

# Edge of oblivion

England's chalk streams are unique and precious and must be vigorously safeguarded, writer and presenter Charles Rangeley-Wilson declares.

Rivers such as the Darent flow through some of the busiest landscapes on the planet and remain under constant pressure, not least from over-abstraction.

"We must learn to use less water"



rainforest, our glacier."

\* Visit [wwf.org.uk/riversontheedge](http://wwf.org.uk/riversontheedge)

**Fact:** On average we each use 148 litres of water per day  
..... That's **ONE TONNE** per person per week

is Charles's stark message in his short film *Rivers on the Edge*.\*

Concern for wildlife overseas is laudable but, he adds: "We should care about this amazing environment right here on our doorstep."

"Chalk streams are the ultimate river. They're over to look after. They are our

## Rivers are as good as gold says rowing ace

Double Olympic gold medal-winning rower James Cracknell and Natural Environment Minister Richard Benyon want the public to get behind the 'Love Your River' campaign.

The campaign encourages people to value their local river and shows the link between water in a river and the water used in the home.

The minister said: "We rely on rivers for much of the water we use, so it is in all our interests to protect and cherish them."

James commented: "We all have a role to play in making sure our rivers are as healthy as they can be."

The 'Love Your River' campaign is a partnership between Defra, National Trust, Environment Agency, Wildlife Trusts, Keep Britain Tidy and water companies.

## Did you know...

... that Tom Hart Dyke, the renowned plant hunter and son of DRiPS president Guy Hart Dyke, is first cousin to comedian Miranda Hart?



## Help us protect the Darent

DRiPS was formed in 1985 to restore and protect the Darent. For years the river has been over-abtracted, causing it to dry up in periods of low rainfall.

Prompted by DRiPS, Thames Water, South East Water and the Environment Agency drew up a scheme to help restore the river ... the Darent Action Plan.

This has now been completed.

Sadly, the threats to the river's wellbeing have not disappeared. Far from it.

The burgeoning population in the South-East brings an increasing demand for water.

In addition, invasive alien creatures and plant life are spreading through the system. The Water Directive Framework from Europe could also have a negative impact on the Darent.

So if you care about your river – a valuable and beautiful natural resource – and want to help preserve it for future generations, then join DRiPS!

\*\*\* Check out our new website

[www.darent-drips.org.uk](http://www.darent-drips.org.uk)

## Join the Darent River Preservation Society

To join DRiPS please complete and detach this form and send it with your cheque (minimum per annum £5 personal members, £10 group members\*), made payable to DRiPS, to The Secretary, DRiPS, 5 Romford Road, Pembury, Kent TN2 4HU.

Name.....

Address.....

Postcode.....

E-mail.....

Do you require a receipt? Yes / No (delete as applicable)

\* Group member, ie, clubs, associations, parish councils, businesses, etc

DRiPS charity number 100230



# NEWS FLOW

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## Campaign must go on says DRiPS

DRiPS has called on all parish councils along the valley to continue campaigning for the future of the River Darent.



Olympic rowing champion James Cracknell and Natural Environment Minister Richard Benyon try kick-sampling, a way of checking on invertebrates that helps to monitor a river's health. Full story back page.

The Darent Action Plan, a multi-million pound project to help safeguard the river, is now completed. However, says DRiPS, that is far from the end of the story. Local communities must stay vigilant to ensure best outcomes for the river.

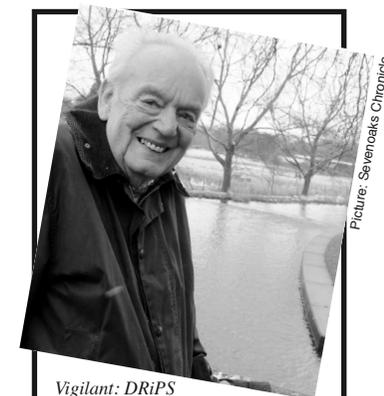
"The battle may be over but the war's still far from won," says Alan Williams, DRiPS chairman. "Sadly, completing the DAP doesn't necessarily mean the Darent will immediately become a strong and healthy river again."

"Ideally we should monitor it for a number of years. However, more pressing are plans to remove sluices and weirs under the European Water Framework Directive.

"DRiPS has warned the Environment Agency it will oppose any closures or removals without consultation and meeting strict criteria.

**"We are, after all, the Darent, not the Danube."**

• More background: see inside.



Vigilant: DRiPS chairman Alan Williams

## Annual meeting will be an extra special occasion

Join us for wine and 'nibbles' to celebrate the completion of the Darent Action Plan.

We'll raise a glass at the Society's annual meeting at the Anthony Roper Primary School, Eynsford, on Wednesday 17 April.

Top-line speakers from Thames Water and the Environment Agency will give latest news on reaching this historic landmark for the river.

Doors open at 7pm for a 7.15pm start. **Please come – all supporters and members of the public will be welcome!**

## Survival threat to native crayfish – see inside