



CRANE VALLEY

STORY GUIDE

A HOW TO GUIDE FOR ENGAGING
WITH THE CRANE VALLEY STORY



ABOUT THE STORY GUIDE

Hello & welcome to the Crane Valley Story Guide.

Thanks for stopping by!

We are so proud of the work that is happening in the Crane Valley. Since 2011 when the river came close to collapse, we have seen an enormous amount of progress. Through the dedication and collaboration of partners up and down the river catchment we have done what once felt impossible and brought back to life this once forgotten and heavily polluted river. 2024 even saw the reintroduction of water voles!

While there's lots to celebrate, there's also lots still to do. Rivers and river management are a complicated business. They are eco-systems that have multiple, interconnected elements which makes it hard to talk about simply. And yet, if we are to engage people's hearts, minds and ultimately change their behaviour when it comes to our rivers, we need to find a way of telling a clear compelling story that cuts through the complexity and moves people to action.

To create the change we want to see in the valley we need stories that speak to people's hearts and hands, as well as their clever heads.

We have been working with the good folks at Make Work Play to help us unearth the story that sits at the heart of the work we do in the Crane Valley. A story that helps local people fall in love with the valley and its rivers. A story that positions the Crane Valley as a place to go, be and enjoy in the hearts and minds of those who live nearby. A story that ties together the rich, varied work we do as partners. A story that acts as an anchor for what we do and don't do.

This document is designed as a how-to guide for playing with the Crane Valley Story. A story is only powerful if it is told and retold and retold again. Which is what we are inviting you to do!

On the next pages we outline how you can take the Crane Valley Story and use it as a springboard to tell your story - whether you're a volunteer, or a hydrologist, or you work with community groups, or Thames Water or a council.....the list goes on.... this guide is designed to help you tell stories of your work in the Valley that have a distinctly Crane flavour.

**THE MORE CRANE VALLEY STORIES WE TELL, THE STRONGER OUR MOVEMENT BECOMES
AND THE GREATER OUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT CAN BE.
SO BUCKLE UP FOLKS!
WE'RE GOING ON A STORY ADVENTURE!**

INDEX

CHAPTER 1: SETTING THE SCENE

CHAPTER 2: THE CRANE VALLEY STORY

CHAPTER 3: THE SHIFTS

CHAPTER 4: LIVING THE STORY





CHAPTER 1:

SETTING THE SCENE

THIS CHAPTER SETS THE SCENE
WITH AN OVERVIEW OF THE CRANE VALLEY
& THE PARTNERSHIPS THAT EXIST TO PROTECT IT.
WE ALSO EXPLORE THE POWER OF STORIES
TO CHANGE HEARTS AND MINDS.

