

Habitats & Heritage (H&H)

Evaluation of Crane Valley Community Fund 2024-25

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1. Summary

This report is an overview of the Crane Valley Grant Programme Community fund 2024-25. Data for this evaluation have been drawn from:

- Groundwork's information about grants made and reporting
- H&H's records of liaison with groups and partner organisations
- Twenty case studies of projects completed or in progress, presented in the Appendix below

Themes from the data and key learning points include:

- The Community Fund enables community groups to enhance and extend their work, harnessing the commitment of communities to improving the catchment environment and to engage volunteers.
- The application process for the Community Fund is found to be generally simple and accessible. Some groups requested detailed support on making applications and on reporting requirements.
- Our focus on site visits and joining in alongside volunteers was chosen because groups last year were delighted with the personal contact and because practical involvement can give greater insights into the work of community groups.
- Communication between groups has been important in focussing projects on the Smarter Water Catchment themes.
- The Community Fund can be a starting point for groups previously without funding and it can be a gateway to other funding within or outside the Crane Valley Programme. Signposting to alternative funding is also important.
- There is continuing need for working with communities where there are few organised groups and to build the capacity of groups in relatively under-served areas of the catchment and neglected stretches of the watercourses.

2. Groups funded and grants made:

A full list of groups funded with amounts and summary of activities is at the Appendix below. 25 grants to 21 different organisations

The 25 grants in 2024-5

Ealing	1
Harrow	4
Hillingdon	2
Hounslow	11
Richmond	6
Cross-borough	1
Total	25

The benefits of the 25 projects funded in 2024-25 can be categorised under themes and some projects cover more than one theme:

Creating/enhancing habitat	15
Promoting health and wellbeing	11
Promoting community engagement	8
Raising awareness and support	4
Reducing pollution/improving water quality	3
Developing partnership resilience and capacity	1
Improving water flow	1
Protecting heritage	1
Reducing flood risk	1

Patterns of funding were as below, comparing figures with 2023/24

	2024/25	2023/24
Number of projects	25	18
Total Crane Valley grant:	£48,658.88	£33,050.28
Minimum grant made:	£682.00	£912
Maximum grant made:	£2,993.81	£2,000
Total match funding:	£4,858.04	£7,876
Total project expenditure:	tbc	£40,927.04
Total in kind funding:	£37,790	tbc

3. Development of organisations and projects.

H&H has been engaged with community projects at all stages of Community Fund awards, from promotion of the scheme to delivery of funded projects and development of organisations' capacity for larger initiatives. The capacity-building and evaluation work are described under headings as below.

3.1. Engaging community groups online

Contact with groups has been through newsletters and emails (eighteen in the year), social media and quarterly online community meetings. Mailings have been requested by groups to advertise events and they have been used to promote relevant funding opportunities and consultations beyond the Crane Valley Partnership.

A database of groups is maintained and frequently updated to reflect changes in contact names and community groups newly coming to notice. There are currently 83 groups on the

database (some are sub-groups of larger organisations), the number having grown from 63 at the start of 2023-24 to 72 by February 2024.

The quarterly meetings are an opportunity for groups to share information about their activities and to learn about others. Meetings have been attended by representatives of 22 different groups and nine theme leaders or others. Theme leaders and others have presented at the meetings:

- Sustrans – presentation on access audit
- Business engagement and corporate links – LGOAL
- Thames 21 – EMPOWER grants presentation and promotion
- Take Me To The River and L B Hounslow work on access – presentation
- Smarter Water Catchments – comparison between Crane Valley other catchments – Rosie Nelson, Thames Water
- Cartographer – Morph training

Groups have raised various issues in the online meetings including making links with Boroughs about access and Local Plans, water quality monitoring, corporate volunteering, sharing equipment such as bat detectors, development of new groups, project monitoring, funding for projects.

Groups also follow up issues by email, for example

- Insurance and banking
- Training for volunteers, e.g. in species identification
- Policies and constitutions
- Organising bat walks, equipment loans
- Queries about the Community Fund or other funding sources.

3.2. Visit to projects and support on site

Visits to projects give an opportunity to look in depth at how projects are progressing. They are a way of recognising and affirming the work of volunteers and identifying problems and barriers. Details of visits are in the Appendix below.

Themes from the visits to eighteen projects:

Groups focus on a variety of benefits including biodiversity, species monitoring and surveys, water quality, controlling invasive species, raising wider community awareness and involving schools, physical access (paths etc), education about heritage, health and well-being and litter.

Community groups collectively have a great wealth of knowledge and experience about the issues for the catchment. People have benefited from training, for example through Cartographer and ZSL.

There are clear links between the funding and volunteers' motivation and effectiveness, for example new tools with which they could undertake tasks not previously possible.

Recruiting enough volunteers is an issue for several groups. Social media are helpful, especially facebook groups. Funding was used for events and promotional material that helped with recruitment.

The opportunity to make a second application in the third round of the Community Fund was appreciated.

3.3. Community Fund Applications and Monitoring

H&H has promoted the Community Fund through the quarterly online Community Meetings and email newsletters; also through a wider H&H newsletter to Friends groups in Richmond and Hounslow.

Feedback from groups on site visits was that the Community Fund application and monitoring process has improved and is helpful. Two groups needed detailed help with monitoring and use of the portal. One group suggested that budget input can be difficult and it may be easier to work with an excel spreadsheet. Groundwork is responsive to queries and the criteria are clear. We noted that there can be complicated issues with the catchment boundary where it meets the tidal Thames and this can affect particular groups.

Groups particularly needed support for the third and final round of the Community Fund because the window for applications and project delivery was narrow and the maximum grant amount was increased. Applications were opened also to groups who had already been awarded funding in 2024-25. We contacted eighteen groups in October and November to promote the fund as well as promoting to all groups through newsletters. H&H has given detailed help to some groups on community fund applications, such as budgeting, targeting applications to Smarter Water Catchment priorities and project planning. The response to the third round was very positive, resulting in seventeen applications of which thirteen were funded. An example of individual support was to the new group Harrow Rivers Trust, part of Harrow Heritage Trust, who were making their first funding application in that name, involving volunteers experienced in water quality monitoring.

3.4. Banking arrangements

Some community groups do not yet have their own bank accounts. H&H offers a facility without charge to the group of holding funds on their behalf. We make payments against invoices relevant to the Community Fund projects and to the charitable objectives of H&H and provide updates on account movements. Groups were Friends of Hampton Heath, Hatton Fields and Hatherop Park and Oak Avenue.

4. Appendix: Crane Valley Grants Community Fund. Twenty five projects funded by the Community Fund 2024/25

Organisation	Project Title	Borough	Short project description	Benefits	Grant awarded
Sunshine of Hounslow	Care and Repair Allotment	Hounslow	Training sessions on reducing food waste	Promoting health and wellbeing	£ 2,000.00
Friends of the River Crane Environment (FORCE)	New and replacement kingfisher nesting banks	Richmond	Kingfisher banks	Creating/enhancing habitat	£ 2,000.00
Friends of Hatton Fields	Community allotment	Hounslow	Young people access to space for growing and environmental learning	Creating/enhancing habitat	£ 1,836.23
London Wildlife Trust	Tree work and replacement metal plate on a nature trail post in Crane Park Island	Richmond	Thinning tree cover	Creating/enhancing habitat	£ 2,000.00
Friends of Headstone Manor Park	Water Quality & Pollution Monitoring at Headstone Manor Park	Harrow	Extend riverfly monitoring	Reducing pollution/improving water quality	£ 660.00
Direction and Development 4 Youth (DADY)	Neighborhood Revitalization Project	Ealing	Outdoor activities for young people	Promoting health and wellbeing	£ 2,000.00
Friends of Yeading Walk	Building a Sustainable Volunteer Community for Yeading Walk	Harrow	Expand volunteering programme	Promoting health and wellbeing	£ 679.00
Gurseva	Our community, our green spaces	Hounslow	Involve volunteers in maintenance of fruit trees	Improving public access and/or site connectivity	£ 1,650.00
Pevensey Road Green Gym Rangers	Wildflower Meadow Improvements	Richmond	Scything and care of wildflower meadow	Creating/enhancing habitat	£ 1,968.87
Hounslow Heath Conservation Volunteers	Heathland Restoration	Hounslow	Increase heathland, removing scrub	Creating/enhancing habitat	£ 1,892.77
Friends of Meadway Orchard	Reset of the group and replacement of worn out tools and equipment.	Richmond	Replace tools and promote volunteering	Creating/enhancing habitat	£ 1,999.53
Creative People and Places Hounslow	River Crane Exhibition Engagement Events and Publication	Hounslow	Walks and promoting exhibition	Promoting health and wellbeing Raising awareness and support Promoting community engagement	£ 2,000.00
Carib and Co Brunch Community Interest Company	Carib and Co Crane Valley Walk, Cycle & Brunch Event	Cross-borough	Outdoor activities for black and minority ethnic people, cycling, art	Promoting health and wellbeing	£ 2,000.00
Friends of Headstone Manor Park	Provision of Equipment for Children & Adult Nature themed events	Harrow	Bat detectors, Field Studies Council guides etc	Promoting health and wellbeing Raising awareness and support Promoting community engagement	£ 1,500.00
London Borough of Hillingdon - Hillingdon Libraries	Tools for maintenance at Cranford Park	Hillingdon	Replace and increase tools for volunteers	Protecting heritage Promoting health and wellbeing Promoting community engagement	£ 1,781.00
Harrow Rivers Group	Remotely Monitor the water quality on the headwaters of the River Crane	Harrow	Equipment for continuous water quality monitoring	Reducing pollution/improving water quality Creating/enhancing habitat Raising awareness and support	£ 2,356.36

