



## Parliamentary Briefing: Planning & Infrastructure Bill

None of England's rivers are in good overall health, including our rare and ecologically distinctive chalk streams. The Planning and Infrastructure Bill represents a valuable opportunity to deliver the bespoke protections, identified by the CaBA Chalk Stream Restoration Strategy, that our chalk streams desperately need. We are deeply concerned by the Government's decision to shelve the long-awaited Chalk Stream Recovery Pack, which has the potential to guide conservation and restoration efforts at a catchment-wide scale along these rare waterways. It is imperative that the Government take urgent action to protect our chalk streams, as part of a wider shift towards nature-positive planning.

The Planning & Infrastructure Bill provides a key opportunity to integrate much-needed protections for these precious habitats within the planning system, whilst delivering the core objectives of the Bill.

### Our key recommendations

Growth delivered through the Planning & Infrastructure Bill must be paired with stringent protections for our chalk streams. Across the South and East of England, chalk streams are already impacted by over abstraction and wastewater outflows. To protect these rare rivers alongside new developments, we recommend the Bill:

- Define chalk streams and their riparian habitats as **irreplaceable habitats**, to provide clear guidance on permissible activities within their catchments.
- Introduce a **50-100 metre buffer zone** along the riparian corridor, in line with guidance from Natural England on vulnerable habitats.
- Mandate Local Planning Authorities to take account of **implications for water resources and sewerage systems** of major housing developments in their Local Plans and proposal reviews.
- Raise standards for **water efficiency** within water-stressed chalk catchments to a minimum of 90 litres per person per day in new developments.
- Ensure that the introduction of a **Nature Restoration Fund** adheres to the principle of non-regression, as required by the Environment Act, and follows the mitigation hierarchy to improve the ecological and chemical health of our chalk streams and rivers.

### We need your help to Save Our Chalk Streams

To deliver protections to our ecologically distinctive chalk stream habitats, we must act now.

We are pleased to work alongside a dedicated group of environmental organisation and supportive MPs to table an amendment to the Bill, building on the proposals set out in the Chalk Streams (Protection) Private Members' Bill. This would ensure that these new planning strategies help to fill the long-standing chalk stream gap in the planning system.

The amendment, tabled by Chris Hinchliff MP, is as follows:

*Clause 47, page 66, line 18, at end insert-*

*“(6A) A spatial development strategy must-*

- (a) List any chalk streams identified in the strategy area;*
- (b) Identify the measures to be taken to protect any identified chalk streams from pollution, abstraction, encroachment and other forms of environmental damage; and*
- (c) Impose responsibilities on strategic planning authorities in relation to the protection and enhancement of chalk stream habitats”*

To speak up for chalk streams, we urge you to **add your name to the amendment** and champion our precious chalk streams in upcoming debates around the Bill.



We include some written questions below, which we urge you to table:

To the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government:

- *To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to the planning system due to the Planning & Infrastructure Bill on chalk streams protection*

To the Secretary of State for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs:

- *'To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the Environment Agency's 2024 Event Duration Monitoring dataset, particularly regarding the importance of our chalk streams in achieving Environment Act targets to restore precious waterbodies*