



Somerset
Rivers Authority

Summary of
Annual Report
2018-19

At a glance

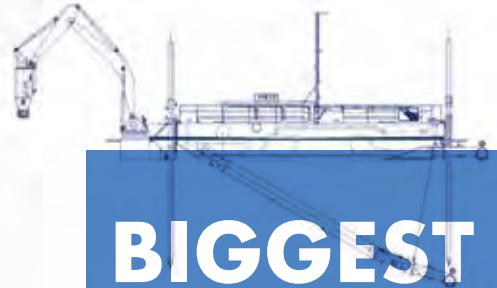
KEY POINTS FROM 2018-19

**£3.81m
EXTRA**

spent in Somerset on flood risk reduction and greater resilience



of places benefit across Somerset



**BIGGEST
EVER**

use of water injection dredging techniques to maintain the River Parrett



**AWARD
WINNING**

Hills to Levels wins UK River Prize for natural flood management

SuDS

Unique and massive review published of Somerset SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems)



Private Members' Bill to establish SRA as separate legal body passes Third Reading in House of Commons and begins progress through House of Lords

**around
15,207**

highways structures given extra cleaning to stop roads flooding



Major projects backed by SRA include further River Parrett dredging, River Sowey-King's Sedgemoor Drain enhancements, Bridgwater Tidal Barrier, Taunton improvements

Front cover image: an amphibious excavator and a hopper barge head up the River Frome on SRA works in Frome

About Somerset Rivers Authority

DURING the devastating floods of 2013-14, Somerset decided to try a new, local approach to tackling flooding. Various partners drew up a 20 Year Flood Action Plan. Somerset Rivers Authority was launched in January 2015 to oversee that Plan and do the extra work that long experience has shown Somerset needs.

There is no single answer to Somerset's many flooding problems, and different parts of the county have different needs. That is why the SRA was set up as a partnership. Different organisations are limited in what they can do individually, but as SRA partners they can get more done by acting collectively. They can take local, grassroots views about what is important for people in Somerset.

SOMERSET RIVERS AUTHORITY BOARD was made up of the following* during 2018-19:



each represented | by **one member**



Axe-Brue Internal Drainage Board and **Parrett IDB** each represented by **two members**

Board's main functions: set strategy and priorities, approve budgets and programmes of work, ensure progress and encourage partnership working, be publicly accountable.

SRA JOINT SCRUTINY PANEL

Panel's main function: scrutiny.

Each council has two representatives, the IDBs one each.

The SRA Board meets quarterly, Scrutiny Panel every six months.

Members of the public and press are welcome to attend.

* Note: on 1 April 2019 Taunton Deane and West Somerset councils ceased to exist, replaced by Somerset West and Taunton Council.

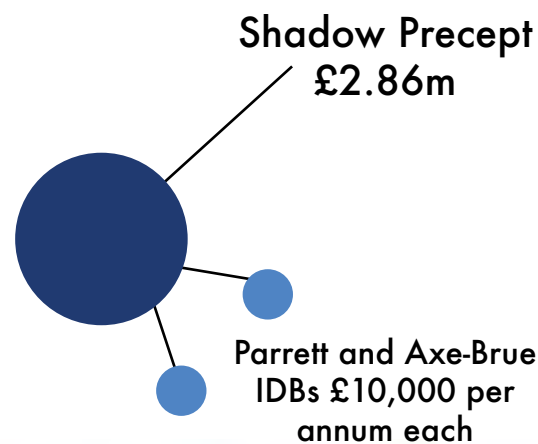
SRA Workstreams and Funding

Workstreams

Through local taxation, the SRA funds a unique depth and breadth of actions. These are grouped into five workstreams, that reflect the local priorities of Somerset's 20 Year Flood Action Plan, and the need to attack problems from different angles. The five workstreams featured in the following pages of this summary Annual Report are **Dredging & River Management (W1)**, **Land Management (W2)**, **Urban Water Management (W3)**, **Resilient Infrastructure (W4)** and **Building Community Resilience (W5)**.

Funding from local partners

In December 2015, the Government gave Somerset County Council and Somerset's district councils power to raise money for the work of the SRA. Every year – as things stand - councils can choose to raise what is called a 'shadow precept' of up to 1.25% of council tax. In 2018-19, the total raised through council tax was £2.86million. The level of the charge has been frozen since its inception, although every year it does increase by a small amount, because the number of people who live in Somerset and pay council tax keeps going up. The Parrett and Axe-Brue Internal Drainage Boards also choose to contribute £10,000 a year each.



