NORTH SOMERSET LEVELS IDB
PART OF THE SOMERSET DRAINAGE BOARDS CONSORTIUM

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MINUTES OF THE NSLIDB FULL BOARD MEETING HELD AT KINGSTON SEYMOUR VILLAGE HALL ON WEDNESDAY 24 JUNE 2026

Attendance:			
Elected Members: Tim Bush Bob Mitchell Peter Kingcott Bob Parsons John Harris Nigel Cole Simon Hutchings	**Appointed Members:** Sandra Hearne Cllr Deborah Yamanaka Cllr Michael Harriott Cllr Mike Bird John Cato	**Officers:** Maggie Hammond Iain Sturdy Virginie Martin Giles Oliver Matt Wall David Crossman Dan Smith Phil Brewin Caroline Murray Dan Alsop Rob King Ben Bloska	**Public:** Will Barnard (Parrett Board/FWAG)
Approved Apologies:			
Brad Fowler Alistair Mead	Cllr Peter Burden Cllr Wendy Griggs Cllr Dan Thomas Cllr Clare Hunt Cllr James Tonkin Peter Harris	Anthony Brinson	
Non-Approved Apologies:			
George Atwell Graham Plaister Ben Letts	Cllr Marcia Pepperall Cllr David Shopland		

Agenda Item:	**Detail:**	**Action:**
1. Attendance & Apologies	The meeting started at 14.34 Apologies as per the attendance list. Chair welcomed Ben Bloska H&S Co-ordinator and Cllr Michael Harriott, the Board's new appointed member.	
2. Items Additional to the Agenda	Maggie Hammond (MH) raised Board members mileage rates to increase to 55p in line with HMRC **PROPOSED: Sandra Hearne** **SECONDED: Deborah Yamanaka** **All in favour** Matthew Wall (MW) raised Parish Brook Nailsea which will be covered under the Engineering report	**RESOLUTION 01**

3. Declarations of Interest	Will be declared as they arise during the meeting.	
4. Members of the public	None	
5. Minutes of the NSLIDB Full Board Meeting	A moments silence was held for Andrew Gilling, Chair of the Axe Brue Board who passed away recently. P4 Sandra Hearne (SH) noted the Investment Policy is completed P6 Deborah Yamanaka (DY) noted that the minute regarding objections to planning should say North Somerset. **"that the minutes of the Full Board meeting held on 28 January 2026 are signed as a true and correct record of the meeting held".** **PROPOSED: John Harris** **SECONDED: John Cato** **All in favour**	**RESOLUTION 02**
6. Matters Arising and review of actions	The Chair noted that in light of the extreme heat, he would ask that all reports be taken as read. IDS ran through outstanding actions: **NSL/20260128-01** To check if EA funding covers coastal defence. IDS confirmed the precept does not include coastal work. **NSL/20260128-02** To check if any IDB objections to planning have been overturned historically. Virginie Martin (VM) updated that since she has been with the IDB she is not aware of any cases of this, however recently they are challenging our objections and asking for conditions/reconsiderations. John Cato (JC) asked if we object does it mean they can't progress. VM advised planning should not be granted where there is any objection or conditions not discharged. They should also apply for consent. The Chair asked if we had more confidence in conditions being enforced. VM believes that this is happening. SH noted that a case has gone to court on appeal and planning was approved on a floodplain. IDS noted that Tessa Munt was raising concerns on planning legislation on floodplains. It is becoming more difficult for regulators. We are a non-statutory consultee, they would need consent from us either way. Dan Alsop (DA) noted that 15 years ago they used to set conditions which needed to be satisfied. Sometimes building proceeded anyway, does this still happen. VM makes sure minimum information on surface water is included which depends on the scale of development. Mike Bird (MB) has been involved in an appeal gone to inspectorate which is one person, so it depends on representation. The IDB need to represent if it is important enough. VM noted there is a drive to deliver houses, and consent is often granted at appeal. We can generally resolve issues before this with access/easement and surface water requirements needing to be met. John Cato (JC) felt that regardless, if our opinion is important we need to make sure our voice is heard. The Chair asked what our opinion is re building on floodplain. IDS noted there are thresholds. It is the EA's responsibility to comment on floodplain development and compensation. VM advised our brief is runoff into our network. IDS noted these things are not cut and dry and a lot takes place, appeal is time-consuming and expensive. They do try to resolve prior to this and can be done with less properties, more attenuation etc.	

