

Motion to: Council

25 January 2022

Subject: Honouring the River Wensum and increasing protection of its biodiversity

Proposer: Councillor Galvin

Seconder: Councillor Price

An amendment from **Councillor Stonard** has been received.

Councillor Stonard is amending the motion as follows:-

Inserting the words “**continue to**” before “**develop**” in resolution 2).

Inserting the words “**that promotes public access where safe and appropriate**” after the words “**river frontage**” in resolution 2).

Inserting the words “**the Environment Agency and the government**” after the words “**Anglian Water**” in resolution 3).

Inserting the words “**Continue to**” before the word “**develop**” in resolution 4a).

Inserting the word “**improved**” before the word “**signage**” in resolution 4a).

Inserting the words “**Continue to develop the Biodiversity Implementation Plan and use the Biodiversity Enhancement and Non-native Species Management Plan to**” before the word “**ensure**” in resolution 4b).

Replacing the word “**enhance**” with the words “**the enhancement of**” in resolution 4b).

Inserting the words “**Continue to**” before the word “**work**” in resolution 4c).

Replacing the words “**to make biodiversity**” with the words “**ensure the council’s Biodiversity Action and Plan and Biodiversity Implementation Plan remain**” in resolution 4c).

Inserting the words “**from particularly government and that it also provides appropriate resource and powers to other responsible statutory agencies;**” after the words “**seek funding for this**” in resolution 4c).

Inserting the words “**Continue to**” before the words “**check the**” in resolution 4d).

Inserting the words “**against the Biodiversity Action and the Biodiversity Implementation Plan**” after the words “**Delivery Plan**” in resolution 4d).

Replacing the words “**including mitigating**” with the words “**and continue to mitigate**” in resolution 4d).

Inserting the words “**Continue to**” before the word “**develop**” in resolution 4e).

Inserting the words “**with a continued ambition to ensure the Riverwalk is enhanced for full public access across all areas, forever.**” After the words “**the process**”.

So the revised motion becomes:-

The River Wensum is a rare and special chalk stream river, nationally important and listed as SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and SAC (Special Area of Conservation): the highest nature designations possible in the UK. With a total of over 100 species of plants, a rich invertebrate fauna and a relatively natural corridor, it is ‘probably the best whole river of its type in nature conservation terms’ (Natural England SSSI Citation 1993).

Globally, chalk streams are rarer than rainforest. All of the habitats within the SSSI are intrinsically linked. The cold chalk filtered water provides a rare habitat for a rich aquatic world. Rare and vulnerable species include the Desmoulin’s whorl snail, white-clawed crayfish, brook lamprey, and bullhead. Sadly, the white-clawed crayfish, classed as under severe threat from invasive populations, now looks like it has been driven out of the river entirely, very recently, by crayfish plague carried by non-native crayfish.

The river supports an incredible list of species from chub, pike and eel to kingfisher and little grebe; from sedge warblers to barn owls. Communities of plants include water lilies and the nationally scarce water dropwort. Invertebrates including molluscs, water beetles and mayflies abound.

This amazing river flows through our city; protecting us from flooding, providing a natural corridor, cooling our air; a living link with our natural and cultural heritage. Yet the Wensum is particularly under threat from abstraction and urbanisation; pollution from agriculture and industry; and invasive species. It suffers from a lack of understanding; we take it for granted. Development of use of the river is welcomed, but the importance of its biodiversity must, especially in view of increased threats, be recognised, protected and enhanced. It is important to pursue a ‘whole river’ approach to this living part of our cityscape, recognising and linking up and downstream.

Norwich City Council has led the development of the River Wensum Strategy working with the Broads Authority, Norfolk County Council, the Environment Agency and the Wensum River Parkway Partnership, as the River Wensum Strategy Partnership (RWSP). After consultation, the strategy was launched in June 2018 and an updated Delivery Plan was brought to Cabinet in December 2021. This Strategy focuses on the stretch of the River Wensum corridor from the city council boundary at Hellesdon in the west to Whitlingham Country Park in the east. Other work led by

external organisations and groups is ongoing for the area upstream of Hellesdon Mill.

In addition to and working alongside the important actions within the River Wensum Strategy, council **RESOLVES** to:

1. In recognition of its natural and cultural significance and to celebrate and share its importance, investigate whether it is possible to confer any statuses or nominate the river for awards or honours such as freedom of the city in order to actively increase public awareness of its value;
2. Continue to develop its planning policies further to protect biodiversity, mitigate flooding and enhance a wildlife-friendly river frontage that promotes public access where safe and appropriate;
3. Write to Anglian Water, the Environment Agency and the government asking for evidence of what is being done to prevent unacceptable levels of human waste in the water from sewage overspill and that the structural reasons for this are addressed;
4. Work in partnership to:
 - a) Continue to develop and deliver improved signage and other interpretation of the river to increase understanding of its importance, and safe and equal access to its amenity;
 - b) Continue to develop the Biodiversity Implementation Plan and use the Biodiversity Enhancement and Non-native Species Management Plan to ensure links with and the enhancement of the river and riparian environments;
 - c) Continue to work with an extended set of partners including the Norfolk Rivers Trust and River Wensum Strategy Partnership to ensure the Council's Biodiversity Action Plan and Biodiversity Implementation Plan remain a high priority and cross cutting theme of the River Wensum Strategy and seek funding for this from particularly government and that it also provides appropriate resource and powers to other responsible statutory agencies;
 - d) Continue to check the policies in the River Wensum Strategy and actions and projects in the Delivery Plan against the Biodiversity Action Plan and the Biodiversity Implementation Plan for their biodiversity implications, and continue to mitigate against invasive species and the effect of bankside works; and
 - e) Continue to develop a process for community and other groups along the river to bring forward ideas for the strategy and action plan, including finding sources of funding to carry out this work, and publicise this process with a continued ambition to ensure the Riverwalk is enhanced for full public access across all areas, forever.