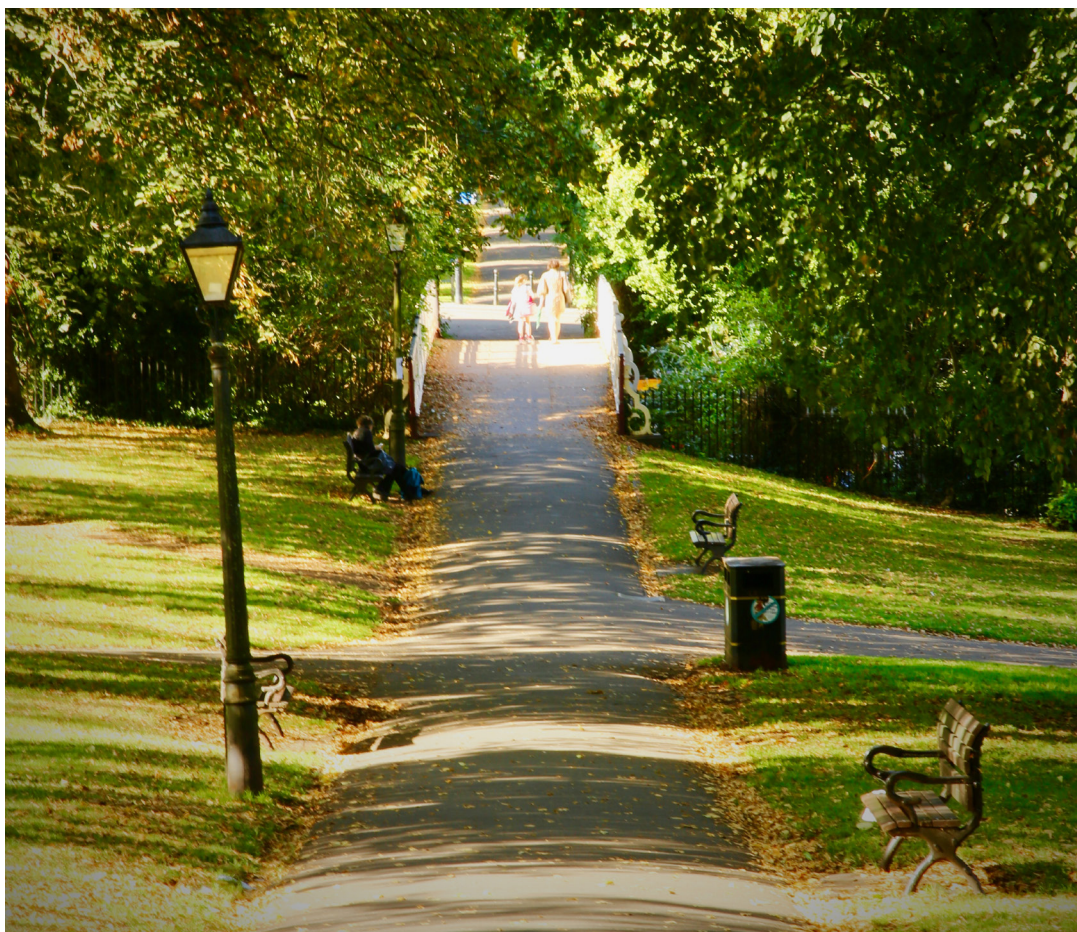


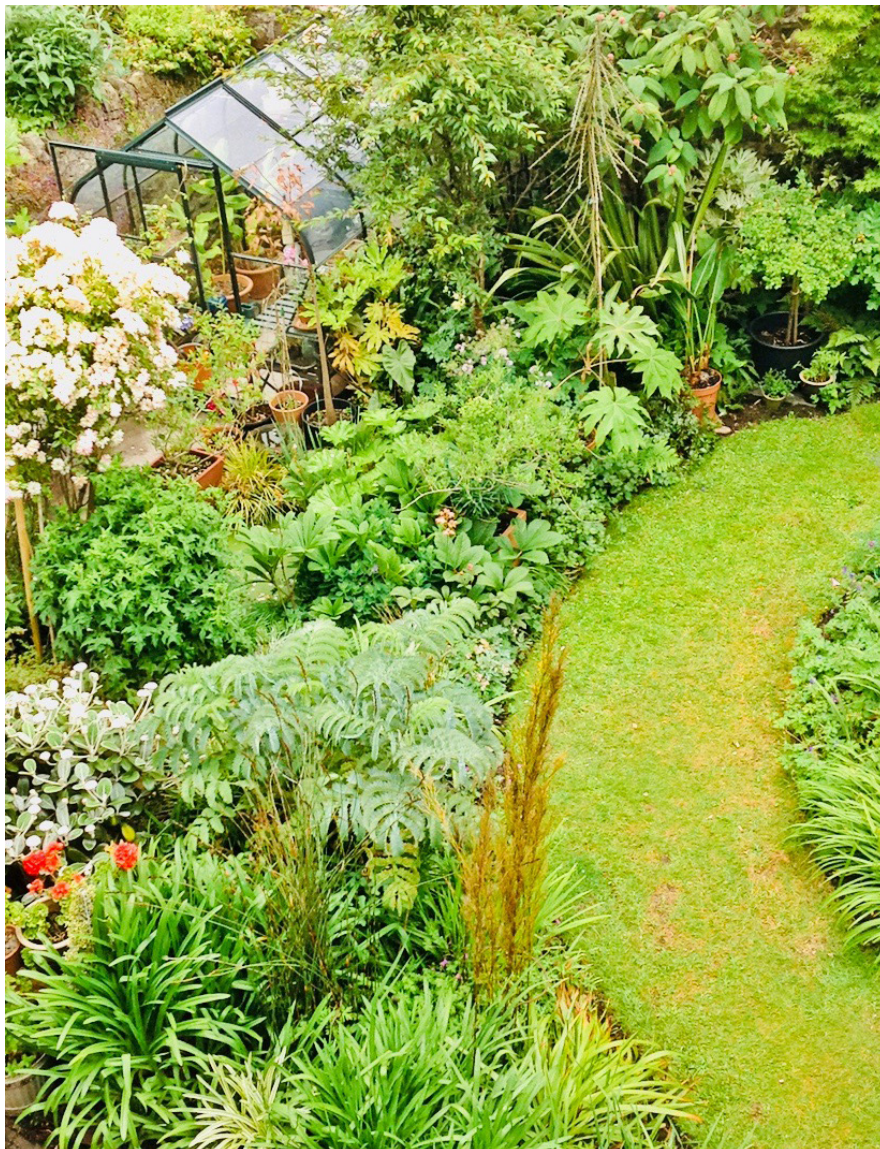
Redland & Cotham Amenities Society



Annual Report
Virtual Open Gardens
Student Liaison
Planning, Parks
Trees



Number 188 - September 2020



Members were invited to share photographs of their gardens as part of a special edition of the Newsletter in June (distributed by email only), after the annual RCAS Open Gardens event was cancelled due to the pandemic

ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to the Autumn Newsletter and Annual Report from the committee.

Firstly, our apologies for the lack of the Summer edition; we were affected by the lockdown in Spring by the guidance on social-isolating and shielding, which meant that a number of our distributors were unable to take on the delivery of the newsletters. Many thanks to the committee members and others who stepped into the breach.

As the Summer edition follows fast on the heels of the Spring, and as there was little to report because of the lockdown situation, which also meant the printers were not operating, we took the decision to cancel the printed Summer Newsletter.

I would like to thank the Open Gardens team and the Newsletter Editors who came up with an alternative format for the Open Gardens event. Everyone for whom we had up-to-date email addresses was invited to submit photos of their gardens, which were compiled into an online edition. Members on our email alert list were then sent the link to this. It is still available as are back copies of Newsletters on our website member page. Details of how to access this are included on page 30. Photos from the online edition are included in this Newsletter and the Virtual Open Gardens report.

During the ongoing Covid-19 situation, we have increasingly relied

on our email contact with members to share information on help available, consultations and opportunities. If we do not have your email address, please do let us have it so we can keep you updated with relevant information. Please also check the RCAS website where updates from our Facebook page are displayed. www.rcas.org.uk

The committee has continued to work in our various roles for RCAS and meet online. Building works continue, including works to trees, and highways, so there is still lots to do. If anyone would like to join us on the committee or working group we would be delighted to hear from you.

As we go through the stages of opening-up and then locking-down again, it is with regret that we have to cancel our Annual General Meeting event at the Redland Club. We will be going ahead with an online meeting and are currently researching the best way of doing this. Obviously, this will need to be using online technology, so again email details are needed to be able to contact you.