Organisation	Project Title	Borough	Short project description	Benefits	Grant awarded
Pevensey Road Green Gym Rangers	Pond Enhancement Project	Hounslow	Planting, ephemeral ponds	Reducing pollution/improving water quality Creating/enhancing habitat Promoting community engagement	£ 2,993.81
Hounslow Heath Green Gym	Information/ Visitor Centre Planters Project	Hounslow	New planters at visitor centre	Creating/enhancing habitat Promoting health and wellbeing Promoting community engagement	£ 2,993.69
Friends of Hanworth Park House	Hanworth Air Park Biodiversity Project - Winter 2025	Hounslow	Conservation education - workshops	Creating/enhancing habitat Raising awareness and support Promoting community engagement	£ 2,811.77
Creative Spaces London	Growing For The Future - Community Urban Greening Project	Hounslow	Garden craft workshops and outdoor parks gardening	Creating/enhancing habitat Promoting health and wellbeing Promoting community engagement	£ 2,310.00
Gurseva	Access to corporate volunteering in the Crane Valley	Hounslow	Engage business in conservation	Improving public access and/or site connectivity Promoting health and wellbeing Promoting community engagement	£ 2,850.00
Woodlarks & Waders	Monitoring wildlife activity in waterways and surrounding areas	Hillingdon	Bat detectors, wildlife camera, involve volunteers	Creating/enhancing habitat Improving water flow Improving public access and/or site connectivity	£ 1,445.00
Friends of Meadway Orchard	Holding a public Activity Workshop involving willow weaving to promote the work of the group and attract new volunteers.	Richmond	Willow weaving workshops	Creating/enhancing habitat Promoting health and wellbeing Promoting community engagement	£ 1,543.00
Hampton Heath Friends	Habitat Management (Equipment and Insurance), and Rustic Seating and Signing	Richmond	Tools, seating, signage, increased volunteer numbers	Creating/enhancing habitat Improving public access and/or site connectivity Promoting community engagement	£ 2,387.85
Heston Action Group	Flood resilience in urban areas	Hounslow	Private gardens awareness with young people, including de-paving and flood mitigation	Developing partnership resilience and capacity Creating/enhancing habitat Reducing flood risk	£ 1,000.00

5. Appendix: Case studies 2024-2025

5.1. Pevensey Road Green Gym Rangers (May 2024 and February 2025)

The Pevensey Road Green Gym Rangers were initially set up as a TCV Green Gym group. Since 2006, they have been a self-organised volunteer group working with Hounslow Council's Lampton Countryside Rangers. Their weekly volunteer sessions now get up to 15 to 20 people, with some members having been involved for over a decade.

The group tend to the Pevensey Road Nature Reserve. An old orchard site comprising of woodlands, ponds and wildflower meadows. They have cleared space for the veteran fruit trees to thrive, and have also planted new ones. Each year, the group hosts an apple picking day at the orchard, where the community gathers to harvest the fruits and make fresh apple juice. In addition to this, they carry out regular litter picks and practical management on the site. They have also created sculptures, benches, and new signage throughout the reserve. Their work has been recognised widely, with their new paths being recently included in the London LOOP walk.

The group's efforts bring benefits not only to the local community, but also to biodiversity. The Pevensey Green Gym Rangers have created areas of hibernacula and stag beetle loggeries, as well as removing invasive species such as Himalayan Balsam. During my visit to the group in 2024, a local butterfly expert mentioned that the work the volunteers have been doing in clearing parts of the woodland has been positively impacting certain butterfly species' populations. This further highlights the group's contribution to local biodiversity and the importance of working in harmony with nature.

The group used the second round of the 2024/25 Crane Valley Community Fund to purchase new tools and equipment for the volunteers, including loppers, pole saws, gloves, secateurs, litter pickers, and personal protective equipment (PPE). They found the application process to be straightforward, and mentioned that the second round of applications was easier to complete than previous ones.

During a tea and flapjack break after a morning of clearing Himalayan Balsam along the riverside, one of the volunteers shared that the new equipment has been very valuable for the group. With up to 20 volunteers attending each session, having more tools has allowed everyone to get involved in tasks.

The Pevensey Road Green Gym Rangers applied for additional funding in the final round of the 2024/25 Community Fund to support their work on the ephemeral ponds at the nature reserve. Their aim is to improve the habitat in and around the ponds, by coppicing trees to allow more sunlight to reach the water, removing overgrown or dominating vegetation, and creating dead hedges with coppiced willow. The hedges will block off access to some of the ponds so they remain undisturbed by dogs or people. Additionally, the group plans to make the ponds deeper to increase water retention and enhance the habitat for invertebrates and amphibians by adding stones, shingle and logs.

The group used this round of funding to purchase more tools to aid this work, such as waders, habitat improvement materials including willow saplings, stones, shingle and wood, and a new First Aid kit. They also purchased interpretation boards to install around the ponds, providing information on the importance of these habitats and the wildlife they support.

The main challenge the group faced during this project was the weather. The heavy winter rainfall caused river levels to rise and areas around the ponds to become very muddy. This made the ponds inaccessible or dangerous for the volunteers to work in, delaying some of the planned conservation work.



Image of new path at the nature reserve which has been added to the London LOOP walk (taken on site visit 13/05/2024)



Himalayan Balsam removed from the river Crane bank (taken on site visit 13/05/2024)



Des (Pevensey Rd Green Gym Rangers) and Andy (Lampton Countryside Team) posing with the new tools purchased with the Community Fund (taken on site visit 10/01/2025)



Image of some of the new tools purchased with the Community Fund (taken on site visit 10/01/2025)



*Image of one of the ephemeral ponds on Pevensey Rd Nature Reserve. Coppicing had taken place at this pond previously as part of the project.
(taken on site visit 10/01/2025)*



*Image of one of the dead hedges made with coppiced willow. This hedge directs people to stick to the path, protecting the pond.
(taken on site visit 10/01/2025)*

5.2. Hounslow Heath Conservation Volunteers (June 2024)

The Hounslow Heath Conservation Volunteers work with Hounslow Council's Lampton Countryside Rangers. The group meets once a week and do practical conservation work across Hounslow Heath to improve habitats for biodiversity.

The group used the Crane Valley Community Fund to purchase new tools including loppers, secateurs, saws, gloves, sharpening stones, litter pickers, mowing scythes and more. The new tools were of high quality and aided the work of the group who, with just 3 volunteers, were able to quickly clear an area of broom and gorse that was encroaching on the heather.

The group also often work with corporate volunteers on the Heath and the tools have been useful to ensure they are all able to get involved. However, they have trouble getting many weekly volunteers in, usually 2 or 3 but are trying to increase volunteer numbers. They are very active on Facebook which they use to showcase the work they do.

The Lampton Countryside Rangers completed the application for the group. They found the process easy however they added that a lot of information was needed and it was difficult to find 3 quotes for some of the equipment.



Volunteers working to clear one of the meadows of heather in Hounslow Heath



New loppers in use on the meadow



Meadow cleared of broom and gorse to allow heather to grow



5.3. Harrow Heritage Trust, Newton Farm Ecology Park (July 2024)

The Newton Farm Ecology Park volunteers meet once a week and work with Harrow Council to manage the site for biodiversity and people. Their activities include litter picking, building dead hedges, keeping paths clear, creating and maintaining wildflower meadows, and hosting events such as nature walks and an annual apple picking day.

