

Dear Friends,

We are now well into our tenth anniversary celebrations, which were kicked off at our annual Open Day in September, following on with the Conference in October. Our AGM, on 21st November, will also be a thank you to our members with wine and nibbles – and hopefully an opportunity to welcome our 500th member (we are currently on 499).

On a more sombre note, last month we witnessed the third major pollution incident on the river in the last two years. More on this, and other happenings along the Crane valley, in this newsletter.

Crane Conference

This event went very well – around 150 people attended and there were valuable discussions on the current status of the river as well as plans for future improvement. FORCE presented a paper on “The Productive Crane”, which is now on our web-site. This paper traces the history of land use along the Crane valley and sets out a vision of how the Crane may develop into a much more environmentally and socially valuable corridor over the next five years.

Crane Pollution

Ironically, on the morning of the conference, 4th October, we received first indications of another major pollution incident in the lower Crane. A pipe carrying sewage sludge between two Thames sewage works was ruptured and then out-flowed into the river near the A30 crossing at Cranford.

First indications were this was a dire event, the river turned a smelly milky grey colour and many fish being killed. However, subsequent kick sampling of the river bed indicate that a remarkably large range of the river invertebrates have survived, albeit in reduced numbers.

The heavy rainfall of the last few weeks has helped to flush the remaining sludge from the bed and banks of the river.

Consequently, whilst it was definitely a very serious event, and the river cannot yet be declared safe to enter, the full devastation of October 2011 has not been repeated.

Vince Cable MP has written to the Environment Agency to ensure the incident is being investigated at a high level and find out what lessons can be learnt from this and previous major pollution events.

Citizen Monitoring Programmes

We are working with partners at ZSL, Frog-life Environmental and Thames Angling Conservancy among others, to develop a citizen monitoring



programme for the River Crane. The programme will provide regular information on the invertebrate and chemical quality of the river. The data will be used to identify pollution incidents and more chronic problems in the river and to target resources to resolving them. More information on these programmes

and how to get involved will follow in the winter edition.

FORCE AGM

As mentioned above, the 2013 AGM, is to be held in Rivermeads Hall from 8pm on 21st November. Formal business will be followed by drinks, nibbles and informal discussions around members' priorities and concerns.

We are also seeking new Trustees to support our work. All Trustees join for an initial 12 months as a co-opted member, allowing them to see how the process works before taking on any formal responsibility. Please contact us if you would be interested.

College Field Village Green application

The Local Inquiry for our Village Green application for the Richmond College Playing Field will be held at York House in Twickenham from 2nd to 5th December.

This Newsletter is funded for FORCE by: -



Mayday Genealogy

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LB Richmond's Site Allocation Plan and latest Richmond College proposals

Richmond Council's plans were recently put out for consultation and include a number of major development proposals for the lower Crane valley – including new primary and secondary schools, housing developments and a new corporate headquarters (proposed for Haymarket Media Group, currently located in Teddington).

We are very concerned about the potential impact of these proposals on the open spaces of the lower Crane. The existing local planning guidelines support improvements to the natural environment and open space. However, in this plan there is a presumption in favour of large scale development, in advance of any assessment of the impacts, or proposals regarding associated benefits for the environment and existing community. We have responded to these proposals (copy on our website) and requested a meeting with the council

Crane Park User Surveys

The next round of surveys at Meadway and Dragonfly Terrace takes place on Sunday 19 January 2014. Our twice-yearly surveys are creating a clear picture of usage patterns and trends along the Crane, and are an invaluable source of evidence in our engagement with developers and the councils. Please contact Gary Backler on gbackler@hotmail.co.uk if you are interested in taking part in this very rewarding and enjoyable exercise.

Crane Park Improvements

The new orchard at Meadway, opened by the deputy mayor during our Open Day, is the first local benefit delivered through this programme.

We are now putting a small team together to support



the long term management of the orchard as a community space. If you are interested please contact info@force.org.uk

A second site at Mill Road has recently been opened up and will benefit from more planting and improvement over the winter. More work is planned on other sites adjacent to Crane Park in the next year.

Big Green Fund wetland sites

Earlier this year Crane Valley Partnership secured funding from the GLA to help create new wetland areas at Donkey Wood, Pevensey Road Reserve and Mill Road. Works commenced at Pevensey last year and an ambitious programme of work at Donkey Wood is just starting. These works will provide new marginal river habitat with associated pathways and information boards/leaflets

FORCE carved benches

Mereway Road residents kindly donated £500 to FORCE following their street party in the summer. We have decided to put this towards a new carved bench for Crane Park, close to the path which runs from Mill Road to Lincoln Avenue. We are looking for a theme for this bench and would like suggestions from members. You can email your ideas to info@force.org.uk The bench will be installed by Spring 2014.

Cycling and access

There is a new cycle path going through Pevensey Nature Reserve and de Brome fields this winter, linking to paths through Crane Park and Hanworth Park. We are also hopeful that progress may be made in the next year on improving access through Feltham Marshalling Yards. Watch this space!

Volunteering

The new season of Volunteer Days started with visits to Craneford Fields and the Butts Farm area of Crane Park. The programme for the rest of the season is set out below.

TCV will also be running regular Wednesday and Thursday events along the Crane valley, including Donkey Wood, Pevensey and Mereway Nature Park, through the winter. More information on these and all the borough's events can be found at <http://www.swlen.org.uk/events-calendar/view>

Regards,

Rob Gray, Chair of FORCE

FORCE Volunteer Days

Date	Location	Activities
8 th December	Crane Park Island	Regular day with LWT – willow coppicing and island maintenance
12 th January	Meadway Orchard and Crane Park	Orchard and hedgerow maintenance
9 th February	Mereway Nature Park	General maintenance and wild flower planting
9 th March	Pevensey Road	Wetland planting of the new ponds and maintenance at Feltham Circles (“Graffiti art” centre)
13 th April	Crane Park Mill Road	Maintain hedgerow and scrapes
11 th May	Silverhall Park	Annual project day
8 th June	Balsam Bash	Repeat of the 2013 joint event with all our partners

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