Early in the Covid-19 shutdown, a face-to-face consultation on the replacement of the no 9 bus was affected. This change has now been put in place so that Redland is now served by a bus which turns north from Redland Station, runs up Redland Road and then down Whiteladies Road to re-join the former 9 route at the triangle. As it comes from the UWE campus and runs down Gloucester Road, it is hoped that there will be good level of use, which will ensure that this route is sustainable. (Route map detailed p17 NL187 March 2020).

As always, a request from me to help the society to reach other people by letting them know about the society. We can supply additional newsletters if you would like to pass one on to potential recruits!

Finally, I cannot let this report go by without repeating our thanks to Peter and Helen Wilde who have now moved away from Redland to Edinburgh. We wish them all the best in their new life and thank them for their past contribution to the society as Chair and Newsletter editor.

Alison Bromilow
alison@rcas.org.uk

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Needless to say, the Covid restrictions this year have affected the normal, annual fluctuations in our membership numbers. There has been a relatively small number of new members over the year – normally there is an increase after Open Gardens which has been sadly missed.

In addition, as we had to cancel the May newsletter the normal subscriptions weren't collected over the summer – a time when we find that a number of members have moved away and we see a drop in membership numbers.

Overall, we do not have a like-for-like membership number this year to compare with previous years and we will have a better sense for the change by November. However, I would expect a slightly larger drop in membership numbers than previous years due to the reduced opportunities to recruit new members.

We would like to extend our membership to be more representative of our area, for example increasing the number of families with young children or people who may be renting. If any of your neighbours might be interested in joining, please do draw their attention to our website and get in touch with Kathryn (membership@rcas.org.uk) if you'd like to share an old newsletter.

Last but not least, a big 'thank you' to our distributors who continue to support RCAS through all weather and eventualities, and without whom you would not be able to read this newsletter.

If anyone would like to help their distributor and set up a Standing Order please fill in the mandate on our website (<https://rcas.org.uk/contact/join/>) or contact Kathryn Armitstead, membership secretary (membership@rcas.org.uk).

Kathryn Armitstead

48th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday 12th November

As detailed in the Chair's Report this will be a virtual meeting and we will need your email address for you to be able to participate.

We do need 20 members to join us at the AGM so we will be sending an email inviting you to the meeting. Please do reply as we will need to send you a link for the meeting!

If you're not receiving email alerts from us then we probably don't have your current email address. Please contact us via rcas.org.uk to update your details.

