

Redland & Cotham Amenities Society



Report from the Chair
Student Liaison
Planning
Parks
Trees



Number 206 - March 2025

Report from the Chair

The future of the society is very important to us and the committee has been looking at ways to take RCAS forward. With the reintroduction of Neighbourhood Partnerships under the BCC administration, there is potentially a greater opportunity for residents to have a say in some of the ways in which the council works in our area. RCAS could be part of that.

As a residents' planning group, RCAS has a voice in planning decisions under Bristol City Council policy so we need to retain the ability to speak for the community by ensuring that we are representing the views of the local residents.

The way our community works is very different now from the way it worked when RCAS was set up 50 years ago and we need to work out how we can stay relevant to Redland and Cotham residents.

Here is a summary of the AGM discussion and the committee response to the ideas raised.

FALLING NUMBERS

We believe a voice for residents is important and can be effective but in order to be taken seriously we must show that we are able to speak for a large proportion of our residents. Our society is well supported by our regular membership, but we are seeing a steady decline in the number of households. Over the last 5 years we have lost 90 members, 15% of our membership; membership is now at around 560 households. We are getting a few new members a year, but this is outweighed by the number who stop being members because they move away or through death.

Most people now engage with their community more locally through street groups usually via WhatsApp, Neighbourhood Watch communities and through activity-based groups like the Friends of Cotham Gardens or the BCR Streetscene group. We feel that the society is becoming less relevant to the current community and we need to work out how to engage more (and younger) households if it is to continue.

MEMBERSHIP FEE

At the AGM in November 2024, we discussed the proposal for dropping the payment for membership. Currently, the society has a very healthy balance, and the committee was concerned about RCAS as a charity organisation failing to spend their funds. Our major outgoings are the costs of setting up and printing the newsletter; and although this is a significant expense, the £10 membership fee and the gift aid reclamation still results in an income for the society.

Members at the meeting were against removing the membership fee as it would be difficult to ensure that all members cancelled their current standing orders and impossible to start membership charges up again if funds were needed. Reducing the fee would be administratively difficult and asking people to change to direct debit, which would allow the society to change the fee as circumstances change, would cause a lot of work for the treasurer.

After discussion, it was proposed that new members should be given free membership for the first 2 years. This was felt to be reasonable by the members present and would also remove the embarrassment when encouraging people to join the society. There was some concern that long term members would be covering the newsletter costs for non-paying new members, but the meeting felt that would be acceptable. Offering an online newsletter only was not preferred by the members present who wanted to read it in hard copy. However, we do now have some members who have opted to access the newsletter online only.

The issue of the number of people who pay cash was also discussed; this is difficult for the treasure and membership secretary and for the distributor team as it results in payments being received over a long period across the summer, and much work to chase up and pay in cash receipts. Some people at the meeting voiced their preference for continued payment in cash. RCAS will continue to encourage people to switch to standing order as it greatly reduces the work for the team.

MEMBER SUGGESTIONS

The meeting suggested a number of ways in which new members could be encouraged; some of which the committee had already tried in recent years.

It was suggested that we identify projects to spend the society's money on. Our society charitable aims are 'to protect and enhance our area, its architecture, streets, trees, parks, open spaces and amenities for present and future residents' and any projects must come within those criteria. We pointed out that we had been inviting members and also contacting local community organisations to propose projects and had carried out a number of these, including tree planting, work in parks, support for Cotham Parish Church and the Elmgrove Centre projects and one for Redland Parish Church which is still to be started.

A request for RCAS to fund works to deal with uneven pavements was made. Unfortunately, it was not possible for RCAS to do works on Highways and Pavements and Bristol City Council were unwilling to direct officer time even to support RCAS funded projects.

A leaflet drop was suggested, as was putting newsletters through doors to encourage membership sign up, and carrying out a marketing exercise to identify how to engage more potential members. We pointed out that we had recently delivered newsletters to non-members encouraging them to join the society, and every household in Redland Court was given a newsletter when they moved in but neither of these efforts resulted in any new members.

