



A Message from the Chairman

The last year has been the most difficult anyone can remember. Many of our moors have been unfarmable since Spring 2012.

The members and officers of the Drainage Board have had to spend a great deal of time encouraging the Environment Agency to pump the water off. During the summer, low oxygen levels slowed the evacuation of water dramatically, so making the damage to land and livelihoods even worse and causing great difficulties in conservation areas.

Thanks not least to the persistence of the Board, the need for dredging of main rivers is now proved beyond doubt. I am just sorry that it has taken 20 years to persuade the experts. The next step is to find the money and get it done.

On the ground the majority of our maintenance has been completed. On those parts of Wetmoor, Westmoor, Currymoor, King's Sedgemoor, West Sedgemoor and Southlake which are still flooded, work should be completed this spring. Moors that were water logged had summer pen delayed to give the land a chance to recover.

You can be assured that the Drainage Board will do its utmost to get the land back to a farmable condition and to keep the maintenance of our ditch system up to scratch.

In the meantime, I and Drainage Board colleagues will continue to lobby Defra ministers, MPs, County Councillors, Environment Agency nationally and locally and Natural England to restore the carrying capacity of the rivers to match the increased level of threat from extreme rainfall events to which we seem to be subject. **Peter Maltby**



Flooding 2012-13—what the Drainage Board has been doing about it.

The floods of the last 12 months have been the worst in living memory. Although main river flood defences and floodwater removal are primarily the responsibility of the Environment Agency, the Drainage Board has been doing everything within its power to get the floodwater shifted as quickly as possible and make sure that the lessons are learned, as follows:

- Last summer, when the extent of the damage caused by the floods in April and May became apparent, the Board commissioned an independent survey to establish the cost, to farming and the environment. The findings of that report have since become a vital plank in the economic case for improved river channel management, which the Board is currently making with the Environment Agency and Somerset County Council to Defra Ministers.
- The Board was also very active in lobbying the EA to get the pumps re-started, when issues over water quality delayed the pumping out of the moors last summer, and has since missed no opportunity to remind Ministers and others that farmers, and farm production, are every bit as important as fish.
- Led by the Board's chief engineer, Iain Sturdy, the Board has also played a key role in persuading the EA to take an objective, clear-eyed look at what the impact of dredging the Parrett and Tone would be. When the EA finally conceded that dredging would have dramatically reduced the severity of both last summer's and this winter's flood events, the Board made sure that MPs were aware of this game-changing conclusion, through a detailed briefing issued in advance of a House of Commons debate on the subject.
- A presentation given by the Board's Chief Executive, Nick Stevens, at the Somerset "Floods Summit" in March, paved the way for that meeting to agree that dredging the rivers is the single most important action for reducing the flood risk to Somerset.
- Having made the case for dredging so successfully, the Board is now actively involved in discussions to ensure that the funds are made available to enable the work to be done. A case for a project to do such work is being put together and the Board's officers are working with and encouraging the Agency to make this case a robust one. We have obtained the services of two very experienced professionals in this field to assist us in this matter to ensure that the answer is the most favourable we can develop.

Although the flooding last year interrupted our normal maintenance programme (we usually finish the 571,000 metres of rhynes in January) we are continuing to undertake channel maintenance works with the aim of completing all locations by the end of March.

In the last three years the Board has undertaken a number of large environmental projects with the aid of 100% grant from central government. As part of these works we have installed over 88 new culverts to replace inadequate, silted or failed culverts.

We have also installed over 100 new tilting weirs and structures which provide better water control but also can be opened in flood conditions leaving an unobstructed channel.

BE ONE OF THE FIRST TO KNOW!

As postage rates continually rise, we would like to make our website the main form of communication with past members, ratepayers, local residents and businesses. We plan to place all information about our meetings and the agenda on the website and therefore we encourage those people who would like to keep in touch with the activities of the Board to obtain access to the internet.

We would therefore like all ratepayers who have an email address to let us know so that we may update you in times of important news. We will not pass it to any commercial organisations or to use it for routine matters.