7. Finance Report	7.1 Update: All Bank Statements are reconciled to 31/05/2026 with no concerns. MH then advised that the following items were discussed by F&W who have made 4 recommendations. She highlighted the Flood Recovery Fund which covered Crossmans Hatch without using Board reserves. Bob Mitchell arrived at 15.01 **7.2 That the North Somerset Levels IDB Full Board approves the accounts as presented as recommended by the Finance & Works Committee** **Proposed: John Harris** **Seconded: John Cato** **All in favour** **7.3 That the North Somerset Levels IDB Full Board requests the R.F.O. to review the reserve policy and report back to the November Full Board Committee** **Proposed: Sandra Hearne** **Seconded: John Cato** **All in favour** **7.4 That the North Somerset Levels IDB Full Board answers yes to all questions in Section 1 of the AGAR as recommended by the Finance & Works Committee and approves its signature by the Chairman and Clerk.** **Proposed: Nigel Cole** **Seconded: John Harris** **All in favour** **7.5 That the North Somerset Levels IDB Full Board approves Section 2 of the AGAR as recommended by the Finance & Works Committee and approves its signature by the Chairman.** **Proposed: John Cato** **Seconded: Nigel Cole** **All in favour** 7.6 Outstanding drainage rates position £47276.22 with first reminders going out next week, so no concerns at this stage. 7.7 £92.31 recovered from arrears. We still push for payment. 6 cases went to court, 4 have paid, 2 liability orders to bailiffs. John Harris (JH) asked about small debts. MH explained that the demands show arrears. When they are over £50 they go to court. None are written off. John Cato thanked Maggie for her excellent work. 7.8 the Internal auditor has awarded substantial assurance.	**RESOLUTION 03** **RESOLUTION 04** **RESOLUTION 05** **RESOLUTION 06**
8. Operations Update	Rob King (RK) asked members to take his report as read and updated members as below. Litter has increased by 90%. We are constantly battling across all Boards but it is mostly in North Somerset. We clear the watercourse and contact the council to clear from site. Structure asset repair list 100% complete in NSL.	

	The new pump at Thorney is a Consortium asset purchased from ringfenced funds. RK showed before and after pictures of repairs undertaken, including Hurstpool Rhyne.	
10 Environmental Report	Phil Brewin (PBr) introduced Will Barnard (WB) who works for FWAG alongside farmers towards consensus and support for Landscape Recovery projects/peat. He is working on a potential bid for Defra funding for partnership projects. This project is FWAG/Avon Wildlife Trust and WB is hoping the Board will work with it. WB outlined the Lowland Peat Water Discovery Fund, adding the context that over next 4 years there will be £50 million for peat restoration/reduction of emissions. He showed slides of work in NS including crop trials and telemetry, all of which is voluntary. There will be a series of projects, the current one being discovery. If there is sufficient appetite changes will commence. The projects will be led by a consortium of FWAG, Moor Associations, AWT, NSC, NE and EA, with the lead applicant being AWT. They require objective consensus on the detailed design. IDB involvement is important. There will be 3 locations: East and West Gordano, Tickenham Moor. PBr asked WB what he requires from the Board. WB feels IDB strategic guidance and knowledge are crucial as well as stewarding. PBr asked if there will be Board funding. WB advised this is built in, largely for contractors but could be steered to officer time. He is hoping to align telemetry with our systems. JH asked what the appetite is and the likelihood of success compared to other regions. WB advised this project is ahead of other areas in terms of partnership working and studying peat. DA feels that as the IDB knows more than other stakeholders, why aren't we on there already and suggested PB. The Chair noted the Board has already given its goodwill. WB has campaigned for Boards to be embedded but he cannot commit the IDB. Giles reiterated the level of involvement up to this point is significant. Phil agreed we have been involved in evolution, may be asked to join when project happens. Giles Oliver (GO) asked if finance is long term. WB noted this is preloading and preparing opportunities for farmers. The Chair felt the Board should not stand in the way of how farmers wish to manage their land, but feel that nobody should be disadvantaged. WB advised that at point of delivery the IDB are the main partner. **Propose to support the development of this Moor Futures project in any way we can, included funded officer time/contribution.** **Proposed John Cato** **Seconded Mike Bird** **Motion passed**. **Environment Update:** PBr asked for his report to be taken as read. RK left at 15.29 PBr would like support for officers to review whether work done in the summer is done in the right way/at the right time. There are risks to the Board around protected species and water temperatures, and Boards have a duty to try and reduce their impact. Maintenance starts early in NSL and is done twice which is unusual. A Standard Operating Manual is normal practice. Other Boards don't start as early unless for a specific reason. He would like clear written method	**RESOLUTION 07**

