

**MINUTES OF THE NSLIDB FULL BOARD MEETING HELD AT KINGSTON SEYMOUR VILLAGE HALL  
ON WEDNESDAY 5 NOVEMBER 2025**

<b>Attendance:</b>			
<b>Elected Members:</b> Tim Bush Nigel Cole Brad Fowler John Harris Peter Kingcott Bob Mitchell Bob Parsons	<b>Appointed Members:</b> John Cato Sandra Hearne Cllr Clare Hunt Wendy Griggs	<b>Officers:</b> Maggie Hammond Iain Sturdy Virginie Martin Giles Oliver Rob King Caroline Murray Matt Wall Anthony Brinson David Crossman	<b>Public:</b>
<b>Approved Apologies:</b>			
George Atwell Simon Hutchings Alistair Mead Graham Plaister Chris Redding	Cllr Peter Burden Cllr Catherine Gibbons Peter Harris Cllr Dan Thomas Cllr Richard Westwood Deborah Yamanaka		
<b>Non-Approved Apologies:</b>			
	Cllr Mike Bird Cllr Marcia Pepperall Cllr Bridget Petty David Shopland Cllr James Tonkin		

<b>Agenda Item:</b>	<b>Detail:</b>	<b>Action:</b>
1. Attendance & Apologies	The meeting started at 14.30 Apologies as per the attendance list.	
2. Items Additional to the Agenda	None	
3. Declarations of Interest	Will be declared as they arise during the meeting	
4. Members of the public	None in attendance	
5. Minutes of the NSLIDB Full Board Meeting	<b>“that the minutes of the Full Board meeting held on 18 June 2025 are signed as a true and correct record of the meeting held”.</b> <b>PROPOSED: John Harris</b> <b>SECONDED: Bob Mitchell</b> <b>All in favour</b>	<b>RESOLUTION 01</b>

6. Matters Arising	<p><b>Review of Actions:</b></p> <p><b>NSL/20250423 – 02</b> Paper on amalgamation: This is an ongoing action and is delayed due to officer time being taken up with elections and the EA withdrawal of maintenance challenge.</p> <p><b>NSL/20250618 – 01</b> Copies of draft policies to be shared with board members: This is also ongoing, with a programme in place to review before the next AGAR.</p> <p><b>NSL/20250618-02</b> To check IDB structure for eel passage: Phil Brewin (PB) confirmed that there are 2 in North Somerset, and a further one will be added to Crossmans Hatch. Giles Oliver (GO) and Dan Alsop (DA) confirmed this is a requirement for new structures and has been sourced.</p> <p>Members and officers discussed whether the EA are also required to fit eel passes on their structures and noted it is good that the IDB's install them, but not helpful if EA structures don't allow passage.</p>	
7. Clerk/CEO Update	<p>IDS apologised for the late paper and highlighted some of the challenges and updated.</p> <p>EA withdrawal of maintenance: We are still working to expose the issue at the right levels to make the impact understood and are hoping to sway decisions on funding to ensure important works take place. The SWADA meeting resolution has been advised to the EA, shared with senior figures and is gaining some traction. The response from the EA is generally one of underfunding and using limited funds to the greatest benefit, however much is not affordable. We have asked for the message to be pushed back up to highlight the risks locally. Some local MP's are engaged: Sarah Dyke has raised the issue at EFRA and with top EA officials. They highlighted capital projects, and suggested regional needs might need to be funded locally, i.e. the SRA. Emma Hardy and Philip Duffy have offered to visit Somerset. MW/IDS/TB are attending a meeting in Newark to raise beyond a local issue, but rather to address nationally. It feels like the direction is local funding for local problems. The Chair asked about a cross-party meeting. IDS explained there has been some interest but it is very difficult to coordinate.</p> <p>Tessa Munt also chairs a members group on flooded communities, so ideally we would like her and Sarah Dyke to lead/coordinate.</p> <p>Peter Burden (PB) asked where Sadik Al-Hassan has found money for maintenance on a section of river which is acknowledged to have no flood risk benefit.</p> <p>IDS explained we have not had any straight answer and are unlikely to know the facts without an FOI.</p> <p>Pete Kingcott (PK) asked with reference to EA maintenance if we have a list of critical rivers which would prevent the Board from carrying out its responsibilities, and if we may need to take on additional works for the wider benefit.</p> <p>IDS confirmed we have mapped and categorised all main rivers. The EA's assessment of what is the most critical is probably accurate, and notice has been served mostly on lower priority ones. We are maintaining our watercourses but much depends on us being able to feed or discharge to and from our watercourses.</p> <p>The EA are promoting PSCA's (but there is no extra money), or de-maining some watercourses. This would empower IDB's to maintain them if we wanted to but would leave a funding gap for us which would need to be met by an increase in rates or a reduction in our programme. If IDB's were to take main river works on, it would need to be done over time, and assets passed over in good condition with future funding to maintain. IDS cautioned all boards about agreeing to take anything on without assurances on funding.</p>	

