

**MINUTES OF THE AXE BRUE FULL BOARD MEETING  
Monday 26 JANUARY 2026 AT 10.30 IN BRADBURY HOUSE**

| <b>Attendance:</b>  |   |   |  |
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| <b>Elected Members:</b><br>Wendy Welland<br>Anthony Dowden<br>Andrew Gilling<br>Joe Stradling<br>Alan Franks<br>Bob Clapp<br>David Tratt<br>Mark Lunnon<br>Liz Scott<br>Harvey Smith<br>Garry Puddy | <b>Appointed Members:</b><br>Cllr Bob Filmer<br>Cllr Alistair Hendry<br>Phil Holms<br>James Grischeff<br>Cllr Bryan<br>Knickerbocker<br>Cllr Mark Healey<br>Cllr Mike Stanton<br>Cllr Peter Clayton<br>Cllr Jon Cousins | <b>Officers:</b><br>Iain Sturdy<br>Margaret Hammond<br>Katy Carleton<br>Matthew Wall<br>Rob King<br>Virginie Martin<br>Caroline Murray<br>Phil Brewin | <b>Public:</b><br>Bill Smart (Wedmore<br>Parish Council) |
| <b>Approved Apologies:</b>  |   |   |  |
| Trevor Whitcombe  | Donna Gowler<br>Cllr Hayward Burt<br>Cllr Roger Keen  |   |  |

| <b>Agenda Item:</b>                     | <b>Description:</b>  | <b>ACTION</b>            |
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| 1<br>Attendance<br>& Apologies          | The meeting opened at 10.29<br>Apologies have been received from Trevor Whitcombe, Donna Gowler.   |                          |
| 2 Items<br>Additional to<br>the         | MH has received an email from LSIDB regarding the SWADA meeting inviting us to visit a structure and add the meeting on to the day.<br>VM noted that unconsented works reported since the report will be included in her Development Control update.   |                          |
| 3<br>Declarations<br>of Interest        | Copies of the Code of Conduct and Declaration of Interest Forms were circulated at the meeting for all members to complete and return to KC.<br>Anthony Dowden (AD) declared an interest in the container at Butleigh.<br>Liz Scott (LS) declared an interest in CR2   |                          |
| 4 Members<br>of the Public              | Bill Smart, Wedmore Parish Council. He raised the matter of the EA notice on riparian owners re withdrawal of maintenance. He learned from the WRFCC meeting that the EA has been awarded less money than requested. Given the IDB is the only alternative to pick up work, could the Board consider an increase workload of this magnitude.<br>IDS noted this will be covered under Governance Update which will address this question. |                          |
| 5 Minutes of<br>the previous<br>meeting | <b>“the minutes of the Full Board meeting held on 3 November 2025 are signed as a true and correct record of the meeting held”.</b><br><b>Proposed: Wendy Welland</b><br><b>Seconded: Joe Stradling</b><br><b>All in favour</b>  | <b>RESOLUTION<br/>01</b> |

