

Dear Friends

Welcome to our winter 2015 newsletter – which begins with a request – that everyone who has not voted already in the GLA's "Big Green Poll" does so. More information and links for voting are provided below.

Vote for the Duke's River and help raise £400,000

We are leading a proposal to improve the environmental and community value of the Lower Duke of Northumberland's River (the Duke's River – also known as the DNR), which flows four kilometres from the River Crane in Kneller Gardens to the River Thames at Isleworth. We submitted a proposal to the GLA's environment fund last year and this has now been shortlisted.

The river was constructed in AD1544 to provide water to the Syon Estate, which had been taken by the King after the suppression of the monastery. It continues to operate as a high value waterway, with a walking route alongside it, linking Twickenham to Isleworth. Unfortunately though it has suffered from many years of neglect and is largely unknown by the public. Our project would widen and improve the walkway and provide mapping and signage to promote it, alongside new and improved habitats for waterfowl, kingfishers, water voles and fish.

The GLA would, if we are successful, provide £175,000 funding and we have commitments from LB Richmond, LB Hounslow and others for £225,000 of match funding. We now need you to vote and show your support for the project, ahead of the GLA's decision on which of seven shortlisted projects around London they will support.

Vote for the Duke's River project now!
www.london.gov.uk/biggreenpoll

We need your help to make this remarkable river better known, to improve the pathways and to protect and enhance the environment for wildlife.

Help us secure much needed funding from the GLA by voting for "The Duke's River" project.

For further information and to vote see www.london.gov.uk/biggreenpoll



Go to www.london.gov.uk/biggreenpoll and vote for "Duke's River Link". Everyone in the household can vote, including children. The deadline for voting is 2nd March and we should know the result within a few weeks.

Park Usage Survey

In January, we undertook our third annual survey of Winter usage of Crane Park at the Dragonfly Terrace and Meadway. During the short daylight hours of one Sunday, over 300 people used Dragonfly Terrace, and nearly 1,000 used Meadway -- more people per hour than on July Sundays. Our usage survey data has been an important input to our discussions with developers at the Richmond Education and Enterprise Campus and Feltham Marshalling Yards. If you would like to take part in these surveys, please contact Gary Backler at info@force.org.uk.

Crane Pollution Recovery

In December 2014 the Environment Agency undertook initial re-stocking of the river following the October 2013 pollution event. A total of 7500 one year old chub, barbel, roach, and dace were released. There are benefits to restocking the river, such as the early return of predatory birds such as Kingfisher and Heron. However, in the longer term we think resources would be better put into the work of improving habitats for fishes in the river and improved connections both upstream and downstream to quicken natural fish recruitment. In the longer term using resources in this way will have better outcomes for the river.

This Newsletter is funded for FORCE by: -



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ZSL has a project this year to introduce eel passes on to Kidds Mill at the base of the lower DNR – allowing eels to migrate upstream from the Thames again. Investigations will continue, potentially with the help of the Duke's River Fund, to improve natural passage from the Thames for a wider range of fish.

Citizen Crane Project

In the meantime we are continuing to work with our partners on the Citizen Crane project, where volunteers are monitoring invertebrates and water quality every month at 12 sites up and down the river. We will be completing the first year's investigation this spring and have submitted a proposal to extend this to a second year, also adding an evaluation of local drainage outfalls into the project. The programme has already helped develop our understanding of how water quality varies along the length of the river – and three pollution events have been identified by the system.

Mill Road Improvement Project

This project, in Crane Park, has already opened up a large new area, where the old mill used to stand, for public use. We are currently running a project to investigate the history of this site with a local school and we plan to create site information boards based on this work. In the meantime the council will be starting works to improve the environmental and aesthetic value of this part of the river, creating new backwater and wetlands, which will also act as fish spawning and nursery areas. The construction works are due to start later in the spring.