The committee recognised that many people are unaware of RCAS despite it having an online presence in Facebook and the website, using Next Door to promote Cotham Gardens events, displaying information in noticeboards and being mentioned in councillor newsletters.

Many people felt that events would generate new members; historically we have found that though the Open Gardens event brings in enquiries from interested people wanting to join to visit the gardens, very few of them do actually complete the sign up as members.

Maybe different events would be more attractive? It was suggested that we hold welcome events for new students moving into the area. Would this be effective do you think? Running litter pick and street cleaning workparties was also suggested. Chandos Neighbourhood Association run a regular monthly group; people seem to be interested in actively helping clean up sessions in parks as the success of the monthly parks clean up in Cotham Gardens shows. A programme of local walks was also suggested.

All of the suggestions would require significant input and, as it was pointed out, the current committee is already working hard and will need volunteers from the membership to take any of them forward.

RCAS is now run by 5 committee members and 5 additional people who support RCAS task groups; they do all the work on running the membership and dealing with the financial administration involved in that, putting together and getting the newsletter printed and distributed, running the website and social media, checking and responding to planning applications in our area, and signing up people to open their gardens for the member visits each year and running the event.

The 5 committee members have been in post for between 3 and 30 years. Two years ago, no volunteers were forthcoming for the role of treasurer and the committee was forced to reallocate tasks among the existing committee membership in order to keep the society going. We cannot take on doing more than we already do, so we need the members to help if they value the society and want it to continue running successfully into the future, so...

WE NEED YOU TO HELP IF YOU BELIEVE THAT THE SOCIETY SHOULD CONTINUE

We have found that new members are most likely to join if they are approached by existing members. So, we need you to recruit new members by talking to your neighbours and getting them to join the society.

Can you help by signing up to pay by standing order to make the accounting task easier? This will make recruiting for the role easier in the future.

We need new people to help with some of the administration tasks including new tasks members have identified:

- Would you be interested in getting involved in writing a marketing strategy? – RCAS has the money to pay for an advisor to work with on this.
- Could you help with the marketing campaign by delivering eg leaflets?
- Could you help with social media on our online presence?
- Would you be interested in running some of the suggested student welcome events?
- Could you put together a series of walks or talks for the members?
- Could you help with organising social events in Cotham Gardens to compliment the working party activities?
- Can you identify projects that RCAS could fund, and can you help with bringing those projects forward?
- Could you join the committee to help with the finance, secretarial jobs or newsletter tasks?

Many local societies have ceased operating because the communities no longer support them: RCAS could join them. If we do not get any new volunteers to work with us on any of these tasks, the society cannot continue, so we need everyone to actively support the RCAS.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Please use the Contact Page on the website to tell us how you can help. Search Redland and Cotham Amenities Society and click on Contact at the top of the page.
<https://rcas.org.uk/contact/contact-rcas/>

Filming on Alexandra Park

Alexandra Park was closed to traffic on Friday 7th February when a filming company used the location for a project. The company was filming a new streaming series for AppleTV. Here are some photos of the film crew hard at work.

Chandos Neighbourhood Association were offered a donation to thank the residents of Alexandra Park for accommodating the works for the day.



Planning Report

25/10113/LA | Proposed replacement of the properties boundary walls. | Flat 1 Knightstone Lodge 6 - 8 Archfield Road Bristol BS6 6BE Referred for committee decision by Cllr GPoultney

25/10117/F | Dropped kerb, parking space, bicycle and bin storage to front garden and replacing of public lamp post. | 34 Hampton Park Bristol BS6 6LH RCAS objected on grounds of Incorrect information - front boundary is hedge not railing; Loss of front garden and front garden boundary hedge; Impact on Whiteladies conservation area character; Loss of publicly available on-street parking; Impact on biodiversity.

