



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

No. 100
Winter
2013

WE'RE PUBLISHING THIS *NEWSLETTER* immediately after the meeting of the City Council Planning Committee which considered the formal planning application for the South Bristol Link Road.

Every planning application which goes to Committee is accompanied by an officers' report which has a recommendation to grant the application, to refuse it, or – occasionally – to postpone a decision in some way. The recommendation here was to grant, which was inevitable. However, as we know, opinion is sharply divided on this issue, so the outcome wasn't a foregone conclusion.

But a vote by the councillors on the planning committee isn't supposed to reflect 'raw' public opinion; councillors are obliged by law to take their decision on the *planning* arguments before them. But in this case, more than in most other planning decisions, many of the arguments are partially subjective. Do you believe the consultants' figures for traffic flows? Do you believe the consultants' estimates for jobs created if a road is built? How do you weigh the acknowledged damage to the landscape and townscape against the claimed greater good of improved transport links?

M.V.C.G.'s answer to these questions is clear: the proposers' and their consultant's claims are totally implausible and this is the wrong road in the wrong place being built for the wrong reasons. At the Planning Committee, though, a majority of the ten councillors disagreed – planning permission was granted by 8 votes to 2. Of the six councillors in our three wards, three were on the Planning Committee itself, and they voted in favour – Richard Eddy, Derek Pickup and Kevin Quartley. Mark Brain spoke in favour from the floor, and Helen Holland spoke against. The sixth councillor, Tim Kent, wasn't at the meeting.

So that's it, then – the road will be built? Some of us have been in this game long enough to know that the answer is – maybe.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

IN THIS ISSUE

Manor Woods Valley News....	Page 2
Love the Common.....	Page 5
Planning Matters.....	Page 6
Dates for your Diary.....	Page 7
A.G.M. and Birthday Party.....	Page 8

NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY L.N.R.

IN THE AUTUMN *NEWSLETTER* we reported the new bench donated by M.V.C.G. and installed at the top of the flower meadow. Beryl and Danny have had a plaque made with our logo, our website address and saying it was donated by our group.

*The plaque,
which will be
securely fixed
to the bench
very soon*



The last *Newsletter* had photos of the bench being installed; here is the view from the bench – you can see why it's a popular place to stop!



*Photo –
and dog –
courtesy
of Angela
James*

Some members of the Manor Woods Valley group who visit regularly felt it would be handy to have a small flyer to give to people they meet there and often have a chat with. Here's what it looks like:



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

**Helping to maintain and improve
Manor Woods Valley
Local Nature Reserve**

Do you enjoy this lovely area - the valley, woods, river and meadow? Have you seen 'My Manor Woods Book', our colourful guide to the history, geology and wildlife of Manor Woods Valley? Why not join us and help protect it for the future? We would value your support as we try to protect Manor Woods Valley and the wider environment in BS13. Visit our website at www.mvcg.org.uk to learn about our involvement with this area.

www.mvcg.org.uk

If you'd like a few, just e-mail us on the M.V.C.G. address, or give us a ring (see the back page)

On 26 September two M.V.C.G. members went for a walk round Manor Woods Valley and Crox Bottom with Joe McSorley, the Reserves Officer from the Avon Wildlife Trust. He was very pleased to be shown round and given a lot of information on these two areas. The main aim of his visit was to see whether the Wildlife Trust could help and support M.V.C.G. by carrying out projects as they are doing with other Local Nature reserves.

Joe and his Sunday Volunteer group will come out and clear some of the scrub around the fruit trees in the old quarry area of Manor Woods Valley on **Sunday 8 December**. Local volunteers are invited to join them for the day, from 10.45am until 3.15pm or for an hour or two. We are really excited about this as we are very keen to improve the area. Thanks to Justin Smith, our Woodland and Wildlife Officer, and some other volunteers it is now easier to walk through than it was a few years ago. Recently, several of us met a couple there who had picked apples and were going to make cider as they did the year before.



