

A WATER RESOURCE POLICY FOR CPRE-HAMPSHIRE (updated 2026)

To protect our rivers, aquatic environments and water supplies and prevent flooding in a time of climate uncertainty, rapid development and changing planning control.

A CONTEXT

B ISSUES FOR CPRE-HAMPSHIRE

- Protecting the Resource
- Demand Reduction
- New Sources of Water
- Water Quality and River Biodiversity
- Flooding (sea, river, ground and surface)
- Climate Change
- Rights of Rivers

C POLICY DEVELOPMENT

- Policy 1 Support efficient Use of existing resource
- Policy 2 Support Demand Reduction
- Policy 3 Link Planning and Water
- Policy 4 Support Agricultural Practices to conserve Water in the Catchment
- Policy 5 Support sources of New Water piped into Hampshire
- Policy 6 Change Attitudes

D WHAT MEMBERS CAN DO

E REFERENCES



Sadlers Mill on the River Test, Romsey

A CONTEXT

Water is an essential resource for ALL life but rising human demand, planned growth and climate change raise difficult issues for sustainable water resource management. It is now being increasingly recognised that efficient use of water, conservation of supplies, reduction in demand, and much better land use planning are all essential for maintenance of water quantity, water quality, river biodiversity and the avoidance of flood risk.

Hampshire is in that part of Southern England defined by the Environment Agency as being one of ‘*Severe Water Stress*’ and is particularly susceptible to overuse of its ground water resources through over abstraction. Drought conditions have particularly severe effects on the health of our internationally important chalk river systems and their biodiversity. As a farming county, we need to consider farming practices and their impact on water quality and quantity too. The large and ever-growing number of planned housing developments, and the need to re-enliven the industrial base, have profound implications for sustainable water use from a limited local resource and leads to conflicting apportionments between human and environmental demands

Hampshire lies in the southern, drier part of the UK. Its geology is characterised first by the Hampshire (chalk) basin, which is a major aquifer and source of base flow for chalk streams and used via direct river and borehole abstraction for the commercial and agricultural water supply. Protection of the aquifer has implications for water quality and river biodiversity and also for groundwater flooding. Secondly, the south of the County is dominated by Tertiary sands, clays and gravels producing flashy streams more likely to cause flood risk.

Streams in the northern part of the county drain towards the Thames, are on both chalk and London Clay and have both flashy and subdued chalk stream characteristics.

The coastline and estuaries along the Solent are a potential source of sea flooding especially with increasing sea-levels and storm surges due to Climate Change - although the Isle of Wight mitigates the worst of the Atlantic storms

The Bunny
River Test
Longstock
MMG



B ISSUES FOR CPRE HAMPSHIRE

We therefore see the main components as being:

The Resource: Protecting the chalk aquifer catchment, groundwater sources, rivers and springs for water quality, quantity, biodiversity and flows. Rivers are an essential part of the valued Hampshire landscapes and have both economic and social value as well as their unique biodiversity. All could be compromised by over-abstraction for increasing demand. Increasing the resource by augmentation with new desalination and wastewater recycling plants plus pipeline transfers need very careful evaluation on a case-by-case basis, involving financial efficacy, energy efficiency and environmental sustainability.

The Demand: Demand reduction, via planning and building regulation which takes account of water supply and provides targets enforced at Government level. Also, increased metering (which continues to be rolled out across the region).

Wastewater: Safe and appropriate disposal, treatment and recycling, internal domestic grey water re-use (this will involve both changes to Building Regs and water company involvement).

Flooding: Sea flooding, and river flooding is the responsibility of the EA. Surface water flooding (eg excessive rainfall and runoff, plus ground water rise) HCC and local councils have this responsibility. Development in areas prone to flood should not be allowed.

Information and Communication to raise awareness of these issues and attitudes to them. CPRE-Hampshire can help by monitoring Water Companies' policies and actions through stakeholder roles and informing members and the wider public and ensure they publish clear metrics, targets and information via public channels

These aspects below are all inter-dependent. They overlap and are all interlinked.