24/04493/F | Addition of roof extension to create a second floor and a material change of use of the premises from a public house to a mixed use incorporating a public house (Sui-Generis) on the basement and ground floors with guest accommodation (Use Class C1) on the first and second floors, together with associated external alterations. Brewhouse, Cotham Hill- reapplication of approved lapsed development. GRANTED

23/01007/F | Application for retention of use from residential (Use Class C3) to small House in Multiple Occupation (Use Class C4). | 25 Brighton Road Bristol BS6 6NU WITHDRAWN

22/00273/F | Retention of rear annexe extension at second floor level, new parapet wall to rear elevation roof and new Velux roof windows. | 19 Brighton Road Bristol BS6 6NU REFUSED House is being reinstated as 2 no 2-bedroom flats and building work carried out without permission is being removed. This included a top floor extension and roof terrace.

24/03843/PINS | Application for Planning Permission for Works to install 3no. CCTV poles and cameras. | Cotham School Cotham Lawn Road Bristol BS6 6DT GRANTED

Existing planning applications: not decided/ updates

24/02736/P Land At Home Gardens Redland Hill Bristol BS6 6UR; Application for outline planning permission with some matters reserved - Redevelopment of the site comprising demolition of existing

buildings and the erection of two new buildings to provide up to 60 residential units (Class C3) and up to 209 sq.m. (GIA) of flexible office space (Class E) to Whiteladies Road ground floor frontage, and associated works (Access, Scale and Layout to be determined now with Appearance and Landscaping reserved for future consideration). The previous application for this site was refused by Bristol LPA and at appeal on the grounds of adverse impact on the adjacent properties at 7 and 9 St Vincents Hill. The revised design has moved the building further from these properties and reduced the height closest to them and increased the green buffer. Many objections made.

24/02738/F | Roof extension works to create additional floor for a new dwelling. | 22 Chandos Road Bristol BS6 6PF Chandos Neighbourhood Association objected.

24/02382/F Garden Flat 52 Hampton Park Bristol BS6 6LJ: Relocate shed, replace with 1-1/2 storey garage with studio accommodation above.

RCAS objected to the new proposal on the grounds of design and poor-quality accommodation for future residents; also potential impact on existing tree.

24/03436/F | Conversion of an existing garage attached to the side and addition of a first floor above to create a 2-bedroom dwelling. | 127 Redland Road Bristol BS6 6XX RCAS objected on grounds of overdevelopment and design.

23/02830/LA | Demolition of potting sheds, outbuildings and garaging, and altered access off Hartfield Avenue. Change of use of Muller House from a large HMO into 6no. Use Class C3 dwellings and construction of 5no. dwellings (Use Class C3) with associated car parking. Alterations to listed building and curtilage listed buildings. Works to trees and re-landscaping. Major | Muller House & The Lodge 7 Cotham Park Bristol BS6 6DA, awaiting decision

Alison Bromilow & Simon Birch

Bristol's Tree Canopy Cover

In 2019 Bristol City council defined a target of delivering a doubling of Bristol's tree canopy by 2050 as part of the solution to the climate crisis. The tree planting programme for Bristol is delivered by the 'One Tree per child' and 'Tree Bristol' teams of the city council.

The target is very challenging as much of the city's open space is privately owned as residential gardens, and the trend towards house extensions, home offices in gardens and landscaping with small ornamental trees may even be reducing the canopy cover. Tree diseases such as Ash dieback, which could lead to a reduction of our existing tree cover by some 10% means it is a challenge to maintain the existing canopy. The two large trees recently lost in Redland Green were Ash.

Between 2023 and 2024, there was a canopy loss of 9.2ha from tree health and human health and safety reasons, and new canopy of 17.6ha planted, (BCC Tree planting report 2023-24). This isn't quite the gain in canopy area that it might seem, as the new canopy figure assumes a mature tree, which won't be fully achieved for up to 50 years.

