



## **THREATS TO THE RIVER CAM AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT THEM**







# WHAT IS THE CAM?

THE RIVER, ITS TRIBUTARIES, ITS WATERSHED, ITS LIFE  
**A RARE & PRECIOUS CHALK STREAM**  
AN IMAGE & AND ICON; A RESOURCE & A WASTE BIN?



# THREATS TO THE CAM

- pollution (Anglian Water)
  - sewage
  - agricultural
  - litter
- over-abstraction  
(Cambridge Water, Affinity)





# RIVER POLLUTION

- In 2024 AWV spilled untreated sewage into its region's rivers >43,919 times for >448,937 hours
  - one of 6 water authorities banned from paying bonuses because of poor performance
- E-Coli and Enterococci on the Cam
  - readings of E-Coli post DBA: 23/40 times
  - Enterococci, 12 times
  - industry (including decommissioned); agriculture; road runoff
    - hotspots in the M11/A11/A14 triangle where a cocktail of c300 chemicals reduce oxygen > fish death (Watershed Investigations)





# FLOW

- In August 2023, the flow in the Cam was 70% of the long term average
- Without effective locks, the Cam would be a trickle through the city
- Until 2000s water abstracted from the chalk aquifer was replenished. No longer as rainfall so diminished
- Less water and weaker flow > more pollution





# DROUGHT, HEAT & SUBMERGENCE

- Fens (and proposed reservoir) at or near sea level
- sea levels are rising faster than expected
- East Anglia the driest region in the UK, with some of the hottest temperatures
- rivers in drought/recovering drought status through most of the year







# WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?

*UNSUSTAINABLE BUSINESS  
MODEL OF WATER  
COMPANIES  
UNSUSTAINABLE LEVELS  
OF GROWTH IN THE MOST  
CLIMATE VULNERABLE  
PART OF THE UK*





# WATER COMPANIES PROVIDE PROFIT NOT WATER/SEWAGE MANAGEMENT

- The Legend of **Honey Hill**
- **Anglian Water** Private Equity owned; CEO paid c£1.4m pa; £79-89 million paid in dividends, 2024 MEANWHILE ordered to pay £62.8m in improvements and in community compensation in July 2025; £1.42m fine in May 2025, .....
- 2nd worst polluting water company in England, 2025
- In total water companies paid £72.8 billion in dividends in 2024
- Owned by asset funds and pension funds (eg **Cambridge Water** owned by South Staffordshire Water owned by Arjun Capital)





# WATER CAN'T SUSTAIN NEW HOUSE BUILDING

- In 2022 the Environment Agency said there was not enough water for the planned development in Cambridge
- Local plan was making provision for levels of house building above the government's recommended level
- Since then, Cambridge Growth Company has been appointed by C. Government to fast track 150,000 new homes for the Cambridge region
- Emphasis on AI, Data Centres and lab space which are huge water guzzlers





# THE MORE HOUSES, THE MORE EXPENSIVE THEY GET

- >6,000 new homes 2017-22 in Greater Cambridge
- Median house price rose >10% (£480,000 in 2022)







# WHAT CAN WE DO?

RIVER RIGHTS

LOBBY, VOTE, PROTEST, CHALLENGE, MONITOR



# WHAT DOES FRIENDS OF THE CAM DO?

- work collaboratively with other groups (Save Honey Hill, Save Coton Orchard, River Rights Network ...)
- campaign to improve the quality of the water, reduce over abstraction and allow groundwater levels to recover
- challenge all actions that threaten the life of the river
- educate ourselves and others about the Cam, rivers and environments
- initiate and support direct action to protect our rivers and their environments.
- river clean-ups
- declared the rights of the river in 2021, which we rededicate annually at midsummer
- **We do not accept any corporate or government money, or funding from any organisation involved in greenwashing**



## The changing West Antarctic Ice Sheet, and its implications for East Anglia

**Rob Larter**

British Antarctic Survey

UK Lead Scientist in ITGC Science Coordination Office

Email: [rdla@bas.ac.uk](mailto:rdla@bas.ac.uk)

[@polarrobs.bsky.social](https://bsky.social/@polarrobs)

[@PoLaRob@fediscience.org](https://www.fediscience.org/@PoLaRob)

Friends of the Cam

21<sup>st</sup> May 2025





**JOIN US: [WWW.FRIENDSOFTHECAM.ORG](http://WWW.FRIENDSOFTHECAM.ORG)**



*Sunday June 21st 2026 - River Cam Festival and Declaration of the Rights of the River*