	statements for staff and contractors. When challenged we can demonstrate this as mitigation. He gave an example of a social media incident which suggests we could consider a lighter flail. We could then come back in autumn and be more thorough. In terms of invasive species, we know they reappear more rapidly in clear water and gave the example of Old Yeo pre maintenance in June which was already clear and could have waited until a bit later. A clearer method statement and operating manual would be a helpful addition. GO noted that some are now critical for big developments and need to consider this. Dan Alsop (DA) noted current arrangements/specs agreed with NE many years ago. JH noted we need to be careful about reducing water storage capacity/encroachment from the banks. Does this mean we should spend less, and thereby generate capacity for main river. He spoke to Tessa Munt and feels we should work with her. IDS explained we have raised this with the other two Boards who are happy for PB to work up a revision of handbooks and a standardised approach to bring back to the Boards for approval. The Chair asked David Crossman (DC) for his thoughts. DC feels it could be done but may not reduce the cost as there would be more to do later. It was previously reduced in the 70's due to fuel prices. MW noted the importance of timing as contracts end this year, giving the opportunity to consider changing the specs. He can work with PBr. Area supervisors can ask contractors not to maintain if not needed. Mike Bell (MB) feels it's a good compromise. PBr noted we need to consider it but it may not change too much, time has passed since last looked at with NE and it needs a system approach. DC noted that A Tucker sometimes only flails hemlock. PBr feels this may not be working. **Recommendation: The North Somerset IDB review where it undertakes early summer channel maintenance and categorise watercourses based on flood and drought risk and ecological sensitivity. The Board should review and update its Standard Operating Procedures, that were in use before joining the Consortium, and adopt and deliver maintenance specifications (dates and methods) that incorporate best practice and environmental risk management. The Board to undertake routine monitoring, auditing and reporting of its maintenance activities to help ensure environmental risks are managed.** **Proposed: Deborah Yamanaka** **Seconded: Mike Bird** **All in favour** On WLMP's we are working with ADA and Defra. Invasive species: floating Pennywort is very difficult to manage, and needs a more integrated approach to control as it returns very quickly. PBr sits on the national group. There has been some success in certain sites with a mixed approach. The Biosecurity Policy will be considered by the Policy Committee. It was considered at the Environment Committee. There is some cost to dealing with it however once pennywort has spread, the cost to manage increases rapidly.	**RESOLUTION 08**

