

### **MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMEN**

We are pleased to have had another successful year delivering flood risk, water level management, drainage, and environmental services to communities within the Drainage Area. We have completed our annual maintenance programmes on the viewed rhyme networks and are progressing substantial programmes of repairs and improvements on our assets. We also continue to scrutinise and regulate development proposals both large and small. Hinkley Point C, The Gravity Site at Woolavington, and Banwell Bypass to mention just a few.

The weather patterns have been challenging for us all, with some of the wettest and driest periods on record, and by all accounts this trend is set to continue. That is why we are pleased that our voices have been heard by leaders and decision makers, both locally and in Central Government.

Through our work with the Association of Drainage Authorities, the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee the Environment Agency and our local Members of Parliament there is a growing acceptance in DEFRA that failure to provide adequate funding for main river maintenance is leading to unacceptable flooding and environmental consequences. This realisation has already led to some limited extra funding for Main River maintenance, and we will continue to press for greater acceptance of the need for ongoing maintenance of Main Rivers and watercourse networks.

Across the Consortium we have been successful in bringing in additional funds from DEFRA that have allowed the Boards through agreement with the EA to undertake Main River maintenance that would otherwise not have been carried out, and funding of some of our own larger projects such as Crossman's Hatch in North Somerset, further reducing flood risk for our rate payers and communities, protecting the environment and reducing Carbon emissions from Peat Moors.

We also continue as governance and delivery partners in the Somerset Rivers Authority who raise additional funding for flood related work in Somerset, and we have once again completed the River Parrett Annual Maintenance Operations downstream of Burrowbridge.

Our capability to make a real difference to the people we serve continues to grow and we encourage your ongoing support to the IDBs as our influence and capacity to deliver flood risk, water level management and environmental outcomes develops further in this time of increasing need.

**Tony Bradford** - Chairman of the Parrett IDB and Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium

**Tim Bush** – Chairman of the North Somerset Levels IDB

**Andrew Gilling** – Acting Chairman of the Axe Brue IDB

### **LAND DRAINAGE CONSENTS - Building in or adjacent to a watercourse**

Please be aware that it is an offence under the Land Drainage Act to build anything in or close to a watercourse without consent from the Board. The Board can prosecute, and has done so in the past where this has happened. However, we want to be helpful and ensure that if you plan to build anything close to a watercourse, it is acceptable to the Boards, and is consented. If you are considering building/planting in or within 9m of any watercourse please speak to the Board's Development Control Team who will be able to advise you what will and will not be acceptable.

### **ANNUAL MAINTENANCE**

The annual routine maintenance of 1492km of Viewed Rhynes runs from May to February each year across the Boards' areas and unimpeded machine access is required to enable our contractors to undertake this important maintenance work efficiently and safely. Please ensure the machine access strips are kept clear of crops/obstructions and inform us of locked gates, that might hinder or prevent the maintenance from being completed

**MAIZE:** Growing of Maize is on the increase and where crops are planted up to the edge of the watercourse machine access becomes difficult and unsafe, at these locations it may not be possible to undertake the routine maintenance at the scheduled time.

Where suitable access has **NOT** been provided the following options may be implemented:

- Track through/flailing of crops to gain access to the viewed rhyme and undertake the maintenance as programmed.
- Not undertake the maintenance and return at a later date to complete works: additional costs incurred and return trips may not always be possible due to contractor availability and/or budget constraints
- Where sections of viewed rhynes are left unmaintained this may reduce conveyance and increase flood risk to properties and business within an area.
- Where maintenance is obstructed, we may require the landowner(s) to undertake the maintenance work themselves.

Please be considerate and provide tracking routes to and from the viewed rhynes and leave a minimum 4m maintenance strip (crops only) that enables our contractors to undertake maintenance safely and efficiently on all viewed rhynes. If you are planning on planting crops adjacent to viewed rhynes but are uncertain of our access requirements, please contact the Board's Office on the number provided to arrange for your local Area Supervisor to contact you to discuss access requirements within your area.

**RIPARIAN WATERCOURSES/CULVERTED WATERCOURSES:** The IDBs have jurisdiction over all watercourses within each Board's area, the annual maintenance of the viewed rhyme system is undertaken using permissive powers within the Land Drainage Act 1991. As a riparian owner you have a legal obligation to ensure your watercourse(s) are maintained to a sufficient standard so that the free flow of water is not impeded. The Board(s) may, when required, instruct riparian owners to undertake works where necessary, this is normally done by agreement but may result in a formal notice being served if riparian owner(s) are unwilling to comply with requested works.



## ENGINEERING

### Board Schemes proposed for 2025/26

#### Axe Brue

Up to 20 projects are proposed as part of this year's programme including repairs to banks and structures, Eel Passes and Operational Safety Improvements. These projects are designed to improve connectivity, water level management and access for maintenance and safe operation by the board. Some areas will include some investigative works (surveys and inspections) and consultation with landowners to understand the key issues and determine the best solutions. The board has secured Somerset Rivers Authority funding to support on 5 of these schemes.