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| <p>6 Matters Arising</p> | <p><b>Review of Actions:</b><br/> <b>AB/20251103-01</b> Draft something for Developing Future Objectives for IDB Water Level Management (Vision). IDS updated that this is gaining momentum nationally. Last week the EA noted they are keen to start to update existing Water Level Management Plans and also develop for areas where they don't exist. They have previously been written by the IDB's since the 1990's and were very comprehensive in terms of detail at the time. The involved parties have been the IDB's the EA and Natural England. The latest drive is around lack of funding for EA maintenance, local initiatives (Agratas), climate change and satisfying flood risk and environmental needs. WLMP's will need to consider all this. IDS/PB/NS have been working on this recently with regards the IDB role. The expectation is growing and the research is in progress.<br/> James Grischeff (JG) asked about the timing and where the Board could interact/engage with outside agencies. He is keen to be involved. IDS noted these discussions are taking place. A draft would come to the Board to be looked at by a subcommittee.<br/> LS noted this is complicated due to the EA situation, and we need to also consider the Bristol Water reservoirs proposal. IDS agreed and noted Virginie Martin is involved. There was also meeting last week about Bleadon Sluice to provide water. The EA are looking for it to be reinstated as an active structure.<br/> Harvey Smith (HS) asked about timescale for the plan. IDS would like to bring to April or June full board if possible but there are many prioritise running currently and that may not be possible.</p> <p><b>AB/20251103 -02</b> Liaise with A Dowden to find consent for Tor Rugby Club. AD advised he had previously had a green file of consents. MW and VM looked for this after the meeting but nothing found. AD thinks they may be in county archive. HS advised his father may have copies. MW and VM will follow up both.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Alistair Hendry left at 10.52</p> <p><b>AB/20251103 -03</b> Investigate damaged culvert on Tealham Moor as raised by Alan Franks. Matt Wall (MW) noted that after works were completed the culverts were handed back to riparian owners. AF feels they were never really left in good order and it has deteriorated affecting water supply/drainage. We can look at if necessary and can add to programme, or emergency works. MW and RK to follow up with AF and ML.</p> <p><b>AB/20251103 -04</b> 2 culverts off Tealham Drove need new posts (culverts under droves) as raised by M Lunnon. MW/RK see above</p> <p><b>AB/20251103 -05</b> To identify if any clusters/area specific where drainage rates not paid, possibly due to EA withdrawal. MH advised this has been looked at with no clusters being identified across the board.</p> <p><b>AB/20251103 -06</b> Clarify arrears with A Dowden. MH explained arrears are cumulative from previous years. Money is still coming in from arrears. She has shared this with AD. Notices to serve will go out this week.</p> <p><b>AB/20251103 -07</b> Meet with H Smith at 12ft rhyne as felt work not done well. MW and Harvey met and have sent Ben and Charlie to do silt surveys. We are proposing to carry out work later this year if needed. HS updated that a poor job was done on the ditch, a yard flooded locally as it was taking run-off water. The retention pond is not taking the water and is close to flooding the hospital. He would like it done asap. MW noted that</p> | <p><b>ACTION</b><br/> <b>AB/20260126-01</b></p> <p><b>ACTION</b><br/> <b>AB/20260126-02</b></p> |
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|                                      | <p>works depend on ground conditions. The section by Hartlake Bridge - Ditch off ten foot rhyne/twelve foot rhyne has not been maintained. Mark Lunnon (ML) noted it needs clearing. IDS asked for the matter to be picked up properly outside the meeting.</p> <p><b>AB/20251103 -08</b> Go to site with G Puddy to show where works not done/completed. MW met with GP and noted that a section of City Rhyne is difficult to maintain. Some handwork is needed and desilting will take place towards the end of the year.</p> <p><b>AB/20251103 -09</b> reinforce with Area Supervisors to check works completed are satisfactory. MW has met with them and followed up with an email to clarify. Please continue to raise any operational concerns. DT asked who is responsible for hand cleaning. He is concerned it is not happening in his area. There are brambles over the banks and meeting in the middle. In Bleadon, volume of floating pennywort is causing big issues. DT feels this is not happening in his area. IDS thanked David and noted he is also concerned. Handwork is generally carried out by contractors. We will have to look at and the work they have completed with them to ensure they are picking this up as per contracts. MW noted sometimes the Area Supervisors do it.</p> <p>ML said no handwork has been done in many years. He has raised ditch at Gagney Lane contractor doesn't do a third of it.</p> <p>LS added Axbridge Moor and Crossmoor have not been done and Ellenge Stream bush work needs cutting back. Also the gatepost has fallen in at the bottom of Middle Rhyne/West Drove.</p> <p>AD feels concerned that work is being signed off by the area supervisors that has not been done. MW agreed that work should not be signed off if it is not complete or not up to standard. IDS asked members to please provide specific locations that we can investigate if they have concerns. ML asked if we record and take pictures. MW noted that Area Supervisors record and take pictures on the mobile App that we have developed for this purpose. He invited ML to wait after the meeting to demonstrate this. IDS explained applications and software allow us to record work. The work force are instructed to record and take pictures using the App of water levels adjustments and any works every time a structure is visited. We remind them frequently, they are getting better at it. There are concerns over some work not being done so officers will look into that. Some viewed rhynes are marked "as and when required", under instruction by the Contracts Manager on an hourly rate.</p> <p>ML stretches were all numbered and inspected. MW said we can check them and offered to look at with ML after the meeting.</p> <p>JS noted there are clearly some problem areas, can we register them so members can highlight and ask them to be checked specifically. MW agreed they can be flagged as key areas. JS suggested members email MW.</p> <p>HS highlighted a section of Middle Drove which has not been touched.</p> <p><b>AB/20251103 -10</b> Rotate officers slots on future agendas. Completed.</p> | <p><b>ACTION</b><br/><b>AB/20260126-03</b></p> |
| <p>7<br/>Governance/<br/>Updates</p> | <p><b>Updates:</b><br/>IDS attended the Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (WRFCC) last week which considers the whole of Wessex region. The key issue is around the importance of main river maintenance, lack of funding and the impact on our system. We encourage the EA to push back to their decision makers when funding is inadequate. The EA bid for money and there is usually a significant shortfall in what they are awarded as we have reported many times before to the Board . Much of the unfunded work is within the Boards areas. The central problem is on</p>   |  |

