

**DOWNS COMMITTEE
11th April 2011**

Report of: Parks and Estates

Title: Annual review of the Downs and Avon Gorge management plans

Ward Stoke Bishop

Officer presenting report: Cellan Michael - Parks Estates Manager

Contact telephone number: (0117) 9639178

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the report be noted
2. That Downs Committee approve the proposal to establish a Management Plan Review group for the Downs Management Plan

Summary

The Downs management plan and integral 5-year work plan were adopted in January 2007. The Gorge Management Plan was adopted in November 2009.

The work plan is a 'rolling' programme of work and is to be reviewed annually (objectives 7.6.26 and 6.41 respectively).

Attached at Appendix A is a copy of the Downs workplan for 2010/11. Also appended (Appendix B) is a copy of the 2010 annual work plan from the Management Plan for the Bristol side of the Avon Gorge.

The significant issues in the report are:

- The reviewed plans identify achievements to date, actions for the forthcoming year and objectives which need to be re-aligned

- **Policy**

There are no formal policy implications beyond , beyond those identified in the management plan including financial, legal and health and safety policies.

Consultation

Internal

Robert Westlake - The Downs Ranger
Helen Hall - Nature Conservation Officer
Cellan Michael - Parks Estates Manager

External

None sought.

Context

Downs Work Plan

Each of the original objectives has a lead officer designated within the management plan to drive forward each objective.

As can be seen from the table in Appendix A, a considerable number of the objectives have been met in 2010/11, and a number of projects undertaken which were not originally identified. Some objectives for 2010/11 are still to be achieved and will need to roll forward into 2011/12. Some objectives should be subject to review of the Management Plan Review group.

Downs Committee will be aware that Bristol Parks is undergoing a further period of change as the council moves to deliver services in difficult economic times. This will not alter the structure of officers who report to Downs Committee other than that Richard Bevan - Manager, Parks Estates, Play, Cemeteries and Crematoria will now be lead officer for the Neighbourhoods Department in reporting to the Downs Committee, following Robert Thurston's departure.

Gorge Action Plan

All of the actions within the 2010 annual plan have either been achieved or are in progress; with some actions rolling forward to be completed in 2011. Details are set out in appendix B.

The development and implementation of the gorge annual action plans are guided by the management plan steering group which includes representatives of the Downs Committee and Clifton Down Charitable Trust.

Proposal

1. To note the progress identified in Appendix A and Appendix B and to establish a Management Plan review group for the Downs Management Plan.

Other Options Considered

2. No other options have been considered at this time.

Risk Assessment

3. A risk assessment has been completed for this project and a summary of the major risks is detailed below.
4. The main risks of not agreeing to this course of action are as follows:-

The original implementation dates for the 5-year work plan will become disjointed and difficult to understand as time scales change.

5. The main risks of agreeing to this course of action are as follows:-

None.

It was always understood that the implementation of the work was subject to change through outside influences. (See start of section 7.0 Downs management plan 2007 - 2012)

This is stated within the management plan : - “The work programme will be subject to change from outside influences including pressure from site users, from the results of surveys or monitoring and the availability of finance.”

6. The action taken to mitigate these risks is:-

Officers are working on implementing as many of the objectives to timescale as possible.

Equalities Impact Assessment

None sought

Legal and Resource Implications:

Legal

The Clifton and Durdham Downs (Bristol) Act 1861 provides that the Downs should remain as a place for the public resort and recreation of the citizens and inhabitants of Bristol and that a committee should be appointed to manage them. The recommendation contained in this report is within the powers conferred by this statute.

Legal advice given by: Frances Horner
Senior Solicitor

Financial The budget for each objective is set out in the management plan and where there is no existing budget e.g. within the wages budget, then each item will be taken back to committee to present further information and identify funding

Revenue see management plan section 7.0 or 5.0 respectively

Capital See management plan section 7.0 or 5.0 respectively

Financial advice given by: Tony Whitlock
Principal Accountant

Land None

Personnel None

Appendices:

Appendix A - The Downs 5 - Year work plan 2009 / 2013

Appendix B - Avon Gorge Management Plan

ACCESS TO INFORMATION
Background Papers

The Downs Management plan 2007 - 2012

The Management Plan for the Bristol Side of the Avon Gorge 2010-2015

Appendix A

The Downs Work Plan 2010 - 2011

Key themes

7.1 Enjoyment

7.2 Access

7.3 Landscape

7.4 Wildlife

7.5 Antisocial behaviour

7.6 Management and Resources

The work programme will be subject to change from outside influences including pressure from site users, from the results of surveys or monitoring and the availability of finance.

The management plan is to be reviewed every 5 years and is next due to be reviewed in 2011/12

Note that many items are on-going every year and so have not been highlighted as being **objective achieved** even though the work for 2007/8 and 2008/9 was achieved.

