

Annual General Meeting of The Friends of the River Crane Environment

Held on 21st September 2016 at 8pm at The Twickenham Club, Church Street, Twickenham

Minutes

1. Attendance

The meeting was chaired by Rob Gray and attended by the following Trustees Frances Bennett, Tim Elson, Martin O’Gara, John Simpson, Joe Pecorelli, Jane Satchwell, 22 members and one reciprocal member.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Gary Backler (Trustee), Mike Day (Trustee) and Chris Hern (Trustee).

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed. There were no matters arising.

4. Reports and accounts 2015/6

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

- There are new structures in place to manage the charity – a new Charity and company structure; new policies and procedures being developed and implemented; and seven portfolio holders sharing out the work Trustees do. These new structures are working very well so far.
- The purpose behind all FORCE’s work is to maintain and improve the wildlife and community value of the River Crane corridor. Much of this work is by small, sustained and cumulative actions – both on the ground through volunteer work, and by influencing others during meetings and events.
- Community and schools education are a key part of this – and this year FORCE have run an enhanced programme of walks and talks as well as community learning events and have also engaged with schools, bringing classes to the corridor to engage them in education through their local environment.
- Through these cumulative efforts the open spaces progressively become better known, wildlife habitats and community assets are improved, and more people use them. This latter point is shown through regular twice yearly surveys, with more people recorded using Crane Park this July than ever before.
- FORCE engage with major projects which can implement significant change in an area and the Duke’s River project was such a project over the last year. It is a corridor of considerable historical and wildlife value and a resource of great community potential that had suffered from many years of neglect. Over the last year or so there have been great improvements in the pathways along the river and the opening up to the public of new spaces along the corridor. Around 20 tonnes of rubbish has been removed from the river and new eel passes encouraged around 1000 eels into the Crane catchment that could not have entered previously. There has been a ten-fold increase in use where the path has been improved.
- As an entirely volunteer run organisation we rely on our partners. FORCE is very grateful to our partners including TCV, Crane Valley Partnership, and Richmond and Hounslow councils, LWT, Environment Agency, ZSL and Thames Water, for all their help and support.
- FORCE are a membership organisation and the role and support of members is critical to our success. Members give ideas, support and inspiration; work on projects and volunteer days and validate our requests and proposals to land owners, developers and councils.
- The chair also asked members to formally thank Chris Slack the Hounslow ecologist for his help and support over many years. Chris is leaving for a new post.

4.2 Treasurers report.

- Following a proposal from Tim Elson seconded by Angela Kidner, members considered the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2016 and voted to adopt the accounts.

Registered Charity: 1155971 Registered Company: 08383410

- The Treasurer reported that a reserves policy had been developed for the charity. This was 9 months core costs plus a £5,000 contingency. This is both good practice and in line with recommendations from the Charity Commission and allows for funding that can act as a bridging fund to allow the charity to function effectively. The reserve funding could be used to cover the risk of unforeseen emergency or other unexpected need for funds, covering unforeseen day-to-day operational costs, a source of income to give the trustee's time to take action if income falls below expectations. It could also be used to fund short-term deficits in a cash budget, e.g. money may need to be spent before a funding grant is received and is necessary to bridge gaps in funding or planned commitments that cannot be met by future income alone, e.g. a significant project that requires the charity to provide 'matched funding'.

5. **Appointment of charity trustees**

Members confirmed the appointment of Charity Trustees retiring in rotation. Tim Elson, Chris Hern, Keith Martin, and John Simpson retired as trustees and were re-elected by members. Their re-election was proposed by Patrick Kidner.

Rob Gray noted that trustees would welcome the opportunity to co-opt members to the trustee board. This is a nonexecutive role and serves to give an insight into how the charity functions and works.

6. **Membership fees**

Members were asked to consider the rate of the membership fees for the charity. The membership secretary Mike Day recommended was that the fees should stay at the current levels of £5 for individual members, £8 for families and £10 for organisations. Rob Gray noted that this was an important income stream for the charity as it was unrestricted income that can be spent as required on running the charity.

7. **Charity governance**

Secretary Frances Bennett reported that the old charity was dissolved by the Charity Commission in 2016. Trustees are waiting to apply to have the Articles of Association changed in line with Charity Commission model articles for a Community Interest Organisation. This would give voting rights to ordinary members. The objects included in these articles are in those agreed at the previous AGM by members.

8. **Members proposed resolutions**

No resolutions were proposed by members

9. **Any other business**

Members asked for clarification on the progress of projects:

- The path through Twickenham Junction Rough. Rob Gray responded that the developer St James had made a start working on the path and that the first volunteer day of the season for FORCE would be held there. The developer is due to transfer the land into public ownership by the end of the year.
- Little Park and plans for a bridge to Pevensey Nature Park. Rob Gray confirmed that there was a proposal to do this with funding to Richmond Council through a higher level stewardship grant. A bridge has been designed and we are awaiting consent from the EA to build it.
- There was a discussion regarding funding for grants for motorised boats which will be used as part of a citizen science project to sample London rivers. RG said that he was interested in how the technology might be applied to projects on the River Crane.

10. **Close of formal business**

Following the formal close of business there was a short talk "2016: A trustees view".

Frances Bennett
30th September 2016

Approved: 20th September 2017

Registered Charity: 1155971 Registered Company: 08383410

www.force.org.uk
www.facebook.com/friendsrivercrane