

## **Rights of the River Roding Declaration**

**ACKNOWLEDGING** that rivers are essential to all life and perform essential ecological functions;

**RECOGNIZING** the absolute dependence of the people of the River Roding catchment on the River, which support human life by providing us with clean and bountiful water for drinking and sanitation, fertile soil, food, recreation, cultural uses, and nourishment of the human spirit;

**ALARMED** that humans & companies have caused the significant pollution of the River Roding, with resulting declines in aquatic health and biodiversity, as well as extensive negative human health impacts;

**CONCERNED** that excessive waterway diversions and groundwater withdrawals have significantly reduced flows in the River Roding. **FURTHER** concerned that humans have caused widescale physical changes to the River Roding through weirs and other infrastructure;

**FINDING** that UK laws are completely inadequate to protect the integral health of the River Roding;

**DISMAYED** at the almost complete failure of the government or regulatory agencies to act as the guardians of our rivers and take proper action and commensurate action for their protection and restoration;

**GUIDED** by the growing number of governments worldwide that seek to reverse the ongoing trend of global environmental degradation by recognizing and enforcing nature's inherent rights;

**CONVINCED** that recognizing the rights of nature, and in particular recognizing those river rights contained in this Declaration, will foster the creation of a new legal and social paradigm based on living in harmony with nature and respecting both the rights of nature and human rights;

**We DECLARE** that the River Roding to be an indivisible and living whole, from its source in Molehill Green, Essex to its confluence with the Thames at Creekmouth, Barking. It comprises its tributaries, small and large, as well as its entire watershed. It incorporates all its physical and metaphysical elements.

**We further DECLARE** that the River Roding is a living entity that should possess legal standing in a court of law and have all the rights, powers, duties, and liabilities of a legal person.

**We DECLARE** that the River Roding is entitled to the fundamental rights set forth in this Declaration, which arise from the fact of its very existence in these islands;

**1. The Right to Perform Essential Functions Within its Ecosystem.**

**2. The Right to Flow:**

The right to be free of unnecessary obstructions that inhibits the river's flow and life.

The right to follow a natural course.

The right to flood.

The right to be connected to its tributaries and wider catchment.

### **3. The Right to Water:**

The right to feed and be fed by healthy & sustainable aquifers

The right to sufficient water and not to be over-abstracted.

The right to receive water from its catchment within the natural ability of the river to receive with it.

### **4. The Right to be Free from Pollution:**

The right to be free of:

- Sewage pollution.
- Road run-off, chemical & industrial pollution
- Agricultural pollution (including soil run-off; fertilisers; pesticides and unnatural nutrient loads).

### **5. The Right to be Free of Rubbish**

Right to be free of rubbish, fly-tipping and single-use packaging and plastics.

### **6. The Right to Conservation:**

Right to the protection of existing river and riverside habitats & biodiversity.

Right to protection for riverside trees.

Right to the halting of encroachment and development onto river habitats & marshlands

### **7. The Right to Regeneration and Restoration**

Right to riverside re-forestation.

Right to re- follow its natural course, meander and move.

Right to re-daylighting.

Right to sustainable land management within its catchment.

Right to native biodiversity: removing non-native species & re-planting & re-introducing native species.

Right to the re-naturalisation of riverbanks and, if that's not possible, the provision of habitat in lieu.

## **8. The Right to a Healthy Relationship with Humans**

**We BELIEVE** that the people who live along the River Roding and its tributaries and within its watershed have an inalienable connection with, and responsibility to, the River Roding and its health and well-being.

**We DECLARE** ourselves to be guardians of the River Roding and will do whatever we are able to protect and restore the river we love and to uphold the rights contained in this Declaration.