

Habitats & Heritage (H&H)

Evaluation of Crane Valley Community Fund 2025-26

Author:

Stephen James, Finance and Operations Manager, stephen@habitatsandheritage.org.uk

Case studies and interviews:

Sophia Gregorio, Community Engagement Officer, Habitats & Heritage
Aanchal Thapa, Habitats & Heritage

With thanks to Groundwork, CVP partners and community groups
who provided helpful insights into the Community Fund.

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1) Sources

This report is an overview of the Crane Valley Grant Programme Community fund 2025-26 and comparison with prior years. Data for this evaluation have been drawn from:

- Thames Water's and Groundwork's information about grants made and reporting
- H&H's records of liaison with groups and partner organisations
- Seventeen case studies of projects completed or in progress, presented in the Appendix below
- Some has changed after 28th Feb 2026 as project reports are finalised

2) Summary and main learning points

- a) The Community Fund has continued to enable groups to extend their work and engage volunteers. 18 grants were made and they were all to different organisations.
- b) The spread of groups across Boroughs was weighted towards Hounslow, continuing a pattern of previous years. Promotion to all Boroughs is important and work on 'orphan stretches' could help to extend the reach of the community fund's benefit.
- c) For the first time this year, some applications were discounted because they appeared to be based on copying from unrelated grant applications elsewhere. This problem was distinguished from the use of artificial intelligence, which can be legitimately used to help with wording of grant applications. Groundwork gave a detailed briefing to the Community Fund panel. Habitats & Heritage validated Groundwork's view by investigating the history of applicant organisations online.
- d) Some community groups depend constitutionally on larger voluntary organisations or London Boroughs, who in turn may make several applications for different local volunteer projects. This generally works well. There have been instances of local volunteers seeking updates about applications and projects from H&H rather than the managing organisation. It could be useful for such applicants to assure the funder that local volunteers are fully briefed.
- e) The application process for the Community Fund is found to be generally accessible. Some groups requested advice about applications or reporting requirements.

- f) The deadline for project delivery was extended to May 2026, because of the timing of the second round of the Community Fund. This flexibility was useful for project planning.
- g) The maximum grant level was raised to £3,000 in 2024-25. This has been generally useful in enabling larger projects. Over-all funds were constrained in the second round and the scope of some activities was reduced due to the lower awards necessary to stay within the Community Fund budget.
- h) Site visits and case studies have been very useful for insights into the practical value of Community Fund grants. We have raised the profile of the work of community groups through blog posts that are indexed and branded as part of the Smarter Water Catchment initiative.
- i) Networking between groups has been important in focussing projects on the Smarter Water Catchment themes.
- j) 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 will be increasingly important. The fund was over-subscribed and particularly in the second round awards were considerably lower than the cost of projects.
- k) 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 'orphan stretches' of the watercourses.

3) Groups funded and grants made:

A full list of groups funded with amounts and summary of activities is at the Appendix below. 18 grants to as many different organisations:

Borough spread of 18 grants in 2025-26 and prior years:

	2025/26	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23
Ealing	1	1		1
Harrow	1	4	3	3
Hillingdon	1	2	1	0
Hounslow	12	11	7	7
Richmond	3	6	2	8
Cross-borough or N/A		1	5	
Total	18	25	18	19

The benefits of the 18 projects funded in 2025-26 were categorised and many projects cover more than one theme:

	2025/26	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23
Creating/enhancing habitat	11	15	8	Data not in application summary
Promoting health and wellbeing	6	11	8	
Promoting community engagement	15	8	11	
Raising awareness and support	9	4	7	
Reducing pollution/improving water quality		3	5	
Developing partnership resilience and capacity	2	1	1	

Improving water flow	1	1	2	
Protecting heritage		1	1	
Improving public access and/or site connectivity	4		5	
Delivering economic benefits			1	
Reducing carbon footprint			4	
Reducing flood risk	1	1	1	

Patterns of funding were as below, comparing figures with prior years

	2025/26	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23
Number of projects	18	25	18	19
Total Crane Valley grant:	£39,914	£48,658	£33,050	£33,527
Total project expenditure:	tbc	tbc	£40,927	tbc
Minimum grant made:	£650	£682	£912	£1,053
Maximum grant made:	£3,000	£2,993	£2,000	£2,000
Total match funding:	tbc	£4,858	£7,876	tbc
Total in kind funding:	tbc	£37,790	tbc	tbc

Notes:

2024/25 and 2023/24 figures advised by Rosie Nelson

2025/26 and 2022/23: from [SWC portal](#) spreadsheets

Data above subject to validation

4) Development of organisations and projects

a) *Engaging community groups online*

H&H and Let's Go Outside and Learn (LGOAL) keep a database to reflect changes in contact names and community groups newly coming to notice. There are currently 86 groups on the database of which some are sub-groups of larger organisations, the number having grown from 63 at the start of 2023-24; 72 by February 2024; 83 by February 2025. Mailings are also sent to partners and theme leads, creating opportunities for wider networking.

Case studies from 2024-25 and 2025-26 have been adapted and [published as twelve blogs](#) in consultation with the relevant groups. In this way the contribution of community groups reaches a wider audience through H&H's website.

Contact with groups and voluntary organisations has been through newsletters and emails (twelve in the year), social media and quarterly online community meetings.