		2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Comment
7.1	Enjoyment				
7.1.2	Carry out a survey of 'young people' through schools to ascertain their views and needs.		#		The Downs team need to seek specialist assistance in scoping this piece of work
7.1.4	Develop and expand the existing education project to provide an integrated interpretation and education programme that increases people's enjoyment and understanding of the natural, historical and cultural heritage of the Downs and its relationship with the city. The good working partnership with existing partners such as the Zoo will be retained and new relationships with additional partners such as English Heritage and the Museums department will be developed.	#	#	#	
7.1.5	Audit the existing interpretational and directional signage for its siting and efficiency.		#		The five major 'you are here' signs to be replaced.

		2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Comment
					Directional signage to be reviewed
7.2	Access				
7.2.1	Investigate the options of how to provide electric mobility scooters for disabled people.		#		The Downs Ranger is currently investigating this objective and will take guidance from BCC's Strategic Access Officer
7.2.2	Investigate the alternative options and implications of extending the cycling routes on existing roads and paths and the provision of cycle parking facilities at visitor attractions.		#		
7.2.3	Carry out an access audit of the site to identify where improvements (if any) can be made.		# Linked with 7.2.1		
7.2.7	Liaise with Highways Dept to provide disabled parking bays at Stoke Road cafe, Seawalls and other areas.		#		
7.3	Landscape				
7.3.2	Implement a programme of scrub management subject to 7.3.1	#	#	#	
7.3.3	Remove all scrub growing within the boundary of the scheduled ancient Monument known as Clifton Down Camp , an Iron Age hillfort.		#	#	
7.3.4	Check the condition of all trees growing on the iron Age Fort annually and maintain them to reduce the risk of them ever being blown over in strong winds.	#	#	#	
7.3.5	Review the provision and design of all 'park furniture' e.g. seats, litter bins, signage, obstacle fences etc. and produce	#	#		

		2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Comment
	a design guide.				
7.3.6	Create and implement a replacement programme of existing park furniture and the provision of additional items – following 7.3.5.		#	#	
7.3.7	Identify and open up ‘lost’ views across the Downs and the Avon Gorge. (See map 11)	#	#	#	
7.3.8	Continued inspection and proactive management of the Downs Tree Stock in line with the risk management strategy. Objective achieved				The trees on the Downs are inspected on a six Monthly basis, usually in June and again in January. All works required are reported to the Downs Committee.
7.3.9	Prepare a tree planting plan for the Downs to include options for replanting with existing or new species to fill gaps within existing avenue planting and / or phased felling and replanting of horse-chestnut avenues.	#	#		
7.3.10	Maintain a sanitation elm tree felling and removal programme where elm disease is identified in an effort to remove the residual disease base with a view to possibly reintroducing elm trees through a planting scheme later.	#	#	#	
7.4	Wildlife				
7.4.4	Develop the idea of introducing grazing to the gully and other selected areas.		#		The plans to introduce grazing in the gully were reported as part of the Gorge Management Plan. Goats will be in the enclosure by June 2011
7.5	Antisocial behaviour				
7.5.1	Produce a detailed plan to manage Fairyland with the aims of encouraging greater public access and increasing ecological interest through the reduction of scrub.		#	#	

		2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Comment
7.5.2	Investigate ways to control traffic speed on The Downs.		#		
7.5.5	Further the process of "preventing" vehicles from parking on the grass by the use of physical barriers and reinstate existing damage to turf (whilst being sensitive to ecological considerations, where appropriate).	#	#	#	Successful implementation of the wheel clamping scheme
7.5.7	Evaluate the arguments for and against the provision of litterbins and the cost thereof.		#		
7.5.8	provide more comprehensive cover of dog bins		#		Subject to approval of Downs Committee following current 12 month trial
7.6	Management and resources				
7.6.1	Investigate and experiment with all options to reduce the effects of joggers eroding grassed areas and any associated 'wildlife'.	#	#	#	Maintenance and extension of areas protected by 'dead hedges' completed
7.6.2	Continue to monitor the effects on the diversity of the plant population of the management of all areas of the downs.	#	#	#	
7.6.4	Continue to monitor the playing quality of the sports pitches and ensure the quality of the playing surface.	#	#	#	
7.6.5	Monitor the demand for sport provision and report all changes to committee with any recommendations for reaction.	#	#	#	
7.6.7	Monitor meadow areas and modify hay cut specification to benefit botanical interest as appropriate.	#	#	#	
7.6.8	Develop wildlife monitoring programme for The Downs.		#		
7.6.11	Investigate ways to increase income through donations and sponsorship of e.g. benches and trees.	#	#		Bench sponsorship does occur and sponsored trees will form part of the Tree Bristol scheme. The Downs Ranger and Parks Estates Manager are currently working

