

## Cam Valley Forum Annual Report 2025

Last year saw chalk streams and river health reach the national consciousness in many ways, and this also played out at the local level. Needless to say, Cam Valley Forum members found themselves involved in many initiatives, meetings and discussions, with the organisation playing an important role. Our thanks go out to all our members, partners and collaborators for their enthusiasm and willingness to engage. One sadness to note is the death, at the beginning of this year, of Jean Perraton, one of CVF's very first members and a long serving Chair and committee member.

With the arrival of Will Oliver as our very professional Treasurer, we've improved some of our systems and can now accept online donations on our website. <https://camvalleyforum.uk/join-us/> Our finances remain in good state, as can be seen in the financial report attached.

The Cam and its tributaries are still far from healthy, still lack adequate protection, and still need much better management but, as we reach our 25th anniversary, we at least have a far greater understanding of the challenges and, dare we say it, potential solutions. In line with our mission, laid out in 2001, we have continued to work with our expanding network of partners to protect and improve the River Cam and its tributaries, for the benefit of the community and the environment.

Our activities in 2025 focused on the following key areas:

### Clean Bathing Water Project and sewage sleuthing

Following our successful campaign to get Bathing Water Designation for the Cam at Sheep's Green in 2024, we are a) helping the Environment Agency (EA) and Anglian Water (AW) identify the sources of sewage pollution and b) applying public pressure to try to accelerate the necessary improvements. The EA is now monitoring water quality at Sheep's Green all year round and the 'Source Apportionment' work is underway. During the 2025 "bathing season" faecal contamination was significantly reduced from 2024, with most readings at a "good" level (see the data on our website or via the QR code on the sign by the river). However, we think this pollution reduction is just because it rained less, rather than anything that AW have yet done to improve their sewage infrastructure. CVF members met with AW and the EA in July 2025 to share information. The results won't be known until 2027, but we are pleased that, as a result of the designation, AW's budget for improvements to the upstream sewage infrastructure has increased from £5M to £20-30M. However, we are disappointed that the main improvements won't happen until 2029.

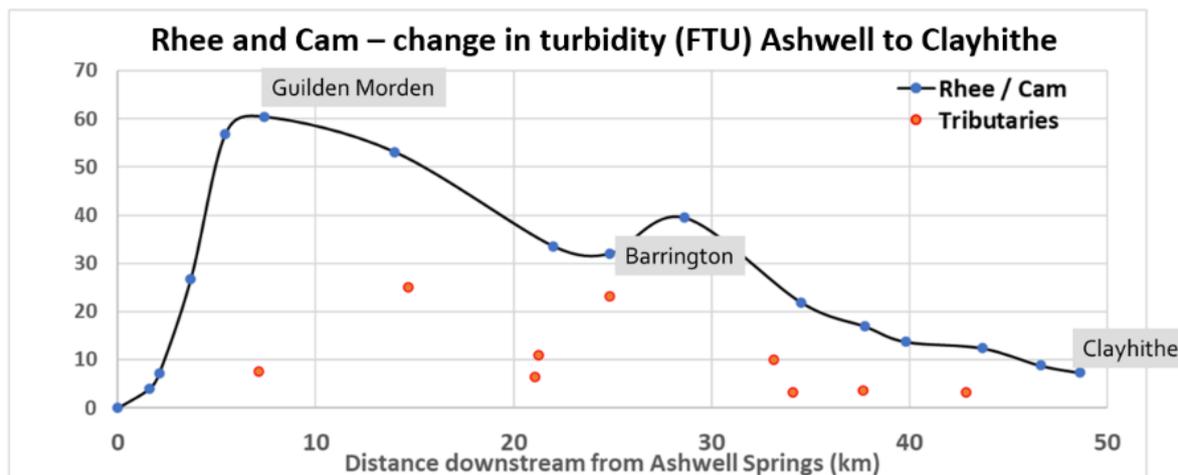
We organised a "Punt and Paddle Out" demonstration on the Backs in May 2025, as part of the Surfers against Sewage nationwide protests **demanding an end to sewage pollution**. Over 100 people participated, accompanied by a specially composed song by Rowena Whitehead "Anglian Water: Clean it up" You can hear this here: <https://camvalleyforum.uk/punt-and-paddleout-17-may-2025/> We're also grateful to Scudamores, who provided 4 free punts



We also provided strong comments on the government's 2025 Water Restoration Fund, created from fines from the water companies. We of course welcomed the grants that have been made available from this for chalk stream work in the catchment, but decried the fact that these are a tiny proportion of the total fines and are also insufficient to ensure that the activities initiated will remain sustainable. The water companies must stop such pollution occurring in the first place and, if it does happen, they should be paying for the clean-up.

