AXE BRUE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
PART OF THE SOMERSET DRAINAGE BOARDS CONSORTIUM

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MINUTES OF THE AXE BRUE FULL BOARD MEETING
Monday 22 JUNE 2026 AT 10.30 AT BRADBURY HOUSE

Attendance:			
Elected Members: Wendy Welland (AC) Anthony Dowden Joe Stradling Alan Franks Bob Clapp David Tratt Liz Scott Harvey Smith	**Appointed Members:** Cllr Bob Filmer Cllr Alistair Hendry Phil Holms Cllr Mark Healey Cllr Mike Stanton Cllr Peter Clayton Cllr Hayward Burt Cllr Roger Keen	**Officers:** Iain Sturdy Margaret Hammond Katy Carleton Matthew Wall Rob King Virginie Martin Caroline Murray Phil Brewin	**Public:** Mr & Mrs Masters Mr Willis Martin Watts Malcolm Higgins
Approved Apologies:			
Mark Lunnon Trevor Whitcombe	James Grischeff Cllr Bryan Knickerbocker Donna Gowler		
Non-Approved Apologies:			
Garry Puddy			

Agenda Item:	**Description:**	**ACTION**
1 Attendance & Apologies	The meeting opened at 10.29 Wendy Welland (WW), the Acting Chair noted the sad passing of the Boards Chairman Andrew Gilling, members held a minutes silence to remember him, and spoke fondly of his longstanding service to the Board WW also thanked members who had attended the recent celebration for her late husband. Apologies have been received from James Grischeff, Donna Gowler, Cllr Knickerbocker, Mark Lunnon and Trevor Whitcombe Also in attendance: Mr Willis, Mr & Mrs Masters, Martin Watts and Malcolm Higgins	
2 Items Additional to the	Maggie Hammond (MH) would like to raise the issue of members Mileage rates. Anthony Dowden (AD) asked for an update on M Andrews.	
3 Declarations of Interest	AD declared an interest in Mr Masters case and a planning matter. Harvey Smith (HS) declared an interest in Mr Masters case.	
4 Members of the Public	Mr Paul Willis was allowed to speak and distributed photos to the Board of damage to his land. He believes that bad workmanship by our contractors has caused damage to his fields (ruts too deep to repair, snapped water pipes, gateways and culverts pulled out). He also advised that his Riparian neighbours are not maintaining their side and are planting trees adjacent to the rhyne	

	The Chair asked when this occurred. Mr Willis advised November 2025, although issues have built up and he feels he has not been listened to. Matthew Wall (MW) responded that there is some uncertainty about timing, some of this dates back to 2021. He has previously responded to Mr Willis on this matter as it is unclear whether damage was caused by the contractor or his farm machinery. MW has discussed the matter with contractors and the Area Supervisor, who believe that hay bales have been loaded and the farm trailer had caused the ruts. The Chair asked that this be handled outside this meeting, with a meeting on site. Harvey Smith (HS) will also attend. Mr & Mrs Masters to address the Board in Item 9 - Finance.	**ACTION AB/22062026-01**
5 Minutes of the previous meeting	**"the minutes of the Full Board meeting held on 26 January 2026 are signed as a true and correct record of the meeting held".** **Proposed: Mike Stanton** **Seconded: Bob Filmer** **All in favour**	**RESOLUTION 01**
6 Matters Arising	**Matters Arising:** HS and AD asked for minutes to be issued earlier, particularly where there is a lengthy gap between meetings. The Chair noted they are draft minutes until approved. IDS agreed it can be frustrating, they are indeed draft minutes and we will aim to produce them more quickly. **Review of Actions:** **AB/20260126-01** Tor Rugby Club Consent. MW and VM to follow up with County Archive and H Smith. HS advised his father remembers and is happy to go through. MW advised VM has approached Mendip Council, there is a significant cost to go through historic planning applications. AD asked if minute books have been checked He believes it was consented and there was a green file containing this. MW advised no written consent is available. **AB/20260126-02** Investigate damaged culvert on Tealham Moor and add to programme, or emergency works. MW and RK to follow up with AF and ML. Rob King (RK) advised the headwall was repaired. Alan Franks (AF) asked if they also looked at damaged culverts further down Sand Drove. MW added there was an issue with Burnt Drove crossing. He thinks it's an overgrown field. RK and MW will discuss after meeting. **AB/20260126-03** MW to look at sections of rhyne not maintained with ML after the meeting. (Note MW attempted to raise with ML after the meeting. He will contact ML directly to clarify in line with maintenance.) **AB/20260126-04** Put in bid in principle for SRA funding. Bid submitted by Caroline Murray (CM), and £270k awarded across Axe Brue & Parrett for maintenance. **AB/20260126-05** Look at other locations for improving maintenance access routes. CM advised this is ongoing, with some already in programme. IDS noted the importance of this as access culverts and gateways are becoming more problematic for contractors/deteriorating conditions for access. This should keep feeding into our programme of works. Liz Scott (LS) asked who is responsible for bramble clearance around culverts/drains. IDS advised it is partly Area Supervisors, partly contractor. RK reiterated that members should contact him as and when these things occur/are noticed. AD suggested that RK/MW ask local Board member when works are complete. The Chair asked for improved day to day communication rather than waiting to raise routine maintenance issues in Board meetings.	**ACTION AB/22062026-02** **ACTION AB/22062026-03**

