

**MINUTES OF THE NSLIDB FULL BOARD MEETING HELD AT KINGSTON SEYMOUR VILLAGE HALL  
ON WEDNESDAY 28 JANUARY 2026**

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

<b>Agenda Item:</b>	<b>Detail:</b>	<b>Action:</b>
1. Attendance & Apologies	The meeting started at 14.33 A minutes silence was held for Chris Redding who passed at Christmas. The Chair introduced Daniel Smith, new DAS Apologies as per the attendance list.	
2. Items Additional to the Agenda	MH noted contact from LSIDB CEO. They are holding a Board meeting on 3/6 to include a visit to their new pumping station and have invited SWADA to join them and hold the Spring meeting there. The Chair noted that following the passing of Chis Redding the Board need to appoint to the F&W committee under Governance.	
3. Declarations of Interest	Will be declared as they arise during the meeting.	
4. Members of the public	None	

5. Minutes of the NSLIDB Full Board Meeting	<p><b>“that the minutes of the Full Board meeting held on 05 November 2026 are signed as a true and correct record of the meeting held”.</b></p> <p><b>PROPOSED: James Tonkin</b>  <b>SECONDED: Peter Burden</b>  <b>All in favour</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Ben Letts arrived 14.39</p>	<b>RESOLUTION 01</b>
6. Matters Arising	<p><b>NSL20251105-01</b> Phil Brewin to send Lowland Peat Research report to Peter Burden – to cover under Phil’s report in Item 12.</p>	
7. Peat Discovery Projects Update	<p>Simon Bunn (NS Council) thanked members for allowing him to attend and updated on output from the Projects. He provided slides and explained how the projects were funded, as well as giving details of workstreams, techniques, surveys, studies, data and hydraulic modelling. He also shared the findings so far and would also like to present on progress at a later time.</p> <p>Giles Oliver (GO) asked how this potentially impacts on the IDB. Simon felt that they are not yet at a stage to know and explained they are engaging via FWAG and the Moor Association to gauge appetite. They are also developing software to look at water levels in rhynes which will be made available to the IDB’s. GO noted the SSSI corridors around rhynes.</p> <p>John Harris (JH) felt there is more geology than meets the eye with peat underneath the clay in the IDB area.</p> <p>Simon agreed this is the case: 3m of clay, 3m of peat from Weston to Banwell. By looking at peat they can influence and stop drying out.</p> <p>Peter Burden (PB) queried the map of Gordano Valley and river systems. This study proves the local view that the end of the valley has lost biodiversity since the motorway and waterways were installed, and asked if the EA could stop work at that end which is currently very dry.</p> <p>Simon agreed that Moor Associations are discussing this.</p> <p>The Chair observed half a meter depth has been lost, but it is not obvious.</p> <p>Simon agreed but noted it is sometimes more visible around structures some of which don’t move with the peat. They will continue to monitor from baseline.</p> <p>The Chair also noted greener grass in middle of peaty fields and wondered where the moisture is coming from</p> <p>Simon noted there is a study on the Somerset Levels showing similar. This makes it complicated and highly variable, and means they need to consider how to improve knowledge where there is uncertainty.</p> <p>David Crossman (DC) asked what the ultimate aim is. Is it stopping farming, will they have a choice and be paid.</p> <p>Simon explained it is about giving information to farmers for them to decide, based on the it. It may be that farming becomes less intensive, wetter farming, or choosing different crops. There is also possible funding/opportunity for agro-economics.</p> <p>Matt Wall (MW) asked if they are working with SWT (proposed Honeygar research facility).</p> <p>Simon explained all information will be available as part of the wider project.</p> <p>MW noted peat is different in different locations.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Iain Sturdy (IDS) entered at 15.06.</p>	
8. Governance /Updates	<p>IDS gave an update on recent flooding and the response, particularly in the Parrett IDB area and explained the moors have filled up more quickly than previously. We continue to monitor and provide advice.</p>	

He has also met with Ashley Fox MP, Tessa Munt and Sarah Dyke and asked them to question parliament about river maintenance.

**EA Consultation on Main River Withdrawal:** IDS updated on the latest consultation. There was recognition that the previous 6 months notice given didn't offer a consultation. This will now take place before the end of April and we continue to fight for resources for EA to reinstate maintenance. The EA are constrained by Defra allowance which fell significantly short of the amount bid for. We have asked the EA to share full details of what won't be done, and also asked for list of less well protected properties due to withdrawn maintenance. We are drafting a response to the consultation informed by the ADA Chairs meeting and resolution.