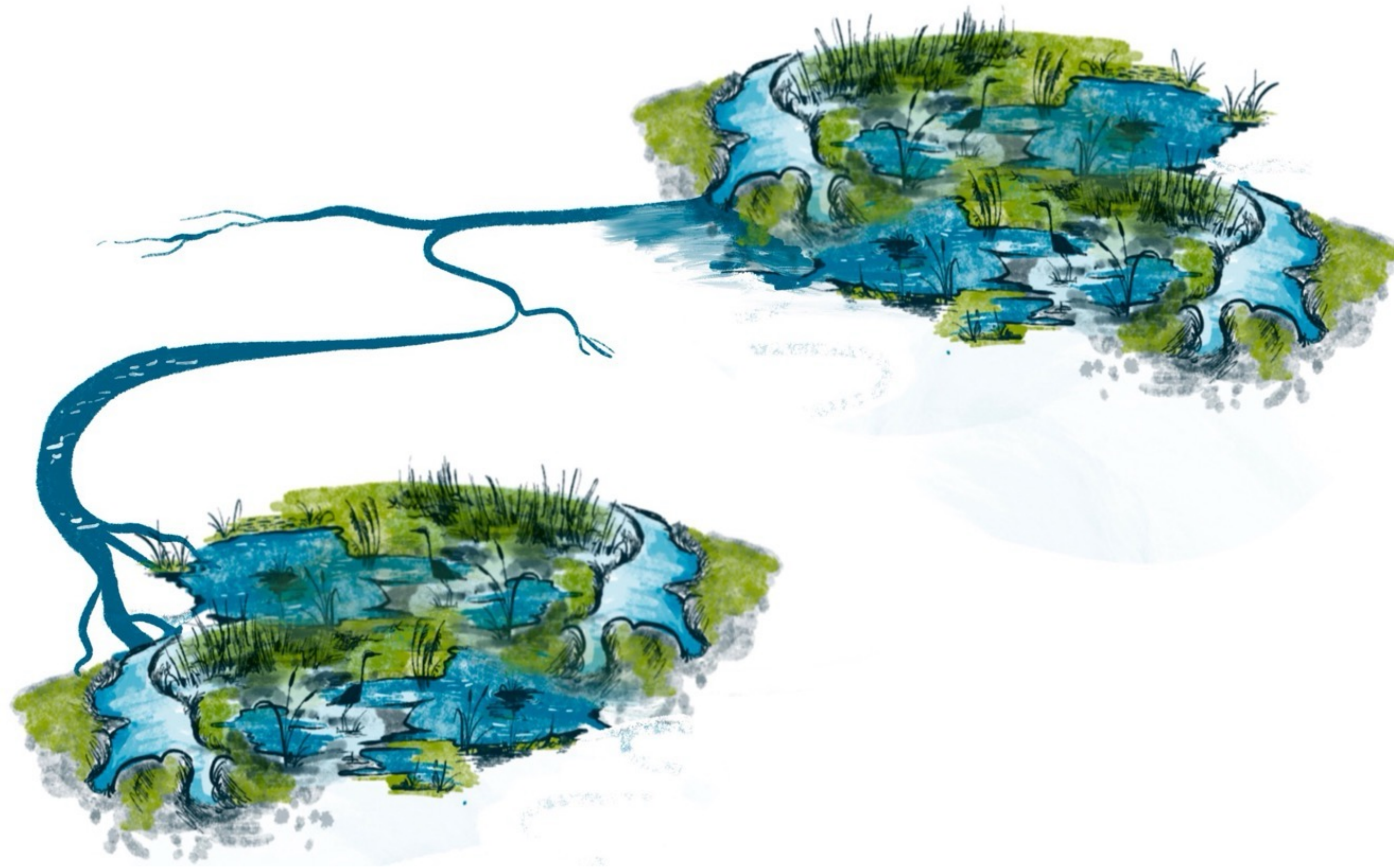
ABOUT THE CRANE VALLEY

The Crane Valley is home to around 650,000 people from a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds and ethnicities. Through the valley runs over 65km of river and surrounding green space. The valley is home to a number of water courses but gets its name from the River Crane, a tributary of the Thames that begins as the Yeading Brook near Headstone Manor in Harrow and runs down to the River Thames in Isleworth.

The Crane Valley Partnership (CVP) was created in 2005 to bring the many groups and organisations with an interest in the river together. It includes the main landowners in the valley (five London borough councils and Heathrow Airport) along with the Environment Agency, Thames Water, third sector organisations and community groups. The Partnership has been steadily improving the health of the river and green spaces around it, so much so that in 2020 it was selected by Thames Water to be the first urban Smarter Water Catchment and awarded £3 million of funding.

In 2011, a severe pollution incident wiped out a 7 mile stretch of the river and all life within it. Yet, today, the river is home to 17 species of fish, kingfishers, egrets, newly released water voles, and CVP has an ambition to reach good ecological status by 2030. This remarkable recovery has been made possible by collaborative partnership working which has provided the connective tissue to enable this change.





There are over 70 community groups working in the valley, over 100 collaborative improvement projects, 10 years worth of Citizen Crane - a citizen science water quality monitoring project, all of which have contributed to the restoration of this once neglected river.



THE POWER OF STORY

As humans we have been telling stories around the campfire for millennia.
They are what has ensured our survival as a species - tales of caution
and hope passed down from generation to generation.



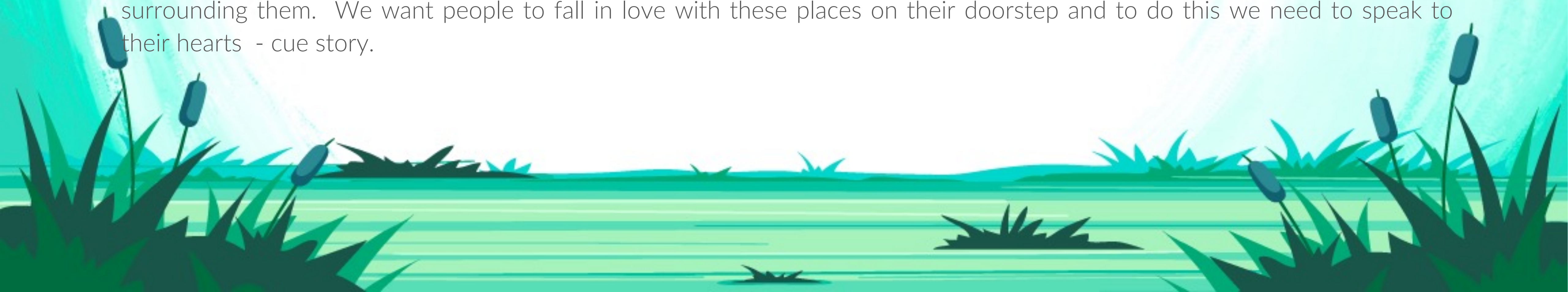
THE POWER OF STORY

We can think of stories as being the operating systems that govern how we live. If we change the story, we can change the world. Part of the power of stories lies in their ability to expand our sense of what's possible. They help us imagine a better future and in the act of imagining we take the first step in bringing something new into being.

