllr Harry Munt (until May 2025), replaced by Cllr Steve Ashton
- Cllr Nick O'Donnell
- Cllr Ros Wyke

Axe Brue Internal Drainage Board

- Jeff Fear (until April 2025), replaced by Trevor Whitcombe (until December 2025), then by Wendy Welland
- Andrew Gilling (until June 2026)

Parrett Internal Drainage Board

- Tony Bradford **(Vice-Chair)**
- Rebecca Horsington (until December 2025), replaced by Anthony Betty

Wessex Regional Flood & Coastal Committee

- David Jenkins (until June 2025), replaced by Ian Collins

Wessex Water

- Matt Wheeldon

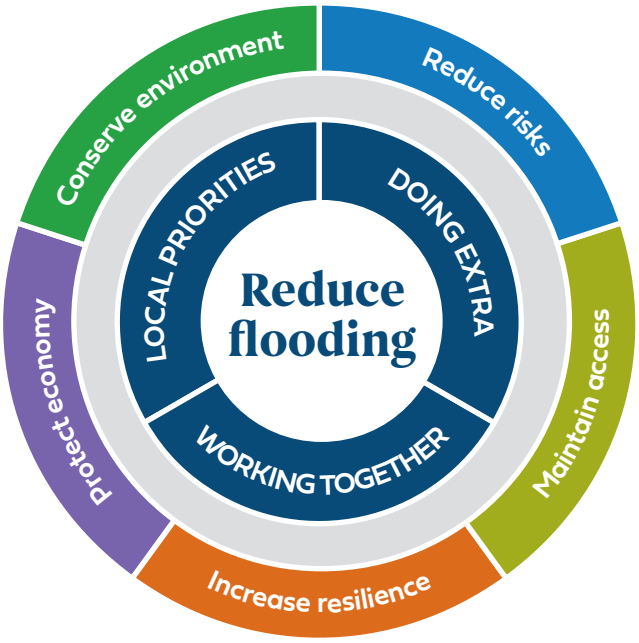
SRA strategy and objectives

Everything the SRA does as a partnership aims to reduce the risks and impacts of flooding across Somerset. Our partners work together as the SRA to go above and beyond their usual schemes and activities and do more than they could individually.

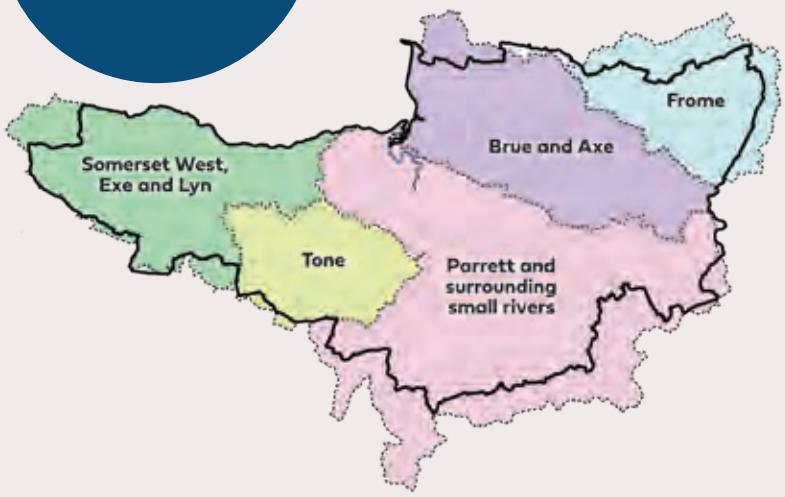
Our partnership's guiding principles are:
Doing extra
Working together
Acting on local priorities

Schemes and activities are judged for SRA funding against the five objectives in the SRA Strategy 2024-34:

1. **Reduce the risks** and impacts of flooding across Somerset.
2. **Maintain access** and connections during times of flood for communities and businesses across Somerset.
3. **Increase the resilience** of people, places and the environment to flooding, while adapting to climate change.
4. **Protect Somerset's economy** from the impacts of flooding, promote business confidence and encourage new opportunities.
5. **Conserve and enhance** Somerset's special environments (natural, built, social, cultural) for all who live and work in Somerset and visit.



Somerset's main river catchments



A catchment is an area of land from which water – especially rainwater – drains and flows down into streams, rivers, lakes and often the sea.

Somerset has five main river catchments.

The SRA analyses these catchments to understand problems with excessive amounts of flood water.

The SRA selects issues about which it can do most in line with its objectives.

The SRA funds proposals which duly benefit Somerset people and places, through SRA Enhanced Programmes of works, set out in this report in five workstreams. The SRA also runs a Community Flood Action Fund.

Chair's Foreword

I'm pleased to introduce the eleventh annual report of Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA). We are a unique partnership, the only one in the country.

Below: SRA Chair Mike Stanton interviewed by BBC reporter Ross Pollard

This has been perhaps the most significant year since the SRA's birth 11 years ago. It included completion of Phase 1 of our River Sowy - King's Sedgemoor Drain (KSD) works, when in September the Parrett Internal Drainage Board (IDB) finished raising the banks of the KSD, a key link in discharging more water faster from the Levels and Moors. That combined with near-disastrous floods in January, a ministerial visit thereafter, then the May 2026 report of the government's Climate Change Committee, means we are at a tipping point for the management of flood risk in Somerset.

With the help of the IDB, we got the Sowy-KSD work done at two thirds of the cost proposed by the Environment Agency (EA) three years before – despite the big increases in contracting costs since then. That reminds us of the constraints such a government agency has to work under, with multiple layers of contractor and real-term cuts in government funding.

> **"Flash floods are becoming as big a threat as slow-advance floods"**

Our partnership arrangement proved itself this year. The EA and the IDBs delivered what was needed. Somerset Council responded to the Major Incident of floods declared in January in its usual efficient manner. All our MPs have been actively working to deal with flooding. And I am now a member of both local IDB Boards, and of the national Association of Drainage Authorities, representing all member councils in England: their Environment Day in Cambridgeshire was highly instructive.

We've learned how to manage the slow advance of flooding on the Somerset Levels and Moors, although we don't always do so as well as it could be done. The EA stepped up quickly (though some say it could have been even quicker) to the January flood threat to Moorland and many other parts of the Levels and Moors. They brought in temporary pumps as soon as the set trigger points for that were in sight and they circumvented flow obstructions at bridges on the Northmoor Main Drain. And they pumped at Dunball, thus speeding up the outflow of the River Parrett to the Bristol Channel.

Flooding Minister Emma Hardy MP toured the floods close to their peak. Subsequently, at the annual Flood & Coast national conference in Liverpool on 9 June, she announced a special one-off allocation of £50 million for Somerset Council, to be spent over the next couple of years on improving Somerset's flood resilience and reducing flood risks. Somerset Council's officers and executive members are working with the SRA and other organisations on how to deliver this unexpected yet very welcome additional funding efficiently and wisely. Meanwhile, at the SRA we are continuing to use our £3.2m per annum as efficiently and

Right: From left, farmer Mike Curtis, Sarah Dyke MP, Flooding Minister Emma Hardy MP, Cllr Bill Revans (Leader, Somerset Council), SRA Chair Mike Stanton, Ian Withers (Environment Agency Wessex Area Director and SRA Board member)

protectively as we can – while seeking a way to increase our funding in the mid to long term, so that we can sustain the useful benefits our partnership brings across Somerset.

Flash floods are becoming as big a threat as slow-advance floods. In my own village of South Petherton, two hours of January rainfall flooded 30 properties including our Co-op, for the second time in three years. I set up a local Flood Group which is now sorting out our problems: like many villages we have a small stream across an ancient flood plain which has been built on and narrowed, so that a storm makes it a raging torrent. Flash floods receive less publicity because they tend to damage fewer properties and over a short time period. They need different solutions to moorland floods. Measurement and warning systems are key and being actively worked on and introduced.

Local organisations – parishes and local flood groups – will play an increasing role in our work. People locally know where the water comes from, where it goes, where the pinch points are. As in South Petherton, these are often the result of construction on flood plains over several centuries, stopping rivers and streams from spreading naturally, constraining them into raging torrents. Our new Community Flood Action Fund (CFAF) is already helping many communities reduce risk.

Climate change contributed to this year's major flood risk events, and since then we have sweltered in the hottest May and June since records began. Scientists were warning of climate change in the 1960s when I was at university. By the 1980s it was becoming a serious political issue.

"Flooding Minister Emma Hardy MP toured the floods close to their peak. Subsequently she announced £50 million for Somerset Council, for flood resilience"

Now we are seeing the painful results – and it will get worse before it gets better. So we have much to do over the coming decade.

The SRA staff have been instrumental in our success: David Mitchell's careful leadership of the team, Jonathan Hudston's eloquent management of our communications and website, Bel Deering and Paul Elliston's deft handling of community support, Caroline Dunn's efficient project management, and Jennie Channing's and Deborah Monk's administrative control combine to create a happy team and organisational success. I thank them all; they have been a pleasure to work with.

But to really keep on with SRA success we need more funding for the SRA, partly so that we can also help to sustain in the mid to long term the benefits that will come from the spending of the £50 million. We are actively working on this SRA funding issue, and I hope to be able to report real progress on this soon.

Mike Stanton

Above: From left, James McGettrick (WM Longreach), John Rowlands (specialist water management consultant), Damian McGettrick (WM Longreach), SRA Chair Mike Stanton, Caroline Murray (Calm Engineering), SRA Vice-Chair Tony Bradford

SRA Manager's Foreword

Somerset Rivers Authority exists to help people. I never lose sight of that fact.