	<p>DA suggested reinstating the pre 1936 model which acknowledged that riparian owners didn't always carry out maintenance and that water came from outside the catchment with rates being collected from all and decided locally.</p> <p>John Harris (JH) asked whether the Bradbury House premises are owned by the Boards.</p> <p>IDS confirmed the building is owned by the Axe Brue board, and the Consortium pay for a proportionate use of the offices.</p> <p>Wendy Griggs (WG) noted that under the Council's Devolution Policy assets have to be of a standard before being handed over, which is what we would be suggesting re EA assets maintenance.</p> <p>IDS agreed that we would hope the same and gave the most recent example of Penzoy which EA wished to de-main. Multiple assets were not fit for purpose.</p>	
8. Risk Register	<p>To cover at each meeting. IDS asked members to note the reviewed and updated register. Increasing risks included Pennywort which, impacts flood risk, staff single person dependency as a small organisation (most staff over 50. IDB's are not well understood, recruitment is difficult. Succession is needed and must be considered), increasing disagreements between staff and ratepayers some of whom are threatening not to pay rates as we are not seen as distinct from the EA.</p>	
9. FWAG Presentation	<p>Will Barnard (WB) from FWAG and Jen Robertson (JR) from Avon Wildlife Trust attended to provide an update on the FWAG/AWT project.</p> <p>JR provided an update on last 18 months of this Defra funded project: Somerset Moor Futures. The project covers both sides of the Mendips, and aims to develop and trial farmer-led consensus on change of land use/management.</p> <p><b>Deliverables:</b> the formation of new Moor Associations to share hydrology amongst 48 farmers/landowners from 40 businesses. Workshops have taken place for members, giving context and looking at science and emissions. Working groups have looked at agri-environmental schemes, green finance, ecosystem services, nature markets, landscape recovery, paludiculture and flood risk management.</p> <p><b>Model/process:</b> the model is one of whole moor land use planning with committees to look at and present back to moor associations. Hypothetical land use maps have been produced.</p> <p><b>Key barriers:</b> attendance, some disengaged landowners, single point divisive issues, complexity of markets, funding streams, landlord/tenant relationships, dynamic water level management planning, structures and maintenance.</p> <p><b>Lessons learned:</b> trust and intensive facilitation. Funding and , government expectations. Defra are pleased with progress and have allocated an additional year of funding to March 26. The project will now like to look at delivery, via more 1:1 sessions, Moor association meetings and site visits trying to ease sticky conversations between landlords and tenants.</p> <p>They are looking to write a roadmap to delivery and building relationships with IDB's and other partners for buy-in.</p> <p><b>Next steps:</b> closer working with partners, looking at nearby LR projects, getting input from experts, engaging more landowners, collaborative community engagement, find and engage functionally linked landowners.</p> <p>This is part of a long-term journey across the levels and moors. The objective is to build resilient clusters of farmers, and they need to sell it to Defra as a long-term project.</p>	

	<p>Defra have put £85 million aside for peat and Somerset is front and centre. Landscape recovery is being delivered in phases, so likely next year. The project needs to find consensus to move a whole moor forward with everything needing to be consented so IDB's are critical.</p> <p><b>Questions:</b></p> <p>JH asked how the project copes with those that don't want to take part. WB confirmed there is no compulsion and nobody outside the scheme should be disadvantaged. These are modest steps forward towards modest change to summer penning water levels.</p> <p>The Chair asked if this project will approach the Board to help move water, and asked about new structures and maintenance.</p> <p>WB confirmed LR includes all this. Structures, consensus building, alternative farming methods etc. The project gives weight to the argument against EA maintenance withdrawal.</p> <p>IDS referred to a discussion this week in the Parrett area. It would include maintenance to get water in and out. Repair/replacement of some major structures - not generally main river, but in places where there are impacts.</p> <p>The Chair asked if solar farms are compatible with peat. WB advised they are neutral on surface land use as long as the peat is not disturbed, but no problem generally.</p> <p>JR noted they are also looking at biodiversity funding, there is lots of scope to bring money in.</p> <p>NC asked if the funding is guaranteed as the rug was pulled out from SFI. JR explained LRP's have 20 years of funding. This is the only reassurance, but they are cautiously optimistic.</p> <p>WB asked for guidance from the Board as to how they would like to engage going forward.</p> <p>The Chair noted that nobody on the Board farms on peat.</p> <p>JT thought Mike Bird of Nailsea Town Council would be engaged.</p> <p>IDS advised that the approach agreed by the other Board area was not to lead meetings and groundwork. Once consensus is reached the Board needs to be kept apprised and will be mindful of those outside schemes as well. They may speak at milestone points or be available to assist with any difficulties</p>	
<p>10. Governance &amp; Business</p>	<p>Meetings Calendar: the Board wish to keep as afternoons for now. The Chair reiterated the need to be quorate, so other members need to attend or advise if not able to.</p>	
<p>11. Finance Report</p>	<p>Maggie Hammond (MH) updated as per the F&amp;W Committee</p> <p>Our Auditors did not agree with our responses in the AGAR on risk register, although it <b>was</b> considered by the Board before the AGAR. We disagree with the Auditor but it is their opinion and has no impact on the figures.</p> <p>IDS explained that it was discussed at F&amp;W where members asked if we would challenge. The Committee resolved that we will write to the Auditor to advise we don't agree.</p> <p>MH the presented the NSLIDB position and forecast, reiterating that it is just a forecast on information at the time.</p> <p>MH updated on the outstanding drainage rates position which stands at £8296, and is more than this time last year. This is the same for all boards which is a concern and is mainly due to EA withdrawal. Of the court cases last year, 3 still remain outstanding due to no response to bailiffs. There are still some arrears outstanding which are included in the £8k.</p> <p>WG asked about the costs of recovering debt.</p> <p>MH clarified that we add any costs to their outstanding bill, so the only costs incurred by the Consortium are staff time.</p>	