Newton Farm Ecology Park hosts a wide range of rare plant and animal species, a pond, areas of seating for people to enjoy, a healing garden with plants which are believed to have healing properties, and a range of fruit trees. The volunteers used the Crane Valley Community Fund for four different things: a spring cut of the dry meadow, support for 4 community events, pond reed management tools, and consumables for water testing to continue pollution monitoring in 2024.

The spring cut of the dry meadow was done to improve accessibility and increase biodiversity in the park. Some areas had become overgrown with plants such as thistle,

hogweed and nettles. The cut and collect mowing regime has been successful in allowing for more plant diversity in the meadow.

Four community events were funded, comprising of tree and nature walks around the site. The funding provided leaflets and promotional material for the events. The events were useful for increasing people's interest in the site and to gather their feedback on its management, as well as recruiting more volunteers.

The long handled pond reed cutter purchased has allowed the group to cut back reeds in the middle and sides of the pond, where previously they were only able to cut to half a metre out. More pond surface is now exposed to the sunlight, creating a healthier and more biodiverse pond. This also allows for park visitors to see into the pond better to appreciate the local biodiversity.

Finally, water testing equipment was purchased through the fund to continue monitoring the pollution levels in the Yeading Brook East and Roxbourne Brook.

Feedback on the application process to the Crane Valley Community Fund was positive.

5.4. Friends of Headstone Manor Park (May 2024, Feb 2025)

The Friends of Headstone Manor Park were set up in 2016 by a group of local residents who were interested in improving the biodiversity and engagement in Headstone Manor Park, Harrow. Within that time, they have achieved a number of successful projects including creating wildflower gardens, installing loggeries for bugs, planting fruit trees for annual fruit picking days, holding workshops and events, creating wetland areas, restoring the sports fields, and doing riverside monitoring. Headstone Manor Park is designated as a Site of Borough Importance for Nature Conservation.

Currently, the group are focusing on flood control, maintaining the two flood storage areas which were created in 2022 to prevent flooding downstream. Specifically, they are working to repair a collapsed drain in one of the basins. They are also working on the reintroduction of water voles at Headstone Manor Park and are currently monitoring mink rafts. The Friends of Headstone Manor Park are also keen to create more wildflower areas and have been tending to the Headstone Manor Museum gardens.

The group work with a number of different environmental and community groups. Local school children with disabilities have adopted a patch in the car park, planting native shrubs and whips to secure the car park. They also bring in cattle on site for conservation grazing.

The group used the Crane Valley Community Fund for events such as nature walks and arts & crafts workshops for families. The aim of these are to connect people with nature and unify park users. The funds were used to purchase equipment and publicise the events. In the last round of the 2024/25 Community Fund, the Friends of Headstone Manor Park received more funding to continue these workshops, engaging families from both local and wider areas. Their aim is to engage around 800 people throughout the year (beating their 2024 record of 600) with their various events including their popular bat walks. Some of the funded activities included bug and bird box making workshops for families, origami workshops, nature walks, plant pot decorating and other craft activities. The group also purchased species ID sheets, branded table cloths, cases and batteries for their bat detectors, rechargeable torches, and a digital microscope as well as materials for their workshops. Their workshops have been very

successful, with most of them having sold out after a few days' notice. Both the parents and children who attended the bug hotel workshop were very enthusiastic about the events, with mothers stating that they are a great way to educate children about nature in creative and engaging ways.

The group had no issues with applying to the fund.



Images 1 and 2: Loggeries and wildflower areas created for wildlife



Image 3: Shrubs planted by Friends of Manor Park in playground area



Image 4: Wildflower and seating area



Image of the bug hotels made by children (with lots of involvement from parents as well!)



Image of some of the ID sheets, bug hotels, and branded table cloth purchased with the last round of 2024/25 funding

5.5. Butts Farm Working Together case study (visit Aug 2024)

Butts Farm Pocket Park was started by local residents in 2014. Their project was to transform a local, dilapidated green space adjacent to Butts Farm estate into an area that could be used by local residents. It funded by Boris Johnson's pocket park scheme in 2015. This also involved creating a small allotment that local residents could access and grow their own food in.

Recently, engagement with the pocket park from residents has been dwindling due to old residents moving away, children growing up, and some of the land being sold. The group used the Crane Valley Community Fund to make improvements to some of the features in the park, such as replacing the cob oven, repairing the tiled table top, and introducing more

perennial plants and fruit trees. They would also like to get a group in to do some work to cut back the existing shrubs.

Their next project is to put in a sand path through the park to allow better access to the Crane and Longford rivers for walkers, cyclists and mobility scooter users. They are currently in communication with FORCE, Hounslow Council, residents and the L&Q group to progress this project.

The group found the application process to the Crane Valley Community Fund flexible, however they had some issues with signing into the portal and felt that some of the questions were repetitive.



Image of the cob oven that is due to be replaced



Image of table which will be re-tiled by R&G Metals in Twickenham

5.6. Carib & Co Brunch Community Interest Company case study (August 2024)

Carib & Co Brunch Community Interest Company are a community organisation set up in 2021 to provide free healthy brunches to the local community and foster social cohesion. In particular, they aim to make walking easier and more accessible to Black and ethnic minority men and women with disabilities. Their brunches have brought together a number of different groups from the local community, including families on low income, young adults, and elderly people.

Since starting up, Carib & Co Brunch have engaged with a number of organisations such as the NHS, Nando's, and Headstone Manor Museum to deliver health and wellbeing workshops, art projects, fun fitness classes, comedy shows, and music events. They have also connected with local charities and organisations to help publicise their events. The events are free, offering opportunities for all members of the community to participate in social, fun, and wellbeing activities. Additionally, they provide support to people on low incomes, such as helping out at foodbanks and talking about the dynamics of the cost of

living in Harrow. The group are largely involved with their local community and make sure to provide experiences that the community desire. On a visit to the group, Jerome, 18, spoke about one of Carib & Co's events at Victoria Hall, where comedians and motivational speakers talked about their life experiences: "it's nice to see different people and hear about their stories, it's inspirational. It offers opportunities for people of all ages to demonstrate and broadcast their work and creativity. [One person] spoke about growing up with a single mother".

Carib & Co Brunch used the Crane Valley Community Fund to launch the Crane Valley walk & talk event; a project which aims to bring people closer to nature and to gain confidence in walking, by exploring the Crane Valley. The project enables people, most of whom have never visited the Crane Valley, to connect with the river through walks, bike rides, and heritage talks. Their historical walks in partnership with Black History Studies add intrigue as they showcase a new point of view of the Crane Valley. People are able to learn about the history of their local area and its inhabitants, further increasing unity and a sense of community. These events also help to improve people's mental and physical wellbeing by creating opportunities for people to exercise together. Feedback from their recent events was hugely positive, with participants saying that they were able to connect to nature and feel a sense of calm and community. Some participants also expressed that they had not ridden bikes since childhood so the bike rides enabled them to relive this experience.

One of their events included a tour of Headstone Manor Museum, followed by brunch and a talk from Mind in Harrow on the services they can offer to people struggling with mental health. Afterwards, the attendees spoke about the positive impacts that Carib & Co's events have on both themselves and the wider community:

Jerome, 18, shared that "the event today was different from other events [with Carib & Co Brunch], it shows they are able to switch it up... there is a range of different people and different ages".

Nina, 33, added "it's nice to find hidden gems, I had never been here before... I learned some new facts today. It's nice to have diverse categories of learning and it's good for your mental and physical health, it's relaxing."

In relation to a previous Butterfly Walk that Carib & Co Brunch Community hosted, Angela said that "there were people of different ages who don't usually cross paths connecting more with nature. Simon (the butterfly expert who led the walk) was very passionate and helped us learn about nature and biodiversity. It was therapeutic, a nice escape from the city as it was not in a built up place".

Jessica described how Carib & Co's talks tackle social isolation and generate connections amongst people "the talks are good as people today communicate via social media so it's good to connect in person. Relationships are the foundation of life, the biggest accomplishments, and [the talks] create communication".

The group found that the application to the Crane Valley Community Fund was seamless and clear. They shared that the portal was useful as it allowed to save answers and go back to them. Additionally, the local workshops that Groundwork organised were useful to gain a more in-depth understanding of how the application process worked, as well as to hear from other groups about their projects, and to ask any questions. The group added that the

feedback from Groundwork was provided in good time, which helped with planning the project.

Below are some images of their latest events including a historic walk, a museum tour and a bike ride.



Carib & Co Brunch Community bike ride along the Crane



At Headstone Manor Museum



Historical walk led by Black History Studies, followed by Nando's Brunch after

5.7. Hanworth Air Park Biodiversity project case study (Nov 2024, Feb 2025)

The Friends of Hanworth Park House were set up in 2017 to campaign for Hanworth Park House and its surroundings.