Stories engage people's heads, hearts and hands and can move people to action in a way that facts, figures and statistics can't. They speak to us in an older, more human way and cut through the noise in a world of information overload.

For organisations and partnerships, when we get clear on our story, we get clear on our reason for being. A strong story can act as a decision making filter for everything we do and crucially, don't do. A powerful story will help us, as diverse partners, to create a common purpose and a sense that we're pulling in the same direction.

When it comes to the Crane Valley, we are on a mission to protect and regenerate its watercourses and the green spaces surrounding them. We want people to fall in love with these places on their doorstep and to do this we need to speak to their hearts - cue story.

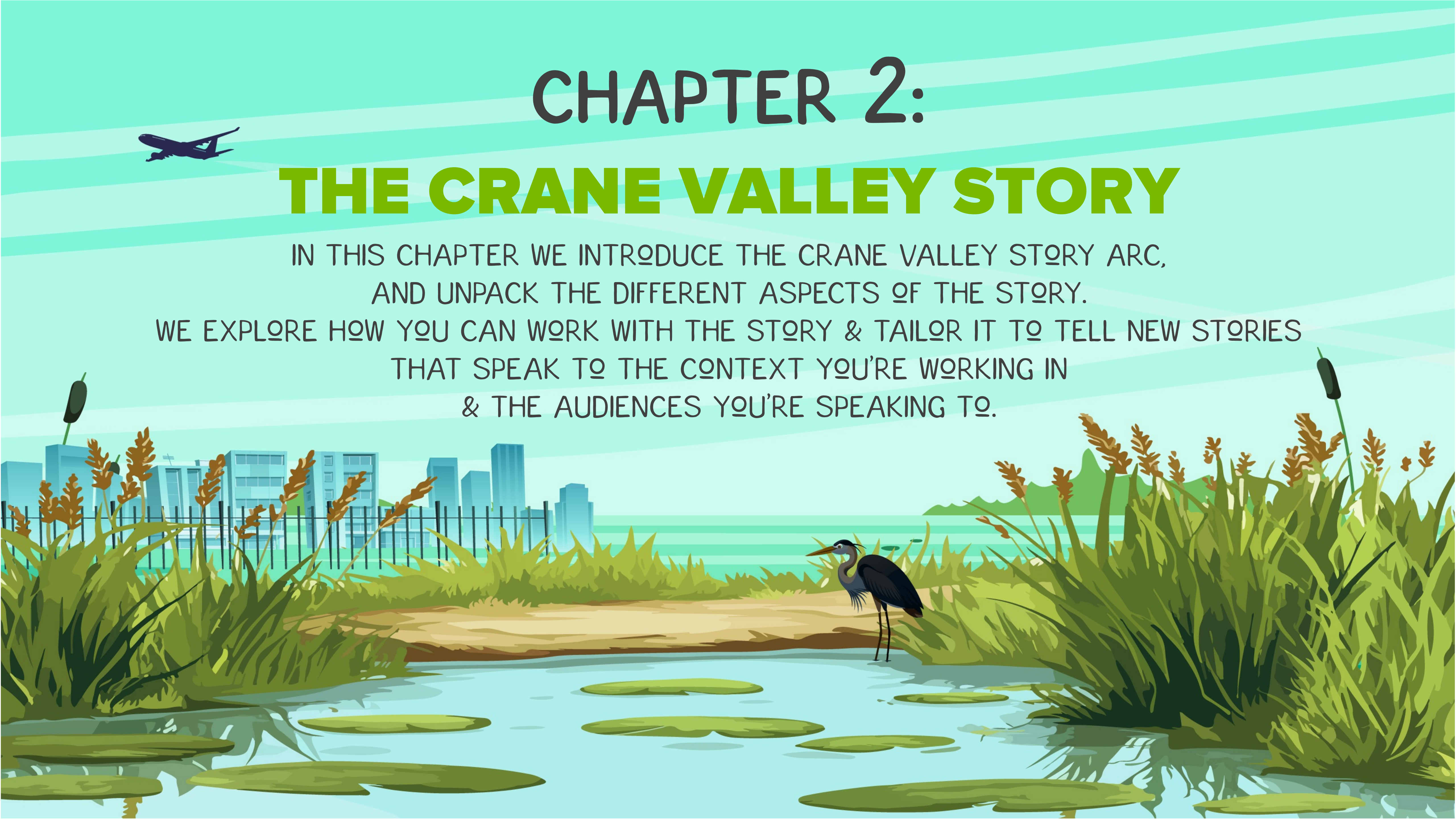


CHAPTER 2:

THE CRANE VALLEY STORY

IN THIS CHAPTER WE INTRODUCE THE CRANE VALLEY STORY ARC,
AND UNPACK THE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE STORY.

