

Valley Conservation Society



doing nothing is not an option

Members' newsletter No 200

We are a non-political organisation

March 2026

Annual General Meeting

We do hope all members will make the effort to join us for our AGM, which this time, in a break from tradition, will be held in the afternoon.

The venue is the King George V Pavilion in Walnut Tree Lane, Loose (postcode ME15 9RG).

The date is **Saturday, April 18**, starting at 2pm, and with an expected finish around 4pm.

The meeting will take our usual format with reports from the Society's officers on our activities over the past year, to be followed by an open forum for members' questions.

This year, there will be additional reports from the newly formed traffic-calming group, and from Carbon Action Tovil, who have been organising Repair Cafés, as well as litter picks and other events in Tovil.

Importantly, there will be the election of your 12 executive committee members for the coming year.

All of your 12 existing executive committee members have indicated a willingness to stand again, but that shouldn't prevent other members from putting themselves forward.

Under the terms of our constitution, nominations must be submitted in writing (email acceptable) to the Secretary at least two weeks before the event, ie by **April 4**. No nominations can be accepted after this date or on the day of the meeting.

The address is The Secretary, Bockingford House, Cripple Street, Maidstone, ME15 6DN, or email a128smith@btinternet.com

We strongly suggest that if you are thinking of standing, you attend our next executive committee meeting at Flat 3, The Manor, Hayle Place, on Wednesday, 1st April, at 7,30pm, in order to get a taste of what the post entails.

Membership

This is a polite reminder that to vote at the AGM, you must be a paid-up member of the Society.

Our annual membership remains at just £2 a person, although we appreciate that many people top that up with a donation, for which we are truly grateful.

Many people pay their subscriptions by standing order, which helps us cut down on the paperwork. Sadly, we can no longer accept cheques as the bank has begun charging us 50p each time to process them. Bank transfers are acceptable. See the application form at the back of this newsletter.

If you are uncertain whether you have paid your dues for 2026, check with the membership secretary, Jonathan Lesson, on VCSMembership@btinternet.com

Quiz night

All tickets for our quiz night this Saturday have sold out. We'll bring you the winners in our next newsletter.

Opera

Tickets for our next Opera evening with Italian tenor **Yuri Sabatini** are also selling well. At just £15 a ticket, to include drinks and nibbles, this is a bargain not to be missed.



Sunday, June 14
Starting at 7pm.

Orders to Alan. Call 07860 909903 or a128smith@btinternet.com

Defibrillator



VCS work party leader Dennis Usmar accepts the defibrillator from Peter Hooper of the Maidstone Lions

We are delighted to report that VCS now has its own defibrillator. It is on a post outside the Conservation Cabin in Cave Hill.

The work to install the defibrillator was done by the work party, but the machine itself was generously donated to us by the Maidstone Lions.

Although we were keen to acquire a defibrillator in case any of our work party should ever need it, it has also been installed outside the cabin so that it can be used by any member of the public in an emergency (although you will need a mobile phone to acquire the access code.)

We understand that it is the only defibrillator in Tovil that is available 24/7.

When in use, the machine speaks to you and tells you exactly what to do, so don't worry on that score. That said, of course, we hope we never have to use it.

- The work party continues to meet every Tuesday. The guys (and gal) are always keen to welcome more volunteers. They meet at 10am at the Conservation Cabin in Cave Hill. You can stay for an hour or all day. The choice is yours.

For further details, call Dennis on [07484 706537](tel:07484706537). Or just turn up on Tuesday.

Wildflower Meadow

Work is underway on the Society's latest project – reinstating a wildflower meadow in the Valley.

Once again, we are fortunate in having an outside sponsor – Pennies Day Nursery – who are donating £310 to pay for all the seeds and plug plants when we get to that stage. We have also benefited from the advice of Guy, from Bee The Change, on the best plants to grow to encourage pollinators.

Work party member John Roberston is leading on this project.

Three wildflower areas are to be created on the west side of Crisbrook Meadow.

The areas will be prepared and cultivated using three different methods - bare soil; very short cut grass, and existing grass. This will be an experiment for us to judge which is the best method of cultivation for us in future.