The group used the Crane Valley Community Fund for a biodiversity project in 2023, to gain more evidence and understanding of the species and habitats on Hanworth Air Park. The park is a local conservation site and this project intended to increase data recordings of its biodiversity, to further protect the site and help implement an appropriate management approach for the habitats that are present. The Friends of Hanworth Park House are also one of the few groups in the Crane Valley to monitor the Longford River. This project initially began with school pupils from the local St. Michael Steiner School, who did some river and grassland monitoring in the park as part of their High School work, led by Sarah Houghton. The grant funded tools for monitoring, events, publicity, habitat surveys, staff time and visits from biodiversity experts. The group did two surveys per month on river and grassland biodiversity and found a large number of plant, animal and invertebrate species. There was also a sighting of a kingfisher. The grant funded a visit from botanist Dr. Mark Spencer to survey the park. He predicted that there would likely be some rare acid grassland plant species, having consulted the last London Borough of Hounslow (LBH) biodiversity survey of the park. March Cudweed (*Gnaphalium uliginosum*) was found to grow in open patches of

mud following the path of the old river to the old pond on the park. Dominant species of plants e.g. ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) & Cocksfoot grass (*Dactylis glomerata*) were noted in the high grassland an effect of where the park was cut in 2022 and arisings weren't cleared. Additionally, the thatch of dried and long grass was noted potentially stopping smaller rarer plants from growing and our regular ground nesting skylarks from nesting. However, indicators of acid grassland, e.g. the rare to London heath grass (*Danthonia decumbens*) was spotted as well as previously identified ancient grassland species of common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and pignut (*Conopodium majus*).

This work has informed a new mowing regime in the park by LBH and the group are awaiting on appropriate grass cutting equipment to make this happen. During Habitats & Heritage's site visit with the group in September 2024, Dr. Spencer's predictions were confirmed, as the rare to west London plant species, the delicate but strong harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*) was spotted in the unmown grassland meadow!

Friends of Hanworth Park House's events have included monthly litter picks and, via this grant, invertebrate and moth trap workshops and two bat walks. Along with the bat walks, they put up two Anabat Swift detectors, loaned by Habitats & Heritage; one by the river and one by the open space of the park. The Anabat Swift detectors can be left for weeks or months so pick up more bat species than in one bat walk event, providing a greater overview of the species present on site. The group also invited Alison Fure, a Field Ecologist and bat specialist, to survey the bat species on site. In total, between the sightings on the bat walks and data from the Anabat Swifts, they recorded a total of 7 species of bats, including the rarer Serotine species. It's likely that some of these bats, such as the long eared brown bat and Serotine bat, have been roosting in Hanworth Park House, as these species prefer to live in old buildings. The group hope that these findings will serve as evidence to inform the legal protection of bats during the new development of the House, which has been recently announced. It is also clear that the park's different habitats provide areas for different bat species to thrive, including sheltered forested areas, large open spaces, rivers, and old buildings. Interestingly, Noctule bats were spotted feeding on insects caught in the floodlights of the sports pitch, demonstrating that perhaps they have altered their feeding tactics due to the rapid decrease of food sources across London.

Through this project, the group found that their communication with LBH and other stakeholders improved as evidence was gathered to support and enhance local biodiversity. Their next projects are to engage the community more in their work and to support the unculverting of the Longford river in the park which will need to be an initiative of Royal Parks – Bushy Park with LBH. Another important aspect they would like to work on is to make people aware of the species that live in the park. Ideas for this include creating signage, organising tours of the park, and installing a café to attract people to the park, without disturbing its biodiversity. They would also like bring back the species experts they previously worked with, including Dr. Mark Spencer, Philip Briggs and Alison Fure, to strengthen the information and data on the park's biodiversity.

The group found the application to the fund slightly difficult, particularly its layout, and would have preferred to have sent an excel spreadsheet with their costs instead. In addition, some costs for tools had increased after their application was submitted so they had to reduce tools bought and submitted a second grant for additional costs and for Dr. Mark Spencer to work with them, which was very informative.

The Friends of Hanworth Park House applied for additional funding in round 3 of the 2024/25 Community Fund to run free talks and workshops on the biodiversity work that has been done. They hosted 4 workshops led by specialists in bats, water flow, ponds, and insects, featuring experts such as Helen Greaves (Dept. of Geography at UCL), Alison Fure (bat ecologist), and Simon Charter (water flowform expert). The workshops combined informative talks with practical activities, including riverfly monitoring, bat detecting, and creating water flowforms using casts. The workshops were well attended, with between 20 to 35 participants at each workshop. Both children and adults found the workshops fascinating, adding that they were able to learn much more about their local biodiversity and develop new practical skills. Although the grant had a limited timeframe, the group was able to deliver the workshops quickly thanks to their existing connections with biodiversity specialists and prior planning efforts.



Image of the rare harebell species at Hanworth air park, picture taken by Sarah Houghton



Image of areas left unmown for acid grassland species



Some of the species of plants include knapweed, pictured above



Image of a section of the Longford River at Hanworth Air Park where river monitoring took place



Simon Charter demonstrating waterflow at Hanworth Air Park



Waterflow casts purchased with the Community Fund for workshops

5.8. Friends of Hatton Fields case study (20 November 2024)

The Friends of Hatton Fields work to protect and enrich Hatton Fields, located by Heathrow Terminal 4 and bordering the Duke of Northumberland River, in the London Borough of Hounslow. The site is a SINCR of borough-level significance and is classified as Green Belt land.

The group previously received funding from the Crane Valley Community Fund to raise awareness of their work and to promote community engagement in the area through a series of events. They continue to take part in monthly litter picks and are planning on hosting more bat walks in the next year. Additionally, they had hired a professional ecologist to do an ecology survey of Hatton Fields. The ecologist also offered them some training on surveying. In the future, they hope to use this knowledge to monitor the changes in biodiversity, particularly as the current development plan on Hatton Fields will focus on greater management of the site for biodiversity enhancements.

For this round of the Crane Valley Community Fund, Friends of Hatton Fields are using the grant to fund an allotment project for local schools to use. This aligns with their vision to increase young generations' appreciation of nature, by enabling primary school children to learn about food growing and biodiversity. The grant will pay for raised planters, soil, and fencing to go around the plot. They also want to create a compost bin to teach the children about the importance of decomposition and detritivores.

The Friends of Hatton Fields were given a neglected, abandoned plot upon enquiry which they levelled out and are putting in planters for growing food and pollinator-friendly plants. The group have engaged with Bedfont Primary, who are keen to use the allotment as it provides a free opportunity for children from all backgrounds to engage in outdoor activities outside of school. The school are also looking to create a baccalaureate course focussing on 'green' science and geography sessions, which the primary school children can earn credits for volunteering and participating in. Friends of Hatton Fields also want to include Bedfont Primary in their other work on Hatton Fields as part of this course, to teach pupils more about wildlife and biodiversity. One of the teachers from the school attended the survey training session led by the ecologist so there is scope to involve the school in species monitoring.

The group found the application process to the Crane Valley Community Fund easy and straightforward, although they did encounter some issues with the portal, such as not being able to add in dates properly or log in at times.

In future, the Friends of Hatton Fields would like to explore the potential of having Shire horses visit the fields for traditional landscape management. They will also need more funding to pay for insurance and would like to do some riverfly monitoring.

5.9. Friends of Meadway Orchard case study (December 2024)

The Friends of Meadway Orchard formed in May 2024 to enhance and manage Meadway Orchard (Twickenham) and its surrounding green spaces for both wildlife and the local community. The group meets every Wednesday, with up to 15 volunteers participating at each session. Originally known as Richmond Green Gym, the group is now led by Let's Go Outside and Learn (LGOAL), who coordinate activities in line with the Crane Park management plan. LGOAL also offers sessions focussed on skill-building, such as tree coppicing, and supports social prescribing services as well as working with schools and young people. Many of the group's members first joined through social prescribing and have remained involved for many years, creating an inclusive group which focusses on improving people's mental and physical wellbeing.

The Friends of Meadway Orchard used the Crane Valley Community Fund to purchase new tools and equipment, including loppers, shears, gloves, t-shirts and a gazebo. The group said the tools were "fantastic", adding that they have made it easier to carry out conservation work and to accommodate new volunteers.