WE EXPLORE HOW YOU CAN WORK WITH THE STORY & TAILOR IT TO TELL NEW STORIES
THAT SPEAK TO THE CONTEXT YOU'RE WORKING IN
& THE AUDIENCES YOU'RE SPEAKING TO.





A RIVER RUNS THROUGH US

HERO

The communities that love and care for the river and its open spaces

GIFT

Beautiful spaces that connect

MENTOR

The River: A reminder of our interdependence

MONSTER

Disconnection



BETTER WORLD

A world where the rivers of the Crane Valley are well known, protected, loved and thriving.

There is a bustling Crane Valley Trail, beautiful spaces where people can connect with themselves, each other and the world around them. Wildlife is abundant and volunteers are in plentiful supply.

Partners are delighted by what they have achieved together.



BROKEN WORLD

A world of isolation and disconnection.

Where people are separate from each other and nature. Where many West Londoners don't even know the river exists and this once valuable river lies disjointed and unloved.



MORAL

The river is the thread that connects people, places, habitats and wildlife

VALUES

Resilience, Positivity, Beauty and Collaboration,

YOUR ROLE

BEAUTY MAKING

Creating beautiful, connected spaces
Where people and wildlife can gather

CONNECTING

Making connections and removing the barriers to connection

STORY TELLING

Collecting and sharing the stories of the Crane Valley

AMPLIFYING

Giving a platform to and highlighting the things that are going on in the valley so people can find each other

A RIVER RUNS THROUGH US

A STORY ABOUT CONNECTION

At the centre of the story is our moral - the river is a thread that connects people with their natural selves, with each other, with places and with nature. The river also connects animals, plant life and eco-systems. Connection has been at the heart of what has made our work in the Crane Valley so successful to date and now it is at the heart of our story too.

In our story, the broken world is one where people are isolated from each other and disconnected from nature. A world where the river lies unloved, disconnected and polluted.

There is also a better world - a vision for “the more beautiful world our hearts know is possible” to use the words of Charles Eisenstein. In this world, the river is thriving. It is bursting with life and bustling with people who love and care for the spaces alongside the river. The river itself is flowing more naturally and only floods where it is welcomed. Where it was once impossible to walk or cycle the length river, we envision a well loved and well used Crane Valley River Path.



A STORY OF CONNECTION

THIS IS A STORY ABOUT CONNECTION

The monster in this story - the thing that is stopping us from realising the better world we seek - is disconnection. Disconnection from nature, from each other and from ourselves, the disconnection between the many and varied organisations that can have a role in managing the river and its open spaces, and the disconnection that exists in and alongside the river itself.

But fear not, our hero is here to slay the monster. It's actually a collection of heroes - those individuals, communities and organisations that love and care for the river. And they are lucky enough to have a mentor - the river itself - who reminds them of their interdependence, resilience and power. The gifts that the river gives our heroes are beautiful, spaces that connect people to themselves, each other and the natural world.

The story is underpinned by a set of values - Resilience, Positivity, Beauty and Collaboration - which ideally can be felt through everything we do in the valley.



YOUR ROLE

CONNECTING | STORY TELLING | BEAUTY MAKING | AMPLIFYING

CONNECTING

As a Partnership, our most important role is to create connection and remove the barriers to connection. This works on a number of levels. Creating connection between ourselves as partners and enabling effective collaboration. Creating spaces along the river where people can connect to each other and with nature - opportunities for people to dwell and find out about the natural world. Connecting the river so it can flow freely, sorting out the challenges around misconnection and allowing the river to connect the places along the valley through the Crane Valley River Path.

STORY TELLING & AMPLIFYING

Another key role of the Partnership is to tell the stories of the amazing work that is going on in the valley. Giving those heroes who are caring for and protecting the river and its green spaces a platform to talk about their work, and amplify the difference they are making.

BEAUTY MAKING

Creating beautiful spaces where people and wildlife can dwell and gather is another important role that the Partnership plays.

Spaces that are free of litter, that feel loved and care for and that people want to spend time in.

Spaces where people can connect with each other and nature.

Spaces where wildlife can thrive.

WORKING WITH THE STORY ARC

You can think of the story arc as being a springboard. It offers an overarching story from which hundreds of different stories can be told. It's designed to be played with, hacked, told and retold in a multitude of different ways but to allow for all these retellings to have a distinctly Crane Valley flavour.

With that in mind there are some things in the story arch that can be flexed and some things that remain fixed - namely the moral, the monster and the values.

