

Dear Friends,

This has been a period of steady progress in some areas, and delays and frustrations in others, in other words business as usual. Details of both can be found in this spring 2017 newsletter - and you can also follow our progress through regular updates on Facebook and Twitter via the links below.

Duke's River and other Walking Routes

Our last newsletter indicated the new on-site signs and maps for the Duke's River walk were imminent – and they still are. The good news is the order has now been submitted and we remain hopeful they will be in place by the summer.

There is still no agreement with the RFU to set back the fence and widen the pathway along their very narrow stretch of the river. However, a proposal has been submitted from Richmond Council to the RFU and we remain hopeful this long running issue - and the associated planning dispute - will soon be resolved.

The new Duke's River leaflets are now available and have been distributed to local libraries. They can also be picked up from our stall at the Twickenham Green HANDS May Fair on 29th May – by which time we hope the new Lower Crane Valley walking leaflet will also be available.

We are soon to put these and other walking maps onto our web-site for download including a new map for the "Three River Walk" – a 12km circular walk along the Crane, Duke's River and Thames, and linking Twickenham Richmond, St Margarets, Whitton and Isleworth which was tested on one of our walks and talks this year.

The new pathway through Twickenham Junction Rough is essentially complete – but we are still awaiting formal timings on when the land will be transferred to the council and opened to the public. We remain hopeful this will be complete by the summer.

Citizen Crane River Monitoring

Volunteers on this project have been monitoring conditions at 11 sites along the river each month over the last three years and we have recently received confirmation from Thames Water (TW) of funding for another three years.

New findings continue to emerge, following last summer's first volunteer led "outfall safari", with TW reporting the discovery of many more misconnected properties polluting the river, including part of a new build school and a service station, and the Environment Agency (EA) investigating various polluting business operations.



Sewage Fungus at Donkey Wood

This winter there has been a significant "Category Two" pollution event in the river, causing over 5km of the river bed to be covered in sewage fungus for two months, and the effects continue to be seen in the March 2017 monitoring. A report on the incident has been released by the Citizen Crane team and

can be seen on our website, and the EA are continuing to investigate the cause or causes.

Planning – New Threats to Green Space

There are major plans being developed in Feltham – which include proposals to develop parts of the Crane valley at De Brome and Feltham marshalling Yards for housing – as well as opportunities to improve the access and environmental value of river corridors along the Crane and the Longford River. FORCE has submitted a response and this can be seen on the planning pages of our web-site

This Newsletter is funded for FORCE by: -



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We shall also be responding to the Department of Transport's consultation on the Heathrow Third Runway. This will affect the Crane catchment due to culverting proposed for the Upper Duke's and Longford River, further overflying of the middle reaches of the River Crane, and likely consequent transport and development pressures – already seen from the Feltham plans.

FORCE is also engaged with Richmond Council's village plan proposals for Twickenham and will be submitting a response to these.

FORCE's planning responses are all on our web-site and we welcome comments from our members on these and other planning matters. In all cases, we seek to ensure that proposals also provide net benefits to both the community and environmental values of the Crane corridor, and we oppose those that do not.

Community Learning



Hedge Laying in Crane Park

We recently completed a programme of community learning which included work to coppice riverside woodland and lay the hedges through Crane Park. This work was funded by a grant from LBRuT and led by Andy Flegg from TCV. There

will be further sessions over the summer. Look out for detailed plans which will be announced on our web-site in due course. Come and learn some traditional conservation skills.

Walks and Talks

The 2017 season of walks and talks is well under way and the programme for the second half of the year is being finalised. These events are all free and designed to highlight different aspects of the river corridor to local people. Booking is essential and is done via our website <http://www.force.org.uk/calendar/> or through Eventbrite.

Crane Park Usage Survey, 15 January 2017

We conducted our fifth consecutive January count of visitors to Crane Park and the Dragonfly Terrace. Despite rain all day, an average of 50 people an hour entered or left Crane Park at Meadway throughout daylight hours, with 10 per hour at the Dragonfly Terrace. Nearly half of all Adult visits were with a dog.

