

COUNCIL
23 APRIL 2026

PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The following amendment to a motion has been submitted:

Protection of North Herts Chalk Streams

Amendment to be moved by Councillor Donna Wright and seconded by Councillor Amy Allen:

Council notes that:

1. Chalk streams are globally rare ecosystems that require our protection. There are only around 260 chalk streams in the world, with 85% of them being in southern England. We have ten in North Herts and it behoves us to offer these precious and vulnerable assets the maximum level of protection against over-abstraction and pollution, particularly in the face of huge potential levels of housing development locally.
2. South Cambs MP Pippa Heylings is currently sponsoring a Chalk Streams (UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site) Bill in parliament. Our MP for NE Herts Chris Hinchliff is a signatory. The bill seeks to give our chalk streams status as a serial UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site, which requires the government to make a national commitment to their conservation. However, the status could take years to achieve.
3. **The Government is driving a growth in housing that is vitally needed across the county, and it is important that this growth balances the need of protecting our nature, such as our rare valuable chalk streams, and our communities.** It is essential that North Herts Council does everything possible to protect its unique chalk streams and the irreplaceable habitats associated with them.
4. The draft NPPF (2025) now makes two mentions of the need to protect chalk streams – in policies P3 2(e) and N1 1(a) – but this protection must also be embedded at the local level.
5. The new North Herts Local Plan currently under development offers an opportunity to do this. The presence of our chalk streams should be woven into the visions and objectives of the Local Plan.
6. Whilst only part of North Herts lies within the Chilterns National Landscape, the Planning Guidance set out for it by the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project is equally valid for the whole of North Herts. This should be applied across the District and its plan-making checklist be implemented in development of the new North Herts Local Plan.

7. The over-abstraction of our rare chalk streams is a serious and long-standing concern. Water companies have consistently under-invested in the infrastructure and new reservoir capacity needed to support a growing population, and this failure has placed significant pressure on our local water environment. Several of our community groups – including RevLevel, Friends of Oughtonhead Common, and the River Hiz Conservation Group– have done exceptional work to highlight the impact this has had on our chalk streams and to champion their protection.

Therefore, Council resolves to:

1. Instruct the Executive Member for Place to write to MPs Pippa Heylings, Chris Hinchliff, Kevin Bonavia, and Alistair Strathern expressing the Council's support for the Bill to make all UK chalk streams a serial UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site.
2. Ensure the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project checklist with the two amendments shown is adopted and applied throughout the preparation of the Council's new Local Plan (see details below).
3. Ensure that the Council as LPA places the highest possible priority on the protection and conservation of the District's chalk streams, taking appropriate measures to safeguard their ecological integrity and the quality and quantity of their water, including the imposition of planning conditions as necessary.