

**MINUTES OF THE NORTH SOMERSET LEVELS INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD FINANCE AND WORKS MEETING AT BRADBURY HOUSE 22 OCTOBER 2025 AT 14:30**

<b>Attendance:</b>			
<b>Elected Members:</b> Mr T Bush (C) Mr J Harris Mr R Mitchell	<b>Appointed Members:</b> Cllr P Burden Mr J Tonkin	<b>Officers:</b> Mrs M Hammond Mrs K Carleton Mr I Sturdy	<b>Public:</b>
<b>Apologies:</b>			
Mr C Redding	Cllr C Hunt Cllr S Hearne		

<b>Agenda Item:</b>		<b>Action:</b>
1. Attendance and Apologies	The meeting started at 14.30	
2. Items Additional to the Agenda	<p>2.1 Maggie Hammond (MH) raised Giles Oliver's funding for Northfield outlet. Giles has said that it has come in over funding and budget. Following tender and re-tender it will be £21.2k over budget which would need to come from free reserves and will be explained at full board. This will impact her report. IDS explained that the costs of materials have increased rapidly, rather than labour.</p> <p>2.2 IDS outlined Mr Atwell's complaint. The Chair suggested that the Board pay the middle figure between what we have offered and his claim. The committee were happy with this.</p>	
3. Declarations of Interest	To declare as they arise.	
4. Approval of Minutes	<p>James Tonkin (JT) noted his apologies had been tendered by the Chair at this meeting. <b><i>'That the minutes were a true and accurate record of the meeting held 4 June 2025'</i></b> <b>Proposed: John Harris</b> <b>Seconded: Bob Mitchell</b> <b>All in favour</b> The Chair signed the minutes.</p>	<b>RESOLUTION 01</b>
5. Matters Arising	<p><b>Review of Actions:</b> <b>NSL/20250604-01</b> To check NS Council meeting dates and KSVH availability when planning next year's meetings. This has been checked.</p>	

