

Valley Conservation Society



doing nothing is not an option

Members' newsletter No 161 We are a non-political organisation

December 2018

Tractor Shed Opening

*Complimentary copy
for your interest*



The Mayor of Maidstone, Cllr David Naghi, did the honours – cutting a ribbon to open our new tractor shed at Hayle Park Nature Reserve.

Not everything went smoothly, the Mayor was at first handed a pair of garden shears to perform the cutting – which proved too blunt to do the job, and Cllr Derek Mortimer had to

step in with a knife to start the cut. However, the event was judged a success with around 70 VCS members and local residents present to show their support.

The building, to be known as The Barn, is near the entrance to the reserve from Fieldfare Drive and was constructed using Section 106 money given to the Hayle Park Trust by the developers of the Hayle Park estate. Further support came from Howdens Joinery, who donated a kitchen for The Barn, Wickes who donated a work-top and £100 for tools, the Blakemore Foundation who donated £200 for tools, and B&Q who donated decking and plants for the reserve. Tovil Tesco donated cakes for the opening ceremony.

The Mayor, who stayed several hours chatting to all and sundry, said: "It's very impressive what the trust has been able to do for the community."

The Hayle Park Nature Reserve is run by nine trustees, with three each appointed by Maidstone council, Tovil Parish Council and your Society.

Steps to heaven

They say there are three steps to heaven, but the lads of the Tuesday work party found it took rather more than that to climb the steep bank up from Crisbrook Meadow towards the Hayle Park Nature Reserve. Nevertheless, they look pretty pleased with their work.



Pictured: Dennis Usmar, David Hill, Phil Smith, Derek Warne, Peter Hobden and Sam Hitwell

Are you sitting comfortably?



In our last newsletter, we reported that the foundation for a new bench had been laid in the meadow. Well that seat is now installed, and jolly comfortable it is too, as our chairman Bryn Cornwell can attest.

The bench was paid for by Christine Higgins, in memory of her father Cyril Wright who in days gone by ran a small-holding on the meadow.



Membership

Our membership secretary Tony Day has had to go into town to buy himself a larger sized hat – after breaking all records on membership this year.

We currently have 534 fully paid-up members – the highest since the Society was founded in the year 2,000. Any members joining in the final month of this year will be classed as 2019 members.

Tony has two requests: many members receive communications from us by email: please don't forget to let Tony know if you change your email address.

Secondly, a reminder, the new membership year starts on January 1. Please use the membership form on the back page to re-register for 2019!

Tony can be contacted on vcsmembership@btinternet.com

What, already?

Your Society has been surprised and not a little dismayed – as we believe have most people – to learn that one of the residents of the new Saxon Way development off Cripple Street has already applied for planning permission for a significant extension to the property.

The owners have barely been in there a year and the developers are still to complete two of the houses in the road.

The application is for both a side and rear extension to number 36 Saxon Way, that is the house on the right at the front as you look at the road from Cripple Street.

Although we can find no reason to object to the rear extension, your Society has objected to the side extension as the plans seem to take the proposed building right into the hedge which borders the public footpath KB22A.

The Maidstone council reference number is 18/505385

Members may like to make their own comments.

Coxheath and Loose

The extension referred to above is small beer compared with the latest application to hit Coxheath.

The Chartway Group acting with Optivo Housing Association has submitted details of their plans to build 210 homes on an agricultural field off Forstal Lane.

The principle of the development has already been accepted by Maidstone council and outline permission granted.

The detailed plans indicate 198 two, three, four and five bedroom homes, plus 12 one and two-bedroom flats.

On a positive note, the scheme does include 1.85 hectares of open space on the eastern edge of the site to include a play area and a community orchard.

Apart from the loss of countryside, what will concern most residents is the increased traffic that will inevitably result. The national average figure for traffic movements to and from a property is 6.5 per day. So that will mean around 1,365 extra traffic movements in the area each day.

There are only two ways out of the site: down Well Street into Loose, or via Stockett Lane, either up towards Coxheath village, or down towards the Valley.

Anyone who knows Well Street would consider the idea that it could take more traffic laughable. That leaves Stockett Lane, already coming under pressure from 74 homes being built in Stockett Lane, outline permission granted for 55 at Olders Field and 72 houses and 43 flats at Clockhouse Farm.

Application number 18/505417 refers.

Phew! Some good news!

After all that extra development, it's a relief to have some good news!