Quarterly online meetings are an opportunity for groups to share information about their activities and to learn about others. Meetings have been attended by representatives of 19 different groups and seven theme leaders or other partners. Theme leaders and others have presented at the meetings:

- Schools
- Business engagement

- London Borough of Hillingdon, including major project at Spider Park
- The Crane Valley Catchment Plan
- Crane Valley Story
- London Borough of Hounslow and Take Me To The River

Full minutes of meetings are distributed and matters arising are followed up in between meetings. Groups have raised various issues in the online meetings including:

- Budgeting and increasing cost of projects
- Pollution and water quality
- Species monitoring and biodiversity
- Water vole release
- Good practice in mowing regimes and other nature conservation
- Consultation on plans and strategies

Groups also follow up issues by email, for example

- Access to specialist services, e.g. ecologists
- Access to training and networking, e.g. Citizen Crane
- Organising bat walks and equipment loans
- Queries about the Community Fund or other funding sources.
- Advertising events and volunteer activities

b) 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 nine projects:

- Groups focus on a variety of benefits detailed in the table at section 5 below.
- Funding clearly helps groups to sustain and extend their activities
- New and replacement tools and equipment are important for sustained and growing volunteer involvement.
- Constraints on funding in the second round led to scaling down of some projects; projects will need additional funding to complete planned work, e.g. repair to a storage shed
- Community groups have a wealth of knowledge and experience about the issues for the catchment. The ability to draw on specialist skills and training is greatly appreciated.

c) Community Fund Applications and Monitoring

H&H has promoted the Community Fund through the quarterly online Community Meetings and email newsletters.

H&H's support to groups and involvement in the funding process has included the following:

- Help with access to the funding portal, which was re-designed for 2025-26.

- Investigation into applications that seemed to involve copying from other unrelated work
- Liaison with groups about meeting conditions relating to funding
- Advice about preparing for monitoring meetings and reports
- Participation in funding panels
- Liaison with Groundwork about issues raised by groups

d) 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. Groups were Friends of Hampton Heath, Friends of Hatton Fields and Friends of Hatherop Park and Oak Avenue. There are continuing challenges for small groups in the voluntary sector in opening their own bank accounts. Friends of Hampton Heath opened their own account in December 2025 and the H&H facility is no longer required by them.

5) Appendix: Crane Valley Grants Community Fund. Eighteen projects funded by the Community Fund 2025/26

Organisation	Project Title	Borough	Short project description	Benefits	Grant awarded
Friends of Yeading Walk	Sustainable, attractive Infrastructure for Yeading Walk Raised Planting Schemes	Harrow	Raised beds in riverside park	Creating/enhancing habitat Raising awareness and support Promoting community engagement	£ 2,516
Direction and Development 4 Youth (DADY)	Empower & Elevate	Ealing	Nature walks linked to existing football sessions, involves Somali communities	Promoting health and wellbeing Raising awareness and support Promoting community engagement	£ 3,000
Sunshine of Hounslow and Ealing	improve the area and food growing training for all	Hounslow	Flooring for shelter, soil and seeds for food growing project	Reducing flood risk Improving public access and/or site connectivity Promoting community engagement	£ 2,500
Habitats & Heritage	River Crane Fun Day event	Hounslow	Butts Farm fun day to engage local people	Promoting health and wellbeing Raising awareness and support Promoting community engagement	£ 2,998
Friends of Hatton Fields	Hatton Fields Ecological grass cut / graze	Hounslow	Meadow cut to promote biodiversity	Creating/enhancing habitat	£ 3,000
Friends Of Hanworth Park House	Hanworth Air Park Biodiversity Project - 6 incredible monthly events	Hounslow	Talks and practical nature conservation, scything	Creating/enhancing habitat Raising awareness and support Promoting community engagement	£ 3,000
Friends of the River Crane Environment	River investigation and other materials	Hounslow	Litter pickers, waders, underwater camera, maps printing	Developing partnership resilience and capacity Raising awareness and support Promoting community engagement	£ 2,700
Let's Go Outside and Learn CIC	Crane Valley Trail Pilot Leaflet	Hounslow	New style trail leaflet	Improving public access and/or site connectivity Raising awareness and support Promoting community engagement	£ 2,700
Friends of Meadway Orchard	Notice Board for Friends of Meadway Orchard	Richmond-Upon-Thames	Notice board for Meadway Orchard	Promoting health and wellbeing Raising awareness and support Promoting community engagement	£ 2,700
Woodlarks and Waders	New and replacement equipment.	Hillingdon	Waders and pond gloves due to expansion	Creating/enhancing habitat Improving water flow Improving public access and/or site connectivity	£ 2,000
Gurseva	Partnering with Businesses in the Crane Valley- Access To All	Hounslow	Business involvement in practical nature conservation	Promoting community engagement	£ 2,600

Organisation	Project Title	Borough	Short project description	Benefits	Grant awarded
London Wildlife Trust	Seating for visitors and equipment for volunteers on Crane Park Island	Richmond-Upon-Thames	Seating, accessible paths	Creating/enhancing habitat Improving public access and/or site connectivity Promoting health and wellbeing	£ 2,500
Hampton Heath Friends	Native Planting, on-site composting and information signs.	Richmond-Upon-Thames	Disease resistant elm and other planting; composting; information signs; insurance for community group	Creating/enhancing habitat Raising awareness and support Promoting community engagement	£ 2,500
Bedfont Lakes Conservation Volunteers	Habitat enhancements and community engagement	Hounslow	Trees and tools	Creating/enhancing habitat Promoting community engagement	£ 650
Friends of Bedfont Lakes	Bat tagging and habitat improvements at Bedfont Lakes	Hounslow	Bat detectors, trees	Creating/enhancing habitat Raising awareness and support Promoting community engagement	£ 650
Hounslow Heath Conservation Volunteers	Volunteer facilities improvements and habitat improvement and creation	Hounslow	Tools and tool storage, materials for bat and bird boxes	Creating/enhancing habitat Promoting health and wellbeing Promoting community engagement	£ 650
Pevensey Road Green Gym Rangers	Site improvements	Hounslow	Tools and equipment	Creating/enhancing habitat Promoting health and wellbeing Promoting community engagement	£ 650
Creative Spaces London CIC	Keep On Growing - Urban Greening Project For Cranford and Heston West's Womens Group	Hounslow	Education and practical gardening sessions	Developing partnership resilience and capacity Creating/enhancing habitat Promoting community engagement	£ 2,600

