

River Stour nutrient neutrality update

Following the July 2020 Natural England guidance about the potential impacts of new developments in the River Stour catchment on the Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve, the local planning authorities (LPAs) affected have been working to address this issue in partnership with Natural England (NE), Kent County Council (KCC), the Environment Agency (EA) Southern Water (SWS) and government departments.

The Planning Advisory Service has convened a group of stakeholders with the purpose of agreeing a strategy to address nutrient neutrality. The principles and objectives of this strategy are currently being discussed with the statutory bodies, including NE, and with government for their views. We hope to be able to share a draft of the strategy in the next couple months.

Folkestone and Hythe District Council have agreed a strategy with NE for the developments affected in their area. Dover District Council are currently undertaking a study into the impact developments in their district have on Stodmarsh.

For Canterbury City Council, Ashford Borough Council and Maidstone Borough Council, the strategy will set out the opportunities in the catchment for mitigating both Phosphorous and Nitrogen to achieve nutrient neutrality in new developments. Once the broad strategy has been agreed it will require further work on the detail of how it can be implemented at a local level; work on this is already progressing.

Appropriate assessments will still be required for individual sites and developments are likely to need to provide mitigation for any nutrients that are added to the River Stour, which may be through onsite measures or through measures offsite.

We will provide a further update once we have made progress with the conversations with the partners.