



**Somerset**  
Rivers Authority

**Annual Report  
Summary  
2021-22**

# Somerset's 20 Year Flood Action Plan and the SRA

The Somerset Levels & Moors Flood Action Plan was published in March 2014, at the end of that winter's massive floods.

Those floods brought misery and devastation to many, they closed 81 roads and cost Somerset an estimated £148 million.

Directly or indirectly, everybody in Somerset was affected.



When Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) was launched on 31 January 2015 the Flood Action Plan was widened to include all of Somerset. The SRA oversees the Flood Action Plan. The Plan has six main aims, stretching over 20 years, reflected in the workstreams in the following pages (W1 etc):

1. Reduce the frequency, depth and duration of flooding.
2. Maintain access for communities and business.
3. Increase resilience to flooding for families, agriculture, businesses, communities, and wildlife.
4. Make the most of the special characteristics of Somerset (with internationally important biodiversity, environment and cultural heritage).
5. Ensure strategic road and rail connectivity, both within Somerset and through the county to the South West peninsula.
6. Promote business confidence and growth.

All actions in the SRA's annual Enhanced Programmes are scored against these objectives.

## Activities in 2021-22

Somerset Rivers Authority is leading a revamp of Somerset's 20 Year Flood Action Plan, working with consultants WSP. The point of drawing up a Flood Action Plan in 2014 was to bring different organisations and people together, so together they could do more. More to reduce local flood risks, more to make local communities stronger, more to respond to local priorities in ways they could not otherwise do.

Since 2014, a lot has been achieved. A lot has also changed. For example, dealing with climate change is more of a priority for many people than it was eight years ago. Several SRA partners have declared climate emergencies. More places have flooded. Next year a new Somerset Council starts.

The time is therefore right to discuss what needs doing next. In 2021-22 the SRA began consulting partners and stakeholders about future local priorities. In autumn 2022, people across Somerset will be asked for their views about what should be done to give Somerset more protection from flooding and greater resilience. A revamped plan will be approved by the SRA Board and published in March 2023.



Baldr and Havik working in combination

## DREDGING

Maintenance dredging in January 2022 covered 3.75km (2.33miles) of the River Parrett between Saltmoor Pumping Station and Andersea. It was organised for Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) by the Parrett Internal Drainage Board (IDB), working as a partner in the SRA. The Parrett IDB liaised closely with the Environment Agency and Natural England, and again deployed water injection dredging specialists Van Oord. They used dredging unit Baldr and tug boat Havik (*above*).



## RIVER SOWY-KING'S SEDGEMOOR DRAIN ENHANCEMENTS

0.82 miles of bank raising, seven new ecological features, delivered for the SRA by the Environment Agency as part of a scheme to help reduce flood risks across 150 square miles.

## OTHER PROJECTS

**Silt monitoring** to help target dredging. **River Brue modelling** commissioned. **Strategic Approach to Mitigation** progress, including a third round of winter habitat and bird surveys. **Structures desilted** in Bridgwater, Cheddar, East Stoke and Perry Street. **Sampford Brett** works finished. **Dulverton Weir** survey and design work carried out. The SRA part-funded several schemes led by other bodies, with which: the Government formally approved the building of a **Bridgwater Tidal Barrier**; a **big Taunton flood alleviation scheme** progressed; **two planning applications** for river restoration on the National Trust's Holnicote estate were made to the Exmoor National Park Authority. **Langport flow station** building now due 2022.

For more information, see the full-length Annual Report or visit the [SRA website](#).



The SRA funds many Natural Flood Management (NFM) activities across Somerset. All sorts of different techniques may be used, singly or in combination. All share the aim of reducing local flood risks, by slowing the flow of water down through catchments in ways that work with nature.



Scrape with timber



Scrape with timber

**Nine schemes constructed** in 2021-22 included a series of floodplain restoration works in Witham Friary (*pictured above*) along Hermitage Stream, which is a tributary of the River Frome.

## OTHER PROJECTS

**12 highway referrals** seeking answers to road flooding problems in better management of land nearby, **1 soil visit** to help reduce the run-off of surface water. NFM activities like planting cover crops (*as at Stawell, top*) at **27 farms** winning online auction grants and **4 Doniford catchment farms** in West Somerset. Volunteers planted **Trees for Water** at 39 places, such as Windsor Hill (*right*).

For more information, see the full-length Annual Report or visit the [SRA website](#).





Stoke St Gregory detention basin



Monkton Heathfield

The main aims of Somerset Rivers Authority's Urban Water Management workstream (W3) are to reduce local flood risks and make places better to live and work. A lot of close attention is devoted to examining Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) at new developments.