We are in discussions with the developers of The Vincent and Redland Court for presentations to be shown at the AGM which we hope will give a very interesting view of these developments

Gold Star Awards will be announced

If anyone is interested in joining the committee please contact info@rcas.org.uk

BISHOPSTON, COTHAM AND REDLAND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

All public meetings of the BCR CP have been cancelled this year since February.

The City Council also cancelled the Community Infrastructure Levy allocation process this year, however this did not unduly affect our area, as there was little money to allocate, due to previous meetings having ring-fenced future income for projects and the lack of income-generating development in the area.

Alison Bromilow

ANNUAL PLANNING REPORT

National Planning Policy change proposals

The government published its White Paper 'Planning for the Future' in August 2020; there was extensive coverage in the press.

RCAS has serious concerns about the proposals, which drastically reduce the opportunities for local planning authorities LPA and communities to affect development in their area.

The increase in the number of developments that would be classed as 'permitted development' means that there is no chance to object to the principle of changes, nor for the LPA to refuse changes such as householder extensions or changes of use on the high street.

The Paper states that the community would be able to have their say when local planning policy, such as the Local Plan, is being drafted but we are aware that the wider public do not and will not engage at this stage because it is very difficult to understand how the policies will affect them individually. The time allowed for drafting this policy is also to be reduced, so the LPA will be unable to spend time doing the sort of consultation which would enable communities to engage effectively. This has been identified by many as a serious democratic deficit.

The Town and Country Planning Association TCPA and many other commentators have written about their concerns about the proposals. As yet, the paper is very light on details so it is difficult to be definitive about the

impacts on the RCAS area but the recent RCAS email alert on August 10th set out some of the particular changes which are proposed:

Enlargement of a house by additional storeys. This is of limited impact to the RCAS area because the permitted development change does not apply in Conservation areas nor to houses built before 1st July 1948 or after October 2018.

Enlargement of detached purpose-built flats by additional storeys. This is of limited impact to the RCAS area because the permitted development change does not apply in Conservation areas nor to flats built before 1st July 1948; it is subject to a maximum height limit for the newly extended building of 30 metres.

Right to demolish a building and rebuild as residential. This is of limited impact to the RCAS area because the permitted development change does not apply in Conservation areas nor to terraced buildings, detached dwelling houses, nor to mixed-use buildings other than offices, research and development, industrial processes (light industrial), and free-standing purpose-built residential blocks of flats. Buildings must have been vacant for over 6 months.

However it should be noted that the White Paper also says that they will be reviewing the current policy on Conservation Areas so until details about this are published it is not possible to guarantee that our area will not be affected.

In addition, 'permitted development

rights' have been passed that further reduce the ability of the community and LPA to shape the retail provision in local high streets.

Changes of use of premises on the High Street

Retail/ financial services/ restaurant uses/ offices and light industrial are now classed as the same Use Class. Premises can therefore change between these uses without requiring planning approval from 1 September 2020.

All these changes come on top of the failure of the West of England WoE Joint Spatial Plan. The programme for reviewing the LPAs Local Plan, which sets out the planning policy for Bristol, has been paused as the two plans support

each other.

The WoE is now drawing up a Spatial Development Plan, which is going to identify the housing supply requirements for the region; however under another concurrent consultation the government is proposing Changes to the Current Planning System which includes how housing numbers are set. This also reduces the requirement for developers to contribute to local infrastructure including affordable housing, securing First Homes and extending the Permission in Principle consent regime.

The White Paper is open to consultation until 29th October 2020; the consultation on Changes to the Current Planning System until 1st October 2020.

Alison Bromilow

CURRENT PLANNING APPLICATIONS

This year has seen progress in the two largest developments in our area with The Vincent nearing final completion and Redland Court progressing on site, after a brief hiatus at the beginning of lockdown.

The Vincent, formerly the 1886 Queen Victoria House, has been refurbished and developed by Pegasus Life as 25 apartments, with two new blocks comprising an additional 39 apartments, amenities such as the gym and pool, and the restaurant which is open to non-residents and is housed in the original QVH building.



The Vincent on Redland Hill

Redland Court is a mixed development by Juniper Homes of apartments, town houses and single/ two storey new detached houses in both the existing Court and school buildings and as new build. The redevelopment is designed to keep the setting the front of the Palladian building built in 1732-5 by John Strachan for John Cossins, with the front gardens, currently occupied by terraced tennis courts, returned to grassland. The Art block in 10 Woodstock Road has been finished and is comprised of 5 part-buy part-rent apartments under the Home Reach scheme.

A residential and office scheme has been proposed on the **Home Gardens** site next to the Vincent above the ASDA petrol station on Blackboy Hill. The application is for outline approval of scale, access and layout. This will establish the principle of development

and, if approved, will be followed by a detailed application. The date for determination has been pushed back to 2nd October 2020.

On **Redland Park**, a large property and detached coach house is in the process of being changed from a nursing home to 8/9 no 1-4 bed flats. Permission has been gained for the 8-unit scheme but a revised scheme for 9-units is currently open to comment. RCAS has previously commented on the desirability of retaining the mature trees but has not objected to the addition of a unit by changes to the internal layout of the consented scheme.

Although the large sites have continued, smaller sites have suffered delays and many of the small houses that we expected to have been nearing completion are still underway.



Redland Court main house

Redland Bakery site has progressed with fitting-out of the two small houses and is close to completion. This is a design which has split opinion locally.

Applications this year have been mainly for tree works, house extensions and, unfortunately, additional off-street parking in front gardens. In our survey in 2016, many of the responses included members support for RCAS opposition to this form of development so we continue to object to loss of front gardens and the front boundary walls. We are concerned that there is also

going to be an increase in applications as people apply to add charging points and parking bays for their electric cars to replace polluting diesel vehicles.

