

Press release for HRA

February 2026

## What if Rivers Had Rights?

We invite you and your members to join a vital movement for Southampton's future. Our rivers and estuaries—the Itchen, Test, and their tributaries—are under huge, often increasing pressure from pollution, sewage, over-abstraction, and habitat loss. Despite existing laws, protections remain fragmented, slow, and often inaccessible to the communities who care the most.

This is why we, Southampton River Rights, have come together to ignite a city-wide conversation and a new approach: a River Rights Charter. This charter would recognise our rivers as living systems with the right to flow, to be clean, and to thrive. It would place river health at the centre of every relevant council decision and empower local people to be a voice for our precious waterways.

Our mission is twofold. First, we are dedicated to fostering deep seated community input and stewardship that will sustain a Southampton Rights of the River Charter for generations. Second, we are committed to working together—drawing on local knowledge and lived experience—to respond to Southampton City Council's call for "genuine, ongoing community input" into [a River Charter to be formally ratified by the council in 2027](#).

If you care about cleaner water, thriving wildlife, and building a more resilient and healthy city, your involvement is essential. Please join us for our next public meeting on **9th March at 19:15 in St Denys Church Hall, Dundee Road, SO17 2ND**. Together, we will explore how a Rights of the River Charter - built from the ground up by the community - can create real, lasting change for Southampton.

If you cannot attend, we would still love to collaborate. We can help promote your events or campaigns and keep you informed of future opportunities via our mailing list. Visit our website, [Southampton River Rights](#), for blog posts, stories from local advocates, and updates on how to get involved. There you'll also find a Google form to share your thoughts or join our mailing list, or you may reply directly to this email.

We believe lasting change starts with community. Your participation - and your voice - could make all the difference. We hope to see you at the meeting and look forward to working together to protect and restore Southampton's rivers and streams, and to create a Charter that will be recognised and ratified by our city in 2027.

With hope and determination,

Southampton River Rights group

Katherine, Christelle, Clare, Kirsteen, Ruth, Liz, Gavin and Neil