6) Appendix: Case studies 2025-26

Case studies below are based on updates during the year from groups during 2025/26 when we were publishing blogs about their work; visits to sites and projects; and online discussions with groups

a) *Friends of Hanworth Park House – Hanworth Air Park Biodiversity Project*

Hanworth Air Park's Biodiversity Project, led by Sarah Houghton from the Friends of Hanworth Park House, began in early 2023 with a series of ecology events exploring the park's flora and fauna. Through the workshops and site visits, some key species have been identified on the park, such as harebells, giving both the local community and the Council valuable insights into how the park can be better managed for biodiversity. The project has been funded through the Crane Valley Community Fund, with previous activities including ecological surveys, water monitoring, and educational workshops. For Year 4 of the Crane Valley Community Fund, the Friends of Hanworth Park House focused on delivering more educational workshops and talks on biodiversity to engage and educate the local community. These sessions offer residents of all ages and from a high deprivation area the opportunity to gain skills in practical environmental conservation, learn about the park's biodiversity, and encourage a stronger connection to nature.

One significant and very successful event was a talk by Professor Dave Goulson, author and academic, held in September 2025 on the conservation of bees and other insects. Over 200 people of all ages attended this event, including the Mayor of Hounslow, Cllr. Amy Croft, and MP Seema Malhotra. Local community groups, voluntary organisations, and academic researchers also set up inspiring displays of their work in nature conservation for the event. Habitats & Heritage published a blog post about this fascinating talk, here: [Bee Conservation with Prof Dave Goulson - Crane Valley Partnership Projects - Habitats & Heritage](#)

Another event included a scything workshop led by Clive Leeke, attended by 12 participants. People were taught how to assemble and safely use a scythe, which is an effective and less damaging management technique for maintaining the park's acid grassland habitat. A further follow-up workshop will take place in May 2026 to assess what impact the scything has had on the biodiversity. Future workshops include a bat walk with ecologist Alison Fure on Saturday 21st March and a botany walk with Dr. Mark Spencer on Sunday 10th May.

The grant was used to purchase equipment for the workshops, venue hire, and to pay for leading experts to give talks and practical demonstrations. When the application was originally submitted, the group planned to deliver 6 events in 6 months. However, due to the heavy rainfall in early 2026 and an extension to the Community Fund's spending date, the events have been spread out. Some workshops have also been adapted. For example, a hedgelaying workshop planned for January 2026 has been changed to a fruit tree grafting workshop, led by Sarah, due to wet weather and the limited availability of experts. Another event has changed from a water workshop to a bird identification session using the Merlin app, and the group is currently seeking an expert to lead the bird walk.

The next step for the group is to establish a dedicated Friends Group for Hanworth Air Park, separate from the current Friends of Hanworth Park House. This will help to ensure a focused effort on protecting and enhancing the park's biodiversity and guarantee that the legacy of the hard work that has been carried out so far continues. They hope to use some of the remaining funds- freed up through workshop changes- to support the set up of this

new group, such as by running a logo design workshop or raising awareness locally to attract new members.



By Sophia Gregorio, based on a meeting on 27/02/2026

b) Friends of Yeading Walk case study 2026

The Friends of Yeading Walk continue to make the Yeading Brook Open Space a welcoming, tranquil space for both people and wildlife to enjoy. Thanks to their ongoing efforts, the park is being used a lot more frequently and visitors have commented that they feel safer using the space. The Friends of Yeading Walk used their grant from the Crane Valley Community Fund to purchase materials for the installation of two raised beds in the park. The grant paid for metal edging for the bed structure- which is more durable than timber and is easy to install- and soil for filling the beds. This funding was used in conjunction with a grant from Harrow Council with which they purchased the plants. The group prioritised native and natural looking plants to create resilient, aesthetic, and wildlife-friendly planting schemes.

One of the beds is located at the entrance of the park on Suffolk Road. This area was previously an unused patch of short grass, with very shallow soil due to an old subsurface concrete road running through the section. In the past, wildflowers had been sown there but were unsuccessful. The new raised bed provides a more suitable space for plants to grow and brings colour to the entrance, with the hope that it will attract more people to visit the park. The bed was named the 'Hot Summer Bed' as the planting scheme has bright, welcoming colours. The planting promotes climate resilience, using species that are adapted to withstand sunny, hot locations with limited watering. Species planted include euphorbia, miscanthus, philadelphus, bottle brush, salvias, persicarias, hypericum and berberis. Heather was also planted around the edges to provide some winter colour and additional food for pollinators. The soil mix comprises compost, bark and grit, and the bed was finished with woodchip to suppress weeds and hold moisture. Two small crab apple trees flank the bed, planted around 18 months earlier.

