

# Basingstoke & Deane Rights of Rivers

The journey so far...

Cllr. Kate Tuck

Basing & Upton Grey Ward

(Views are mine and not necessarily those of BDBC)



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# Agenda

- **What are the Rights of Rivers?**
- **Legislation**
- **Why looking at Rights of Rivers?**
- **What we did at BDBC**
- **Declaration of Rights of Rivers approved at BDBC**
- **Council Implementation**
- **What has it achieved?**
- **The Future**



# What are the Rights of Rivers?

## **Universal Declaration of the Rights of Rivers.**

**This declaration proposes broad rights to which it says rivers should be entitled:**

- **the right to flow,**
- **the right to be free from pollution,**
- **the right to perform essential functions within its ecosystem,**
- **the right to feed and be fed by sustainable aquifers,**
- **the right to native biodiversity, and**
- **the right to regeneration and restoration**
- **the right to active representation**

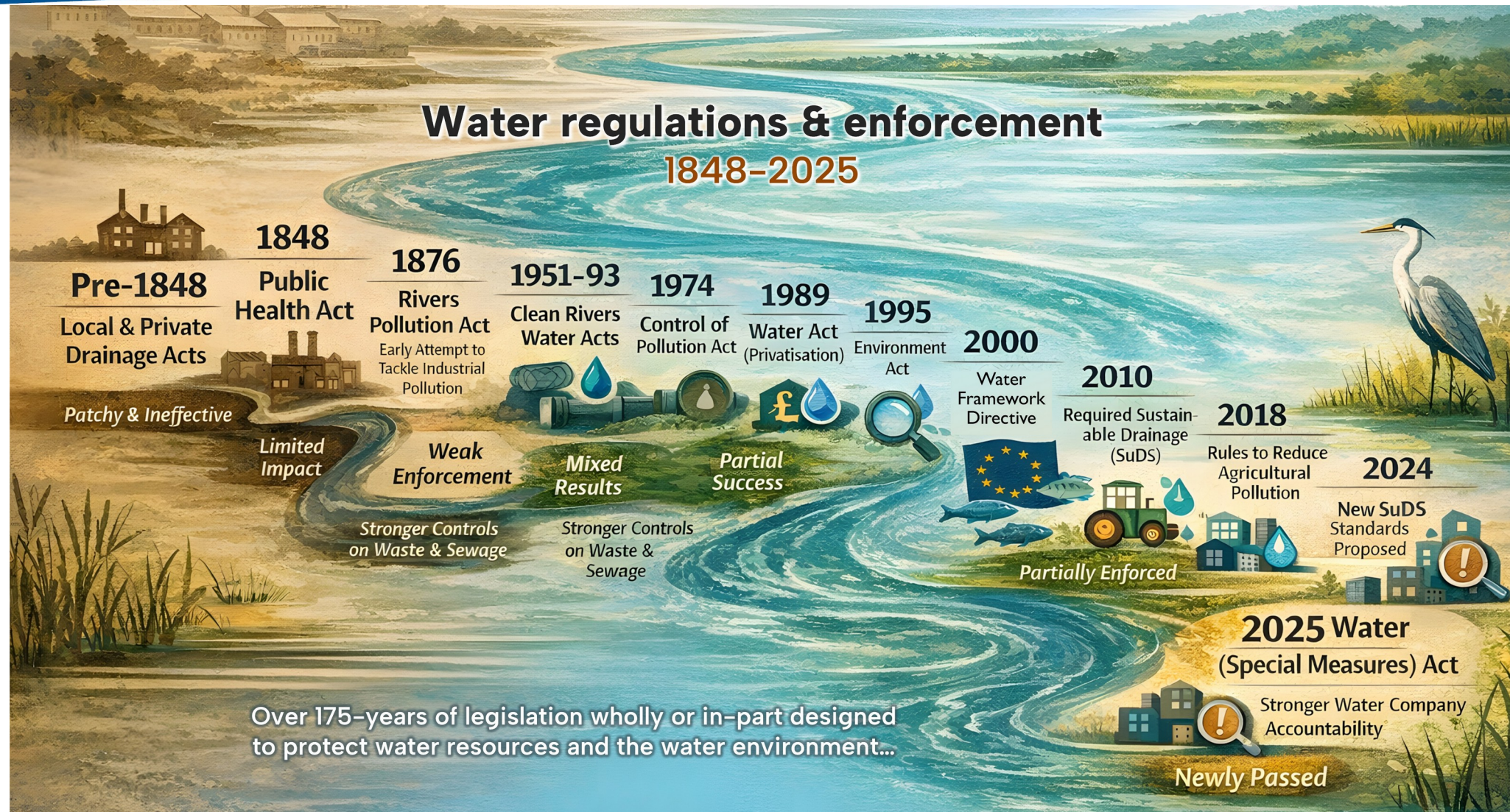


Whanganui River – New Zealand



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# Legislation



Nick Paling:

Bio Regional Learning:  
Intro to Rivers and  
Catchment Science.

# Why did we look at Rights of Rivers?

- **Recognise the problems our rivers face**
- **Borough has springs of River Loddon and River Test, plus tributaries of the Itchen and Kennet**
- **Sparked by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust's chalk streams campaign**
- **Lewes's Motion ...scepticism to curiosity**
- **Planning challenges make legal river status appealing, has to make a practical difference**



*River Lyde chalk stream, A30 road run off*

