



The Hogsmill News

Winter 2005/06

Editorial

Since 2002 this newsletter has been an important communication tool between Kingston Council and an invaluable group of volunteers around the Hogsmill River. Our aim is to provide information about what is happening in this natural area in order to facilitate and encourage the use and enjoyment of open public spaces.

We are encouraging members of the Hogsmill Action Group (HAG) and the general public to use this newsletter to help us raise the profile of this precious resource.

To aid us in raising the profile you could send us ideas and articles to include in the newsletter and spread the voice by motivating friends and neighbours to take an active role in caring for the Hogsmill, or even just invite them to enjoy a nice and relaxing walk along the river. We still have plenty of maps of the Hogsmill Valley Walk, please contact us if you require one.

Hogsmill Valley Walk Strategy

You may remember that we produced a Hogsmill Valley Walk Strategy in 2002. We are in the process of reviewing this strategy, bringing it up to date to allow us to highlight developments in the walk over the past three years and to identify areas for future work. We hope to publish a revised strategy in the spring of 2006 providing possible action points for the next three years.

We are carrying out a consultation to support this review from Monday 12th December to Thursday 9th February 2006. We'd like to know what you think. The consultation document is available online at www.kingston.gov.uk and at local libraries. If you would like us to send a copy to you please contact us using the details overleaf.

Knollmead Clean-up 16th September

On 16th September, more than a year since we last met for a clean-up, a group of enthusiastic neighbours of the Hogsmill River got together for some litter picking along the Knollmead section of the river. The activity was also an opportunity for our new Environment Community Officer, Carlos Queremel, to meet with members of the group and explore ways to continue developing activities with the HAG.

Outputs of the meeting were very useful and informative. The group identified the need for having an action plan of practical activities along the river organised by the Council. They also emphasised the great value of the social side of activities.

Finally, as a way of improving and making communication channels more efficient, the group agreed on the idea of developing a sort of communication network.



Consultation Results

With the aim of exploring views and ideas in relation to priorities and ways of how to develop the HAG, a questionnaire was sent to everybody that has been involved in previous HAG activities.

When asking about the challenges the HAG has gone through so far, answers were concentrated around ensuring the Hogsmill River stays clean, keeping the enthusiasm of the volunteers, and the temporary loss of a council officer to lead the group.

In relation to the priorities of the group, answers concentrated on increasing awareness of the existence of the walk, gaining more volunteers and improving some of the riverside walks. Of the respondents, 74% think that the group could benefit from some sort of communication network.

We thank all those who took the time to fill out the questionnaire and return it to us. Inputs have been of great value in the development of a strategic action plan for the HAG.

What's On?

Saturday 18th February

Clean up Day between Watersplash Close and Villiers Road.

We will be meeting at Watersplash Close at 10:30 am. Bags, gloves, litter pickers and other materials will be provided. We will also provide tea, coffee and refreshments, feel free to bring something to share.

Sunday 2nd April

Clean up Day along Elmbridge Meadows

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

And for the rest of 2006...

April

Spring colour discovery photograph competition, Rose Walk

June

Hogsmill Party

July

Clean up - Worcester Park Road, Tolworth Court Farm Fields LNR

August

Volunteers Guide Walks

October

Clean up - Lower Marsh Lane, Berrylands

December

Christmas Party

This Season look out for Blackthorn

Blackthorn is the first hedgerow shrub to flower in the spring

In early spring, the blackthorn bushes are white with blossom. The flowers appear on the black spiny branches before the new leaves. The fruits of the blackthorn are called sloes, which appear on the branches in the autumn. The sloes look like small blue-grey plums which are very bitter to eat. The latin name for blackthorn is *Prunus spinosa* Prunus is the general name for trees and shrubs of the plum family.

Sloes can be used to flavour gin. This is done by packing a bottle with sloes and pouring gin over the top so all the sloes are immersed. After about 6-9 months the gin will have turned beautiful purple colour. It will be ready in time for a refreshing alcoholic drink, when mixed with soda or tonic, during those long summer evenings. The gin soaked sloes can then be set in bitter dark chocolate for an extra treat.

You will see a lot of blackthorn growing in the fields along the Hogsmill River. You can pick the sloes, if you wish. Remember to give them a good wash even though they are going to be steeped in alcohol!



A Website for the Hogsmill!

A new website is currently being developed which will provide free web space for community groups. The website (provided by RBK) will be available in the New Year, and will allow groups to register for free web space, and build their own site.

This is a further development of an existing product already being used by www.EssexOnline.gov.uk. The site allows groups to create a website with a few clicks of the mouse, to share latest news, photographs, create a discussion forum, and much more! It provides a simple and easy-to-use platform for increasing communication across the group, and for others who are interested, to find out what's going on, using the Events Calendar. Documents, such as meeting minutes and agendas, can also be easily shared.

There is no need for you to be very technical as the site has been designed to be intuitive and easy to use! RBK will be working with Surrey e-Partnership to engage local groups early next year.

For more information, please contact project manager Anna Smith, anna.smith@rbk.kingston.gov.uk

Enjoy your end of the year celebrations!

Why don't you look at the size of your ecological footprint during the Christmas period, perhaps you could write a New Year pledge to reduce it?

If you have not seen the leaflet about Ecological Footprints, please contact us or download it from our website www.kingston.gov.uk/sustainable_development.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 Community Environment Officer on 020 8547 5347, email environment@rbk.kingston.gov.uk or write to the address opposite.



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