The second bed is located in the centre of the park in a much shadier area where the ground gets very wet in winter due to sloping conditions and poor drainage. This has been named the Mahonia Bed. Plants here were selected to cope with both wet and dry conditions, and to again provide winter colour and are pollinator-friendly. Species include mahonia, fatsia japonica, cotinus (smoke bush), perennial geranium, daffodils, grasses, Japanese anemones, and more. This bed will grow more slowly, taking around 3 to 4 years to reach maturity.

The Friends shared that the project provided a valuable opportunity for volunteers to come together at every stage, from clearing the ground, constructing the metal edging, shovelling

the soil, and planting and mulching. The group now has around 12-15 active volunteers and a total of around 200 people on their membership list. The Friends are currently focusing their efforts on ongoing maintenance work and conservation in the park but in future they hope to plant more trees and to create another raised bed that mirrors the Mahonia bed. Overall, the group are very pleased with the outcome of the project and believe it has good sustainable outcomes. They are grateful to both the Crane Valley Partnership and Harrow Council's principal landscape architect for their support in making the project possible.

By Sophia Gregorio, based on a site visit on 6 Feb 2026. With thanks to Mary Wayne, Friends of Yeading Walk, for the images below



Images 1 and 2, volunteers creating the Hot Summer Bed on Suffolk Road entrance



Image 3, completed bed at Suffolk Road rec entrance



Image 4, before picture of the area in the centre of the park for the Mahonia bed.



Image 5, volunteers working on constructing the bed. Some of the original plants were left



Image 6, Friends of Yeading Walk volunteers planting up the Mahonia bed



Image 7, completed Mahonia bed. Some logs were also added to the side to create a habitat for minibeasts

c) *Hounslow Heath Conservation Volunteers case study 2026*

Hounslow Heath Conservation Volunteers (HHCV) received funding from the Crane Valley Community Fund Year 4 Round 1 to make several adjustments to their existing tool shed. Improvement included creating a plywood wall to support racks for their tools and to purchase workbenches to make bird and bat boxes. The toolshed is quite big and Andrew Peake, the Senior Countryside Ranger from Lampton 360 involved in decisions on the site, has big visions for what the space could become for volunteers and for local nature groups.

The tool shed in its current state is suffering from quite a few issues. There are gaps between the roof and wall, leaks that often result in puddles and staining, and constant condensation that they're trying to manage with a suspended plastic tarp. However, the size of the space does call for a lot of potential. As Andrew spoke about it, he wanted the funding to create a space where volunteers could do indoor activities like birdbox creation and other bush craft activities using the tool bench during sessions with poor weather. New indoor activities could increase volunteer retention and support biodiversity initiatives and community learning. Diversifying activities provided for volunteers could help them with getting more people in.

Volunteers for the site tend to be locals who hear about Lampton 360's work through the multiple sites they have a presence in. On this site, volunteers help with pond management, dead hedging, and other natural reserve habitat management. HHCV has struggled with volunteer numbers fluctuating, for instance, from 8 people in one week to 2 in another. The volunteers I had met were all young people who had signed up because it there were few barriers to access (no online accounts, training etc.).

HHCV had requested £3,000 and received £650. They believe that this might be able to cover the costing for the plywood wall, but they need to discuss the best use of this money before spending it. As of now, they have not spent the funding but will be letting us know when the funding has been spent.

By Aanchal Thapa. Based on a site visit on 11/02/2026



Image 1: Wall intended for the plywood backing. Holes between the roof and wall visible.



Image 2: Middle table where they currently do some craft, table not stable enough and would be replaced with workbench.



Image 3: Location for their intended workbench.



Image 4: Where leaks and condensation drips with a tarp to catch it.



Image 5: A sign on their volunteer break room.



d) *Sunshine of Hounslow & Ealing CIC case study 2025*

Sunshine of Hounslow and Ealing CIC received funding from the Crane Valley Community Fund Year 4 Round 1 to make improvements to their indoor polytunnel. The grant was used primarily to purchase materials for flooring, ensuring the space is more accessible by making the ground even. This area is an important hub for volunteers, offering a place to socialise and warm up during the colder months over refreshments.

The CIC has continued to grow in their efforts and volunteer numbers. As well as an increase in corporate volunteers, they now work with new groups such as West Thames College special needs pupils and refugee and asylum seekers. They are also expanding their team by introducing a paid administrative staff member to support their operations.

Sunshine of Hounslow & Ealing CIC remain committed to growing food with members of the community, including people with disabilities or those who are housebound. They provide training on all aspects of food growing and plant a wide range of seasonal fruits, vegetables

and herbs. Volunteers can take home produce, helping to reduce household food costs. Sharnjeet, founder of Sunshine of Hounslow, shared that they never buy fruit and vegetables from the supermarket as the allotment provides all the nutrition they need year round.

One challenge that the group encountered with the funding was that the cost of materials had increased after the grant was received. Their original budget covered wooden boards, plastic sheeting, screws, and other materials for the polytunnel flooring, as well as seeds and soil for the allotment. Whilst some savings were achieved- for example, they received a donation of lino and will get volunteers to help with the installation of the flooring- changes had to be made to the grant spending to reflect the higher cost of the wood. As a result, they were unable to purchase seeds and soil with the funding.



Image 1: boards purchased which will be used as base of flooring in polytunnel



Image 2: welcome sign at the entrance of the site, designed by West Thames College students

(images continued on next page)



Image 3: the beds used by groups and individuals to grow food. In the image you can see garlic and onions.