Funding from Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (HotSWLEP)

The SRA gets no central government funding from year to year. However, in 2014 Government funding of £13.049m was awarded through the HotSWLEP Growth Deal Fund for the carrying out of Somerset's Flood Action Plan (FAP) – with £3.55m for flooding alleviation works in 2015-16, and £9.5m for future years. As the body that oversees the FAP, the SRA plans to spend its Growth Deal funding by 2021 on several major projects.



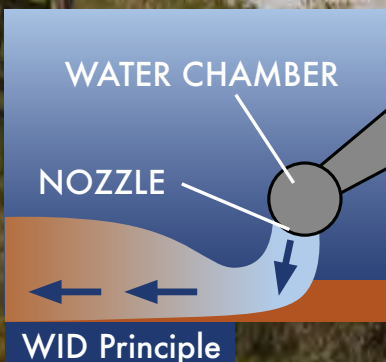
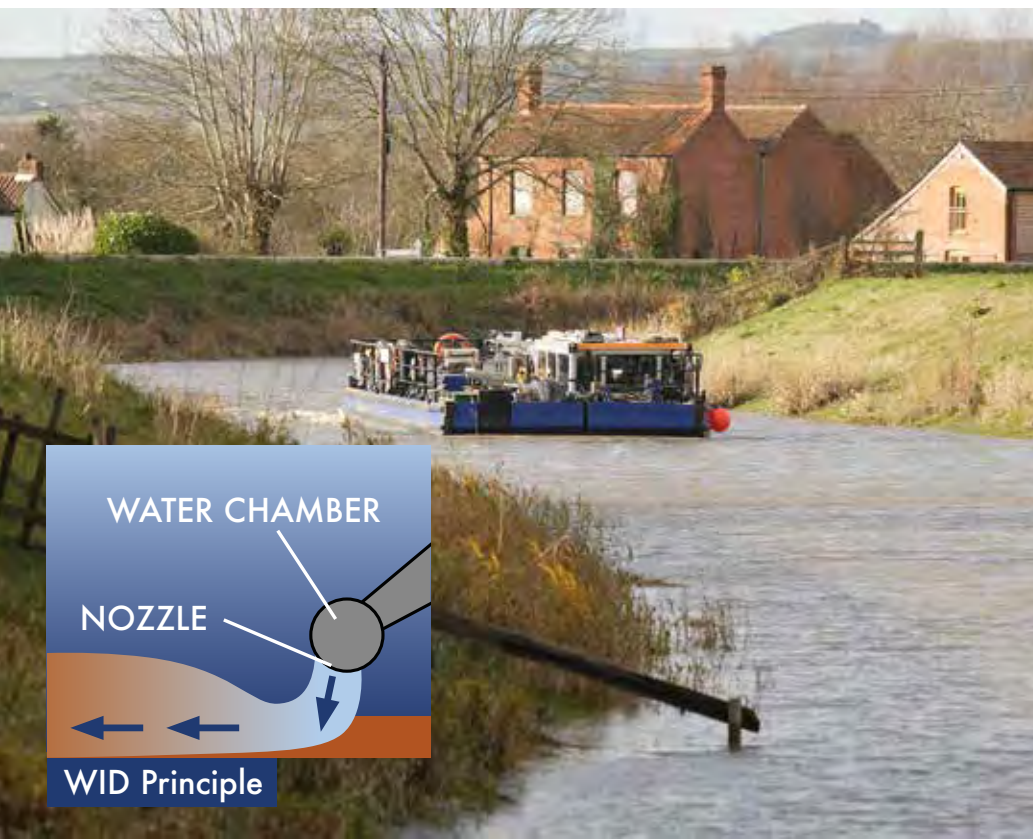
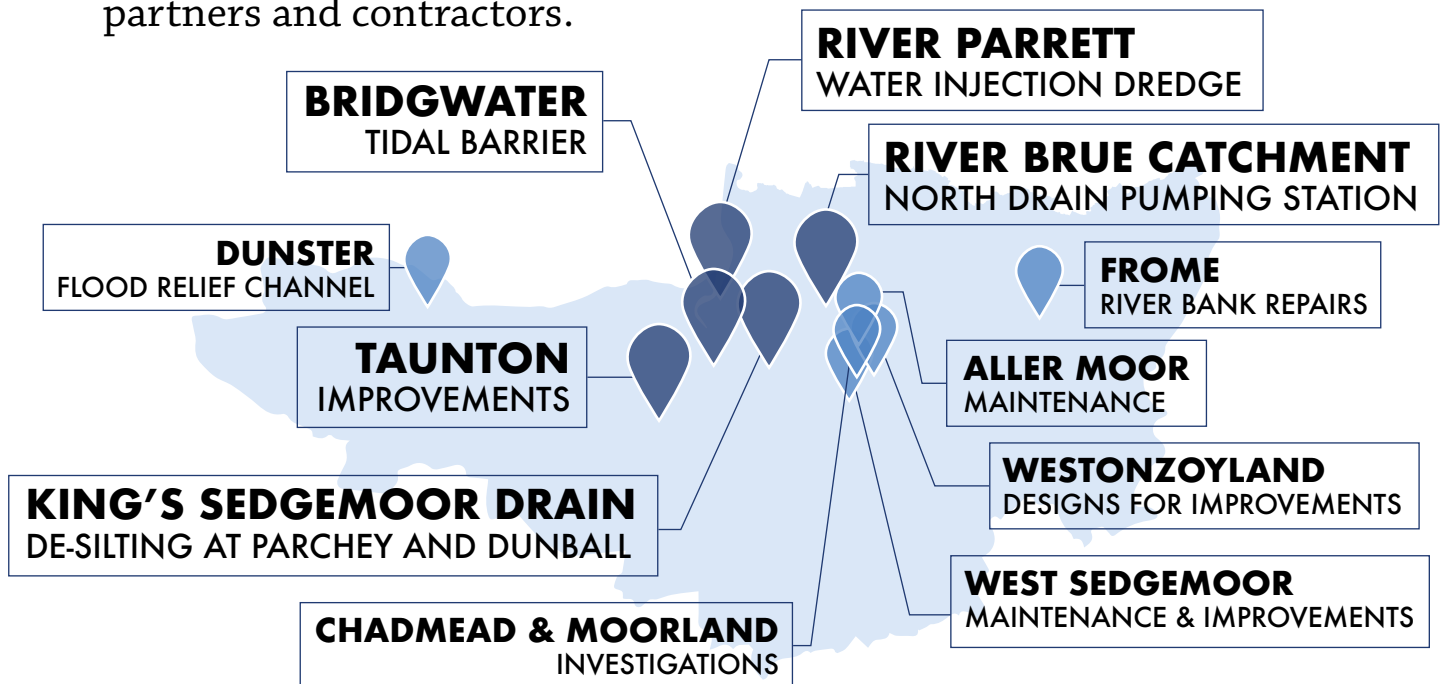
Legislation