To show how we are doing at increasing canopy cover we need a measure, so how do we measure the existing canopy cover in Bristol?

There are lots of companies and researchers interpreting satellite data for many purposes. Some are trying to automate the calculation of canopy cover, for example looking for green features in an image that are associated with a local height measurement of a few metres (a tree). A detailed measurement of the height of the land surface and any features on it (trees), is available from LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) scan data, which uses low powered lasers.

However, there is still a lot of variability in calculating the % canopy cover, as image interpretation methods improve and satellites get higher resolution images, therefore the change over time is unclear.

Variability is also seen because calculations are made from images taken at different times of the year and times of the day that are affected by changes in shadow profile, particularly in the denser urban areas. New trees take a long time to be recognised by the image

analysis algorithms, due to the slow growth rate, but the removal of older mature trees can be recognised more easily as there is an abrupt change from the earlier image. In one case, the satellite analysis said that a tree had been removed however inspection from the ground (ground-truthing) revealed that it had just been significantly pruned.

The canopy cover for Bristol overall is reported by i-Tree to be 12% but in Redland and Cotham we have around 18%.

I understand that a significantly lower, but realistic canopy cover target increase is now planned. This will still be a huge challenge. Street tree sponsorship opportunities in our area are usually quickly snapped up, so the main opportunity we have is to keep our gardens green, maintain our trees. and plant trees in our gardens when we are able.

Dave Jones



PARKS

Cotham Gardens

The Friends of Cotham Gardens group lifted the gully gratings in Lovers' Walk and removed nearly a ton of silt from the drains in February. This should help reduce the run off into the playground area

The Friends group are working on the planting bed at the top of the park opposite Cotham Gardens primary school. A new edging strip to replace the temporary rope is being installed and planting for the bed is being planned for this year. We are choosing plants that are attractive to pollinators all year round. The bed is already home to snowdrops and daffodils and the perennial plants are coming up again. There are already lots of bees investigating the forget-me-nots



The January clean up group above. Photos on the opposite page show some of the members of the February clean up group lifting the drain cover, the gully clearing and the new border on the flower bed at the top of Cotham Gardens.



The Friends of Cotham Gardens Working Parties and Proposed Social Events

Introduction: The Friends of Cotham Gardens, with over 56 active members in our WhatsApp group, have shown remarkable dedication through their participation in various environmental and community-building activities. These activities not only contribute to the enhancement of the local area but also foster strong community ties. Regular attendance at our monthly working parties ranges from 10 to 25 members, highlighting the commitment of our community to maintaining and improving Cotham Gardens.

Monthly Working Parties: The January Working Party focused on clearing a significant amount of debris and leaves following the cancellation of the December meeting due to adverse weather. In February, a dedicated smaller group successfully cleared the park's drainage system, removing around 1.5 tonnes of earth, which was then used to enrich the topsoil in the flowerbeds at the top of the hill. These beds are being equipped with recycled plastic sleepers and will soon feature a new raised wildflower bed. Plans for a borage bed along the wall are also in development to support local pollinators such as bees and wasps.

Proposed Social Events: Feedback from group participants indicates a strong interest in social events, which has led to plans for quarterly gatherings around the Roam Wild Coffee van, featuring live music. These events aim to enhance the park's community spirit and encourage even greater participation in our monthly working parties. These are opportunities to thank FOCG, the RCAS Committee and other RCAS volunteers and their friends and families, and to network to hopefully recruit new members, especially "younger" neighbours.

We propose Friday 4th April 2025 for a Spring Social and Friday 18th July 2025 for Summer Social. These are timed from 3.30pm to 8pm'ish to attract Cotham Gardens Primary School families, and locals who finish work around 6pm. There will hopefully be a Christmas Carol Singalong on either Sat 6th or Sat 13th December 2025 in conjunction with CITYCHURCH of Elmgrove Road.