RCAS also opposes, where possible, loss of trees or excessive pruning in our area. Trees provide much needed shade, particularly as summers get hotter, and they also help with flooding issues, which we are seeing with a greater frequency, as well as reducing air pollution. It is always a shame when a tree is lost and we hope that, where trees are removed because they are inappropriate, they are replaced with a species more appropriate to the location.

RCAS has also pressed the Local Planning Authority to give greater protection to the purple beeches in our area after a superb specimen was felled without permission in Waverley Road. Although many of our members who have purple beeches on their property are responsible and careful landowners and only carry out necessary works to the trees, we have asked that these trees have a Tree Protection Order placed on them so that any new owner is more likely to be made aware of the value of these trees to our area.

Nationally there is a severe housing shortage and we understand that proposals for residential units are going to be supported where they are acceptable. RCAS does not oppose applications that comply with planning policy as we're aware that the LPA will be unable to refuse them, or if refused, they will achieve permission at appeal with costs awarded against the LPA.

However, where there are concerns about whether the proposals will have

an adverse impact on the area, or on the community, RCAS will object to the application.

Rear of 3 Clyde Park; an application for a 2-storey house on the footprint of the existing garage. RCAS has objected on grounds of overdevelopment, potential damage to existing trees, design, and overlooking.

Woodland Terrace; new house on garage site. RCAS objected to the original application which was then revised to reduce the height and to include green landscaping. RCAS has not made a further comment.

1A-D Chandos Road; addition of residential accommodation at first floor over the single storey shops. Refused.

10 Chandos Road; conversion of basement and rear of retail unit, rear extension, to create 2 maisonettes. RCAS objected to poor-quality accommodation and loss of retail.

36 Cotham Park; change of use from residential to HMO. RCAS objected but it was approved with reduction from 4 to 3 bed layout.

48 Hampton Park; single storey house at rear of Hampton Park. Would face onto fence of garage on Hampton Road. RCAS objected to poor-quality accommodation.

Alison Bromilow and Simon Birch

PLANNING ISSUES FURTHER AFIELD

Downs Loop proposal

Following positive feedback from the Downs Committee a public consultation is running this summer for the Downs Loop proposal developed by Cycle Sunday and Greenways and Cycle Routes.

The key elements of the proposal are:

1- A zebra crossing on Stoke Road near the Water Tower to improve access to the Downs and safety at that point. It's clear that this is a popular place to cross but with the deep curbs, poor visibility and heavy traffic, it's currently pretty tricky.

2- Accessible paths alongside Downleaze/Rockleaze, Ladies Mile and a short section of Stoke Road. These will be 3m wide and designed to be wheelchair, buggy, scooter and bike friendly. Our target cycling audience is very much children and less confident

cyclists. We are pretty confident that our short off-road paths won't be of interest to more keen road cyclists, but we know that we may be challenged about this.

3- Physical traffic calming along Circular Road. This will take the form of speed tables that are designed as continuous raised crossings. We hope that people will see that deterring boy racers and providing clear places to cross will benefit all visitors even those who arrive by car but then pedestrians once they park.

The consultation includes public information boards next to Café Retreat (near the Water Tower) and a consultation website www.thedownsloop.com with information about the proposal and links to an online survey. The website and survey are now live with the consultation (under "Have Your Say") running until the end of September.



ANNUAL TREE REPORT

September 2019 - August 2020

Much of Redland and Cotham is designated a conservation area, which for trees means that there is a legal process to be followed before work on a tree can start. Applying for permission for work to be carried out on a tree is free, and fairly straightforward. Often arboreal contractors will do this as part of the work, but can be done by the tree owner if desired. The main consideration for accepting or rejecting the application is whether there is a loss to the public from the requested works. So a prominent tree in a front garden, visible and complementing the street view has a value, whereas a tree in a rear garden hidden from the street has a lower value. Bristol now has a target for increasing tree canopy cover as part of the climate change strategy, so all trees are considered as contributors to this goal.

Copper beech trees – these dark red leaved trees (pictured right) are a feature of the Redland and Cotham area and 41 mature specimens have been identified as significant to the region. The leaves on all Beech trees remain until spring time, so provide some colour to the street scene through the winter. RCAS are working with Bristol Council to provide better protection for these trees by applying tree preservation order status on them.

Ash Die Back, which is actually a fatal or severely disfiguring tree disease, despite its rather mild sounding condition. It is likely to affect a very large percentage of the Ash trees in the country eventually. If the tips of the branches of an Ash tree are bare, very visible with the sky as a background, it is an indication of the

early stages, but be careful, Autumn leaf loss may produce a similar effect. Fortunately, in Redland and Cotham this year there has only been one tree requiring work because of the disease, and in this case the tree was pruned back to a stump. There have been two other healthy Ash trees felled, despite objections from RCAS.

RCAS reviews all tree planning applications and considered objections were warranted to 7 tree applications for tree felling this year, and positive outcomes were achieved in 3 of these. The planning system for trees is there to protect the public interest and all expressions of interest are taken into account by the planning officer. Please either make comments yourself through the planning system when trees of interest are threatened or alert RCAS through the 'contact' board.

Dave Jones



HEDGES

On your road frontage

With the mixed weather this summer our gardens and hedges have put on a lot of growth. It is worth reminding members that this is not always an advantage along your road frontage for passers by. In Redland and Cotham we are lucky to have space for so much greenery in our front gardens which adds to the attractiveness of this area BUT if you have hedges or fast growing plants / brambles / roses along a road frontage you may not realise how much they have expanded. Please check them. Possibly they are now overhanging the pavement to create obstacles for people walking past, parents pushing buggies or people with eyesight problems as not everyone is blessed with good vision.

