

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our summer 2019 Newsletter, the latest quarterly update on happenings along the Crane valley.

FORCE AGM

The 2019 AGM will be held at the Twickenham Club in London Road on Tuesday 17th September from 8pm. This is an opportunity to hear about our work over the year and meet the Trustees. After formal business we will have a short talk by John Waxman who is the new lead for the Crane Valley Partnership.

Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

FORCE were delighted to receive the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in June. The QAVS is the highest award given to local volunteer groups across the UK; it is awarded for the life of the charity and allows us to use their logo at the top of this newsletter.

FORCE trustees commented: "The award of The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service 2019 represents a huge achievement for all the many FORCE volunteers who work, and have worked over the last 16 years, to improve the environment along the River Crane in Twickenham and Hounslow for people and wildlife. The trustees of FORCE would like to congratulate and thank all our volunteers, past and present."

Duke's River Path

Over the last five years we have worked with Richmond and Hounslow councils, the Environment Agency, Thames Water (and latterly the RFU) to improve the entire 4km of the Duke's River pathway and river corridor.

The formal opening of the pathway was celebrated in July with a ceremony along the newly re-furbished RFU reach, attended by the mayor of Hounslow and deputy mayor of Richmond. The path is now wider and accessible for wheelchairs and pushchairs for the first time. We have already seen an increase in use and plan a full survey later in the year (see also below).



Cllr Chard (LB Richmond) and Cllr Louki (LB Hounslow) cut the hop strands to open the new path

FORCE Volunteer Days

We are currently in the middle of our summer break, but our regular second Sunday volunteer events will re-start in October 2019 with a visit to Twickenham Rough and Craneford Fields. More details on this and the rest of the year's plans are shown in the events listing below.

The numbers attending over the last few years have shown a steady increase – from below 20 per event in 2015 to almost 30 last year. We welcome all new and experienced volunteers and hope to see you during the next season. Children are also welcome – though they must remain the responsibility of the parent or guardian throughout the day.

Community Learning Programme

TCV volunteers have been improving the river margins and working in the meadows of Crane Park this summer. This work has been supported by shire horses from Operation Centaur and they have allowed us to expand our work to three meadows covering around 2 Ha.

We have also worked with local botanist Paul Lose to survey these meadows and develop our management plans to enhance them. Paul's report can be found on our website.

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Heath and Nobby cutting the Mill Road meadow in July

The community learning includes lots of family-based activities and the opportunity to win a water vole badge for those attending five of them over the year. To register for these please see our website.



Kneller Gardens

Kneller Gardens is set to become LB Richmond's fourth "Friendly Park for All", improving everyone's access to the park, including those with physical and mental health challenges. "Pets as Therapy" will run monthly walks, led by volunteers and their trained dogs, especially for people with dementia and their carers.

For more information on this initiative contact outdoor.learning@outlook.com or look at the LB Richmond website.

Kneller Hall

This site, currently home of the Military School of Music, is scheduled to be sold for development. FORCE has responded to the council consultation on possible plans for the site.

We proposed part of the site is developed as a public park and the opportunity taken to remove the Whitton Brook from its culvert and restore it as a stream through this park. The council's proposals are due to be released in the next few months and will be a major consideration for those buying the site.

Usage Surveys

FORCE continues to carry out regular six monthly surveys of public use of the lower Crane valley and we are very grateful to all the members who have helped us. The survey data are proving very helpful in our discussions with the two councils and others about supporting parks and open spaces.

We are planning a further survey in the autumn on the Duke's River path and would be grateful for volunteers to help. It typically involves counting users in various categories over two or three hours during the day. Please contact us if you are interested in helping with this work.

Volunteer Support

FORCE is a volunteer only organisation and our projects are largely dependent on our volunteers and the work of our partners. In the last six months we have engaged a bookkeeper for the first time to support our accounting. We have also recruited volunteers to help on planning matters and data analysis. However, we are still keen to recruit more, particularly supporting our communities and education portfolio. We also have an urgent need for a new Company Secretary to support the Charity. If you are interested in these posts, know anyone who may be, or would like to know more about other volunteering opportunities with us, then please contact us at info@force.org.uk

Regards,



Rob Gray,

Chair of FORCE



Volunteer Days and Activities Programme 2019

Date	Event and Location	Activities
28 August 19:50 – 21:00	Bat Walk Kneller Gardens	An evening bat walk led by an expert
8th September 11 – 12.30	Mindfulness Walk in Mereway Nature Reserve	A mindfulness walk and exploration led by local expert Andrea Hosfeld
17 th September 8pm	FORCE AGM. Twickenham Club, London Road Twickenham	Formal business followed by a talk with John Waxman, lead for Crane Valley Partnership
21 st September 10:30 to 12	River dipping. Meet at the dragonfly bench opposite the Ellerman Avenue entrance to Crane Park	Looking at invertebrate life in the river. A family friendly event
9 th October 10:30 – 15:00	Community learning in Crane Park: meadow management with TCV and Operation Centaur	See www.tcv.org.uk/london/richmond for details
13 th October 10:30 – 15:30	FORCE volunteer day. Rifle Club on Craneford Way	Improvement works in Twickenham Rough, Craneford Playing Fields and the Rifle Club open space
19 th October 10:00 – 13:00	Three Rivers Circular walk starting at Pevensey Nature Reserve	A circular walk along the Crane, Upper Dukes and Longford Rivers, exploring some of our best and yet least known riverside open spaces
10 th November	FORCE volunteer day. Twickenham Station	Improvements to the new space, not yet opened between the station and Moormead as well as working in Twickenham Rough
23 rd November 10:00 – 13:30	Three Rivers Circular walk starting at the tower in Crane Park	A circular walk along the Crane, Upper Dukes and Longford Rivers, exploring some of our best and yet least known riverside open spaces
8 th December 10:30 – 15:30	FORCE volunteer day. De Brome Fields	This is a new site for FORCE, next to Pevensey Nature Reserve. Site improvements, potentially including the planting of a new orchard.

FORCE Walk and talk events are free, but registration is essential. Go to the events page on the FORCE website <https://www.force.org.uk/calendar/> and follow the links. All other events are free, and no registration is necessary. More information is available through the FORCE and TCV websites.

*Hounslow Countryside Rangers have started a series of volunteer events in open spaces in Hounslow – including the Crane valley. At present there is no more information but there will be on the LB Hounslow website in due course - or please contact countryside@hounslow.gov.uk

There are three Green Gyms operating along the River Crane. All are free with no booking required. Everyone can join in this gentle exercise in a social environment whilst working together to improve local riverside spaces. You can turn up on the day (10.45am to 2pm) or contact TCV Green Gym for more information.

- Pevensey Road Green Gym Rangers meet every Monday at Pevensey Road Nature Reserve
- Hounslow Heath Green Gym Rangers meet every Tuesday at the Hounslow Heath visitor centre
- Richmond Green Gym meets every Wednesday at Kneller Gardens – call Pablo on 07717 494476

All green gyms are designed to provide light exercise and social engagement whilst improving local open spaces. The sessions normally run from 10.45am to 2.30pm and everyone is welcome to join them.

For more information about the Green Gyms and all the events run by the Conservation Volunteers see www.tcv.org.uk/london/richmond