



Friends Of the River Crane Environment

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our autumn 2008 newsletter. FORCE was created, around a table in the Cabbage Patch pub, in the autumn of 2003. **Five years later** we are in good health and busier than ever; our membership has risen to **over 400** and, as you shall see, the number of projects, opportunities and challenges along the Crane Valley has never been greater. We are very grateful to our members for their support and encouragement and welcome your comments and inputs to our projects.

FORCE Open Day 2008

The Annual Open Day was a great success and, despite some nervousness on our part regarding the weather, was **very well attended**. Thanks are due to members who came along and especially those who helped on the day and beforehand. Photos of the day will be on our web-site in the near future.

Volunteer Days

The new season of volunteer days is underway. In November we started work on a **kingfisher bank** at Twickenham Rifle Club. This bank will provide nesting habitat for kingfishers along the concrete banks of the lower Crane where there are no natural banks for these birds to burrow into. We shall keep you updated next year as to how successful this has been.

We also learned recently that we have been awarded a **grant from Richmond Council** for more environmental improvements at the Hospital Bridge Road site in Crane Park. We have two volunteer days planned here for next year when we shall be starting work on a new hedge along the fence dividing the park from the school playing fields. We shall also be doing more work on the existing reed bed and starting to build a second kingfisher bank on this site. Further work, using contractors and a small mechanical digger, will be undertaken around this time to create new **backwater channels and wetland scrapes** in this area.

The new season is set out below. As usual volunteer days will be held on the second Sunday of the month, and run between 10:30am and 4:30pm. **Everyone is welcome**, for the whole day or an hour, to join in or to see what we are up to first hand.

Volunteer Days

Sunday 14 th December	Crane Park Island <i>Our annual visit to the Island to manage the willows. This is also an opportunity for volunteers to collect lengths of willow for their own use.</i>
Sunday 11 th January	Mereway Nature Park & Kneller Gardens <i>Maintenance of these two important sites</i>
Sunday 8 th February	Crane Park - Hospital Bridge Rd <i>Hedge planting, reed planting and kingfisher bank construction.</i>
Sunday 8 th March	As Above <i>As above</i>
Sunday 12 th April	[To Be Decided]

Note that the venue for April is not yet confirmed – we will be happy to consider proposals from our members at any time for this and future volunteer days.

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Mayday Genealogy

Family History & Genealogy Research Services
89 Third Cross Road, TWICKENHAM, TW2 5DY
Telephone: 020 8894 0488
Info@maydaygenealogy.co.uk
www.maydaygenealogy.co.uk

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Website: www.force.org.uk
E-mail: info@force.org.uk



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Crane Riverside Park

The interim report on the **Feasibility Study** for this project has been **well received** by Hounslow and Richmond Councils, as well as the GLA and other interested parties. This report can be accessed on our web-site. We are now moving forwards with the **final stage** of this project and it is proving extremely valuable in negotiations and discussions regarding other developments as follows:

- **Feltham Marshalling Yards:** this 30 hectare site, astride the River Crane, was abandoned some 40 years ago and has subsequently become a very important brown-field nature site, classified as a “Site of Metropolitan Interest for Nature Conservation”, and is a key part of the proposed Crane Riverside Park. BAA and Network Rail have recently announced proposals to re-develop the entire site as a rail depot. We are in discussion with Hounslow Council and the local MPs among others to identify an appropriate strategy for addressing this proposal.
- **Richmond Upon Thames College:** the college is in the process of developing plans for a major re-build. We are in discussion with the college to identify opportunities to improve and protect the local environment as part of any re-development.
- **Twickenham Station redevelopment:** this project has just been put into the public domain and we do not have details as yet. We understand that Network Rail has seen our Riverside Park proposals and we are hopeful that any development would incorporate improvements in riverside access and environmental value adjacent to the station.

We are also pleased to say that our **Riverside Park** project has been **shortlisted** for the London Mayor’s **priority parks programme**, more details of which are provided below.

Mayor’s Priority Parks Programme

The new mayor, Boris Johnson, has announced £6m of new funding to parks across London. A competition has been set up to identify **10 parks** to receive **£400,000** each over three years, with one further park to receive £2m. **Crane Riverside Park** has been **shortlisted** and the final stage of the competition is a **public vote, over the internet**, with the top two parks in each of five London regions announced as the winners.

The voting will take place between **25th November and 30th January 2009** on the web-site www.london.gov.uk/parksvote and click on south west London. We would **urge all our members to vote** and to ask all your friends and family to do likewise. There is **no age limit** on voting. This funding would enable us to achieve our ambitions for a new Metropolitan Park along the Crane valley and **provide major improvements** to the quality of our local green spaces.

Crane Valley Partnership

In the meantime, the Crane Valley Partnership, a network of five councils, the Environment Agency, Thames Water, London Wildlife Trust and others, has been successful in raising **around £140,000 for biodiversity improvements** along the Crane between Harrow and Twickenham. Around a third of these funds are to be invested within our area of interest and we shall let you have more details as these are agreed.

As I said, we have never been more active and the next year looks to be busier than ever. We are grateful to our members for their continued support and would encourage anyone who wishes to be more actively involved in any of our work to get in touch.

Kind regards,

Rob Gray
Chair of FORCE

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