



Friends of the River Crane Environment

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2014

24th November 2014 8.00pm

Rivermeads Hall, Staines Road, Twickenham

1. Attended by: Frances Bennett (Trustee), Doug Craik (Trustee), Mike Day (Trustee), Tim Elson (Trustee), Rob Gray (Trustee), Chris Hern (Trustee), Colin Cooper (SWLEN), Angela Kidner, Paul Leonard, Ian McKinnon, Sally Maynard, Trudi Morgan, Pete Morgan, Martin O'Gara(Trustee), Joe Pecorelli (Trustee), Jane Satchwell, Susan Scorer, Jo Tipping, and others

2. Apologies

Piers Allen, Ted Darby, Ruth Jones, Gary Backler (Trustee), Anna Smyk (Trustee)

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

Colin Cooper proposed that the minutes of the previous meeting were agreed. There were no matters arising.

4. Reports and accounts 2013/14

4.1. Chair The chair gave the following report to members.

Following a review of charity structure we now have seven separate portfolio managers. The aim was to separate the corporate functions of the charity from the executive and to better share the work load among trustees. For the same reason we actively seek partnerships with other organisations. Our partnership with the Conservation Volunteers (TCV), for example, has blossomed in the last year and whereas we only deliver one volunteer day per month ourselves, this partnership delivers two to three volunteer events per week along the Crane valley. We have been really impressed at how much volunteers can do and how well they do it. The cumulative benefit of manual working by relatively few people can be seen throughout the valley – and for this reason we look for a significant part of all our contract work to be delivered through volunteer groups such as TCV. It is important that the volunteers also benefit from this – and we are seeking to design our volunteer events to support the needs and wishes of volunteers. We also have a good network of (mostly) local suppliers, working with us on a contract basis and providing skills such as leaflet production, outdoor teaching, bridge manufacture and chain saw sculpting.

Our role as part of the wider Crane Valley Partnership is of crucial importance to us – linking with all the key parties throughout the catchment. Therefore I am delighted that Ilse Steyl, CVP project officer, is here tonight and will be presenting to us after the break. The Partnership has been essential to several major projects that we started in the last year. We worked with the Partnership to secure £375,000 from the GLA through the Big Green Fund and, led by the sterling efforts from Martin, we are now over halfway through delivering our parts of this project. The Partnership has also helped with the creation of a network of Citizen Scientists, in a project called "Citizen Crane". Eleven monitoring sites are collecting monthly data and we have already identified several chronic pollution problems and reported these to the Environment Agency and Thames Water.

The Outdoor Education Programme under Frances continues to go from strength to strength, and it has been a great pleasure to witness so many children enjoying learning outdoors and getting so much from it. Finally, and most importantly, I come to you our members. We are very grateful for your continued support – last year we celebrated our membership growing above 500 for the first time and this number is of great importance, not least in conferring legitimacy to our negotiations with statutory organisations. We also have over 350 followers on Facebook – providing valuable interaction and feedback with local people. So thanks again to members, Trustees, partners and other supporters. As always it has been our combined efforts that have made a difference.

4.2. Treasurer The Treasurer submitted the following report to members and Trustees asked them to adopt the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014.

The accounts presented here are for the year April 2013 to March 2014 and were submitted to the Charity Commission in October 2014. Also presented is the Trustees' Report that accompanied the accounts and the Independent Examiner's Report. The turnover was not sufficient for the accounts to require an audit.

The accounts show total cash funds at year end of £28 714, increased from £14 208 the previous year. The main change is an increase in restricted funds from £2986 to £16 936, largely due to receipts incoming at the start of the Big Green Fund project. Unrestricted funds have remained reasonable constant, rising slightly from £11 222 to £11 778.

In year expenditure grew substantially, up to £18 246 from £6354 the previous year, reflecting the major increase in activities over the last 12 months. This expenditure included £10 420 of restricted funds on project work, as well as an unprecedented £7826 of unrestricted funds. This high unrestricted expenditure was due in part to investments around restructuring of the organisation, and the FORCE 10 celebrations, as well as investment of one-off donations on two new carved benches and the education projects.

Despite these investments the charity remains in good financial health, and the balance of unrestricted funds stands at around 18 months of last year's expenditure, which is our target and in line with Charity Commission guidelines.

Angela Kidner proposed that the accounts were adopted, this was seconded by Colin Cooper and the members voted to adopt the accounts.