Protecting the Resource, Demand Reduction, Water Quality and River Biodiversity Improvement To protect our rivers and water supplies and prevent flooding

Increasing demand for ever-increasing housing developments and the need to revitalise industry in the county leads to increasing demands for water. People in England and Wales use approx. 145 litres of water each per day on average (lpppd) a rise of some 70% since 1979. The Government's target is to lower this to 120 lpppd. (DEFRA), whilst SW's long-term target is a more ambitious 100 lpppd

The droughts of 2012 and 2022 have shown that this demand, whether satisfied from groundwater or river sources, can lead to unhealthy low flows in rivers (There are enough abstraction licenses currently in existence to remove flows altogether in many British rivers). These droughts are likely to recur more frequently. (Graham Warren Protect Kent - Bookham presentation October 2012).

Drought-Orders have been applied for every year on the Test under the Section-20 agreements with the EA (2019) but timely rainfall has so far averted their execution - except in 2022.

Diffuse Pollution mainly from farm sources and road-runoff, plus the inability of some domestic sewage systems to cope in wet periods, all have implications for reducing water quality in our rivers: cf the Bourne Rivulet- a tributary of the River Test. The problem of increasing nitrates continues to cause worries for the future, with some borehole sources having to be closed (eg Chilbolton), and so needs close monitoring.

Flooding

The very wet years of 2012 and 2024 have highlighted the problem of flooding. Although Hampshire's chalk rivers are generally not flashy, they can still flood over their natural flood plains in all sections of their courses and we need to lobby strenuously to preserve the provisions of Para-94 of the NPPF, (which relates to planned development in flood plains), is to be taken full account of. Flooding should not be caused by new developments either ON or OFF site. (HCC Local Flood Risk Management Plan)

Ground-Water flooding A rise in aquifer GW-levels was the cause of the extensive flooding of 2001,2014 and 2024. Most parishes now have a local flood watch group (set up after 2001) which keeps an eye on groundwater levels and alerts residents to any impending threat. The 'FloodWatch' scheme & Gov.UK's Floods site issues similar alerts.

Rising sea levels already evident due mainly to thermal expansion of the oceans will increase coastal flood-risk areas and reduce rivers' ability to scour silt from their beds making floods both at the coast and inland, more likely with time.

Climate Change

The **uncertainties** of climate change should help us to justify being cautious. Rainfall has been seen to be both more erratic and more intense, often prolonged. Infiltration into the aquifer is reduced by impermeable urban and rural surfaces, leading to increased run-off, soil erosion, muddy floods and road-silting-up of drains.

Drought in the South East continue to be a recurring problem. The region has been declared one of 'Severe Water Stress' by the Environment Agency and some 25% of the area was under drought orders in both and 2012 and 2022.

Water Companies, nonetheless, have a statutory duty to supply water to existing and planned developments. The Environment Agency has recognised the situation and is reducing abstraction amounts and licenses where it can but abstraction in drought conditions leads to progressive lowering of the water table. Rivers are fed from this, and low flows will lead to reductions in both water quality and quantity which will inevitably degrade biodiversity and inflict harm on the aquatic environment.

Rights of Rivers

There is a developing groundswell of community-led initiatives to conserve, protect and restore our natural environment, which goes beyond the usual piecemeal conservation designations like SSSI's, SAC's SPA's etc. for small 'special' areas afforded statutory legal 'protection' under specific environmental legislation. The concept of affording 'Rights' to natural eco-systems akin to Human Rights is taking hold internationally whilst in England, many 'Green' community organisations and some local Councils are beginning to adopt a 'Rights of Rivers' (RoR) policy, and ultimately an RoR Charter. In Hampshire, four Councils have already passed motions to move towards adopting a RoR Policy and ultimately a RoR Charter

CPRE Hampshire is discussing this developing 'Natural Rights' movement with a view towards developing our own 'Rights of Rivers' Policy in the near future.

C POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Given these elements, CPRE HAMPSHIRE will adopt the following policies:

Policy 1: Support efficient use of existing resources

To protect our rivers, aquatic environments and water supplies and prevent flooding

First among the principles that CPRE HAMPSHIRE applies to these issues is the need to use existing water supplies more efficiently through water conservation measures, including catchment management and leakage reduction at the supply side, and water metering and consumer wastage on the demand side. Progress in combating and reducing leakage must be monitored and water companies kept to their leakage reduction targets.