### Other Water Quality Monitoring.

The main focus of our other citizen science monitoring programmes in 2025 was the turbidity (or murkiness) of the Rhee. Mike Foley’s work suggests that this is due to a combination of some dredging of the upstream section of the Rhee a few years ago, and more recent “improvements” to the agricultural drainage in the area, leading to a huge peak in turbidity around Guilden Morden. The large numbers of non-native, invasive American Signal Crayfish in the Barrington/ Haslingfield area may also contribute as they burrow in the river banks, causing erosion in the clayey soil, and thus turbidity.



Although not specified in this chart some tributaries are Chalk streams and two have become turbid as they approach the junction with the Rhee

We are planning to monitor road run-off from the A11 into the Granta, and have had discussions with Stormwater Shepherds who are campaigning nationally on this emerging major source of pollution. Following a meeting with the Highways Agency, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding with them to allow us access to their data, which will help with development of a project.

### Water scarcity and flooding – either too little or too much!

The Cam catchment is in one of the driest places in the country, but is also not immune to flooding and the negative impact of extreme rainfall events. This is now recognised as a real challenge to the political and economic drive to speed up development in Greater Cambridge. The Cambridge Water Scarcity Group aims to address this but we have heard very little yet from it. The October 2025 review of Cambridge Water’s Water Resources Management Plan by the EA, Ofwat and Defra says “.. there is a significant risk that the company will rely on **unsustainable abstraction** until at least 2032”<sup>1</sup>. This, of course, also poses a major threat to our chalk streams.



River Shep, A Chalk Stream near Shepreth

We have thus made it a high priority to continue pushing for reduced abstraction. We voiced our concerns strongly in our response to the consultation by the House of Lords Environment and Climate Change Committee on the 2025 Cunliffe report – the review of the water industry. We generally welcomed the subsequent report of the newly established Independent Water Commission, whilst regretting its lack of reference to the catchment approach.

We met with Cambridge Water in May (few, if any other local groups, have annual consultative meetings with the water company in this way), and raised our on-going concern about their lack of urgent action. We continued to advocate for a hosepipe ban to be imposed from the early stages of drought. Cambridge Water's view continues to be that they must follow the 'drought triggers' laid out in their current drought plan, although we are aware that such adherence is not mandatory. We publicised the EA's urgent advice in June for more immediate action to address future water shortages. In our response to the consultation on the Greater Cambridge Local Plan we requested strengthening of the proposed policies for "Water efficiency in new developments" and "Integrated water management, sustainable drainage and water quality".

CVF has supported the Fen Reservoir proposal since its inception, since storing water when it is plentiful in the winter is vital for reducing abstraction from the chalk aquifer, and we responded to their third consultation. CVF members met with Matthew Bullock and his colleagues to discuss their proposal to use farm scale reservoirs as an alternate supply source for Cambridge Water; we support the basic concept but are as yet unclear about how it would be implemented.

Although CVF has been less involved in flooding issues to date, we commented on the policy on 'Managing flooding' in the consultation on the Greater Cambridge Local Plan, emphasising that it must reflect the need to avoid the current situation where pressure on the planners (and Councillors) results in approval of planning applications on potentially floodable land. Flood risk has greatly increased with the rapid acceleration of climate change which has led to a 30% increase in Cambridge's winter rainfall since the 1960s, and increasingly intense storms, bringing a risk of flash flooding.

### **Invasive Plant Species**

We continue our seasonal work tackling non-native plant species, particularly Himalayan Balsam, focussing on Bourn Brook and the field downstream of Newnham Riverbank Club. We are planning more extensive work on this in 2026, with the help of Trumpington Farm Company and by engaging contractors. We will be following up their work with volunteer working parties in the summer and autumn, and welcome volunteers wanting to help.



### **Advocacy and public engagement**

At the last AGM, David Brooks was presented with a bound volume of the 100 newsletters he had written and produced whilst editor, in recognition of his sterling work since 2013. He handed over to Clara Todd, who kindly took the newsletter over on a temporary basis, producing a further 5 issues during 2025. Many thanks to her and to Anouk Gouvras, who will be taking over the role of newsletter editor in 2026. Anne Miller has continued to maintain the CVF website and has revised the structure to make our activities clearer. We had 3,500 visits to the website in 2025.

David Brooks kindly organised two informative nature walks in 2025 (Coldham's Brook and Fulbourn) which were much enjoyed. He would like to stand down from this role and we are looking for a new walk organiser.

We participated in several water-related public events including the River Day at the Museum of Technology, the Eco Festival at St Johns Church, an event during Cambridge Open Eco Homes, and the Cambridge *Rivers of Film* Festival. Mike Foley gave an inspiring talk in Newnham on the murkiness of parts of the Cam. And we provided a grant of £300 to the Fulbourn Community Association for costs related to showing their Fugolburna film and production of DVDs.

