



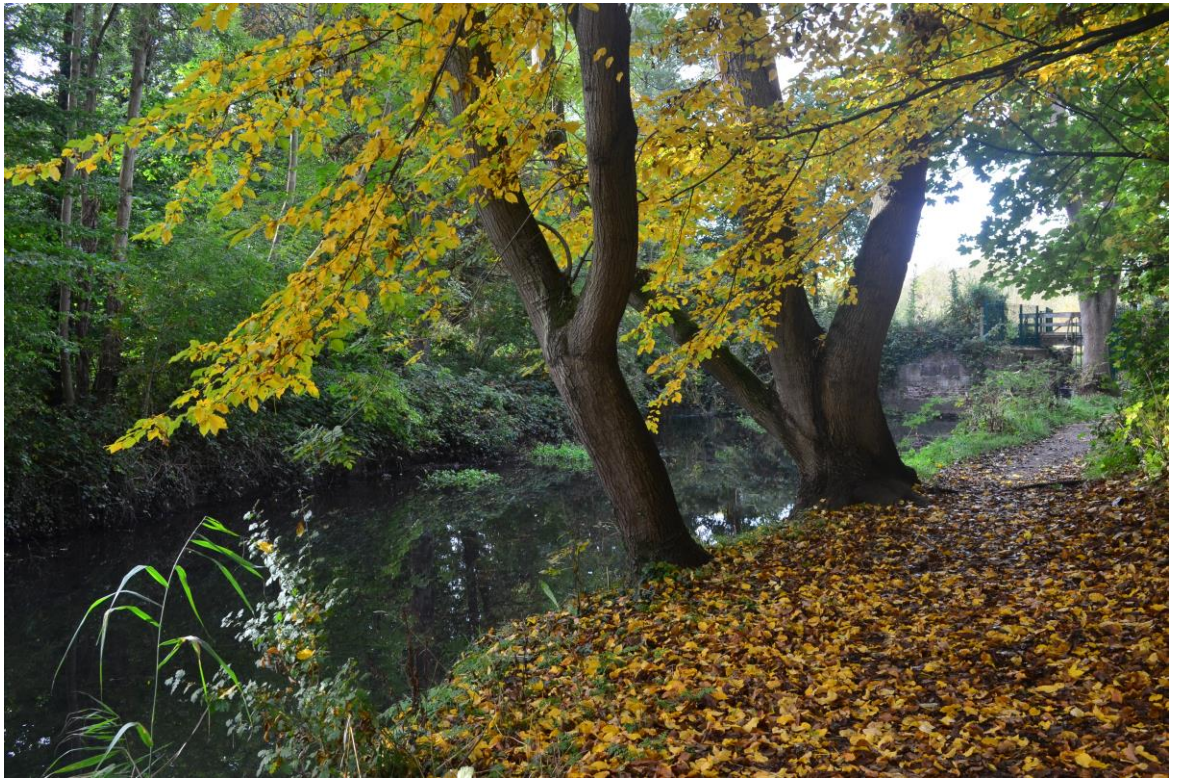
Friends of the River Crane Environment

# Annual Review 2015

# Friends of the River Crane Environment

## Chair's Report

Our Charity operates for the benefit of the public, and together with other interested parties, we aim to protect and enhance the environment of the River Crane and to advance the education in the ecology, conservation and improvement of the environment of the River Crane.



Welcome to our first annual review as an incorporated Charity, which has to start with a big thank you to all the Trustees, members, volunteers and partners who have contributed to our work over the year. FORCE is only as strong as the people who support it – and we are very grateful for the ongoing support that has allowed FORCE to deliver steady improvements to the Crane valley.

Last year we implemented a new structure with seven portfolios covering key operational areas in addition to the corporate governance functions. Six now have lead individuals and a strategy in place. The benefits of this structure were starting to be realised over the last year, principal among them being an increased capacity for delivery and an agreed strategy as to how to do it. Each portfolio lead would welcome support so if you are interested please get in touch [info@force.org.uk](mailto:info@force.org.uk)

### Portfolios

- wildlife
- planning
- education
- volunteering
- communities
- memberships
- communications

The Communications portfolio still has no lead – and we would welcome ideas and suggestions from members as to how we might fill this position.