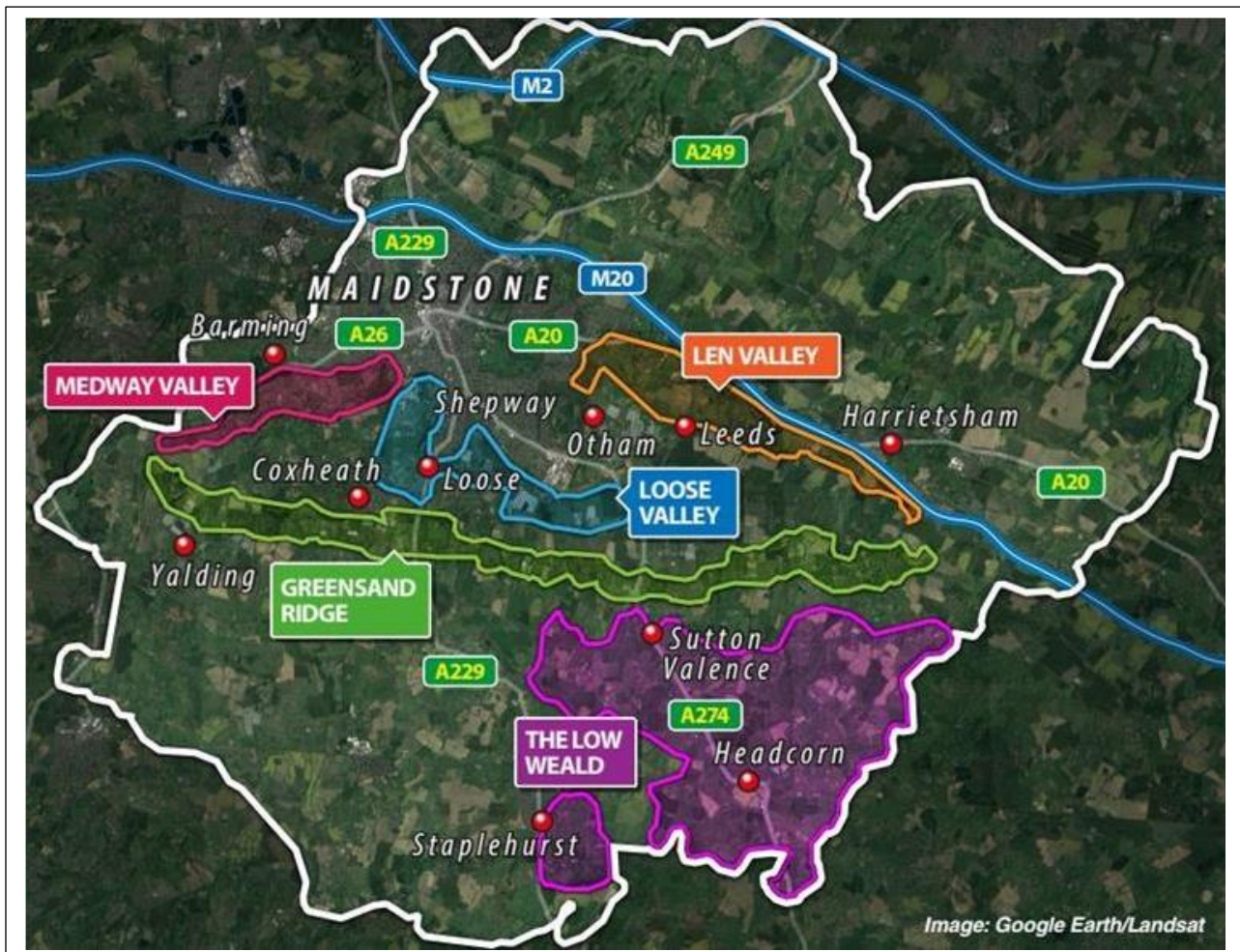
South Ward councillor Brian Clark has achieved something of a coup for the borough by persuading Maidstone council to apply to the Government to have Maidstone's five Areas of Local Landscape Value upgraded so that they receive a national level of protection.

In particular the council will seek to have the Greensand Ridge re-classified as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – the highest level of protection available, but in addition the council will seek for the four other Areas of Local Landscape Value – and that includes us in the Loose Valley Area – to be upgraded to a new “sub-tier” level of protection being mooted as part of a Government Review of the nation's AONBs and National Parks.

To be honest, Cllr Clark, who proposed the recommendation contrary to the borough planning officers' recommendations, was pushing at an open door – and every councillor on the committee voted with him.

It does not mean the new rankings are secure – Maidstone will now have to embark on the lengthy process of persuading the Government to accept – but there is a chance.

Any new designation would not prevent development sites already allocated in the Local Plan from going ahead, but would mitigate against new ones coming forward. Planning officers were unhappy with the idea – warning that the new designations might “prevent the council gaining windfall sites.” Er yes! That's rather the idea!



Furry critters

A Small Mammal Survey carried out in Hayle Park Nature Reserve under the supervision of Steve Songhurst, the warden at Vinters Valley Nature Reserve, revealed plenty of rodents enjoying the park.

Sixteen humane traps were set and when checked the next day they revealed eight wood mice, one yellow neck mouse and one short-tailed vole. Two other traps had been set off - possibly by a fox – but with no captives.

After inspection, all the mice were returned to the wild unharmed.



VALLEY CONSERVATION SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2019

I/We should like to (re)join the Society: *(Please include your title and first name)*

Names:

.....

Address:

.....

.....Postcode.....

Phone: E-mail:

Mobile:

Would you prefer to receive newsletters by e-mail? Yes / No

Signature(s)

Membership is £2 per year (or 50p for young people aged 14 to 18). Send your application form and your cheque made payable to Valley Conservation Society to:

**Tony Day, Membership Secretary,
57 Mayfair Avenue, Maidstone, ME15 6BY**

I enclose a cheque/cash for £..... (Donations welcome)

General Data Protection Regulations

Please tick the box if you consent to the Valley Conservation Society retaining the details on this form

Our legal basis for holding and processing the data you provide is our legitimate interest as a membership organisation and we will use it to send you newsletters and other information we consider relevant and useful. We will not disclose it to any third party

Office use only:

Issued:

Donation: £

Membership Nos