To make the stories we tell feel like they are part of a larger whole, they need to resolve to our moral:

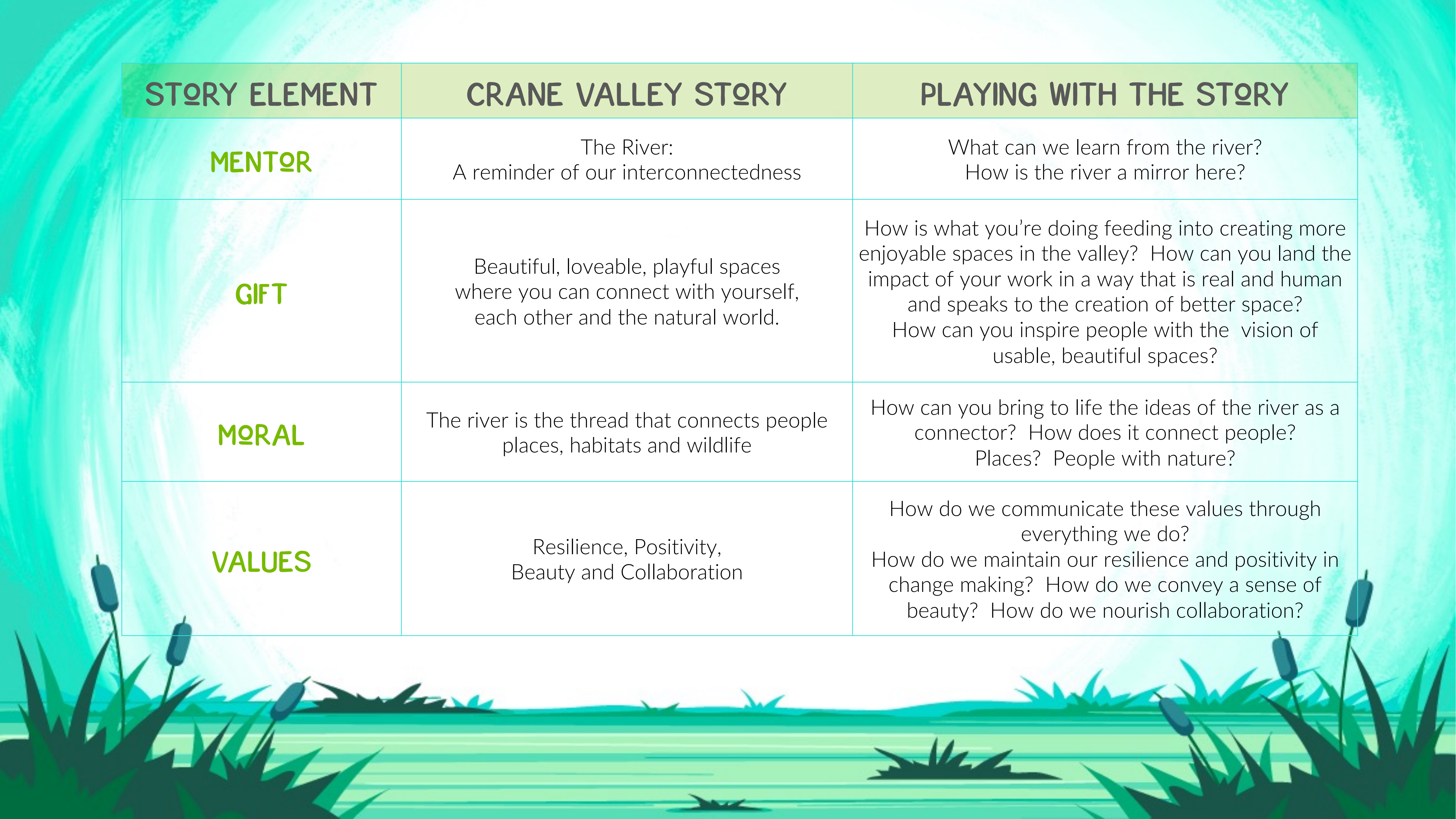
**THE RIVER IS THE THREAD THAT CONNECTS PEOPLE
PLACES, HABITATS AND WILDLIFE**

How we do this will differ from story to story, whether it's a report, a press release, a social media post, an event, how an experience comes to life, this is the central story line. This can act as an anchor for what we do and, importantly, don't do. It can be a strategic decision making filter.

**On the next page are some question prompts to help you think through how you can play
with the story to tell the stories of your work in the Crane Valley.**

WORKING WITH THE STORY MAP

STORY ELEMENT	CRANE VALLEY STORY	PLAYING WITH THE STORY
BROKEN WORLD	A world of isolation and disconnection. Where people are separate from each other and nature. Where many West Londoners don't even know the river exists and this once great river lies disjointed and unloved	Paint the picture of the broken world in your context. How is disconnection showing up? What is keeping people disconnected from the river and from each other? Where is there a lack of flow?
BETTERWORLD	A world where the river is rediscovered, protected, loved and thriving. There is a well used Crane Valley River Path, beautiful spaces where people can connect with themselves, each other and the world around them.	Paint a picture of the better world you are looking to bring about. How does connection feature? How is disconnection overcome?
HERO	The individuals, communities and organisations that love and care for the river and its open spaces.	Who are the heroes protecting and championing the river?
MONSTER	Disconnection	How is disconnection playing out in your context? How is it getting in the way?