Image 4: Some of the pumpkins previously grown at the allotment.



Image 5: this marquee was donated to Sunshine of Hounslow, providing another weatherproof area for people to socialise, have refreshments, and for extra storage.



Image 6: Sharnjeet and Sophia doing some weeding on one of the beds in preparation for another group to plant bulbs

By Sophia Gregorio, based on a site visit on 09/12/2025

e) Woodlarks & Waders 2026 case study

Woodlarks & Waders, supported by Dragana Knezevic at Hillingdon Council, have had an increase in volunteer number over the past year, fuelled mostly by word of mouth, and their role as pioneer volunteers in ZSL's Spider Park re-naturalisation project in 2025. The group now has up to 25 volunteers, with 15 dedicated regulars who attend weekly, rain or shine.

As a result of their growing volunteer numbers and efficient work, Woodlarks & Waders now work across various sites along the River Pinn and Yeading Brook. Their activities include litter picking, clearing blockages in rivers, and doing maintenance work on rivers and ponds.

During Habitats & Heritage's visit, the volunteers were working on clearing a blockage in the Yeading Brook at Spider Park, Ruislip, and removing algae from the surface of a pond. They also occasionally work with other groups and organisations, for example during Habitats & Heritage's visit, the group were joined by Paul from the Uxbridge Green Gym, who was harvesting branches for hedge laying, which he does across South England.

Many volunteers noticed that members of the public often mistook them for community service workers. In order to establish a clear identity, promote their work, and create a more visible presence in the spaces they work, the group used some of their grant from the Crane Valley Community Fund to purchase branded uniforms. They were able to purchase good quality hats, jumpers, and waterproof coats at wholesale price, reducing costs. The new uniforms have significantly improved visibility and encouraged more positive interactions with passers-by, many of whom now stop to ask about the group or praise them for their work.

Woodlarks & Waders also used the grant to purchase new waders. Since the volunteers spend a lot of time in rivers and ponds, this equipment needs regular replacement, and growing volunteer numbers also means additional waders are needed so everyone can participate safely.

The group is also planning to invest in whistles to provide quick and effective ways to signal for help or to locate one another, improving overall health and safety, as volunteers are often spread across large sites or in rivers.

Volunteers emphasised the importance of social connections as well as environmental action, and refreshment breaks provide valuable time to talk with each other, as well as providing a well-deserved break from their hard work. Therefore, a portion of the grant was also used to purchase more refreshments, helping to foster socialisation.



Image of the branches gathered at Spider Park for hedging.



Image of Woodlark & Wader volunteers clearing plant cover from the pond in Spider Park, with new waders.



Image of Woodlarks & Waders volunteers clearing a blockage in the Yeading Brook at Spider Park, wearing new branded clothing.

By Sophia Gregorio, based on a site visit on 20/01/2026

f) FORCE case study 2026

The Friends of the River Crane Environment (FORCE) continue to make significant contributions to habitats and the local community across the River Crane, through biodiversity monitoring, habitat restoration, litter clearance, and community events which help to engage people with nature.

Initially, FORCE applied to the Crane Valley Community Fund to purchase equipment that would support their activities as well as individuals and other organisations in the Crane Park area, in particular the Friends of Northcote Nature Reserve (FoNNR). The funding was originally intended to cover litter picking equipment which would be given to local residents and Duke of Edinburgh students to increase litter picking efforts, water monitoring equipment

such as waders, nets and trays, an underwater camera for fish monitoring in collaboration with FoNNR (particularly to identify sea trout spawning), and printing costs for new maps to inform visitors and volunteers about the local river corridor. Monitoring activities would focus on the tidal river at the lower end of the catchment and at new restoration sites.

However, since submitting the application, there have been changes to the project and to the allocation of the funding. Litter pickers were still purchased, but the order changed from 20 standard litter pickers to a mixture of 10 standard and 3 long-handled pickers to allow for safer and easier removal of litter from the river and hard to reach areas. For water monitoring equipment, FoNNR found that their current GoPro camera was proving effective at recording fish activity. Thus, instead of purchasing a more expensive underwater camera, FORCE decided to purchase a more affordable GoPro camera as well, bringing down the overall costs on equipment. The FoNNR have to date only requested one pair of waders for their water monitoring activities, although FORCE are expecting further orders for monitoring equipment in the next month or so and have allocated £300 to this.

Moreover, in December 2025, the Crane Valley CIC secured £430,000 funding from the Greater London Authority to support the development of the Crane Valley Trail. Part of this funding covered the production of new maps for the trail, meaning FORCE did not have to print these separately. Collectively, these changes reduced FORCE's expenditure of the Crane Valley Community Fund from £2,700 to around £1,000.

With approval from Groundwork, FORCE have re-allocated the additional £1,700 to (a) making improvements at the dog dip in Kneller Gardens and (b) providing wetland plugs for the river restoration work through Crane Park. The dog dip area was created by FORCE in partnership with LGOAL, LBRuT and local Friends Groups to create a safe access points for dogs to swim in the river, whilst protecting more sensitive river habitats. Feedback from dog owners highlighted concerns over the depth of the river making it difficult for dogs to get out and the risk of dogs injuring their paws on hidden objects. To address these issues, flint gravel has been added to reduce the river depth, improve safety, and enhance the habitat quality. This work was completed on 8th February with support from The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), with £600 allocated to gravel and £400 towards TCV's costs. This has already proved to be very popular with dog owners and has had considerable coverage on social media with around 40,000 views from two Facebook posts and over 60 generally supportive comments.