	AB/20260126-06 Top of 12ft Rhyne join up maintenance from the highway with council resurfacing works. HS explained this is now all fixed and can be maintained. M Wall referred to the Highways Act. He is happy to look at commencing works with Harvey. This year AS's will identify start and stop locations of maintenance with reasons to stop them slipping through the net. The Chair again asked that Board members raise operational issues as they arise with officers before and/or outside meetings. MW can ask AS's to copy in Board members on works completed. IDS explained we are aware of issues around checking and sign off of maintenance work. The Boards reporting App requires officers to report from each location with words and photos so we capture the work done and it can be looked back on later if there are queries. The Board need to know what has and hasn't been done. Members should be given information on what's done, not done and done well/not well. Officers will pick up patterns and performance and manage the contractors accordingly. HS cited a poor job at 12ft rhyne as instructed by AS where surveys were done, but not work. MW explained a heavy weed cut will be done next week, this rhyne needs environmental input re timing and specification. HS and MW to meet outside the meeting. David Tratt asked if specifications change from contract/tender. Specifically in Berrow/Brean where minimum work was done. MW updated that officers have looked at the site and there are many nesting birds, so they can't maintain hard at the moment. Phil Brewin (PB) explained he will cover this in his report. The specification for work is 3 times a year, however there are legal environmental obligations and he feels the work this time was correct. He explained that public sharing of maintenance on social media is a reputational risk to the Board. In the summer we just need to make sure water flows, then later in the year we can maintain more thoroughly. PB wants the Board to support with developing Policy for this. DT asked if the contract changes and works agreed are amended, and is there an adjustment in the price. MW explained that the contractor was paid as instructed. PB feels the specification should reflect less works in the summer and more in autumn. Bob Filmer (BF) noted the meeting was nearly an hour in and he was concerned that it was going round in circles. He suggested a forum outside the meeting to move actions forward. IDS agreed and noted this meeting is like an old style IDB meeting looking at operational details. We have previously at the request of the Boards tried to move towards more business focussed meetings leaving the operational detail to officers and members outside these meetings. The Board need to help officers understand what is needed and he noted that the new CEO may be the opportunity to resolve this. Jon Cousins (JC) noted that governance and operational issues are two meetings and suggested a separate meeting for members and officers in the meantime. The Chair feels these discussions should happen regardless of meetings. IDS noted the discussion. **AB/20260126-07** Get numbers of council taxpayers in SC and NSC to work out and get an understanding of how it might affect them to share with F&W. Maggie Hammond (MH) provided the breakdown to the Board. DT advised he wanted a year-on-year comparison to see how it has impacted per household. MH will do this for the next meeting. More households. IDS advised our budgets are prepared based upon the running costs of the organisation and the work to be undertaken. Once that is agreed there is a formula in the act that allocates the expense in proportion between the Local Authority and the Rate payers. SDBC budget is set Will pick up at F&W ACTION **AB/20260126-08** Follow up with contractor re 12ft rhyne (twice a year). Already covered.	**ACTION AB/22062026-04** **ACTION AB/22062026-05** **ACTION AB/22062026-06**