Alistair Mead (AM) noted the River Banwell was done in November. He feels we need to report back on the lack of coordination as well as the lack of funding (perhaps via Simon Bunn).

MW felt the river was cleaned because of the storm but would not have been done otherwise. IDS agreed it was done in a rush and there is a disconnect between practice and policy. We try to support local staff and push for change at EA at a higher level.

John Harris asked if there is still an agricultural representative on the WRFCC and wondered if we should promote somebody.

IDS advised that there is not. Tony Bradford was the last, however we have allies on the committee in Mike Stanton, and NS Council. We will share when vacancies arise.

**APPG Presentation:** IDS showed members his presentation given to the APPG in Westminster in December which represented what we have been pressing re shortfalls and perils of ignoring main river maintenance.

This is exactly what we are seeing in Moorland and wider IDB areas currently. There has been some argument regarding the natural purpose of the Levels, however people live and farm there, transport routes are affected and business and the regional economy are impacted by flooding. Maintenance helps ensure channel capacity and alleviates frequency, duration, extent and depth of flooding. We know flooding happens but need to manage its impact and have as much control as possible so that other resilience measures are not tested prematurely. There is no viable adaptation alternative in place, so rivers need to be maintained until there is. Creeping withdrawal and decline means water has nowhere to go other than into properties. The EA are not applying for SRA funding for the next year, which means that 75% of main river maintenance is no longer being funded. If rivers cannot discharge, it impacts our water courses and our ability to carry out our statutory function.

In 2014 the floods exposed neglect, which led to local funding. The IDB's would argue that the cost of repairing an asset is greater than maintaining it. The alternative is to plan the maintenance handover to reflect the changing climate. This could be done with local demaining/PCSA's but nobody can pick up the EA work straight away. IDS suggested 3-5 year transition so the baton can be handed over and not dropped as any gap leaves a risk. We are building support and visibility.

Nigel Cole asked about demaining and if rivers would need to be in a good state of repair. IDS agreed we would like this but there is no plan and the EA say it is not really their responsibility/no obligation.

The Chair noted that David Shopland's father paid in perpetuity for maintenance in 1925.

	<p><b>Approval of Policies following review:</b> In response to audit criticism last year, the following policies have been reviewed: Whistleblowing, Anti-Fraud, Gifts &amp; Hospitality, Bullying &amp; Harassment, Finance, Scheme of Delegation (2) (Enclosures 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9). These policies to be reviewed at Policy Subcommittee having delegated authority, with 3 members from each Board.</p> <p><b>NSL representatives: Tim Bush, Sandra Hearne, James Tonkin</b>  <b>Proposed: Peter Burden</b>  <b>Seconded: Peter Harris</b>  <b>All in favour</b></p> <p><b>Risk Management (Discussion/Update):</b> IDS updated on increasing risks which included Flooding, EA maintenance withdrawal and staff retention and succession planning: ageing officers, ill health etc. There is an awareness needed for future arrangements and recruitment is already tricky.</p> <p><b>Committee Membership:</b> to fill the vacancies on:  <b>Finance &amp; Works (elected member) Nigel Cole</b>  <b>Health &amp; Safety – Peter Harris</b>  <b>Investment – Sandra Hearne</b>  <b>Proposed: Peter Burden</b>  <b>Seconded: James Tonkin</b>  <b>All in favour</b></p>	<p><b>RESOLUTION 02</b></p> <p><b>RESOLUTION 03</b></p>
11. Finance Report	<p>Bank Statements all reconciled to 31/12/25 no issues.</p> <p>End of Year Financial Report &amp; Proposed Budget FY25/26: The North Somerset Levels IDB notes the forecast year-end position. This was fully discussed and scrutinised by F&amp;W. Maggie Hammond (MH) explained the surplus is due to rates and Special Levy being received, but some expenditure still to go. This is the year end forecast as best as we know showing variance. The proposed budget for 26/26 was also scrutinised by F&amp;W.</p> <p><b>The North Somerset Levels IDB approves the proposed 2026/27 budget and sets the penny rate for 2026/27 to 11.18 pence in the pound</b>  <b>Proposed: Sandra Hearne</b>  <b>Seconded: James Tonkin</b>  <b>All in favour</b></p> <p>Peter Burden (PB) proposed a vote of thanks to officers and congratulated staff for such clear presentation of the budgets.</p> <p>MH then explained the Plan B Budget <b>which is for illustrative purposes if we were to carry out some works not done by the EA</b>, and explained the potential impact on drainage rate and special levy.</p> <p>IDS added that it would particularly increase the special Levy cost to NS Council by £117k, so we need to engage the Council with the reality of movement of funding from national to local.</p> <p>AM asked what the EA will be doing with their money instead. IDS explained they have bid for enough but not been allocated the full amount.</p> <p>Peter Harris (PH) felt it would be useful to have an approved statement of cause and effect, i.e. using additional council tax to reduce home insurance premiums which would make it easier for people to accept.</p>	<p><b>RESOLUTION 04</b></p>