You are responsible in law for looking after your garden hedges making sure they do not cause a nuisance to anyone else. Hedges which now overhang the pavements need to be taken back to the boundary line; most will cope with very heavy pruning and then will be easier to keep under control in future. Even low hanging branches of trees can be a problem.

You can report someone else's overgrown hedge on a road frontage to the council on their website. They will notify the hedge owner and your name will not be made public.

Go to www.bristol.gov.uk/ Report Street Issues link and

go to Trees, Hedges, Leaves or Grass or Report Overgrown Hedges.

Useful information can also be found on www.gov.uk/ 'Over the Garden Hedge' link. This also gives guidance on assessing whether high hedges block too much daylight or sunlight from reaching adjoining properties or gardens. The 'action hedge height' above which action can / should be taken is 2m and applies to evergreen hedges only, not individual plantings, and should take into account orientation and slope of the land as well. However "it's good to talk" to the neighbour first if you have a problem.

Gillian Penrose



PARKS REPORT

Inevitably, the lockdown situation has impacted on the activities in Parks this year.

The Bristol Parks Forum continues to coordinate all the parks groups and Bristol City Council parks department and hold meetings, the last two of which have been virtual rather than in person. The discussions have been about what individual parks can do to respond to the ecological emergency. Bristol has published a One City Climate Strategy which includes proposals for improvements in buildings, infrastructure, food and the natural environment and parks groups have been talking about how their park can contribute to the overall goals.

The Bristol and Bath Parks Foundation, which has been set up with funding from National Lottery Community Fund, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Nesta, will not take over the ownership or management of parks, but identify projects and partnerships that will enhance and revitalise these important spaces. The Forum is working closely with the BBPF to support the work of volunteers.

Meetings called Bristol Future Parks were organised for spring 2020 to discuss their parks with local communities but these had to be cancelled due to the lockdown. The meetings went ahead virtually but some were poorly attended so may be rerun at some future date.

Cotham Gardens and Redland Grove/ Lovers' Walk.

All children's playgrounds were closed

down for a period until July 6th so the gates at Cotham Gardens were locked. This led to a greater use of Redland Grove greenspace by people who wanted to enjoy the summer weather (remember that?) and this became a great community gathering space, day and evening. The refurbishment of the sundial seat, which had just started in March, has been set back by the lockdown.

The local residents attempted to nurse the newly planted purple beech tree on Redland Grove opposite Redland Court through the very dry weather but, despite their efforts and regular watering by BCC, the beech failed to thrive so will be replaced this season.

The flowerbed at Cotham Gardens also suffered during the drought and then the rainy period, which restricted gardening activities, and the Greater Bindweed and other weeds flourished. The recent workparty effort has removed much of the enveloping growth but there will be a need for some serious work in Autumn.

Regrettably, some of the donated plants, including 4 lavender plants were stolen, along with one of the rose bushes and a loquat, but there is an impressive display of many varieties of flowers despite this and it is good to see people enjoying them.

Cotham Gardens is used by people of all ages and it is good to see that activities such as adult workouts on the tarmac area and chin-up bars can co-exist with children using the play equipment and sandpit, as well as the picnic and sunbathing parties.

Below: Cotham Gardens - busy after school once again in early September



Above: Emily Smithson with the Lord Mayor at the official opening of the tree trail on Redland Green (Photo courtesy of Emily Smithson)

Redland Green

The bird boxes which were put in in time for the nesting season have been enthusiastically welcomed by the tits. Many of the boxes were occupied by great and blue tits who successfully raised one or two broods.

Emily Smithson, the chair of Redland Green Community Group, spent time in the lockdown putting together a wonderful tree trail in Redland Green which was officially 'opened' by the Lord Mayor on a sunny day at the end of May.

It is an app - Redland Green Tree Trail - which you can download from Google Play or Apple Store.

Bristol City Council have let a temporary pitch for 3 months at Redland Green to a trader who would normally be working in festivals. The let has been taken by a trader who operates without running an engine by using bottled gas and battery. They are offering a small selection of vegan cakes, coffees, fresh juices and organic ice lollies.

Alison Bromilow



CoCo & Co Vegan Cafe on Redland Green (Photo courtesy of Warren Marsh)

LIVEABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS

During lockdown it was noticeable the difference it makes to have less traffic on our roads – less noise, less air pollution, more pleasant and safer to walk and cycle, for young people as well as for adults. Add to this the vital benefits of reduced greenhouse gas emissions and it is no surprise many are looking for ways that these benefits can be extended.

Liveable Neighbourhoods, also called low-traffic neighbourhoods, are an approach to local infrastructure that shifts focus from the motor vehicle back to people. This approach, as successfully used in Waltham Forest in London, is now being considered in Bath, Bristol and elsewhere.

The key aim of Liveable Neighbourhoods is to stop rat-runs and unnecessary through traffic. By doing so they can make high streets attractive again, so increasing footfall and trade, they can provide safer routes to school, and they allow a return to cleaner air, less noise and a more healthy environment.

A new initiative to promote Liveable Neighbourhoods in Bristol is encouraging discussion on how this can be achieved in each local area and asking councillors and the mayor to back the approach in next year's local elections.

The initiative is supported by Bristol Civic Society, Bristol Walking Alliance, Bristol Older People's Forum, Bristol

Cycling Campaign and Playing Out among many others.