Infrastructure Improvements: Safety concerns regarding park infrastructure have been addressed, with plans to replace the damaged roof on the children's horse carriage unit and the weather-affected sleepers beside the sandpit. Consideration is being given to using durable materials such as wood or a plastic wood substitute to ensure long-term safety and sustainability.

Defibrillators: RCAS has agreed to fund two defibrillators with one already installed at the Shakespeare Pub and the second to be installed at the Cambridge Arms. This is part of the national defib network: <https://www.defibfinder.uk/>

Conclusion and Recommendations: The activities of the Friends of Cotham Gardens have greatly improved the aesthetic and community value of the park. The introduction of social events is expected to further these benefits by providing enjoyable, regular community engagement opportunities. The committee's support in facilitating these events and infrastructure improvements will be crucial to their success.

Action Items:

Approve and support the organization of the proposed quarterly social events.

Proceed with planned infrastructure improvements to enhance safety. Enhance community engagement through continued promotion and outreach efforts.

This report highlights the vital role that the Friends of Cotham Gardens play in enhancing our local environment and building a vibrant community spirit.

Christopher Shelley

Redland Green

Storm Darragh on December 5th 2024 brought an early unwanted Christmas present to Redland Green by toppling two of the 300 year old ash trees in the Dell area of Redland Green. (Do go to the Redland Green Community Group website to read all about the history of these trees). Thankfully no one was hurt as it was in the early hours of the morning but the fence over the gully was crushed and the fence round the Metford Road allotment site was also damaged. A few smaller trees in the area were decimated and until the debris is all cleared away the full impact cannot be assessed. The Council teams worked hard to clear the paths and way through the green. They will be completing the work in April to move remaining wood and repair the fences. Much of the brash and smaller wood has been removed by people for their wood burning stoves etc. Some of the larger pieces will remain in situ and around the Dell area.

A happier event was the Singing of Christmas songs on Friday 13th December on the tarmac by the play area where more than 50 hearty voices enjoyed the sing-along. Thanks to Dr Jazz for leading the music, Adie Butcher from the Redland Club for providing the hot chocolate, Dr Jazz Charitable Funds for the mince pies and Lifelong Fitness for the loan of the lights. We were luckier with the weather as it wasn't raining nor was it too cold!

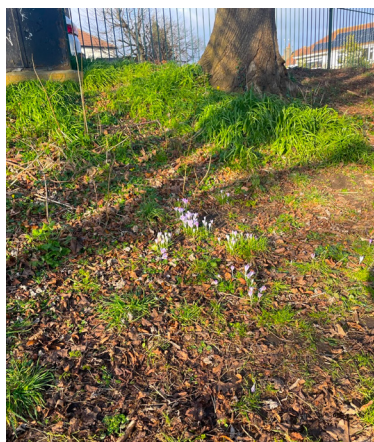
Talking of weather, we hope that we may be spared a fall of snow this year as the crocuses, snowdrops and daffodils have already pushed through the very wet ground and are starting to flower. It would be such a shame if they got crushed and we miss their glory and promise of better things to come!

Although it seems a long way off Redland Church are again hosting a community afternoon in the Church Hall on Monday May 5th 2025 and we will look forward to seeing everyone there. It is hoped that the Tennis Club and Bowling Club will also be participating in some way and there will be an allotment stall which will have rhubarb and plants to sell. Dr Jazz will also be providing some of the music. All are welcome.

A group of volunteers managed to trim the hedge round the play area before the birds starting nesting and the ground around it wasn't a quagmire. Other volunteering activities have been put on hold until the weather is more clement, and the ground underfoot is firmer. In the meantime, we will be arranging the Redland Green Community Group AGM for early April where we hope many people will attend to help with ideas for planting in the Dell, possible carving of the ash tree monolith and a memento to Storm Darragh and its effects on the flora and fauna in the Dell.

Roll on Spring.

