

Chairman's Annual Report

(2022-2023)



Please forgive the length of this!

We end this year with many of our past messages about Chalk streams, pollution and the health of our rivers being very much in the public eye and with warnings now ringing in every ear. The media message is out there. We have also come through another bad drought, with Cambridge up to 39.9 °C, in the heat waves of the summer of 2022, reminding us forcibly of the power of Climate Change and the clear warning of its accelerating pace. Nationally and regionally we are going to face a much tougher time both for ourselves and our rivers, streams and wetlands.

First, I would like to thank all of our members for their physical, moral and financial support! Those of us on your committee have always received warm and welcome help. We have had generous donations from individual members and from some businesses, most specifically for our water monitoring work. Microbial monitoring in particular requires professional laboratory analysis and that does not come cheap. As you will see from our Treasurer's Report we hold a very healthy bank balance, and we are now pursuing a policy of ensuring that more of that money goes directly to support our river Cam work. We have welcomed to the committee this year, **Richard Sewell, Clara Todd and Anabela Pinto**.

The main focus of the Forum this past year has again been on its water quality and so has involved more detailed monitoring. We have insisted on having an evidenced-based approach to knowing just what is wrong with the Cam, and to find out just how bad it is. In that exercise we need to pay huge tribute to **Mike Foley** and his big team of Citizen-Science site monitors. They did us proud and Mike is rightly something of a celebrity, in this catchment, for what has been achieved by Cam Valley Forum.

Two years ago **Michel Goodhart** convened a 'safer Swim Group' who were all keen to know how bad the sewage pollution in the river was. After Mike Foley's team work, we told Anglian Water how distressed we were for our river, up stream of Cambridge, in having what were clearly the biggest inputs of faecal bacteria emanating from Anglian's smaller sewage treatment works. **Robin Price**, Anglian Water's Head of Water Quality and Environment, acknowledged the scale of the problem, and has adopted our 19 data sites and is now half way through a full one year of weekly monitoring of *E.coli* and *Enterocci* populations in the Cam. The confirmatory data from that is now coming out on our web pages, as it is produced, and open to all. Given that there is both an interest in safer river swimming, not to mention other water recreations, and some insistent support from many City and South Cambs Councillors for a cleaner River Cam we do feel that progress is being made here.

Mike Foley, has also been working with a smaller network of helpers in monitoring phosphate pollution. This is the key environmental problem in the river; from a wildlife point of view it is far more important than potential pathogens for us swimmers. That most of the upper river water in high summer is now classified, in EA River status, as 'poor' is a deep disgrace. This is, as many of you now realise, closely linked to the sewage input. The Forum hopes to address this problem majorly in the years ahead. Again, the only possible cure is a vastly greater Anglian water investment in the quality of water that they are allowing to enter the river. Excitingly, we feel, a greater effort also needs to go into village-level nature-based solutions whereby treated sewage has to pass through a local wetland before re-entering the River. We have raised this natural remediation concept with Anglian Water but CVF is not able to lead this locally without greater structural and operational support from elsewhere. Such sites would help wildlife a lot.

Cam Valley Forum is only one small player in a huge water-related network. **Richard Sewell and Clara Todd** have now joined the Cambridge Water Company's 'Challenge Panel'. Theirs is the only voice on that panel for water conservation specifically, and changing that Water Company's thinking is indeed a challenge! We are grateful to Cambridge Water (South Staffs) for their donations to Chalk stream welfare but the inescapable and inconvenient truth is that we customers are allowed to have as much lovely clean water as we want from the Cam Chalk catchment. We are obliged therefore to welcome the new Fen Reservoir (ready in 2035?) as, along with now promised water transfers from Grafham Water, in a few years time, these will be just about the only lifeline for our dying Chalk streams.

Beyond the County we are connected to the Rivers Trust and Chalk Aquifer Alliance - to mention but two larger umbrella groups. There are also twelve other *physically active* River Groups in our Cam catchment. We have engaged with many of these this year in both river monitoring and in needed planning consultations. Notably this includes FROG on the Granta, Hobson's Conduit Trust, The River Mel Restoration Group, Mill River, the Wilbraham River Protection Society, and CURAT (the Cam Upper Reaches Action Team) in Essex. The lobbying of 'the Friends of the Cam' has also been lively! It is our hope to bring these together as a more effective force within our local River Cam Catchment Group. Arguably, that Catchment Group should be a power for good. We have benefited from **Elizabeth Ranelagh's** links to the farming world and from **Ruth Hawksley's** connection to the Wildlife Trust. More widely we have a good working relationships with local government. We have been delighted that substantial funding continues to come in for the County's Chalk Stream Recovery project. This is still professionally supported by the continuing physical work of **Rob Mungovan** and **Ruth Hawksley**. On many other river-related issues, **Clara Todd** sits as our *observer* on the Cam Conservators meetings. Locally, we have also assisted in answering river questions from our local MPs and have met some prospective parliamentary candidates as well. We strongly assert that as water is a 'Commons' and is neither owned by Water Resources East nor by any of the three local water companies (Anglian, Cambridge and Affinity who sell what they abstract from our Cambridge Chalk aquifer). Our whole society needs a better model of its water governance than we have now - and soon.