maintenance spending, however this is skewed by an increase in costs capital projects. They also use a metric to describe increase in number of properties better protected by capital investment. We have suggested also reporting what is less well protected due to lack of maintenance and what is not in the target condition. We feel there will not be a change in maintenance investment in the near future

The new EA Board member on the WRFCC is a chartered civil engineer and Royal Academy member. A recent article from the RA noted 60% of public assets are in the last 25% of their lifespan. The report suggests the country should increase investment in maintenance. The WRFCC list identifies all watercourses not being maintained. We are being consulted by the EA alongside riparian owners regarding formal maintenance withdrawal on some watercourses. Last years initiative from EA was to give notice of their intent to withdraw from maintenance, but this did not correctly follow their agreed protocol, so they are now undertaking a formal consultation.

HS noted Defra are not happy with EA as the decision was not consulted. IDS noted Efra and APPG have committed to raise visibility of the issue. Defra and minister are not getting the message from the EA, but hopefully will from us. Local EA staff are unable to push back to National teams because they are constrained by Policy frameworks which are risk averse but not cost effective.

DT noted Fridays meeting brought up the possibility of the Floods Minister visiting this spring and asked if we can lead the narrative/agenda for this. IDS explained that via ADA we have met with Branch Chairs in Newark where a resolution was passed to set up a task force which Innes took to the minister. We push for adequate funding for flood risk and will continue to do so. We are also engaging with Sadik Al-Hassan, Tessa Munt, Gideon Amos and Sarah Dyke. We pushed for the additional temporary pumps to be installed last week at Northmoor and Currymoor, however they waited for the trigger point criteria to be met which lead to delay

MS clarified that Sarah Dyke has asked Emma Hardy twice to visit Somerset. She has agreed, but no date yet. It is clear that the EA don't have the money or staff and are not in a position to do all of the maintenance needed The IDB's will probably need to build up capacity and cover some of the work where possible, alongside riparian owners. However due to the EAs withdrawal, lack of co ordination and oversight is likely to be problematic.

The SRA issue grants for works. The EA have previously applied for and got grants to cover gaps in Main River maintenance funding. However they have not applied this next year as they don't have the resources/contractors available. MS doesn't feel they have the ability and wonders if there is an internal conflict of interest at EA between the environment and the management of flood risk.

The Chair noted the priority and importance the EA give to protecting property and that other flood risk has a lower priority.

HS believes the IDB's should do this work. IDS noted funding and capacity is the issue. EA revenue is from national taxation which will not increase. Where national resources are inadequate to meet the local need it looks as if there will be a future need towards local funding to fund local choices. Most of our IDB funding comes from special levy which is essentially a taxation on Council Tax payers. SRA funding is also locally generated from Council Tax and was not welcomed by all when it was first introduced so there is no easy answer.

LS asked if the precept the IDB's pay to the EA will continue if we take on maintenance. IDS noted that we can't refuse to pay it, although we could