Below: A visit to see bank raising works on King's Sedgemoor Drain

Read about all the many schemes and activities that we funded in 2025-26, and I hope that you too will get a sense of how dealing with the risks and impacts of flooding is, basically, about looking after each other. Our families, friends, neighbours, colleagues, all the varied environments that make Somerset a special place to live: we want them to be safer and better protected.

So for me, writing as the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) manager, seeing what is achieved on the ground is extremely satisfying because I know how much effort my team and colleagues from across the partnership put in to make things happen. I particularly enjoyed spending time with members of the SRA Board as they rode on the Borr Water Injection Dredging vessel, saw bank raising works on King's Sedgemoor Drain (KSD) and experienced the passion and dedication of the local flood wardens when they visited Croscombe. One of my most rewarding days this last year was spent with Graeme Watt in Stoke St Mary: he amazed me with just how much had been achieved with a modest amount of money from the SRA's new Community Flood Action Fund.

On the Somerset Levels and Moors, thanks to the SRA, residents have benefitted from works to keep more water in rivers, ditches and rhynes for longer. Dredging, the River Sowy – KSD Enhancements Scheme, and extra main river maintenance, have together reduced flood risks for hundreds of homes and businesses and thousands of hectares of agricultural land.

Our investment in improved land management and natural flood management (NFM) – 21 NFM schemes completed and almost 3,000 trees and shrubs planted – helps to slow the flow of water to lower catchments. It also produces cost-effective flood risk reduction results for dozens of local properties, and it can help to improve water quality, soil health and habitats for wildlife. It complements other SRA schemes and activities by reducing the amount of water sheeting off fields, onto roads and towards properties.

We cannot stop all flooding but we can prepare for it and take steps to bounce back quicker when it happens.

The SRA supports an extensive programme of working with communities. Passionate, committed staff in several organisations work with people at risk of flooding, to give them the tools they need to take action. Through the SRA, in 2025-26, around 5,000 people were engaged with and offered support. More flood groups are developing and implementing flood plans and adaptation plans; these groups are forming networks to help each other. We are working in schools to help young people be flood-aware and be future agents of change. We are creating localised flood warning systems to help communities better understand, monitor and respond to their flood risks. This has resulted in some fantastic examples of communities taking what we have provided and adding to it to make it truly local and bespoke.

As we look ahead, the SRA partnership will continue to meet our objectives by working with communities and focusing on local priorities for practical action that will address the risk of flooding.

There will always be more to do!

David Mitchell

Workstream 1

Dredging and River Management

This workstream has always been the one on which the SRA has spent the most. Especially this year, with the completion of the SRA's major Sowy-King's Sedgemoor Drain scheme, more combined dredging, main river maintenance, River Brue modelling and more besides. These schemes and activities accounted for just over 57% (£2.588 million) of the total spent by the SRA in 2025-26 (£4.534 million).

The SRA takes a workstream and catchment approach because it enables flooding problems to be tackled in different but cohesive ways. So, as will be seen in this report, all sorts of methods may be used as different parts of Somerset do have different needs and different parts of the landscape offer different possibilities. Ultimately, everything is connected, from riverbank dredging to back-garden water butts.

"They say don't work harder, work smarter, and this is exactly what has been achieved through using water injection dredging in the River Parrett between Burrowbridge and Moorland. This innovative approach makes maintaining the Parrett's optimal profile feasible in both logistic and financial terms. I have no doubt that without this work, houses and farms would have flooded since 2014, particularly in the villages of Moorland and Fordgate."
Rhona Light, local resident

WORKSTREAM 1 IN NUMBERS

£2,588,000
spent in 2025-26, 57.1% of total

25%
more flood water flows through Sowy-KSD after 1.22 miles of bank raising completes multi-year £10million scheme

2.5
miles of dredging helps to protect 1,300 homes and 7,500 hectares of land

10
sets of main river maintenance work helps to protect 447 commercial properties, 416 homes, 2,198 hectares of farmland

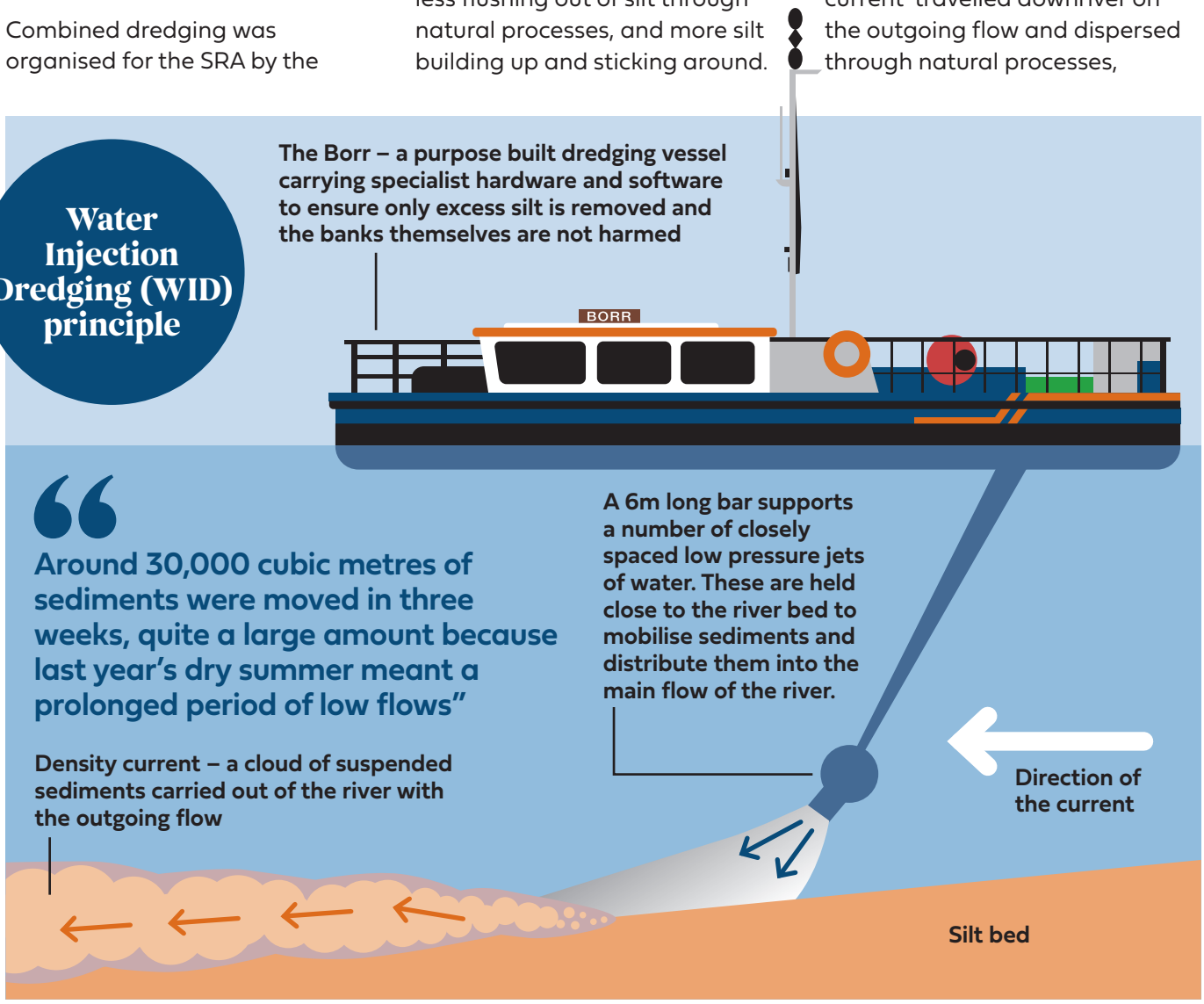
Dredging and silt-monitoring

In January 2026, 4 kilometres (2.5 miles) of the River Parrett between Burrowbridge and Northmoor Pumping Station was dredged with a Water Injection Dredging (WID) vessel working in combination with an excavator mounted on a floating platform in the river.

Since 2014, SRA partners have concentrated on this section of the Parrett because this is where most sediments are deposited, as incoming tides jostle with outgoing flows. This is where regular dredging is most needed. Works done here have the biggest impact on how much water can be conveyed by the Parrett, as part of the same key system as the River Sowy and King's Sedgemoor Drain.

Combined dredging was organised for the SRA by the Parrett Internal Drainage Board (IDB), working with SRA partners and contractors Van Oord and WM Longreach. It followed on from similar works with the same participants in January 2024 and January 2025. Around 30,000 cubic metres of sediments were moved in three weeks, quite a large amount because last year's dry summer meant a prolonged period of low flows. So there was less flushing out of silt through natural processes, and more silt building up and sticking around.

Two methods of dredging were used in combination. The first involved the WID vessel Borr working solo, jetting out powerful sprays of water just above the river bed so that various sediments (sands, silts and clays) were separated and mobilised. They were then washed away in what Van Oord call a 'density current' in the lower third of the river's water column. This 'density current' travelled downriver on the outgoing flow and dispersed through natural processes,



> "Around 30,000 cubic metres of sediments were moved in three weeks, quite a large amount because last year's dry summer meant a prolonged period of low flows"

chiefly disruptive wave action. That force broke the bonds in the 'density current' so that sediments once again became part of the gigantic natural load that has been carried by the Parrett in and out of Bridgwater Bay for thousands of years. All forms of dredging the Parrett have only ever had temporary results. The key point with this method of maintenance is that sediments get unstuck from the channel so the channel's capacity is increased for the best part of a year, until sediments solidify again, as naturally they always have and always will, to a point where more dredging is called for.

