

Valley Conservation Society



doing nothing is not an option

Members' newsletter No 154

We are a non-political organisation

October 2017

Join us For our Autumn Walk

*Complimentary copy
for your interest*

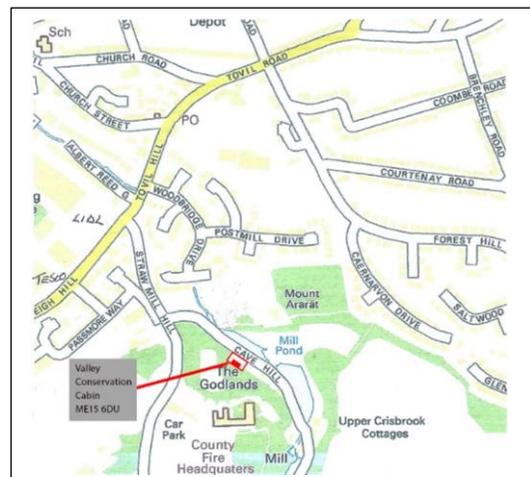
Please come and join us this SUNDAY (22nd OCTOBER) for our autumn walk over the VCS land and around Hayle Park Nature Reserve to see the progress made by our volunteers over this past season.

Meet at the Conservation Cabin in Cave Hill at 10.30am. The walk will end in the gardens of Hayle Place Manor for tea and delicious home-baked cakes, where toilets will be available.

We will be taking the opportunity to raise money for Children In Need. Why not ask a friend to sponsor your walk, or just make a small contribution yourself on the day. Those unable to make the walk itself are still welcome to join us at Hayle Place just for the tea and a chat, from about midday.

Keep dogs on a lead please.

For catering purposes it would be helpful if you could just drop Dennis Usmar an email to let him know you are coming: denusmar@gmail.com



Extra help

The boys of the Tuesday work party received some extra help this month, when a party of volunteers joined them in the valley.

The new faces were members of staff from the Mid Kent Environmental Protection team, who spent the day helping to cut and rake the wildflower meadow, spreading wood chippings on the path leading up to the nature reserve from Hayle Mill Road, and sorting stones ready for further repairs to the ragstone walls in Crisbrook Meadow.



Loose clean-up

Loose Parish Council is looking for volunteers to join a litter-pick around the village on Saturday, 11th November.

Meet at pavilion in the King George V playing field at 10.30am to get kitted out with litter pickers, gloves and hi-viz jackets. Afterwards, volunteers will be rewarded with tea, coffee and cakes. Any queries to Liz McLaren, Deputy Clerk, on 07921 809161.

Tuesday Work-party

Looking for some exercise? You are welcome to join the Tuesday work party, meeting at the Conservation Cabin every Tuesday at 10am. Come for an hour or all day: it's up to you.

Wall repairs

Anyone who visits the Valley will have noticed the length of repaired ragstone wall bordering Hayle Mill Road. This was not due to our efforts directly, but was carried out by a contractor commissioned by the trustees of the Hayle Park Nature Reserve. The trustees comprise three members each from Maidstone Council, Tovil Parish Council and ourselves.



The trust is currently in the process of obtaining planning permission to erect a tractor shed in the nature reserve, to securely hold the equipment used by the park's volunteers. It will be near the main entrance from Fieldfare Drive. Details can be seen on the MBC website under planning application reference number: 17/505101.

Barbecue report

It seems a long time ago now, but we haven't yet reported on this year's summer barbecue. Around 120 members and their guests attended the event at Hayle Place Manor House with around a dozen children. We all had to take shelter from the rain for about 10 minutes mid-afternoon, but otherwise the weather remained fine. Everyone agreed the food was superb this year. The event raised £611. We are grateful to Tesco at Tovil, which donated a considerable number of bread rolls and desserts free of charge.

There is a great deal of work goes on behind the scenes each year, from cutting the grass for the car park, to erecting the gazebos, preparing the salads and desserts, and then next day, of course, taking down the gazebos and cleaning the barbecues. Several dozen people lent a hand in one way or another; thanks to all, but our especial thanks to Jane and Colin Holman for allowing us to use their lovely gardens, and to Bryn Cornwell, Terry Moore, Tony Day and Dennis Usmar for their hard work at the barbecue coal-face.



