



Friends Of the River Crane Environment

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our autumn 2010 newsletter. Last month we held our seventh Annual General Meeting and were pleased to report that we are in good health with secure finances, more members than ever before and more of those members active in our projects. We are also busier than ever, managing some of our own projects and dealing with many proposals and activities from others up and down the Crane valley. The Chair's report to the AGM can be seen on our web-site and further information on many of these activities is provided below.

#### Hospital Bridge Road

The **wild flower meadows** on both sides of Hospital Bridge Road, installed by Richmond council in the spring, have been a **blaze of colour** this summer. They have proved very popular with the public and have now received official recognition as the **September winner of London's Green Corners award**. The site is now being put forward to the grand final in March next year.

By the time you read this the next phase of FORCE's work in this area should be under way when, with the help of contractors Agricultural and Estate Services Ltd (paid for by a grant from Richmond Council), we will be constructing several shallow scraped wetland excavations (or "scrapes") and a new **back water channel**. Three patchworks of **wetland scrapes** are in development, replacing areas of close mown grass that currently get very boggy in the winter. The shallow scrapes should remain damp for much of the year and we shall be planting these, with the help of BTCV and others, with a wonderful array of wetland plants (such as common spike rush, water mint, yellow flag, marsh marigold, purple loosestrife and lesser spearwort), derived from a **long established flood meadow** on the River Crane around 5 kilometres upstream in Hounslow.

The new back water channel will effectively **create a small island** of the flood bank, opposite our kingfisher bench, where we have been planting rushes and reeds for a number of years. The channel will help these wetland species prevail against bramble encroachment and also provide **more habitat for the water voles** that are increasingly moving downstream to re-colonise the lower Crane. Perhaps most importantly, it will create a barrier of sorts to domestic dogs accessing the reed bed area and disturbing the wildlife. We shall put up notices to inform people of our intentions and we would be very grateful if our members can help to spread the word, and particularly if dog owners could discourage their pets from crossing the channel onto the new island.

At the same time we are continuing, with our partners, to improve and develop the **hedgerow** we have planted between Hospital Bridge Road and Meadway. BTCV will be planting more hedgerow outside the Twickenham Academy (Whitton School) playing fields in the next couple of months and we shall be working with the council to replace and add to the **fruit trees**, planted alongside the hedge, that have not survived their first year.

#### Crane Valley Park – Priority Parks

Work has now started in earnest on this project. So far, work has included creating pockets for **planting bulbs** on the Richmond side of the park, and a large amount of tree felling works in the **Hounslow side of Crane Park**. We have registered our concern over the tree felling works with the project team (from Richmond and Hounslow councils), and that the works to date, although agreed to be of value in principle, have not been carried out with sufficient sensitivity to the ecology or aesthetics of the park, or with sufficient information being given to the local community.

This is a critical period for the overall success of the project. The project team has taken our comments on board, we continue to be engaged as members of the steering group, and we remain hopeful that the project can deliver significant and **long lasting benefits** to the park.

This Newsletter is funded for FORCE by: -



#### Mayday Genealogy

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**Associated Projects: Cycle Path and Playbuilders Scheme**

Hounslow Council has proposals to include a **cycle track** through the Hounslow side of Crane Park linking the Hanworth Road with the Chertsey Road. The work will begin in the near future.

Richmond Council with the support of The Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), are planning to develop a **natural play space** in the Crane Park, located in the green space near the Shot Tower. It is planned to be **inspirational and attractive to all**, with focus on 8 to 13 year olds. If you or your children have any comments or suggestions relating to these plans, please contact Ruth Hutton at [ruth.hutton@richmond.gov.uk](mailto:ruth.hutton@richmond.gov.uk). Some suggested ideas have been worked up already and these can be seen on notice boards at different locations in the park.

**The Outdoor Classroom**

Over the last couple of years, we have been working on a project to encourage local schools to use Mereway Nature Park as an **Outdoor Classroom**. This has involved developing a set of **cross-curricular resources** aimed at primary school children and their teachers. Last month, we held a workshop for local schools to promote this project. Schools have been using the worksheets and visiting the Nature Park as a result. The project should be complete by the end of the year and it is planned that the resources will be available on the FORCE website.

**Volunteer Days**

The new season of volunteer days started at **Mereway Nature Park** in October and continued with work on the **hedgerow and wetland areas** in November. On December 12<sup>th</sup> we shall return for our regular visit to **Crane Park Island** and an opportunity for members to collect willow stakes for weaving and allotment gardens.

As always all volunteer days are the **second Sunday** of the month and everyone is welcome for the day or an hour (or just to say hello and meet some other members). Our tentative list of volunteer day activities for 2011 is as follows:-

Date	Location	Activities
January 9 <sup>th</sup>	Mereway Nature Park and Kneller Gardens	Paths, planting and clearance works + bird box maintenance
February 13 <sup>th</sup>	Twickenham Rifle Club and the triangle	Hedge laying and path maintenance
March 13 <sup>th</sup>	Hospital Bridge Road	Planting the scrapes and flood bank with wetland plants
April 10 <sup>th</sup>	Mogden/Duke of Northumberland's River (DNR)	Working with Thames Water on site improvements
May 8 <sup>th</sup>	Mereway Nature Park and DNR	Path maintenance and loggery construction

**And finally**

Thank you to everyone who came along to the Open Day and made it such a success. Photos from the day can be found on our web-site.

We appreciate everyone's help and support over the year and encourage you to contact us with any opinions or ideas concerning the Crane valley.

Kind Regards,

Rob Gray (Chair of FORCE)



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