Lois Goddard



Student Liaison

Mark Aston, the University of Bristol's (UoB) new Community Liaison Officer (CLO) is now in place and has already visited resident groups in the area. He has explained that although it is a steep learning curve, particularly in understanding how the university is organised and how it operates, he is enthusiastic. All the resident groups have welcomed him into the role.

Operation Beech, where residents can text message noise complaints directly to police volunteers on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday nights, has been mentioned in past newsletters. Residents had suggested UoB provide a letter which the officers could present to students involved in any incident Operation Beech responded to. The Vice Chancellor (VC) has written a comprehensive letter which makes very clear what standard of behaviour is expected of students, and that any unacceptable behaviour should stop. It also requests the names of all students at the property be given to the police officers and advises the incident will be reported to the UoB.

This VC letter has now been used by Operation Beech for some weeks and feedback from police officers attending incidents is very positive. Many volunteer officers are unfamiliar with the area so the letter helps clarify how best to deal with students by making clear to the students themselves that they should not be infringing the rights of other residents. A further advantage of presenting a letter is that all student tenants of a house will have to respond, and not just the ones directly spoken to as used to be the case.

The last newsletter also explained that resident groups were working with the UoB in two Working Parties whose aim was to establish effective procedures, processes etc. to minimise the disruption caused to the community by the large concentration of students in the area. Previously called 'Disciplinary Process' and 'Education and Communications to Students' UoB now refers to these two categories as 'Enforcement' and 'Education and Engagement'.

'Enforcement' was described in the previous newsletter. Unfortunately, the Working Party covering 'Education and Engagement' is still a work in progress. This is partly due to the Christmas break, but the delay also allows Mark Aston to find his feet. Meetings are now being

planned for the near future, with the areas to be considered falling broadly into the following:

- develop a clear framework of rules defining expected behaviour
- update and formalise training modules for students on expected behaviour
- update Student Agreement Package to incorporate expected behaviour rules
- provide information on alternative locations for parties and discourage 'house parties'
- improve management of household waste with focussed campaigns at key times of year
- lobby landlords and agents to recognise their responsibilities

Hopefully by the next newsletter there will be developments to report.

Bristol Student Community Partnership (BSCP)

This is perhaps the most important element in the dialogue between residents and the UoB. It's where any problems caused to the wider community by the transient student population is discussed and is attended not just by representatives of the community and UoB, but also student representatives, local councillors, Operation Beech coordinator, Bristol Waste, engaged landlords, the Private Housing (PH) department and Neighbourhood Enforcement Team of Bristol City Council (BCC).

The last meeting took place a few days ago on 30th January and was notable for the return of representatives of University of the West of England (UWE). This was welcome as there are UWE students living in the area.

Although the minutes have not yet been distributed, some areas of concern did surface:

Record of Complaints

It's become clear that there is no central record of complaints. The UoB CLO records all complaints made directly to his office, and all messages to Operation Beech are passed on to the CLO whether acted on or not. Similarly, any complaints to Bristol Waste are held by them, as are any actions from PH or Neighbourhood Enforcement.

A lack of a comprehensive central record of incidents makes it difficult to see any patterns of behaviour eg from a particular house. A future action is to explore how a central record can be established.

Pinpoint Map

This interactive map supposedly shows all licensed Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the city, and because the majority of students live in an HMO it can be an important tool. The symbol identifying each HMO used to give the name and address of the HMO Licence Holder and Agent. About 18 months ago that information was removed as PH had been legally advised to remove personally identifying information from the publicly accessible map. BSCP objected as it made contacting the Licence Holder or agent difficult. BSCP suggested that the map symbol for each HMO should have a note stating the contact information for the Licence Holder and Agent could be obtained on request to PH. Fortunately this was agreed and has now been adopted by PH.

A more important problem with the Pinpoint map is that it no longer shows all HMOs. PH have explained they now only show HMOs with a current Licence. If a Licence application or renewal is being processed, then the property is not identified as an HMO on Pinpoint. The problem is compounded by the fact that it can take up to 18 months for an application to be processed.