These surveys help us to understand who is using Crane Park, and give us a factual basis in our discussions with councils and developers. Our next survey will take place on Sunday 16 July 2017. If you would like to help, please contact info@force.org.uk

Volunteer Days

Our season of volunteer days continues, with visits to Pevensey Nature Reserve and Mereway Nature Park in April and May, followed by a final big balsam bash, based at Hospital Bridge Road in June. Our events continue to grow in popularity, with an average attendance of over 20 through the year.

One innovation this year has been to count the numbers and types of rubbish collected at every event, and use these data to develop our understanding of the litter problem throughout the catchment. This has proved very interesting and is starting to increase our (and others') focus on litter hot spots, both to reduce the proliferation in our local open spaces and to reduce the outflow of litter into the tidal Thames and marine environments. A first report on these activities can be seen on our web-site.

Spring/Summer Events

FORCE will have stalls at the Springtime Safari in Orleans Gardens on Sunday 30th April and the HANDS May Fair on Twickenham Green on Monday 29th May. Both are popular local

community events and it would be great to see you there. The Dog Show in Kneller Gardens will be held on 10th September this year

Regards,

Rob Gray,

Chair of FORCE



FORCE Volunteer Days and Activity Programme

Date	Location	Activities
2017		
9 th April*	FORCE Volunteer Sunday Pevensey Nature Reserve	Programme of work to include – path management, clearing ivy from old fruit trees, and clearing large amount of litter.
15 th April	Ecology of the DNR & Water Vole Environment	Walk & Talk – Ecology & Water Voles on the DNR – Led by Rob Gray
22 nd April	Walk the Crane 3 Hanworth Road to Isleworth	The third part of our annual walk from the source to the Thames along the River Crane. Details sent at registration
30 th April	Springtime Safari at Orleans	Annual environmental fair designed to appeal to young children in particular – runs through the afternoon. FORCE will have a stall
6 th May	Happenings on the Heath Shot Tower	"Hunting, horse racing, military reviews, duels, Kings, soldiers, botanist, extreme pedestrians - it all happened on the Heath" Led by Katy Cox
13 th May	Hedges in Crane Park	Walk and Talk - Which plants are included in the Crane Park hedges? Led by Jacob Seston TCV
14 th May*	FORCE Volunteer Sunday Mereway Nature Park	Programme of work to be decided
20 th May	Birds on the DNR	Walk & Talk - Birds on the DNR – Led by Keith Martin
29 th May	HANDS May Fair, Twickenham Green	Annual community fair in support of local charities, starting mid-morning. FORCE will have a stall.
3 rd June	Wildlife at Mogden	Walk & Talk – Wildlife at Mogden – Led by Lydia Blake
10 th June	Crane Park – Trees as a habitat	Child Friendly Walk & Talk – Trees as a habitat – Led by Jane Crowther, LBRuT Tree Officer
11 th June*	FORCE Volunteer Sunday Crane Park - Hospital Bridge Road	Our annual balsam bash
1 st July	Walk the Crane 2 Bulls Bridge to Hanworth Road	The second part of our annual walk from the source to the Thames – Re-scheduled from March and included as part of the London Rivers Week.
7 th August	Crane Park – Mindfulness	Walk & Talk – Mindfulness – Led by Andrea Hosfeld
19 th August	DNR Isleworth to Kneller Gardens	Children's walk along DNR – Bug Hunt in Silverhall Park
10 th September	Kneller Gardens Dog Show	Visit our stall and take part in the annual duck race.
16 th September	Mill Road Crane Park	Citizen Crane Led by Rob Gray
16 th December	Isleworth to Kneller Gardens Isleworth Mill Bridge	Walk and Talk – A leisurely walk along the Duke of Northumberland's River

Walk and talks events are free but registration is essential. To register go to the events page on the FORCE website <http://www.force.org.uk/calendar/view> and follow the links. Further walks and talks will be added to the calendar over the next few weeks.

*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. FORCE volunteer Sundays from February onward may be subject to change.