When it rains, SuDS help to control the run-off of water from hard surfaces like roads, roofs and pavements. SuDS use techniques inspired by nature – such as permeable paving and plants and ponds – to absorb water and hold it back. SuDS can make places greener and more attractive, healthier for people and better for wildlife, with less pollution.

Very few formal SuDS inspection processes are in place across England: Somerset is ahead in checking new developments. The SRA funded inspections of SuDS at 41 places in 2021-22, including Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea, Chard, Langport, Monkton Heathfield, Shepton Mallet, Taunton and Wellington. Inspectors check schemes for compliance against 16 different criteria.

The SRA and its partners want to ensure that SuDS are built in accordance with the exact designs that were approved by local planning authorities, and that they work as they are meant to work. Local planning authorities have the power to enforce changes to constructed SuDS schemes, and where necessary they use this power.



Croscombe

## OTHER PROJECTS

**Activities in Rode** included computer model development to enable drain and watercourse capacity-testing, and installing a field drain. **An ongoing study of the catchments of Croscombe, Shepton Mallet**, and places in between such as **Bowlsh**, saw several surveys done along with some vegetation clearance and jetting. In **Minehead**, a **2D Integrated Catchment Model** is being developed to get a better understanding of local surface water flood risks.

For more information, see the full-length Annual Report or visit the [SRA website](#).

Two of the six main objectives in Somerset's 20 Year Flood Action Plan are about making Somerset's infrastructure more resilient. They urge that access should be maintained for people and businesses travelling within Somerset or through the county. As it oversees the Flood Action Plan, Somerset Rivers Authority therefore deals with highways as well as waterways.

### IMPROVEMENTS THROUGH CARHAMPTON

For many years the A39 at Carhampton Cross regularly flooded so badly it was dangerous or impossible to drive through. As the A39 is the main road serving West Somerset, widespread disruption resulted for residents, businesses and visitors.

Problems were made worse by water cascading down from Carhampton Cross, regularly flooding the B3191 Eastbury Road, and hitting people's homes. Drainage systems were simply overwhelmed by the amount of water pouring off land nearby. The SRA therefore teamed up with Somerset County Council's Highways Department for a pleasingly successful series of major drainage upgrades.

SRA-funded improvements along the A39, B3191 and nearby Hill Lane included bigger pipes, better gullies, and new water control features such as concrete chambers and a catch-pit. Somerset County Council paid for extensive road resurfacing.

### OTHER PROJECTS IN 2021-22

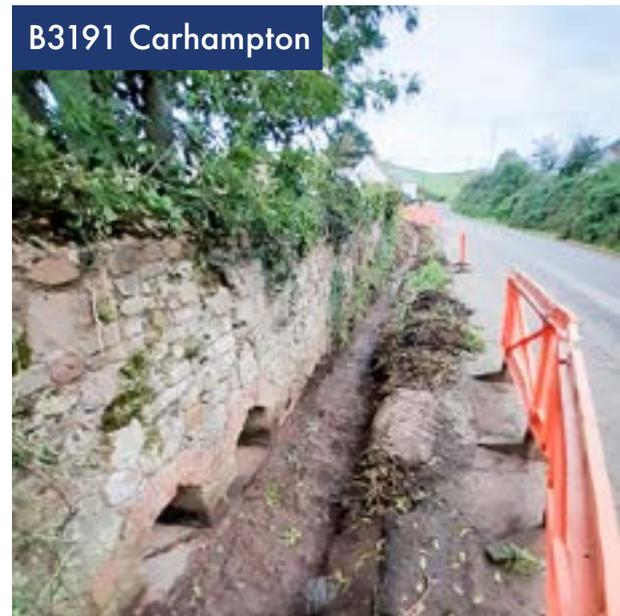
The SRA funded **extra maintenance** for **13,622 gullies**, **125 drains**, **8 trash screens**, **56 silt traps** to help keep roads open, make them safer, preserve access for communities and safeguard properties from flooding.

**Extensive drainage improvements** were made in the Lodes Lane area of Kingston St Mary on the edge of the Quantocks near Taunton, and in the Urgushay Road area of West Camel in South Somerset. **Individual drainage features were upgraded** in Bruton, Castle Cary and Cucklington in South Somerset, Chilcompton and Ditcheat in Mendip, and Mark in Sedgemoor. **An unstable section of bank was stabilised** in Chadmead (Sedgemoor). An SRA-funded **study of the Mill Stream catchment** around Rimpton and Marston Magna in South Somerset suggested eight options for improvements, such as desilting, infrastructure replacement and installation, and creating flood water storage features.