At the same time, local councils have put in bids for government funding to enable Covid-19 distancing and to encourage walking and cycling. Cotham Hill is one local shopping street where pavements are too narrow both for distancing and for users of wheelchairs, mobility scooters and children's buggies.

Reduction in traffic would allow a more sociable and inviting environment to be created for the benefit of residents and businesses. Some of you may have seen visualisations showing what the northern end of Cotham Hill could be like if through traffic were removed. However, these are not yet proposals. Funding is not yet agreed and any proposal would in any case have to involve local consultation.

For more details, see liveablebristol.org.uk where there is a petition that can indicate support for a Liveable Neighbourhood in a specific area. Also see healthystreets.com, where public health specialist Lucy Saunders describes how the elements that are necessary in public spaces to improve people's health are also those needed to make them socially and economically vibrant and environmentally sustainable.

Roger Gimson



Computer generated image to show how the junction of Cotham Hill and Hampton Park could look if pedestrianised. Image courtesy of Smith Maloney



The same view today with lots of parked cars, some of them illegally parked on double yellow lines

FAMILY FOOD PROJECT

Covid 19 has hit many people in our society hard and there are people in areas across the city who are having real difficulties putting food on the table for their children. Redundancies are hitting even more families, particularly in socially deprived areas, and RCAS has been working with others to try to support those less fortunate than ourselves.

In June this year, RCAS circulated an invitation to members to be part of the Family Food Action group which had been set up to help families in food poverty in Bristol and to maintain the contact between schools and disadvantaged families, and particularly children in need, in their area.

Food was collected then distributed through 3 schools in Easton, Eastville and Hartcliffe. During the school holidays, donations have been routed through the children's centre in St Pauls and the Vench in Lockleaze who have been running activities for children.

Now that schools are going back, the group is going to pick up their contacts with local schools again to provide support to the families that are experiencing Food Poverty.

People have been very generous over the summer and we thank everyone who has donated or coordinated donations, but with more job losses in

prospect, there is likely to be an even greater need, so we will be continuing to support this project with drop-off points for donations in Grove Park, Clarendon Road, Cranbrook Road and Limerick Road.

For more details get in touch info@rcas.org.uk or drop off any items at 5 Grove Park any time on Sunday/ Monday each week. There is a collection box in the front porch so there is no need for personal contact unless you would like to chat!

PLEASE CAN YOU HELP?

Food basics such as tinned vegetables/ fish/meat/fruit, dried goods eg pasta/ rice etc, oil, food treats such as chocolate spread and biscuits, toiletries (shampoo/ soap etc) and baby necessities such as nappies are all welcomed.

Just a couple of extra items from each of us makes an enormous difference to these less fortunate families and especially the children.



OPEN GARDENS - A Virtual Tour

This section reproduces some of the collection of photos sent in by RCAS members which was sent out to the emailing list in July. If you would like to be added to the emailing list to receive notifications and alerts in the future please sign up on our website at <https://rcas.org.uk/member-page/email-alerts/>

There's no doubt that the combination of mild winter, wet spring and sunny early summer has led to our gardens putting on a great show in 2020. What a great year it would have been for our wonderful annual Open Gardens event!

Anyone fortunate enough to have a green space of their own - no matter the proportions - has appreciated it all the more during the weeks of lockdown. Being confined at home, whether alone or as part of a family unit, is made infinitely more bearable by an additional outdoor 'room' where we can delight in taking notice of the birds and the beasts, the unfurling of leaves and expectantly awaited petals.

Many of us have had far more time than usual to tend to and actually enjoy our gardens. We've struggled to continue to make excuses for STILL not having completed (or even started?) that garden

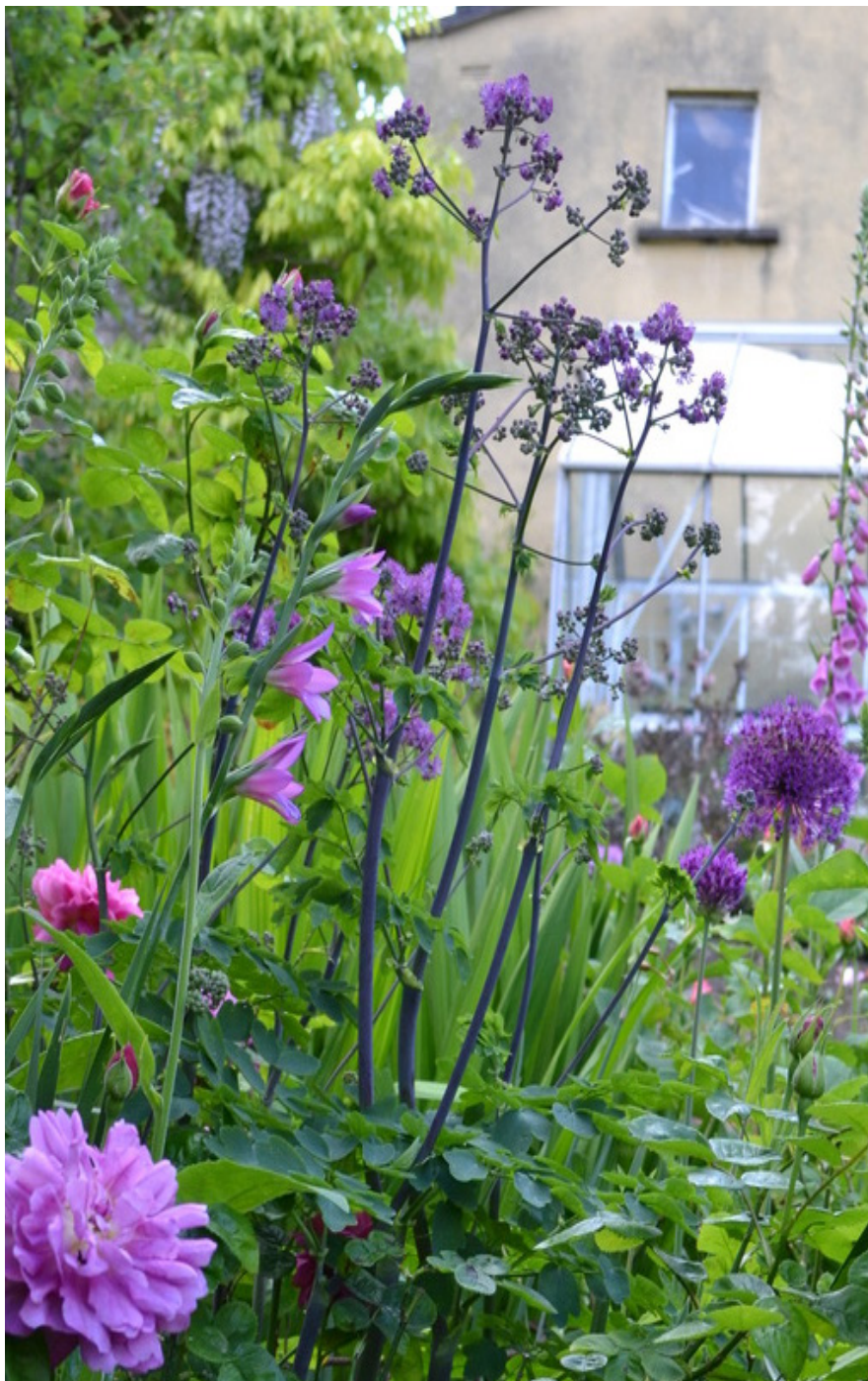
project we'd been talking about for some time. And even if we didn't make as much progress as we might have liked, we can still pat ourselves on the back and we can always thank Mother Nature for doing most of the work for us.



