

An Introductory Message from the Chairmen

We are proud to say that despite all of the challenges we have faced this year the Drainage Boards in the Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium have adjusted when necessary and continued to deliver a thorough and professional service to the public.

We have successfully outsourced delivery of all of our maintenance work and we have an excellent group of contractors appointed who are managed by our in-house area supervisors. We have also delivered a programme of improvement works for the Boards and continue to collaborate with professional partners including the Environment Agency, Local Authorities and the Somerset Rivers Authority for the benefit of the area.

Having lost a number of key staff this year we are pleased to be embarking on a new recruitment campaign and we aim to be back to full operating strength as quickly as possible to take on the challenges that the future will bring. We will of course continue to manage water levels and flood risk for the benefit of the area and in doing so we will be open to new ways of working in the best interests of all those who we serve.

Looking to the future we have recently heard that Bridgwater Tidal Barrier has now been approved by the Secretary of State and we must congratulate all of those who have been instrumental in getting the project to this point. We will of course continue to support partners in its delivery over the next few years.

In the southern part of the North Somerset Levels IDB we have a vacancy for a new board member and would welcome expressions of interest for that position.

Our thanks go to all Board members, staff, professional partners and members of the public, who have worked with us over the last year.

Together we are sure we will continue to deliver a service we can be proud of.

Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium & Parrett IDB Chairman - Mr Tony Bradford
Axe Brue IDB Chairman - Cllr Andrew Gilling, North Somerset Levels IDB Chairman - Mr Tim Bush

RECRUITMENT

Following a period of re organisation we are now recruiting to fill our vacancies.

The Drainage Boards in Somerset are a Public Body Employer who exist to provide water level management services to the public across large parts of the County. This includes the Somerset Levels and Moors and urban districts including Sedgemoor, South Somerset, North Somerset, Mendip, Somerset West and Taunton.

If working in this special part of the county, in an important and rewarding role, serving the public inspires you then please get in contact with us. We are currently seeking staff with the following skills and experience. Clerical/Administrative, Financial, Field team operations, Contract supervision, Engineering (Civil/Structural/Building/Agricultural/Drainage), Technical (CAD, Surveying, Operational Support, problem solving etc), Planning and Regulation, Environmental Management

LAND DRAINAGE CONSENTS - Under the Land Drainage Act 1991 Drainage Boards have a duty to exercise a general supervision over all matters relating to the drainage of land within its district. In order to carry out this role successfully, the relevant Board must receive details of any proposed works affecting watercourses, and grant permission for the work to proceed.

Consents are therefore required for both temporary and permanent works in or adjacent to **any** watercourse (except a main river).

Application forms for Land Drainage Consents can be downloaded from our website: www.somersetdrainageboards.gov.uk.

Upon receipt of the application, accompanied by the application fee the Board has two months in which to grant or refuse a Land Drainage Consent. The granting of a Land Drainage Consent may be subject to conditions and does not remove the requirement for any approvals or authorizations required from other parties.

For further guidance please see the website to download the Land Drainage Consent Information Sheet.

INCOME – In accordance with the Land Drainage act 1991, for the year ending 31 March 2023 the following drainage rates have been set – Axe Brue IDB 9.136p ~ Parrett IDB 7.923p ~ North Somerset Levels IDB 9.139p

ANNUAL CHANNEL CLEANING WORKS - Each year the Boards undertake channel cleaning work programmes on viewed rhynes by approved contractors, in accordance with the Land Drainage Act 1991. Please see the website for full details www.somersetdrainageboards.gov.uk

If landowners or occupiers renting their land have locked gates or have erected electric fences, please pass details on to the office on 01278 789906 or email admin@somersetdb.co.uk to assist with organising access for maintenance



INVASIVE WATER PLANTS - The IDBs are keen to stop the spread of fast growing non-native water plants that can block water flows and smother native wildlife. Floating pennywort is a particular problem as it grows very quickly and can completely fill watercourses (photo of pennywort from Bleadon). All known locations of pennywort in Somerset are being managed to reduce risks to drainage and ecology. Please contact the IDBs if you think you have seen any pennywort in your local area or you have any questions about our non-native invasive species work.