# Building Support, Motion Passed

- **HIWWT provided strong support throughout – knowledge, introductions, community groups**
- **Public/Councillor Drop-In session built engagement and shaped the Motion**
- **Cross-party collaboration refined wording before the vote**
- **Enlisted community and expert support**
  - **Community environmental groups played a key role (e.g. LFCC, Natural Basingstoke)**
  - **Strong quotes from Loddon Catchment Partnership, Test & Itchen Catchment Partnership, and HIWWT**
- **Motion Approved—real work begins!**



# Motion Passed – what next...

- **Formed a Core Team (HIWWT, Cabinet Member, Motion proposer and seconder)**
- **Established Officer Executive Team**
- **Call with Lewes for hints and tips**
- **HIWWT connected us with Rights of Nature and legal expertise**
- **Brainstormed implementation strategies for RoR**
- **Learning curve: moving from bespoke Declaration to standard**
- **Legal advice: cannot use a Motion to subvert normal Plan Making process > Unsound Plan**
- **10<sup>th</sup> March 2026 Cabinet approves our Declaration of RoR**



# UK River Rights (Dec 2025)

**RIGHTS OF RIVERS  
IN THE UK**



**Catchment Partnerships:**

- River Usk
- River Roding
- River Wye

**UK-wide:**

- RoN and Future Generations Bill

**Council Declarations**

- River Ouse (Lewes)
- River Loddon (Basingstoke)
- River Itchen (Southampton)
- River Test (Test Valley)
- River Medway (Wealden)
- River Rother (Rother)
- River Meon (East Hampshire)
- River Wye (Herefordshire)
- River Darent (Sevenoakes)
- River Wensum (Norwich)
- Deben
- Dôn
- Eden
- Exe
- Frome
- Gaywood
- Helford and Fal
- Kent
- Lark
- Lough Neagh
- Plym
- Rye
- Severn
- Stour (Kent)
- Stour and Avon (Dorset)
- Stour (Suffolk and Essex)
- Tyne
- Whiteheart, Hart and Blackwater

