



**Hampshire &
Isle of Wight
Wildlife Trust**

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Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing,
Communities and Local Government
The Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF
United Kingdom

17 February 2025

CC: Secretary of State for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs, Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP
CC: Minister of State, Matthew Pennycook MP

Re: Local councillors calling for chalk stream protections

Dear Deputy Prime Minister,

We are writing to you as elected, local representatives from all political parties, to share our – and our communities' - deep concerns regarding the future of one of Britain's most irreplaceable natural treasures: our chalk streams. The current reforms to planning in England offer a crucial opportunity for the Government to protect and enhance these precious streams for future generations and protect the rare biodiversity which depends on them.

Across our country, we are lucky to enjoy the characteristically clear and sparkling waters of our globally rare chalk streams. These precious habitats are a quintessential part of our natural environment and national heritage. Indeed, 85% of the world's chalk streams are found in England alone, and they truly are some of the most biodiverse and ecologically significant freshwater ecosystems in the world.

As local representatives, we share the concerns raised to us by our residents about the ongoing degradation of our precious chalk streams. Despite their ecological value, they are exceptionally vulnerable to pollution, over-abstraction, and habitat degradation. Water quality in chalk streams across the UK continues to worsen, with unabated pollution from our highways significantly disrupting the unique and fragile ecology of these rivers, with detrimental impacts for wildlife. Salmon, genetically distinct to southern chalk streams, are at a tipping point of extirpation, compounded by deteriorating water quality.

While we welcome the Government's launch of an Independent Commission into the water sector, we recognise that more urgent action must be taken to protect our chalk streams. Last year, polluting effluent flowed for a total of 10,901 hours into Hampshire's Test and Itchen, 32,577 hours into Wiltshire's Avon and 3,591 hours into Berkshire's Kennet. In Norfolk, flood prevention efforts, including dredging and vegetation clearance, disrupt the sensitive ecology of the River Gaywood – placing protected species such as water voles at risk.

Local efforts alone are not enough. We need decisive national Government action in planning to ensure that these unique waterways are preserved for future generations. We urge you to utilise the opportunity of planning reforms to designate chalk streams and their catchments with a bespoke protection. We ask you to work with us and help support us in our efforts to protect our chalk streams so that we can deliver more homes across the country, without sacrificing the health of our waterways.

We are disappointed to hear recent reports that the Chalk Stream Recovery Pack has been abandoned.

To provide the continuity and certainty needed to underpin local action, we need the Government to urgently clarify its plan for chalk streams by releasing an improved version of the previously promised 'Chalk Stream Recovery Pack'. This action plan must be decisive and ambitious, outlining a specific designated protection for chalk streams, offering enhanced legal protections, strengthened enforcement mechanisms and immediate investment in restoration and conservation.

We stand ready to support the implementation of these measures and to work collaboratively to support the recovery of our chalk streams. Thank you for considering this urgent issue and we look forward to hearing from you.

To discuss the concerns raised in more detail, please email lorna.selby@hiwwt.org.uk to arrange a meeting with a delegation of the signatories.

Yours sincerely,

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|----------|-----------|-------------|--|--|
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| Cllr | Philip | Dowd | New Forest District Council | Hythe Centre |
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| Cllr | David | Harrison | Hampshire County Council | Totton South & Marchwood |
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| Cllr | Paula | Langford-Smith | Winchester City Council | Denmead |
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| Cllr | Jo | Rust | King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council | Springwood |
| Cllr | Dhan | Sarki | Rushmoor Borough Council | Wellington |
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| Cllr | John | Smart FRPharmS | East Hampshire District Council | Clanfield |
| Cllr | Chris | Smith | Norwich City Council | Town close |
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| Cllr | Martin | Tod | Winchester City Council | St Paul |
| Cllr | Chris | Tomblin CEng | Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council | Bramley |
| Cllr | John | Toye | North Norfolk District Council | Erpingham |
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