	<p>The Chair noted it is not an insurmountable increase for this Board compared to the other two which could also reduce some maintenance and not main river every year. IDS noted that consultation will inform this. Plan B is just to stimulate debate. PH feels people will be broadly supportive if it is explained properly. IDS felt ratepayers understand, but council tax is more tricky. NC asked if coastal defences are from a different budget for EA and will the £77k include this. IDS explained we pay a precept, but doesn't think it includes coastal defence. He will check.</p> <p>MH explained works reserves and money raised in previous years. She outlined F&amp;W recommendations. GO clarified this is new money for work not in the existing budget for repairs to existing bridges for access.</p> <p><b>1. The North Somerset Levels IDB approves the reallocation of £21,000 within works reserve to fund the emergency works in 2025/26 for both Ten Foot Rhyne East Bridge Repair and Ten Foot Rhyne West Bridge Deck Repair</b></p> <p><b>2. The North Somerset Levels IDB approves the reallocation of £17,100 within the works reserve to fully fund the Ten Foot Rhyne Nailsea Wall project</b></p> <p><b>3. The North Somerset Levels IDB approves repurposing of the remaining 2025/26 underspend on projects of £36,084.18 to future projects</b></p> <p><b>Proposed Claire Hunt</b>  <b>Seconded: Alistair Mead</b>  <b>All in favour</b></p> <p><b>Outstanding Drainage Rates</b>  There are 703 accounts with a zero balance and 14 accounts in credit (£260.48) leaving 73 accounts with an outstanding balance from 26p to £867.02 totalling £5,132.49. This time last year the outstanding balance was £6,222.70. MH clarified we will take 7 non-payers to court.</p>	<p><b>ACTION NSL/20260128 -01</b></p> <p><b>RESOLUTION 05</b></p>
<p>12. Operational &amp; Engineering Reports</p>	<p><b>OPERATIONS</b></p> <p>David Crossman (DC) provided updates on: A culvert on the Congresbury Yeo where the EA have put a camera up. The culvert is blocked, they will jet it. They will also look at trees on Black Ditch and the River Kenn but may suggest the landowner do it despite the EA planting the trees. Dan Alsop will continue to chase re clearing the ditch beside Portbury 100 railway line. DC is negotiating with Simon Bunn over Farley Fields as no offsite works are included. Need NS to use our contractor to desilt the rhyne. Network Rail will do Yatton to Backwell.</p> <p>Matt Wall (MW) updated on maintenance completed so far. The contractor has now completed most of the work. Anthony Brinson (AB) added that Hutton and Locking Rhyne was omitted from the second keetch causing a mass of weed and flooding from a blocked culvert. This proves the importance of a second keetch on some watercourses.</p> <p>MW updated that routine maintenance from the highway can now be progressed as agreed with NS Council.. Some has been done already and feedback is positive.</p> <p>At Blind Yeo Rhyne at Summer Lane whilst accessing for maintenance we found an asbestos cement main parallel with the Rhyne. We have contacted Bristol water who are happy for us to</p>	

proceed as we are just tracking over the top, and they have also given us a map of asbestos mains in the area so we are aware.

MW then covered Rob King's slides which showed the 870 assets surveyed across the 3 boards. His team have addressed everything dangerous, and are now working through the defects list. MH highlighted on the budget how much has been done on assets in this financial year. IDS noted the improvements in asset management were prompted from a safety perspective as a response to an incident.

### **ENGINEERING**

Giles Oliver (GO) updated members on the projects programme for this year showing those completed and minor outstanding.

Crossmans Hatch: the main structure is complete although weather has paused works. Telemetry and eel passes to go in then reinstatement. This should equal the funding applied for, anything leftover will be returned.

Elver passes at Tickenham Boundary Rhyne and Crossmans Hatch: 26/27 programme shows additional funding from April. A Contractor has been secured for the 10 Foot Rhyne access bridge at Nailsea Wall, and road closures being booked to deliver at the end of March/April.