For more information, see the full-length Annual Report or visit the [SRA website](#).



A39 Carhampton



B3191 Carhampton



West Camel

Robin Huish, Ham Village Flood Defence Committee



Being mostly about people, this workstream was affected during 2021-22 by Covid-19 concerns and restrictions. In autumn 2021, Somerset's annual Community Resilience event (part-funded by the SRA) largely consisted of online training sessions. However, come spring, there were 10 public screenings of SRA-commissioned film *Down by the River*, which celebrates local volunteers (including the trio on the top half of this page). The film is now on YouTube. The SRA's community engagement team supported residents in places recently affected by flooding, including Chard, Combe St Nicholas, Forton and Tatworth, Ilminster, Shepton Mallet and Croscombe, and they worked with volunteers in Ruishton and Ham, Burrowbridge, North Petherton, Martock and Langport. They visited two schools, gave talks to Long Sutton Gardening Club and Langport Rotary Club, and took part in SCOP26+, Somerset's version of the global event held in Glasgow.



Teresa Bridgeman



Gordon Swindells



### OTHER PROJECTS IN 2021-22

**Grants for equipment** were given to flood warden teams in Ham, Croscombe and Martock.

The SRA part-funded **Adapting the Levels**, a major project about the water-related effects of climate change (flooding and drought). Recent developments include **mobile app Somerset Trails** featuring Wedmore and a Kids Corner with Iona (*left*), an **online tool for exploring adaptation pathways**, **new Moor Associations** and **new proposals for water storage** and **peat**.

For more information, see the full-length Annual Report or visit the [SRA website](#).

# Financial Summary

The SRA gets annual funding from two sources. Firstly, council tax: Somerset's local authorities raise money for the SRA. Secondly, the Parrett and Axe Brue IDBs each give £10,000. In 2021-22, from these two sources, the SRA received Local Partner Funds totalling £2,941,586.

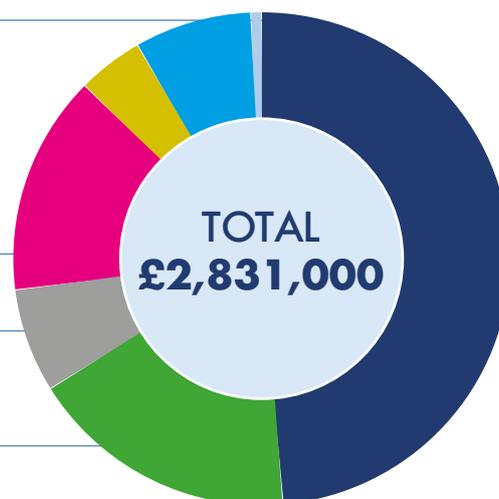
In March 2021, the SRA Board topped up that total with funds moved out of contingency. They set a budget of £3,440,000 to cover the SRA's 2021-22 Enhanced Programme of works. Further funds, also carried forward from the previous year, were allocated to four full-time staff, a new part-time Technical Adviser post, administration and overheads. The 2021-22 Enhanced Programme contained 21 schemes and activities, all designed to advance Somerset's 20 Year Flood Action Plan.

## Spending of Local Partner Funds in 2021-22

Many actions and initiatives are completed within one financial year. Some require longer-term research, design, planning and implementation. In 2021-22, coronavirus pandemic restrictions continued to affect delivery, so less was spent than originally expected. The table below shows all of the Local Partner Funds held by the SRA at the beginning of the 2021-22 financial year and the SRA's total spend during the year. Remaining funds are carried forward into future years. For more information, see the full-length Annual Report or visit the [SRA website](#).

### 2021-22 SPENDING BY WORKSTREAM

	TOTAL £	%
Dredging and River Management	1,377,000	48.6
Land Management	498,000	17.6
Urban Water Management	193,000	6.8
Resilient Infrastructure	408,000	14.4
Building Local Resilience	121,000	4.3
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>2,597,000</b>	
Staffing, administration, overheads	214,000	7.6
SRA Development Activities	20,000	0.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,831,000</b>	



LOCAL PARTNER FUNDING 2021-22 FINANCIAL SUMMARY	ALLOCATED FUNDS AT START OF 2021-22 FINANCIAL YEAR £	SPEND IN 2021-22 £	ALLOCATED FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD TO 2022-23 ONWARDS £
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,388,000</b>	<b>2,831,000</b>	<b>7,557,000</b>