The second method used in January was an extension of the first. An excavator on a floating platform scooped accumulated sediments and plants from the so-called 'shoulder' of the river, then it dropped them down into the central part of the channel. Along that channel, the WID vessel used the same powerful jets of water just described to agitate and disperse the materials placed in its path, so they got washed out on the outgoing flow. The importance of 'shoulder' works is that once sediments get stuck in bankside vegetation they further clot and strengthen, and get harder to erode. This clagging reduces the Parrett's cross-sectional area and its effectiveness as a flood channel evacuating water.

Twice a year since 2015 the SRA has funded silt-monitoring, which involves surveying the shape and size of the Parrett's channel. Resulting information has been used to help target dredging. The SRA's aim has been to maintain benefits achieved in the major £6million dredge of 2014, through methods much cheaper, much quicker and much better for local residents (for example, no road closures). In combination with other elements of the SRA's overall programme of works, SRA-funded dredging has helped to protect around 1,300 homes and businesses, around 7,500 hectares of land, 5.3 miles of A-roads, 30 miles of minor roads and 5 miles of main line rail network. It has particularly benefitted the area around Moorland which was so badly hit in 2014 - but much less affected in 2026, following on from all the numerous works done since 2014.

The Parrett's channel is widened, with bankside sediments and plants dropped down ready for powerful jets of water to remove them further downstream and out to sea

River Sowy - King's Sedgemoor Drain (KSD) Enhancements

During 2025-26, the Parrett Internal Drainage Board (IDB) completed Phase 1 of the SRA's major £10million River Sowy - King's Sedgemoor Drain (KSD) Enhancements Scheme. The IDB's project team raised 1.22 miles (1.96 kilometres) of the left bank of the KSD, and upgraded Chedzoy Tilting Weir and KSD Back Ditch outfall.

These works capped a long series of improvements carried out by the Environment Agency between 2016 and 2023, such as raising another 5 miles (8 kms) of bank, desilting Parchey Bridge and the railway bridge at Dunball, creating embayments, two-stage channels and a backwater, upgrading outfalls, and replacing or repairing 100 water control structures around Moorlinch, Westmoor and at Egypt's Clyse on King's Sedgemoor.

These works also complemented other schemes such as the raising of the A372 at Beer Wall near Othery and the installing there of four huge culverts, two new river channels and a bespoke tilting weir; regular dredging of the River Parrett; building flood defences at Westonzoyland; upgrading Northmoor Pumping Station so it can accommodate high-capacity mobile pumps; removing a troublesome protrusion of concrete beneath the A38 bridge at Dunball; creating a pumping platform at Dunball so it too can accommodate high-capacity mobile pumps; and refurbishing Dunball Sluice.

As a result, nearly 25% more flood water can flow safely in channels through the connected River Sowy – KSD system, up from 17 cubic metres per second (called 'cumecs') to 21. The Sowy-KSD system runs for 13.5 miles (22km) from Monk's Leaze Clyse sluice at Combe near Langport down to Dunball Sluice north of Bridgwater.

The Environment Agency - which is responsible for managing flood risks from main rivers such as the Parrett, Sowy and KSD - says: "All these works combine to provide a significant improvement in our capacity to manage floods, in terms of conveyance, operational response and flexibility. This reduces flood risk to the mainline railway, key roads such as the A372 and A361 and many small local roads. It increases resilience to communities frequently affected at Langport, Northmoor and Moorland and large areas of surrounding farmland.

"While we can't say *exactly* how many properties or hectares of land, the scheme should provide enhanced protection to approximately 165 homes. The area of land that benefitted from the original 17 cumec operation is approximately 6,500 hectares, which could increase by approximately 1,500 hectares under the 21 cumec operation.

"It increases resilience to communities frequently affected at Langport, Northmoor and Moorland and large areas of surrounding farmland"

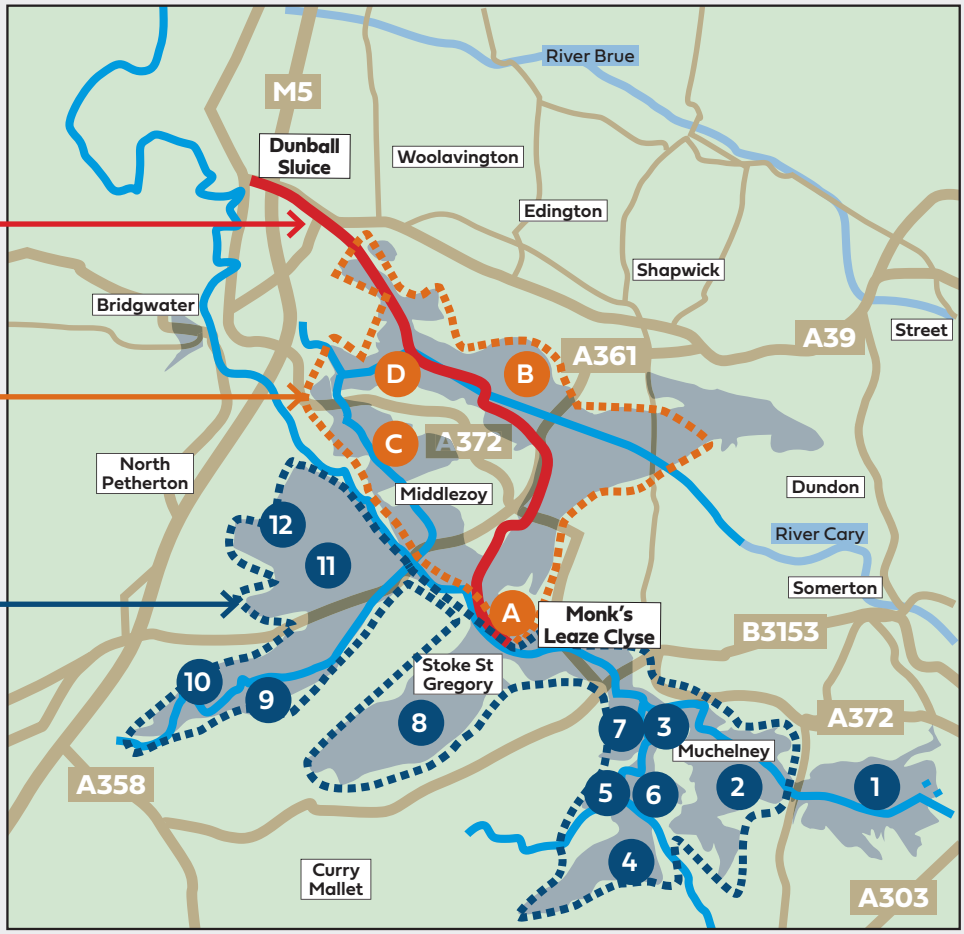
1.22 miles of the KSD's left bank was raised, so nearly 25% more water can be conveyed

Sowy-KSD scheme impact area

Sowy-KSD

Enhanced capacity benefit area:
A. Aller Moor
B. King's Sedge Moor
C. South Moor
D. Lang Moor

Enhanced operation benefit area:
1. King's Moor
2. West Moor
3. Mulcheney
4. West Moor
5. South Moor
6. Huish Level
7. Thorney Moor
8. West Sedge Moor
9. Hay Moor
10. Curry Moor
11. Salt Moor
12. North Moor



"The benefit also extends to managing required water levels across protected conservation sites."

The whole system was put through an exceptionally severe test with Storm Chandra in late January 2026. This month was the second wettest since records began in 1871; one third of the month's usual rainfall fell in two days; at its peak there was 1.2million cubic metres of water per hour coming down from the Parrett's big catchment - about half of Somerset - through Langport. All the improvements made were not sufficient to cope with this gigantic influx, flood waters overflowed, a Major Incident was declared and numerous pumps were brought in.

The Environment Agency did, however, gain a few more days' extra flexibility and control at the start and the end of this major incident and this did help to reduce flooding. Because, the more water can safely flow from the Parrett into the Sowy, the less water there is in the Parrett. The less water there is in the Parrett, the more water can be pumped off moors into the Parrett. So the Environment Agency say that water was off land about a week earlier than it would otherwise have been.

Surveyors check the bank is a consistent height and shape

Main River Maintenance on the Somerset Levels and Moors

The SRA funded 10 additional packages of main river maintenance work by the Environment Agency on and around the Somerset Levels and Moors.

The Agency focused particularly on clearing excessive weed growth from channels. It did this primarily because - when channels are not choked with weed - they can convey more water out to sea, which helps to reduce flood risks. During drier summer months, there are other benefits. Having a network of channels which can carry fresh flowing water helps to provide drinking and 'wet fences' for cattle, habitats for wildlife, and valued possibilities for people and businesses: recreation, fishing, sport, navigation.

In recent years, because of increased costs and reduced funds, the Environment Agency has been doing less main river maintenance work. One reason the SRA chose to enable more was to complement other SRA-funded projects, such as River Parrett dredging and the funding of a new pump at Screech Owl near Huntworth.

Extra strands of work were: weed control on St Andrews/Kewards Brook (Wells) and Glastonbury Millstream: weed control - with initial grass cutting to enable access - along the Cheddar Yeo, Mid Axe and Bleadney Branch; along the River Brue from Glastonbury to the River Cripps; along the Parrett from Slabgate to Langport to Thorney; along West Moor Main Drain; and along Huntworth Brook, where heavy

The Environment Agency calculate this work resulted in reduced flood risks for...