STORY ELEMENT	CRANE VALLEY STORY	PLAYING WITH THE STORY
MENTOR	The River: A reminder of our interconnectedness	What can we learn from the river? How is the river a mirror here?
GIFT	Beautiful, loveable, playful spaces where you can connect with yourself, each other and the natural world.	How is what you're doing feeding into creating more enjoyable spaces in the valley? How can you land the impact of your work in a way that is real and human and speaks to the creation of better space? How can you inspire people with the vision of usable, beautiful spaces?
MORAL	The river is the thread that connects people places, habitats and wildlife	How can you bring to life the ideas of the river as a connector? How does it connect people? Places? People with nature?
VALUES	Resilience, Positivity, Beauty and Collaboration	How do we communicate these values through everything we do? How do we maintain our resilience and positivity in change making? How do we convey a sense of beauty? How do we nourish collaboration?

STORY MAP TEMPLATE

(S)HERO

GIFT

MENTOR

MONSTER



BROKEN WORLD

BETTER WORLD

MORAL

VALUES

YOUR ROLE



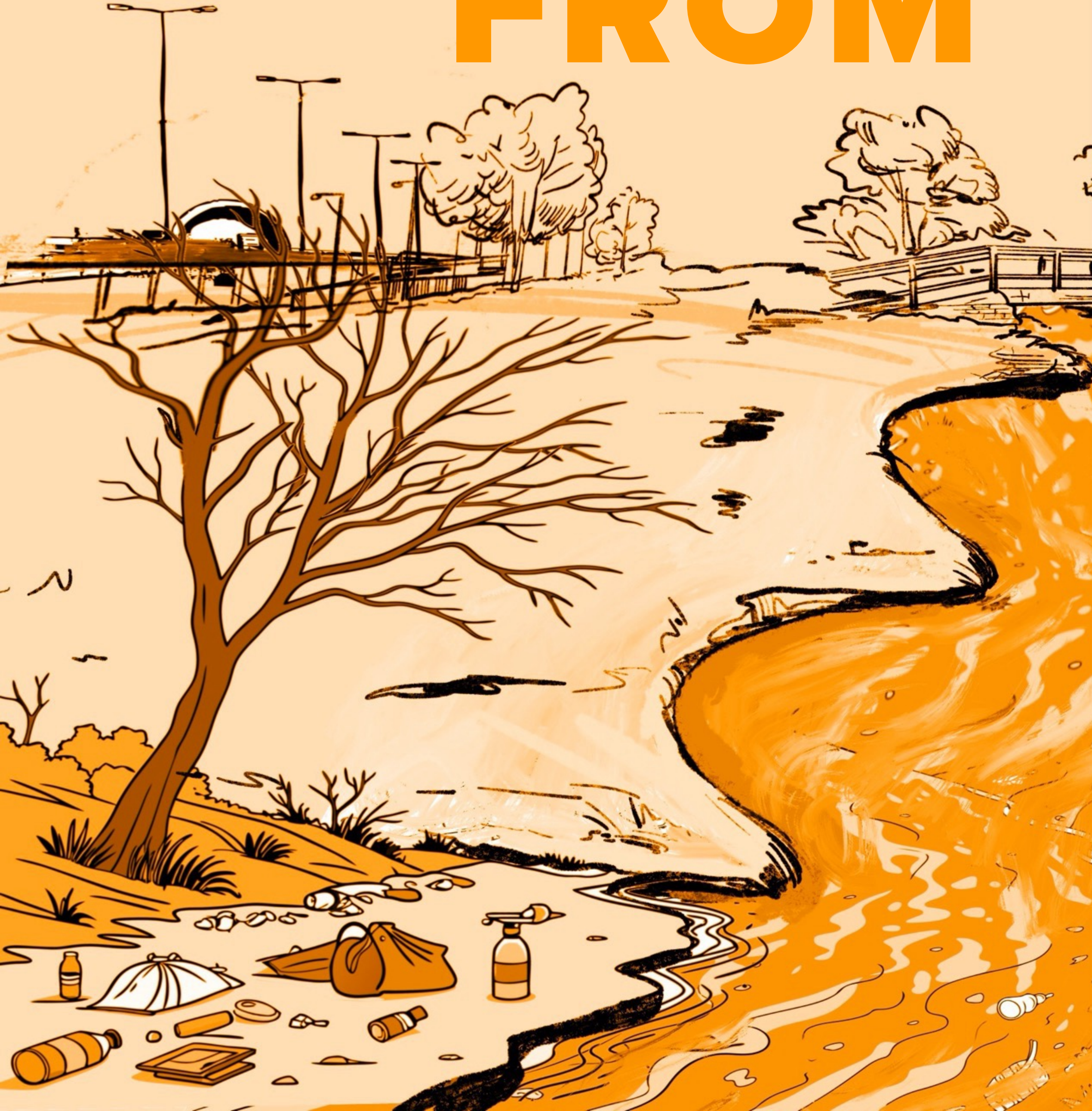


CHAPTER 3: **THE SHIFTS**

IN THIS CHAPTER WE EXPLORE THE SHIFTS
WE NEED TO MAKE TO CREATE A MORE BEAUTIFUL FUTURE
FOR THE CRANE VALLEY AND HOW YOU CAN BUILD THEM INTO YOUR WORK.

