



Vote to agree Amendment 94: Chalk Stream Protections

England's rivers are all in poor overall health, including the rare and ecologically distinctive chalk streams. With 83% of WFD chalk stream waterbodies failing to achieve Good Ecological Status in 2024/25, a business-as-usual approach is not an option. **This is why Amendment 94 is vital to affording our rare chalk streams the protections they deserve.** Embedding chalk stream responsibilities within spatial development strategies would effectively coordinate protections across whole catchments to deliver a consistent and effective approach, unlike relying on the NPPF or LNRs which do not offer the catchment-scale, enforceable protections our chalk streams so urgently need.

1. LNRs cannot account for a catchment-wide approach

As the LNRs are developed at a local level, they may only address a portion of a chalk catchment, leading to fragmented protection and management approaches. This is particularly damaging to chalk streams, which are highly fragile and vulnerable to inputs across their catchments – with activities upstream heavily influencing water quality and ecological health further downstream.

Within some LNRs, such as those in Norfolk and Suffolk, not all chalk streams are identified as priority habitats despite their rarity and high ecological value. Even if the LNRs were appropriate for the protection of chalk streams at a strategic scale, the wording in proposed new section 12D(11) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 would fall short – with a weak requirement for the Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) to “take account of any local nature recovery strategy”.

2. NPPF does not set out a specific protection for chalk streams

The NPPF fails to grant appropriate protections for chalk streams in new developments. As noted by the Minister, the NPPF includes general provisions for the conservation of biodiversity within Clause 193. This policy is not suitable to guide the protection of irreplaceable habitats and is likely to be weakened by Part 3 of the Bill, in which site level assessments of harm will be replaced with an estimation.

As a result, decisions taken under the NPPF fail to give adequate weight to the specific vulnerabilities of chalk stream habitats, leaving them exposed to incremental harm from development pressures across the catchment.

3. Lack of Primary Legislative Protection

Chalk streams currently lack explicit protection under primary legislation, and even the few that are designated are in poor health. Without clear national guidance, the existing legal gap creates a vulnerability within forthcoming SDS in which local policy to protect chalk streams may be overturned through appeals and legal challenge.

Key points to support you in the debate:

- With so few chalk streams existing globally they are truly one of the rarest habitats on the planet. In Hampshire and across the Isle of Wight, we are lucky to enjoy many iconic chalk streams, including the River Itchen, Test, Loddon and Meon in Hampshire as well as Lukely Brook and the River Caul Bourne on the Isle of Wight
- They are also incredibly rich in life, with oxygen-rich waters providing the perfect habitat for rare British species like water vole, southern chalk stream Atlantic salmon, brown trout, southern damselfly, water crowfoot and white-clawed crayfish.
- They are England's equivalent to The Great Barrier Reef or the Amazon Rainforest, a special heritage and our responsibility
- Only 11 out of 220 British chalk streams are protected, and even these designations fail to address decline. Over-abstraction, pollution from sewage and run-off, historic modifications and urban development all exert

significant pressure on the ecology of these rivers. Collated Water Framework Directive (WFD) Status Data across England shows that:

- Over 1/3 of all chalk streams are over-abstracted
- Over 1/3 of all chalk streams fail their phosphorus targets
- Over 1/3 of all chalk streams fail their fish and plant assessments