4.3. Membership Secretary The membership secretary gave the following report to members. At the end of the previous financial year (2012/13), the membership of FORCE stood at 476 members. Membership at the end of the 2013/14 financial year stood at 530 an increase in membership of 11.3%. This increase can be linked to the work that the charity has done around celebrating its 10th anniversary and the challenge that we have is to continue this momentum over the next year.

A member asked why there were only 2 members under 18 and suggested that this is something which the charity could focus on. The membership secretary said that there were more members than the 2 listed here. These members were members in their own right whereas there were also members under 18 who were household members. We often get members joining this category for a short time while they are involved in Duke of Edinburgh scheme for example.

5. Appointment of charity trustees

All trustees are required to stand down at this meeting. Rob Gray noted that David Trigg stepped down as trustee and vice chair and thanked him for the many years of support and involvement that he had had with the charity. Mike Day was temporary chair for the election of chair. Trustees were elected by members to the following positions:

Post	Name	Proposed by:
Chair	Rob Gray	Bob Heap
Treasurer	Anna Smyk	Chang Sook Kim
Secretary	Frances Bennett	David Trigg
Membership Secretary	Mike Day	Sally Maynard
Trustees	Gary Backler	Trudi Morgan
	Doug Craik	Rosalinda Sewell
	Tim Elson	Gary Hyams
	Chris Hern	Anna Smyk
	Keith Martin	Anita Martin
	Martin O'Gara	Alan Charles
	Joe Pecorelli	Anna Smyk
	Jane Satchwell	Phil Crompton

6. Membership fees

Members were asked to consider the current membership fees of the charity. These are set at £5 for individuals and £8 for households. This matter was discussed and it was agreed that there was no need to amend the fees for the next year.

7. Incorporation, and process to review objects

The secretary gave an updated report from trustees.

7.1. FORCE was incorporated on 31 January 2013. A new charity was registered on 5th March 2014 so that we have now achieved our longstanding aim of becoming an incorporated charity. We are in the process of running down the old charity and anticipate that this will be the last AGM for this charity, as once assets have been transferred to the new charity we shall ask the Charity Commission to remove the registration from the old charity. We have opened a bank account for the new charity. Any funding

obtained over the last few months is now being paid into the new charity bank account. From April 2014 we asked members to pay their subscriptions into the new account.

- 7.2. At the first company meeting trustees voted Gary Backler as the company chair, with Tim Elson as vice chair. Anna Smyk was elected as Treasurer. All other Trustees were directors of the company and Frances Bennett was company secretary.
- 7.3. We still aim to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). We understand that legislation to enact this for our size of Charity is being held up until mid-2015, but that conversion to a CIO would then be a simple process. In preparation for this trustees reviewed the charity objects with a view to changing them when the organisation becomes a CIO. We would like this meeting to accept the revised objects for the organisation to be included in the Articles of Association when the time comes to register the CIO with the Charity Commission.
- 7.4. Trustees have also reorganised the way that the executive board operates. We now have a number of portfolios, and portfolio leaders. These trustees have taken on discrete areas of responsibility and report to trustees on a monthly basis. So far the model is working well.
- 7.5. Draft revised objects were taken from the Charity Commission Example of objects – Conservation of the Environment
 1. To promote for the benefit of the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment by promoting biological biodiversity.
 2. To advance the education of the public in the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment.

Members at the AGM voted to move the objects forward.

8. Other reports and updates from trustees

8.1. Pollution incident in the River Crane

The chair gave an updated report from trustees on the ongoing pollution in the River Crane.

There have been two catastrophic pollution events on the river in the last three years. The first, in October 2011 killed around 10,000 fish and virtually wiped out the river ecology. In October 2013, just as the system was recovering, a second major incident killed virtually all the nascent fish population and the river was returned to a largely lifeless state. It is only now recovering again – the invertebrate population has returned, small fish are coming back and kingfishers can again be seen on the river. Responding to these events has been a major learning curve for FORCE. Our understanding is as follows:

