

Editorial

Clean-ups during September and November were very successful. With the help of the group's new waders we managed to pull out of the river lots of old pieces of annoying waste including a broken motorbike dumped in the Long Meadows a while ago.

During October's clean-up between Watersplash Close and Villiers Road an enthusiastic group of students from Kingston University joined the task, allowing us to clear the path along the river in record time. We hope to see more students involved in future activities.

Once more, thank you to all the volunteers who have contributed with their valuable time and effort to keep the Hogsmill Valley Walk free of litter and general waste. A task that without your support, the council would have found difficult to achieve.

Japanese Knotweed

Seven enthusiastic volunteers and two council officers are being trained as professional qualified chemical sprayers, as part of the Hogsmill Action Group's determination to support the Council in controlling Japanese Knotweed. The training is part of a Thames Water and Kingston Council project to control this exotic invasive weed along the Hogsmill.

The control of Japanese Knotweed is not an easy task and could take up to three years of systematic spraying (Spring and Autumn) until the plant has been eradicated from a specific site. The chemical we will be using is one of the less harmful weed killers available and applications will be made in a responsible, localised and safe manner.



Plastic bags everywhere

Londoners use at least 1.6 billion of shopping bags per year. Plastic bags are often perceived to cause great environmental problems despite the fact that they only make up a small percentage of the total litter dropped. They can have a disproportionate impact on rivers and marine wildlife compared with other types of litter. The Hogsmill River, which carries street litter (including plastic bags) that has been washed out by rain, drains into the Thames, which ultimately ends in the sea. Up to a million sea birds and over 100,000 sea animals (including whales, seals and turtles) are thought to be killed or injured each year from accidentally ingesting or becoming entangled in plastic, much of which is from plastic bags.

London Councils are looking into different ways of dealing with the general problem of throwaway bags (TOS), if you want to learn more, visit www.londoncouncils.gov.uk. However, this problem does not only require governmental action, it requires a change of attitudes in each of us. So do not wait for others to take action, get hold of a couple of reusable bags, carry them with you all the time and reject plastic bags whenever if possible.



What is on for this autumn?

25 November @ 10:30am

Clean up day along Elmbridge Meadows.

We will meet at the junction of Raeburn Avenue with Elmbridge Avenue at 10:30 am. Materials and refreshments will be provided.

8 December @ 10:30

Christmas Festivity

This year has seen lots of positive actions around the sustainable use of our local resources. Groups such as the Sustainable Gardening Kingston Permaculture and Compost Mentors are gaining high profile in the Community. In order to celebrate this success and share knowledge and experiences among groups with similar aims, we will be opening the doors of HAGs Christmas Celebration to members of these groups as well as members of Friends of the Hogsmill Group and general residents interested in getting involved.

We will be meeting at Kingston United Reform Church, Eden Street, Kingston, KT1 1HZ. This is a great opportunity to learn about one another projects and actions while sharing a glass of mulled wine and mince pies. RSVP to carlos.queremel@rbk.kingston.gov.uk or 0208 547 5347.

Strategies for Trees and Allotment out for consultation

The drafts strategies for Trees and allotments are available from 06 November for four weeks. You can find them in local libraries and at Guildhall 2 Reception desks, or online using the following link

www.kingston.gov.uk/green_spaces_strategy.htm

If you would like to be kept up to date with regular news and information on the Hogsmill, or have any comments or suggestions, please contact the Environmental Services Customer Care Team on 020 8547 5929, email environment@rbk.kingston.gov.uk or write to the address opposite.

Urban paradise for wildlife in potential danger

There often seems little harm in solving parking problems by paving over our front gardens. But extra hard surfaces can have a surprising impact on the wider environment. Twelve square miles of front gardens are now under paving in London alone. This is the equivalent to 22 Hyde Parks. Clearly there are less gardens for wildlife and enjoyment as well as greater potential of flash flooding. While gardens can soak up rain, paving, tarmac and concrete are less porous and increase the amount of rainwater that runs off by as much as 50 per cent. This additional water usually flows into street drains, which can't always cope with the thousands of extra litres in a storm. The excess can run back into front drives potentially causing the house to flood or could contribute to flooding in other parts of the town.



Well designed front gardens can have wide range of positive benefits such as: provide screening and privacy, creating a green oasis for enjoyment and contributing to support and enhance local biodiversity. Front gardens also contribute to regulate local temperature as less vegetation tends to exacerbate extreme temperatures. Finally, there is evidence that if lots of homeowners along a single street pave over their gardens, then the average house price drops.

If you do decide that you need to park outside your house, consider ways to keep the front garden green and reduce the impact paving has on the environment. Where paving is needed, try permeable materials that allow rain water to soak through.



Service Director (Environment & Sustainability)
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
Guildhall 2
Kingston upon Thames
Surrey KT1 1EU



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Printed on recycled paper

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Published November 2007

