

On 01 April 2011 it is proposed that the existing Lower Axe, Upper Axe, Lower Brue and Upper Brue Drainage Boards will combine together to form a new amalgamated Drainage Board to be called the Axe Brue Drainage Board. This amalgamation is being encouraged by Defra (Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs) to modernise and provide a more effective flood risk management, drainage and environmental service for the areas of special drainage need in the lowlands of Somerset. Similar amalgamations are being undertaken by other Drainage Boards across the whole of the lowland areas of England. There are approximately 155 Drainage Boards across England and Defra are seeking to reduce this number to approximately 30 by 2013. Drainage Boards are generally being given guidance by Defra as to the criteria that we must meet however they are allowing Drainage Boards to work out on a local basis the best arrangements for that locality. This enlightened view by Defra is a positive approach to the need for reorganisation that is being pursued by the Drainage Boards with some urgency.

Set out below is the proposed scheme of amalgamation which has been forwarded to the Environment Agency and Defra which it is hoped will form the basis of the new Parliamentary Order that will create the new Drainage Board in Somerset. The order shows that the Boards are planning to set up electoral districts as part of the democratic and representation arrangements that are being put in place to ensure the Boards reflect the wishes and requirements of the local ratepayers, residents and businesses. Electoral districts do not exist within the current Boards and at present a "first past the post" system is operated across all whole Board areas. The new arrangements will provide a clear link for local residents in understanding which Board member represents their local area.

All the arrangements for the new Board are being considered and planned by existing officers and members within a shadow Board arrangement that will ensure the work and services provided by the Board moves seamlessly from the old arrangements on the 31 March 2011 to the new arrangements on the 01 April 2011.