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|  | <p>appeal if we think it is disproportionate to the service the Boards receive. The precept we pay is already fully used on higher priority work so they will be able to do even less if we withhold it. There are efficiencies that could be achieved, but we need to do things correctly and not just withhold payment of the precept. He asked at the APPG that any changes and withdrawal should not happen at short notice as small agencies can't pick up this work overnight. IS felt that whilst the IDB can pick up some of the slack, and have already done so to some extent, it would take at least 3 years to build up the capacity to take on all of the work EA are unable to deliver.</p> <p>LS noted a problem upstream on the Axe previously where farmers offered to carry out maintenance, but the EA objected. IDS explained the notice from EA led to our original response over lack of coordination.</p> <p><b>Risk Management</b><br/>IDS discussed the most significant risks which now sit on our Risk Register:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EA withdrawal as already discussed (high and increasing risk).</li> <li>• Staff retention and succession planning is an increasing risk. In particular within management and leadership roles. We will need to consider and plan for the future as several staff are approaching the age where they could retire. At other levels in the organisation, the pay offer is similar to the EA but we need to keep an eye on succession planning and recruit for gaps.</li> <li>• Flooding is currently in a period of heightened risk. This helps us identify problem areas and make the case for improvement</li> </ul> <p>AF noted that recent works he has carried out as a riparian owner have improved conditions this year.</p> <p>JG added the work was done, but permits were very frustrating and costly to maintain a section of EA river. IDS noted these cases serve to support our case.</p> <p><b>Approval of Policies</b><br/><b>In response to audit criticism last year revised draft</b> copies of the following Policies were sent to members for consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whistleblowing,</li> <li>• Anti Fraud,</li> <li>• Gifts &amp; Hospitality,</li> <li>• Bullying &amp; Harassment,</li> <li>• Financial, Scheme of Delegation.</li> </ul> <p>These need to be reviewed, approved, re-dated and re-signed to satisfy the AGAR auditor. We would like to set up a subcommittee to complete these with delegated authority from each Board. The critical date is up to 31 March 2026.</p> <p><b>To give delegated authority for the approval of Board Policies to Wendy Welland, Harvey Smith, Mike Stanton as part of the Consortium Policy Sub Committee.</b><br/><b>Proposed: Joe Stradling</b><br/><b>Seconded: Liz Scott</b><br/><b>All in favour</b></p> <p><b>Wendy suggested a deputy: James Grischeff volunteered.</b><br/><b>Proposed: Wendy Welland</b><br/><b>Seconded: Bob Filmer</b><br/><b>All in favour</b></p> | <p><b>RESOLUTION 02</b></p> <p><b>RESOLUTION 03</b></p> |
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|                          | <p>AD questioned the value of Bradbury House and asked where the loss in value is identified in the accounts. MH explained it is on Row 26 and will be covered under Item 8 Finance.</p> <p><b>Possible SRA Additional Funding for 2026-27</b><br/> This is linked to back to the maintenance issue previously discussed. A figure of £330k may be available for bidding for funding Main River work next year. We are keen to do some of this work in 26-27 if we have funding and resources. There are risks that funding like this may not be available in future years so we need to choose carefully what work we take on. We have been awaiting a list of what Main Rivers the EA will not maintain in future which we now have. The Brue is not on the list.<br/> HS feels there is a high risk of Glastonbury being flooded. He would like there to be a bid for Hartlake/Long Drove.<br/> Caroline Murray (CM) added that the SRA Technical Group meeting highlighted there is money available for an enhanced programme of maintenance and SRA would like a formal expression of interest by 5/2/26. MS suggested putting in a bid in principle for which not much detail is needed.</p> <p><b>Committees</b><br/> Membership of sub committees was reviewed and the policy committee was added.<br/> Phil Brewin (PB) reminded members of the Environment Committee. The Axe Brue Board has deputies but the other Boards don't, he would suggest coming in line to be consistent. PB would prefer an increase in members instead. The committee will find a consensus. JG is happy to attend as a member or as a deputy, in any capacity.</p>   | <p><b>ACTION</b><br/> <b>AB/20260126-04</b></p> |
| <p>8. Finance Report</p> | <p>All Bank Statements are reconciled to 31/12/25 with no concerns. Board member Jon Cousins (JC) has checked them.</p> <p>MH presented her End of Year Financial Report &amp; Proposed Budget FY26/27 which was previously considered and discussed at F&amp;W committee who have recommended the Board to approve. The main variance is on the property valuation loss which the Board has the reserves to absorb.<br/> AD noted the large sums spent on purchase and refurbishment.<br/> AF asked if it was worth more valuations. MH noted only one of the several agents we asked agreed to value it.<br/> JS noted the figure is just a correction as the building has depreciated more than expected.<br/> AD asked what is unspent on routine maintenance what has not taken place this year. MW advised that maintenance is 90% complete with some still to do. There are some additional costs for traffic management and hourly rates, and no underspend predicted. MH confirmed the difference is the forecast including inflation.<br/> JG asked about no spend on WLMP and if will it need budget allocated. MH advised there is a small amount of ringfenced reserve for those items held on the balance sheet.<br/> AF highlighted working on the highways and feels there are savings to be made over the years by training in-house staff to carry out traffic management as he feels they are not busy. ML agreed.<br/> MW explained that whilst prices for NASWAR Q1 &amp; S1 training are £215 per person, he still feels this responsibility sits with the Contractor.<br/> AF feels this is better than £600 per day. ML feels it is cheaper for us to get licences than a traffic management company.</p> |   |