The Government has pledged several times to put the SRA on a secure long-term footing, and give it the power to raise its own share of council tax. With Government support, Somerton and Frome MP David Warburton took up a Rivers Authorities and Land Drainage Bill drafted by Defra as a Private Members' Bill. He introduced this Bill to Parliament on 5 March 2018, then a burst of activity in February and March 2019 saw it pass through the House of Commons with cross-party support. It went up to the House of Lords and had its 2nd Reading on 16 May 2019.

Transcripts of all debates can be read on Hansard: <https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/riversauthoritiesandlanddrainage.html> Following a critical report by the Lords' Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee, whose arguments were backed by the Lords' Constitution Committee, the Bill was withdrawn by Mr Warburton in July 2019. New ways forward are now being discussed.



2018-19 SUMMARY: Somerset Rivers Authority spends more on dredging and river management than it does on any other workstream. Water injection dredging (WID) and silt monitoring on the River Parrett are outstanding examples of innovation in this workstream. 37,500m³ of silt was removed in just a few days, downstream of Burrowbridge. Extra maintenance, repairs, improvements and investigations have figured strongly across the county. Schemes are designed and delivered for the SRA by a range of partners and contractors.





River Sowy-King's Sedgemoor Drain Enhancements

Dredging of two sites along King's Sedgemoor Drain, back to their capacity 50 years ago.



West Sedgemoor / Aller Moor

18.5 miles of extra maintenance of Internal Drainage Board 'viewed rhynes' (drainage ditches) to carry water away more effectively.



North Drain Pumping Station

Replaced 50-year-old leaking concrete roof with lightweight new roof, along with other improvements.



Frome

Repair of the river banks in Frome town centre, reducing flood risks to about 300 properties.



Dunster

Repairs to the River Avill Flood Relief Channel and erosion protection at Gallox Bridge.