The remaining funds have been used to purchase marginal river and wetland plants for Crane Park to enhance habitats for water voles and other wildlife. In January and February of 2026, FORCE- along with TCV and Habitats & Heritage volunteers- started creating a new river channel. Planting of this channel took place in March 2026 with 275 plug plants planted and 130 clumps of sedge and flags transplanted from scrapes at Crane Park, with support from TCV. Another volunteer day for marginal planting at Willow Way is being planned for April 2026.



Volunteers adding gravel to the dog dip at Kneller Gardens



Dog dip completed with gravel to reduce river depth, tried and tested by its first new user!



Sophia with TCV and Thames Water volunteers digging out a new channel in the River Crane, Crane Park

By Sophia Gregorio, based on a site visit on 12/02/2026. Images courtesy of Brittany Florence-Bennett, TCV.

g) *Countryside Volunteer Rangers- Pevensey Road case study 2026*

The Countryside Volunteer Rangers, formerly known as the Pevensey Road Green Gym Rangers, continue their weekly Monday sessions at Pevensey Road Local Nature Reserve, supported by the Lampton Countryside Rangers (LBH contractors). Their change in name is intended to represent a shared identity for all groups in Hounslow undertaking similar tasks with the Lampton Rangers. The advantages of using a single name also helps reduce future costs on shared materials such as flyers and branded clothing. The groups' activities focus on habitat management across the reserve, ranging from litter picking and pond clearance to caring for the orchard at the site. As well as managing these spaces for wildlife, the group learn new skills at the sessions, such as coppicing and other practical conservation practices. They also enjoy hot drinks and lots of homemade baked goods at each session, creating a welcoming and social atmosphere. The group now get around 15 to 20 regular volunteers, with overall volunteer numbers having grown to around 40.

With support from the Lampton Countryside Rangers team, the group applied for a grant of £3,000 from the Crane Valley Community Fund. The grant initially would have been used to purchase improved seating for volunteers, additional PPE such as waders and gloves, interpretation boards and signage to inform the public about the group and the reserve's habitats, and equipment to support volunteer welfare including gazebos and a table. However, due to the large number of applications to the Community Fund this year, the grant amount had to be reduced and they received £650. This required the group to re-evaluate their spending priorities.

With the funding received, the Pevensey Countryside Volunteer Rangers purchased signage and an interpretation board to reflect their updated name and provide information on some of the habitats and wildlife found at Pevensey Road Local Nature Reserve. The interpretation board features the same design used across the Crane Valley for consistency and clear branding. Instead of purchasing new benches, the Rangers are looking to source some logs for free to act as seating areas. They are also exploring options to purchase additional PPE within their budget, but have not yet made this purchase.



One of the new interpretation board highlighting the Pevensey ponds habitat. This design is used throughout the Crane Valley.



Image of new sign for the Conservation Volunteer Rangers

By Sophia Gregorio, based on a site visit on 16/02/2026

h) Friends of Meadway Orchard case study 2026

The Friends of Meadway Orchard, which is now supported by Let's Go Outside and Learn (LGOAL), continue to make biodiversity enhancements to Meadway Orchard in Twickenham. They also work in other surrounding greenspaces, such as Mereway Nature Park and Mill Road, with the aim to increase habitat connectivity and biodiversity. Some of their work in these areas includes hedge planting, tree coppicing, and dead hedging.

The group provide a safe, inclusive environment for local communities. Their volunteers have contributed an impressive 2,592 volunteer hours in 2025. As well as making improvements that benefit wildlife, the Friends of Meadway Orchard volunteers also gain a lot of new skills, from practical nature conservation management to species identification and food growing. The group has also organised two community workshops in 2025.

Some of the groups' more recent improvements to the orchard include a large stag beetle loggery made from local dead wood, where some candle snuff fungi was discovered, and a hand-dug pond. The pond, created in consultation with Richmond Council's Ecologist, has been fenced off with wooden panels and has provided a new wildlife habitat. Local logs have been added around and within the pond, creating natural entry and exit points for wildlife.

The group used their latest grant from the Crane Valley Community Fund to purchase and install a notice board. This provides information on the groups' activities, gives details about upcoming events, and educates passers-by on the different management techniques taking place throughout the seasons, which can sometimes be misunderstood, such as leaving unmown patches of grass, i.e. No mow May. The Friends hope that the new board will assist them with the recruitment of new members and encourage the local community to take greater interest in nature conservation. In preparation for the installation of the sign, the volunteers spent weeks clearing away brambles and overgrown plants to make space for the notice board.

By Sophia Gregorio, based on a site visit on 6 Feb 2026. With thanks to Mary Wayne, Friends of Yeading Walk, for the images.



Stag beetle loggery at Meadway Orchard



Candle snuff fungi found in the stag beetle loggery



New pond in Meadway Orchard, dug by hand, with logs from surrounding areas



Meadway Orchard, featuring new paths, seating, bug hotel and enclosed pond



Area cleared for new sign to go in

By Sophia Gregorio, based on a site visit on 10/12/2025

i) Crane Park Island volunteers case study 2026

The Crane Park Island volunteers, managed by London Wildlife Trust, have continued their dedicated work to enhance Crane Park Island's habitats- particularly for the thriving water vole population, released in 2024. Their recent work includes extensive clearance of overhanging branches, shrubs, and overgrown sedge along the riverbanks and ponds, and planting of marginal plants that are known to be favoured by water voles. The logs and branches that were removed have been repurposed into dead hedges and habitat piles, ensuring that these local materials do not go to waste.

