



Friends Of the River Crane Environment

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the spring newsletter, which includes our annual request for membership renewals. Around half our members do this by standing order and will have already renewed their membership. Those who renew by cheque or cash will find a renewal form with this newsletter. Our members are very important to us and our membership numbers are a significant factor when negotiating with other parties on priorities for riverside land. We are therefore particularly pleased that membership numbers in March this year reached **469, the highest we have yet recorded.**

Also with this newsletter is an invitation to a **Special General Meeting** on 27th June to discuss the proposals for FORCE to incorporate. This proposal was initially considered at the last AGM and a sub-group of Trustees has been working with a pro bono legal team to develop it further. If we receive permission from members to go ahead, FORCE will convert to a **charitable company limited by guarantee.** This convention has been adopted by many charities in recent years and has the main effect of limiting the liability of the Trustees and thereby removing an obstacle for recruiting new Trustees and retaining existing ones. The new structure will be a significant change for the management of the charity but we anticipate that the operational change will be invisible to members and the partners that we work with. Members will also be asked at this meeting to approve a **Code of Conduct** for use by trustees and FORCE company directors. Our proposed Code of Conduct is based on *'Good Governance: a code of conduct for the voluntary and community sector'*. A copy of the full document can be found on the Charity Commission website at: http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/Library/guidance/good_governance_small_orgs.pdf. All members are invited to attend this Special General Meeting or submit a proxy voting form to the Secretary.

Crane Pollution Update

It has now been six months since the fish and invertebrates of the Crane and DNR below the A4 were essentially wiped out by a major sewage discharge. The recovery of life in the river has been **slow and patchy** – one of the main results has been a return in huge numbers of the **dancing midge**, benefitting from the lack of predators and now hatching to form large clouds over much of the river. Other invertebrates such as mayfly and caddis fly have returned in smaller numbers but other once common species such as dragonflies and water boatmen are still absent. Most important of all, there has yet to be any return of fish or fish fry into the river and, consequently, **no return of breeding kingfishers and herons.**

FORCE is part of a Crane group formed to oversee the restoration of the river following the pollution event; this group is currently finalising details on a Thames Water funded response for the next five years. Progress on this has been slow but we are hopeful that Thames Water will honour its pledge to ensure that the river is in better condition in five years time than it was before the incident. We expect to be announcing a **public meeting in Twickenham** in the near future where plans will be presented and debated.

Priority Parks Project

This project, which started back in late 2008 when over 6700 people voted for Crane Park and helped it to win £400,000 funding, is now **coming to a close.** We are very happy overall with the result, which has seen major improvement to the dilapidated park on the southern (Hounslow) side of the river and a sensible upgrade to the existing facilities on the Richmond side. If you have not yet explored it then we recommend you do so and if you are a regular then look out for the **three new carved benches** coming in the next few months. We are now completing a **series of maps and guides** and these will be available on our website shortly. One of these is a map of the lower Crane Valley, enabling you and your family to find all 10 carved benches (and the sites proposed for several more). The map shows how all the open space along the river connects. We have also helped produce a family activity sheet based on the **new Dragonfly Trail** in Crane Park.

This Newsletter is funded for FORCE by: -



Mayday Genealogy

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Post Office site

We have been in regular contact with the development team for the post office site in Twickenham and we know that a number of members have attended their recent public meetings, with a further meeting planned for **30th May**. To date, we are reasonably happy with the discussions and remain hopeful that the eventual proposals will include significant benefits for the community and environment along the Crane corridor.

Volunteer Days

We have largely completed our schedule of volunteer days for the 2011-12 season – in recent months we have worked alongside BTCV planting trees and hedgerows local to Butts Farm and developed our wild flower areas in Mereway Nature Park among other tasks. On May 13th, we have a major event with London Wildlife Trust as a part of the “London capital cleanup campaign”, and called **“The Big Balsam Bash”**. Himalayan Balsam is an invasive species that has been making major inroads along the Crane in recent years. The only way to deal with it is to pull it out by hand – a surprisingly simple and satisfying task – and this year we have teamed up with LWT, BTCV, Environment Trust and Thames Water among others to make a major impact on the balsam up and down the river. Everyone, as ever, is very welcome for the day or just an hour.

Crane Walk

On **20th May** we shall be leading, alongside LWT, a walk along the length of the Crane, from **Northolt tube station to Kneller Gardens**. Transport shall be leaving Twickenham Station at 9am to take you to the starting point for 9.30am with a return at 5pm for those joining us in Northolt. There will be a £5 fee to help with costs and everyone wanting to come should register at info@force.org.uk or 020 8892 9518. All ages welcome but remember it is 12 miles and the ground is rough for parts of the way.

Activity Calendar		
Date	Location	Activities
May 13 th	Crane Balsam Bash Crane park - Hospital Bridge Road	Himalayan Balsam removal as part of a Crane wide initiative
May 20 th	Crane walk	See above
May 31 st	Hampton Hill School	Sustainability conference: launch of FORCE outdoor classroom project
June 2 nd	Crane Park (Dragonfly Trail)	Trial Run with ParkRun
June 3 rd	Dragonfly terrace – Crane park	Opening of the terrace
June 4 th	Twickenham Green	HANDS Fair
June 9 th	Crane Park (Dragonfly Trail)	1 st Dragonfly Trail ParkRun for further details see www.parkrun.org.uk To volunteer to help set this event up contact info@force.org.uk
June 24 th	Bike Fest – Kneller Gardens 11am-4pm For details of other cycling events in Kneller Gardens and Crane Park over the summer see the Strictly Cycling and Sky Ride at www.richmond.gov.uk	A festival of cycling for the family - bike skills arena, bike polo, grass track racing, bike doctor etc.

We look forward to seeing you at these events in the near future,

Regards,

Rob Gray
Chair of FORCE

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