Not only is this frustrating for anyone trying to contact a Licence Holder or agent, but it also has serious implications regarding planning applications for new HMOs. This is because a Supplementary Planning Document adopted by BCC limits how near a new HMO can be to any established HMOs, and it is the Pinpoint Map the document refers to for locating existing HMOs. By not showing all HMOs Pinpoint makes it impossible for residents to comment effectively on any application for a new HMO.

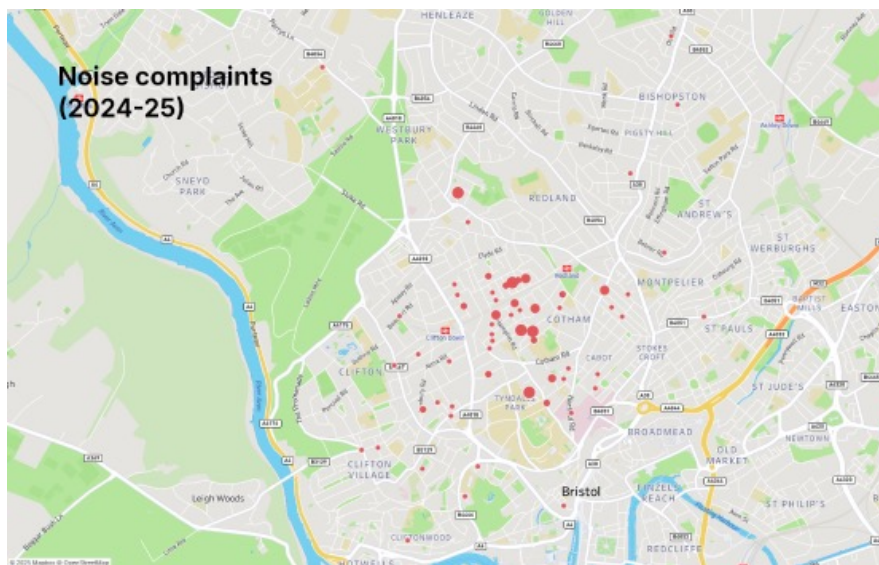
Residents have suggested that if a licence is being processed the HMO should still be shown on the map noting that licence renewal is pending. PH are yet to respond adequately.

Derrick Collier

University of Bristol Community Liaison Office released the following breakdown of noise incidents for the September to December 2024 term.

The concentration of incidents in the Cotham area is evident.

Map Overview of noise incidents in this academic year- September to December 2024
(Down to street level, not exact addresses; circle size indicative of number of complaints)



2025 RCAS Open Gardens Sunday June 15th

Believe it or not, Open Gardens is now just a few months away.

It seems the cold and wet weather will never stop; however dry balmy days will soon lead up to the highlight of the local gardening calendar at 2pm on Sunday June 15th.

This year it is the turn of the Redland North area, as shown in the map opposite. If you are in the area and are interested or even considering opening your garden, please get in touch with Margaret, Serena or Dave, via rcasopengardens@gmail.com, and we can answer any questions or one of the team can come round for a chat.

Open Gardens works best when there are a variety of gardens on show. It is not how big the garden is, but what has been made of it, or ways that you have been able to enjoy your outdoor space.

Open Gardens has also been a pleasant way to raise money for a favourite charity by providing refreshments, and this greatly adds to the sociable nature of the day. There will be a special tour on the Saturday before for garden openers, so you won't miss out seeing the other gardens on show on the day itself.

The programme for Open Gardens will be in the May issue of this newsletter, so you can take it around with you on the day to show you are a RCAS member.



Redland North Area for Open Gardens

Front Cover Photo: The fallen Ash trees at Redland Green. Some wood taken for wood turning.

Back Cover Photo: Snowdrops cheery on Cotham Gardens Lover's Walk despite the freezing gloom