The work party have been busy preparing the ground and the first sowing is due next week.



Willows

In February, the Society engaged Hoods Tree Services to professionally fell two large willow trees, one growing on the island in Crisbrook Pond and one growing on the island in Reeds Pond.

The two trees had become over-large for their rather insecure root foundations and had become unstable and at risk from toppling over.

Felling them also created more light and space for surrounding plants to thrive.

Willows are notoriously good at recovering from even harsh treatment and we expect they will soon send up fresh shoots.



Dates for your diary

This year, we are delaying the “spring walk” until **June 13**, so that it coincides with Maidstone Borough Council’s Big Day Out. Details to follow, but stick the date in your diary.

This year’s summer event will be on **Saturday, July 18**, at The Manor in Hayle Place. Again, details to follow.

New homes target

Despite obliging local authorities to grant planning permission for practically every scheme that developers put forward, it seems that the Government is still failing on its ambition to build 1.5m homes by the end of this Parliament.

So the work party has decided to help them out by building some new homes of their own.



The bird boxes are being created with wood generously donated by Steve Small of the Cowshed.

Calendar

This is our regular reminder that we are looking throughout the year for photographs of the Loose Valley in order to compile next year's VCS calendar.

Please send your images (landscape only) to a128smith@btinternet.com with details of when and where they were taken, and your name. Most mobile phones produce images of sufficient quality.

Repair Café

Our colleagues at **Carbon Action Tovil** (CAT) held a Repair Café at the YMCA Community Hall in Barfreton Close, Tovil, on Saturday, March 14.

The event was attended by 58 members of the public who brought along a wide variety of items for repair, from broken clocks, to defective bicycles, jammed cassette players and more.

Thirty-three items were repaired on the day. Five others, requiring more attention, were taken away by the repair team to fix at home. In other cases, advice was given about the type of replacement part that was needed.

Among the clients was Pennies Day Nursery, who brought along some of their children's toys for repair. In return, Pennies generously sponsored the hire of the hall.

This community event, organised by Eileen Lewis, involves a lot of volunteers – not just the repairers, but also those manning the check-in desk and working in the café's kitchen. If you can lend a hand at the next event, Eileen would love to hear from you. Call her on **07709 031365** or email eileenmlewis@sky.com.

The next café is on **Saturday, May 9.**



The repairers

Parish Meetings

Loose holds its annual parish meeting on Monday, March 23, at 7pm in the KGV pavilion. This is a meeting of the parish, not the parish council, and a chance to hear from local groups.

The annual Tovil parish meeting will be on Monday, April 27, at 6pm, in the Tovil Workingmen's Club in Hearne Court Road. Again, this is for local groups, not the parish council.

VCS will be represented at both events.

Valley Conservation Society

'doing nothing is not an option'

See us on Facebook and on our website www.valleyconservation.org.uk

Membership Application 2026

Name:

Address:

..... Postcode

Email (*please print*)

Phone Mobile

Membership is £2 per person per year (50p for 14 to 18-year-olds).

I enclose cash for £ (Donations welcome)

Cash can be delivered with your form, and we will confirm receipt. Drop off at:
Jonathan Leeson, Membership Secretary, Ridgeways, Cripple Street, Maidstone, ME15 6DN

Unfortunately, we can no longer accept cheques (due to bank fees). However, you can set up your own direct debit or standing order using our bank details below.

BANK TRANSFER DETAILS

Utilise the following bank details for the Valley Conservation Society to make payment:

For the credit of: **Valley Conservation Society**
Bank: **Lloyds Bank plc**, Week Street, Maidstone (309537) Branch, PO Box 1000,
BX1 1LT
Account Number: **02166853** Sort Code: **30 95 37**

The sum of £2 starting on the day you joined and thereafter on 1st day of January every year until further notice.

Please email - VCSMembership@btinternet.com with your name and address if you choose this option to confirm payment (we do check the bank statement)

General Data Protection Regulations: *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.*

Please tick the box if you consent to VCS retaining the details on this form