We have still been moving ahead with communications – our Facebook page [friendsrivercrane](https://www.facebook.com/friendsrivercrane) is very active with almost 600 followers and, most excitingly, we have just this month launched our new website [www.force.org.uk](http://www.force.org.uk) We are also looking for support on legal aspects and would be very pleased to hear from you if you have experience in this field.



We hope you enjoy this summary, where we have pulled together some information about the activities and projects from the portfolios and we welcome your feedback on what we have done and could do in the future.

*Rob Gray  
Chair*

## Project Summary



The **Citizen Crane** project is a **Crane Valley Partnership** initiative led by FORCE in partnership with the **Zoological Society of London** and **frog environmental**. It started in January 2014 and around 40 citizen science volunteers have been trained to undertake monthly sampling, at 12 sites in the Crane catchment, to measure the ecological and chemical quality of the river. The purpose is to better understand the detailed nature of the river system, and how this is influenced by factors such

as river management and pollution, so as to identify cost effective improvement options. To date the initiative has helped to pick up several pollution incidents and are working closely with **Thames Water** and the **Environment Agency** to target chronic pollution issues across the catchment.

The **Crane Valley Partnership**, supported by FORCE, bid to the **GLA's Big Green Fund**, receiving £350,000 in total for the Colne and Crane catchments. FORCE took responsibility for the Lower Crane Valley Wetland Project and £48,000 from the Big Green Fund, attracted a further £290,000 in match funding. The Wetland Project provided new areas of marginal habitat along four sites: Donkey Wood, Pevensey Road, Little Park and Mill Road. Highlights were; new ponds and backwater areas; the installation of a new boardwalk for improved access; education projects with local engagement; hedging and planting to improve wetland and marginal habitat. Experts led organised walks, introducing the wildlife and history of these sites to the local community.



For the third, successive year, FORCE volunteers carried out **park usage surveys** at the Dragonfly Terrace in Hounslow, and the Meadway entrance to Crane Park, on one Sunday in July and another in January. At the Dragonfly Terrace, 387 people were recorded in the July survey, and 323 in the January survey. At the Meadway entrance to Crane Park, 1414 were recorded in July, and 971 in January, around 75% of whom continued their visit to or from Kneller Gardens. These surveys are of great importance in tracking types of use, in how these have grown over the years and illustrating to the Councils the value of these spaces.

FORCE tracks all major **planning** applications along the lower Crane and we have been actively involved in negotiating environmental and community benefits on a number of key sites. This year FORCE was involved in four major developments; Twickenham Sorting Office site; Twickenham Station, the RFU stadium and Richmond College. The approach is the same as for all river related sites - to seek net benefits to the environment and community from any development.



**Education and community projects** FORCE continued to work closely with several local schools to promote outdoor learning. This work, delivered with the help of freelance community teachers, included visits to the outdoor classrooms in support of the national curriculum.



FORCE ran a successful poster competition with Heathfield School to promote awareness of the effect of rubbish on the environment and led the successful bid and well-attended community learning courses in hedge laying and marginal planting of the river in partnership with **The Conservation Volunteers**.



We delivered a series of walks and talks on a variety of topics with the aim of engaging local people who would not normally use the open spaces of the Crane Valley.

We held nine Sunday **volunteer days** along the River Crane corridor, providing maintenance and improvements of the habitat for wildlife and people. This included 750 hours of FORCE volunteer time attended by 170 volunteers. Working with the **Crane Valley Partnership** and others, we enhanced 4 wetland sites using funding from the GLA Big Green Fund. This work included 10,000 hours of volunteer time by all the partners including FORCE. We worked with the **London Invasive Species Initiative** to develop



a catchment wide programme managing Himalayan balsam, an invasive species.

