

## **FORCE ANGERED BY RFU APPROACH TO THE DUKE'S RIVER FORCE PRESS RELEASE - JULY 2015**

The Friends of the River Crane Environment (FORCE) have been angered and disappointed by recent proposals from the Rugby Football Union (RFU) regarding the Duke of Northumberland's River, which runs past the RFU stadium.

Back in 2013 the RFU approached FORCE with proposals to build installations up against the boundary of their site and the Duke's River. FORCE were concerned about these, but were persuaded to give their support when the RFU also offered to remove the outer fencing and thereby widen the pathway along around 150 metres of its 700 metre boundary. This had been a long term objective of FORCE, given the very narrow pathway alongside the rugby ground, which requires single file walking and limits the potential for environmental improvements.

The RFU plans subsequently gained the approval of Richmond Council's planning committee with the fence change as a key condition. The buildings have now been constructed –and FORCE's concerns have been realised as they make a significant adverse impact on the openness of the corridor, complete with night time lighting and generator noise. The outer fence was also removed though and the scheme seemed to be moving forwards as required.

In early 2015 FORCE, in partnership with Richmond and Hounslow councils, were successful in raising a total of £400,000 to improve all 4km of the Duke's River, between Twickenham and the Thames at Isleworth. The RFU were invited to take part in this project, were initially supportive, and then went very quiet.

Then last month FORCE were told, informally, that the RFU had submitted a further planning application to install a new fence in its original position and upgrade all the remaining fencing line, retaining and re-enforcing the existing narrow pathway. When FORCE went to meet their representatives earlier this month they were told this application was to meet security concerns and there was no possibility of moving the fence either here or anywhere else along the boundary. This week the RFU has also applied to the Council for this pathway to be closed completely for all the World Cup matches.

Rob Gray, Chair of FORCE said; "We are very disappointed by the approach of the RFU to the Duke's River. We understand about security concerns but we do not believe that reneging on this planning commitment is the only way to meet them. The Duke's River is a great asset and the RFU is in a unique position to change it for the better and create a positive legacy from the World Cup. At present they are utterly failing to take this opportunity."

FORCE are in contact with the council about the RFU's proposals and remain hopeful that a solution can be found that benefits the Duke's River and the local community that use and appreciate it. To respond to the planning application go to:

[http://www2.richmond.gov.uk/PlanData2/Planning\\_CaseNo.aspx?strCASENO=15/1691/FUL](http://www2.richmond.gov.uk/PlanData2/Planning_CaseNo.aspx?strCASENO=15/1691/FUL)

To contact FORCE [info@force.org.uk](mailto:info@force.org.uk)



Part of the new development on the RFU boundary



The development, with the inner fence and the remaining outer fence posts (with temporary heras fencing attached) and the narrow path beyond



Another part of the development, the two lines of fencing and the narrow pathway beyond