Catchment Based Approach

Chalk Stream Restoration Group

Annual Review 2024/25

As custodian of 85% of the world's chalk streams we have a global responsibility to protect and restore them. Setting out the actions that are needed, the Chalk Stream Restoration Strategy was first published in 2021 and was accompanied by a detailed Implementation Plan in 2022. This is a summary of the first Annual Review tracking delivery of the plan and reporting progress from 2024/25. Our annual review shows that although some progress is being made - there is much more that we still need to do.

The Chalk Stream Restoration Group includes a large number of organisations operating at National, Regional and local levels. Working together, we can deliver some truly inspiring projects. By showing a positive vision of the future, we hope we can persuade our leaders and politicians to grant our One Big Wish for Chalk streams to drive action and future investment to return them all to good health.

The five core themes we identified in the Annual Review

1 - One Big Wish

Our overarching ambition is to ensure that chalk streams are recognised in a way that secures their protection and investment in their restoration.

We continue to work with our partners to ensure that we take all opportunities to push for greater levels of protection through changes to policy and legislation.

2 - Water Company Investment

There has been substantial investment by the water industry in the period 2020-25 and record levels of investment are planned for the next 5 year period.

Despite that, it is often hard to report what the benefits of that investment have been as information is not presented in an accessible way or is simply not available.

3 - Innovate for faster action

We know that the scale of the task to improve chalk streams is huge and under existing processes using conventional techniques it will take time and will need significant investment. We want to see more exploration of creative and innovative solutions which can be quicker to deliver and more cost effective.

4 - Data and Evidence

The detailed analysis underpinning our annual review shows that there are significant issues with the WFD dataset we use to characterise the state of our chalk streams.

Citizen Science initiatives are helping to plug that gap alongside the use of other more detailed datasets that are increasingly being made available. We will continue to build our evidence base so that we can target action to the right places.

5 - Working Together

The strong chalk stream community that we have developed helps to promote the sharing of knowledge and best practice.

Projects like our Chalk Stream Flagship Projects show what can be achieved when partners come together with funding to identify and address cross sector impacts on chalk streams.

We have welcomed collaborations with other organisations such as Big Chalk and South Downs National Park which extend our outreach and help build a shared evidence base and deliver wider benefits than simply working alone.

October 2025

Catchment Based Approach

Chalk Stream Restoration Group

Annual Review 2024/25

83%

of WFD chalk stream waterbodies do not achieve Good Ecological Status

69

Wastewater Treatment Works in chalk catchments introduced phosphate stripping for the first time

9

Chalk stream flagship projects are now underway

>20

MPs from across the political parties have engaged with our work

To make progress in achieving our objectives we need to see clear and decisive action from Government.

We want to see:

- **Chalk streams properly taken into account in Government policy – notably the Planning and Infrastructure Bill and forthcoming Water White Paper**
- **Adequate funding for catchment working and delivery, including a greater mandate for CaBA partnerships**
- **Time-bound goals for addressing the multiple issues facing chalk streams and to use the best available information to target activity to the areas where we can have the greatest impact**
- **Greater direction to drive innovation, collaboration and creative problem solving so that we can see quicker delivery of improvements**

Our Annual Review points towards the activities we need to focus on in 2025/26

- **Continue to push for chalk streams to be recognised and protected**
- **Complete an updated map and inventory of chalk streams**
- **Help Regional Water Resources groups in prioritising action to achieve sustainable abstraction**
- **Identify future water company investment needed to improve water quality**
- **Develop approaches to help address highways and agricultural pollution**
- **Develop a Chalk Stream River Restoration Guide and continue to support our Flagship projects**
- **Continue to engage with and support the wider chalk stream community**

Find the Annual Review at https://catchmentbasedapproach.org/learn/chalk-stream-strategy/

October 2025