	<p><b>The North Somerset Levels IDB approves the level for taking Drainage Rate Debtors to court to be £50 as recommended by Finance &amp; Works committee</b>  <b>PROPOSED: Peter Burden</b>  <b>SECONDED: Deborah Yamanaka</b>  <b>All in favour</b></p> <p><b>The North Somerset Levels IDB approves that the Governance Officer, Responsible Finance Officer and Clerk be given authority to instigate proceedings for the recovery of arrears of drainage rates and that the Chairman sign and seal a certificate to confirm this as recommended by Finance &amp; Works committee.</b>  <b>PROPOSED: Peter Burden</b>  <b>SECONDED: James Tonkin</b>  <b>All in favour</b></p> <p>MH gave an update on investments, the returns are down a bit. The HSBC current account is in progress and the mandate being changed.</p> <p><b>That North Somerset Levels IDB award the tender for the provision of the Internal Audit function, for 3 years from 01 Apr 2026 to 31 Mar 2029 to TIAA.</b>  <b>PROPOSED: James Tonkin</b>  <b>SECONDED: John Harris</b>  <b>All in favour</b></p>	<p><b>RESOLUTION 02</b></p> <p><b>RESOLUTION 03</b></p> <p><b>RESOLUTION 04</b></p>
<p>12. Operational &amp; Engineering Reports</p>	<p><b>OPERATIONS:</b>  Matt Wall (MW) asked for his report to be taken as read. He updated on contractor maintenance which had fallen behind but is now 80.5% complete, with A Tucker back working. Anthony Brinson is assessing his channels as some do not require a second cut. Banwell and Hurstpool Rhyne will be done, however some will not require a second keetch. The app is now being used by Area Supervisors to report works completed and show on a dashboard. It also collects photos to record the quality of work completed. There have been changes to procurement regulations so we will update our Procurement Policy to reflect this in time for next tender. The Chair asked if we will still need an approved suppliers list. IDS explained that the regulations now require that we advertise openly through a portal similarly to councils. Peter Burden (PB) asked if this will cause financial issues as we are more nimble currently. IDS noted that we don't know yet but need to be mindful of keeping costs low. Market forces are powerful and if one body pays a higher rate, it may lead the competition. Will need strategic thinking. Pete Kingcott (PK) asked if we will need to go through the same process for small contractors. IDS confirmed we will look into this at the same time.  Catherine Gibbons left at 16.20.  Routine maintenance from the highway: We have written to highways at both councils. It is not straightforward. We have asked Area Supervisors to identify areas where we currently work from the highway, look at them all individually and assess if it can be done from the field.</p>	