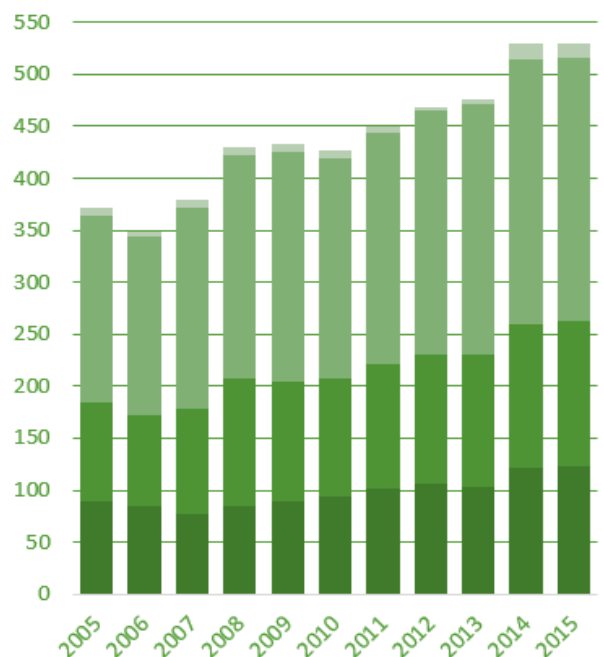
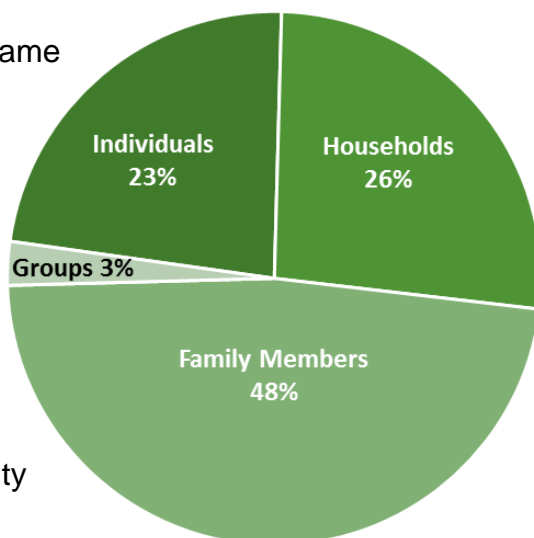
We supported the opening up and environmental enhancement of 5 previously unmanaged spaces. These enhancements have included new access to riverside land; new public footpaths; several new carved benches and a new community orchard.

## Membership Summary

At the 31st March 2015 our membership stood at 530.

It remains at the same level as last year, having grown steadily over the last ten years.

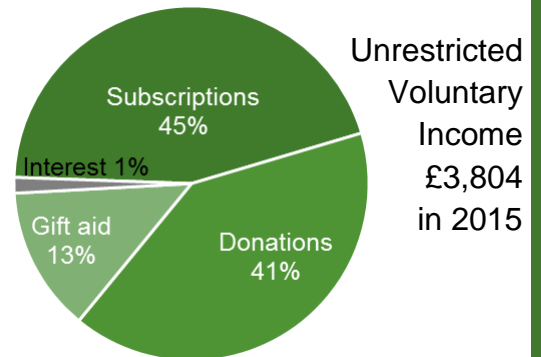
Renewal rates have been consistently high, around 90% reflecting the loyalty of our members.



