



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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THINGS WILL BE CHANGING SOON. There will be changes in Bristol, with our newly elected Mayor, and there will be changes in Malago Valley Conservation Group.

Firstly, the Mayor - our congratulations to George Ferguson on his election. However things evolve 'politically' (large and small 'p'!), to have at the centre of Bristol's decision-making someone whose career has been based on a belief in good architecture and town planning can only be encouraging. At the time of writing, we don't know how national government will respond to requests for enhanced powers for Bristol, especially in transport. However, we do know that the Mayor isn't much taken with the proposal for Line 2 of the Bus Rapid Transit proposals, and has just announced that the scheme is being reviewed. This is the route between Long Ashton Park & Ride and the central area. If this scheme is abandoned, it's virtually certain that the South Bristol Link will disappear as well, which is what M.V.C.G. believes should happen and has campaigned for. All we can say at the moment is that the South Bristol Link - which has *never* been a done deal - is looking less likely than ever.

Now changes in M.V.C.G. In the last edition we asked for help in producing the *Newsletter*, or, at least, any comments about it. The response was zero. The workload in producing the *Newsletter* in its current form has been borne by the same person since M.V.C.G. started and is no longer sustainable, so, in the absence of help, some decisions will have to be made. We will continue to publish news and views about environmental matters in our part of Bristol, but we are considering no longer incurring the extra work of printing and circulating a paper *Newsletter*. If we go electronic, we understand that not everyone can be or wants to be on e-mail, so the implications and the options will have to be carefully considered. This will be an important topic for the AGM on 19 February - see the notice on the back page.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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DUNDRY PLAYGROUND

WE RECEIVED an invitation to one of Dundry Playground's first birthday events and Danny and I went along to represent M.V.C.G. It took place on 30 September and we arrived to see a lot of activity taking place.



The playground itself was spacious and all the equipment had been made from natural materials. We introduced ourselves to Nancy who was overseeing things and she suggested we might like to help plant a tree. They had purchased three native trees and several shrubs, the intention being to plant these at the event. Not ones to shrink from a challenge we set about the task, Danny wielding a pick axe whilst I shovelled. The ground was very stony and in fact we excavated quite a pile of bricks. The next job was to put in stakes but we left that to someone else as the sledge hammer needed for this had gone 'walkabout'.

We wandered over to see what was happening in a gazebo nearby, where there was a large group of adults and children. A company called Touch Wood Enterprises had set up benches and were showing the children how to use old wood working tools such as spokeshaves and drawknives. It was very 'hands



on' as the children were allowed to use the tools themselves. They were obviously delighted to be able to join in (under the watchful eye of the instructors) and Danny and I couldn't resist having a go ourselves. The intention was to create a bench for the site.

A barbecue had been fired up and soon the appetising smell of food was wafting across. Burgers were handed out and people started to tuck in. We then had to go as we had another commitment later in the afternoon. As we took our leave we thanked Nancy for inviting us. It was a most enjoyable occasion and we intend returning to the site when our small grandson comes to Bristol. We can't wait to see the finished bench as we had a hand in its construction.

BERYL HEATON



NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY L.N.R.

Invasive Weeds

We've made contact with Neil Green, the new Field Officer for the Avon Invasive Weeds Forum. We had a very productive meeting with him on site, showing him around Manor Woods Valley and 'introducing' him to the areas of Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed. He was rather shocked by the amount of Japanese knotweed in the Quarries area, which, of course, comes under Property Services and not Parks - at least until this area is reallocated when the lengthy Bristol Plan process has run its course.

Valley Heights flats

The trees planted below the flats in Manor Woods Valley when this development was built were supposed to provide a screen to prevent the development intruding visually into the green space. Unfortunately, vandalism and theft have removed several of the trees and the screening effect will be lost unless they are replaced. We have asked Julian Cox, our Area Environmental Officer, to meet us on site to discuss what can be done.

Wrings

We were very concerned back in October to hear and see machinery operating in the extension to Wring's yard. This is the part of their yard which was built into the Quarries area. We opposed the development, but lost the argument, though the extension was permitted only on condition that noisy machinery was not operated there. On a previous occasion, in March, when machinery had been heard here, the company's planning agents reported to the City Council officers that it was the temporary testing of equipment. We have raised this again with the Enforcement Officers and we are currently awaiting the result of their enquiries.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE AND THE
MANOR WOODS VALLEY WORKING GROUP

IMPROVEMENTS are happening at the park/play area at Headley Park. On 28 November, trees were planted around the edge of the park, with volunteers joining in to improve the appearance of the boundary. At the moment, that boundary is defined by a chain link fence supported by concrete posts (or in places vice versa!) and it looks rather sad. Section 106 money from a near-by development is available to spend on the park, and it's been decided that new railings are the top priority. Costings are being obtained and fingers are crossed!

CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT RURAL ENGLAND



SIR ANDREW MOTION was in Bath on Wednesday 28 November to address a meeting of our local branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England, of which he has been president since June. As corporate members, M.V.C.G. received an invitation, and Marie Jo and I went along.