FROM

TO



FROM

A LOST RIVER NO ONE KNOWS

DISJOINTED AND FRAGMENTED

A VALLEY THAT'S NOT JOINED UP

A RIVER THAT IS POLLUTED AND STRUGGLING

LITTLE INFRASTRUCTURE

NO ONE TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

MAINLY MEN USING THE SPACE

THE RIVER AS A LIABILITY

TO

THE RIVER AS ICONIC TO WEST LONDON

CONNECTED, PARTNERSHIP WORKING

A THRIVING CONNECTED RIVER AND VALLEY

A THRIVING, CLEAN RIVER BURSTING WITH LIFE

THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF CAFÉS, BENCHES,
SIGNAGE AND (GLORIOUS) TOILETS

COLLECTIVE OWNERSHIP

AT LEAST 50% FEMALE USAGE

THE RIVER AS AN ASSET, VALUED IN A MULTITUDE
OF WAYS

WORKING WITH THE SHIFTS

The shifts represent the journey we are on from the broken world to the better world we are trying to bring into being. For some shifts we are quite some way along, for others we still have a way to go.

They act as an anchor for the partnership and can be a decision-making criteria for the things we do and don't do. They can hold us to account when it comes to living the story.

They can be a brilliant measure for where we've been and where we are. We can evaluate a campaign, a community initiative, the overall progress of the partnership in terms of where it is on each shift.

We can use them as an evaluation device. We can use them to interrogate our annual plans and daily decisions against them.

If we put them at the heart of our work they can become a great guide and measure of success.





CHAPTER 4: **LIVING THE STORY**

IN THIS CHAPTER WE EXPLORE WAYS IN WHICH
WE COULD BRING THE STORY TO LIFE.

LIVING THE STORY

The greatest of stories is nothing more than words on a page unless we walk the talk. For a story to be truly powerful we need to live and breathe it through everything we do. From the way we run our meetings, to the way we show up with volunteers, to the way we talk about issues with the press, to the way we run our events.

Every piece of house media - think websites, leaflets, banners, email signatures - is an opportunity to tell our story. It needs to be reflected in both our words and deeds.

In the next pages we explore what it would look like to bring the Crane Valley Story to life with some examples of how we might do this.



CELEBRATING HEROES OF THE CRANE VALLEY

There are lots of people doing amazing things in the Crane Valley, but they're not always celebrated or connected with others doing similar work. A Heroes of the Crane Valley competition could help to bring these people together and inspire others to get involved. Spread across different categories, accessible and indicative of CVP's values and remit, from youth to environment to ecology to litter picking to toilet cleaning to storytelling, anyone can nominate a hero – who are all invited to an event where the winners are announced, and everyone is commended.

Perhaps the winners and runners up could become part of a new permanent 'Heroes of the Crane Valley' exhibition, so their work is recognized for generations to come.