Music was from the Darstardly Scoundrels

MINK

They may look cute, but mink are voracious killers of other wildlife: fish, frogs, water voles, ducks and even rabbits. There is some concern then that our colleagues in the Loose Amenities Association believe they have mink in their end of the Loose Stream. If you spot a mink, please let us know on 01622 746514.



Voting for the Local Plan



South ward councillors Paul Wilby, Brian Clark and Derek Mortimer with Loose Councillor Sue Grigg

On Thursday, October 25, Maidstone councillors will vote on whether to adopt the Maidstone Local Plan. They would have already voted if our local MPs had not made a last ditch battle to scupper the plan by asking the Secretary of State for Communities, to call it in. He declined. In fact, the same week his department began consulting on a new method of calculating housing demand for each area that may see Maidstone having even more house-building imposed on it, if adopted.

The Local Plan remains deeply unpopular. It still aims to build 17,660 homes in the current planning period (until 2031), which many Maidstone residents who already waste hours of their lives stuck in the town's traffic queues find totally incredible. It still contains provision for a commercial development at Junction 8 on the M20, close to Leeds Castle, which was what particularly exercised our MPs, and it still contains many other unwelcome suggestions, such as extending the bus lane in Sutton Road.

Knowing their decision may be unpopular, our local councillors have taken the unusual step of issuing a statement to residents explaining why they intend to vote FOR the Local Plan.

“Unfortunately, a process imposed by Whitehall determines the housing level and in the future councils without an adopted Local Plan will likely see significantly increased housing numbers (based on a government housing consultation announced in September),” writes Brian Clark.

“In light of this, we did not agree with the recent attempt to call in our Local Plan and are pleased that the Secretary of State has decided not to intervene.”

“We supported the plan during consultations even though we knew we had much more work to do to make it acceptable for our area, because the plan gave us a five-year housing supply, a statutory requirement giving us a much stronger position to fight for concessions.”

“We jointly reviewed areas of the plan that would be most harmful locally. We have appeared as expert witnesses at the hearings, lobbied at countless committees, raised and supported petitions and have worked hard to reflect the public view at both Maidstone Borough and at Kent County Council. This, along with a tremendous community effort has led to a considerably improved plan for our area.”

“The government inspector listened to our evidence and agreed that two major South Ward sites should be removed from the plan, endorsing our concerns on local traffic and congestion in his report. Furthermore, we successfully campaigned for these sites to be included in the Landscape of Local Value register along with large tracts of previously unlisted green open space within the Loose Valley, from Loose Village to Tovil.”

“In light of these safeguards achieved, we are united in our decision to vote in support of the Local Plan at the Town Hall on 25th October. Should the Plan be rejected, we would jeopardise our valid five-year housing supply, taking away our ability to keep at bay what will become a tidal wave of new speculative development.”

“We understand how controversial any large housing plan can be, and that choosing to oppose the plan may seem an easy choice that could play out well in some quarters, but we feel that the risk we face by not having a Local Plan would be unthinkable.”

Signed: Cllrs Derek Mortimer, Paul Wilby, Brian Clark and Sue Grigg

Meanwhile...

Those of us that had begun to hope that a development of 62 homes on green fields off the Postley Road extension and opposite Hayle Park Nature Reserve might never go ahead have been disappointed.

Maidstone council agreed to grant outline planning permission for the development back in May 2015, but subject to the signing of a 106 agreement requiring the developer Chailey Homes make certain commitments.

As the entire site was not in Chailey's ownership (It was part owned by the developer of the Hayle Park estate, Taylor Wimpey, and part in the private ownership of Perry Mason, the resident at The Lodge) that proved more difficult than expected.

However, all the parties have now agreed and signed the legal deed, enabling Maidstone council finally to issue permission.

Chris Baron, managing director of Chailey Homes, told the Kent Messenger: “It's been a very frustrating process, but we have now finally received permission. The next stage will be to discharge the conditions relating to that outline permission, before we proceed with a detailed application.”

So prepare for the next intrusion into one of our few remaining green spaces.

Pink purse: A sneak-thief has stolen the pink purse of one of our members in the Valley. While the villain has already used her credit cards in local shops, there is a chance the purse itself was discarded somewhere in the valley or on the nature reserve. If you see a pink purse, please collect it and inform our chairman Bryn Cornwell on 01622 746514 who will see it is returned.