The new tools have also enabled the group to collaborate with Richmond Council's Parks Team in creating a dog dip- a designated area for dogs to swim in the river. This diverts dogs from accessing the river in other areas that require more protection, especially since water voles have recently been reintroduced along parts of the River Crane. The dog dip also provides an opportunity to educate dog owners about the impact of flea treatments on water pollution. Using the new tools, the Friends of Meadway Orchard created a dead hedge and some laid hedges along the banks of the Duke of Northumberland River, which guides dogs towards the dog dip and prevents them from damaging the riverbanks. The hedge also improves sightlines into Kneller Gardens and to the dog dip, making it safer for visitors and dog owners. The group coppiced trees to make stakes, then cleared blackthorn and bramble from the riverside to create the weaves. Additionally, they cleared an area around Mereway Nature Park and planted spring bulbs ready for spring.

The new gazebo allows the team to meet in all weather conditions and the t-shirts mean that members of the group will be identified by the public when they are working in the green spaces, promoting the group and its activities.



Images of the dead hedge created by Friends of [Meadway Orchard](#) along the Duke of Northumberland River



New rake used to clear an area in [Mereway Nature Park](#), purchased through the Community Fund



Planting bulbs for spring using the new tools purchased



Volunteers working at the new dog dip in Kneller Gardens



Volunteers laying a hedge using new equipment



The Friends of Meadway Orchard at Kneller Gardens dog dip

5.10. Gurseva case study (December 2024)

Gurseva is a volunteer-led charity which supports the homeless, local communities and the environment with the aim of promoting wellbeing and preventing poverty. They deliver food parcels, run soup kitchens, and do environmental work such as engaging communities in tree planting.

Gurseva applied to the Crane Valley Community Fund to purchase additional tools and equipment for tree planting at Bedfont Lakes Southside, as well as to cover the costs of promotional materials. This includes pruning and watering equipment, gloves, tools for planting such as pickaxes, forks, and spades, and 20 pear trees. Previously, Gurseva had applied to the Year 2 round of the Community Fund to plant trees in Leirim Park in Hounslow. Since then, their volunteer numbers have increased significantly and they expect to have up to 60 volunteers at their monthly sessions. These new tools will enable more people to participate in tree planting activities. Promotional materials, such as posters, also help to boost participation and encourage residents to access their local greenspaces.

Both Leirim Park and Bedfont Lakes Southside were chosen as tree planting sites based on guidance from the local community and Hounslow Council. The 20 pear trees were planted next to the existing apple orchard at Bedfont Lakes, in the hopes that Gurseva can host apple and pear picking and juicing events in the future. They collaborated closely with the Lampton Countryside Team, the Council's contractors, to identify ideal plots for the trees.

During Sophia's visit to the tree planting session at Bedfont Lakes Southside, 15 employees from Microsoft had joined for a corporate volunteering day. Satinder from Gurseva mentioned that they have been approached by several corporate groups, including teams from Heathrow Airport, requesting volunteer days. In response, Gurseva has applied for additional funding from the Crane Valley Community Fund to support their offer of corporate volunteering opportunities. They hope to connect this work with LGOAL's business strategy. To ensure that both the local community and corporate groups can benefit from volunteering and engage with nature in their local areas, Gurseva plans to offer these sessions to individual volunteers as well as corporate teams.

Gurseva's tree planting project aims to promote better health and wellbeing within local communities by planting trees that improve air quality, and providing opportunities to

increase participation in nature-based activities. It also provides learning opportunities, not only through raising environmental awareness but also by teaching people new skills such as planting and pruning. The project encourages people to access their local green spaces, as participants can take ownership of the trees they've planted and contribute to their ongoing maintenance like pruning, weeding and watering. The sessions also provide opportunities for local people to explore new areas, as some participants noted that they had never visited the south side of Bedfont Lakes before.

Gurseva found “the application process was simple to use and navigate. We were able to send an application in a short timespan thanks to the online nature of the process. It also meant we could collaborate together with the inputs”.



Images of Gurseva's tree planting event with employees from Microsoft



Sophia, from Habitats & Heritage, and Satinder, from Gurseva, at the tree planting session at Bedfont Lakes



Sophia with a volunteer digging a hole for one of the pear trees



Image of the pear trees planted at Bedfont Lakes Southside

5.11. Crane Park Island volunteers case study (December 2024)

Crane Park Island is managed by London Wildlife Trust (LWT) on behalf of Richmond upon Thames. The management work on site is done by a dedicated team of volunteers, the Crane Park Island volunteers, who meet every Wednesday and Thursday and once a month on a Sunday. Their activities include coppicing small trees and shrubs to remove shading,

managing other plants on the riverbanks, removing invasive species, and maintaining the paths and signage for visitors. The site is home to the nationally threatened water vole, and the reserve and surrounding area is a hotspot for the nationally endangered stag beetle. Riverside species such as dragonflies, damselflies and a range of amphibians are also found there. The group's main aims are to enhance and protect the site for wildlife conservation.

The Crane Park Island volunteers were awarded two Crane Valley Community Fund grants in 2024 to help them continue to improve the island for visitors and wildlife.

The first grant was used to employ specialist contractors to carry out tree work that the volunteers could not complete with their own tools. One large horse chestnut tree had fallen across an internal water channel of the island, blocking access for volunteers to other parts of the channels where water vole monitoring takes place. The contractors used chainsaws to cut up the tree and ropes to remove it from the water, leaving the cut pieces on the bank. They will also cut down non-native, overhanging sycamores on the western bank of the island, to prevent over-shading of the river and encourage native plants to grow. The remaining wood will be left as standing deadwood or will be cut up by the volunteers and used as log piles, creating habitats for amphibians, stag beetles, fungi, mosses, birds and other insects, in turn providing food for birds. This tree work supports the water vole and stag beetle populations of Crane Park Island.

The Crane Park Island volunteers also used part of this funding to replace a metal plate that had been vandalised. There are 14 metal plates placed throughout the island, each featuring a raised outline of an animal or plant found in the area. These plates are designed for brass rubbing, providing a fun and educational way for visitors, especially children, to engage with and learn about the island's nature.

The second grant was used to complete repairs to the island's main hard path to improve accessibility for visitors, including those using wheelchairs or motorised buggies. The paths will also encourage people to stay on the paths, thereby protecting the surrounding flora. These repairs were started earlier in the year using a 2023 grant from the Crane Valley Community Fund. The group has used the 2024 funding to purchase more wooden plans to finish replacing the sides of the path and more shingle. Initially, they had planned to buy cheaper bulk bags of shingle, but encountered an issue as they could not be transported to the island. As a result, they had to change the order to 20kg bags which were more expensive, impacting the budget. The 2023 grant enabled them to repair three-quarters of the path and they are now awaiting the final delivery of wood and shingle to complete the rest.

The group is very grateful for the Crane Valley grants, as the smaller amounts are more manageable for them, whereas larger grants would be too difficult to budget and oversee. They found the application process straightforward. The London Wildlife Trust officially submits the application and handles the funds through its bank account, while the group is responsible for the initial choice and pricing of the projects and their management.



Image of new wooden sleepers installed at Crane Park Island, ready for the new shingle to be placed. One of the metal plates can also be seen in the background



Image of new gravel paths with wooden sleepers installed at Crane Park Island



Image of the tree contractors working on the horse chestnut that blocked the channels. Image thanks to Eleanor Lawrence.

5.12. Woodlarks & Waders case study (January 2025)

Woodlarks and Waders are a volunteer group that work in the waterways across the Borough of Hillingdon. Their aim is to create better habitats for wildlife and plants, through scrub management, pond creation, riverfly monitoring and litter picking. They are one of the few volunteer groups who work on the Eastern arm of the Yeading brook. They have noticed an improvement in litter along some of the areas they work in, although there is always litter to be picked. Some of their volunteers have been involved for over 10 years!

Woodlarks & Waders applied to the second round of the 2024/25 Crane Valley Community Fund to purchase new tools, including waders for work in rivers, extendible rakes, loppers and refreshments to reward their work. The volunteers found that the new waders were of high quality with elastic straps to keep them secured, allowing for better mobility when working in the rivers.

They found the application process easy and straightforward. Colin from the group added that the communication from the Crane Valley Partnership was helpful and prompt. The only complications the group encountered occurred once the application had been accepted, as there was a lot of diligence on specifics.

The volunteers were very dedicated and work at an incredible speed, unblocking a large blockage in the river as a result of a fallen branch, and not discouraged by the wind and rain. It was lovely to see such a committed team of volunteers!

Woodlarks & Waders also applied to the Community Fund for the final 2024/25 round to purchase equipment for monitoring wildlife activity in the areas where they work. They bought bat detectors and a torch for newt and bat surveys. Whilst they have conducted these surveys in the past, the updated equipment will allow for better data collection. Additionally, they purchased a camera trap to monitor changes in biodiversity before and after contractor work takes place at Spider Park, Ruislip, to reintroduce a meander in the Yeading Brook. This also supports the Waterlife Recovery Trust's mink trap project and ZSL's water vole reintroduction efforts, as any camera sightings of mink or water voles will be shared with these organisations.

