For Winsley Parish Council to consider adopting the Bristol Avon River Charter

In an era defined by overwhelming biodiversity loss, climate change and other human harms to the environment the 'rights of nature' movement has emerged as a potential solution to bridge the gap between ecosystems and society.

A key approach for rivers is to devise charters to formally recognise their intrinsic value and our shared duty to care for their health.

Such charters are non-statutory and voluntary but when adopted by councils offer long term operational guidance and a policy baseline.

Caroline and I propose that Winsley Parish Council adopts the charter written for our river which, it is interesting to note, forms more than a third of our parish boundary (around 6 km of river course of a total 15km). In addition, the river is a key concern reflected in our work on the Wild Waters Festival, Watermark Community and most recently West Wilts Farmers Group.

There is currently a move promoted by 'We Are Avon', based in Bath, and with whom the festival has close links, to have the charter adopted by council resolution in multiple council areas. It is anticipated, I am told, that B&NES, Bristol City, Chippenham and South Gloucestershire councils will likely seek to pass this during the summer. It would seem fitting for us to be the first parish council to do so and to adopt the charter during our Wild Waters Festival.

RM/CR May 2026