



Ward(s) Affected: All

Motion on Notice

Report by the Director for Sustainability & Resources

Officer Contact Details:-

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Executive Summary

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The report before Council sets out a motion received from Councillor Gabe Crisp which has been seconded by Councillor Julian Shinn.
- 1.2. Council is asked to consider and debate the motion prior to it being referred to the Joint Strategic Committee for determination under provisions set out in paragraph 14 of the Council Procedure Rules (part 4 of the Council Constitution - Rules of Procedure).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Council is asked to debate the motion, as set out in Annex A to this report, prior to its referral to the Joint Strategic Committee for consideration and determination.

3. Context

- 3.1 A motion on notice has been received from Councillor Gabe Crisp, (attached as Annex A).
- 3.2 The content of the motion is relevant to a matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties and which specifically affects the District.

4. Issues for consideration

- 4.1 Motions considered by Full Council are done so under part 14 of the Council's Procedure Rules and are debated under rules set out under part 16 of the Council Procedure Rules.
- 4.2 The Council is asked to debate the motion under these rules accordingly.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The financial implications associated with this motion will be considered by the Adur Joint Strategic Sub-Committee following its referral.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 Rules concerning motions are set out in the Council's Constitution under section 14 of the Council's Procedure Rules.

Background Papers

None.

Rights of the River Motion on Notice

Summary

This motion seeks to establish a 'Declaration on the Rights of the River Adur' and to enshrine the rights of the river into Our Plan and the newly revised Adur Local Plan.

Background

The river Adur defines our place. It is the name of our district and our council. It runs through the heart of our communities. It provides restful views for the weary and exciting recreation activities for the lively. Hundreds of walkers, cyclists, birders, anglers, watersports enthusiasts and dog owners enjoy its company every day. Millions of plants, mammals, birds and invertebrates live in or alongside the Adur. We all rely on its 'free' ecosystem services to clean our air, to filter our surface run-off, to allow biodiverse species to flourish and to channel surface water to the sea. Adur residents love 'their' river and want to give it a voice to protect it for the future generations

The river itself should have a voice in shaping [Our Plan](#) for future generations.

Our river faces numerous threats, both from within and without the Adur District, including multiple sources of pollution upstream¹, sewage discharges, unintentional but frequent human misuse along the Adur Estuary SSSI [between Cuckoo Corner and Ferry Bridge] and the unforeseen consequences of discharging fresh water at the pumping station near the Toll Bridge.

It is clear that the multiple agencies involved in managing and protecting our waterways are struggling to mitigate the threats and to keep ahead of the pressures that the river faces. There has been much media coverage of the issue of sewage pollution of waterways across the UK this year. Even Henley Regatta has been affected. We are all aware of the harmful effects of storm water 'overflows' (which can contain sewage) directly into the river itself at Ropetackle, and the risks from marine sewage discharges entering the river on an incoming tide. In addition we face the specific issue of some of the houseboats discharging raw sewage directly into the estuary on a daily basis.

Following the "[Who cares for our Adur Estuary SSSI?](#)" multi-agency event last September a lot of work has taken place to raise awareness of the river, the threats it faces and the actions needed to improve the condition of the river and restore its vital ecosystems to better health. This builds on the excellent work by officers over the past four years on various aspects of river restoration. New signage, to promote and explain desirable behaviours is being installed, following work with the Ouse and Adur Rivers Trusts and Sussex Wildlife Trusts and funded by Natural England.

Human caused damage includes (but is not restricted to): illegal cockle picking; excessive bait digging where the holes are not backfilled; dog-owners throwing balls into the water from the path causing their dogs to run backwards and forwards across the SSSI vegetation and

¹ e.g agricultural run-off, and industrial chemicals

mudflats²; Watersports enthusiasts trampling the vegetation and compacting the mudflats as they assemble and dismantle their craft at inappropriate tide times; Excessive development along the water's edge³. Many of these threats can be reduced if we provide a strong voice for the river.

There is a global movement of states and intergovernmental organisations recognising the Rights of Nature⁴. A sustainable economy requires us to acknowledge our interdependence with natural systems. Adur has already made many steps in this direction.

We have the capacity to give the River Adur a voice in our council. Through the award winning [Sussex Bay](#) initiative, [Weald to Waves](#), The [Adur River Recovery](#) Project, the River Adur [wetlands restoration project](#) the Adur Estuary Community Group and many other groups it is clear that now is the right time to coordinate and step up our actions in Adur District to help to protect the River Adur as a single entity from source to sea, to regenerate the mudflats and the salt marshes, to reverse the decline in the condition of our Adur Estuary SSSI and to preserve the RSPB Nature Reserve.

Adur District Council can, once again, be a beacon institution. Setting the bar high for other local authorities to admire and emulate our bold actions to protect nature and our relationship with the natural environment.

The [Rights of Rivers](#) global movement has framed The Universal Declaration of River Rights. This says that all rivers shall possess the following fundamental rights:

- (1) The right to flow
- (2) The right perform essential functions within the river's ecosystem
- (3) The right to be free from pollution
- (4) The right to feed and be fed by sustainable aquifers
- (5) The right to native biodiversity
- (6) The right to regeneration and restoration.

This approach has already been supported by the Sussex Wildlife Trust and Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust in the Lewes District Council [Rights of the River Ouse](#) motion. ADC has already taken action to protect and enhance our river estuary including at Pad Farm and New Salts farm through the Adur River Landscape recovery project.

This is our opportunity to establish a 'Declaration on the Rights of the River Adur' to formally enshrine the rights of the river into our strategic and policy vision for the future in Our Plan and within our newly revised Adur Local Plan.

Motion

1. This Council acknowledges the growing global movement of 'rights of nature' as a framework for rethinking its relationship with the environment.

2. This Council acknowledges the work of multiple bodies in addressing the health and wellbeing of the River Adur and believes that there is a case to be made for adopting the 'Rights of Rivers' approach.

² This flushes up the feeding and resting rare migrant bird species causing stress and limiting the chance for these rare visitors to gain weight before their long onwards flights

³ including the removal of many of our ancient hardes and the destruction of much of our historic fishing heritage

⁴ Rights of Nature is a way of rebalancing our extractive relationship with the planet. It is only by working alongside nature that we humans will be able to survive and thrive into the future

3. This Council will develop with local communities, adjacent local authorities and other relevant stakeholders a 'Declaration on the Rights of the River Adur' and will bring forward the 'Declaration on the Rights of The River Adur' at a meeting of the full council within 12 months, for debate, and possible adoption.

Proposer - Councillor Gabe Crisp

Seconder - Councillor Julian Shinn