In times of water shortage, we are very concerned that the progressive drought triggers used by the water companies should not be set so low that warnings are issued too late and that water supply to rivers and streams is unhealthily compromised.

Resource

Resist over-abstraction of groundwater if it will impinge on river health & biodiversity.

Reservoir schemes to store surface water during pluvial floods should be treated on a case by case basis as they can enhance landscape and add wetland biodiversity, but can also be very contentious over farmland losses, safety and local NIMBY issues

Farming techniques, including increased interception of rain by forests and grassland, enhancing humus rich soils and reducing ploughland will be supported. Construction that prioritises permeable surfaces (SUDS) should be encouraged so that the aquifers are constantly recharged and flood risk reduced

Increasing water supplies through new water techniques like desalination, wastewater recycling and pipeline transfer should be carefully considered on a case by case basis for their overall impact on both drought-relief, energy efficiency & aquatic environments.

Policy 2: Support for demand-reduction measures in these times of water stress and unpredictability is essential. This involves strong lobbying on both planning controls and building regulations.

To protect our aquifer and rivers from over-abstraction, to maintain water supplies and prevent flooding.

Demand

Ever-increasing demand for housing means an ever-increasing demand for water. People in England and Wales use some 145 litres of water per day on average (lpppd) a rise of 70% since 1979. The Government's target is to lower this to 125 lpppd (Defra), whilst SW

is aiming for a more ambitious 110 and then 100 lpppd by 2050. This demand side measure can best be effected by:

- supporting the water companies in installing more meters;
- lobbying planners to consider the adequacy of supply to new developments and to respect para 94 of the NPPF.
- Lobbying planners to require builders to install Code Level 3 measures which would lower water use to 105 lpppd in new-build housing.

New houses have to comply with government's Code Level 1 and 2 for water conservation, i.e. 125 lpppd. Code Level 3 (105 lpppd) would be preferable. Encouragement to builders and planners to install at Code Level 3 would reduce lpppd to 105 litres in new builds.

Older houses generally use more water than new ones and continue to make demands on supplies that, when scarce, could lead to an unacceptable lowering of the water table. Lobby membership and planners to enable retrofitting of simple, water-saving measures.

More efficient water appliances Support the retrofit introduction of low flush toilets and other low water use appliances like showers, washing machines, dishwashers etc (a single toilet flush can use 9 litres of water) plus grey-water systems, which use recycled water, could have a significant positive effect in substantially reducing water demand.

Leakage has reduced by 27% (Southern Water Co. SW) and the water companies' plan to reduce by a further 10% by 2035. They should also continue to improve leakage control to help conserve existing supplies.

Metering Demand reduction should be managed by encouraging water companies to speed up their programme to achieve near universal metering as soon as possible. Consumer profligacy with water should be progressively discouraged with outreach education/information programmes about need to save water and thus save money too.

Waste-Water systems are generally old, leaky and inefficient 'cleaners' of effluent. Encourage the urgent updating of sewage systems including replacing and/or re-lining older sewer-pipes to prevent/minimise groundwater ingress in wet winters which overwhelms treatment works capacity leading to harmful over-spills into rivers. Support firm legislation to control/prevent the occurrence of combined sewage overflows (CSO's), and publish the real-time data on their operation.

Promote the various new public and private schemes currently being trialled to replace rural consumer's old septic tanks with new packaged treatment plants which produce a much cleaner effluent. Finance is available via the nutrient, nitrate and phosphate credits scheme.

Support the expansion of stormwater storage tanks at sewage works and pumping stations, and the installation of effluent 'polishing' systems like reed-beds and soakaways to minimise harmful impacts on rivers.

Lobby for the fitting of nutrient-reduction facilities at ALL wastewater treatment plants.

Lobby for the reuse of water and wastewater wherever practically possible.

Policy 3: Linking Planning and Water.

