

Valley Conservation Society

doing nothing is not an option

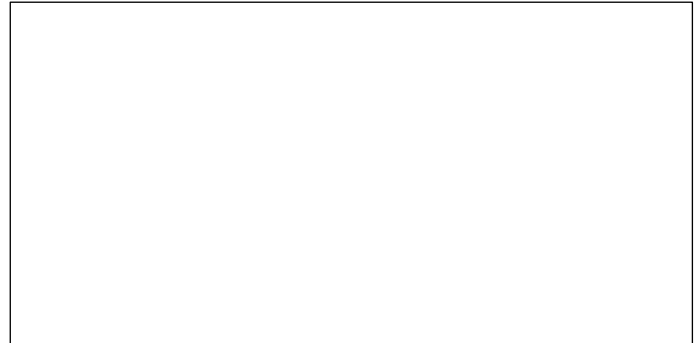


Members' newsletter No 183

We are a non-political organisation

June 2023

Major problem at Reeds Pond



Members who walk the Valley will have seen for themselves that we have a major problem at our Reeds Pond.

The water in the pond is usually retained by a concrete weir a little further downstream, on the section of the Loose Stream that runs alongside the Woodbridge Drive Play Area.

There is a breach beneath the foundation of that weir that is allowing the water to run underneath rather than over the top. As a result the water level is around two feet below the top of the weir, and so the water in our pond is two feet lower too, meaning that much of the pond has dried out.

We have held meetings with both the Environment Agency and Maidstone council's parks department, (who own the section where the weir is). To date, we have not had any reassurance that the weir will be repaired.

The Environment Agency in particular seems happy to allow the Loose Stream to "take a more natural course."

We are not happy - and neither are the ducks or fish. We have offered to help Maidstone council with any repairs they choose to do and will keep you informed of any progress.

The KentOnline website carried a report on the issue, which can be seen at <https://tinyurl.com/reedspond>



The water level is two feet below the top of the weir

Annual General Meeting

The Society's annual general meeting was held on **Saturday, April 29**, at the King George V Pavillion, off Walnut Tree Avenue.

We are pleased to say it was well attended and we thank members for giving up their time on a Saturday morning.

Two of our committee members did not seek re-election this year. They were Brian Shingleton and Peter Hobden. We thank them both for their past service.

Two new members joined the committee after a unanimous vote. They were Jonathan Leeson of Cripple Street, and Kevin Shanahan of Old Loose Hill. The other committee members were re-elected.

Abbeygate Farm – 250 homes

The Planning Inspectorate's Stage 2 hearings into Maidstone council's Local Plan Review are continuing.

On Tuesday, May 16, the inspector looked specifically at the Allocation No LPRSA265 – land for 250 homes at Abbey Gate Farm, off Stockett Lane.

Alan Smith represented the Society at the hearing, and VCS member Eileen Lewis spoke as an individual. Another VCS member, John Talbot, the owner of Abbeygate Place, was represented by his solicitor.

Sadly, we were not able to persuade the Inspector that the allocation should be dropped from the Local Plan. However, we were able to win some concessions. MBC agreed to change the wording of the policy, which would have permitted housing development actually on the Walnut Tree Meadow Nature Reserve, so that it was clear that housing there would not be allowed.

The inspector also agreed that the wording should be changed so that it was clear that no housing development would be permitted on the field east of Stockett Lane.

Mr Talbot's solicitor was also able to persuade the inspector that a buffer needed to be left around Abbeygate Place, to save the integrity of the Grade 2* Listed building.

Since the hearing, we have been contacted by the agent of the adjacent site, which most people know as Burke's Land, but which is actually now owned by L&G Affordable Homes.

He has suggested that the access road to the Abbeygate Farm development could in fact run through his site, with no need to cross the Walnut Tree Meadow Nature Reserve. We shall be investigating this promising suggestion.

The hearing was webcast by the council and can be viewed online at <https://tinyurl.com/plantalk>
The action starts at 28.40 on the timer.

Calendars

A reminder that we are looking for photo submissions on the subject of flora and fauna of the Loose Valley for inclusion in our calendar for next year,

Please email your submissions in J-peg form to the Secretary, Alan Smith, on a128smith@btinternet.com

Include your name, and the date and place the shot was taken. A judging panel will decide in the autumn which photos to use.

By submitting your photograph you are deemed to have given copyright consent for its use.

Photos should be horizontal, not portrait, and with a minimum of 1mb resolution. Most modern mobiles take a photo far in excess of that.



Toothwort by Jane Holman

Summer barbecue – Saturday, July 22

We have already sold around half the allocation of tickets for our summer barbecue in the grounds of Hayle Place. So if you haven't yet bought yours, don't leave it too long. Numbers will be strictly limited to 100 to ensure there is not an unreasonable waiting time for the food to be cooked.

The BBC says food price inflation is running at 19%, so our barbecue is a real bargain - as we are keeping the ticket price exactly the same as last year: £12.50p for members and £15 for guests (maximum 2 per member).

Entertainment will be from the Soundwave Disco Roadshow. Gates open at 3pm, with parking nearby.

Vegan options will be available for non-meat eaters as long as they are ordered in advance. For tickets, and to place vegan orders, contact Alan Smith on a128smith@btinternet.com



Desserts are included