A partnership approach to reducing flood risk

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Presentation content

- Origins & purpose of Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA)
- Partners, funding, structure
- What the SRA enables
- Benefits of the SRA model
- Not always plain sailing
- Why its worth the effort
- What does the future hold
The issues are different in different parts of the county. Large areas of catchments within the county boundary.
Summer 2012 - 8ft deep on farmland

Winter 2012 / 2013
2013-14 floods

- End of December 2013 until middle of March
- 14 storms
- Only 2 days without rainfall
- Wettest winter for 250 years
- Coastal surges

The effect

- 600 homes affected
- 17,000 acres flooded
- 81 road closures
- Major incident called
- Somerset ‘closed’
- Cost Somerset up to £148m
What’s the difference this time?

- ‘Major incident’ and sustained period – depth & duration
- Residents demanding more – no more clean up and go
- Senior national political buy in
- Central government challenge to Somerset – what do you propose?
- 20 Year Flood Action Plan – 5 workstreams dozens of actions
‘We cannot let this happen again.’
Prime Minister David Cameron, February 2014
Flood Action Plan – the proposal

• “A new management and funding approach to improve local control and accountability… including the development of a new funding mechanism”

• Somerset communities and businesses want a higher level of protection than is affordable from existing sources

• The Somerset Rivers Authority
Creation of Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA)

- Partnership MoU signed to set up SRA January 2015
- £2.7m Interim funding for 2015/16 - Defra £1.9m, local partners £800k

- Existing FRMA responsibilities and funding remain
- SRA oversees Flood Action Plan – **now Somerset wide**
SRA purpose – *extra*, not instead

- Deliver *extra* level of protection for the whole of Somerset
- Raise *extra* money
  - *Extra* work
  - *Extra* information
What guides SRA extra work?

Somerset Flood Action Plan objectives:

• Reduce frequency, depth and duration of flooding
• Maintain access to communities and business
• Increase resilience to flooding
• Protect the natural characteristics of Somerset
• Strategic transport connectivity
• Promote business confidence and growth
SRA partners and structure

Partners in the SRA:

• Somerset County Council
• Mendip District
• Sedgemoor District
• South Somerset District
• Taunton Deane Borough
• West Somerset
• Axe/Brue Drainage Board
• Parrett Drainage Board
• Environment Agency
• Natural England
• Wessex Regional Flood & Coastal Committee

SRA Board

Only SRA partners – (mostly) politicians

SRA Management Group

SRA partners – senior officers, plus Somerset Catchment Partnership chair

SRA Technical Group

SRA partners – technical officers, plus Wessex Water, ENPA, SCP, HE,
SRA governance

**SRA Board**
*Agrees the SRA Programme.*

**SRA Management Group**
*Briefs the Board, holds Technical Group to account for delivery. Policy development*

**SRA Technical Group**
*Delivers, prepares proposals, identifies and addresses flooding problems*

Meets Quarterly

Meets 6 weekly

Meets 6 weekly
The SRA Team

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<tr>
<th>SRA MANAGER</th>
<th>COMMS MANAGER</th>
<th>GOVERNANCE OFFICER</th>
<th>PROJECT OFFICER</th>
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- Support the Board & Mgt Group
- Promote the work of the SRA
- Coordinate technical group activities
- Ensure proper governance is observed
- Manage the development of the Enhanced Programme
- Maintain relationships
One important point to note…

• The SRA is not an currently an independent legal entity
• Part of Somerset County Council (SCC)
• Ultimately subject to SCC decision making governance and financial rules and standards
• Funded through ‘additional notional amount’ on council tax
• Requires SCC, District Councils and IDBs to approve funding each year
• SRA to become separate precepting authority… watch this space
How does it work?

SRA Board Meetings

• Senior representation on the Board – positive decision each year to support the SRA
• Meetings are public with strict governance
• Technical group develops a programme and the Board formally agree it – buy in
• The Board requires regular updates - challenge and support
• The Board represents Somerset’s interests – one voice

• **Benefit** – clear process and clear democratic accountability; senior representation ensures projects delivered; one voice to government
How does it work?

SRA Management Group

- Senior officers with direct influence on resource / delivery
- Bridge between the technical group and the Board
- Addresses issues which cannot be resolved by tech group
- Opportunity for frank discussion and finding solutions
- Ensures that the right questions go to Board - maximises the benefit of the Board

**Benefit** – senior ownership ensures projects delivered; ability to ‘unblock’ issues; ensures different organisational priorities are considered
How does it work?

SRA Technical Group

- Extensive technical knowledge from a broad range of organisations (LAs, IDBs, EA, NGOs, HE, Wessex Water)
- Regular meetings to report on progress and raise issues
- Opportunity to identify interlinked projects and seek support
- Ensures SRA work is ‘extra’ - no ‘cost shunting’
- Developed the enhanced programme scoring – ownership
- Puts forward proposals for enhanced programme
- Sub-groups delivering projects
How does it work?

SRA Technical Group – benefits

- EA, IDB, NE Sowy / Kings Sedgemoor Drain enhancements
- Highway referrals – natural flood management
- Natural England / IDB – strategic approach to mitigation
- Community resilience – building into schemes
- Riparian responsibilities officer actions
- IDB – developing new approaches to dredging
- IDB – Brue project / technical workshop – stakeholder approach
Not all plain sailing

- A broad range of partners with own pressures and priorities
- Political cost of raising additional notional amount
- ‘All about the Levels and all about dredging’
- Different organisational cultures
- Conflicting objectives – economy v’s environment
- Extra money also means extra work
- Extra may mean extra risk
- Effort v’s reward – is it proportionate
Why it’s worth the effort

SRA annual Enhanced Programmes

• *Funded by council tax – over £8m raised including 2018/19*
• 2015/16 -2018/19: 77 actions approved across Somerset (tens to hundreds of thousands of ££s)
• Checks ensure workstream balance, geographic spread

Heart of SW Local Enterprise Partnership Funding

• £13.1m allocated in 2014 (capital)
• Dredging, enhancements, land management, Parrett tidal barrier, Taunton strategic flood alleviation
Conclusions

• Shared vision required (FAP / FAP2)
• Senior political support is essential
• Recognise and understand different perspectives and motivations
• Ability to have frank discussion important
• Relationships have to be maintained
• It should be easy to stay engaged (work to be done here)
• Financial & risk implications clear from the outset
• Gaining security of on-going funding is very important
Thank You

www.somersetriversauthority.org.uk