To protect our rivers, aquatic environments and water supplies and prevent flooding

Integrated planning is crucial to ensure that proposed new developments are compatible with the availability of existing water supplies and sewage treatment capacity. CPRE Hampshire should promote a much stronger emphasis on employing spatial planning to integrate land use and built development with policies for water resources. Concerns for water should be a key component for spatial planning. The location of new development has an enormous impact upon demand for water resources and flood risk. It must not impose an unacceptable burden on water supply systems, river biodiversity or water reserves, or cause flooding on or off the development. Locating housing developments where water (and/or sewage capacity) is in short supply or within river flood plains is unsustainable.

River quality

Concern for the aquatic environment and the health and biodiversity of our rivers is paramount. Their vulnerability to damage is increasing and any measure which risks long-term deterioration should be most strongly resisted.

Flooding

Lobby for sane planning controls in flood plains.

Encourage a catchment approach to water conservation supporting land use and farming practices that conserve and delay water up-catchment.

Lobby for SUDS to be universally implemented

Support inter-agency approaches.

Adequate water supply in the future

Ensure that development is located, constructed and equipped to be commensurate with sustainable resource management and that all new water resource schemes like desalination, wastewater treatment and recycling and pipeline transfers are fully compatible with ALL environmental goals.

Policy 4: Support agricultural practices to conserve water in the catchment.

To protect our rivers and water supplies and prevent flooding.

Agricultural practices which encourage both water conservation and water quality should be highlighted at every opportunity. Contour ploughing, reducing ploughland acreage, planting trees, hedges and/or wildlife strips enable river catchments to retain

water. This recharges the groundwater stores and prevents excess runoff and diffuse pollution.

Encourage a catchment approach to water conservation, supporting land use and farming practices that both conserve water and minimise the use of harmful chemicals

Policy 5: Support policies requiring New Sources of Water piped into Hampshire

There is virtually no more natural water available in much of Hampshire to support the ever-expanding housing developments without removing (stealing) that water from the aquatic environment - with all the predictably adverse environmental consequences.

Therefore we must support SW's major WRSE- Wastewater Treatment and Transfer Project - which is our only hope of getting significantly more water into our area by the early 2030's, to relieve the annual worry of Drought- Orders.

**Policy 6: Information to raise awareness and encourage changing attitudes.
To protect our rivers and water supplies and prevent flooding**

CPRE Hampshire should encourage, both in its newsletters and mailings to its membership and by its actions in the planning system and its co-operation with the agencies involved, an end to the pursuit of cheaper water for its own sake and, in this time of climate uncertainty, an awareness of the implications to the health of our rivers and landscape of doing nothing.



The River Itchen, Winchester.

D WHAT MEMBERS CAN DO

At Home

- Use less water. Choose efficient appliances, and low-flush toilets. Flush less frequently (Flushing only every 2nd or 3rd pee will save a lot of water).
- Get a water butt - for garden watering
- Change your household washing & cleaning products to more natural and/or eco-friendly ones as all their contained-chemicals will eventually end-up in our rivers, as they are mostly NOT removed in septic tanks or by Wastewater Treatment Works.
- Ask your water company to install a meter at your property. It encourages you to save water and may even lead to lower bills.
- Water the garden only in the evening to reduce evaporation and increase water effectiveness. Grow drought-resistant plants.
- Investigate the installation of grey water (recycled water) systems to flush your loo.

When you are out

- Watch your local rivers, if you are concerned that flows are too low, contact the EA.
- Report local diffuse pollution events (mud or effluent flowing in quantity from a ditch or gully into a clear stream) (Environment Agency-(EA))
- Report overgrown/silted-up ditches and small water courses to HCC or to the local parish council.

Planning

- Take part in consultations by the Water Companies on their: Drought, Catchment, Drainage and Water - Management Plans.
- Take part in the consultations about Local, Neighbourhood and Parish Council plans, core strategies and local planning applications.
- Raise the question: **“Where is the water going to come from for this development? Where will the sewage go?”** Consider influencing their policies in advance via the various Local Plan consultations.
- Be aware of the Companies, agencies and organisations responsible for, and concerned with, the rivers and streams in your area. They vary across the County

E REFERENCES

Catchment Sensitive Farming - serena.leadlay@naturalengland.org.uk
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www.blueprintforwater.org.uk
<http://www.southeastwater.co.uk/>
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The River Itchen at Ovington. Moya Grove & Nick Walton - June 2026