We're delighted to be able to share some snapshots of RCAS members' gardens taken over the past few weeks in this special edition of the newsletter. A big thank you to everybody who took the time to capture their garden and share pictures with us.

We'll look forward to returning to the more usual format in 2021 - a wonderful community event where we can not only show off our prize plants but share stories, tips and a love of gardening and our community.

**The Open Gardens Team -
Judith, Kelly-ann & Abi**













STUDENT LIAISON ANNUAL REPORT

The new academic year!

With the start of the new academic year we say hello to new and returning students and wish them well in our community.

This new start brings with it a few unknowns.

What will be the impact of the Covid-19? How do we now communicate effectively with UoB since the disbanding of the community liaison meetings?

How does the Bristol student body manage with the changes to their academic studies?

How will these things impact on our local community?

In order to encourage a healthy community we recommend a 'meet and greet' approach with new student neighbours to help them integrate into the area. This approach has been found to pay great dividends and encourages investment in the community by the short term residents.

However, if you should be affected by a student house in your area, for example noise or rubbish bins, we first recommend a face to face conversation so that they are able to understand the effects of their behaviour. If this doesn't work and further problems occur then register the problem with the various bodies including BCC, UoB/UWE and the relevant HMO landlord and/or letting agent.

For more information regarding registering complaints go to the Noisepages website (thenoisepages.com). Find the 'click to respond to

noise' link near the top of the page and then follow headings to source contact information relating to your concerns.

The HMO landlord is licensed by BCC and has a responsibility to exercise control over his or her tenants, see extract below from BCC website for Licensed HMOs. This states that the landlord must comply with all the conditions of the 'West of England Code of Good Management Practice' including paragraph 8 below.

'8. Neighbours

The Licence holder must take reasonable steps to minimise any nuisance, alarm, harassment or distress that may be caused to neighbours by the way the property is used. The licence holder will provide occupiers of the immediately neighbouring properties a contact telephone number, address or e-mail address to report any problems and will ensure that "To Let" or "Let" boards are not left up as long-term advertising features (over 28 days); and to keep the external appearance of the property in a condition taking into account its age of the property, character and locality.'

Contact details of Landlord/Letting Agent can be obtained from BCC by searching at 'Register of licenced properties' on their website.

Contact details and housing details for up to 3 HMO houses can be obtained for free by email.

We have asked BCC to make the HMO register available on their website as many other Local Authorities do, for

example BANES. They decline to do so.

Sound measurement

BCC have strict rules regarding their response to noise issues.

There are apps for smart phones that measure and record noise levels in decibels and BCC use a noise app now as an alternative to the 14 day noise diary method. Basically the Reportable App is made available to citizens when NET are investigating a noise nuisance to monitor noise levels i.e. when there is an open noise case. It is used for example to monitor noise from venues as well as neighbouring properties etc.

Apologies if you have heard this said before but those who make policy over the future strategy of student accommodation in our residential areas need to know what we are thinking and feeling and can only be made aware by the reporting of what is actually happening - if an incident is not reported it didn't happen!

It must be appreciated by all that it is only a small number of students who are causing any issues. The vast majority of Bristol students who live in our community are good neighbours and are very much appreciated for what they bring to our city.

Operation Beech and large student parties

The number and scale of these events has been ramped up in the last 3 or 4 years. The noise is greater, with hired-in sound systems and large numbers of party goers; the duration is longer, until late into the next day. This is not suitable for a residential area. It is antisocial and is causing tension in the neighbourhood.

It was generally agreed by local community groups that the Police patrols as part of Beech had a positive impact. Beech was run by the Police and funded by UoB over the Cotham, Redland, Clifton & Kingsdown areas, to address the concerns regarding large student parties and anti social behaviour.