Angela's photo, taken on 8 November, shows the debris on the grid at the interceptor and the resultant flooding of the River Path

At our last Manor Woods Valley Working Group meeting on 14 November we discussed our concern with the lack of maintenance in the stream and the pond. The River Path was flooded recently, the interceptor was choked with debris and there were several other blockages. We have brought this to the attention of the Parks Department. The silting up of the pond is an increasingly acute problem to which we will continue to press for a solution, despite the very difficult financial circumstances the City Council has been placed in. An area of concern is the lack of birds because the water habitat is degraded. One might also wonder whether a pond whose original function was a silt-settling area can be doing its job when it is full of silt.

Finally, we're pleased to report that we've successfully worked with the Council to get a litter bin installed at the Valley Road entrance, which these days is used by a lot of people.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE
Manor Woods Valley Working Group

LOVE THE COMMON

HAVING RECEIVED a flier to ‘**Love the Common, Stop the Link Road**’, which advertised visiting Highridge Common on 17 November at 2.00pm, Danny and I grasped the opportunity to go along to the meeting. We were early and were not really sure where the organisers would be. As the time neared 2.00pm with not a soul in sight we started to feel most apprehensive and made mutterings about the local feeling of apathy.



We set off towards the bus stop, thinking we were in the wrong place. Looking back, suddenly we could see figures under the trees opposite Cox’s Garage. We retraced our steps and found a table had been set up with leaflets and petitions to sign. I introduced myself to one of the organisers as being a member of M.V.C.G. and happily she had heard of us and the work we do. I explained that André had sent an excellent letter setting out our objections to the road. She was pleased about this but she said individuals need to protest as well.

Whilst we were talking a small crowd had arrived. I had asked the organiser if I could take photos and she was happy about this. Lots of people were signing the petition and also letters that the group had prepared. Our previous pessimism dispelled as the crowd grew. I reckon around 20 people were there as we left at 2.30pm, and the organisers had said on the flier that they would stay until 4.00pm, so it was a reasonable turn-out on a damp and dreary afternoon. I was impressed by the enthusiasm of the lady I spoke to. It is good to know people are fighting our corner as we try to stop this blight on our landscape becoming a reality.

BERYL HEATON



PLANNING MATTERS

WE REPORTED in the last *Newsletter* about pre-application consultations about the United Reformed Church building on Church Road and the former ZION METHODIST CHURCH HALL on Bishopsworth Road. We're still awaiting developments on the U.R.C., but the owner of the Hall has now applied for permission to convert it into seven flats, as we described last time.

We're happy with the principle of the conversion, which makes sensitive use of the existing building. The problem is that there can be no parking on site, because of the adjacent pedestrian crossing, and several neighbouring residents have objected to the application because, they say, it will result in even more on-street parking – already a problem in the area. It's a genuine dilemma: should a good building be left to rot, or be demolished, because of society's demand for cars, or should a principled decision be taken to provide flats with no parking to discourage dependence on the private car?

There's a less nuanced application at 131 BRIDGWATER ROAD – at least, that's the official address of the site, but the proposed development would actually be an extension to KINGS WALK, and all vehicular access would be from that side. A lot of concern is being raised about this one: traffic and parking, of course; the intensity of the proposal – 14 houses; and, not least, the wholly inadequate consultation by the applicant. This one will run and run!

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

BISHOPSWORTH SWIMMING POOL NEWS

Local residents will get their chance to have their say over the future of now-closed Bishopsworth Swimming Pool in the New Year.

Since the closure of the popular community pool in early 2012, the Dundry View Neighbourhood Partnership Bishopsworth Pool Development Steering Group have been considering possible future uses for the redundant site.

Now they are proposing that Transitions Skate CIC develop an indoor skateboard park at the site for next summer, incorporating various 'community hub' features including a community café, car-parking, landscaping, food markets and a war memorial.

A Drop-In Event is being held on Saturday 11 January 2014 to provide further information at Headley Park Church and a Mid-Winter Fayre is being held at the Bishopsworth Pool site on Saturday 18 January.

