

**Faversham Town Council
Climate and Biodiversity Working Group**

**February 14, 2022 meeting, agenda item 7,
Mapping Faversham's Chalk Streams**

Report by Matthew Hatchwell

Anna Stonor and I, as Secretary and Chair respectively of the Friends of the Westbrook and Stonebridge Pond, had a phone call on February 4th with Charles Rangeley-Wilson (CRW), lead author of the 2021 UK Chalk Stream Restoration Strategy. (See <https://catchmentbasedapproach.org/learn/chalk-stream-strategy/> for details of that.)

Our call was the result of an email exchange in January with CRW, Chris Mainstone of Natural England, and Mark Wilkinson of the Chalk Aquifer Alliance about how best to get the Westbrook, Cooksditch and other nearby streams flowing from the chalk aquifer officially recognised as chalk streams on the national database, which is held by Natural England.

Chalk streams are a globally rare habitat, with only ~230 currently recognized worldwide – 85 percent of them in the UK and the remaining 15 percent in northern France. Thanks in part to the 2021 Chalk Stream Restoration Strategy and the work of groups like the Chalk Aquifer Alliance, they are now recognised by DEFRA, the Environment Agency and private water companies across the country as a very high priority for protection.

Experience elsewhere in the country suggests that inscription of our local chalk streams on the national database won't be a game-changer in arguments about housing development around the town, but it may help with individual sites adjacent to springs and watercourses. It may also help increase pressure on Southern Water to stop discharging untreated or partially treated wastewater into Cooksditch and Thorn Creek. There's also research going on elsewhere in the country to better quantify the link between increased abstraction from chalk aquifers and lower flow in nearby chalk streams, that we may be able to benefit from.

The main conclusion of the February 4th phone call was that CRW has agreed to come and spend a day in the Spring looking at the chalk streams in and around Faversham in coordination with Natural England so that, if all goes well, Cooksditch, the Westbrook and other streams flowing from the chalk aquifer between Goodnestone and Bapchild can be added to the national inventory of chalk streams.

The current expectation is that CRW's fee will be covered by the Friends of the Westbrook and Stonebridge Pond. I will keep the Working Group informed as the date for his visit is set and a programme agreed.