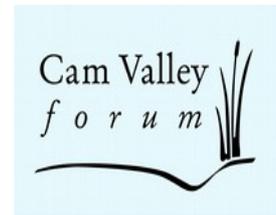


The River Cam Manifesto

Executive Summary



The Cam Valley Forum

published "The River Cam Manifesto" in August 2019.

For the full text see

<https://camvalleyforum.uk/river-cam-manifesto/>

- The River Cam, especially its tributary streams, does not have enough water flow to function well ecologically. Human environmental abuse to our chalk streams has caused this to be the case. It is not just a matter of low rainfall.
- Cambridgeshire is a naturally very low and also highly variable rainfall area (the mean is 56 cm per annum), but this is not the only reason for poor river flows in this year, 2019. Our ground water is regularly now depleted and with our rainfall's characteristic pattern of unreliability, particularly the winter rainfall which tops up groundwater, successive dry winters can be absolutely critical.
- Over abstraction of water from the ground is the main reason for the crisis. We pump much too much water out of the chalk, principally for our domestic supplies, and, to a smaller extent, for augmentation and agriculture. Water abstraction should not be viewed as a commercial 'right' but only as a privilege.
- The Chalk hills near Cambridge are where the regional drinking water supply comes from. Chalk streams are also very special environments (England alone have 85% of the world's total) and we will lose this natural asset increasingly, in England, if we are not careful to protect this ecosystem.
- The Environment Agency already pumps extra water from the Chalk to support stream flows in summer. This augmentation help to rivers is not enough to compensate for that taken by the water industry and is only needed because we have taken too much from the ground water in the first place. The natural resilience of Chalk streams - essentially a huge reservoir - has been abused by over abstraction.
- Most would agree that we should aim for sustainable development where we do not cause harm to our environment or compromise the needs of future generations. Unquestionably we have a water supply crisis at present. Present needs cannot be met without this abuse continuing. Future needs most certainly cannot be met at all without a major restructure intervention.
- Low river flows are inevitably added to by insufficiently treated effluent water from sewage works. This is why the upper Cam is largely classed by the EA as of 'poor' water quality. Our wild plants and animals have an entitlement to the quality water our environment can provide. Our human population have high expectations of environmental quality. We are losing biodiversity now.
- A river such as the Cam has an iconic status, nationally and internationally, and can be much better managed to be more resilient. Were this to be practised, its resilience would ease the problems of climate change, instead of displaying them, and be both better able to stand both occasional flooding and drought.
- Saving domestic water will help the river Cam. Here there is much we can all do. But the savings potential is extremely hard to either depend on or demand.
- Helping the River Cam requires us to reassess our local and national values. Our rivers could be both cleaner and healthier and the central feature of our environment in which we could take pride. We need to take action now.