

MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

No. 90
Summer
2011

THIS TIME last year, we reported the results of the local elections, which were minor, but there was the prospect of broader implications from the general election and the new coalition government. The local elections this May resulted in no change at all in ‘our’ three wards, but the Liberal Democrats lost their overall majority on the City Council. And a year on, national government policies are starting to make themselves felt locally.

One of the immediate effects of the Lib Dem’s loss of control was a pause in the Area Green Space Plans, with all proposed sell-offs of park land put on hold. We welcome this, since we were unconvinced by the arguments for any disposals in BS13. We also regard the entire Area Green Space Plan process as seriously flawed. However, the A.G.S.P. process is continuing, now in the context of Neighbourhood Partnerships. Since we also have serious misgivings about the N.P. system, this isn’t a happy prospect. The most likely result, however, is simply a waste of everyone’s time, with meetings ‘deciding’ priorities which will either never be implemented or which would have happened anyway without the complex and time-consuming processes. The immediate threat to one of our green spaces isn’t dealt with in the A.G.S.P. (which is a measure of its failure), but comes from the emerging city-wide planning framework - read more on page 4.

At national government level, cut-backs initially seemed to stop the Ring Road in its tracks, but it hasn’t totally disappeared, and there’s an update on page 5. Meanwhile, normal planning life goes on, and we report on page 6 on a potentially good new scheme.

So it’s the usual M.V.C.G. mix of natural environment, built environment and, with the Programme, learning and having fun! What would be even better is if more members got involved, came to meetings, and contributed to the *Newsletter* ...

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

IN THIS ISSUE

Manor Woods Valley.	Page 2
Staying Alert	Page 4
Wild BS13	Page 5
Planning Matters	Page 6
The Programme	Page 7

NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY L.N.R.

THE FIRST HALF of 2011 has been rather quiet in Manor Woods Valley and seasonal jobs have been carried out. The new planting below Valley Heights flats was tidied up and a few trees replaced. Unfortunately, one or two have been vandalised since and will need to be replaced next planting season. We have replaced a few of our 'Abi the Airedale' dog notices to encourage people to clean up after their dogs.

We are pleased to report that, after many years of trying to find out who was responsible for cleaning the area on the right hand-side of the Vale Lane entrance, we can report a little victory. This small area had always been full of rubbish. We reported it many times and it was never cleaned. Early this year fly-tipping occurred. On 9 March two members of our group, feeling so frustrated, decided on the spur of the moment to pick up the rubbish and leave the bags there, waiting to be collected. We sent 'shock waves' through several Council departments and finally the rubbish was taken away and we were informed that the contractors, Quadron Services, would be approached to clear the rubbish if it happens again.

Unlike in previous years we had no big project this season, so we decided to take stock. We had become aware that some areas of scrub which used to be very thick have now grown upwards and potentially offer less protection for wildlife. The area up from the River Path near the interceptor is an example (remember, we had the problem of people having barbecues there last year). We invited Justin Smith, our Woodland and Wildlife Officer, to meet us on site, and he readily accepted. Some informative and interesting points came up!

At the moment there is no management plan as such for the woodland, only maintenance to ensure safety along the path. From an ecological point of view, unmanaged woodland is not necessarily bad for wildlife. We admired what Justin calls 'veteran trees', the old oaks and the hawthorn trunks, some 120-160 years old. These trees are survivors! When you next go there, look up and see these strange, gnarled shapes.

We asked Justin if we could do anything. It's out of the question to go scrambling up slopes or use chain saws! He suggested we remove as many young ash and sycamore saplings as we could along the path as they have become invasive, and possibly plant a few young oaks in the autumn, since we had raised the question of the future of the woodland if there is a lack of regeneration. So we had a small

working party on 1 June and in an hour we cut a lot of these saplings at the entrance behind Bishopsworth Library and along the Woodland Path. It was a great opportunity to see what other saplings were growing. We even found a young oak tree. We have not finished our job, so if you are interested in joining us for the walk in July when we will carry on removing young ash saplings, give Marie Jo a ring on 964 3106 and we'll let you know the date.



Following our meeting with Justin he has now confirmed that he will be doing some thinning and coppicing in Manor Woods Valley in the winter. Thank you, Justin, for listening to our concerns and firing our enthusiasm!

The programme of eradicating non-native invasive weeds carries on this summer. Japanese knotweed has been treated again or is about to be. You may remember that last summer there were two sessions organised to eradicate Himalayan balsam, attended by a lot of people, unfortunately very few from M.V.C.G. At the moment it seems that we cannot see many young plants growing (it is an annual). Could this be true? Have we won the battle? If there is a pulling-out session in the summer and you would like to take part, do let Marie Jo know. It was great fun and an opportunity to meet people who usually do not know the area and have taken a day off their work to do this activity for the community.

