

Our Ref: IDS/AEDB

Date: 24 July 2025

Dear Ratepayer,

Update on Environment Agency River Maintenance & Drought Conditions

We are writing to update you on important developments that affect flood risk management and watercourse maintenance across the Somerset Levels and Moors.

The Environment Agency (EA) has recently issued formal notifications confirming long-term withdrawal from maintenance of some Main Rivers. Many of these channels flow through Internal Drainage Board areas and have previously been managed by the EA under permissive powers. This decision was not fully consulted on with Boards prior to its communication, and we are now responding to numerous queries and concerns from occupiers and rate payers.

Alongside this, the EA has now designated our region as being in **Prolonged Dry Weather status**. This reflects unusually low river levels after months of dry conditions, and brings heightened environmental pressure on farmland, habitats, property, and infrastructure. EA guidance recommends maintenance of watercourses to alleviate drought impacts — yet in many places, formal withdrawal from Main River maintenance has already occurred.

Your Drainage Board is deeply concerned by the growing mismatch between public expectations, flood risk, water level management, environmental pressures, and current service provision. While we understand the financial pressures facing national agencies, the lack of consultation and strategic alignment presents serious risks. We continue to advocate on your behalf — engaging with the EA, Natural England, MPs and funding partners to seek practical solutions and policy clarity.

These issues will be discussed in full at the next Board meeting, and updates will be published on our website. In the meantime, we welcome your feedback and will do our utmost to represent your interests during this period of transition and uncertainty.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement.

Yours sincerely,



Iain Sturdy
Chief Executive
Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium



Tony Bradford
Chairman
Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium

Below is a list of those Somerset rivers affected by the EA decision

Somerset

Land Yeo Upper	Lox Yeo	Chedzoy	Drove Ryne
Blind Pill Ryne	Congresbury Yeo	Panborough Drain	Rhynemoor Rhyne
Red Lake	Division Ryne	Kenn Lower	White Lake
Hartlake	River Cary	Barton and Lydford Mill Stream	Baltonsborough
Cockhill	Wickmoor Rhyne	Kingsmoor Main drain	North Street Langport
Tank Rhine	Pill River	Priorswood Stream	Hopwood Stream Minehead
West Somerset Streams including River Avill, River Aller, Horner Water, Hawcombe Stream, Washford River, Traphole Stream, Monksilver Stream Doniford Stream, Pill River, Timberscombe		Taunton Streams including Kingston Stream, Norton Brook and Halsewater, Lyngford Stream Mill Lease, Dyers Brook, Allens Brook, Maidenbrook stream, Black Brook, Sherford Stream, Galmington Stream, Westford Stream	

Each Board is a public statutory body with responsibilities for flood protection, land drainage and the environment.
All are members of the Association of Drainage Authorities.