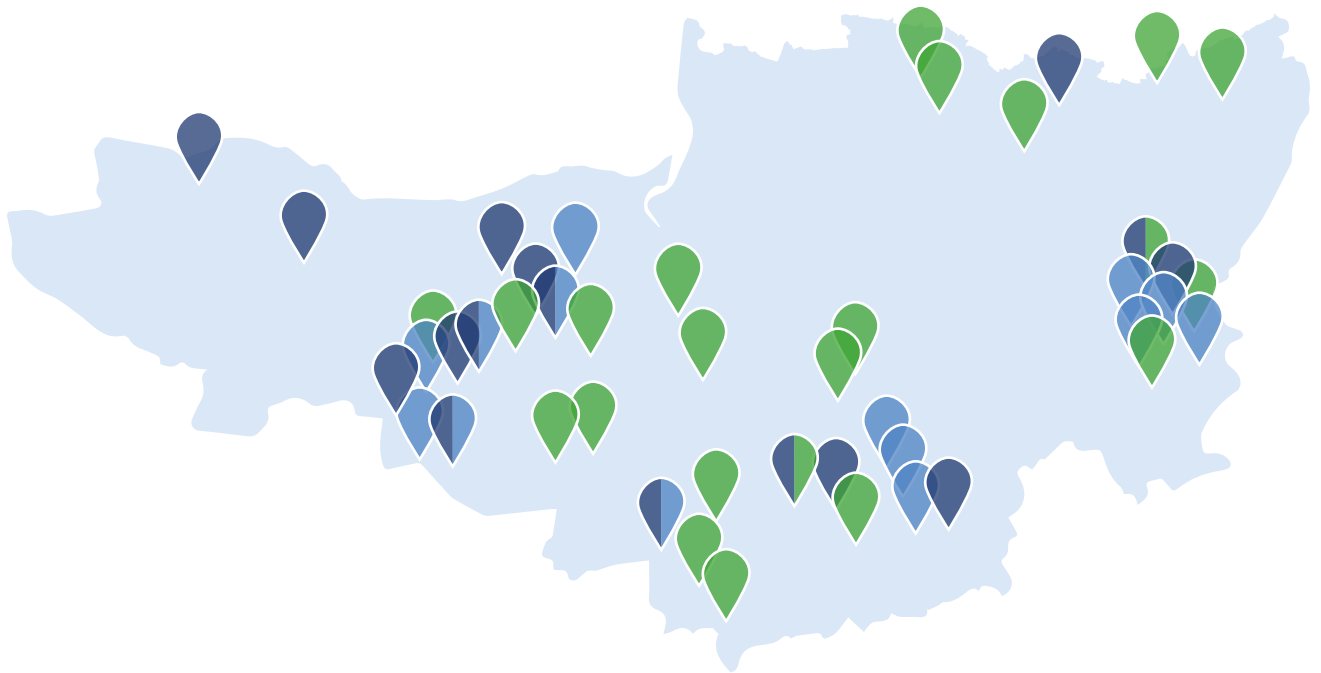
Moorland

'Lost watercourses' investigation highlights overgrown and blocked ditches.

Bridgwater
SRA funding supports development of Bridgwater Tidal Barrier, which will protect nearly 13,000 properties.



2018-19 SUMMARY: 39 grants awarded to farmers and landowners for NFM schemes to slow of the flow of water, including 15 given as Triple C match-funding, 23 highways investigations ('referrals'), 17 soil advisory visits, the UK's first online auctions for NFM works and 14 activities; Hills to Levels won the UK River Prize.



KEY:



CAPITAL GRANT
SCHEMES



TRIPLE C MATCH-
FUNDED SCHEMES



HIGHWAYS
REFERRALS

Somerset Rivers Authority funds the biggest range of natural flood management activities in the UK as part of its Land Management workstream. This award-winning workstream is admired nationally for its innovation, strong partnership working and increasing sophistication. It is led for the SRA by the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SW (FWAG SW). Activities generally go under the popular local branding of Hills to Levels. This makes it easier for partners to get involved and to contribute match-funding so that more can be achieved. It also helps that as Somerset has some famous hills and valleys and floodplains, the idea of trying to slow the flow of water from Hills to Levels can be simply understood.

There are three main strands to this SRA workstream. They are:

1. Capital grants offered to farmers and landowners for Natural Flood Management projects that slow the flow of water and reduce flooding risks across the county.
2. 'Highways referrals' – that is, looking for answers to highway flooding problems in better management of land nearby.
3. Soil husbandry to reduce surface run-off.

The EU's Interreg 2 Seas part-funds Hills to Levels through the Triple C initiative. The three Cs stand for: Climate resilient; Community-based; Catchment planning and management.



UK River Prize

Hills to Levels won the UK River Prize 2018 for catchment improvements. The SRA is a major Hills to Levels funder.