The issues that the group faced with this round of funding was that the costs of the equipment increased after they had submitted their application. As a result, they ended up purchasing only Magenta 4 bat detectors which are cheaper, rather than both Magenta 4 and 5 detectors. They also found a camera trap on sale which brought down the cost. They hope to begin their newt surveys and bat walks in April 2025.



Woodlarks and Waders volunteers cleared a pond of excesses algae using the new extendible rakes (left). There were huge amounts of frog spawn in the pond, indicating a thriving ecosystem (right).

5.13. Hampton Heath Friends case study (January 2025)

Hampton Heath is the name given by the Friends Group to the green space surrounding David Lloyds in Hampton. The area is designated for public use but was not used or managed for many years and as a result was littered with dog waste, litter and fly tipping. In 2021, a group of local residents came together to start to tackle the severe littering and fly tipping on the site, with up to 16 people joining and 25 bags of litter collected at the first session. Since then, the Friends Group formed in 2021 and have transformed the site into a wildlife haven.

Thanks to their efforts to manage the site, it is now home to a wide range of species including fungi, lizards, newts, frogs, toads, and a range of plants and wildflowers such as bee orchids, sheep sorrel and broom. The group upload their findings on iNaturalist, and currently have records of 590 species found on the site. They share these findings with the Richmond ecology team and GiGL (Greenspace information for Greater London).

The Hampton Heath Friends' activities include opening up the paths around the site, clearing them of bramble to expose historic fly tipping and to make them more accessible for the public to walk through safely. They have adopted a mosaic grassland cutting technique, mowing some areas and allowing others to grow with the "cut, rake and remove" technique to encourage the growth of a diversity of wildflowers and grassland fungi. Additionally, they are attempting to replicate the species diversity at Hounslow Heath, which was once connected to this green space. Over the last 2 years, they have been planting heather, bell heather, and dwarf gorse in the low acid grassland areas in order to achieve this.

The group previously applied to the 2022/23 Crane Valley Community Fund to hire contractors to dig a seasonal pond near an existing ditch, both for flood alleviation and to support the amphibians that have been spotted in the area. For the 2024/25 round of the Community Fund, the group has purchased tools to support their continuing work at Hampton Heath. They will also use some of the funding to build signage and seating using reclaimed wood from a recently felled oak on site, and to pay for insurance for the group. Some of the new tools include rakes, litter and garden sacks, hedge and pole trimmers, bow saws, secateurs, a lopper and a rotary scythe.

The transformation of the site thanks to the group has been incredible, and David Lloyds are very supportive of their work, providing them with a space to store their tools, and teas and coffees at the end of their weekly sessions. The group regularly has up to 12 volunteers per week, with a weekly newsletter that reaches 110 members.



Friends of Hampton Heath. New tools bought with the Crane Valley Community Fund



Some of the paths cleared of brambles by Friends of Hampton Heath



The seasonal pond that was created with the 22/23 round of Crane Valley funding



Image of some heather planted on the heath, propagated from Hounslow Heath plant

5.14. Heston Action Group case study (January 2025)

Heston Action Group was formed in 2018 by a group of local residents passionate about improving civic pride in their community. The group came together to tackle various issues in the Heston area, including environmental concerns, community cohesion and local amenities. Through organising litter picks, planting sessions, and supporting local initiatives such as Cleaner Greener Hounslow and Play Streets, Heston Action Group has made significant progress in creating a greener, safer and more connected neighbourhood.

Central to Heston Action Group is the Heston Community Garden, established in 2020, which features vegetable patches, a wildlife pond, a medicinal garden, a polytunnel and fruit trees. A Hub was also created on the site to host meetings, training sessions and other community gatherings. Recently, the group completed a tree nursery project at the Community Garden, known as the West London Tree Hub. They hope the trees will be given to schools, local parks, corporate groups and local residents. In addition, they aim to raise

awareness on the importance of depaving and rewilding public spaces and front gardens. Another main topic the group focus on is flood resilience and Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS). They work with various organisations such as Thames 21 and Hounslow Highways on flood resilience and depaving initiatives.

During a visit to the group, they were working with Thames 21 to plant a rain garden on a residential road, to alleviate flooding in the area.

In order to further educate the local community on the importance of flood resilience and rewilding front gardens, Heston Action Group applied to the Crane Valley Community Fund to engage young people in these topics. They aim to do this through presenting on flood resilience and SuDS at school assemblies, organising a school photography competition, and producing a pupil-led newsletter. These activities would be exhibited or shared with the community and relatives to raise publicity on the topics of biodiversity, flood resilience and clean air. Additionally, they would like to run a Duke of Edinburgh skills session on flood mitigation for teenagers to produce research on the impact of depaving and rewilding in built up areas of the Crane catchment. In order to achieve this, the group hope to work in partnership with LGOAL, FORCE and the National Park City Junior Rangers programme.

One of the key issues Heston Action Group is facing in carrying out this project is getting schools on board. Whilst they have successfully connected with some primary schools, secondary schools are proving difficult to engage with, due to their limited time availability and strict curricula. As a result, the group has had to shift its focus primarily to primary schools, who have been more responsive. This challenge has impacted the group's ability to spend the full grant within the expected timeframe, particularly the printing costs of promotional materials.



Planting a rain garden for flood resilience, with Thames 21 and Heston Action Group

5.15. Friends of Yeading Walk case study (January 2025)

The Friends of Yeading Walk were established in 2020, initially by a local resident who began weeding and planting in the park. Soon after, the local community donated plants to enhance the space. The group aim to improve Yeading Walk by clearing overgrown trees and shrubs and adding new plants. Before the group formed, Yeading Walk - a small, linear park frequently used as a walk-through route - was prone to vandalism. However, thanks to

the group's efforts, the park has transformed into a safer and more inviting space for the local community.

The group received 3 Crane Valley Community grants, one in 2023 and two in 2024.

Grant 1 - 2023

The first grant was used for the planting and care of three new trees on the far riverbank of the park, following destruction from a severe storm which brought down eight trees in this area. Planting trees was a key objective for the Friends of Yeading Walk as there had been no new trees planted in the park for over 40 years, and some of the existing trees were showing damage, disease and ageing. They are also essential to maintain the shaded character of the park. Watering bags, support cages and a 2-year watering programme for the trees was funded by the grant and three native tree species were chosen: a hornbeam, a bird cherry and a field maple (*acer campestre*). The fund also helped to provide an initial start to the creation of the Bat & Bee Patch, with planting on the far side of the river, intended to provide nectar for night flying moths and other pollinators. Harrow's Green Grid fund further supported the planting of this area in the subsequent year. The trees are now doing well and the planting has continued to mature and extend, creating a colourful space in a previously heavily shaded area, which was avoided by many park visitors.

The Friends of Yeading Walk shared that "We always referred to this path as the 'Shady Walk' because of the overhanging cherry laurel. After the storm devastation, it felt like the not-so-Shady-Walk, but now there will be some big trees on the far bank in the future, which is welcome."

"The Bat & Bee Bed has brightened up an area which was very barren with little growing in the deep shade, now there is plenty of colour and different species of plants to enjoy, and I make a point of coming this way when walking our dog."



New trees along the 'Shady Walk', Yeading Walk



The Bat & Bee Patch, 18 months on

Grant 2 - 2024

The second Crane Valley grant was used to purchase tools and equipment for the group. Initially, the Friends of Yeading Walk used their own tools brought from home in the park. This was inconvenient and resulted in heavy wear on privately owned equipment. The grant enabled the group to have safe, appropriate, and correctly maintained tools and equipment for projects, as well as to afford some larger specialist items such as a strimmer, ladder, wheelbarrows and good locks. The battery operated strimmer helps the group keep paths open and clear of unwanted undergrowth safely and efficiently, as previously they used

manual clippers which was a time-consuming job. The wheelbarrows and pull trolley allow for heavy green waste bags to be moved safely and easily. As a result, they have become a more effective and professional volunteer group.

The tools were initially stored in volunteers' homes. Harrow Council provided an empty storage container so the group now has a securely locked central tools station, fitted out and properly organised and equipped. This has helped to attract volunteers, particularly those without home tools.

Some quotes from volunteers include: "Finally! Strimming, not trimming. No more cutting grass around the trees on my knees with a pair of hand-held shears" and "These are proper professional secateurs – my pair from home is totally blunt."



