

Rivers Sowy and King's Sedgemoor Drain improvements

Part of the Somerset Levels and Moors Flood Action Plan – 10 December 2014

Background

A priority action in the 20 Year Action Plan is to enhance the ability of the River Sowy relief channel and King's Sedgemoor Drain (KSD) to take flood waters. The Environment Agency (EA) is working closely with Somerset County Council (SCC) to jointly deliver the improvements on behalf of the Somerset Levels and Moors 20 Year Flood Action Plan Partners.

We have prepared for winter 2014

We will be able to pass winter 2013-14 flood flows along the Sowy and KSD to Dunball without increasing the risk to houses or main roads in the Sowy-KSD floodplain this winter. The EA and SCC have carried out numerous flood mitigation and resilience works which complement the Sowy-KSD enhancement project:

- The EA has built new local flood defences at Aller Drive and Westonzoyland to reduce risk to property;
- The EA has constructed a platform for placing temporary pumps at Dunball if the need arises during a significant flood;
- The EA has improved the Allermoor Spillway from the River Parrett to the River Sowy;
- SCC has constructed a new channel which has been cut through the A372 Road at Beer Wall with a temporary bridge spanning the gap (formal culverts will be constructed in 2015); The A372 road has been raised by a small amount in places. More information is given below.

The EA is also investigating options to reduce the risk of flooding in the Chedzoy and Andersea area, by improving the Chedzoy Cut outfall flap and Lake Wall flap.

The EA's 'trigger joints' work highlights the operational steps we will take in the future to manage floods. For example it states that we will install temporary pumps at Dunball before operating Monk's Leaze Clyce beyond its normal criteria.

A372 Beer Wall Improvements – 2014 and 2015

In the winter floods of 2013/14, large temporary pumps were placed at Beer Wall to enable water to flow more easily from Aller Moor to the KSD via the River Sowy. The enhanced pumping strategy allowed the Environment Agency to successfully divert extra water from the River Parrett at Monks Leaze Clyce, through the Sowy and KSD to the Parrett Estuary. This resulted in water levels in the River Parrett dropping so that more pumping stations could be switched on and water could be pumped from the moors around Langport and downstream.

Somerset County Council has started improvements of the road at Beer Wall on the A372 between Othery and Aller, using funding from the Department of Transport. Using hydraulic modelling provided by the EA, SCC will add two sets of two culverts east of the Langacre Rhyne, it will also raise and/or resurface some low sections of carriageway keeping the road open during floods of the size we experienced last winter. This work should remove the need for temporary pumps at this location in similar future floods. Somerset County Council has let the contract to Skanska for this work.



The County Council scheme is being carried out in two phases: This autumn a breach approximately 12m wide has been cut through the road to allow flood water to pass under it. A temporary bridge has been installed to allow traffic to use the road which has been resurfaced and raised as appropriate. In spring 2015 the breach will be replaced with a set of two culverts. Two more culverts will then be placed further along, and the road reinstated.

Following this, a third phase of works will be carried out by the Environment Agency in summer and autumn 2015 to use the new culverts at Beer Wall for extra flood capacity for the River Sowy and Langacre Rhine. This will be done by connecting those rivers to the culverts through new channels with control structures.

Sowy and KSD improvements - 2016

On behalf of the Somerset Flood Action Plan Partners, the Environment Agency has done an initial investigation of options to improve the Sowy and KSD river system to carry more Parrett flood water without increasing the risk to property and infrastructure. By making improvements we should in future be able to operate this system much more flexibly. This in turn will help relieve flood flows on the River Parrett in the future, allow us to operate the pumping stations earlier and benefit communities such as Langport, Muchelney, Thorney, Moorland and Fordgate.

We have considered options such as diverting more water through Monk's Leaze Clyce (the input sluice to the Sowy), enlarging the Sowy and KSD channels, increasing the use of flood plain storage, reducing flow constrictions at bridges and the use of pumps at Dunball.

We are holding a public consultation event at Othery village hall on 10 December 2014. We would like to hear your views on improvement options, with view to starting work in 2016. We will use your feedback to help prioritise the options. An online survey will be available on our website from 10 December 2014 until 09 January 2015. A short report will also be available on our website, and at the consultation event, to give you information about the options and the river system.

Funding for the 2015 and 2016 Sowy and KSD improvements

As with many actions in the 20 Year Plan, the implementation of the Sowy and KSD options is subject to funding availability. The Somerset Flood Action Plan Partners are pleased to have been given an £8M contribution through the Local Enterprise Partnership to help deliver the improvements in 2015/16 and 2016/17. The improvements being done to the A472 at Beer Wall by SCC are funded by the Department for Transport.

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