	AB/20260126-09 investigate Mendip Business Park section of uncleaned rhyne/new building/warehouse. VM To pick up as part of her report.	
7. Health & Safety update	IDS introduced Ben Bloska (New Health & Safety Coordinator). Ben asked members to take his Report as read. There were no questions.	
8 CEO Updates	CEO Leadership Transition: IDS flexible retirement has been agreed with the Boards. IDS will move to part-time advisory work from August but will continue to cover the basic CEO duties until a replacement is found. We are recruiting and there is interest. Operational Performance & Summer readiness will be covered in the Operational and Engineering report. There is volatility around red diesel prices which Finance & Works have considered. EA consultation on main river withdrawal: IDS continues to press. We have responded to the consultation, with a specific catchment assessment, but learned at the SWADA meeting that it won't make a difference to the decision. There will be a reduced service but not a reduced cost. There has been some protest in drainage rates payment. In terms of additional funding: The SRA has awarded a grant in principle to fund some Main River Work Major update: We have recently been advised that as result of Regional lobbying to central Government, Somerset Council have been awarded £50million of funding direct from Defra. We are hopeful this will provide for improved pumping capacity, improved conveyance etc. Officers and Chairs are part of preparing a proposal to Defra for spending of money over 2 years. The money is a positive thing but the challenge is enormous. Particularly the limited timescale. DT asked if spending is restricted to IDB areas/Somerset not North Somerset. IDS explained that the money is for the whole county and includes flooding from the sea, but is not eligible for coastal protection/erosion. There is mention of a small area in the North Somerset IDB area but clarification is required. Lots of partners to be included and it is being led by James Divall at Somerset Council. Alan Franks (AF) feels it was for flooding on the levels and moors. IDS clarified that he had focused on this, however the lobbying was also via MP's and Councillors who have wider interests. The grant is not just for this but we can make a good case for using the money which will be stronger than others cases. AF feels areas outside should approach the SRA for funding. There is a signed grant agreement between Somerset Council and DEFRA with T&C's. HS noted money is for the County and was given to Somerset Council not the EA. AD asked if in light of EA withdrawal of maintenance could we use EA staff and redeploy their machines. IDS explained the EA use mainly contractors, their staff have been redeployed, and their plant is hired. Also we would not want to use their framework and contractors as it would be much more expensive. Mr Masters suggested using farmer's sons to drive machinery. IDS thanked him for his suggestion. **Jon Cousins (JC) asked that the minutes reflect thanks to IDS for his hard work in the past as CEO**	
9. Finance Report	9.1 Maggie Hammond asked members to take her reports as read and updated that all Bank Statements are reconciled to 31/05/2026 with no concerns. She advised that in the calling notice she had asked for any Finance queries to be sent to her prior to the meeting. As none received	

	she moved directly onto the recommendations from the Finance & Works Committee: **9.2** **It is recommended that the Axe Brue Finance & Works Committee recommends to the Full Board that the accounts as presented for 2025/26 are approved.** **Proposed: Bob Filmer** **Seconded: Mike Stanton** **All in favour** **9.3** **It is recommended that the Axe Brue Finance & Works Committee recommends to the Full Board instructs the RFO to review the reserves policy to ensure that the minimum provision is adequate.** **Proposed: David Tratt** **Seconded: Harvey Smith** **All in favour** **9.4** **It is recommended that the Axe Brue Finance & Works Committee recommends to the Full Board that the answers to the questions within Section 1 of the AGAR are answered yes to all.** **Proposed: Mike Stanton** **Seconded: Harvey Smith** **All in favour** **9.5** **It is recommended that the Axe Brue Finance & Works Committee recommends to the Full Board that Section 2 of the AGAR is approved and the Chairman sign accordingly.** **Proposed: Mike Stanton** **Seconded: Bob Filmer** **All in favour** 9.6 The outstanding drainage rate position £124,332k. Reminders to go out shortly. **9.7 *****************CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE 1************** **9.8** **HMRC Mileage rate is changing. MH explained the increase to 55p. Members asked for it to be updated for Board members as well.** **It will be backdated to April 2026** **Proposed: Jon Cousins** **Seconded: Mike Stanton** **All in favour**	**RESOLUTION 02** **RESOLUTION 03** **RESOLUTION 04** **RESOLUTION 05** **RESOLUTION 07**
10 Environment Report	Phil Brewin (PB) asked members to take his report as read. **Environment Committee**: PB asked the Board for clarity on committee membership as the terms of reference do not mention deputies. The committee will align with TOR's for membership and welcome any other interested members to attend, but there will be no deputies. The committee is more about developing ideas for the Boards than making resolutions.	

Peat Projects: There are none currently in the Axe Brue, although there was some interest around Westhay Moor/Honeygar.