Friends of Yeading Walk. New lawnmower, trimmer, trolley and wheelbarrow purchased with Crane Valley Community



Storage container provided by Harrow Council where Friends of Yeading Walk tools are stored.



Waders for stream work

Grant 3 - 2024

The most recent Crane Valley grant awarded to the Friends of Yeading Walk was used for a marketing plan, to fund effective ways to publicise and expand their volunteering membership. This requires raising awareness within the local community and is essential to the sustainability of the group's programme for Yeading Walk.

Currently, their small volunteering team of 8 places too heavy a burden on few people and limits the groups' ambitions. Attracting a variety of different ages and people with varying interests is intended to create a wider volunteer base, bring new ideas to the park, help attract new Committee members, and provide enjoyment and satisfaction to those who come to help.

Yeading Walk's small and linear shape does not lend it suitable for large community events or sporting activities, which could create recruitment opportunities. Therefore, the group must capitalise on its strengths: it's a convenient, local short walk for dog walkers, older residents and families with young children. The river, shade and peacefulness is also a draw. Most of the groups' volunteers are retirees so the group want to attract more young adults, which is often difficult due to work and family demands of this age range.

The group has therefore designed a banner and created colour posters illustrating different volunteering opportunities which will be displayed at the park's entrances and on noticeboards. They will also survey park users' opinions on the FoYW programme to guide future efforts. Additionally, specific *Volunteering Project Saturdays* and mid-week sessions with the theme of 'What a difference an hour makes!' will be planned to enable short taster activities so that volunteers can make a contribution without committing too much leisure time. Photos of volunteer activities will be featured in their quarterly newsletters.

The grant funded A3 printing and an A3 laminator for posters, paper, colour print cartridges, and printing costs for banners and flyers, which will be distributed to households, libraries, doctors' offices, places of worship and local businesses. Tables and chairs have also been purchased to set up an information base in the park to talk to passersby.

The aim of this marketing plan is to get additional volunteers of FoYW which would help the group transition from a 'start-up' Friends group to an established, sustainable park volunteering organisation. It would help sustain the park programme through the holiday season and foster a sense of community involvement.



Image of banner that will be put up at the park's entrances



Tables and chairs purchased for the set-up of an information base during activities to talk to passersby

Feedback on the Crane Valley Community Fund application process

The Friends of Yeading Walk found the timing of the grant difficult, as the application was late in the year and funding had to be spent by the end of February, which is not the best time to try to attract people to volunteer in the park due to the cold and wet weather. A spring

launch would have helped to spread the funding and adjust prices as they went along, and would have enabled the group to make progress during the summer.

The group also found that in earlier years there was a long wait between being told they were successful and receiving the funding. This means that some projects had to start later in the year.

Another suggestion is to provide an application form that can be downloaded, completed and uploaded. This would be helpful for the applicant to know what questions are coming and can allocate comments more effectively. The Friends found that the 'save and complete later' was not an ideal function.

5.16. Sunshine of Hounslow and Ealing

Sunshine of Hounslow and Ealing CIC was founded by local resident Sharnjeet Bhalla and her husband 13 years ago, in 2012. The Community Interest Company is dedicated to improving the lives of individuals who are isolated or living with mental and physical disabilities. It does this by providing people access to horticultural activities, including food growing, and other outdoor events that foster social inclusion, personal development, and well-being. Sharnjeet and the volunteers also grow vegetables for people who are house bound so they are able to have free, fresh fruit and vegetables throughout the year. In addition, the CIC offers indoor activities such as yoga, swimming, art work, and sewing sessions. Sunshine of Hounslow and Ealing CIC's mission is to create a welcoming and supportive environment for individuals to engage with nature, connect with others, and enhance their physical and mental health.

The site which is now home to Sunshine of Hounslow and Ealing CIC's community allotment had been disused since WWII and was covered in brambles. With funding from the National Lottery Fund, Tesco bags for help, and the Crane Valley Community Fund- along with a dedicated team- the site now has two areas with colourful raised beds, an eco-toilet, a polytunnel, and a new greenhouse.

The CIC hosts a lot of corporate groups for volunteer days who help with the maintenance and upkeep of the site, from planting vegetables to weeding and harvesting. The food grown is often given out for free to the local community, and many local residents have their own raised beds which they tend to. There are also a number of fruit trees which are harvested.

Currently, they are growing a lot of garlic and onion. As the weather warms, they will plant a large variety of fruit and vegetables including aubergines, tomatoes, strawberries, spinach, cabbage, and much more. Sunshine of Hounslow and Ealing CIC keeps a lot of seeds from the harvests to save on costs and to build up a seed bank.

The CIC's latest grant from the Crane Valley Community Fund is being used to support two weekly growing sessions for schools who cater for children with disabilities, and families on low incomes. The sessions include training on food waste and composting, winter food growing, and how to maintain an allotment. The goals of these sessions are for people to learn new lifelong skills, reduce food waste, and help with physical and mental wellbeing by engaging with nature, socialising with others, and adopting healthy eating habits. So far, the charity has hosted 2 school visits with Woodbridge School and 7 weekend family sessions since 23rd November. The issue with the funding was the timing, as not many people engage with the site during the colder months of October to February. In the spring and summer time however, large numbers of the local community and a wide range of groups participate. The CIC hopes to grow visitor numbers even more this year to over 3,000. There

have also been some issues with the school's risk assessments and transportation, which has meant that some sessions had to be cancelled or postponed.



*Left: Sophia (Habitats & Heritage) and Sharnjeet (Sunshine of Hounslow & Ealing CIC) sitting on one of the new raised beds funded by the Crane Valley Community Fund
Right: Sunshine of Hounslow and Ealing CIC's raised beds in the community garden*

5.17. Friends of the River Crane Environment (FORCE) – (February 2025)

FORCE is a well-known established charity, formed in 2003, who work to enhance the River Crane's environment for both wildlife and visitors. Their work focuses on the lower Crane Valley, spanning the boroughs of Hounslow and Richmond.

In the latest round of the Crane Valley Community Fund for 2024/25, FORCE used their grant to install three new kingfisher banks along the River Crane in Crane Park. Two of the new banks will replace old ones, built in 2003 and 2013, that have deteriorated over time and are no longer functional. These original banks were constructed with marine plywood, which over time has warped and become unsuitable for the kingfishers to use. The third new bank will be placed at an intermediate location between the other two. While the design of the new banks remains the same as the previous versions, the marine plywood has been replaced with recycled plastic wood sheeting. This gives the same appearance but has greater durability.

The concept of the kingfisher banks at Crane Park originated with Ian from FORCE over 20 years ago. Ian explained that a local bird ringer was granted permission to ring birds in Crane Park and would share his bird data with FORCE. The data revealed that, despite the abundance of food in the area, the kingfishers that Ian often saw flying through the park were not nesting there. He realised that this was because the riverbanks in Crane Park were unsuitable for nesting, as they were being eroded by water or dogs, and lacked sufficient height. Therefore, Ian installed kingfisher nest banks, which led to an increase in nesting and successful hatching of kingfishers in the area. Over time, he has perfected the structure of the nest banks, such as by adding wooden panels to the sides and top of the boxes to prevent predators from accessing the nests. Ian's efforts have gained recognition beyond Crane Park as well, with invitations to install banks in places like Bushy Park. Today, more than 30 kingfisher pairs have successfully nested in his banks. His achievements have also been praised by Sir David Attenborough, who applauded him during a visit to Crane Park Island.

The Community Fund paid for the plastic wood sheeting and other materials needed for the construction of the bank, including wooden frames and chicken wire. TCV were also hired for two days to lead volunteer sessions to help with the creation of the kingfisher bank, which can be a long process.

Volunteers, including Sophia from Habitats & Heritage, began by removing mud from areas around the island where the kingfisher bank would be installed. The next step was assembling the kingfisher bank, which involves drilling the plastic wood sheeting panels together to form a box. The front of the panel is positioned slightly submerged in the river and, to prevent predators from entering, chicken wire is placed across the base and top of the box. The structure is filled with the soil collected, which is tamped down firmly to create a stable nesting environment. The installation took place in winter as vegetation is minimal, allowing for easier access and ensuring the river bank is clear of plant cover. The kingfisher banks need to be left for up to 2 years before they can be used by kingfishers, to ensure the soil settles and does not collapse under the weight of the birds, as they burrow deep to build their nests.