LAND DRAINAGE CONSENT

The Board has jurisdiction over all watercourses within the Boards district (with the exception of Statutory Main River which is under the authority of the Environment Agency). This means that you must apply for Land Drainage Consent from the Board for any improvement works you intend to carry out in, under, over or within 9 metres of any watercourse (except Main River). Please contact the Board or visit our website for details of the Land Drainage Consent and forms.



TELEMETRY

We now have 21 water level monitoring stations operating across the Board's area. The information is available to us online and used by the IDB to adjust structures when needed. Details of how this information can be accessed from your own computer will be made available on:

www.somersetdrainageboards.gov.uk

EXPENDITORS:

Nick Lockyer (OM&W, Aller & Stan)
 Alan House (B&P)
 Mike Phillips (KS&CV, Chedzoy, CM)
 Mike Snook (C&W, STK, DUN, Northmoor)
 Joy Thorne (Lang & W Sedge)



EXPENDITURE

The Board has resolved to set a rate in the pound of 6.200p for the current financial year. The Board has four principal areas of expense:

Channel maintenance
 New works and improvements
 Contributions to the EA
 Administration costs

This year the Board will maintain approximately 571,000m (355miles) of watercourse as part of the annual cleaning programme.

MEMBERSHIP

(All elected members are unpaid volunteers)

<u>District</u>	<u>Member</u>
Aller Moor	P Maltby
Bridgwater & Pawlett	M Young
Cannington & Wembdon	W Barnard
	J Irish
	R Marchent
	A Rowe
Chedzoy	R Roberts
Curry Moor	R Barrington
Dunster	A Fewings
King's Sedgemoor	A Bradford
	B Bryer
	D Vigar
Langport	R Coombes
	R England
	J Lock
North Moor	M Bere
	J Winslade
OMW	P Betty
	M Winslade
Stanmoor	P House
Stockland	C Passmore
West	A Gothard
Sedgemoor	G Theed

Appointed Members:

Cllr D Alder, R Archer, D Ayers,
 Cllr D Durdan, Cllr I Dyer,
 Cllr A Fraser MBE, Cllr A Gilling,
 P Gooding, Cllr A Hamlin, J Healey,
 Cllr D Hill, Cllr N Jones OBE,
 Cllr S Kingham, Cllr M Lewis,
 Cllr R Lillis, Cllr R Mills,
 Cllr C Morgan, Cllr P Palmer,
 S Parker, D Spicer, Cllr P Stone
 and Cllr J Taylor.

ENQUIRIES

For general enquiries please call: 01278 789906

(09.00hrs – 17.00hrs Mon-Fri)

Out of Hours: 07887 687746

Email: drainage.boards@btconnect.com
www.somersetdrainageboards.gov.uk

Flooding incidents out of hours should be reported to the Environment Agency 0800 807060

For enquiries please contact:

Clerk/Legal: Nick Stevens
Engineering: Iain Sturdy/Phil Ham
Finance: Stephen Gee
Rate Collection: Carrie-Anne Porter
 Kendra Kingston
Environment: Phil Brewin

MEETINGS CALENDAR 2013/14

Dates of the Main Board meetings:

Tues 11 June

Tues 23 July 10.30am (venue tbc)

Tues 26 November

Tues 28 January 2014

All meetings, except that of Tues 23 July, are held at the Westonzoyland Community Centre at 2.15pm

RIPARIAN MAINTENANCE

It is important for landowners and tenants to maintain their own channels and gateway culverts. This improves the drainage and water feed to your land and neighbouring fields and is part of the farm payment requirements. Private ditches and rhynes are often neglected and will not function properly so that the land cannot benefit from the Board's annually maintained system. This leads to wet or dry areas, poor crops and damaged soils.

Bridges and gateway culverts are a constant problem, mainly because agricultural machinery weight has increase massively over the last couple of decades and the existing accesses were never built for these loads. On viewed rhynes any replacement culverts should be at least 900mm (3 ft) diameter or a minimum of 450mm (18") on other ordinary watercourses. If you are planning to replace any culverts please ensure you apply to the Board for consent so that we can ensure these are constructed properly – these applications are free. If the Board needs to use gateways over viewed rhynes for access then a contribution to the culvert works may be available.