CLLR RICHARD EDDY

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



THREE DATES to note this time – one ‘working’, one ‘social’ and one a mixture of business and pleasure!

As mentioned on page 3, on **Sunday 8 December** there will be a **WORKING GROUP** from the Avon Wildlife Trust clearing scrub to open up the Quarries area of Manor Woods Valley where the fruit trees are. Anyone who wants to go and help will be very welcome. The A.W.T. volunteers will be there from 10.45am until 3.15pm, but you can go for however long you like. Dress for ‘gardening duties’!

As we announced in the last *Newsletter*, **Tuesday 17 December** will be the date for the **M.V.C.G. CHRISTMAS PARTY** at 7.30pm. As usual, the highest security surrounds the planning of the silly games and competitions, but come prepared for fun – and to buy a raffle ticket or two. There will also be our traditional American Supper, so please bring a contribution for the table if you can.

It seems like a long way away, but it’s time to give notice that our **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** will be on **Tuesday 18 February** at 7.30pm at St Peter’s Rooms. Please see the ‘official’ announcement on the back page.

MEMBERSHIP OF M.V.C.G. runs on a calendar year basis, so it’s time again to renew your subscription. When people join the last few months of the year, their membership runs through to the end of the next year, but there’s no-one in that category this time. So, unless you’re receiving a complimentary copy of the *Newsletter*, please let us have your renewal subscription.

There’s no need to fill in the form unless your details have changed – just let us have a note of your name with your cheque or cash – but **do please let us know if you have a new or changed e-mail address.**

The subscription – unchanged at a mere £4 since we started! – covers the (minimal) costs of running M.V.C.G. but more importantly allows us to make direct improvements to our local environment – like the new bench in Manor Woods Valley.

Please bring your sub. to the Christmas Party, or the A.G.M., or send it to either Beryl Heaton (3 Kings Walk) or André Coutanche (14 Queens Road).
Thank you!

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND BIRTHDAY PARTY

THE NINETEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of Malago Valley Conservation Group will be held on Tuesday 18 February at St Peter's Rooms, Church Road, Bishopsworth, starting at 7.30pm. The Officers and Committee members retire each year but are eligible for re-election. The names of the current Officers and Committee members appear below.

Nominations for either Officers or Committee members are very welcome and should be supported by a seconder and the consent of the nominee must first have been obtained. Nominations can be made to the Hon. Secretary, André Coutanche, at 14 Queens Road, Bishopsworth, BS13 8LB (phone number and e-mail address below). Please feel free to contact me or any Committee member for an informal chat if you'd like more information about joining the Committee.

The formal A.G.M. business will include a report-back to members on the year's events and a short topical talk. As usual, we will finish with wine/orange juice and cheese/other nibbles to celebrate our birthday. All members and friends of M.V.C.G. are invited to come to our birthday party.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE
Hon. Secretary

Malago Valley Conservation Group

Chairman	Peter Crispin	907 0623
Vice-Chairman	Mary Sykes	964 3712
Hon. Secretary	André Coutanche	964 3106
Hon. Treasurer	Beryl Heaton	964 5780

Committee Members

Anton Bantock, Heather Leeson, Paul Mizen, Lis Pibworth

Co-opted Committee Members

Diana Porter, Don Smith, Sue Walker, CSV Environment, Cllrs Mark Brain, Richard Eddy, Helen Holland, Tim Kent, Derek Pickup, Kevin Quartley (*All the City councillors for Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe and Whitchurch Park wards are invited to become co-opted Committee members*).

Newsletter edited by André Coutanche, 14 Queens Road, Bishopsworth, Bristol, BS13 8LB; tel. 964 3106; e-mail andrec@mvcg.org.uk; website www.mvcg.org.uk.

Letters, articles and suggestions from readers are welcome.

The opinions in this *Newsletter* do not necessarily represent those of M.V.C.G.