



It's AGM time again! This will be taking place at NI Institute for the Disabled (bottom of Downshire Road) on Monday 11th June at 7.30pm. We would love as many members or interested residents as possible to come along. We will welcome John McConnell who will talk to us about his role in managing our parks and other open areas. As usual, we should have some local councillors there also. We will welcome all comments and questions on the night.

Since the last newsletter, the committee has been busy:

- **One-to-one meetings with our councillors, Marion Smith, Carl McClean and Rachel Woods to discuss on-going support with Bangor West Matters**
- **Conducting 'walkabouts' to identify areas requiring attention.**
- **Exploring ways in which we can utilise funding for protecting and planting trees.**
- **Looking at ways to engage residents with the preservation and improvement of our Bangor West environment.**

***Our aim for the Group continues to be to preserve and enhance the character of Bangor West.***

Right now we're focussing our efforts on 5 things:

- Getting action to tidy up and improve the general appearance of our neighbourhood
- Getting action, rather than just promises from the Council, towards delivering planned guidelines for our Bangor West Area of Townscape Character, so that planners finally have updated criteria on how planning applications here should be considered
- Monitoring planning applications and providing advice on how to object to – or support – proposed developments
- Completing a survey of important trees, creating a database and an action plan for protecting them and for new tree planting
- More actively communicating with members, government departments, councillors and officials on these matters.

There has occasionally been some misconception over the role BWCG serves in the community and the extent of our influence over decisions on planning and development schemes.

***Here, we will try to clarify this with examples.***

- Our formal powers are limited and are the same as any other individual in the area. That is, we can seek to persuade the Council and government departments on our interests and place objections where relevant. However, we believe that the whole may be more effective than the sum of its parts, and as such that the Group serves a useful purpose in providing cohesiveness and strength.
- We can work with the Council and its planners to encourage sympathetic development. Frustratingly, 'good' decisions by planners can be over-ridden by the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC), as happened at Thalassa. We objected strongly to the developers' original apartment proposal in 2003 for 27 apartments. Planning officials agreed and refused the application as being out of keeping with the scenic headland in Bangor West. The developers appealed to the PAC, which reversed the planning decision. The only comfort is that the combined pressure from the BWCG and the Planners led to the proposal being downsized to nine apartments.
- Some schemes produce disruption but are necessary because of increased development in an area. This is the case with the pumping station at Brompton. While we may take a stance on this, it is important to recognise that the Group is neither a statutory nor executive organisation and has no approval/refusal powers.
- Our communication and meetings with councillors enable us to be an effective link between residents and the Council. This liaison can result in services being delivered which might otherwise not happen. For example, we are working in recent weeks towards getting speed controllers on lower Downshire Road to facilitate traffic emerging from Kensington Park and from Brompton Road, where sight lines are poor. Transport NI is now looking at this.

Members of the committee have worked hard to keep pressure on the powers that be to improve the infrastructure in the area. For example we have had meetings with Transport NI about the state of our roads, particularly the poor condition of Downshire Road. Despite the frequent defence of 'no money' this has resulted in potholes being repaired in some areas. We are also working to keep the appropriate agencies aware where contractors are damaging roads and footpaths.

There is nowhere better to live than Bangor West at this time of year, with its trees, gardens and wonderful situation. Thus, planting and trees have been foremost in our minds. A very productive meeting with Patrick Cregg, Director of the Woodland Trust in NI, followed by really useful support from Alderman Marion Smith, have resulted in some great ideas being generated on how to tidy up some overgrown and unsightly areas along the coastal path. See Patrick's comments over.

## The Woodland Trust

As the UK's largest woodland conservation charity, we are the leading voice for woods and trees. We campaign to protect precious ancient woods and trees, restore the ones that are damaged and fight for those under threat.

We are delighted to team up with Bangor West Conservation Group to explore opportunities for partnership working. Through such a partnership we hope that we can help to preserve those wonderful trees that grace the area whilst identifying new areas for tree planting.

Trees and woodland contribute to our quality of life in so many ways. The provision of green spaces can, for example, benefit both physical and mental health and, in turn, reduce the wider costs of health care.

We are giving away free packs of native trees to schools and community groups.

Groups can now choose between packs of 30, 105 or 420 saplings, depending on how much space they have to plant. There are different mixes of tree species to choose from too, including packs themed for autumn colour, wood fuel and wildlife.

Planting trees is the perfect way to help children and young people connect with and learn about nature. To find out more, head to [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk)

**We hope through BWCG that areas might be identified that would benefit from our free trees offer.**

## Membership

Our membership has fallen slightly over the last couple of years. We are trying to rectify this by extending our activities to include residential and community matters that affect all of us, as well as remaining loyal to our aim of preserving the character of the area. We welcome suggestions on how to meet the needs of residents and to engage you more fully in our activities. When contentious planning issues arise we hope that our new emailing list will prove helpful in advising you of any significant developments that may impact us. This list includes both members and non-members, and we will continue to advise all of our activities regardless of membership. However, membership is always encouraged, as explained overleaf, where a membership slip is also given.

Why be a full member? The small subscription makes a great difference in what we are able to do. For example, we may receive matching subsidies towards planting schemes or pursue legal cases if necessary. Membership would enable you to avail fully of any advice the group might offer on planning matters, and to come along to the AGM and vote on issues. In short, it enables you to be more fully involved in matters that are pertinent in the environment in which you live.

*Are you a member but can't remember if you've paid your subscription?* Simply send an email (details overleaf) with your name and address, and we'll let you know based on the records we hold.

To receive email notification of relevant news and information, including planning applications in your area, please email [bangorwestgroup@gmail.com](mailto:bangorwestgroup@gmail.com), giving your name, email address, postal address and (optional) contact numbers. To become a full member of the group and to have a stronger say in what we're doing, please complete the following form and either post or hand deliver to the treasurer at the address below, including £5 per member. Vincent Jamison will be present at the AGM and happy to review memberships there.

Please return to: **Vincent Jamison, 21 Ranfurly Avenue, BT20 3SJ**  
**Cheques Payable to "BWCG"**

### Current Committee Members:

*Acting Chairman*  
**Perry McDonnell**  
*Treasurer* **Vincent Jamison,**  
**James McCausland,**  
**Aileen Hull**  
**Roger Killiner**  
**Bill Rainey**  
**William McCormick**  
**Mary Stanley**  
**Kathy Smith**

### Membership Renewal/Application Form

Name.....

Address .....

.....

Postcode .....

Tel: .....

Email: .....

**Return to Vincent Jamison 21 Ranfurly Avenue, BT20 3SJ.**  
**With fee of £5 per person enclosed Cheques made payable to:- BWCG**