Online Auctions

The UK's first online auctions for NFM works gave farmers a choice of measures to bid for, including planting winter crops to stop soil being washed off fields, planting hedges to slow the flow of water and aerating soil to increase the amount of rain that can be absorbed.



Highways Referrals

The SRA funded 23 investigations into how land management changes could reduce road flooding, with solutions such as this hedge at Barrington.



Soil Visits

The SRA's aims are improved soil and hence reduced run-off, as here at Nunney near Frome.



< Wood Hingeing

A new technique of hingeing living trees into a watercourse is being trialled at Folly Farmyard in Dommett, Buckland St Mary.

Leaky Woody Dams >

Eight of these dams have been created near Lufton College near Yeovil, along with major pond improvement works at Manor Farm, Lufton.



< Brash Woody Dams

Aisholt Common on the Quantocks, match-funding Triple C. The three Cs stand for Climate resilient, Community-based, and Catchment planning and management.



Pond De-silting >

Around 4,950m² of a large pond upstream of Bishop's Lydeard de-silted to allow storage of an extra 3700m³ of water at Cothelstone.



2018-19 SUMMARY of Workstream 3: A unique 747-page review of **Somerset’s Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)** has been published, and a contract let for the production of **Somerset-specific guidance for property developers** to help them create high quality SuDS at new sites across the county. A **SuDS inspections service** has been funded; responsibility for rain garden facilities in **Taunton** handed over; progress made on plans for a storage pond in **Yeovil**; and a second phase of works completed at Wirral Park balance pond and pumping station in **Glastonbury**.



SuDS Review

In 2018-19, this workstream’s outstanding achievement was the publication of this massive review of sustainable drainage schemes across Somerset. 20 major new development sites were assessed to ascertain whether they were adequately designed, constructed as designed, had any deficiencies, and were being adequately maintained. The SRA and its partners want to encourage more high-quality design and better place-making. Generally, in terms of being able to cope with basic flows of water, and allowing for climate change, over three-quarters of the sites surveyed were satisfactory or better, but 6% were rated poor or very poor.



Rain Gardens and Sponge 2020

Responsibility for maintenance of new rain garden facilities at Middleway and Kilkenny Court, Taunton, formally handed over to Taunton Deane Borough Council (as was; now Somerset West and Taunton Council). Somerset County Council worked with Westcountry Rivers Trust on the planters, as part of the EU-backed Somerset Sponge 2020 project. The aim of Sponge 2020 is to encourage ‘innovative participatory adaptation solutions to reduce the risks of and damage from urban flooding... at considerably lower costs’. The SRA has been part-funding the development of Somerset County Council’s Sponge 2020 plans for car park retrofits in Taunton.



2018-19 SUMMARY of Workstream 4: Somerset Rivers Authority carried out an extensive programme of extra maintenance works to reduce flood risks to roads and nearby properties, including gully-emptying, drain jetting, edge of road clearing, de-silting of structures and culvert improvements. Drainage works have been carried out near **Chelston** and **Stoke sub Hamdon**; schemes designed for **Monksilver**, and **Stogursey** and **Shurton**; studies advanced at **Beckington** and **Bradford on Tone**.

Although its name emphasises rivers, Somerset Rivers Authority deals with highways as well as waterways. This is because the SRA oversees Somerset's 20 Year Flood Action Plan, which was drawn up during the floods of 2013-14. Those floods closed 81 roads, often for long periods. Countless people suffered difficulties. Businesses lost time and money: 86% of Somerset businesses were badly hit – the estimated cost to the local economy was up to £15 million.

So two of the Flood Action Plan's six main objectives relate directly to making Somerset's infrastructure more resilient: they are to 'Maintain access for communities and business' and to 'Ensure strategic road and rail connectivity, both within Somerset and through the county to the South West peninsula'.



7 structures de-silted

Case study: Blake Bridge, Bridgwater.

The main aims were to increase the River Parrett's ability to flow under the bridge, and to safeguard the bridge itself, as serious pressures were being exerted on its arches by very large build-ups of thick, heavy silt. Methods used included high-pressure jetting of silt on the banks and some water injection dredging from a vessel on the river. This job was delivered for the SRA by Somerset County Council's Highways Department using contractors Crestmoor Construction and several sub-contractors.