	<p>In North Somerset 19 locations have been identified and just under 13k of work from the roads.  We have written to highways to agree that it its mobile or short duration works depending on location.  David Shopland (DS) asked about access and noted that he knows that Board has right of access and if he plants it is his issue if there is a loss.  IDS confirmed this is the same as the officer's understanding but has been challenged. The Act says if we cause damage we may be liable for compensation. We have sought legal advice and are still awaiting clarity. Area Supervisors generally manage relationships so that this is not an issue.  MW noted there has been good weather this year, so this has not been an issue.  Officers confirmed the working group will reconvene when there is more to update. In the meantime, this will be considered in contractor RAMS. Some contractors are concerned, but we may remove this work from some and award to one contractor for all areas. There will be an increased cost.</p> <p>Rob King updated the Board on structure surveys which are carried out at each visit, with 781 now completed. Many safety repairs identified have been carried out already with only 2 of the 27 remaining to be repaired.  Penning dates for North Somerset are 1<sup>st</sup> Dec or thereabout, with winter pen w/c 17/11.</p> <p><b>ENGINEERING:</b>  Giles Oliver (GO) and Caroline Murray gave an overview of projects across boards and progress on completed, in progress and in-year ones that have been added. Some will push into next year. 5 completed and 10 in progress.  Giles asked for the report to be taken as read and outlined some of the works under the programme which need attention. The current programme in a good stage of progress.</p> <p><b><u>Recommendations:</u></b>  <b>Resolution Required:</b> Northfield Rhyne Outlet Structure requires an uplift in the original budget for the scheme to progress. As the programme was critical, we consulted the chairman to seek approval to progress the scheme ahead of a formal resolution by the board to allocate the additional funding required. Refer Section 7.2.  <b>We now seek a full board approval to allocate a further £21,244 from reserves to deliver the project.</b>  <b>PROPOSED:</b> Peter Burden  <b>SECONDED:</b> James Tonkin  <b>All in favour</b></p> <p><b>Resolution Required:</b> Little Wall Rhyne Access Culvert has been identified as collapsed and needs repair to enable maintenance works to be carried out. Kewstoke Rhyne Access Culvert was budgeted in the 2025/6 programme but is now deemed as not necessary following a review earlier this year. Refer Section 7.3.  <b>We therefore seek board approval to simply move the funds from Kewstoke Rhyne Access Culvert (£8,000) to Little Wall Rhyne Access Culvert Emergency Works.</b>  <b>PROPOSED:</b> Dan Thomas  <b>SECONDED:</b> Deborah Yamanaka</p>	<p><b>RESOLUTION 05</b></p> <p><b>RESOLUTION 06</b></p>
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	<p><b>All in favour</b></p> <p>Dan Alsop (DO) gave an update on Crossmans Hatch which is now commissioned. It has taken a little longer than planned, however the weather was helpful and useful lessons have been learned. There will be a full and detailed report to follow and in terms of funding, the project is still within budget and won't need to ask the Board for reserves.</p> <p>Landowners have been most cooperative. There is still some tidying to do to reinstate. The landowner will reinstate himself on one side and invoice us. The Chair will write to both thanking them for their cooperation. John Harris congratulated the engineers.</p> <p><b>DEVELOPMENT CONTROL:</b> Virginie Martin (VM) Solar panel applications are taking a lot of time. The team are also busy with Grumble Pill Rhyne applications for planning and consent where we need to ensure we can still access for maintenance Banwell Bypass: Discharge consent for ponds, now focusing on culverts. This has temporarily slowed down as they are changing contractors. The Chair asked on what basis we have responded to land west of Road. VM confirmed that she wrote back and advised that we object. The Developer is not happy but we advised that this is as a result of EA maintenance withdrawal. The Developer offered to do the maintenance, but this doesn't resolve the issue up or down stream.</p> <p><b>ENVIRONMENT:</b> Phil Brewin (PB) Phil Brewin (PBr) asked the Board to take his report as read. He explained that the Environment Committee TOR's allows for 3 members, leaving a vacancy for this board and recommended John Cato as he usually attends anyway. <b>To appoint John Cato to the Environment committee</b> <b>PROPOSED: Peter Burden</b> <b>SECONDED: Wendy Griggs</b> <b>All in favour</b> PBr noted he is happy for others to attend, but the approach needs to be consistent with other boards regarding deputies. On the Peat Project PBr works with Simon Bunn who needs to present to this Board. Wessex Water have changed their approach to Nailsea wetlands and have bought additional land to create wetland features. JH asked if the lowland peat research project online was worthwhile. PBr advised this was Defra work looking at IDB's helping with rewetting peat. Phil is involved and can share the report PB would also like the report as the link didn't work. Phil will send.</p>	<p><b>RESOLUTION 07</b></p> <p><b>ACTION NSL20251105 -01</b></p>
13. Any Other Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	
14. Date of Next Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full Board Meeting Wed 28 January at TBC</li> <li>• Finance &amp; Works Wed 14 January 2026 at Bradbury House</li> <li>• Consortium Office Charity Day: Thurs 6 November 2025, in aid of The Royal British Legion. All welcome.</li> </ul> <p>The Chair thanked members for their attendance. Meeting closed at 17.00</p>	

CHAIR.....DATE .....

**NORTH SOMERSET LEVELS BOARD MINUTES  
DATED 5 NOVEMBER 2025**

**NORTH SOMERSET LEVELS BOARD – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

Action Number:	Action:	Actionee:
<b>NSL20251105-01</b>	Send Lowland Peat Research report to Peter Burden	PBr