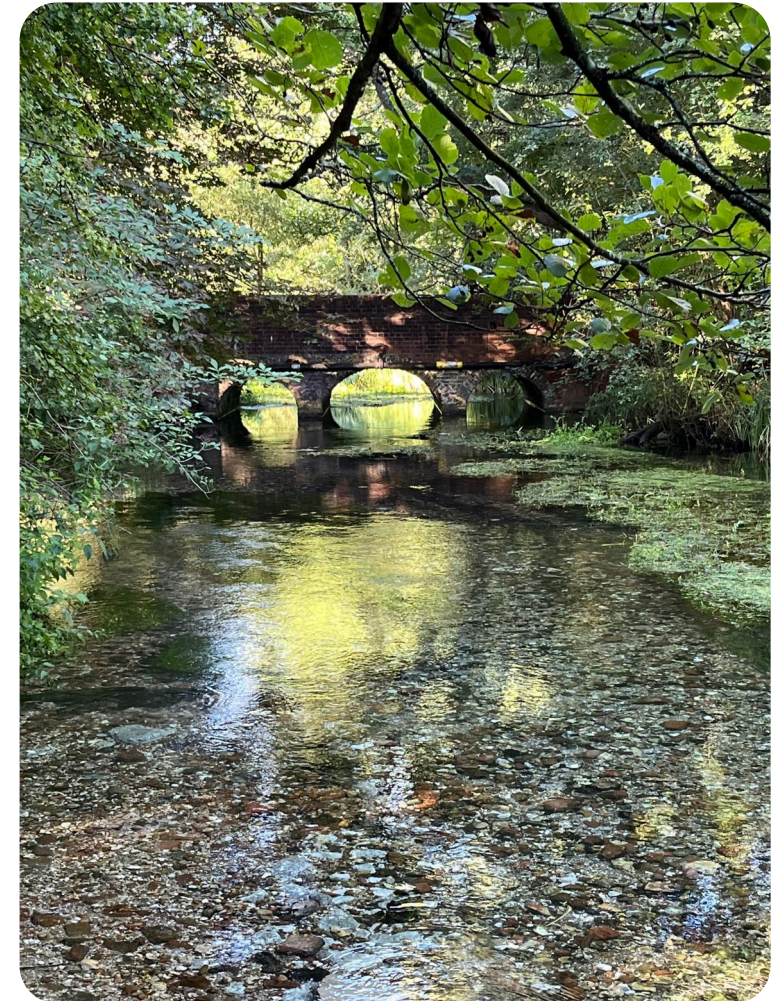
**River Rights Initiatives:**

- Afon Cegin
- Avon (Bristol)
- Cam
- Char
- Clyde
- Channel Sea (London)
- Dart

# What we 'formally recognised' at BDBC

**Council resolves to formally recognise the Rights of Rivers, drawing inspiration from the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Rivers.**

- 1. The Right to Flow** – to follow natural and seasonal flow patterns.
- 2. The Right to Perform Essential Functions within its Ecosystem** – to sustain the hydrological and ecological processes that underpin the health of the waterways and landscape.
- 3. The Right to be Free from Pollution.**
- 4. The Right to Feed and Be Fed by Sustainable Aquifers and other freshwater sources** – to be replenished by, and to replenish, groundwater systems without unsustainable depletion.
- 5. The Right to Native Biodiversity.**
- 6. The Right to Regeneration and Restoration** – to recover from damage, including through active protection, remediation and investment in habitat restoration.



*River Loddon, Old Basing*

# What we 'formally recognised' at BDBC

continued

This Council therefore declares that:

1. The intrinsic rights of rivers within the jurisdiction of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council will be acknowledged.
2. It will work with community groups, river trusts and environmental experts to identify and support the practical recognition of these rights.
3. It will support local initiatives and citizen monitoring efforts that protect and restore river health, such as citizen science water testing, riparian buffer planting, natural flood management and creating wildlife corridors.
4. It will embed river rights principles into council policies, where appropriate, particularly those concerning planning, development, land use, water quality, water management, and biodiversity.
5. It will commit to Council projects and strategies taking account of the principles of Rights of Rivers and chalk streams taking appropriate measures to protect these ecosystems and delivering enhancements where possible.
6. It will advocate to national and regional bodies, including the Environment Agency, the adoption of river rights frameworks and enhanced protections for our chalk streams and freshwater ecosystems.



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# Council Implementation

## Planning Context

- Reg 18 Local Plan underway – **38% housing uplift but lack of water supply**
- NPPF – new version expected shortly
- Environment Act and Planning & Infrastructure Act
- Planning ‘Top Trumps’ – nature needs a stronger hand

## Policy Integration

- The Council Plan
- Local Plan Policies: spatial, site-specific and non-spatial
- Blue & Green Infrastructure Strategy
- Biodiversity Strategy
- Well-Being Strategy
- Approaches to Parks and Landscapes management
- ...and more