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|  | <p>IDS disagreed with the suggestion that Area Supervisors are not busy and explained the Board would probably need to employ more staff if it were to carry out this work. He noted the contract relationship between a client and a contractor the need for clarity of roles. The incident that triggered this change involved confusion in the clarity of roles and responsibilities, and this made the investigation very complicated. The contractor must be accountable for delivering the work with any safety measures needed and risks managed effectively to merge those tasks between client and contractor makes responsibility and accountability unclear. The Boards need to instruct the contractor to carry out the work correctly and we are proposing that there is no crossover. In addition to this we have brought down the additional cost by reducing how much work will need to be done from the highway.</p> <p>AF noted his concerns that working from fields takes longer and there is the liability of tracking along roads. He feels costs will get out of hand or work may not be done such as sections on Tealham Moor Road.</p> <p>IDS reiterated the responsibility to do work safely and compliantly. This fulfils the need.</p> <p>M Lunnon asked if we need to change the contracts. IDS explained it is not a new contract but a standard instruction under existing ones.</p> <p>JS responded that may be a kneejerk reaction, but agrees that actually it is a conflict of interests and agrees with the approach.</p> <p>CM noted the engineering programme has improved maintenance access routes wherever possible and they can look at any other locations if possible. MW noted a location near Ivydown ditch where this has been done.</p> <p>HS noted Long Drove last year where we utilised a Council road closure for resurfacing. He suggested a section at the top of 12ft Rhyne near West Pennard.</p> <p>MW noted we do this and will use road closures where possible.</p> <p><b>The Axe Brue IDB approves the proposed 2026/27 budget as recommended by the Finance &amp; Works Committee and to set the penny rate for 2026/27 to 11.027 pence in the pound</b><br/> <b>Proposed: Jon Cousins</b><br/> <b>Seconded: Wendy Welland</b><br/> <b>All in favour</b></p> <p>The “<b>Plan B</b>” budget was then explained by MH showing the additional cost for this scenario to take on additional EA work with no additional funding from other sources which would equate to a 30.04% increase in the penny rate. This is significant <b><u>and for illustrative purposes only</u></b>.</p> <p>HS asked about SRA funding. MH explained this is not guaranteed every year. IDS explained he asked MH to prepare “Plan B” just to give an indication particularly to appointed members of the potential burden on SC budget if the IDB were to take that approach. For visibility going forwards.</p> <p>JC asked how much a Band D council tax payer would pay in this scenario. BF noted the Council is capped on any increase. They have already appealed this so would be a debate about what loses out.</p> <p>DT felt it would be useful to know how many households pay it, and increasing the number of households may reduce this.</p> <p>JC noted that if Somerset prioritised it they could find the money.</p> <p>JS echoed this but noted it is the responsibility of the Board to represent ratepayers, not how SC spends its money.</p> <p>IDS noted this discussion is helpful: funding is one side of the coin, capacity to do the work is also important, and at this stage we do not have capacity to take on all of this work.</p> | <p><b>ACTION</b><br/> <b>AB/20260126-05</b></p> <p><b>ACTION</b><br/> <b>AB/20260126-06</b></p> <p><b>RESOLUTION</b><br/> <b>04</b></p> |
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|  | <p>MH explained that if we look to increase Special Levy the Council will say no at some point as they would need to make additional cuts elsewhere. MS asked if Plan B has been advised to SC. MH advised it has but we do not anticipate it being implemented. It is for illustrative purposes to help members understand the potential consequences of taking on work which is not otherwise funded. JG asked about other opportunities such as Agratas and CR2. The Chair felt it may not be high on their priority list. MH noted these are one off not ongoing.</p> <p>JS suggested raising rates incrementally rather than as a one off. MH noted the free reserve position, if we were not ready to do the work, we could be criticised. Also the first time we maintain a watercourse will be more costly than subsequent years.</p> <p>JS wondered if we should not pressure the EA any more. IDS showed his final slide from APPG presentation: It is accepted we will have a part to play.</p> <p>JC feels that flooding will not be a priority for SC until a repeat of 2014/5. Someone has to take responsibility. IDS agreed and noted that historically additional investment and resources in maintenance and assets are often made available as a one off measure after a major flood.</p> <p>Bill Smart noted in light of his question, he is heartened to hear this discussion and support and thanked the Board.</p> <p>BF said that there may be reluctance from ratepayers without a plan in place. We need to be able to show the transition.