1. The river is vulnerable to pollution events – and its modified character (straightened and divorced from its natural flood plain) - means that these events are more likely to be catastrophic
2. The river is vulnerable to polluting discharges from Heathrow, following extended periods of cold weather, due to the use of glycol as a de-icer at the airport
3. This vulnerability to pollution is a long term phenomenon – with 17 major incidents in the last 27 years
4. The river is also subject to chronic every day pollution inputs, from road run-off and domestic missed connections in particular
5. In June this year Thames Water were found guilty of negligence in relation to the October 2011 incident and fined £75000 plus costs. FORCE registered its dissatisfaction with this fine
6. Thames Water noted during the court case how it has instituted risk assessment and risk mitigation works following this incident. FORCE has asked for a report from TW about how these affect the Crane.
7. Thames Water has also pledged £400,000 in support for the Crane through the Thames Water Fund. This fund is helping to pay for Ilse's role at the Crane Valley Partnership as well as several major improvement works
8. The Environment Agency has investigated the 2013 incident and stated it was the result of illegal acts by persons unknown. FORCE has requested clarification as to the current status of the investigation
9. There are around half a dozen projects along the Crane that will introduce new marginal habitat into the river, improving the ecology as well as the resilience of the river to pollution
10. The Citizen Crane project has provided an enhanced level of monitoring for the river. This improves our understanding of the river chemistry/ecology and provides an early warning for pollution problems
11. Thames Water has a programme of work to reduce missed connections around the catchment – whereby domestic waste are tapped into the surface water drainage, feeding this waste water directly into the river. There are around 150 surface water drains into the Crane and TW has targeted missed connections for 45 of these over the next five years, possibly the most intensive approach to the issue across London
12. We hosted a public meeting on 31st October to debate the issues and we felt this went well. We have now written to all the participants setting out requests for action moving forwards
13. The Environment Agency has confirmed that the first round of fish stocking, comprising 5500 fish, will take place at Baber Bridge on 3rd December
14. The EA has proposed a workshop to debate the means to move the Crane to "Good Ecological Status by 2021

We believe that good progress is being made but a lot of work is still required to reach Good Ecological Status for the river.

8.2. Summary of activity of the planning directorate April 2013-March 2014

The Planning Director, Gary Backler, apologised that he was unable to attend the FORCE AGM as he was attending the Local Community Forum that has been set up by the development partners of the Richmond Education and Enterprise Campus. Rob Gray read the report from the Director with responsibility for planning.

The Planning Directorate covers two broad streams of activity:

- Inputting the FORCE perspective to planning applications, consultations and meetings with councillors, developers and landowners
 - Organising and documenting twice-yearly surveys of the numbers of visitors who use Crane Park.
1. In terms of planning activities, much of 2013 was taken up with preparing the application for "Village Green" status for Craneford East Field. After postponement of the hearing scheduled for July 2013, the application was finally considered in December 2013, and failed. This hitherto open space is now, under the REEC proposals mentioned above, threatened with being fenced off from the public, considerably increasing pressures on adjacent open spaces in the Crane Valley.
 2. Throughout the year, we continued liaising with St James, the developers of the former Post Office Sorting Office site in Twickenham, and with Richmond Council, to ensure appropriate access and pathway design along the Crane and through Twickenham Junction Rough.
 3. We also provided detailed responses to Richmond Council's consultations on its Site Allocations Plan, which included five relevant sites within the Lower Crane Valley; and on its assessment of flood risks in the Crane catchment area. Finally, we sought to maintain pressure on Richmond Council over its failure to commit £287 000 of Section 106 money to improvements on the Duke of Northumberland's River. The Council received this money in June 2010, and will be obliged to return it if not committed by June 2015.
 4. In terms of usage surveys of Crane Park, we successfully mounted our regular surveys at the Dragonfly Terrace and at Meadway, where we count both those accessing Crane Park and those linking up the open spaces of Crane Park and Kneller Gardens. The July survey showed an overall 9% increase in usage compared with the previous year. The January survey, on the first sunny day after weeks of rain, saw as many users within the 8 ½ hours of daylight as had used the park in the 14 hours of our July survey.
 5. We also supplemented our regular surveys with a one-off survey on Wednesday 1 May 2013. This enabled us to produce a crude estimate of annual usage of nearly 90 000 visitors at the Dragonfly Terrace and over 300 000 at Meadway during 2013.
 6. The surveys provide an increasingly rich and factual database of the usage of Crane Park, which in turn provides increasingly powerful insights for our discussions with councils, developers and partners.

9. Members proposed resolutions

No resolutions were proposed.

10. Any other business

- 10.1. Paul Leonard said that he was planning to promote the work of the Citizen Crane Project at a conference in 2015 in Geneva.
- 10.2. Rob Gray mentioned a Crane Valley Partnership project to produce beermats for distribution to pubs and cafes that included a map that showed how the River Crane linked to the River Colne.

11. Close of formal business

12. Following refreshment there was a short talk by Dr Ilse Steyl Crane Valley Partnership Development Manager