Minutes Maidstone CAN Chat
Monday 20th July 2026 Lockmeadow Foyer 7.30pm

Attending…
Bernie Cumberland, Glyn Williams, Lauren Sykes, Tomas Thorndycraft, Geraldine Lawrence, Ben Darlington, Guy Tanner, David Harman, Polly Williamson, Vincent Jasper, Neil Nixon, Maria Paez, Brian Wallace

Apologies… Duncan Edwards, Sally Edwards, Diane Frewer, Shirley McDonald

Repair Cafe

Numbers of visitors down but repair numbers holding up and with the B team organising on the day it went well but highlighted some gaps in our knowledge when Duncan and Sally aren't around. Overall impression that the event went well and a very useful opportunity for us to find those gaps and be aware for the future and get others trained up.

One particular area is electrical triage where some knowledge of what a repair entails proves very useful in directing it to the appropriate repairer.

Repair Cafe Themes

Some discussion around Themes for next year and Food proved popular from how it links to Health as well as growing your own food. Energy and Home Efficiency, Community Groups, Travel and Transport were all put forward as possibilities. Everyone was asked to consider what else might work and to let us know by email/Whatsapp etc as it takes months to get things up and running and the longer time we have to prepare the better.

Repairs and Alterations

The problem of whether we can do alterations was discussed and we do have a policy around this now whereby as a foundation alterations are not done. That said if we have plenty of capacity then on the day a judgement call can be made on the nature of the alteration and time spent etc as to whether we get involved.

Discussion on time limits for repairs, number of items that can be accommodated and some possible communication/lack of knowledge between triage and repairers as it is so often the case that it's almost impossible to judge how long a repair might take if you are not skilled in a particular trade.

We talked about limits on items and having to go to the back of the queue if you have too many etc which are areas discussed previously.

Overall we are there to repair things so taking a practical stance and managing the flow of items on the day is likely to remain a sensible solution.

Market Hall Plans

Everyone brought up to speed on MBCs plans for the market and also the Market Hall building as far as we know albeit that isn't too much at this stage. People interested in who might take over, what businesses could be and should be involved and what part if any we should/will play.

Plenty of ideas as you might imagine but also concerns on how to get involved and at what level. Discussion also on alternative venues for the Repair Cafe from churches to community centres but essentially this was just stating what the plans are and there will no doubt be some involved discussions around what the future holds.

Footfall is an area that was in full view at the meeting as Lockmeadow was very quiet with various retailers closed and hardly anyone around or even passing through.

Bee the Change

Guy provided us with an overview of what he wants to achieve across Maidstone and build on the successes he has had with a number of ventures. These centre around maintaining and extending/increasing our wild communities with habitats preserved and created to improve our wildlife.

Gardens are in fact a major part of the green spaces our wildlife can rely on and joining them up as part of nature corridors is high on the agenda for Bee the Change.

As part of their campaign Guy is looking to host a National Emergency Briefing event on 28th September (venue to be advised) and from that work specifically towards wildlife projects to achieve these aims. Guy requested that we make a note in our diaries.

Neil explained some of the projects he has been involved with via Pennies and there has been some great successes in this regard with various meadow areas being planted. Of course the kids can get involved and enjoy this side of things enormously. Working closer with businesses was put forward as a way to get them engaged in supporting nature and wildlife which is good for their profile as well as them being able to fund projects faster and quicker than volunteer groups can on their own.

Basically environmental groups working hand in hand with local businesses to look after our local area.

Polly updated on MCAN's early-stage plans relating to a large nature project for 2027. The next step is likely to be a grassroots survey to establish residents' interest and need for help, and a survey of MCAN supporters to assess available resources and expertise. The exact project will be scoped from the result of the surveys and this group will be kept updated.

Save Oaken Wood

Recently this is achieving a much higher profile with the council voting on the minerals plan, which includes extension into Oaken Wood. A much closer vote than was anticipated, but in favour of the plan.
All is not lost despite the vote agreeing to the plan being submitted for inspection, as opposed to having Oaken Wood removed, or the plan reviewed"

We must all keep the pressure up and an easy thing to do is to spread the word far and wide via our own social media accounts. Can we all look to do this please.

If you wish to help further then join their Facebook Group here LINK

It will all help

Caring for the Medway

Friends of the River Medway are running an event on Thursday 23rd July as part of the River Medway Pilgrimage and an opportunity to get involved starting with our Litter Pick at 9.30am - 11am.

Lots happening on the day from Natural Raft making (great for children) to guided walks

Hoping you can get along and support this

Also mentioned there is a Rights to River Confluence on Friday 24th July at Aylesford Priory. Not a free event but very important. LINK

AOB

An update on the Maidstone West Adoption scheme which is running well and down to our small team of dedicated volunteers. The planters with our pollinator approach are doing what was intended as is the garden itself.

Poster designed and printed ready for display at the station on bees and pollinators.

As well as helping others in the community have a voice and benefit from support via MCAN this is our close to home environment and biodiversity project so it is great to see it doing well.