Left: Ian from FORCE and other TCV volunteers installing the front panel of the kingfisher bank

Middle: Sophia (Habitats & Heritage) and other TCV volunteers/staff collecting mud for the kingfisher bank

Right: Image of the kingfisher bank installed, before it is filled with soil collected

5.18. Harrow Rivers Group (Jan and Feb 2025)

The Harrow Rivers Trust is a newly formed group who focus on surveying water quality in areas around Hillingdon and Hounslow where there are pollution issues in the watercourse. Their primary focus is on the Brent, Yeading Brook, and Crane rivers, with a key aim of improving data sharing between these three rivers. Currently, much of the available data and initiatives are isolated, and the group seeks to bridge these gaps to create a more interconnected approach to monitoring and conservation.

Harrow Rivers Trust is part of the Harrow Heritage Trust and work closely with organisations such as Clean up the River Brent (CURB), Citizen Crane, The Zoological Society of London (ZSL), Harrow Nature Conservation Forum, and Cartographer. The group currently do monthly riverfly monitoring across these areas which serves as an indicator to overall river health. The two key volunteers, Angelique and Alan, have received extensive training to lead this initiative and are hoping to get more volunteers involved. During a recent riverfly monitoring session I attended, we made an exciting discovery- a cased caddis was spotted, which had not been found in that stretch of river for at least 4 years! This finding highlights the importance of continuous monitoring in tracking ecological changes.

To further their monitoring work, the group is using the Crane Valley Community Fund to purchase 10 water quality testing box build parties. These devices will be placed in areas where water pollution is high or where it fluctuates significantly, such as under bridges or in culverted sections of the river. The solar-powered water testing kits will remain in the water for over a year, providing continuous data to improve monitoring and detect patterns. For example, the group has found that pollution levels often spike during the morning or when people come home from work.

Harrow Rivers Trust is working with John Grifford, an electronics expert at CURB. The boards for the water testing devices rely on custom-built circuit boards, coding, and SIM card communication, ensuring that data is transmitted effectively. The kit includes: 10 x MK3 boards; 10x TDS probes; 10x temperature probes ; 10x solar panels; 10 x standard SIM cards ; 10x batteries; 10x plastic boxes; 10x antennae ; Labels.

The group made their application through the Harrow Heritage Trust, whose guidance has been very helpful in supporting them to establish themselves. They did not encounter any issues with the application process, although they noted that the funding took some time to arrive.



Image of cased caddis found in Yeading Brook



Riverfly monitoring with Harrow Rivers Trust

15th Feb 2025. H&H attended part of a session to build in-river passive monitoring system. The device measures temperature and conductivity, sending results to a cloud-based database. The measures are used to estimate Total Dissolved Solids (TDS), contributing to water quality monitoring. The big step forward is that the devices can be left in place and monitor without anyone present so that continuous monitoring is possible. The devices are in use on the Brent and will be brought into use on Yeading Brook in Harrow. The training was run by Clean Up The River Brent (CURB) and funded by CVP / Community Fund.

Photos: Alan Patterson, Harrow Rivers Group

The completed board with:-

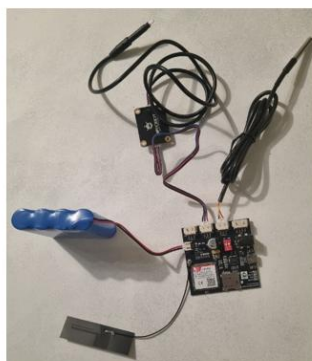
temperature probe,

TDS probe,

Antenna,

Battery connected.

The 3 wires connecting the TDS probe to the board had to have connectors crimped onto them.



The workshop on Saturday 15th February at CURB HQ (Pitshanger Pavillion)

Ben, Ian, Angelique, John and Alan



5.19. Creative Spaces London (February 2025)

Creative Spaces London (CSL) is a Community Interest Company (CIC) dedicated to providing fitness, arts & crafts, and wellbeing activities for women and children. The CIC collaborates with a number of partners, such as Thames 21, Let's Go Outside and Learn (LGOAL), Cultivate London and Hounslow Council. With a strong focus on building community engagement in Cranford and Heston, CSL designs projects based on ideas suggested by local residents. A key question that is often asked is "what would you like to do but can't afford to do?", to ensure that activities are tailored to the needs and wants of the local community.

CSL's most recent Crane Valley Community Fund was used to provide 10 free 'Garden Craft' workshops for the local community, involving a combination of craft and nature. This project is a continuation of a previous 'Grow for the Future' project, which looked at urban greening and food growing. Participants of the previous project gave very positive feedback and requested further workshops. In particular, they asked for raised beds to be made so they could engage more in food growing. As a result, the Community Fund also funded bespoke raised beds, constructed by Cultivate London.

Some of CSL's 'Garden Craft' workshops include:

- A wreath-making session, in collaboration with LGOAL, where people collected greenery from their local green spaces
- Building bird houses, which will be put up in trees by Hounslow Council
- Seed potting for people to either take home with them or contribute to a community garden
- Creating bug hotels with colourful paint and explaining why they are important for our ecosystem, linking the company's creative focus with nature and wildlife
- A 'fairy door' workshop for children to make and put up in their local area

These free workshops provided people with the opportunity to learn about biodiversity and engage with nature in a creative way without financial barriers, as CSL supplied all the materials. This is particularly important for families on low income as they are able to participate in new activities without financial risk. Additionally, the project provided employment and training to local unemployed residents.

The workshops were well attended, with some weekend workshops attracting up to 20 participants and weekday sessions averaging around 10. The workshops had a mixture of both regular and new attendees. Both staff and attendees have shared positive feedback on the workshops. One of the organisers from CSL added that “*when we have opportunity to add joy and beauty, it makes people take care of things*”, reflecting on the positive impacts the workshops have on local green spaces.

Creative Spaces London found the Crane Valley Community Fund highly beneficial for smaller organisations, as the application process is not time consuming and is accessible for groups with small capacity. The CIC also acknowledged that there is a lot of support available with the application if needed. The issue that staff faced with this project was the short timescale, which made it hard to deliver all the workshops in time. However, by having 2 workshops per week on Wednesdays and Saturdays rather than one, they managed to keep within the timeframe.

In previous rounds, another challenge CSL had faced with the Community Fund was the administrative burden of financial reporting. Staff noted that the diligence required in tracking receipts was time consuming and occasionally led to having to do unpaid work to meet these requests. However, through experience, they have now become more stringent with receipts and can better manage this issue.



Image of home grown veg from the Grow for the Future project. Image courtesy of Rachel Doherty, CSL.



Image of a handmade fairy door created at one of the workshops. Image courtesy of Rachel Doherty, CSL

5.20. Hounslow Heath Green Gym (February 2025)

The Hounslow Heath Green Gym was originally established by The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) but has now evolved into an independent volunteer group who work closely with Hounslow Council's Lampton Countryside team at Hounslow Heath. The Green Gym group has been active for around 10 years, with some of the volunteers having been involved for the majority of those years. Led by Marilyn, the group focusses on engaging volunteers with disabilities, providing a weekly 3-4 hour sessions every Tuesday. The group focus on nature

conservation tasks including litter picking, meadow scything, scrub and bramble clearance, maintenance of the heather pen, and upkeep of tools and the Hounslow Heath visitor centre. These regular sessions foster a connection with nature and promote social interaction amongst volunteers, and many of the volunteers have experienced the benefits that this has had on their mental and physical wellbeing.

Hounslow Heath Green Gym used the latest round of the 2024/25 Crane Valley Community Fund to replace old, rotten planters in the visitor centre. The group had used the planters for a range of flowers and vegetables, and this gardening activity was very popular and enjoyed amongst the volunteers. The fund financed high quality wooden sleepers for new raised beds along with materials to install them, seeds and plants for the beds, and additional tools to help with the long-term maintenance of the beds. The group also purchased more PPE and a new first aid kit. The revitalised planters will be used for growing a range of fruits and vegetables for volunteers to take home, as well as the cultivation of some plants that can be planted on the Heath to enhance its biodiversity.

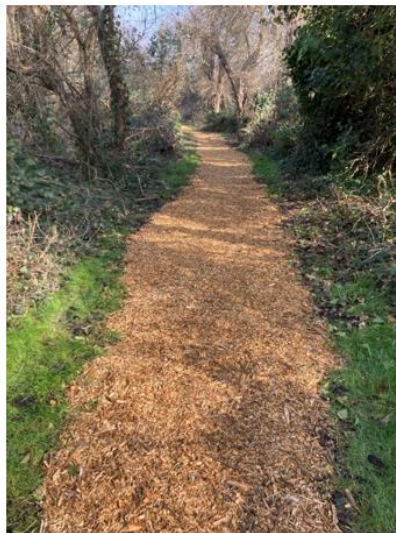


Image of the woodchip spread on a path in Hounslow Heath by Sophia and the volunteers



Image of the new raised beds at the Hounslow Heath visitor centre