The groups' volunteer numbers have grown over the past year, with around 15 regular volunteers on weekends and 8 on weekdays. In addition to this core volunteer group, occasional volunteer numbers have grown significantly. The wider community also plays an

active role in caring for the island, for example by recently designing and installing signage which encourages responsible dog walking to keep wildlife safe. More recently, the London Wildlife Trust have also started welcoming primary schools twice a week for outdoor learning, as well as corporate groups who support with practical conservation tasks.

Following the completion of the improved paths on the island, funded by the previous round of the Crane Valley Community Fund, the group has noticed an increase in footfall on the island, in particular from families, older people and mobility scooter or wheelchair users. In response, the Crane Park Island volunteers are using this years' Community Fund to provide more seating for visitors. The grant has allowed the group to purchase metal gabions, stones and wood to create secure, sturdy seating throughout the island. These structures also function as hibernacula for insects and amphibians, contributing to habitat diversity.

Materials for the seating and wood to finish off tapping rails on the main path make up the bulk of the grant; the rest was budgeted for equipment, such as forks, safety spectacles, knee protectors and waders for the growing group of volunteers.

The group has also used the grant to make some wooden bird boxes, as the Woodcrete of ones used by great tits and blue tits are not suitable for some of the larger birds seen on the island. As well as replacing damaged fronts on 6 of the Woodcrete boxes, volunteers have installed 2 tawny owl boxes, 2 kestrel boxes, and 2 mallard duck boxes, with the hope that these birds will nest on the island. The pulley equipment to install the bird boxes was purchased out of saved funds.

By repurposing some equipment, the group has been able to keep costs down. For example, some of the wood for the new seating was salvaged from leftover wooden pavers in the previous project. The labour to make the new wooden bird boxes was donated by volunteers skilled as carpenters. The group was thinking of spending some of the small amount of spare money from the grant on more gravel for the main path, but Habitats & Heritage has donated surplus gravel from their site, allowing money to be redirected elsewhere.

Crane Park Island continues to flourish as a haven for wildlife. As well as water voles, species such as muntjac deer, frogs and toads, kingfishers, and a range of fish species thrive at the site. To support this growing biodiversity even further, the volunteers are looking to focus their efforts on improving one of the ponds in the centre of the island in future.



New paths in Crane Park Island, funded by the previous Crane Valley Community Fund.



New gabions installed as seating on the island. The bricks were sourced locally and the wooden bench on top still needs to be secured.



Gabion for single seat, with stones. The wooden bench still needs to be secured



Volunteer Tina Cruise posing with mallard duck box



Volunteer Tina Cruise with tawny owl bird box



Volunteers putting up a tawny owl bird box on Crane Park Island

Sophia Gregorio, based on a site visit on 19/02/2026

j) Creative Spaces London case study 2026

For Year 4, Round 2 of the Crane Valley Community Fund, Creative Spaces London continued to deliver intergenerational and accessible workshops for the local community in Hounslow. The funding was used to purchase workshop materials, hire venues, and promote the events, and to cover staff time to lead and manage the activities.

The workshops focussed on partnerships with other organisations, such as Let's Go Outside And Learn (LGOAL). Creative Spaces London has built a strong, long-standing group of community members, which they recognise as being fundamental to the success of their events. They noted that it can be challenging when community projects are funded without

initial or built-in engagement, whereas having an existing relationship with an established community means the workshops are tailored to residents' needs and interests, boosting attendance.

One of the most popular workshops was a wreath making session delivered with LGOAL at Cranford Community College. This activity attracted a diverse group of participants, including people who do not celebrate Christmas and instead gifted their wreaths to neighbours. Most of the wreath making materials were responsibly sourced from nearby Avenue Park, with permission from the Council, to strengthen participants' connection with nature. Any leftover materials were returned to the park to remind people of the natural cycle of decomposition and to minimise waste.

Other workshops include macramé, bird feeder making, and moss plant potting. These were all designed to foster hands-on connections with nature. Another exciting activity involved a visit to Chiswick House & Gardens, where participants were able to work on the vegetable patch. This partnership will now continue once a month, a legacy made possible by the Crane Valley Community Fund, as the funding enabled this visit to happen.

Most workshops took place at the Brabazon Centre and in Avenue Park. The numbers of attendees varied from 20 at the wreath making session, to between 7 and 10 participants at smaller workshops, since the space doesn't allow for more than 12 people. Participants included young children and adults aged 25 to 70+, with women making up the majority. This wide age range is testament to Creative Spaces London's efforts in making sessions welcoming and inclusive to people of all ages, and providing a support network for mothers and women in the community.

Creative Spaces London found the application to the community fund easy and user-friendly. They shared that they felt supported throughout the application and that the process was accessible, even for applicants with language barriers- an important factor in ensuring that a diverse range of community groups can apply.