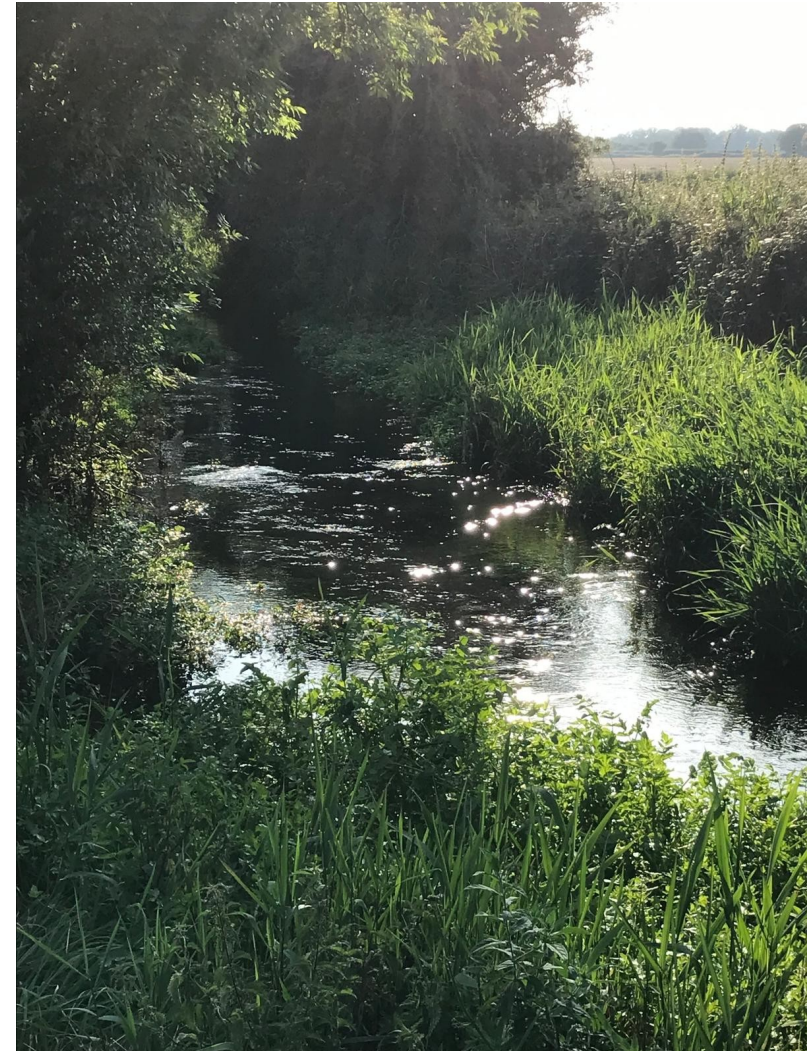
## Next Steps

- Build on Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)
- **Annual Monitoring Report** with river metrics – what to include?
- **Catchment Partnership Action Plans**
- Eastrop Park - regenerate/de-culvert
- Saunders Field – Conservation Covenant sought
- **Implementation is a work in progress... your help is needed.**



# What has RoR Achieved?

- **Significantly increased awareness of our chalk streams at BDBC and locally**
- **Second UK Council to support Rights of Rivers contributing to rapid growth of support nationally**
- **Councils are not legislators but sends powerful message**
  - **House of Commons Briefing on Rights of Rivers for MPs**
- **Devolution/LGR – reaching out to our neighbouring authorities – Rushmoor passed RoR Motion**
- **Deciding key goals and deliverables for river enhancements or protection**



River Loddon chalk stream just above Basingstoke STW.



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# The future - now

- **Collaboration – engage with EA, water companies, Catchment Partnerships**
- **Catchment Action Plan – Vitally important!**
- **Aquifer, water source quality measurement -critical**
  
- **It will take all of us, pulling together, to improve the health of our rivers**

***Thank you to everyone who has supported this so far: residents, HIWWT, the Catchment Partnerships, Natural Basingstoke and all the fishing and community groups who have been absolutely instrumental.***



River Loddon chalk stream just above Basingstoke STW.



- **Hogan Lovells RoR Guide:**  
[RightsofRiversGuide-final.pdf](#)
- **BDBC Declaration of ROR Cabinet Paper:** <https://democracy.basingstoke.gov.uk/documents/s500003705/Report.pdf>
- **River Rights:**  
[RIVER RIGHTS NETWORK – Home](#)
- **House of Commons Library, Briefing for MPs on RoR:**  
[Rights of Rivers - House of Commons Library](#)



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# Thank You

Contact: [Cllr.kate.tuck@basingstoke.gov.uk](mailto:Cllr.kate.tuck@basingstoke.gov.uk)