It ran on selected nights, during the first term in 2019, from 8pm until 2am with two dedicated police officers contactable by text. The police reported that when called out they talk through the implications of a noisy party to the organisers. Party goers are encouraged to leave in small groups to reduce noise. Most students seemed to be aware of Beech!

Andrew Waller of the Noise Pages said that he believed that the situation was better than last year with less parties reported on his website and less observed when he walks around. Both UoB and the Police were proactive delivering letters to student houses stressing the importance of being respectful to neighbours.

UoB Community Liaison

Gordon Schofield said that 'Shush' corridors (based on a scheme used by Oxford Brookes Uni) have been introduced. This is where street signs remind late night revellers about the effects of noise on people asleep. The possibility of doing this along Hampton and Chandos Road is being looked into. BCC has given UoB permission to put signs on lamp posts.

Gordon has said that he has attended every household this year where a complaint had been made and was trying to engage with the letting agents.

Public Spaces Protection Orders in Leeds

Another approach for good student liaison that could possibly be used in Bristol is being trialed in Leeds. The Leeds CC has opted to use Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs). PSPO's are among the measures introduced by the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. They deal with a particular nuisance in a defined area where this is having a negative impact on the quality of life for those in that public space.

Before introducing PSPOs the council have to apply the 'test' for a PSPO, this being that the type of behaviour has to be assessed and tested to see if an order can be imposed on the individual.

Failure to comply with an order can result in a Fixed Penalty Notice.

The order can only be used as its name suggests, in public open spaces.

Student liaison group to be terminated by UoB?

Gordon Scofield has indicated that the community liaison group meetings will not be happening in the future. This is very disappointing as we thought that a lot of good came out of them. Groups from all over Bristol met and chatted and we learned a lot about what was going on city wide which is important and helped put the topic into some perspective. The UoB's reasons for doing this are puzzling!

This may make it harder for us to get our voices heard and have influence.

HMO Planning applications

Blackboy Inn conversion to commercial and HMO. Approval was granted subject

to conditions regarding soundproofing.

Soundproofing measures were applied in this case, could this be relevant to other new HMO planning applications? For planning consistency, similar soundproofing measures required to allow the change of use from a house to flats could be applied for a change of use from a house to an HMO.

20 years of the HMO lobby

The Lobby was set up to get changes in legislation to manage the usage of HMOs. The aims were for an adequate definition of HMOs, for control of them through planning and licensing, and for fair taxation. The Lobby has lobbied for all of these, with some success.

Future aims are to improve HMO legislation by expanding licensing to cover all HMOs (as in Scotland and Northern Ireland). The permitted development right for conversion of family houses to HMOs removed (as it is in Wales and in Northern Ireland and in areas in Bristol where Article 4 directive has been adopted).

HMOs could be classed as businesses subject to business rates. And the grant of an HMO licence could be refused if it lacks planning permission or there is over-provision in the area (as in Scotland and Northern Ireland).

July to August 2020, the 'quiet' period!

Sadly July and August which is normally

a quiet time with people away on holiday and student digs empty was problematic for some people with a return to late night parties, with many reports of some of the worst behaviour for many years. (See thenoisepages.com)

The Police shut down a large student party in Abbotsford Road, in the early hours of Sunday 12th July. According to Andrew Waller “between 50 and 100 students filed out of the house and several police vehicles attended as officers cleared the street. The area was quiet shortly after 2am.

This is a very welcome new approach by the Police, as in the past they said that there were great operational problems closing a party down.

The party took place just days after the VC’s of UoB and UWE warned students to follow coronavirus rules or face disciplinary action!

Cllr Negus has been very active trying to tackle this situation. He is hopeful that ‘Operation Beech’ will be run again for this academic year. Speaking to the Police he said “tell them all that they ignore the value of publicity. One well-publicised sanction, copied and re-presented, is an effective deterrent”

The media has reported that SAGE considers that there is a threat to the epidemic spreading due to the seasonal migration of students, making possibly six

journeys across the country during the year. There has also been recent news relating to concerns from University Lecturer bodies.

In Bristol there are about 45,000 students.

Rob Harris
RCAS Student Affairs Rep



Poster from lamppost in Waverley Road which UoB have put up to encourage more neighbourly noise levels at night

RCAS WEBSITE

Have you used the new improved Website? If not, do check it out on

<https://rcas.org.uk>

Lots of work has been put in to inform and entertain members as well as allow easier communications between members, supporters and organisers. Members can see previous editions of the newsletter by going to 'publications' and 'newsletter' and clicking on the link using **News** as the password.

We also have an active Facebook page

Redland & Cotham Amenities Society

The link to this can also be found on the front page of the website.

FRIENDS and NEIGHBOURS may want to join RCAS

The annual subscription is £10 per household. The postal subscription for those living outside the RCAS area is also £10.

We prefer to collect subscriptions by Standing Order to reduce our distributors' work and we will supply a Standing Order mandate form on request.

Those wishing to join should contact the Membership Secretary

Kathryn Armitstead

52 Redland Court Road

Redland, Bristol, BS6 7EH

Email: membership@rcas.org.uk

Please give your contact details and your e-mail address.

If you are a taxpayer and make the following declaration, the Society can claim Gift Aid.

I want the Redland & Cotham Amenities Society to treat all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise, as Gift Aid. I know that I must pay an amount of income/capital gains tax at least equal to the tax the charity reclaims on my donations in the tax year. Signed and dated.

Do mention if you are able to help with any RCAS activities





Soaking up the late summer sun in Cotham Gardens