447 commercial properties

416 homes

2,198 hectares of farmland

6.34 miles (10.2km) of minor roads

2.2 miles (3.5km) of the rail network

Pictured:
1. Somerset Levels and Moors
2. Somerset Levels and Moors
3. Glastonbury Millstream
4. Glastonbury Millstream
5. Glastonbury Millstream
6. Knowle and Bleadney Branch

vegetation growth, plus higher-than-expected costs, meant not all planned work could be completed. Hamp Brook and Middle Stream were fully hand-pared. Weedboat work along the River Tone at Curry Moor was 88% completed, descoped in December because river levels were too high.

Outfall jetting and desilting on the Parrett and Tone covered Dunwear Pond, Sam Gamlins, Newhouse Farm, Elson's Clyce, Moats, and Screech Owl.

The Environment Agency calculate this work reduced flood risks for 447 commercial properties, 416 homes, 2,198 hectares of farmland, 6.34 miles (10.2km) of minor roads and 2.2 miles (3.5km) of the rail network.

Resident feedback

"What did this work mean for us at Cocklake? During 2023 and 2024 when no work took place, the river rose rapidly with the first heavy Autumn rain and stayed at that level for the entire winter and spring causing damp to permeate the buildings along the bank. Prior to 2023 we regularly saw families of swans year round but that stopped as they couldn't navigate through the weed.

Once the weed was cleared in October 2025 the river returned to its normal behaviour with levels dropping as rapidly as they rose. The swans returned and the damp subsided. In addition, the years that no clearance took place, our agricultural neighbours found the river flooding back up the drainage ditches leaving fields waterlogged, something they'd never seen before. The clearance meant this didn't happen last winter."

Christina Brown, local resident

Bridgwater Tidal Barrier

Bridgwater Tidal Barrier will reduce flood risks for over 11,300 homes and 1,500 businesses.

It's a project led by the Environment Agency and Somerset Council, with contributions now totalling £3.37 million from the SRA and the old Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership. These contributions particularly helped to accelerate the project's early development. It has three main elements:

- a Tidal Barrier across the River Parrett between Express Park and Chilton Trinity
- 4.3 kms (2.67 miles) of new flood defence banks and 2.8 kms (1.74 miles) of raised banks at Chilton Trinity, Combwich and Pawlett
- fish and eel passes at up to 12 sites upstream of the barrier

The Parrett's bypass channel flowing round the cofferdam

Extensive progress was made in 2025-26. Activities included:

- as part of a Design Efficiency Review, simplifying the Barrier's superstructure, which still incorporates three sculptural towers and two vertical lift gates
- with the aid of a huge jack-up barge, constructing a cofferdam, that is an enclosure pumped dry to allow for works below water level
- completing the installation of tubular piles for the Barrier's foundations
- completing the bypass channel needed so the Parrett can still flow around the cofferdam while further works take place
- working on outfall structures, embankments, piling mats, culverts and haul roads around Chilton Trinity and Pawlett
- archaeological works, community drop-ins, school and college visits, sessions with local businesses

Piling mat construction at Chilton Trinity

Major prize for Exmoor project part-funded by SRA

The Holnicote Estate Project, led by the National Trust in West Somerset, won the Catchment Restoration Award in the River Restoration Centre's 2025 UK River Prizes, awarded in April 2025. Somerset Rivers Authority part-funded 15 schemes in this project, including the UK's first large-scale main river restoration using "Stage Zero" techniques, on part of the River Aller, and a similar restoration of 125 hectares upstream at Tivington Farm; the re-introduction of beavers to an enclosed site; and 12 other natural flood management schemes. Together, these works have slowed and held back water and so reduced flood risks for places downstream such as Allerford and Bossington. They have cleaned water and created habitats for wildlife. They have fostered greater resilience in times of flood and drought, which has helped to keep land productive for farmers.

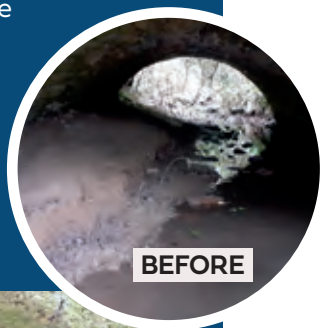
The River Aller's reconnected floodplain (above) and a grey wagtail (inset) at that new habitat.

Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation Improvements Scheme

The SRA made contributions to the Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation Improvements Scheme (TSFAIS) between 2016-17 and 2020-21, including £65,000 of Growth Deal funding which came to the SRA via the now-defunct Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership. In 2025-26, Somerset Council and the Environment Agency continued to work on Phase 2 of one of the projects which is part of TSFAIS, designing repairs of - and replacements for - flood defences along the most vulnerable parts of the left bank of the Tone (Clarence Street, the BT Exchange, the former Poundstretcher site). Construction is scheduled for 2027-28.

Desilting structures

Somerset Council budgets allow for bridges and culverts to be desilted when there is a threat to those structures. A danger, for example, of them being damaged because of the sheer volume and weight of material built up inside and around them. Extra SRA funding allows for desilting works that benefit both structures and the watercourses flowing through them – and nearby roads, land and properties. One structure was desilted in 2025-26 by Somerset Council: Little Bridge in Stoke Trister.



River Brue modelling

SRA-funded modelling of flood risk reduction options for the River Brue's lower catchment was completed in 2025-26. This work followed on from an earlier SRA-funded study of how much water the Brue conveys, and how water moves – and is moved – around its lowlands.

The aim of both these studies was to seek general agreement about which potential improvements would work best and how to reconcile any competing interests.

The options modelling was led by Somerset Council, working as an SRA partner with AW Water Engineering Ltd and WSP as consultants. They considered eight options singly, plus five combined options. Combined options included silt removal and other methods of increasing watercourses' capacity for conveying water, structural improvements to flood defences, bank repairs, and changes to operational procedures.

In December 2025 the SRA Board noted that only Combined Option 1, for Brue conveyance improvements, had a Benefit Cost Ratio of more than 1 when flood risk benefits alone are assessed. The Board heard that it is hard to assemble conventionally strong business cases for flood risk reduction works in the Brue lowlands, because of low densities of homes, businesses and critically important infrastructure. However, members agreed that if the scope of future works could be extended to include less tangible benefits (such as amenity, ecology and health), this could strengthen rationales for investment.

The project's steering group had its last meeting in April 2026. As a result, different organisations are now focusing on four main ideas. The first involves formally lowering water levels in the Huntspill before predicted floods. (The Huntspill was created in the early years of World War Two primarily to hold and supply the huge quantities of water needed to help make explosives at Puriton, but it was also intended to serve as a flood relief channel).

Other possible moves include getting low spots raised in the banks of the Brue; increasing conveyance through pinch points on the Brue downstream of the Cripps River; and tie-ups with other strategies and initiatives such as Somerset's Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the Agratas battery factory being built at Puriton.

SRA partners will take such actions forward as part of their usual work through selecting works, securing funding and permissions, producing detailed designs and implementing them.

Siphons Appraisal

Investigations continued into three of the 14 siphons known to exist in the Axe, Brue and Parrett catchments.

These siphons were mostly built in the 19th and 20th centuries as part of drainage or river improvement schemes. For untold centuries people have shaped the distinctive landscape of the Somerset Levels and Moors. Before rivers were embanked hundreds of years ago, the Levels and Moors were natural flood plains - marshes - with many islands in them, from the Glastonbury and Meare lake villages in Iron Age times, through to Muchelney (Great Island), Thorney, Athelney, Westonzoyland and Horsey (Horse Island).

Siphons' purpose is to enable water to go underneath rivers - to move from place to place - so that flood (and drought) risks can be better managed. In 2025-26 the Axe Brue IDB used SRA funding to examine the three siphons judged to pose the biggest flood risks if they failed.

One (called Swallows) goes under the River Brue about 1.5 miles north-west of Baltonsborough in the Watchwell Drove-Butt Moor area, one goes under the River Sheppey on the eastern edge of Lower Godney, one (called Crossmoor) goes under the Old River Axe on the southern edge of Cross. All need repairs. Next steps are being considered by SRA partners.

Inside a siphon

Workstream 2

Land Management including Natural Flood Management (NFM)

For the last 10 years, this workstream has been led for the SRA by the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest (FWAG SW). In 2025-26, FWAG SW advisors continued to work with landowners, farmers and communities eager to turn ideas into action to help the places where they live. As part of the SRA's Somerset catchment-driven approach to tackling flooding from different angles, this workstream slows the flow of rural water down to vulnerable areas, in ways that work with nature. Some smaller schemes address specific local priorities: others are far more ambitious, like Heal Rewilding near Frome, which has been getting national praise.

"We now have natural streams and pools of water forming in areas of land that were previously drained and ditched. It has been truly magical to watch the works come to life over the winter, slowing the flow of water through the land and attracting species such as Snipe and Lapwing to feed."
Daniel Hill, Heal Rewilding

WORKSTREAM 2 IN NUMBERS

£441,000
spent in 2025-26, 9.7% of total

21
varied NFM schemes in Somerset catchments

91
visits, walks, workshops by FWAG SW advisors

2,950
trees and shrubs, 1,386 metres of hedgerow planted to help slow the flow

New wetland at Heal

21
NFM schemes
were completed during 2025-26, including ponds, scrapes, leaky dams and bunds. Schemes were:

Brent Knoll, Axe catchment

At least four properties were flooded in Brent Knoll in 2023 and 2024, partly because water was running down the footpath from the Knoll, into the church and down the road. To reduce this flow, a hedge was cut back and coppiced to allow for access to a ditch, a cascade of leaky dams and flow spreaders was created in the ditch, along with three flow spreaders in a field, and three in the forest above the field.