Media engagement has been substantial. Anne Miller had several interviews with ITV about sewage in the Cam, and calling for improvements to Haslingfield Sewage Treatment Works, and they provided good coverage for the “Punt and Paddle out protest. The Cambridge Independent ran several articles mentioning CVF, covering the Paddle Out, Cambridge Water’s lack of urgency about water scarcity and its failure to introduce a hosepipe ban, and our concerns about the government’s Water Restoration Fund.

### **Strengthening partnerships**

CVF is playing a key role in the revitalised Cam Catchment Partnership (CCP), which is developing a Catchment Plan for the area and bringing the many local river groups and associated organisations together.

<https://www.rivercam.org.uk/> We also continue to be involved in and support CAMEO <https://www.cameopartnership.org/>, and to contribute to Water Resources East discussions.



Many CVF members are actively involved in the Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project (e.g. advising on water quality monitoring methods; participating directly in the volunteer activities at the case study sites). CVF is now formally represented by Michael Goodhart on the new CPPF Grantchester Meadows Management Committee. We are supporting the Cam Conservancy in their efforts to raise funding for the urgent repairs to Jesus Lock and Baits Bite lock.

We urgently want to see more attention paid to chalk streams as an iconic habitat, with critical biodiversity value. To this end, we contributed to the consultations on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the Cambridge City Council Biodiversity Strategy. We also supported and advised on specific initiatives, such as the City Council’s proposals for the creation of new watercourses on Sheep’s Green.

### **What next? – priorities for 2026?**

This coming year we will continue our on-going work to achieve clean bathing water, our sewage sleuthing and other monitoring work, running working parties to reduce the encroachment of Himalayan Basam, and further campaigning to reduce over-abstraction. We’ll also maintain our efforts to increase public awareness of catchment-related issues and continue to work with our many partners.

**Do join us and get involved:** <https://camvalleyforum.uk/join-us/>

Anne Miller, Sue Wells.

# Appendix

## List of committee members 2025

Anne Miller (Co Chair) Sue Wells (Co Chair) Will Oliver (Treasurer)

Bruce Huett, Charles Turner, Clara Todd, Christine Berry, David Brooks, David Partridge, Elizabeth Ranelagh, Matt Day (ex officio Cam Catchment Partnership), Michael Goodhart, Richard Calverley, Richard Sewell, Rob Mungovan (ex officio Wild Trout Trust), Ruth Hawksley (ex officio Wildlife Trust), Stephen Tomkins

## CVF Reports published during 2025

These reports are available to download here: <https://camvalleyforum.uk/publications/>

- Obituary of Jean Perraton, one of Cam Valley Forum's very first members, a long serving Chair and committee member. We are grateful to celebrant Katy Astley, [Katy\\_astley\\_celebrant@outlook.com](mailto:Katy_astley_celebrant@outlook.com) for sharing her fascinating funeral address. *January 2026*
- Presentation by Dr Mike Foley summarising some results from our investigations (so far) into why the River Cam is so murky. Read it along with the blog here. *December 2025*
- Short YouTube video showing our techniques for removing the invasive plant, Himalayan Balsam. *September 2025*
- Presentation to Anglian Water, on the impact of turbidity and the river flow-rate on water quality. *July 2025*
- Press Release, calling on Cambridge Water to implement a hosepipe ban this summer. *June 2025*
- Technical report by Steve Boreham of WildReach, analysing the pollution from roads near the Cam. *May 2025*
- Presentation by Craig Bennett, Chief Executive of the Wildlife Trusts, at CVF AGM. *March 2025*
- Update report on Turbidity in the Rhee and Granta rivers. *March 2025*

## Consultation responses during 2025

These reports are all available to download here <https://camvalleyforum.uk/consultations/>

- [Cam Valley Forum](#) response to 3rd Fen Reservoir consultation. *December 2025*
- [Cam Valley Forum submission](#) to the House of Lords Select Committee on Environment and Climate Change, for their inquiry looking at drought preparedness in England. *November 2025*
- [Cam Valley Forum response](#) to Cambridge City Council Consultation on Sheep's Green Water Course creation *Oct 2025*
- [Cam Valley Forum response](#) to Local Nature Recovery Strategy *Sept 2025*
- [Cam Valley Forum response](#) to Cunliffe review of water industry regulation *April 2025*
- [Cam Valley Forum response](#) to CSET busway consultation. *Feb 2025*
- [Cam Valley Forum response](#) to Cambridge Water's pre-consultation for 2027 drought plan. *Jan 2025*