</p> <p>DT proposed that over next few months MH gets the numbers of council tax payers in Somerset and North Somerset to get an understanding of how it might affect them. MH to share with F&amp;W</p> <p>MS noted it is an impossible problem. There is an oddity on the additional rate for the SRA which was set by 2016 council tax and has not increased in line with inflation, so diminishes every year. He is looking to get it re-based. The increase is down to new properties.</p> <p><b>The Axe Brue IDB agrees the reallocation of underspend in the Swallows Siphon and Cornmoor Culvert works reserve and to release £27,544.07 from free reserves to fully fund the costs of delivering the Vole Road Project</b><br/> <b>Proposed: David Tratt</b><br/> <b>Seconded: Wendy Welland</b><br/> <b>All in favour</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outstanding Drainage Rates<br/> Outstanding Drainage rates £20,416. This is 2k more than last year, but they have not yet been to court.<br/> AD asked if any are more than 2 or 3 years old. MH noted there are some. This is total not just this year.<br/> MS asked what role elected members play in their areas. MH noted they help identify land where we do not know the owner. HS noted he has spoken to people locally and they are more willing to pay.<br/> DT asked about West Rhyne improvements as it has been deteriorating and needs looking at/funds put aside. WW agreed. Caroline needs to review the status of the design.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointment of Internal Auditor (Appendix D). MH asked the Board to note the content of this Paper.</li> </ul> <p><b>That Axe Brue 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><br/> <b>Proposed: Harvey Smith</b><br/> <b>Seconded: James Grischeff</b></p> | <p><b>RESOLUTION<br/>05</b></p> <p><b>ACTION<br/>AB/20260126-<br/>07</b></p> <p><b>RESOLUTION<br/>07</b></p> |
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|                       | <p><b>All in favour</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Mark Lunnon left 13.25</p>  |  |
| 10 Environment Report | <p>Phil Brewin (PB) asked members to take his report as read. He explained they have caught up on maintenance and repairs on ageing telemetry with a few faults still requiring resolution. There will be an Axe Brue focus this year. He has also submitted expression of interest with SWT on additional monitoring in locations which benefit the Board such as QSM. Glastonbury Lake Village groundwater data helps justify this application. SWT have a more suitable way of monitoring. By working in partnership we can make efficiencies.</p> <p>The WLMP will be covered in more detail by the Environment Committee. He is also talking to ADA/Defra re modernising plans.</p> <p>Defra have announced additional funding for peat. We may wish to apply for some implementation grants. There may also be capacity to employ someone to manage these projects.</p> <p>Beaver sightings are increasing. PB is advising Defra/ADA on strategy /management plan on potential impacts.</p> <p>Issues with badger licencing have been resolved. Protocols and responsibilities are in PB's report.</p> <p>PH noted GLV is a good indicator of ground water levels. PB noted his chart shows the most extreme data. Climate is a definite impact and a concern. HS feels this goes back to maintenance and investment in infrastructure is needed on the Millstream. Joe S noted his peat shrank by 14cm this summer, which was extreme.</p> |  |
| 9 SWT Update          | <p><b>Somerset Wildlife Trust</b></p> <p>James Grischeff (JG) circulated a document on proposed planning at Honeygar Farm. The site is used for research and telemetry on peat and carbon, shrinkage, nutrients etc. There is lots of evidence but still looking for some answers with lots of work being done and universities involved in research. They are also looking at wildlife and grazing cows. There is a farmhouse and buildings on the site which they would like to turn into site laboratories, with communities and farmers for a peatland research facility.</p> <p>IDS noted if this is to ask the Board if they would support this scheme.</p> <p>JG explained there will be a planning application. He is interested to know the Boards thoughts.</p> <p>Phil Holms asked if there is any public access, café etc. JG noted nothing planned.</p> <p>AF sees no difficulty in this. Wondered that originally this farm was a dairy farm, now very low input in terms of cattle etc. He feels to balance what is happening to peat it would benefit from an area of more high input. JG referred to the landscape recovery project which contains control sites and confirmed this is the intention.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Gary Puddy left at 13.48</p> <p>IDS asked that the Board not compromise itself re planning.</p> <p>JG confirmed this is just for information.</p>  |  |
| 11 Ops & Eng Reports  | <p><b>OPERATIONS:</b></p> <p>Rob King (RK) provided an update on survey inspections to the 8<sup>th</sup> January, with 870 structures inspected so far.</p> <p>It has been a busy period with penning, and flood issues recently and over the weekend.</p> <p>RK then showed slides of upgrades to damaged/unsafe structures following the surveys. There has been a big push to get Axe Brue structures safe and less accessible to the public.</p> <p>RK asked Board members to contact him directly with any issues/damage to any structures/watercourses as they arise rather than waiting for Board meetings. The rate of weed growth is often faster than can be kept up with.</p>   |  |