The former poet laureate arrived a couple of minutes late, having just come from giving an interview to the press about Nick Boles, the new planning minister. The previous evening, on *Newsnight*, Mr Boles, just two months into his job, had announced that he wanted to relax planning laws and allow new building on an additional 3% of Britain's countryside. This would amount to an area of 1,500 square miles, more than twice the size of Greater London.

Sir Andrew didn't mince his words; he described his feelings at the minister's performance as 'somewhere between horror and enormous anger'. 'Nick Boles has clearly spent a lot of his life in thinktanks,' he said in his press interview, 'and he has the kind of attitude you imagine went down quite well in a thinktank. Slightly abrasive, irksome, ruffling feathers. But to talk so blithely about these issues where so many people's lives and so much of our land is at stake is just incredibly irresponsible.'

Sir Andrew repeated the CPRE's policy that we do need to build more houses, and the quality of new house-building should be improved, but he disagreed that using more green land for house-building will solve the current problems with the housing market. There are enough previously developed 'brownfield' sites already available for 1.5 million new homes and that should be used before letting developers tear up the planning rule book which most people in this country support.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

AT THE BISHOPSWORTH QUIZ on 19 November, the two M.V.C.G. teams performed in what is now their traditional way - they were nicely in the middle/upper part of the pack without being in danger of winning! Owing to a last-minute miscalculation (!), the winners were the team from the Malago Society, who now have to organise next year's event.

WITHYWOOD UPDATE

IN JUNE, planning consent was granted for the partial conversion of ‘The Willows’, the former Area Housing Office in Four Acres, into offices with an attached workshop. Since then, a private sector company has purchased the property, creating jobs and investment in the local area. *[Update: as we go to press, there is a planning application for a garage building at the back of the site].*

In July, planning approval was given for the demolition of the ‘Rising Sun’ public house, in Queens Road, and the erection of eight houses. This follows substantial public consultation and, as I write, demolition is about to occur.

In September, Litt Holdings Ltd, owners of ‘The Woods’ former Public House, in Four Acres, Withywood, was fined almost £12,000 for failing to act with regard to fly-tipping and the accumulation of rubbish at the site. This follows a long-running campaign by local councillors and residents, frustrated by inadequate action by the property owners. In October, planning consent for demolition of the building and the conversion to private residential use was refused.

At a recent Cabinet Meeting, Bristol City Council agreed to resurface Queens Road during the current financial year.

The other issue which has been hanging over us is news over the South Bristol Link Road. After consultation earlier this year, detailed proposals were due to be submitted to Bristol City Council for further planning consultation and determination. This will obviously particularly affect people living in King Georges Road, as well as elsewhere. No doubt, further news will be forthcoming in early 2013. *[Update: see also the front page].*

CLLR RICHARD EDDY
Bristol City Councillor, Bishopsworth Ward

- *We repeat what we said after Richard’s piece in the last Newsletter: we always welcome contributions from all our readers, and if any of our other councillors would like to provide news from their patches which would interest M.V.C.G. members, please get in touch.*

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

SADLY, due to falling numbers, we have reluctantly decided to discontinue with our monthly talks. It does not seem fair to ask speakers, enthusiastic about their subjects, to speak to such small audiences.

Looking back, I now realise how lucky we have been with the many contributors to past talks. In my time of organising, the topics have included the Soil Association; Bristol Civic Society; the Councils' Woodland and Wildlife activities; the Dog Warden service; the Knowle West Media Centre; our crematoria and cemeteries; thoughts about future transport projects; Ashton Court Mansion; Bristol Living Streets; a Safe Land for Bees; the campaign against BRT. Other contributors have brought along pictures of local interest. I would like to thank everyone who has contributed and been so helpful during my period in charge.

But all is not lost. We shall continue with our Christmas parties and hope to see everyone on Tuesday 18 December.

See you all then.

PAUL MIZEN

M Tuesday 18 December: M.V.C.G.'s *Christmas Party*. Apart from the organisers' Top Secret surprises for this year, it's the mixture as before, with fun and games, a raffle (bring some money!) and our usual American supper, so, if you can, please bring a small contribution for the feast. 7.30pm at St Peter's Rooms (by St Peter's Church), Church Road, Bishopsworth.

M Tuesday 19 February: Our *Annual General Meeting*. See the formal notice on the back page. 7.30pm at St Peter's Rooms (by St Peter's Church), Church Road, Bishopsworth.

MEMBERSHIP OF M.V.C.G. runs on a calendar year basis, so it's that time again to renew your subscription. If you joined in the last few months of 2012, then your membership runs through to the end of 2013; otherwise you should find enclosed a membership renewal form (unless you are receiving a complimentary copy of the *Newsletter*).

Please bring the completed form and your sub. to the Christmas Party, or the AGM, 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 EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of Malago Valley Conservation Group will be held on Tuesday 19 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 discussion about the future of M.V.C.G. 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*).

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Letters, articles and suggestions from readers are welcome.

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