Finally we had a short session in Bishopsworth Library garden. In spite of the dry weather last spring and this spring some of our plants have survived from last year and the rowan tree is growing. Have a look through the fencing when you go this way. You will also see the three handsome trees which have been planted on the slope. If you see some rubbish there M.V.C.G. has been working on this problem area too. Do not hesitate to report it yourself as well.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE AND THE
MANOR WOODS VALLEY WORKING GROUP
tel: 964 3106 or e-mail mariejo.coutanche@googlemail.com

STAYING ALERT I - THE QUARRIES

WHEN Manor Woods Valley was declared a Local Nature Reserve five years ago the quarry area at the Vale Lane end was not included, in spite of the pressure exercised by M.V.C.G. It has dual - and conflicting - planning designations; it is simultaneously a Site of Nature Conservation Interest and an area zoned for industrial and commercial development. This has already happened for part of it when, three years ago, the local company Wrings applied for an extension of their yard into the quarry. We strongly opposed the planning application but we were unsuccessful.

Those twin designations have been carried forward into the new planning framework, and a City Council paper, the Site Allocations Document, currently gives priority to industrial development. That document will be up for final public consultation soon, and we will continue to press for the priority to change.

Because we are concerned about the future of what is left of the quarry area, we are thinking of ways of protecting it from development. We have been aware of its habitat significance and its rich wildlife for many years. One way of strengthening the case against a planning application is having a detailed ecology survey of species carried out. We are investigating this possibility at the moment.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE AND THE
MANOR WOODS VALLEY WORKING GROUP



Were you at the super talk on 19 April by Mark Coombes about the Dog Warden Service? It was fun and informative. Mark was intrigued to hear about our 'Abi the Airedale' notices and, at his request, we e-mailed them to him the next day.

STAYING ALERT II - THE RING ROAD

When the coalition government started planning cuts in public expenditure, it seemed very likely that the South Bristol Link would be affected. What has emerged is a tiered approach, with some schemes put on the back burner and others sent back to local authorities for re-working. Here's an update ...

INFORMATION has emerged that the Council are seeking funding for the construction of the link road and associated guided bus way from the Government. The Airport has already committed £1m from section 106 money for their extension.

Of particular concern to M.V.C.G. is the routing across Highridge Green and down St Georges Road. It seems unlikely that the Council will listen to the views of those most concerned and that we need to ensure that firstly a Public Inquiry is held and secondly that the scheme is defeated.

We need to gear ourselves yet again to fight this insidious and unnecessary proposal.

PETE CRISPIN

WILD BS13

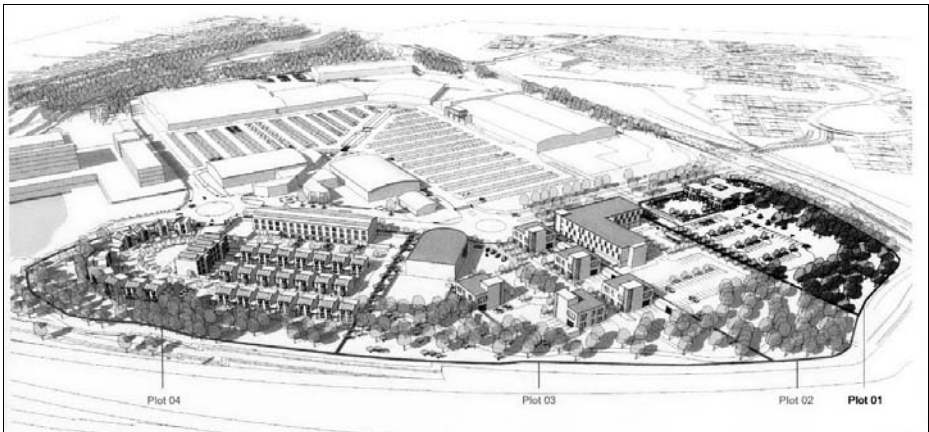
More reports from members and friends ...

- Two people have reported seeing a WOOD MOUSE in their compost heaps.
- Early spring was very good for butterflies. People reported them in their garden and in Manor Woods Valley, mainly BRIMSTONE, HOLLY BLUE, ORANGE TIP, SPECKLED WOOD and SMALL TORTOISESHELL. There's a national survey of butterflies taking place between 16 and 31 July and anyone can join in. Go to www.bigbutterflycount.org to find out more (there's a super colourful Butterfly Chart available for download).
- You may have noticed that HEDGEHOGS have become a rare sight in the past couple of years. The reason for their decline is unclear. We can help by reporting our sightings to the Wildlife Trust on their website (www.wildhedgehogs.org.uk) or telephoning the office on (0117) 917 7270. It's as important to let them know if you used to see hedgehogs but you don't see them anymore. At 14 Queens Road, after not seeing any for a couple of years, two were seen in early spring and one since, regularly. A good way of finding out if they visit your garden is to look for droppings. Otherwise, go round your garden with a torch after dusk and listen. You may hear rustling through vegetation or snuffling. Worth doing!