Pevensey and Little Park

Work continues on these two sites, located on both sides of the river upstream of Crane Park. TCV is running a Green Gym every Monday morning at Pevensey – particularly focused on health and getting a dozen or more people at a time to work on improving this wonderful site. See <http://www.tcv.org.uk/london/green-gym-london/pevensey-road-green-gym>

We helped to clear ivy from several more fruit trees and wood-chipped the path to the Marshalling Yards during our February volunteer day. We also recorded the numbers using the reserve and were very pleased to see these continuing to increase as more people discover it. LB Richmond are currently working up a project to construct a new wooden bridge to link this site to Little Park, another neglected area on the other side of the river. We hope to report more progress on this over the summer.

Volunteer Days and Themed Walks

Our season of volunteer days is well under way and we are very pleased by the number of people helping and their enthusiasm!

We are also embarking, with partners, on a series of walks and talks along the Crane Valley, designed to introduce local people to aspects of its natural and historical value.

Partners such as TCV and the Environment Trust are also delivering volunteer days throughout the week on various Crane Valley sites. The events are listed below and more information can be found on our web-site and Facebook page.

More information on these and all the borough's events can be found at <http://www.swlen.org.uk/events-calendar/view>

Thanks again for your continued support

Regards,



Rob Gray, Chair of FORCE



Volunteers remove a burnt out motorbike from Pevensey Nature Reserve

FORCE Volunteer Days and Activity Programme

| Date | Location | Activities |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| 4 th March | The Riverside, Twickenham by Eel Pie Island bridge at 10.00am or 10.30am at the Shot Tower, Crane Park | Community Learning Wetland Management |
| 8 th March | Crane Park Butts Farm (Meet at the Dragonfly Terrace) | *FORCE Volunteering Tasks to be identified |
| 11 th March | The Riverside, Twickenham by Eel Pie Island bridge at 10.00am or 10.30am at the Shot Tower, Crane Park | Community Learning Wetland Management |
| 18 th March | The Riverside, Twickenham by Eel Pie Island bridge at 10.00am or 10.30am at the Shot Tower, Crane Park | Community Learning Wetland Management |
| 21 st March | Mill Road, Crane Park 10.00am | Walk & Talk Water Voles with Ian McKinnon |
| 25 th March | The Riverside, Twickenham by Eel Pie Island bridge at 10.00am or 10.30am at the Shot Tower, Crane Park | Community Learning Wetland Management |
| 12 th April | Crane Park, Hanworth Road | *FORCE Volunteering Managing recently planted hazel woodland |
| 18 th April | Shot Tower, Crane Park 6.00am | Walk & Talk Birds and their calls with Keith Martin |
| 25 th April | Pavilion, Kneller Gardens 10.30am | Walk & Talk Duke of Northumberland's River, Kneller Gardens to the London Apprentice, Isleworth (return by bus) |
| 3 rd May | Springtime Safari Orleans Gardens | Lots of environmental activities and animals – very child friendly – FORCE has a stall |
| 10 th May | Silverhall Park, South Street, Isleworth | *FORCE Volunteering Supporting the local Friends Group |
| 16 th May | Staines Road entrance, Donkey Wood 10.30 (to be confirmed) | Walk & Talk Archaeology of Donkey Wood Catherine Edwards, AOC Archaeology |
| May (date to be confirmed) | Dragonfly Terrace Crane Park | Walk & Talk Memory walk for older people |
| 14 th June | Catchment wide balsam bash | *Big Balsam Bash Balsam removal and planting along lower Crane + end of season BBQ |
| 19 th June | Mill Road, Crane Park 12.00 noon | Walk & Talk Tree Identification |

| Date | Location | Activities |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| 27 th June | Dragonfly Terrace, Crane Park time to be confirmed | Walk & Talk How the Green Spaces Link Together with Rob Gray |
| 4 th July | To be confirmed | Walk & Talk Gunpowder Mills and Market Gardening in Crane Park Katy Cox & Chris Hern |
| Aug/Sep | To be confirmed | Walk & Talk Bat Walk – Alison Fure |
| Aug/Sep | To be confirmed | Cycle Ride For Families |

*FORCE volunteer events start at 10-30am; join us for an hour or the whole day. Hot drinks are provided but bring a packed lunch if staying the day. Please wear stout shoes or boots and old clothes.