

Minutes
Inaugural Meeting of the River Chess Association
7pm, Wednesday
16th September 2009,
Chesham Town Hall,
Chesham, Bucks

Attendants

David Hyde
Richard Jones
Paul Jennings
David Leach
David LeNeve Foster
Judith Aldridge
Phillip Folly
Ken Austin – Chesham Environmental Group & Chesham Society
Norman Bennet
John Taylor
Gill Leaper
Eric Holt
Terry Tyler – Crestyl Watercress
Kathryn Graves – Chesham Town Council
Allen Beechey – Chilterns Chalk Streams Project
Sophie Jennings
Ellie Powers – Veolia Water Central (was Three Valleys Water)

Apologies for Absence

Scott Horton
Roger Wotton – University College London
Stephen Webster
The Hon Sir Anthony and Lady Colman
Justine Fulford - Mayor of Chesham

1. Introduction – Paul Jennings

A presentation was made by Paul Jennings introducing the concept and rationale for the River Chess Association (RCA). It will focus on issues specific to the River Chess. The main issues identified were:

- i) low flows
- ii) over abstraction
- iii) water quality
- iv) invasive species
- v) dissemination of information to stakeholders

The RCA would work with existing organisations who are already carrying out excellent work on the river and on the issues identified. The meeting felt that the

RCA would augment the existing groups and could focus on lobbying appropriate organisations on issues affecting the river.

Allen Beechey explained some of the issues affecting the Chess. There was expansive discussion on the over-abstraction issue, with input from the representative of Veolia Water Central. We were told that the water company is operating close to the limits of their abstraction licence and that this has been the case for sometime. The water supply to the Chesham cannot be met from water extracted from the local aquifer and has to be topped up from water from outside the area. Ellie Powers advised the meeting that Veolia Water were not planning to increase abstraction from the catchment.

Allen Beechey (AB) suggested that the RCA might want to look into the possibility of some parts of the Chess becoming areas of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). This would be a way of providing long-term protection for the river and would attract significant funding. AB advised the group that achieving SSSI status would not be easy but might be a long term goal of the RCA. SSSI status could provide significant benefits but there may also be restrictions on land use which would need to be considered. AB opined however, that much of the river was already being managed in a manner consistent with good SSSI management and so gaining SSSI designation may not lead to a major change for landowners. It was felt that there was a need to understand the implications of having a SSSI site on the Chess. This will be a subject for further discussion.

2. Discussion on the Aims of the Association

Protect and Improve the River Chess for Future Generations

- Environmental Monitoring and Protection
- Management of Voluntary Resources
- Exchange of Expertise and Ideas
- Public Awareness
- Education
- Lobbying

3. Adoption of the Aims of the Association

This was postponed until the next meeting.

4 Enrolment of Members of the Association

A list was circulated and 14 people registered their interest on becoming members. Since the meeting we have had 3 more people who have registered. Formal enrolment will take place at the next meeting.

5. Appointment of Association Officers -

Chairman	Environment Liaison Coordinator
Resource Manager	Education Liaison Coordinator
Treasurer	Public Relations Coordinator
Association Secretary	

Nominations are requested for the next meeting.

6. AOB

Coffee and tea organised by Sophie Jennings