STORIES FROM THE CRANE VALLEY

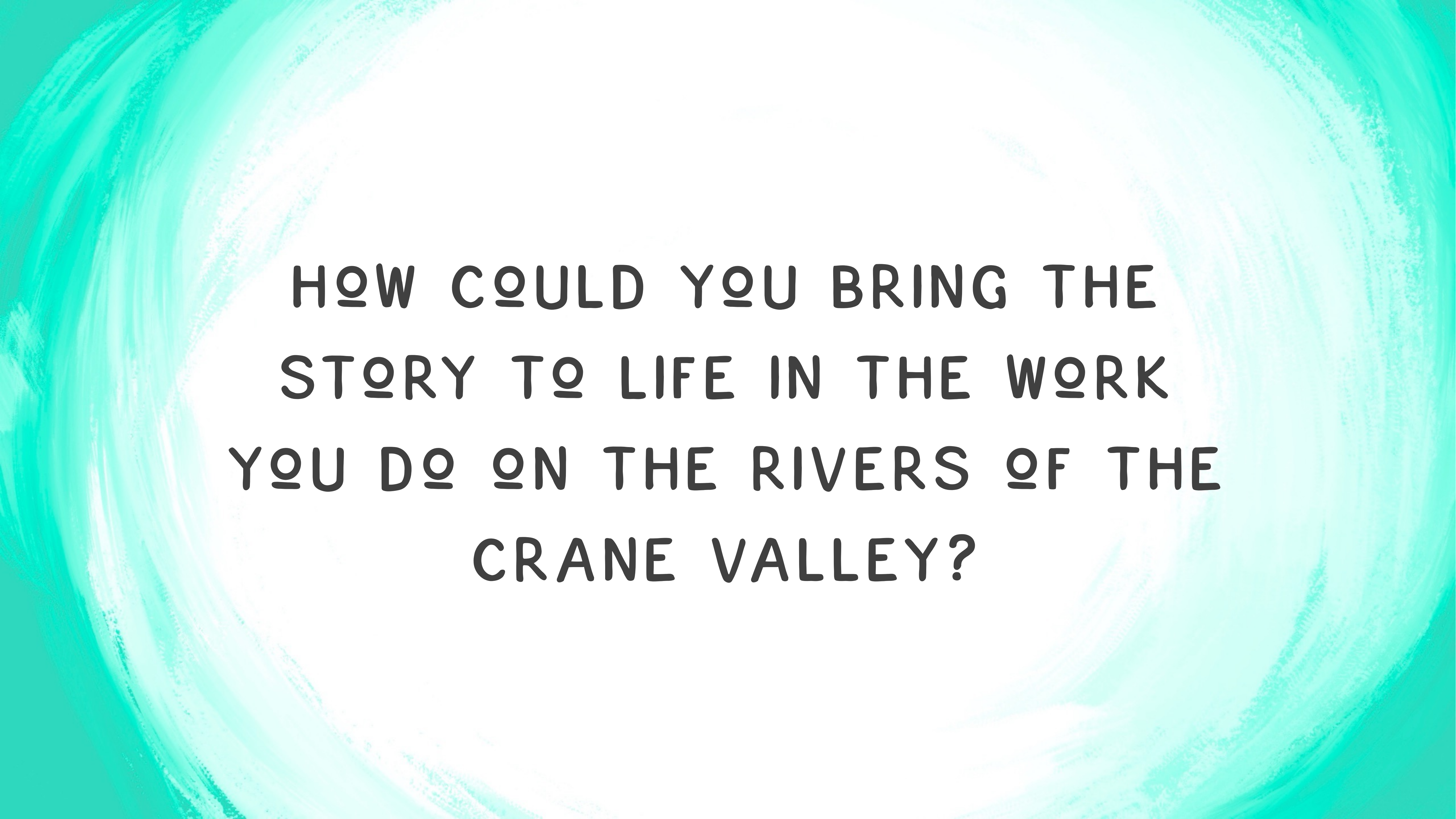
An art exhibition which brings together the stories of people – past and present - who live, play and work in the Crane Valley.
Team up with local artists to embark on a story gathering project.

Connect with any local celebs who can raise the profile of the exhibition and host at a river connected venue. Look into partnerships with others such as [MIMA](#) (Middlesborough Institute of Modern Art)

Part of collecting these stories could be a roving 'Crane Valley Capsule' - an offline concept/ online space to gather stories past and present of how people resonate with and love the rivers of the Crane Valley.

The host could take this concept to different institutions/ organisations/ groups along the river to get input and engagement from schools, mosques, sports clubs etc. Inviting groups to take part boosts awareness and engagement.

A downloadable playbook and guide to gathering stories could be used
if it's not possible for volunteers to carry out this work.

The background of the image features a large, circular, teal-colored brushstroke that frames the central text. The stroke is thick and textured, with visible brush marks and a gradient of teal shades from a darker outer edge to a lighter inner center.

HOW COULD YOU BRING THE
STORY TO LIFE IN THE WORK
YOU DO ON THE RIVERS OF THE
CRANE VALLEY?

HAVE FUN!

We want The Crane Valley Story to be one that lives and breathes. We have put this guide together so that we can tell this story in different ways, in different contexts, to different audiences. This Story Guide is a document that will evolve over time as we create more examples of it as a breathing living story. We will iterate and refine it as we go.

OUR INVITATION TO YOU ALL IS TO HAVE FUN WITH IT!

Get together with colleagues to brainstorm how you could use the story in your work.
Take the blank story arc and work out what it looks like in the world.

And then share where you get to!!

We'd love to start collecting examples and case studies of the story in motion.

If you need any help don't hesitate to reach out.

HAPPY STORY TELLING, PEOPLE!

PRODUCED BY

MAKE WORK PLAY AND IRRESISTIBLE DESIGN

IN COLLABORATION WITH CRANE VALLEY CIC – HOSTS FOR THE CRANE VALLEY PARTNERSHIP

CONTACT DETAILS

LUCY@MAKEWORKPLAY.CO.UK

ADMIN@CVCIC.ORG.UK



CRANE VALLEY
COMMUNITY
INTEREST COMPANY