PLANNING MATTERS

THERE'S some major new planning applications just in for Imperial Park - the 'left over' bit between the main car park and Hengrove Way/Hartcliffe roundabout. Some years back, there were rumours that this site could become a Tesco supermarket, but that was squashed when Morrison's were given permission to build at Symes Avenue.

The land is divided into four plots, each with its own planning application. The applications are 'outline', which means that it's mainly the principle of the land use and road access which is being applied for - but there's a lot of detail, which gives a pretty good idea of what's proposed.



The drawing shows the site looking north from above Hengrove Way. Plot 4 (furthest left) would be houses and flats, including a care home; plot 3 would have office units and a car showroom (the building with the round front); plot 2 is for a hotel (the L-shaped building); and plot 1 has a pub. Some trees would go, but there would be some new planting, and most of the existing mature trees would stay.

The M.V.C.G. committee hasn't considered this yet, so I don't know what our formal response will be. But the land uses look OK, and the suggested sizes and shapes of buildings seem reasonable. The architect is a respected Bristol firm (Alec French), so, unless there are things lurking in the detail, this may be a welcome rounding off of the long development of the old cigarette factory site.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

SUMMER may be just starting, but this edition takes the Programme through to Christmas! Our 'indoor' meetings are on the third Tuesday of the month, starting at 7.30pm, meeting at St Peter's Rooms, by the side of St Peter's Church, Bishopsworth. The **M** symbol means our own meetings, to which everyone is very welcome, M.V.C.G. member or not. We're including the dates of the Neighbourhood Partnership meetings (*), and we'd really like M.V.C.G. members to let us know what they think of these meetings.

* **Tuesday 14 June:** HARTCLIFFE NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM, 7.00-9.00pm, Gatehouse Centre, Hareclive Road.

* **Wednesday 15 June:** BISHOPSWORTH NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM, 7.00-9.00pm, Ex-servicemen's Club, Winford Grove.

Saturday 18 June: The annual *Hartcliffe Millennium Green Fun Day* from 12 noon to 4.00pm.

* **Wednesday 22 June:** DUNDRY VIEW NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIP, 7.00-9.00pm, Personal Development Centre, Bridge Learning Campus, Teyfant Road.

M Thursday 23 June: *A Visit to Urban Splash's Lakeshore Development.* You may remember that we arranged a visit last October which unfortunately had to be cancelled at short notice. Fingers crossed! Meet outside Boots at Imperial Park at 5.15pm to start the tour at 5.30pm.

M Tuesday 26 July: *A visit to Knowle West Media Centre.* Meet at the Media Centre - Leinster Avenue, Knowle West - at 6.00pm. A very few members went on a previous visit, but we hope many more will come this time, inspired by the very interesting talk about the Media Centre by Rachel Clarke last March.

* **Wednesday 7 September:** BISHOPSWORTH NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM, 7.00-9.00pm, Ex-servicemen's Club, Winford Grove.

* **Thursday 8 September:** WHITCHURCH PARK NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM, 7.00-9.00pm, Hartcliffe Methodist Church

* **Wednesday 21 September:** HARTCLIFFE NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM, 7.00-9.00pm, Willmott Bowling Club.

continued over the page ...

* **Monday 26 September** DUNDRY VIEW NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIP, 7.00-9.00pm, venue to be confirmed.

📅 **October:** On a date to be fixed, we will do some more of our traditional *Daffodil planting*. More details in the Autumn *Newsletter*.

📅 **Tuesday 18 October:** A talk by RICHARD BEVAN, recently appointed as the City Council manager in charge of Heritage Estates, Cemeteries and Crematoriums. Not only does Richard live locally, but many of his areas of responsibility are well known to us, not least Ashton Court estate. Some members may remember Richard's previous talk when he was in charge of pest control and will recall how fascinating and amusing it was!

Tuesday 15 November: We expect this to be the date of the *Bishopsworth Quiz*, where M.V.C.G. usually enters two teams and members are invited to come along to support them. This replaces our 'normal' November meeting.

📅 **Wednesday 7 December:** M.V.C.G.'s *Christmas Party*. Please note the switch from our normal Tuesday.

* *For more information about the Neighbourhood Forum or Neighbourhood Partnership meetings, call Melanie Monaghan or Heather Williams at Hartcliffe & Withywood Community Partnership on (0117) 903 8044.*

Malago Valley Conservation Group

Chairman	Peter Crispin	907 0623
Vice-Chairman	Mavis Palmer	964 2344
Hon. Secretary	André Coutanche	964 3106
Hon. Treasurer	Beryl Heaton	964 5780

Committee Members

Anton Bantock, Heather Leeson, Paul Mizen, Lis Pibworth, Mary Sykes

Co-opted Committee Members

Valerie Gay, Diana Porter, 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; telephone 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.