



ENVIRONMENT AGENCY CHOOSES FAIRFORD SOFT STARTERS FOR FLOOD PREVENTION PROJECT ON RIVER POLMORLA IN CORNWALL.



Fairford's QFE soft starters have been chosen by the Environment Agency for a flood prevention scheme on the Polmorla River in Wadebridge,

Cornwall. The three QFE units have been retrofitted to three 90kW pumps in a pumping station at Wadebridge, replacing auto-transformer and contactors sets that were proving unreliable.

The Polmorla River is affected by a tidal flow, which at its peak could cause flooding, if it were not addressed. A tributary of the river joins the river Camel at Wadebridge, and it is here that a pumping station was built 10 years ago, with the objective of preventing flooding upstream.

The pumping station houses three 90kW submersible pumps; the first of which is called into service when the pressure builds-up behind the tidal flap or gate on the river Polmorla, and upstream level reaches 2.85 metres. This pump transfers excess water in the main river Camel. The second and third pumps are called into service when the water level rises above 3 metres; these also alleviate the build-up by pumping water into the river Camel.

The 90kW motors driving the submersible pumps were originally started using a combination of auto-transformers and contactors. However, reliability is a key factor at the pumping station and these units were not meeting requirements, due to continuing incidences of contactors failing. In order to overcome this problem, David Turner, the engineer responsible for the station, decided to replace the original starting system with soft starters. He spoke to colleagues at the Environment Agency's Bridgewater facility, seeking advice on a suitable soft start manufacturer: they recommended Fairford.

The Environment Agency has used Fairford soft starters on a number of projects; the latest being retrofits at the Huish Episcopi, Middledney and Westover pumping stations in Somerset. In all of these projects the Fairford QFE soft starters have proven to be totally reliable and efficient in operation. As a result of this, the Environment Agency in the South West, is currently recommending Fairford for future projects in the region.

"We like to establish standards for equipment because this ensures familiarity with our engineers, and we generally have a single source to refer to in the instances when we run into problems," commented David Turner. "Fairford is local company in the South West, which is ideal for us; and the reliability of the product and standard of service provided are both well-proven."

In order to gauge the effectiveness of the QFE soft starters on the river Polmorla project, a brief but highly successful trial was undertaken on Pump 1. This was followed quickly by the fitment of Fairford QFE units to Pumps 2 and 3: the complete retrofit installation being undertaken by A & T Services, the Environment Agency's term contractor for flood defence.