<p>6. Finance Report</p>	<p>6.1 MH advised that the bank was reconciled to 30/09/25 and all is as expected with no issues. Bob Mitchell will check and countersign.</p> <p>6.2 MH summarised her <b>Finance Report</b> (enclosure 2, circulated with Agenda), with a revised version of the report circulated at the beginning of the meeting, to reflect some changes.</p> <p><b>6.2.1 External Auditors Report: (Enclosure 3)</b>  We have received the external auditor opinion on our AGAR return. They have suggested we should have answered no to 2 of the questions in Appendix A. Section 2 and we have had no opportunity to respond before the deadline. The queries related to the Risk Register which they have suggested was not considered in the financial year. We are comfortable that the Boards discussed risk before answering the Audit questions, and have also discussed risk throughout the year. We are happy that risks have been managed. The other item was our response to the Audit Report recommendations. We are comfortable that we implemented action and prioritised it. Their comments make no change to the figures and MH has no concerns as RFO.  The Chair asked what the implications are of us disagreeing.  IDS noted that he is disappointed at the auditors response, but it presents no business risk. MH will respond to them so that we have a challenge on the record. The auditor has now left the organisation which is likely why the deadline was set.  The Chair and IDS noted that the policies are not unfit for purpose but had exceeded their review dates which have now been extended.</p> <p><b>6.2.2 Appendix B - SDBC position (Enclosure 4)</b>  MH explained the SDBC position/forecast as per her Finance Report. She clarified that the variance of £81k (favourable) is mainly due to staff vacancies as the budget is set with all posts filled. There was also an underspend on premises due to warmer weather.  The overspend on office admin is due to licences as we have moved to Office 365 with some of it for 3 years of licences which will show as a prepayment at the end of year. Postage is over budget due to the letters sent to ratepayers on EA maintenance. Professional fees on Calm Engineering are an overspend as they are covering vacancies. Insurance has also gone up.  The Chair asked why we recharge for SRA work.  MH explained this is as per an agreement between the Parrett Board and the SRA.  IDS clarified that the SRA provide funding but not delivery of works. We have oversight and tech expertise to projects.  JH asked if postage is negotiable.  MH confirmed the office has a franking machine with fixed charges. We could undertake a procurement exercise.</p> <p>MH then went through the Forecast: Favourable variance of £169.9k, with vacancies still being the biggest issue.  JH asked about ADA promoting sponsorship of engineering graduates, an if the Consortium could follow this up.  IDS noted that the EA took the lead on this, foundation degree. We asked pre-covid if this was ongoing/could we join. The EA is under review so unsure if this programme is still in progress. We need an experienced core of people to have oversight and could also work in combination with access to consultants going forward as demand increases.</p> <p><b>6.2.3 Appendix C – NSLIDB position (Enclosure 5)</b>  The YTD position as of the end of Sept showed a £151k adverse variance. The income was in a positive position due to Crossmans Hatch under the grant total, however rechargeable work has not yet been invoiced.</p>	<p><b>ACTION  NSL/20251022  -01</b></p>
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	<p>Other items of note included an underspend on maintenance and consultancy due to the timing of works and invoices, an overspend on repairs and renewals (rollovers from reserves will cover this), Contractor callouts for Sampsons Sluice (we have not yet needed to call out but need it in place), telemetry not yet purchased, and Board Schemes (mainly Crossmans Hatch) which is almost complete but mostly covered by an EA grant.</p> <p>MH then went through the Forecast, which will be subject to change but showed an adverse variance of £197k, with the main player in positive being the EA grant. Blank entries with unknown costs include summons costs and specialist contractor callouts. Bank interest reflects current rates. There is a maintenance underspend of £60k, as we are not using rolled over money. The overspend is on ringfenced reserves.</p> <p>Bob Mitchell (BM) asked if the forecast included any payment back from the Consortium.</p> <p>MH explained that it didn't as it is still an unknown at this stage.</p> <p>Peter Burden (PB) asked if the Board is getting value for money on rent and other expenses.</p> <p>MH noted the costs of the Cider Barn and explained the heating needs to be on due to containing historic paperwork which needs to be sorted.</p> <p>James Tonkin (JT) queried the need to keep the office rather than rationalising/getting rid of it and also suggested digitalising the paperwork. The Chair suggested reducing costs and just keeping the smaller office.</p> <p>IDS noted there is outstanding work to look at this matter before letting the board decide based on research, and David Colbourne is looking at digitising in between other jobs.</p> <p>MH noted for context that financially she keeps 7 years plus the current year, no other paper records need to be retained.</p> <p>A similar exercise took place in the other boards and anything of interest went to the County Archive. There is a place for keeping some paperwork, but there is a cost/risk balance. There will be a need to assess this matter in the near future.</p> <p>MH continues that this gives a Forecast reserve position of £678k, which is an improved position. This means the Board could reduce the amount to be added to reserves this year.</p> <p>The outstanding drainage rates position is £8296k, which is more than last year. It is not yet a concern but is creeping up. The next step is taking people to court to recover unpaid rates. MH recommends setting this level at £50.</p> <p>Maps showing parcels of land where we don't know who the owner is will be provided to the Full Board to try and identify them. Land registry is 2 years out of date.</p> <p>JH asked about the cost of taking people to court. MH explained the debtor pays the legal fees.</p> <p><b>The North Somerset Levels IDB approves the level for taking Drainage Rate debtor to court to be £50</b>  <b>Proposed: Peter Burden</b>  <b>Seconded: James Tonkin</b>  <b>All in favour</b></p> <p><b>The North Somerset Levels IDB Finance and Works committee recommends to Full Board 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.</b>  <b>Proposed: James Tonkin</b>  <b>Seconded: Peter Burden</b>  <b>All in favour</b></p>	<p><b>RESOLUTION 02</b></p> <p><b>RESOLUTION 03</b></p>
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	<p>MH then provided an update on current investments. Very little remains in the current account and most is in various investments and earning well, with North Somerset Council giving the best return.</p> <p>The Chair suggested moving some funds from NS&amp;I to money markets. JH asked if it is still 3 months of spend that must be easily accessible. IDS confirmed that the Investment Policy means some funds must be accessible, so there is liquidity.</p> <p>MH confirmed this could improve once the Investment Policy is finalised. The Chair mentioned setting up an Investment Committee. MH noted the policy has been a sticking point, however once the other boards have gone through their elections, we may be able to set the committee up to find better investments.</p>	
7. IDB Funding for Main River maintenance	<p>The current position is that no provision has been made.</p> <p>All our efforts this year have been focused on engaging with the agency and working with ADA/SWADA.</p> <p>ADA Branch Chairs are meeting in Newark on 29 October with the aim of making a joint resolution to take to a subsequent meeting with Minister Hardy in Lincolnshire on 30 October. IDS and the SDBC Chair have been invited to attend both.</p> <p>The Chair asked about a meeting of local MP's.</p> <p>IDS notes that there has been some feedback: Tessa Munt now chairs a new cross-party Flooded Communities group; Sarah Dyke is on EFRA and trying to engage the minister to encourage a visit to Somerset. Other boards nationally recognise the issue and are aligned.</p> <p>PB noted that North Somerset MP's have also passed a similar resolution. He also noted that following MP pressure, maintenance has taken place on the Land Yeo which is the least important to land drainage.</p> <p>IDS confirmed he has written to the EA to question this decision, but as yet has had no reply.</p> <p>The Chair noted he has asked Tessa Munt to find out who made the decision and where the money has come from.</p> <p>JT confirmed he will also ask next month.</p>	
8. Any Other Business	None	
9. Date of Next Meeting	<p>Full Board Meeting Weds 5 November at 14.30 at Kingston Seymour Village Hall</p> <p>Finance &amp; Works Weds 14 January 2026 at 14.30 at Bradbury House</p> <p>Clashes with planning – change to AM or Thursday</p> <p>Consortium Office Charity Day: Thurs 6 November 2025, in aid of The Royal British Legion. All welcome. (Bradbury House)</p> <p>The meeting closed at 16.00</p>	

Annex:

A. NSLIDB F&W Meeting – Table of Outstanding Actions

CHAIRMAN.....DATE .....

NSLIDB F&W MEETING – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Action Number:	Action:	Actionee:
<b>NSL/20251022-01</b>	MH to look at franking/postage solution	<b>MH</b>