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|  | <p><b>MAINTENANCE:</b></p> <p>Matt Wall (MW) asked members to take his report as read and showed the maintenance map of what is completed/not completed. Current wet conditions have impacted this.</p> <p>AF asked if working from the highway can be done in line with/within weeks of other works rather than months later – specifically Brook Bank, Lewis Drove and Lucys Ditch.</p> <p>MW explained we will do this as much as possible, but also need to consider the economy of additional cost of working from the road.</p> <p>Joe asked if the progress is comparable to previous years. MW explained it would usually be 95%, but working from the highway has delayed some areas. This is consistent with previous years.</p> <p>HS is concerned that less time than usual has been spent on Twelve Foot Rhyne and works not completed. It has only been done once a year and he feels the contractor was asked to do a minimal job.</p> <p>MW explained this is at the Area Supervisors instruction/oversight. He has followed this matter up, and it was due to ground conditions. It will be done better in future and needs doing twice a year. He will follow up with contractor.</p> <p>Existing contracts have been rolled over except for Kowle Moor and Westbury Moor where the contractor did not wish to roll over. Works will be picked up under hourly rates.</p> <p>Ivydown Ditch, Biddisham: MW updated that we went back to reinstate the problem area but access has now been severely restricted by the land owner who has been consistently difficult. It is a battle every year and access now has electric gates and narrow access. This impacts properties upstream. MW asked the Board to consider how to resolve access issues at this location.</p> <p>IDS noted we have powers of entry under notice. When there is an obstruction we have further powers to compel them to do the work, or we do and recharge, or charge for days of obstruction. We usually try to work and cooperate without incurring risk and cost. We have exhausted this at this location and need Board support to escalate to a higher level. It has been nearly 20 years.</p> <p>JS asked if the argument is that we maintain from his side. IDS noted a desire to develop is possibly the reason. It is a difficult situation due to the attitude of the landowner.</p> <p>AD has dealt with the landowner previously who had partly agreed we could clean it by hand. Another option was to create alternative access, but he refused. Overhead cables are a problem. There was a suggestion to do by hand, but decided not to do this. MW advised when the rhyne was previously not cleaned, it nearly flooded properties upstream so is critical.</p> <p>DT asked about access from NE of the land. Is there a way to re-route and take out of view. MW noted it is constrained. Every other part of the rhyne is maintained.</p> <p>AD noted culverting this section was previously suggested. MW noted we would still need to access to clear and maintain a culvert.</p> <p><b>Propose that the Board support officers in whatever the appropriate access to escalate this matter.</b></p> <p><b>Proposed: Jon Cousins</b></p> <p><b>Seconded: Joe Stradling</b></p> <p><b>All in favour</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;">14.16 Jon Cousins left</p> | <p><b>ACTION</b><br/><b>AB/20260126-08</b></p> <p><b>RESOLUTION</b><br/><b>08</b></p> |
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**ENGINEERING**

