

Amendment to motion 13b 'Rights of the River motion' which was submitted in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules in the Constitution but not moved. See the minutes of the meeting for further details.

Councillor Thornburrow proposes and Councillor Moore seconds the following amendment to the Rights of the River motion. (Deleted text ~~struckthrough~~ and additional text underlined).

Introduction (not part of active motion)

Labour Group proposes this amendment to the Green and Independent Group ~~proposes the following~~ motion to address resident concerns over the state of our rivers and chalk streams. We regard the river as an integral part of the life of our city. Threats to our rivers are a threat to us all.

~~The purpose of this motion is to:~~

- ~~• state our city's aspirations for our river and chalk streams ("the declaration of the Rights of the River Cam")~~
- ~~• petition the organisations responsible for our river to improve their performance in order to help save our river and its tributaries.~~
- ~~• consider the limits placed by the depleted state of our river on future growth in buildings and infrastructure.~~

This motion will:

- reassert the City Council's commitment to the health of the River Cam and its tributaries as a fundamental component of our ecosystem
- request a letter from the Council's Chief Executive to organisations responsible for our river to improve their performance in order to help save our river and its tributaries.
- engage with other bodies including national government to consider the possibility of a formal application to Defra for an inland bathing water stretch within Cambridge city boundaries

- reaffirm the message given at the cross-party, cross-boundary Water Crisis Forum in 2019 that the preservation of the Cam must be paramount in future development plans

Active motion

1 Declaration of the Rights of the River Cam

This council acknowledges ~~declares that~~ the symbolic importance of agreeing, in line with the Universal Declaration of River Rights, that the River Cam and its tributaries should have the following rights arising from their existence in nature:

- The right to flow and be free from over-abstraction
- The right to perform essential functions of flooding, moving sediment, recharging groundwater and sustaining biodiversity
- The right to be free from pollution (while recognising that's its unnatural for a river to be pure)
- The right to feed and be fed by sustainable aquifers
- The right to native biodiversity
- The right to restoration
- The right to maintain connections with other streams and rivers

~~This council undertakes to assess the impact of all its decisions on the health of the river and ensure that all its decisions support these rights.~~

This council calls on all persons to engage with the river in a relationship of respect and stewardship and asks all residents and organisations of Cambridge to act as guardians of the River Cam and engage with the river in a relationship of respect and stewardship be mindful of the impact of our own actions and those of others that threaten its health and survival.

In order to help reduce threats to the River Cam and its tributaries caused by pollution and over abstraction, the council will:

Collaborate with South Cambridgeshire District Council and community groups to consider the possibility of a formal application to Defra for an inland bathing water stretch along the River Cam in Cambridge City, recognising that designation would bring tangible benefits to the health of the river and city residents.

2 Responsibility

This council notes that the responsible bodies are:

Environment Agency – general oversight

Cambridge Water - water supply

Anglian Water - sewage

The council asks the Chief Executive proposes to write a formal letter from to all three bodies to share its concerns over the state of the river and call upon them for their assistance.

3. Interaction with the Council's own actions and the growth of the city

~~The Council proposes to set up a small cross-party group to draw up a plan for the protection of the river. This will include considering the impact of future growth in buildings and infrastructure in the City on the depleted state of our river, and the limits that may be necessary to respect the rights of the river to report back to full council prior to updating the Local Plan. For the avoidance of doubt, it is intended that this group will supplement rather than displace the work of existing scrutiny committees.~~

The Council will continue to consider the impact of the emerging local plan on the water environment through the cross-party, cross-boundary Shared Planning Local Plan Advisory Group, and by the cross-party Cambridge City Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee. The achievement of 'environmental destination' rather than 'business as usual plus' for water management plans has already been stated.

The Council will ensure public access to the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning response to the Cambridge Water, Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) consultation.

End of Active Motion

Background Notes (not part of active motion):

The Water Crisis Forum was organised and chaired by Cllr Katie Thornburrow and attended Cllr Rod Cantrell, Cllr Graham Cone and Cllr Anna Bradnam.

- 1—On Midsummer's Day in 2021, Friends of the River Cam made the first public declaration in the UK of the rights of the River at Jesus Green, linked to the Universal Declaration of River Rights: <https://www.rightsofrivers.org>
- 2—The declaration is repeated on Midsummer's Day each year and is repeated in the text of this motion.
- 3—This year the declaration will be at 6pm on 21st June ~~with a celebration with short speeches, live music, choirs and poetry from 4pm to 9pm. All residents are welcome.~~
- 4—~~The declaration of rights is supported by many of our local environmental and community groups including CPRE, FeCRA, Cambridge Friends of the Earth, Save Honey Hill, Keep Waterbeach Rural, Friends of Logan's Meadow, Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook, and many others.~~
- 5—~~Earlier this year, Lewes District Council passed a Rights of Rivers Motion to protect the River Ouse in East Sussex. Momentum has been growing globally to extend legal rights to nature and in some cases specifically to rivers. <https://democracy.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/documents/s27490/Motion%20-%20Rights%20of%20the%20River.pdf>~~
- 6—~~Cllrs Glasberg and Tong wish to thank the Friends of the River Cam and representatives from a number of local environmental groups for their help in putting this motion together. Any errors or omissions are of course our own.~~

The Bathing Water Designation will:

- impose a legal obligation on Anglian Water to reduce sewage pollution upstream of Cambridge,
- require the Environment Agency to test the water regularly during the bathing season, in order to produce an annual classification of “excellent”, “good”, “sufficient” or “poor”
- require the council and agencies to publish the annual water quality classification,
- help City residents experience the benefits of wild swimming in a cost of living crisis, namely reducing stress, and improving wellbeing, fitness and contact with nature.

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