Brent Knoll Parish Council's view: "really pleased with the results."

Cole, Cole Manor, Brue catchment

To help roads and properties downstream, 400m³ of water storage capacity was created by removing 650 tons of silt from the manor house pond, which is part of a leat system connected to the River Pitt.

The owner's view: "thrilled... will make a Big Difference towards mitigating any possible flooding in the future."

Cranmore, Somerset Frome catchment

After homes and a business were flooded during Storm Henk, local residents approached the SRA's community team, they involved FWAG SW's SRA-funded community NFM advisor, and moves were then made to reduce the flow of surface water from farmland upstream of the village. Land close to a farm gate on the edge of Cranmore was regraded with a bund and leaky outlet, and another bund up to seven feet high with a trickle outlet was built further up the catchment.

Landowner's view: "a good impact on the danger of flooding. I've had several people in the village say thank you for doing it."

East Pennard, Brue catchment

A pond was desilted and made bigger at the source of the Bradley Brook, in the grounds of Hill Farm along Middleway Road, to help reduce flood risks to five properties in Coxbridge and West Bradley, and to help preserve road access. A 65-centimetre high masonry weir with a trickle outlet was also built in front of the pond's curent outlet, to help the pond retain up to 500m³ of water during periods of heavy rain. The applicant also re-gravelled the track near the pond, and pledged to keep livestock out of the yard nearby, to help reduce future pond sedimentation.

Landowner's view: "Completed work far above and beyond spec... the holding capacity is much larger than originally planned."

Friggle Street, Emblems Farm, Somerset Frome catchment

Five scrapes were dug out and two existing low-lying areas accentuated to increase water storage by around 650m^3. Pipes were fitted into four of the new attenuation features, and land drains excavated, to help further slow the flow of water into nearby ditches. The aim: to benefit roads and residential areas in and around the Wallbridge area of Frome. The site was identified as a prime one for NFM in 2017.

Landowner's view: "The attenuation features and scrapes immediately did what we set out for them to do, as observed on site and monitoring cameras."

Witham Friary, Heal, Somerset Frome catchment

The SRA part-funded a series of works to create large amounts of natural water storage in three areas within the headwaters of the River Frome and reduce flood risks for 13 properties and local roads. In total, 1000 metres of waterways were reconnected to their floodplains, with six ditches blocked or filled in, two pilot channels made, five scrapes, and dozens of flow spreaders and bunds. Old plastic drainage pipes were broken up and removed. The Environment Agency also provided significant funding.

Lydeard St Lawrence, Pyleigh House Farm, Tone catchment

Following a request by Somerset Council's Highways Department for FWAG SW to look for ways of reducing road flooding at this site, a small pipe was replaced with a larger twin-wall pipe, a 200m^2 attenuation area was dug out below the mouth of the pipe (around which a hibernaculum was also created), a cascade of flow spreaders was installed and a historic pond was restored. The applicant also had a Trees for Water Action Fund grant, as did the adjacent property.

Landowner's view: "Water on the road just vanishes into the works we had done. It's been great - all the neighbours have noticed the difference."

Cothelstone, Cothelstone Road, Tone catchment →

An old 500m^2 Mill Pond in Cothelstone was de-silted and a new sluice outlet installed, to help reduce local flooding, especially along Cothelstone Road on the edge of the Quantocks.

Landowner's view: "working well at present."

Lower Henlade, Tone catchment

Two interlinked schemes. A series of 7 leaky dams was also installed within the main stream at Stones Farm at Lower Henlade, and a water storage area of around 150m² was desilted, to help reduce flows down to Stoke Road. This floods during heavy rain, inconveniencing around 80 properties and impeding access to the A358. Both these schemes tied in with another scheme funded through the SRA Community Flood Action Fund.

Parish council view: "People do think it's had a beneficial impact for sure. Other parts of the area have flooded and [in Lower Henlade] we've not - which has been great."

Thornfalcon, Tone catchment

Three interlinked schemes to reduce flood risks along the track (also classified as a public footpath) to Holy Cross Church and four properties. Two historic ponds were cleared and desilted, one about 50m², the other about 514m², to help store water. Drainage channels were also restored, the track regraded, and a third pond desilted, to direct water for storage into a remnant of the 19th century Chard canal. Finally, a French drain was created to divert flows away from a problematic gateway into a fourth existing pond in a domestic orchard. This pond was regraded to give it less steep banks. A pipe was also laid to connect the larger desilted pond to the French drain to allow for additional storage.

Landowner's view: "We had some fairly heavy rain over the winter, and it was really encouraging to see the difference these works made. Water moved away much more effectively."

Culmstock, Overlands Farm, Tone catchment

Two interlinked schemes. Silt traps, cells and bunds were created to hold water and reduce soil-wash and run-off down a field valley, to lessen the amounts of fine sediments filling highway drains and thereby cut flooding in Westford.

The owner said he enjoyed doing the work himself using his own machinery and "it definitely does hold back water."

Kingston St Mary, Park Farm, Tone catchment

In 2024-25, at the farmer's suggestion, an old pond was reinstated to help slow peak flows of flood water, down towards Pickney Lane, the busy A358-Cross Keys pub junction and properties downstream. In 2025-26, for the same purposes, a second farmland pond (75 metres long and up to 12 metres wide) was reinstated. This pond has a leaky outlet made with on-site timber and a 6-metre buffer strip.

Landowner's view: "it's certainly acted as a silt trap and it was full to overflowing when we had all that heavy rain so it must definitely have slowed some of the water going downstream."

Knole Pit Meadow, Knole, Parrett catchment

A scheme to slow the flow of water into Knole by meandering two drainage ditches and creating two attenuation ponds in Knole Pit Meadow, a market garden and regenerative farming showcase north-west of Knole below the A372. In total, 242 metres of inlet and outlet ditch were dug out, and nearly 2,200 m^3 of soil was shaped into bunds. The aim was to complement other SRA-funded works done in Knole.

The owner - who also got a Trees for Water Action Fund grant - said: "A dream for me became a reality for the villagers of Knole. My land has been transformed."

Milborne Wick, Parrett catchment

Two interlinked schemes between the villages of Charlton Horethorne and Milborne Wick, including a new drainage ditch and two scrapes with slow-release drainage pipes to reduce flows down to a stream that is part of the headwaters of the River Yeo and runs down towards Milborne Wick. Milborne Wick has flooded in recent years.

Landowners' view: "finished to a very high quality, will improve flooding mitigation for us and to the village."

Pye Corner Farm, between Odcombe and West Coker, Parrett catchment

Thirty-four leaky woody brash dams were placed 10 metres apart along Sutton Bingham Stream, either hinged from trees nearby or built with arisings coppiced locally, to help slow the flow of water down to West Coker, where roads and at least eight homes have flooded. Part of a wider scheme also involving around 2000m^3 of pond desilting funded by Wessex Water.

Landowner's view: "very pleased with the work... and what it has achieved."

Westcombe Farm, Somerton, Parrett catchment

A soil bund was created to capture heavy run off along the farm's main flow pathway towards Lower Somerton, which flooded during December 2023 and January 2024, near the junction of Cartway Lane and the B3153 over Somerton Hill.

Landowner's view: "Did it solve the problem? No, not with all the rain we had earlier this year, but it definitely had a positive impact in stopping that road from flooding for longer."

Referrals, soil visits and community NFM

'Referrals' are flooding problems that FWAG SW have been asked to examine because it is thought that better land management might help.

Requests for FWAG SW to carry out SRA-funded investigations can be made by sources such as Somerset Council's Highways Department, its Flood and Coastal Management team, SRA staff, Wessex Water, parish and town councils and established flood groups. So, for example, four of the NFM schemes just described in 2025-26, at Lydeard St Lawrence and Thornfalcon, formally began as 'highways referrals'.

FWAG SW advisers can choose to assist in cases where they judge that better land management or natural flood management, or both, could indeed help to reduce flooding, for example along roads where too much water is running off from fields or tracks. Places visited in 2025-26 included the A358 near Norton Manor Camp, Combe St Nicholas, Combwich, Crimchard, Monksilver, Trull, Wiveliscombe and 11 sites within the purview of the Three Villages Flood Group (Mudford, Chilton Cantelo, Ashington).

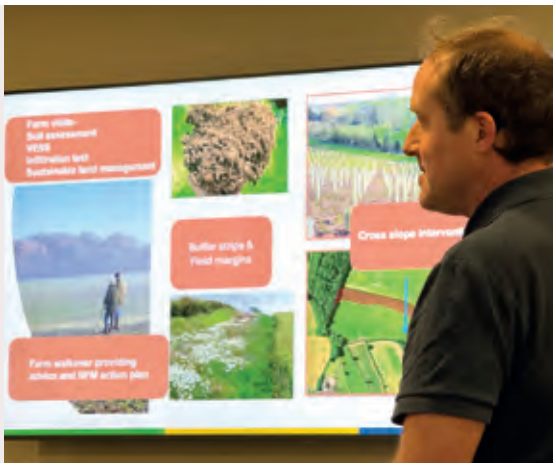
FWAG SW are also funded by the SRA to encourage the uptake of land and soil management techniques which improve the infiltration of water into the ground, reduce run-off and lessen compaction and erosion.