Operations & Engineering

• Channel Maintenance

- Axe Brue 601 kilometres
- Parrett 584 kilometres
- North Somerset Levels 191 kilometres
- Multiple cuts at some locations
- Projects and Schemes completed (see website for further details)

• Development Control

- Planning Applications 257
- Land Drainage Consent 296
- National Grid Culverts 38

Axe Brue

- Lewis Drove improvements
- Burnham Level Rhyne Access
- Northwick Road Culvert replacement (SRA)

Parrett

- Somerton Moor Water Level operational improvements
- River Parrett Water Injection Dredging (see below)

North Somerset Levels

- Desilting in areas of – Yatton, Kingston Seymour, Backwell, Kenn
- Drainage Improvements in areas of – Yatton, Kenn, Claverham, Tickenham Moor
- Health & Safety installations – Hutton & Locking and Blind Pool Wick St Lawrence

Office opening hours & Enquiries
Usually 9am to 5pm Mon-Fri but currently variable due to Covid restrictions please call the office for up to date opening hours

01278 789906

Email: admin@somersetdb.co.uk
www.somersetdrainageboards.gov.uk

For other enquiries please contact:

Acting Clerk/ Legal/CEO Iain Sturdy

Operations & Engineering: Iain Sturdy

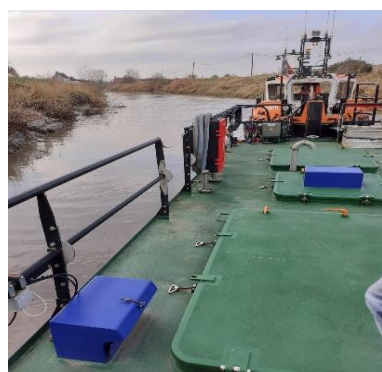
Finance: Margaret Hammond

Rate Collection: Margaret Hammond
Kendra Kingston

Environment: Philip Brewin

Flooding and pollution incidents should be reported to the Environment Agency:
0800 80 70 60

Another Water Injection Dredging (WID) campaign was carried out on the river Parrett in January. Water Injection Dredging uses a jet bar moved over the surface of the channel bed while large volumes of water are directed at low pressure into the sediment layer. The density of the sediment surface layer is lowered until it achieves fluid behaviour. The fluidized sediment layer is then transported horizontally in the lower part of the water column away from the dredged areas by river flow during outgoing tides. The fluidized sediment eventually enters lower estuary where it mixes with extremely high background turbidity conditions. General practice is to start dredging at the downstream extent of the site, which increases channel gradients and facilitate mobilisation and transportation of the fluidized sediment downstream.



Our Term Contractor, Van Oord used a new vessel this year specifically designed for dredging upper estuary systems like the River Parrett. In previous years, Water Injection Dredging was undertaken using a self-propelled vessel called the 'Borr' (above), which had an injector bar that was orientated towards the channel bed. In 2022 an alternative WID configuration of 'Baldr' and 'Havik' (below) has been deployed. The Baldr has the same WID capacity as the Borr, but is propelled by a separate vessel called Havik. The Baldr can operate in shallower water and smaller channel cross sections, thereby greatly extending the potential for dredging under different tidal conditions. Furthermore, the injector bar angle of the Baldr can be adjusted allowing greater flexibility and precision in dredging, especially in the channel margins. Dredging over an 18-day period in Jan 2022, funded by Somerset Rivers Authority, removed around 20,000m³ of consolidated silt from a 4km reach of the river, increasing flow capacity and reducing flood risk.

CHANGE OF LAND OWNERSHIP – Please remember to notify the Board when there is a change in land ownership. This allows the Board to keep its information up to date and provide accurate Drainage Rates. If you require a plan of land held in your ownership, please email admin@somersetdb.co.uk

Full Board Meetings Calendar 2022

Axe Brue: 20 Jun, 10 Oct

Parrett: 21 Jun, 18 Oct

NSLIDB: 23 Jun, 12 Oct

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

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.