Your committee has been hugely supportive this year, not only through those mentioned above but also by our Hon Treasurer, **Bruce Huett**, assiduously keeping the books. Bruce has been a supporting anchor at our meetings, and has acted very largely as our Secretary. Our Membership Secretary and Newsletter editor, **David Brooks**, has supplied you with no fewer than 9 more newsletters this year. He and **Anne Miller** receive info@camvalleyforum.uk mails. **Anne** has most ably and faithfully supported our expanding webpages. She is also an authoritative voice on climate change and for long has been an advocate of Zero Carbon ideas that we can no longer ignore.

You will also see from your Agenda that both **Mike Foley** and your **Chairman** are also stepping down to a degree. The demands of keeping CVF on the road is becoming more than both Mike and I can presently sustain.

In re-electing your committee at this AGM we shall be without Mike. He has been a huge force and a great driver of practical river conservation and leadership in 'Citizen Science' monitoring. Some of his many roles may be filled by present committee members but we will certainly need **new recruits** for more practical river work to continue.

For my part, I see that I originally took over from Jean Perraton as Chairman 'for a year' some few years ago. I do feel the Forum is in good shape, but my family need me back and I have much else to attend to. I shall remain on the committee only in so far as a smooth transition requires it.

Your Committee are in charge. They are now going to shape the Forum's future. They will be recruiting. Do support them please. So "*Let it Flow!*"

Lastly, our long-standing members should note that **Lawrence Wragg**, who was actually with us at this AGM meeting last year, sadly died in the summer. Lawrence was a stalwart of the Cambridgeshire CPRE and cared much about the River Cam and its heritage. He was a wise counsellor, supporter and Committee member whom we now miss.

Stephen P Tomkins:

Retiring - Chairman

March 2023

Appendix

see <https://camvalleyforum.uk> and other pages of our web site for updates on

- Our Committee
- Past Accounts
- Annual subscriptions
- Cam Valley catchment River Groups
- Grants
- Past Projects
- Water Quality
- Drought and Flood
- River web resources open to all
- All our past Newsletters

The following CVF documents have been produced or published by us in the past year
see <https://camvalleyforum.uk/reports-consultations/>

- *Cam Catchment Partnership (discussion paper) - Towards a River Enhancement Strategy (January 2022)*
- *Consultation Response to the Environment Agency Flood Risk Management Plan Consultation (January 2022)*
- *Consultation Response to Cambridge City Council Riverbank public art consultation (February 2022)*
- *Consultation Response to the Water Resources East Emerging Water Resources Regional Plan (February 2022)*
- *CVF Report on the counts of Faecal indicator bacteria in a Cam Valley Forum sample of effluent discharging from Haslingfield STW during a storm overflow, (March 2022)*
- *Consultation Response to City Council Logan's Meadow Plan (March 2022)*
- *Appeal Response to the Planning Inspectorate about Fulbourn Village development on a wetland site. APP/W0530/W/22/3291523 (April 2022)*
- *Consultation Response to The Anglian Water consultation on the Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant Relocation Project (Phase 3) (April 2022)*
- *CVF Report on Phosphate monitoring in the Upper Bourn Brook and its tributaries (April 2022)*
- *Consultation Response to the Government's DEFRA Storm Overflow Discharge Reduction Plan (May 2022)*
- *River Cam Manifesto (second edition) (June 2022)*
- *A Briefing Sheet on Reduction of Abstraction from the Chalk Aquifer. August 2022*
- *Consultation Response to the Anglian Water Company's Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (September 2022)*
- *CVF Report of an investigation of Water Turbidity of the River Rhee and Cam 2021-22 (January 2023)*
- *Response to the Anglian Water & Cambridge Water Fenland Reservoir Proposal. (January 2023)*
- *Consultation Response to Water Resources East on the Draft Water Resources Regional Plan for Eastern England (February 2023)*

E. coli /100ml counts over distance (km) from Haslingfield Sewage Treatment Works to Cambridge, January-August 2022