Events in 2025-26 included a farm walk across the Dillington estate where Workstream 2 leader Roy Hayes discussed matters such as cropping, hedges, bunds and buffer strips. Another walk was held in the Hillfarrance Brook area to promote opportunities for farmers to get funding from Wessex Water, and a workshop at Evercreech was organised with Bristol Water and the Headwaters of the Brue project. Other places visited included Monksilver, Odcombe and Somerton. At the Somerset Prepared Community Resilience Conference, FWAG SW advisors ran a workshop about NFM, soil visits and the usefulness of forming community action groups.

Overall in 2025-26, FWAG SW advisors visited dozens of places across Somerset for various SRA-related purposes from Skilgate in the west to the River Mells in the east.

Above: FWAG SW's SRA-funded community NFM advisor Emma Robertson with Dr Martin Minogue of Knole Flood Prevention Group in Knole

Right: Roy Hayes, of FWAG SW, at the Somerset Prepared conference



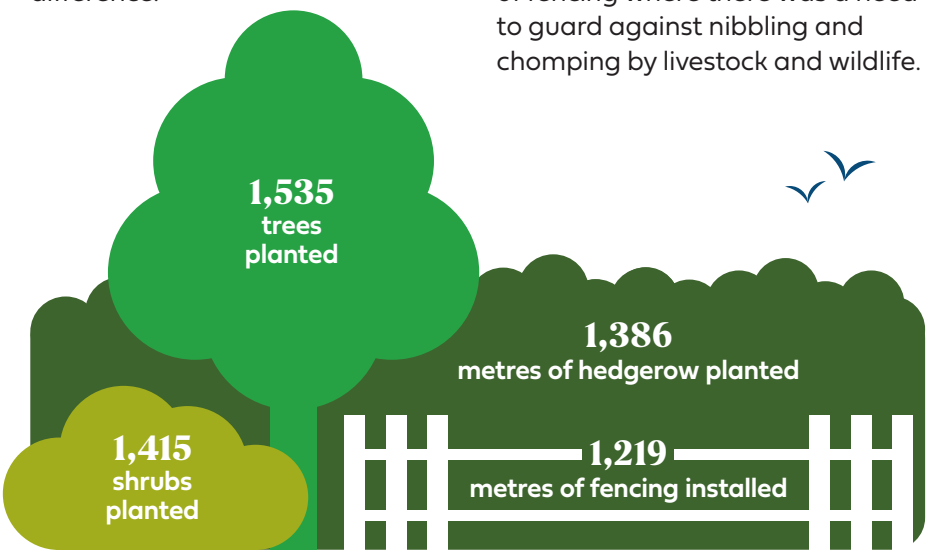
Volunteers planting trees and shrubs in Yeoman's Copse, owned by Curry Woods Conservation Trust, at the highest point of Curry Rivel parish, to help slow water run-off north and south

Trees for Water Action Fund

Trees for Water is an SRA-backed Fund for tree and hedge planting that helps people across Somerset to reduce local flood risks arising from surface water run-off.

The project is led by Reimagining the Levels, working with the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest (FWAG SW). It's now in its seventh year. It's designed to suit small sites where local knowledge and expert analysis suggest that planting will make a difference.

Planting is usually carried out by landowners and teams of enthusiastic volunteers, many now very experienced, quite a few still learning. Sixteen schemes went ahead in 2025-26, with 1535 trees, 1415 shrubs, and 1386 metres of hedgerow planted and 1219 metres of fencing where there was a need to guard against nibbling and chomping by livestock and wildlife.



Trees for Water places in 2025-26:

- Ash Priors, Kerdon Farm
- Bruton, Gants Mill

- Charlton Adam, Blakes Cottage, Broadway Road
- Curry Rivel, Yeoman's Copse, Hellards Hill Lane

- Glastonbury, Paddington Farm, Maidencroft Lane
- Haselbury Plucknett, Penwood, Claycastle
- Haydon, Lower Haydon Farm
- Knole (x2), Ciderpress Farm, and Knole Pit Meadow
- Langport, North Moor, land behind Moor Close

- Lydeard St Lawrence (x2), Pyleigh House Farm, and Pyleigh Bungalow
- Merriott, Lower Street
- North Curry, Moredon House
- Queen Camel, Wales Farm
- Staple Fitzpaine, Curland, by the Fivehead River
- West Bagborough, Tilbury Farm.

Workstream 3

Urban Water Management

The two main aims of the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) Urban Water Management workstream are reducing local flood risks and making places better to live and work. Five projects progressed in 2025-26.

Local flood risk management measures

A partnership project designed to reduce local flood risks across Somerset by investigating problems, assessing possible remedies and taking action; it's led by Wessex Water and Somerset Council as partners in the SRA, and funded by the SRA and Wessex Water. Somerset Council contributes staff time.

In 2025-26, 15 places came under consideration in Bridgwater, Chard, Cheddon Fitzpaine, Chedzoy, Creech St Michael, Drayton, Fiddington, Ilminster, Milverton, Norton Fitzwarren, Taunton, Wiveliscombe, Wookey Hole and Yeovil. Activities included Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest surveys, which recommended land management and Natural Flood Management interventions to reduce runoff from fields and improve the infiltration of water into the ground. In Bathpool on the edge of Taunton, an area that was under consideration, the SRA Board agreed in March and June 2026 to contribute to the cost of an Environment Agency scheme for pumping improvements.

WORKSTREAM 3 IN NUMBERS

£622,000
spent in 2025-26, 13.7% of total

26
places with flooding problems assessed for action

2
detailed proposals drawn up for drainage improvements

Chard Reservoir

The SRA part-funded a Somerset Council scheme to improve Chard Reservoir and help protect up to 1,000 properties from its potential to flood if the reservoir failed.

Works were completed in 2025. They included building a 'wave wall' along one section of the reservoir to prevent overtopping, reinforcing the reservoir's stilling basin, and landscaping.

The Market Street car park, Watchet

Watchet town centre and Lower Keyford, Frome

Parts of Watchet and Frome were investigated during the 2024-25 stage of the 'Local measures' project outlined on the previous page, and both were judged to warrant further moves. The SRA therefore agreed to part-fund a Somerset Council-Wessex Water proposal for the design of improved rainwater and surface water management measures to reduce flood risks in the Market Street area of Watchet town centre. One aim was to work out how best to retrofit Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) into the Market Street car park (owned by Somerset Council), another was to encourage the use of SuDS and innovative rainwater management techniques nearby. Hence in 2025-26 the project team surveyed assets, reviewed and analysed data, held meetings with the town council, and drew up some initial designs. Local residents consulted in April 2026 were keen to see more.

The SRA also agreed to part-fund a Somerset Council-Wessex Water proposal to reduce the high risks of surface water flooding at Lower Keyford in Frome. A CCTV survey was done of a culverted watercourse under Lower Keyford. Results suggested the best way to reduce flooding could be to attenuate rainwater upstream and/or separate it from local surface water drains. This idea will now be assessed. Given how drains here may interact with sewers, water quality in the Dippy Stream and River Frome could also be improved.

Taunton Integrated Catchment Study: 25 Year Flood Action Plan

A study focused on the risks of surface water flooding in and around Taunton, with those risks considered in their complex relation to drainage infrastructure, sewers and watercourses. Completed in 2026, this study was jointly funded by Somerset Rivers Authority and Wessex Water. It was led by Wessex Water and Somerset Council. Several other partners were involved, including the Environment Agency, Parrett Internal Drainage Board and Network Rail.

In 2023, Wessex Water commissioned WSP to act as consultants. WSP built a computer model of Taunton to help better understand local flooding problems, and they checked this model's representations against historic records of flooding. Twelve flooding hotspots were identified, and the project team looked for cost-effective ways of reducing flood risks in those areas. They also considered whether other benefits could accrue, such as for wildlife, water quality, amenity and carbon.

The 12 hotspots are Bathpool, Cheddon Fitzpaine, Creech St Michael North, Creech St Michael South, Kingston St Mary, Kingston Stream to Taunton railway station, Nailsbourne, North Town Firepool, Norton Fitzwarren East, Norton Fitzwarren West, Ruishton, and Trull.

As stated on the previous page, the Environment Agency is already aiming to get new pumping arrangements for Bathpool, part-funded by the SRA.

Ideas for the other 11 places include creating ponds, planting trees and improving drainage.

Aside from Bathpool, further progress by SRA partners will depend upon them prioritising options, engaging with landowners, doing more surveys and designing, refining modelling, developing business cases and securing funding.

Flooding in Bathpool

Workstream 4

Resilient Infrastructure

In the Somerset 20 Year Flood Action Plan, drawn up in 2014, two of the six main objectives were about making the county's infrastructure more resilient. They urged that access should be maintained for people and businesses travelling within Somerset or through the county.

This imperative was picked up in the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) Strategy for 2024-34, the second of whose five objectives is to "Maintain access and connections during times of flood for communities and businesses across Somerset". The SRA therefore deals with flooding along highways as well as waterways.

CCTV surveys

Somerset Council arranged SRA-funded CCTV surveys in the centre of Haselbury Plucknett, and Lower Keyford in Frome (as part of the scheme described on p.27). Getting accurate information through surveys helps interested parties (such as Flood Risk Management Authorities, landowners and residents) to pinpoint and deal with flooding problems.

Enhanced maintenance of road drainage structures

Extra maintenance helps to keep roads open, make them safer, preserve access for communities, and safeguard properties from flooding. In 2025-26, SRA funding enabled Somerset Council's Highways Department to give 23,182 of the highest-risk gullies across Somerset a second round of emptying, six months after their first council-funded clearout. A long list of places that benefitted is on the SRA website.