Caroline asked members to take her report as read and encouraged members to contact her outside the meeting for detail on any project on the programme.

SRA Technical Group meeting confirmed we don't need a variation request for Brocks Pill and to go ahead and utilise funding. Photos show the scale of the issue. Similarly with syphon work, they will add an additional one to the programme as identified by the Operations team using leftover funding.

IDS noted syphon work is investigation not fixing or accepting liability as ownership is unknown. We have gathered evidence to identify risk.

**DEVELOPMENT CONTROL**

Virginie Martin (VM) asked members to take her report as read.

Northwick Rhyne: VM updated on the success on notice served with the fence now mostly removed and replaced with electric fencing so we can maintain. We will go back and complete maintenance when conditions allow.

Church Road East Huntspill: the landowner has said his structure is removeable at short notice. We will ask him to demonstrate this. Any consent will come with conditions. MW added that this was an open channel which was previously culverted with conditions.

Ashley Park, Bason Gardens: Notice was served, however, nothing has been removed. We have been contacted by the landowners solicitor to extend the notice period. We will respond and prosecute if needed.

AD declared an interest in the next item and left the room 14.24.

**Heath Rhyne:** We served notice which was not acted upon so we removed railway sleepers and maintained the watercourse. A few days later a container was placed in the way of the access. It would undermine our previous position if we did not take action about this. We would like the Board to consider next steps.

In this location the land occupier is not the landowner. We would need to serve notice on both as was done last time. The location is subject to special levy not rates.

AF asked if the landowner can put pressure on the occupier as they are difficult to deal with. IDS explained the owner has advised they can't make the occupier do it and there is no formal agreement.

VM explained we need to act within 3 months of knowing the access is blocked, by sending a letter.

BF noted we have followed the correct procedure and must proceed to treat everyone the same and serve on both. IDS noted we recharge costs to the perpetrator.

JS noted Board members know we need to treat the situation the same as any other.

The Board to consider appropriate enforcement action regarding a second breach of the byelaw at Ashcott Rd, south of Meare on the top of Heath Rhyne bank.

**Proposed: Joe Stradling**  
**Seconded: Wendy Welland**  
**All in favour**

AD re-entered at 14.33

Apple Tree Inn West Pennard/start of Twelve Foot Rhyne: We used to maintain from the car park but can't now access the site due to fencing and caravans close to the watercourse.

**RESOLUTION  
09**

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|                         | <p>MW noted AD has advised on this. MW and HS have visited and ascertained that the caravans house workers associated with the pub. They have contacted the pub owner and will arrange to meet with them. AD noted the culvert.</p> <p>MW noted that in light of this we can add this to the GIS layer and take into view this section of rhyne/culvert.</p> <p><b>Proposed: David Tratt</b><br/> <b>Seconded: Joe Stradling</b><br/> <b>All in favour</b></p> <p><b>The Board agreed for Officers to enforce if needed/not resolved.</b><br/> <b>Proposed: Joe Stradling</b><br/> <b>Seconded: James Grischeff</b><br/> <b>All in favour</b></p> <p>DT asked if the Mendip Road Rooksbridge issue has been cleared. Note ye, but if not done this week we will serve notice and remove.</p> <p>DT also asked about an uncleaned section upstream on Mendip Business Park and a new building/warehouse within 6m of the watercourse (same landowner). VM to investigate.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">14.40 JG left the meeting</p> | <p><b>RESOLUTION 10</b></p> <p><b>RESOLUTION 11</b></p> <p><b>ACTION AB/20260126-09</b></p> |
| 12 AOB                  | <p>MH noted LSIDB have offered to hold the SWADA Spring Meeting following their meeting in June and invited members and officers to join their visit to pumping stations.</p> <p>IDS advised there is a Living Brue Day 28/3 at Glastonbury Town Hall.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">DT left 14.45</p>   |   |
| 13 Date of Next Meeting | <p>Dates of Next Meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environment Committee Tuesday 10 February 14.00-16.00</li> <li>• Investment Task &amp; Finish Group Weds 11 February 14.30</li> <li>• Full Board Meeting Mon 13 April at 10.30</li> </ul> <p>IDS noted April Full Board meetings are not statutory as there is no financial reporting. If the meeting does take place, there will be an operational focus. The date also falls within the Easter holiday.</p> <p>The Chair thanked members for their attendance.<br/> The meeting closed at 14.47</p>  |   |

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

**AXE BRUE BOARD – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

| Action Number:        | Action:  | Actionee: |
|-----------------------|--|-----------|
| <b>AB/20260126-01</b> | Tor Rugby Club Consent. MW and VM to follow up with County Archive and H Smith.  | MW/VM     |
| <b>AB/20260126-02</b> | Investigate damaged culvert on Tealham Moor and add to programme, or emergency works. MW and RK to follow up with AF and ML.               | MW/RK     |
| <b>AB/20260126-03</b> | MW to look at sections of rhyne not maintained with ML after the meeting.  | MW        |
| <b>AB/20260126-04</b> | Put in bid in principle for SRA funding  | CM        |
| <b>AB/20260126-05</b> | Look at other locations for improving maintenance access routes  | CM        |
| <b>AB/20260126-06</b> | Top of 12ft Rhyne join maintenance up with council resurfacing works   | MW        |
| <b>AB/20260126-07</b> | Get numbers of council tax payers in SC and NSC to work out and get an understanding of how it might affect them. ACTION to share with F&W | MH        |
| <b>AB/20260126-08</b> | Follow up with contractor re 12ft rhyne (twice a year)   | MW        |
| <b>AB/20260126-09</b> | investigate Mendip Business park section of uncleaned rhyne/new building/warehouse   | VM        |
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