Workshops

12th Nov - **Bulb Lasagnes** - planting bulbs in pots for spring display

26 Nov- **clearing the community centre garden**

12th Dec - **Community walk and foliage collection** for Christmas wreath from park (with LGOAL) 14th Dec - **Christmas wreath workshop**- creating wreaths with local foliage to be shared with neighbours for those who do not celebrate Christmas

21st Jan - **Bird feeders** from natural materials like leaves and jute

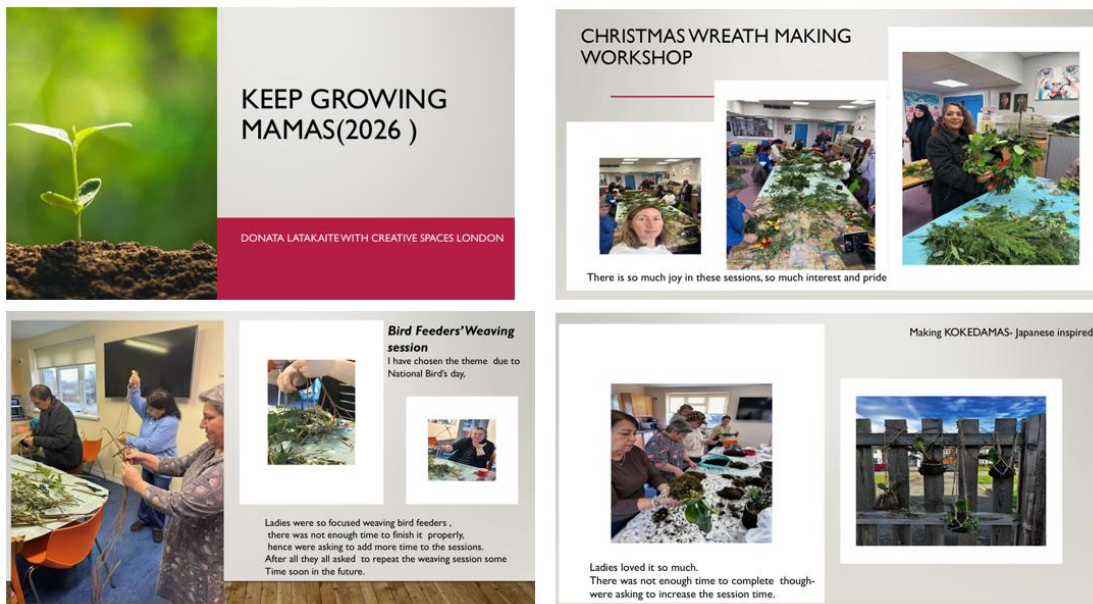
4th Feb - **kokedama making workshop**

25th Feb -**seed sewing** (aubergines and chillies)

04th March - **Seed sewing and decorative outdoor dream catchers** (tomatoes)

25th March **Chiswick house gardens** community garden workshop

1st April visit to **Osterley house gardens** tour



Images: Creative Spaces London

By Sophia Gregorio, based on a meeting on 20/1/2026.

k) Gurseva case study 2026

Gurseva continues to champion health and wellbeing, poverty prevention, and environmental improvement through its volunteer activities. The organisation provides support to residents experiencing hardship across London and in 2025 alone, they gave out 2,600 food parcels and 4,860 hot meals to the homeless and people on low income.

Gurseva's tree planting activities have become increasingly popular, with 141 trees having been planted in 2025. This is supported by Lampton Greenspace contractors who help identify suitable planting locations and transport the trees to site. Following successful corporate volunteering days with companies like Microsoft and British Airways last year, interest from other companies has continued to grow- often from companies with limited or no volunteering budgets. To meet this demand and encourage more people to connect with nature, Gurseva used the Crane Valley Community Fund to purchase new pruning and planting tools, litter picking equipment, and to produce promotional materials, such as posters and improvements to their website. These resources benefit both corporate teams and Gurseva's own volunteers. Over the last planting season, Gurseva hosted 3 corporate volunteer groups, the most recent being Johnson Service Group PLC at Bedfont Lakes Southside in March.

The grant did not cover the cost of the trees themselves as they are really expensive. Gurseva managed to secure other funding to support tree purchases, such as a grant from British Airways. In future, they hope to apply to larger funding bids to sustain and expand their tree planting efforts and are also encouraging companies that they've hosted at volunteer days to give donations towards expenses.



Sophia (H&H) and Satinder (Gurseva) tree planting at Bedfont Lakes, March 2026

1) Bedfont Lakes Conservation Volunteers Case Study 2026

The Bedfont Lakes Conservation Volunteers (BLCV) was formed in 2008 working to support wildlife conservation and park management as guided by Lampton 360. The site is impressive in size and has also been recognised as a site of metropolitan importance for nature conservation.

The volunteer group meets up every three weeks and is of a considerable size. I had met individuals who have been attending for varying periods, some helping for 10 years, some for 1, but all very local. When I visited, we were ‘shedding’ trees, a word that Andrew Peake, the Senior Countryside Ranger from Lampton 360 running the sessions, had shared with us among others in his wealth of wildlife knowledge. I heard from the volunteers that they do a range of activities like community litter picks, orchard pruning, and pressing apples. They have built a community around nature conservation but also community engagement events.

Notwithstanding their presence and duration of it, the group often use tools from other groups on the site. The lack of a tool storage means that their tool purchases often get used, and perhaps poorly maintained or misplaced, by other groups like Volunteers in Parks or corporate groups hosted by Lampton 360. With their grant they have ordered new tools like kneelers, a kneeler chair, and are waiting for the delivery of their small tool shed to home their new and old tools. With this funding, it eases the weight on the session leaders to check tool conditions, bring tools from other sites, and ensure that volunteers are not limited in ambition with the security of having their own tools.



Images left to right:

Meet up point for the group and a site they share with the local animal rescue centre.

A kneeler that can be converted to a seat as purchased with the grant.

A volunteer at work cutting down a branch.

Two volunteers cutting up a felled tree.

By Aanchal Thapa, based on a site visit on 28/02/2026