Hurstpool Rhyne tilting weir: this is complicated and has been retendered. Engineers will revisit to find a solution.

New budgets are in place for Nye Road Bridge access bridge and Liddy Yeo tilting weir with additional funding for faulty gearbox.

The Chair asked if landowners will be asked to help to fund new culverts at Kingston. GO is unsure at this stage.

JH asked to what extent extra concrete from development will put strain on the drainage system. PH noted they are all designed using Suds and should have no effect.

Virginie Martin (VM) advised the problem is that there is no obligation to reduce the volume of runoff, which has increased. Multiple repeat rainfall events send water to the floodplain so it floods a lot quicker. We are looking at the impact in other areas and asking developers to reduce volume as well as runoff and provide attenuation in flow and volume.

Wendy Griggs (WG) noted the Yatton proposal which was turned down on flooding grounds has gone to the High Court. It has been overridden at the Council, but developers are generally granted at appeal.

PB feels runoff issues are a real problem as schemes are putting stormwater into the foul sewer.

Deborah Yamanaka (DY) wondered whether any objections from the IDB have been overruled by Somerset historically. **VM will check.**

Alistair Mead commented that every development has to slow the rate, and they spend millions. He feels at the Persimmon site it is to do with the flood plain not runoff.

### **DEVELOPMENT CONTROL**

VM updated on the Banwell Bypass. Her team have been receiving consent apps since last year for 100 structures/temporary diversions and culverts. There are 4 left to grant, then they will step back and oversee only.

An enforcement action needs consideration from the Board on a culvert at Kewstoke. We have been patient and given plenty of time

**ACTION  
NSL/20260128  
-02**

	<p>and support, but have had no response so recommend serving notice to remove the culvert.  <b>Recommend serving notice on the landowner for the removal of the culverts at land at Kewstoke with the support of Wilkin Chapman Rollits solicitors.</b>  <b>Proposed: Sandra Hearne</b>  <b>Seconded: James Tonkin</b>  <b>All in favour</b></p> <p><b>ENVIRONMENT</b>  Phil Brewin (PB) asked members to take his report as read.  Anthony B left at 16.41</p> <p><b>Eels:</b> PB updated on eel passes and showed a map of structures in place and passage through the system. We continue to work with the EA on this.  Alistair left at 16.42</p> <p>We will continue to develop our programme as identified by Dan Alsop. There are no pumping stations in NS which helps with eel populations.  Bob Mitchell (BM) asked if eels can get into the system from the sea. PB explained some are not passable, in EA programme, but others are. It is being monitored in the Parrett and eels are found congregating in high tides. We could look at research with volunteer organisations and can adjust to allow for them.</p> <p><b>Peat:</b> the Landscape Recovery project (Avon Wildlife Trust) for peat should be scrutinised at Board level to look at opportunities. WLMP's need updating in line with legislative framework and ADA/Defra. We are looking at scope to build capacity to make this happen. Defra peat funding has been used for telemetry and there may be some more in future for discovery and implementation.</p> <p><b>Beavers:</b> PB is actively involved with ADA advising Defra. A long term management plan is being written with protocols. AWT are also focusing on this and setting up a beaver management group. Beavers are starting to pop up nearby so we will need to consider. The species is protected but there are measures in place to mitigate damage.</p> <p><b>Badgers:</b> PB explained we work with contractors to know where they are, and also hold licences. We deal with them appropriately and collect records.  JH asked if Area Supervisors should hold badger licences. PB advised we have enough and have not used them in 2 years. We need AS's to understand how we work effectively around them, PB will offer training in the spring.</p>	<p><b>RESOLUTION 06</b></p>
<p>13. Any Other Business</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Chair noted we need another elected Board member. Possibly from South of the area. Suggested Dan Ball. Please keep in mind and advise.</li> </ul>	
<p>14. Date of Next Meeting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full Board Meeting Wed 15 April 2026. CEO and chair to decide if needed or not.</li> <li>Environment Committee Tues 10 February 2026</li> </ul> <p>The Chair thanked members for their attendance.  Meeting closed at 16.57</p>	

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

**NORTH SOMERSET LEVELS BOARD MINUTES  
DATED 28 January 2026**

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

Action Number:	Action:	Actionee:
<b>NSL/20260128-01</b>	To check if EA funding covers coastal defence	IDS
<b>NSL/20260128-02</b>	To check if any IDB objections to planning have been overturned historically	VM