#### Parrett

2 to 3 new culverts are proposed as part of this year's programme with the remaining engineering input focused on upgrading and replacing water level control structures within the board area. The engineering team will also be supporting in the delivery of the remaining 2 outfalls on the Sowy/KSD scheme and delivery of the KSD Bank Raising Works funded through the SRA. We will then be working towards our annual water injection dredging programme into the winter months.

#### North Somerset Levels

A Board funded telemetry system has been installed on the Oldbridge River providing real time information on the river catchment and the major tidal penning structure Sampsons Sluice. This year's programme of work includes the replacement of Crossman's Hatch on Yatton Little River with the construction of a new large tilting weir structure. The scheme has recently been awarded external funding from the National IDB Asset Improvement Fund. Other works are to improve a number of structures culverts and de-silting.

#### Contact Information

Office opening hours & Enquiries  
9am to 5pm Mon-Fri  
01278 789906

Email: [admin@somersetdbs.co.uk](mailto:admin@somersetdbs.co.uk)

[www.somersetdrainageboards.gov.uk](http://www.somersetdrainageboards.gov.uk)

**Clerk/CEO:** Iain Sturdy  
**Operations Manager:** Rob King  
**Maintenance/Contract Manager:** Matthew Wall  
**Finance:** Margaret Hammond  
**Rate Collection:** Nicky Cornish  
**Environment:** Philip Brewin  
**Consents/Planning:** Virginie Martin

**Emergency out of hours: 01278 789906**  
**(You will be directed to the duty officer)**

**Flooding and pollution: report to the Environment Agency: 0800 80 70 60**

## OPERATIONS

All IDB structures are operated by our in-house team; if you think a structure may need adjusting, please contact the office staff who will be able to put you in contact with the local operators.

Landowners, please ensure that your own ditches are clear of debris and weed etc in order to promote the conveyance of water into our viewed rhyme systems, this will help reduce future flood water and allow better water level management when needed.

If you are not sure the watercourse is maintained by the Drainage Board please refer to the map link below which shows viewed rhynes (maintained by the IDB) as dark blue lines. <https://somersetdrainageboards.gov.uk/boards-membership/maps-2/>

## IDB ENVIRONMENT PROJECTS



**Water level monitoring sensor**

**Water level monitoring in peatland areas:** Defra has provided the North Somerset and Parrett IDBs with funding to improve water level monitoring in peatland areas, which will help inform plans to better conserve and restore peat and potentially reduce carbon emissions that can occur when peat is too dry. 25 new telemetry sites have been installed in North Somerset using the latest radar sensor technology. Work will continue over the next year to improve the gauge board network in North Somerset and to extend the existing water level telemetry network in the Parrett. The Parrett IDB has also been undertaking work to improve water control structures in Kings Sedgemoor, which will help enhance the summer water supply to the area.

**Parrett IDB Eel passage improvement project:** Natural England has provided the Parrett IDB with funding to install 12 eel passes on tilting weirs in Northmoor and King Sedgemoor. Eel is important species for the Somerset Levels, which has undergone a severe decline over recent decades. Barriers to migration are just one of many factors affecting eel, but installing passes can make a big difference to the numbers of eelers entering the rhyme system in the spring. The IDBs also recently organised an Eel Training Day for Board members and Officers, with the Somerset Eel Recovery Project and the Sustainable Eel Group, to learn about eel and to develop actions that the IDBs can undertake to assist eel recovery in Somerset.



**Tilting weir Eel pass**

## CHANGE OF LAND OWNERSHIP

Please remember to notify the Board when there is a change in land ownership. This allows the Board to keep information up to date and provide accurate Drainage Rate demands. If you require a plan of land held in your ownership, email [admin@somersetdbs.co.uk](mailto:admin@somersetdbs.co.uk)

## INCOME

In accordance with the Land Drainage act 1991, for the year ending 31 March 2026 the following drainage rates have been set – Axe Brue IDB 10.588p ~ Parrett IDB 9.889p ~ North Somerset Levels IDB 10.833p

### Full Board Meetings Calendar 2025

**Axe Brue: 22 April 2025 am, 16 June 2025, 3 Nov 2025**

**Parrett: 22 April 2025 pm, 17 June 2025, 4 Nov 2025**

**NSLIDB: 23 April 2025, 18 June 2025, 5 Nov 2025**

**There will be an election for Membership of the Axe Brue and Parrett IDBs later this year**

All meetings are subject to change. Please refer to the meetings calendar on the website for the current list of events:  
[www.somersetdrainageboards.gov.uk](http://www.somersetdrainageboards.gov.uk)

### Direct Debits



Axe Brue and Parrett IDB Drainage Rates can be paid by Direct Debit. It is a simple and effective method for ensuring payment of your annual Drainage Rate.

If you have not already done so, you can set up a Direct Debit easily by returning the completed mandate to the office in the reply-paid envelope.