Action to reduce road flooding, making people's lives easier and safer

134 drains JETTED

15,043 gullies emptied

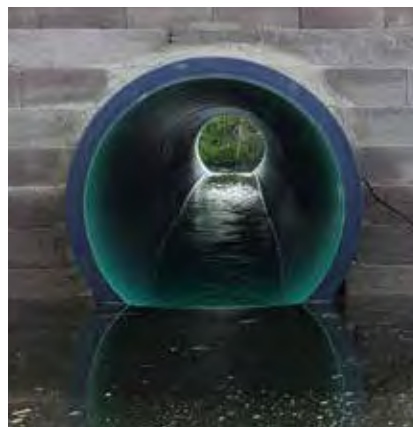
906 tonnes of debris cleared from

32.44 miles of road edgeways

Carried out for Somerset Rivers Authority for Somerset County Council's Highways Department.



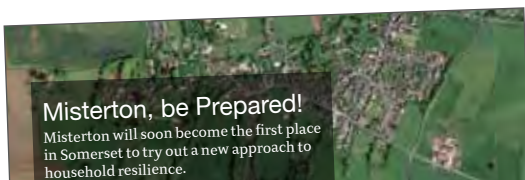
Culvert inspections and remedial works in Internal Drainage Board areas: An ongoing programme of de-silting, vegetation clearance, high-pressure water jetting and structural repairs. The main aims are to improve the conveyance of water and to help prevent disruption to residents and road users.



Case study: One high-priority site was at Nythe, where a culvert was in a very bad state, with short sections of pipe disconnected and wonky. This increased the danger of water backing up and flooding the road. Also, a hole had appeared in the edge of the road and the ground was collapsing. This dangerously crumbling culvert was repaired at the end of March 2019, so that water could drain through under Nythe Road and traffic could keep flowing north of Langport between High Ham and Pedwell. Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium delivered the scheme for the SRA, using local contractors Bernard Perry. The job was completed ahead of schedule.

2018-19 SUMMARY: The SRA part-funded Somerset’s first Resilience Day, an affordable flood insurance survey on the Somerset Levels & Moors and a pilot household resilience survey in **Misterton** near Crewkerne. It helped to set up the **West Moor** Futures Group and began work on **Wet Moor, Tealham** and **Tadham Moor**, gave communities in **Curry Mallet, High Ham, Hatch Beauchamp, Milverton** and **Sampford Brett** grants for equipment and backed Somerset’s new Co-Adapt project designed to tackle the water-related effects of climate change (flooding and drought).

One of the six main objectives of Somerset’s 20 Year Flood Action Plan is to “Increase resilience to flooding for families, agriculture, business, communities and wildlife”. Hence this workstream. It aims to make people better informed and equipped, so they can better protect themselves against flooding and recover more quickly afterwards. It also aims to encourage discussions about flooding and water management issues across Somerset, especially adaptation and sustainability.



Would you know how to protect your family and home in an emergency?

Household resilience planning: what is it? Basically, it’s about common sense and thinking ahead. It’s about making a few simple, practical arrangements to keep your family and your home safe in the event of possible emergencies.

What sort of emergencies? The events most likely to cause disruption in Somerset are severe weather and flooding, but even a simple fire can cause disruption. Take time to consider the risks in your area - what would cause disruption to your daily routine? If one of the emergency services advised you to leave your property or stay safe indoors, would you have all you need to look after yourself and your family?

What is going to happen in Misterton?

Misterton Resilience Team are hoping to gather information from Misterton villagers to assess local knowledge and interest in resilience, if an incident were to occur. Local Rotary group members are helping by calling on all households to offer advice and get people’s views, which will then be analysed by local authorities.



What will Rotary members be doing?

Rotary members will be out and about in Misterton, talking to residents and sharing ideas and information and top tips to help local people be prepared.

When will this take place?

During the two weeks starting Monday 19 November.

CASE STUDY: For the first **Somerset Resilience Day** in October, more than 80 volunteers, wardens, councillors and community leaders travelled to North Petherton for talks, workshops and displays. Subjects included riparian responsibilities (what people who own watercourses are supposed to do) and the art of setting up a flood group – and keeping it going. A key feature was giving people chance to learn from each other’s experiences.

CASE STUDY: In November, villagers in **Misterton** took part in a **household resilience survey**. This was organised and funded by the SRA in partnership with Somerset Prepared, Misterton’s lively parish resilience team, and a willing bunch of local Rotary volunteers. After a four-page leaflet went to all households in the village in early November, Rotary members called at every property to offer further advice and gather information. Following on from this pilot project, other communities across Somerset are to be visited.

LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

Somerset Rivers Authority has been encouraging local people and organisations to co-operate and adapt to the water-related effects of climate change – flooding and drought. The Somerset Levels, particularly, are at the forefront of concerns about the effects of climate change and sea level rises. Several partners in the SRA – Somerset County Council, Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, South Somerset District Council, and the new Somerset West and Taunton Council – have all declared climate emergencies and pledged to take action. Members of the SRA Joint Scrutiny Panel, largely drawn from local councils, have raised climate change issues and the subject has regularly featured in debates in Parliament about the Rivers Authorities and Land Drainage Bill. The Environment Agency’s new Draft National Flood and Coastal Risk Management Strategy also stresses that “climate change is the biggest challenge we face. It poses the greatest threat to our economy, environment, health, and way of life. The increased risk of flooding and coastal change that it brings is significant.”

Notable SRA moves in 2018-19 have included funding for a new project called Co-Adapt and support for a new Environmental Land Management scheme on the Somerset Levels.

Co-Adapt: The aim of Co-Adapt is to get local people and organisations co-operating and adapting to the water-related effects of climate change. Work began early in 2019. The SRA’s main interest is in flood protection and alleviation, but Co-Adapt will also help to encourage greater resilience to drought on nearly 10 square miles of the Somerset Levels. Recent Environment Agency predictions suggest that England could run short of water within 25 years. One of the aims of the Environment Agency’s new draft national Flood and Coastal Risk Management Strategy is to “help communities better understand their risk and give them more control about how to adapt and respond”.

Environmental Land Management: In June 2018 the SRA Board agreed to be part of developing a new Environmental Land Management scheme in the Somerset Levels. The Board also agreed to be involved in trialling how payments for land management on the Levels could be combined with flood risk management, agricultural production and the delivery of improvements for nature.

The SRA Board agreed it made sense for the Somerset Levels to seek to become a pilot area, so it could try to shape its own distinctive future, in much the same way as Somerset Rivers Authority has allowed the whole of Somerset to create its own unique and local ways of tackling flooding.

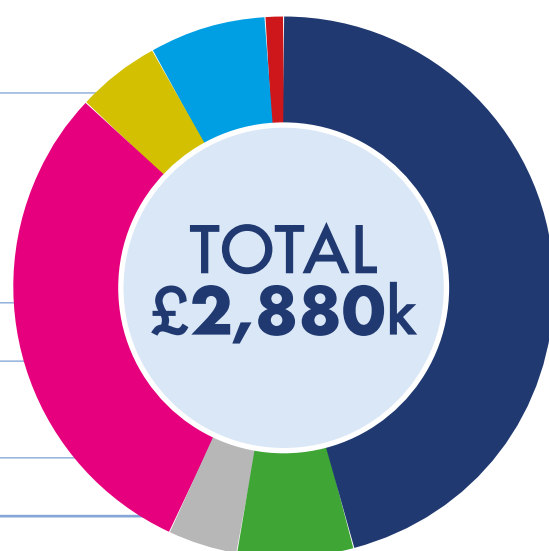


Financial Summary

2018-19 LOCAL PARTNER FUNDING

The SRA currently receives annual funding raised by Somerset's local authorities through a shadow precept* and the Parrett Internal and Axe-Brue Drainage Boards. We call these funds Local Partner Funds. In 2018-19 the SRA received funds totalling £2.88m. The SRA launched its fourth year with allocating 92% of this funding to a further 22 schemes continuing its Enhanced Programme of Works that delivers the 20 Year Flood Action Plan. The remaining 8% went towards staffing and administration and to boost a small contingency budget. The 20 Year Flood Action Plan is separated into five workstreams and the table below shows a summary of how the 2018-19 Local Partner Funds were allocated:

BY WORKSTREAM	TOTAL £k	%
Dredging and River Management	1,326	46
Land Management	202	7
Urban Water Management	107	4
Resilient Infrastructure	866	30
Building Local Resilience	133	5
SUB TOTAL	2,634	
Staff costs & Administration overheads	200	7
Contingency	46	1
TOTAL	2,880	