Also in 2025-26, SRA funding (carried over from a previous year) enabled Highways to jet drains at six locations. In recent years, Highways have only been able to afford to jet drains when bad blockages have occurred. SRA funding allows for earlier preventative maintenance at places known to flood.

Local knowledge and professional judgement are used in selecting these extra sites. In 2025-26, they were:

- **Barton St David**, Mill Road
- **Compton Dundon**, Ham Lane
- **Galhampton**, High Road
- **Mudford**, Hinton Road
- **Shepton Montague**, Higher Shepton Road
- **Taunton**, Lisieux Way.

WORKSTREAM 4 IN NUMBERS

£303,000
spent in 2025-26, 6.7% of total

23,182
highest-risk gullies received a second round of emptying

6
places got extra drain jetting

Robins Lane, Burtle

The Axe Brue IDB finished designing an SRA-funded scheme to reduce flooding along Robins Lane in Burtle. Two undersized culverts and a dilapidated roadside ditch have long caused problems at this site. Works are now due in 2026, once a necessary road closure has been arranged.

Workstream 5

Building Local Resilience

This workstream helps to deliver the SRA Strategy by concentrating mostly on 'working with communities' and 'building resilience, encouraging adaptation'. The aim is to foster better understanding, collaboration and preparation across catchments. Individuals and communities say they value being able to do three main things. Firstly, understanding and monitoring the various flows of water through the landscapes in which they live. Second, helping to reduce their own future flood risks. Third - if floods do occur - being able to act, having acquired some requisite mix of knowledge, training and equipment.

Hence the activities of the SRA's community team, Dr Bel Deering and Dr Paul Elliston. In 2025-26 they led or took part in:

WORKSTREAM 5 IN NUMBERS

£290,000
spent in 2025-26, 6.4% of total

191
events and visits involving the SRA's community team

9
grants given for training and equipment, 4 climate adaptation plans completed

10
training sessions and workshops

24
flood group and flood group network meetings

3
Somerset Prepared community resilience roadshows

48
community visits

1
business resilience event

11
school visits

76
public events

18
Local Community Network and town and parish council meetings

In total they had 4,856 meaningful conversations about flood-related matters.

Impact statements

9/10 Average evaluation score for flood warden workshops

"The interactive group sessions provided a lot of thoughtful alternatives to the role and risks for flood wardens, rather than just a presentation."

"It was so valuable to meet other flood wardens and share ideas."

Flood wardens' feedback

Every number on the previous page represents a multitude of stories. For example, the SRA's community team took leading roles in organising the annual Somerset Prepared Community Resilience Conference. Held in November, this event drew around 190 people to Taunton Racecourse. Attendees enjoyed an opening talk about flooding from Clinton Rogers (one of Somerset's Deputy Lord-Lieutenants) and took part in interactive sessions about aspects of community resilience. Sessions led by the SRA covered riparian rights and responsibilities, some others were led by communities who had benefitted from SRA and Somerset Prepared support and now wanted to share their knowledge and experiences (Blackford, Three Villages Flood Group near Yeovil).

Above: Oyez, Oyez, Oyez! Bel Deering with Glastonbury's town crier

During 2025-26, there were also three smaller Somerset Prepared 'roadshows' - organised by and featuring the SRA - in Glastonbury, Minehead and West Coker and two flood warden workshops in Seavington St Mary and West Coker.

Somerset Emergency Volunteer Action Group (EVAG) members at the Somerset Prepared Community Resilience Conference at Taunton Racecourse

At other events, the SRA's team helped parishes and Local Community Networks (LCNs) with producing emergency plans (Bawdrip, Mudford, West Monkton, Wellington and Avalon and Poldens LCN). Support continued for long-running SRA-funded projects like the development of localised community flood warning systems linked together through an online Community Flood Hub, hence site visits with flood wardens (e.g. in Croscombe) and training sessions (e.g. in Galhampton).

Flood group networks were launched for the Parrett, Tone and Axe and Brue catchments. (West Somerset already has a successful area-wide Flood Group: and after an initial SRA-organised meeting, people in the Somerset Frome catchment are setting up their own with flooding as part of a wider riverine remit).

Impact statements

100% Emergency plan workshops: All attendees said they would complete their plans

"A fantastic starting point to building a resilient community for ourselves"

Attendee feedback

Above left: SRA Board member Cllr Steve Ashton (left) with Paul Hodge of Croscombe Flood Group, by flood barriers part-funded by the SRA

Bel Deering and Paul Elliston (standing, in black) at a Parrett flood group network meeting in Langport

Impact statements

9/10 Average evaluation score for school workshops

"It was perfect - the children were all completely engaged. There was a really great balance between understanding the serious issues of flooding and talking about positive action."

"It helped the children understand the relevance of flooding and flood prevention to their own lives."

"I'd love to make this a yearly workshop."

"It wasn't boring ish."

Feedback from three teachers – and high praise from a teenager

Lessons and assemblies educated and entertained students at schools in Bridgwater, Chilton Cantelo, Combwich, Hambridge, South Petherton, Taunton and West Coker, and the SRA's team engaged in training sessions with 19 Geography and History subject leaders.

SRA staff helped SRA partners with events such as community drop-ins and they took part in the March 2026 flood symposium organised by ex-SRA Board member Sarah Dyke, now MP for Glastonbury and Somerton. In Chard and South Petherton, the SRA organised flood cafes for people affected by upsetting experiences of flooding to discuss their thoughts and feelings and connect with others. At the time of writing, the South Petherton cafe has been held every month for a year, so useful has it been found for nurturing wellbeing and building resilience

Flood Resilience Dashboard

One new factor in 2025-26 was the production with Somerset Council's Emergency Planning, Response and Recovery service of a Flood Resilience Dashboard. This gathers up-to-date information from a range of sources to see which places could benefit from more help and support than they are currently getting. The five main metrics cover Hazards (e.g. vulnerability to flooding), Risk Management (e.g. does somewhere have a good emergency plan?), Social (e.g. age and disability profiles, numbers of volunteers), Economic (e.g. rates of employment and home-ownership), and Communication (e.g. mobile signal coverage, ease of vehicular access). As a result, Dulverton, Porlock and Williton have begun to get more attention.

Above: West Coker pupils

Main image: The SRA had a stall at Wincanton Play Day

Taking all Workstream 5 initiatives cited together, SRA staff have spoken to - or with - around 5,000 people about flood-related matters. The effects of these conversations are incalculably diffusive, but they have led in many different directions. Work has begun, for example, on a new SRA-funded website intended to provide Somerset residents with all the information they need about flooding in one prominent place, rather than - as people have frustratedly complained - it being spread unevenly across umpteen locations and therefore hard to find.

Many people have also complained bitterly about being flooded solely because of road vehicles driving through water, creating bow-waves and pushing water into their homes. A pilot scheme is therefore being developed that could see trained community flood wardens closing and opening public roads in times of flood under delegated powers from Somerset Council in its capacity as a Highways Authority. Places currently involved are Lopen, Martock and Yeovilton.

Another subject known nationally for its power to infuriate are the so-called 'riparian' responsibilities that come with owning a watercourse or culvert or drain, particularly maintenance and the lack thereof. To try to boost understanding, and to encourage owners to fulfil their responsibilities, the SRA has devised interactive training sessions and talks, given in 2025-26 in Burrowbridge, Cranmore, Edington, Glastonbury, Mudford, and Porlock, and to Somerset Wildlife Trust staff, National Farmers Union members and the South West Association of Drainage Authorities.

Paul Elliston leading a workshop in Mudford

Edington Parish Council told Paul Elliston that since his workshop:

"the flood risk in the village has diminished as we have worked with landowners, residents and Somerset Council to improve water flow away from the higher risk areas. Explaining the nuances to Riparian Law to about one hundred locals galvanised and motivated the community. We are lucky to have public spirited volunteers and council leadership that understood what was needed... We've held two community action days, involving culvert and ditch clearance but we are not done yet. We still need further action from Somerset Council, and we will continue to harry them to repair under road drains and perform adequate jetting and unblock drains as appropriate. We will get there but thank you for giving us a firm base to begin the journey. Your help was appreciated."

Paul Elliston leading a workshop in West Coker

Grants for training and equipment

Nine grants for flood-related training and equipment were funded by Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) in 2025-26.

These grants were awarded through the Somerset Prepared partnership, which includes the SRA. Applicants pay 20% of the total costs of a project: an SRA grant covers the remaining 80%. Grants were given in 2025-26 to:

Bishop's Hull Parish Council, for emergency flood equipment including hi-vis gear, wind-up radios, first aid kits and first aid training.

Bishop's Lydeard Parish Council, for emergency flood equipment including torches, storage, first aid kits and first aid training.

Carhampton Parish Council, for emergency flood equipment including torches, tools, a flood barrier, yellow jackets and storage.

Oake Parish Council, for hi-vis personal protective equipment (PPE) for flood volunteers, radios, torches and first aid kits.

Porlock Parish Council, for hi-vis PPE for flood volunteers, VHF radios and emergency equipment storage.

Rotary International, for flood sacks and other household flood protection equipment for distribution by volunteers to vulnerable householders across Somerset.

Shepton Mallet Town Council, three separate grants for sheds and emergency flood equipment at Bowlish, Lower Lane and Queen's Road.

Three Villages Flood Group (Mudford, Chilton Cantelo & Ashington), for getting Mary Long-Dhonau ('Flood Mary') and her FloodPod to visit Mudford Village Hall, for a very busy afternoon of expert advice and hands-on demonstrations of flood resilience products.