WLMP's: Discussions have been taking place with ADA and Defra as well as other boards to understand their approach. Data is key along with considering structures, telemetry data and web-based apps to understand flow and blocks along with policy decisions around WLMP's.

Invasive Species: floating pennywort is becoming a major problem in some parts of the Axe Brue but especially in North Somerset. PB is looking to restart a programme with MW. Maintenance can be counterproductive if done too early as it creates good conditions for regrowth. We have had success in some areas – eradicated on Park Brook and kept out of Currymoor in the Parrett. The Biosecurity Policy has been reviewed and will be considered at the next Policy Committee.

Beaver Update: we are receiving increasing reports of them appearing outside of licenced release, especially on the Brue as well as the Penzoy and KSD. PB showed images of damage from burrowing which is a H&S hazard. We need to monitor and take action under licence. They are appearing in high risk areas. PB cited the approach in Holland where it is taken seriously and they have measures to mitigate.

PB also explained early summer maintenance which is necessary in some areas, but we need to make sure we are doing this where needed and understand risks around species/birds. Other Boards have a Standard Operating Manual which would be useful for our contractors. PB recommends practice of a lighter cut early.

BF asked if beavers appearing have migrated or are being introduced illegally. PB thinks probably a bit of both, although it is now an offence to have unlicenced beavers on land. They are also good at escaping. On water management systems it is more problematic and requires the tools and training to respond.

Bob Clapp left at 13.33

JC asked if anything eats pennywort. PB explained there is a weevil, but it is also an alien species, so lots of test and trial is required. Preventing the spread is most important.

AF felt that in light of the £50 million funding a derogation should be requested and asked if this could be expedited by the IDB/PB for work desperately needed on the Brue where modelling has been done. PB noted the concern is getting permits to EA. IDS explained PB has helped with trying to get EA up to speed with permitting. We are working very hard and been successful. AF is frustrated with NE and the slow response. IDS noted our involvement is about identifying and pushing through what needs to be done asap. PB is pushing hard specifically with permitting.

DT feels too light flailing was done. Do we also consider the eels underneath. Can they be harmed by digging out. BM noted this is a more sensitive method.

MS asked why some areas do not have WLMP's. They were written to give priority to SSSI's. PB suggested a more integrated approach, tied into peat, development etc to meet the requirements of the area. We are often asked when they will be updated. He is asking the Boards to consider them

	within legislation. MS asked if a central one could be formulated. IDS explained WLMP origins from 1996 for SSSI's. They have been extended over the years, but all are overdue a review. MS feels that for IDB, plans should focus on food production, flood risk management and not damaging peat. JC asked how we facilitate this. PB noted that adequate resource, a Statement of intent, and to add to operational plan. DT believes the EA are working with Gravity to instigate a WLMP. Liz Scott left at 13.49	
11 Ops & Eng Reports	**OPERATIONS:** MW asked members to take his paper as read. **MAINTENANCE:** Discussions are ongoing with ADA re procurement regulations. MW would like to roll over existing contracts for one year until ADA advice is in place. If not accepted by contractors we can retender. **Recommended that the Board offer to extend existing Brue Area maintenance contracts for a period of one year only.** **Proposed: David Tratt** **Seconded: Jon Cousins** **All in favour** Contractor meetings have raised an issue around red diesel costs. MW is looking at introducing a fuel price escalator. A Subcommittee is required to introduce this into existing contracts to take into account ongoing fluctuations and volatility. We suggest setting a base price based on March 25 and separate from CPI an escalator using industry standards. AD noted the previous change according to RPI. IDS noted we discussed with contractors when prices were higher. Need to be careful. We have looked at models used elsewhere on fuel heavy contracts. We would identify a trigger point. We will set a trigger point and it will also be plus and minus. It is about sharing the risk to deliver services. AD noted the unspent SDBC amount in the accounts did not mention NSL or amounts. MH explained the first is a printing error and she will add the amounts for next year. **Joint subcommittee for 3 boards to agree fuel price escalators. Axe Brue members to be Anthony Dowden, Harvey Smith.** **Proposed: David Tratt** **Seconded: Bob Filmer** **All in favour.** Rob King (RK) showed safety repairs carried out before and after pictures. AD left at 14.04 RK showed images of flytipping and clean ups happening weekly. There is a new pump at Thorney which is a Consortium asset. **ENGINEERING** CM provided an update on projects. She has copies of maps if required. There are 2 urgent in-year additions due to leaky structures. These will be added to the programme and hope they will be covered under project reserves. Vole Road construction starting today. 3 new culverts, increasing the size of two to increase capacity. Mike S and AD re-entered the meeting	**RESOLUTION 08** **ACTION AB/22062026-07** **RESOLUTION 09**