FINANCIAL STATEMENT

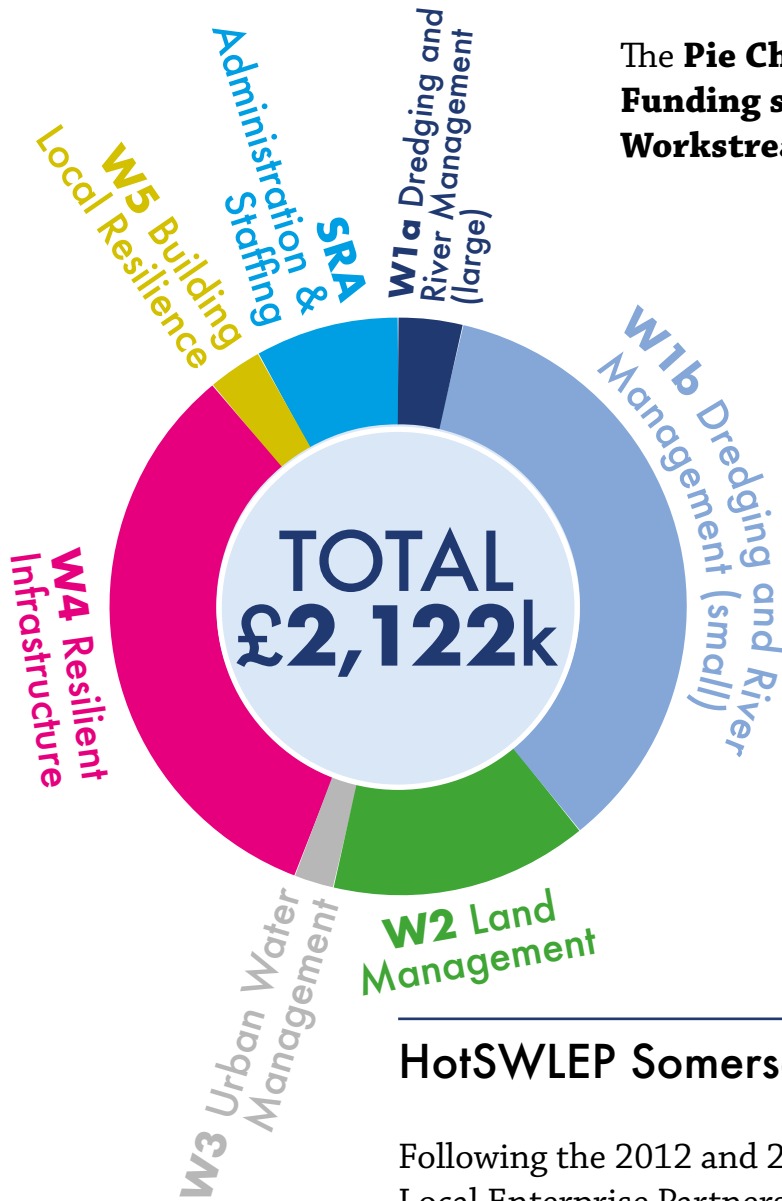
The SRA has funded over 130 schemes, actions and initiatives having raised over £11.5m since its inception in January 2015. A large proportion of these schemes can be delivered within the same financial year however some schemes and initiatives, whether they be small, large or complex by design require more long-term planning and take longer to complete.

LOCAL PARTNER FUNDING 2018-19 FINANCIAL SUMMARY	LOCAL PARTNER FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD FROM PREVIOUS YEARS £k	SPEND IN 2018-19 £k	FORECAST SPEND IN 2019-20 ONWARDS £k
Enhanced Programme of Works allocation	5,865	1,951	3,914
Contingency	220	0	220
Staffing & Administration overheads	203	171	32
TOTAL	6,288	2,122	4,166

*A 1.25% 'alternative notional amount' (ANA) added to individual council tax bills; permission to raise this ANA is given by central government and can be used only to fund the Somerset Rivers Authority.

Financial Summary

The **Pie Chart** to the left shows **SRA Local Partner Funding spend during 18-19 financial year by Workstream (£k)**.



The SRA does not commission works directly, instead SRA partners deliver works on behalf of the SRA. Once works are complete, funds are claimed back from the SRA. Funds claimed back equate to the actual spend by the SRA. During 2018-19 the SRA processed delivery partner claims for Local Partner Funds totalling £2,122k:

92% (£1,952k) delivering the Enhanced Programme of works

8% (£170k) relates to staff costs and administration overheads

HotSWLEP Somerset Flooding

Following the 2012 and 2013-14 floods, the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (HotSWLEP) awarded £13.049m of Growth Deal funding up to March 2021 to enable key capital schemes delivered. The table below provides the current balance of Growth Deal funding including what was spent during 2018-19.

HotSWLEP FUNDING 2018-19 SUMMARY	FUNDING ALLOCATION £k	FUNDING SPENT TO 31 MARCH 2019 £k	FUNDING SPENT DURING 2018-19 £k	FUNDING BALANCE £k
Pioneer Dredging River Parrett	2,438	858	165	1,415
River Sowy/KSD Enhancement Scheme	7,996	4,346	192	3,458
Bridgwater Tidal Barrier (contribution)	2,000	751	1,249	0
Land Management Capital Grants	550	459	82	9
Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation Improvements Scheme (contribution)	65	65	0	0
TOTAL	13,049	6,479	1,688	4,882



Somerset
Rivers Authority

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