	Beavers have been sighted at Blagdon Lake. They undermine banks and can cause hazards for machinery. It a complex matter with national visibility. We will continue to monitor.	
8. Health & Safety Update	IDS introduced Ben Bloska who asked members to take his report as read. IDS noted work is now being picked up following a gap without in house advice. Ben is working with our external consultant Liz Bennett, who we have worked with before. Bob Parsons (BP) asked about the rhyne not being cleaned at Wick St Lawrence. NSC have cut the verges. Working from highway can be a safety problem. and IDS agreed it is a challenge. Our current way of working follows a historic incident and criticism. We are managing risk by working to national guidance (Chapter 8) when working from the highway. We have worked with the Highways team, because there is a requirement to operate correctly and safely. He agrees Council contractors may not always comply, but we must. MW and the area supervisors have looked at all highway working locations and found alternatives for many areas. Highway based work across the Boards has been reduced by more than 50%. BP advised there had been a suggestion he remove trees from his orchard. He allowed access but doesn't want to remove trees. MW will look at this with him outside of the meeting. IDS advised Board members can raise issues at any time. JH asked if WFH is resolved. MW advised revised RAMS are in place, some contractors have trained their own staff. We have progressed and work is being done well and we are actively monitoring. Contractors now know where responsibilities lie. IDS noted we will always need to be mindful and manage risks. In a short period we are much better protected by the measures in place and can adjust where needed. DC asked MW if Chapter 8 relates to digging in the road. IDS explained our process avoids a Regulation 171 road closure, and is done with short duration mobile works.	**ACTION NSL/20260624-01**
11. Operational & Engineering Reports	MW asked for his paper to be taken as read. Desilting works at Ham Rhyne: MW met on site with Peter Burden (PB) and Nigel Cole (NC), works went well as per slides shown to members. Work at Summer Lane to move access strip to maintain from field: Access had been lost so tree clearance took place to allow access. There had also previously been some complaints re arisings. Alternative access going forward resolves this. AOB item: Parish Brook is a watercourse we currently maintain from the highway and is the location we were picked up on by the NSC Highway Inspector. We reviewed and this location would need a road closure. MW feels we should consider switching the access route to the field side, installing a gate. We could work around the trees. It is a very busy road. There is clear access and it could be done under an environmental impact assessment with PBr assistance. DC is against this and advised the landowner is also set against it. It would mean cutting a lovely old hedge which gives shade and shelter. It would require fencing and spraying and would also need	

	a culvert. He feels creating access would be costly and Tucker has advised he can do it from the road in 25 minutes. MW feels there is always negotiation when improving access. Detail needs to be worked out and we would try and do it with agreement. This land is due to be developed so it is important to establish access before this rather than working with developers. SH knows this stretch of road. Many of the trees/willows are collapsing and have not been maintained for many years. If we can do the work in the field it would be better. We could then perhaps replace trees at sensible intervals. This field is not SSSI and many people want the field for development. We should get in first. MB noted this is his ward. Nailsea Town Council did traffic survey, showing nearly 4k cars a day. The road is crumbling which will affect the banks. It is an important rhyne. Developers already have outline planning permission, so we need to speak to them now. DC asked for PBr's view. PBr understands his concerns. WFH is an issue. He would like to speak to the landowner and NE but we need to facilitate access if we choose to. He feels there is a need to keep mature oaks and manage willows better via pollarding or replacing. If we do remove them we need to manage better elsewhere to offset. It is a challenging location. IDS it is a problem, but we need to do work in a safe way. There is no current agreement, but the work needs to be done. He suggested a road closure this year alongside the working up of a proposal to overcome the problems in future years. DC feels we could do some from the field and reduce road time. SH suggested it be time sensitive – after 9.30 and before 3.30. the speed on the road is also an issue. DC felt it is always busy. IDS noted this adds weight to the argument to maintain from the field. It must be done this year by road closure which is the only option. Pete Kingcott (PK) noted that on the first section there are not many trees, the next one has the thick hedge, and asked if there is any way to do it differently. IDS explained we know we can't do work from the highway long term, so need to establish access before the land is developed. **To carry out works under road closure this year and reach consensus for future years to maintain from the field.** **Proposed: Sandra Hearne** **Seconded: Mike Bird** **All in favour** Red diesel costs volatility: MW advised we have met with contractors to address this and are suggesting a fuel price escalator. We have considered all aspects and MW is working on a draft paper as we know it is an ongoing issue. We may not need to trigger an escalator and could just stick to CPI. He would like to propose a subcommittee to review this over the next couple of weeks and go to contractors with a proposal. DA noted there used to be one which we stopped using. IDS explained that some contractors had both CPI and a fuel escalator. We are suggesting CPI to the non-fuel element and an escalator to the fuel element only. We will use existing public body rates and set a trigger point to go up or down. **To appoint Sandra Hearne and Tim Bush to the Fuel Subcommittee with delegated authority.**	**RESOLUTION 09**