Above: Mary Long-Dhonau ('Flood Mary') in her FloodPod and black and red in Mudford

Below: Bel Deering with flood volunteers in Oake clad in their new hi-vis PPE

Adaptation and Moor Associations

In 2025-26, the SRA continued to fund the production of bespoke climate adaptation plans, produced in collaboration between local people and Somerset Wildlife Trust.

The SRA's community team supported six sessions. Plans were completed for Wells, the Martock area (including Ash, East Lambrook, Martock, Kingsbury Episcopi, South Petherton and Stoke sub Hamdon), Spaxton on the eastern edge of the Quantocks, and Chard. Good progress was made in Frome and Mudford (near Yeovil), and exploratory discussions were held in Taunton with the town council. All plans have sections about reducing flood risks, with dozens of ideas covering subjects such as improved drainage and water storage, and emergency planning and local communication systems.

Actions taken since, in Spaxton for example, have included ditch clearing and planning for rainwater harvesting. In Glastonbury, where a plan was completed in 2024, recent activities have included producing a leaflet promoting permeable paving, rain gardens and water butts, and training people in how to create rain gardens and install water butts.

In March 2026, to push further ahead with these plans, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Somerset Council, and the University of Bristol began a year-long project called Act Together To Adapt, funded through the Maximising UK Adaptation to Climate Change (MACC) Hub Flexible Fund.

Through FWAG SW, the SRA has also continued to support 10 Moor Associations on the Somerset Levels and Moors. They bring many different landowners together to focus on water control issues and strategic decision-making. Banding together locally to help Defra pursue such goals as peat restoration and landscape recovery can help to secure practical improvements and extra funding.

An Act to Adapt meeting in Frome with Paul Elliston and Bel Deering presenting

Community Flood Action Fund

One of the main themes in the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) Strategy 2024-34 is working with communities across Somerset to reduce the risks and impacts of flooding. In December 2024, therefore, the SRA launched a Community Flood Action Fund (CFAF). This enables not-for-profit organisations, such as parish councils, to take practical actions with obvious benefits that can be achieved quite quickly.

COMMUNITY FLOOD ACTION FUND IN NUMBERS

£75,000
spent in 2025-26, 1.7%% of total

7
schemes done, 7 started, 11 new grants given

In 2025-26, CFAF's first full year of operation, 11 grants were given for works on local priorities. The parish councils of Aller, Baltonsborough, Carhampton, Croscombe, Godney, Isle Abbotts, Norton Fitzwarren, Ruishton and Thornfalcon, Shepton Beauchamp and West Buckland got single grants, mostly for clearance and desilting works. Ruishton and Thornfalcon applied twice and got grants for two separate but interlinked schemes for Lower Henlade, also for clearance and desilting works.

During 2025-26, seven schemes were completed. This number includes some places given CFAF grants towards the end of 2024-25. Schemes were:

Aller, rhyne clearance and ditch works, to reduce flood risks for 15-20 homes;

A new outlet headwall in Knole, part of a wide-ranging drainage scheme

Baltonsborough, flailing and weed-cutting along the overgrown Coxbridge Brook, to reduce flood risks to homes in Baltonsborough, Coxbridge and West Pennard, following floods in December 2023 and February 2024;

Godney, partially desilting Decoy Rhyne and James Weir River, restoring the north bank of Decoy Rhyne and sealing leaks, to reduce troublesome overflows of water northwards towards North Drain;

Ham (in West Buckland parish), reducing flood risks along Asham Lane, which flooded more than 10 times in 2024, chiefly impeding access;

Knole near Long Sutton, for a multi-faceted drainage scheme to help reduce flood risks in a hamlet where nine properties (out of a total of 40) flooded over the winters of 2023-24 and 2024-25;

Lower Henlade, 230 metres of ditch clearing to benefit properties, small businesses, and roads;

West Monkton, reducing flooding along Blundells Lane in West Monkton, chiefly to help maintain access for local people and businesses.

Left: Watercourse desilting works completed to help reduce flooding in Asham Lane, Ham

Schemes in Knole and Lower Henlade complemented other SRA-funded activities (see pages 22, 23, and 25).

CFAF schemes got underway in Cotford St Luke, Creech St Michael, Croscombe, Isle Abbots, Norton Fitzwarren, Stoke St Mary and West Camel. Creech St Michael was funded to buy a pump, to be operated by a team of volunteers.

Otherwise, these schemes too mostly involved clearance and desilting. Croscombe, for example, got a grant to create an access chamber into the River Sheppey culvert near the village centre. This chamber will enable Flood Group volunteers to get into the culvert, to remove debris and blockages from a sticking point where it bifurcates. This will reduce the risks of water backing up and overflowing, so helping to protect homes, the village pub and the A371.

Croscombe has flooded several times in recent years. Stoke St Mary got a grant for a thorough programme of works on drainage channels and inflow ditches, to lessen flood risks for people's homes and to help maintain access to and from the village. In recent years it has sometimes been cut off. A key feature here and elsewhere has been encouraging and empowering volunteers, partly through collaboration with the SRA's community team.

Resident feedback

"The extent of flooding on roads and parishes around us... leaves me in no doubt that CFAF work has transformed the flood risk in the targeted area... more effective than we could have conceivably hoped... Many thanks for your support and funding.

"For info, the volunteer clearing of Black Brook (removing 7 major blockages) and drains maintenance, was also successful in avoiding flooding in the main village itself... Again, this would certainly have been a serious flood in Stoke St Mary... without the clearance and drains maintenance we undertook ourselves.

"These 2 areas have been our worst flood spots for many years (but not this year). It now feels like we have the proven ability to proactively manage and reduce the risks for ourselves."

Graeme Watt, Councillor, Stoke St Mary

Financial summary 2025-26

All numbers are rounded to the nearest thousand.

SRA funds at the start of the 2025-26 financial year (April to March)

Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) gets funds every year from two sources.

£3,113,000

Council tax, raised for the SRA by Somerset Council.
For 2025-26: £3,113,000.
(The average Band D household charge: £14.65)

£20,000

£10,000 each from the Parrett and Axe Brue Internal Drainage Boards.
Making £20,000.

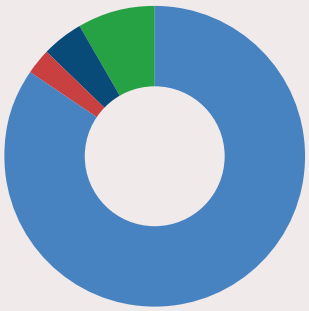
Fresh SRA funds for 2025-26 thus equalled £3,133,000

The SRA also carried forward funds from previous years:

- **£3,149,000** already allocated to ongoing projects as part of the SRA's overall Enhanced Programme of works, and
- **£983,000** for contingency.

Available SRA funds for 2025-26 thus totalled £7,265,000

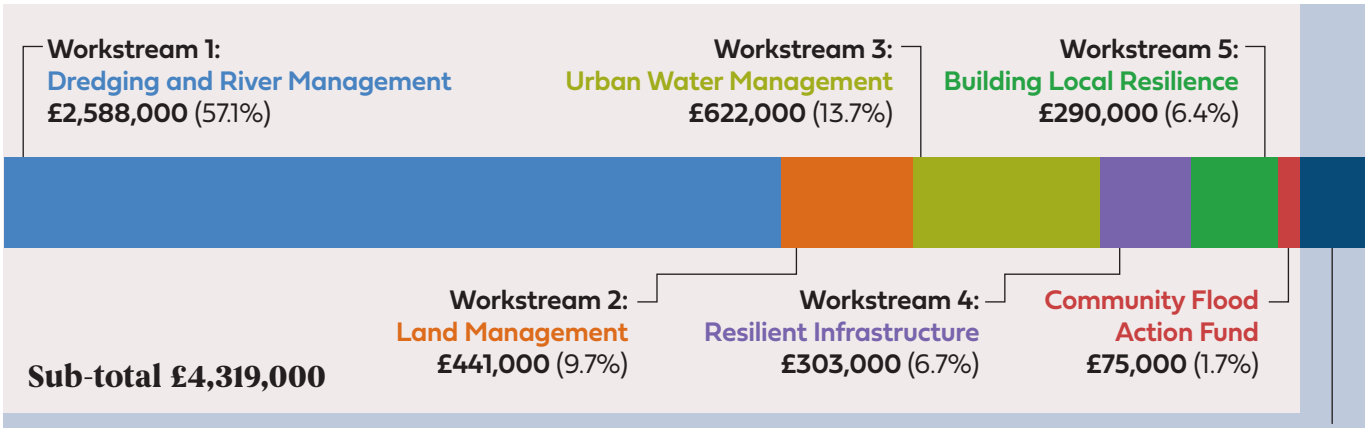
How the SRA allocated its funds for 2025-26



- **£6,158,000** (84.8%) For 2025-26, the SRA Board added 13 schemes and activities to the SRA's ongoing Enhanced Programme of works, making total funds for that £6,158,000.
- **£200,000** (2.7%) was allocated to the SRA's new Community Flood Action Fund.
- **£320,000** (4.4%) was allowed for staffing and overheads.
- **£587,000** (8.1%) for contingency.

How SRA funds were spent in 2025-26

SRA funds were spent as described in this annual report and as outlined below.



Sub-total £4,319,000

Total £4,534,000

This is the highest yearly total spent by the SRA since 2016-17.
Funds not spent in 2025-26 have been carried forward into 2026-27 either for ongoing projects in the SRA's overall Enhanced Programme of works or as contingency.

Hedge planting at Moredon House near North Curry to help slow the flow of water down to Haymoor and Stoke Road, which both flood

Somerset Rivers Authority

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