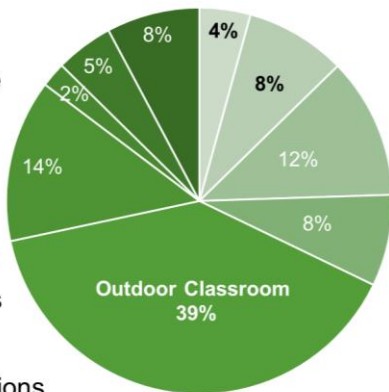
## Financial Summary

On the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 FORCE began operating as an incorporated charitable company. The assets of the former unincorporated charity, which amounted to £28,714 cash funds, were transferred in to the incorporated charitable company. The table below provides some of the key information taken from the Annual Report and Accounts, approved by the Trustees on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2015. A full copy of the report can be viewed on our website [www.force.org.uk](http://www.force.org.uk)

For year ended 31st March 2015	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total Funds
Voluntary Income	£ 3,804	£ 60,029	£ 63,833
Pre-incorporation asset transfer	£ 11,778	£ 16,935	£ 28,714
<b>INCOMING RESOURCES</b>	£ 15,582	£ 76,964	£ 92,547
<b>RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>	£ 6,525	£ 61,527	£ 68,052
<b>NET INCOMING RESOURCES</b> before transfers	£ 9,057	£ 15,437	£ 24,495



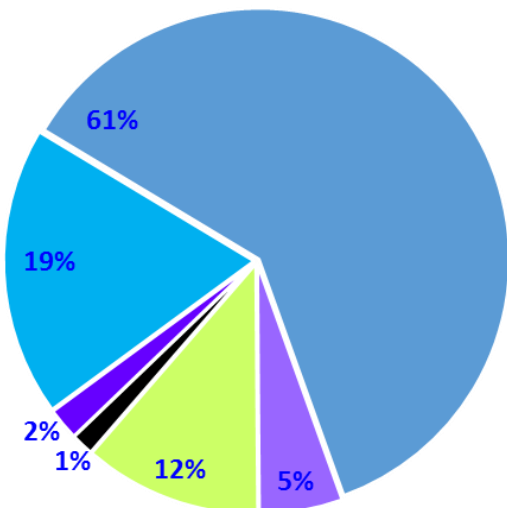
- Operations
- Governance
- Wildlife
- Planning
- Education
- Volunteering
- Communities
- Membership
- Communications



Unrestricted Expenditure in 2015 - £6,525  
Shown here split across the new operating portfolios. This year we made a substantial investment from core funds into the Outdoor Classroom Project. In addition to the financial income reported, FORCE Trustees invested more than 5,000 voluntary hours in developing and delivering projects across the portfolios. This equates to £112,500 gift in kind, some of which is used as match funding. This is in addition to the 2,000+ hours Trustees spent on governance and directorship.

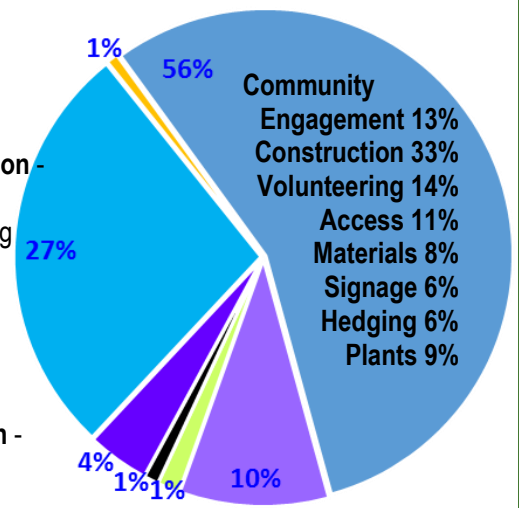
## Restricted Funds – Summary of Grants and Awards in 2015

Income £60,029



- CVP Big Green Fund - Wetland Project
- Heathrow Community Fund - Outdoor Classroom
- The London Community Foundation - Mill Road Interpretation
- LB Hounslow - Community Learning & Duke's River Project
- Heathrow Community Fund - Citizen Crane
- Thames Water Fund - Citizen Crane
- Metro Public Gardens Association - Pevensey Bench

Expenditure £61,527



The Trustees are very grateful to members and organisations for their generosity and support, in particular to **Fulbright and Jawarski LLP** and **SWLEN** for their help during our incorporation process. Thanks are due to the organisations below who have funded our projects over the last year.



**RICHMOND CIVIC TRUST**



London Borough of Hounslow

Heathrow Community Fund