	The board to move £15,110 of unrequired project funding from Phase 3 Health and Safety into the ringfenced reserve for future Project Delivery **Proposed: David Tratt** **Seconded: Harvey Smith** **All in favour**	**RESOLUTION 10**
	Recommend to full board to repurpose £10,124.07 of Board Scheme reserves to fund increased costs of delivering UB36 Project. **Proposed: Harvey Smith** **Seconded: David Tratt** **All in favour**	**RESOLUTION 11**
	Lewis Drove improvements. EA landowner notices of works. We also have a project so are in conversation. Dog Leg Ditch identified as for replacement. Needs to be bigger. CM is meeting today. East and Pitlands update. Bristol water will be funding. Will require a problem statement. Brue Modelling outputs IDS has some concerns that additional modelling runs will be needed. We may need to fund some investigations from Westhay to Cripps/Highbridge Clyse. Would need to add into project plan if needed. DT asked if we have capacity within officers to complete the works. IDS feels we can do most things, but also know our limitations and it may become more difficult to deliver what is coming although it should not stop us. We have previously taken on works beyond our legal scope through PSCA agreements. We need to prioritise and find capability. HS noted the reduction in EA staff who now work for contractors, and would be willing to work for the IDB's. IDS asked HS to get them to contact him.	
	The Board to consider the request from the SRA to undertake this initial short development study on the Lower Brue conveyance works. **Proposed David Tratt** **Seconded Harvey Smith** **All in favour**	**RESOLUTION 12**
	Main River Maintenance: CM showed a more detailed map of what the EA will do, will not do and where funding applied for but refused. We have asked if the shortfall could be topped up which just leaves Division Rhyne, Hartlake, Lox Yeo, Panborough Drain, Redlake, Whitelake, Rhynemoor. The conversation is still ongoing. Panborough Drain may be picked up by the Parish Council, and we could work with them. AF feels he is having difficulty with access, IDB could assist with this. CM is in contact with EA re access routes. Please see CM with any specific queries/issues. **DEVELOPMENT CONTROL** Stepping Stone Rhyne, an IDB-maintained viewed rhyne, there are concerns around Gravity proposed infilling and diversion works. The Board also advised that consideration would need to be given to future adoption of the diverted watercourse as a viewed rhyne, including provision of a 9 metre maintenance easement and suitable access gates, secured through a legal agreement.	

	AD asked if level of bed is low enough. VM advised she has requested that the reprofiled watercourse be constructed to minimum standards, including a minimum 1 metre bed width, side slopes no steeper than 1:1, and no reduction in drainage capacity or wider network function. Gravity would need to pay for reinstatement. AD which side maintenance would be carried out from. VM advised this would need to be agreed and a culvert would be required. There are no trees. HS asked how we could be sure they don't fill it in. VM advised they would need to apply for consent demonstrating compensation for loss of storage and an alternative. **Propose recommendation to return section, take into view and Gravity to pay.** **Proposed: Bob Filmer** **Seconded: David Tratt**	**RESOLUTION 13**
12 AOB	AD asked for update on M Andrews. Members of the pubic were asked to leave the meeting. **********CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE 2******** DT asked that we not put off the Spring meeting again. Has meant this meeting has been too long.	
13 Date of Next Meeting	Dates of Next Meetings: As per agenda… The Chair thanked members for their attendance. The meeting closed at 14.40	

CHAIR.....DATE ……..

ANNEX A TO

AXE BRUE BOARD MINUTES

DATED 22 JUNE 2026

AXE BRUE BOARD – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Action Number:	Action:	Actionee:
ACTION AB/22062026-01	M Wall and H Smith to meet on site with Mr Willis	MW
ACTION AB/22062026-02	Speak to A Franks re culverts on Sand Drove/Burnt Drove Crossing	MW/RK
ACTION AB/22062026-03	Contact M Lunnon to clarify sections of rhyne not maintained	MW
ACTION AB/22062026-04	ask AS's to copy in Board members on works completed.	MW
ACTION AB/22062026-05	HS and MW to meet outside the meeting re 12 foot rhyne	MW
ACTION AB/22062026-06	Year on year comparison of increase in council tax payers	MH
ACTION AB/22062026-07	Add SDBC underspend amounts for each Board to next years report	MH