	Proposed: John Cato **Seconded: Pete Kingcott** **All in favour** MW reiterated this is the last year of extended contracts. He will review with PBr around retender and bring to the November meeting. PBr will draft a standard operating manual to share with the Consortium under the Environment Committee. JC queried about page 4 section 5 of the Operations Report which suggests the landowner is responsible for removing rubbish but is unlikely to clean it. MW explained that the landowner is unfortunately responsible for anything dumped in his ditch however he has refused to do so as it is not his rubbish. Public bodies have permissive powers to assess the risk of them remaining in place. We remove and place on the rhyne bank, the Council take it away. The cost of enforcement cost can be greater than us pulling it out. ENGINEERING: GO showed progress with Calm to deliver projects. He is happy to answer any questions outside the meeting. Historic work is being completed. He showed the example of Parish Brook completed works at the confluence of two rhynes (10ft Rhyne) which is a difficult location, but all completed and there is safe access for the contractor. Crossmans Hatch is completed and working. We have still to fit an elver pass and telemetry. There have been some access issues and bank repairs to resolve. GO credited DA with the delivery of the project and funding from the IDB recovery fund. At the Finance & Works committee a more detailed breakdown of projects was discussed. This will now be regular, will be based on budgets and will include spend. Future projects: some not funded have been started using repurposed engineering funds, including Ham Lane. Also Curio Yatton is being funded using a commuted sum for small tilting weir. DC asked if Crossmans Hatch name should be changed to tilting weir. GO advised it will be changed on asset board. JH asked about Mill Lease cutting off a dead corner under 2 bridges. GO is aware, and advised it is funded. DEVELOPMENT CONTROL: Virginie Martin (VM) updated on Yarnel Farm solar park consent: this could involve cable crossings/culvert/fence. The team are very busy with consents. GO has been on site. We have been approached by ADA for a survey on cost of consent. Defra have asked ADA if there is a way of simplifying consent for utilities companies. We currently charge consent is £50per structure, the average cost to the IDB is nearly £600. The Chair thanked VM and feels it is not always appreciated in terms of the amount of work that goes through her department.	**RESOLUTION 10**

	DC is concerned that nobody is visiting consented sites. VM advised this will be done by the Enforcement Officer. Officers are interviewing on Friday.	
9. CEO Updates	IDS asked members to take paper as read as much has already been covered. Leadership Transition is ongoing. Applications have been received and the vacancy closed today. Operational performance and resilience are on track and have been covered under the Operations & Engineering Update. Financial year end has gone well. The Internal Auditor has awarded us substantial assurance. EA Withdrawal of maintenance: IDS/CM/GO met to get clarity on specific watercourses. The slide map showed that most will be funded in NSL and the red lines show what will not. We have responded to the consultation but have been advised that this will most likely not change outcomes on withdrawal. Other Boards have some funding from SRA, and from the £50 million. We will continue to work with them as we will need PSCA's, access, permits etc. The Floods Minister has announced a grant to Somerset Council, partly from Board pressure, as well as local MP's etc. The challenge is the time limit to deliver. The EA have written to us re withdrawal of maintenance on Millenium Rhyne Congresbury chich we are looking at. IDS has no governance or capability concerns in the organisation. The Chair thanked and congratulated IDS for all his efforts as CEO.	
12. Any Other Business	The SDBC Chair has suggested a joint meeting in November and a trial for amalgamation which may be useful to streamline some of the repetition. IDS felt this may give some efficiencies, but is just an idea at this stage.	
13. Date of Next Meeting	Environment Committee Tuesday 8 September 14.00-16.00 Health & Safety Committee Tuesday 15 September 10.30-12.30 Finance & Works Wednesday 21 October 14.30 • Full Board Meeting Wednesday 4 November 14.30 (KSVH) The Chair thanked members for their attendance. Meeting closed at 17.04	

CHAIR.....DATE ……..

NORTH SOMERSET LEVELS BOARD – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Action Number:	Action:	Actionee:
NSL/20260624-01	Meet with Bob Parsons to discuss access to WSL rhyne needing to be maintained from the highway.	MW