



PRESS RELEASE

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'Stand Up for Your River': the Wandle Trust calls on South London people to stand up for the River Wandle

The Wandle Trust is encouraging local residents in Croydon, Sutton, Merton and Wandsworth to stand up for their local river, the River Wandle.

Members of the Wandle Trust joined river action campaigners as part of the 'Our Rivers Campaign' to meet Huw Irranca-Davies, the Minister for Marine and Natural Environment, by the Thames at Westminster yesterday (Wednesday 25th November 2009) to discuss new plans which will detail how the quality of each river in the United Kingdom should be improved.

The plans, which will be published next month under the Water Framework Directive, are required by EU legislation stipulating that all rivers must reach a good ecological status or potential by 2015.

Sadly, the River Wandle is unlikely to achieve the target of good ecological status by this date. But to ensure the river has the best possible chance, the Environment Agency now needs local-level information on current problems faced by the Wandle.

The Our Rivers Campaign was set up by the RSPB, WWF UK, the Association of Rivers Trusts and the Angling Trust to help local people 'Stand up for Your River' by feeding information about it to the government, so that local knowledge can be taken into account in the new plans.

Members of all these organisations, together with the Wandle Trust's Development Officer Dr Bella Davies and a representative from Action for the River Kennet, met the Minister to encourage him to ensure that local information is incorporated into the new river plans to best effect.

Dr Bella Davies, Development Officer for the Wandle Trust said:

"The River Wandle has some unique issues which affect its quality and we want to be sure that they will be included in the government's new plans. For the Environment Agency to address these issues they have to know what the problems are at a local scale, so they need local information about each river. The Our Rivers Campaign website (www.ourrivers.org.uk) enables anyone to provide this information.

"The campaign also encourages people to 'Stand Up For Your River' by lobbying their MP, through local media work or by writing to Hilary Benn, the Secretary of State for the Environment, to ensure that their local river is properly represented in the plans which will be published next month. We strongly urge people who enjoy the River Wandle to stand up for their river to give the Wandle the best chance for the future."

Notes to editors:

1. The River Wandle is a chalk stream which flows 11 miles from Croydon and Carshalton to the River Thames at Wandsworth. It runs through the London Boroughs of Croydon, Sutton, Merton and Wandsworth.

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2. The Wandle Trust is an environmental charity dedicated to restoring and maintaining the health of the River Wandle and its catchment. (www.wandletrust.org)
3. A recent Environment Agency assessment listed 26 per cent of rivers as 'Good' status. This means 74% of rivers are failing – including 117 rivers (2%) which are classified as 'Bad' making them among the worst in Europe. The EU Water Framework Directive requires the UK to bring all of its rivers up to 'Good' status or above by 2015. Current draft plans mean the UK will fail to reach this target.
4. The River Wandle is currently classed as 'Poor'.
5. The Government is set to publish River Basin Management Plans for the 11 river basin districts of England and Wales as part of the EU Water Framework Directive. These plans will set out how the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) deals with pollution, abstraction and other issues affecting rivers and wetlands but currently only propose a disappointing improvement in status of just 5% of waters.
6. Draft River Basin Management Plans were published by the Environment Agency in December 2008 for public consultation. Following this consultation, the UK Government will have to submit its final plans to the European Commission on 22 December 2009.
7. Since the Our Rivers campaign launched at the end of April, 217 regional river action groups and more than a thousand individuals have adopted local rivers and have been providing information during the consultation phase on the pressures they face. The campaign has also been backed by eight Parliamentarians who are concerned about the state of the water courses in their constituencies. For more information visit the campaign website - www.ourrivers.org.uk
8. Feedback from supporters of the Our Rivers campaign during its first six months indicate that the three biggest threats to rivers in England and Wales are chemical and sediment pollution from agriculture, over abstraction by water companies, and run-off water from urban areas.
9. Our Rivers is supported as part of the HSBC Climate Partnership (HCP). The HCP is a US\$100 million, five-year partnership funded by HSBC, working with the Climate Group, the Earthwatch Institute, Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute and WWF. Launched in May 2007, the HCP will:
 - Help to protect four of the world's major rivers – the Amazon, Ganges, Thames, and Yangtze – from the impacts of climate change, benefiting the 450 million people who rely on them.
 - Make some of the world's great cities – Hong Kong, London, Mumbai, New York and Shanghai – cleaner and greener, which the partners will promote as models for the world;
 - Create 'climate champions' worldwide who will undertake field research and bring back valuable knowledge and experience to their communities;
 - Conduct the largest ever field experiment on the world's forests to measure carbon and the effects of climate change.

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