		2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Comment
					with colleagues in finance and concessions to explore other opportunities
7.6.12	Investigate all grant funding opportunities for 'capital works'.	#	#	#	
7.6.13	Apply for Green Flag.	#	#	#	Achieved Green Flag again for 2010
7.6.14	Produce an interpretation and promotion plan.		#		
7.6.15	Develop recycling of all arisings and as much litter as possible.	#	#	#	
7.6.16	Audit the EMAS action plan	#	#	#	
7.6.17	Support the formation of a Friends of the Downs group and develop a good working relationship through consultation.	#	#	#	
7.6.19	Investigate and encourage volunteer assistance (including research) for the Downs.	#	#	#	
7.6.20	Investigate the options and benefits of establishing a Volunteer Ranger / Warden service.	#	#		The Downs Ranger is working with colleagues and the Friends of the Downs to deliver this objective
7.6.22	Provide an information point adjacent to Stoke Road, which includes emergency telephone contact numbers and information such as public notices.	#	#		
7.6.23	Manage the Downs budgets as a business unit.	#	#	#	
7.6.29	Downs Committee reports to Council and Society of Merchant Venturers.	#	#	#	
7.6.30	Downs Committee monitor the implementation of the 5-year plan through the regular Downs Ranger's reports at the	#	#	#	

		2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Comment
	committee meetings				
7.6.31	Downs Biodiversity Education Officer writes a monthly report for the Downs Committee (actually an annual report)	#	#	#	
7.6.32	Avon Gorge and Downs Project produces an annual review of the project	#	#	#	
7.6.33	Parks Operations Manager and Technical Services Manager review the Departmental Asset Management Plan for the maintenance of buildings and structures	#	#	#	
7.6.34	Monitor income and expenditure against annual budgets.	#	#	#	
7.6.35	Monitor and record the number of events	#	#	#	
7.6.36	Monitor and record the number of football games (and income generated).	#	#	#	
7.6.37	Downs Ranger formally monitors quality of work against specifications.	#	#	#	
7.6.38	Playground checks carried out weekly by the inspector and filed in the play section	#	#	#	
7.6.39	Informal grounds maintenance quality inspections carried out by the Downs Ranger	#	#	#	
7.6.40	Review the environmental register currently used by the Landscape and Design Team. Adapt and adopt it for the specific needs of the Parks Service.		#		
	Additional Works Undertaken				
1.	Established and managed very successful partnership with Community Payback		#		
2.	150 th Celebration Event		#		
3.	Bridge Valley Road issues		#		

		2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Comment
4.	Water mains replacement works		#		
5.	Extensive works and training towards the Gorge goat project		#		Please refer to the Gorge Work Plan

Management Plan for the Bristol side of the Avon Gorge

Annual Action Plan 2010

Introduction

The Management Plan for the Bristol side of the Avon Gorge includes within it a five year work plan, which sets out management actions for the period 2010 – 2015.

The management plan also sets out the need for the five year work plan to be reviewed on an annual basis, and an annual action plan to be produced. The purpose of the annual action plan is to set out actions for the year ahead to facilitate the planning of work and resources. The annual action plan for 2010 is set out below.

The layout, including numbering of actions, is based on the five year work plan. Where numbering is not consecutive, this is because actions relate to 2010; missing numbers (and thus actions) relate to other years.

Progress is indicated as follows:

Green = achieved

Amber = in progress but behind planned deadline

Red = not started or difficulty commencing due to issues beyond our control

Management Plan for the Bristol side of the Avon Gorge Annual Plan 2010

No.	Action	Lead	Cost band £	Source E/P/D/G/B	Progress
Rare plants, rock faces and open grassy areas					
6.1	Maintain existing areas of limestone grassland through managed removal of encroaching trees and scrub	AGDWP	10 – 20K	P	
6.2	Remove selected trees and shrubs in the Gully, clear fence line, and fence the land	AGDWP	20 - 50K	P	
6.3	Under expert guidance fence rare whitebeams and areas for seedling re-growth in the Gully	AGDWP	<5K	P	
6.4	Introduce small group of 5 – 6 goats into the fenced area	AGDWP	5K	P	Preparation work progressed. Goats to be introduced 2011

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Lead:

AGDWP = Avon Gorge and Downs
Wildlife Project
DC = Downs Committee
DR = Downs Ranger
NE = Natural England
SG = Management Plan Steering Group
UB = University of Bristol

Funding Source:

E = Existing
P = AGDWP
D = Downs Budget
G = Grant aid eg Heritage Lottery Fund
B = Bristol City Council

Management Plan for the Bristol side of the Avon Gorge Annual Plan 2010

No.	Action	Lead	Cost band £	Source E/P/D/G/B	Progress
6.5	Ensure good management and welfare of the goats – including daily checks on animals and fences	DR	13k Annually	D	Preparation work progressed. To be implemented when grazing programme starts
6.6	Ensure signage is provided and maintained to explain goat grazing with contact details	AGDWP	<5K	P	Preparation work progressed. To be implemented when grazing programme starts
6.7	Put in place a monitoring programme to measure and record the effects of goat grazing and rare plant recovery	AGDWP	10 - 20K	P	Preparation work progressed. To be implemented when grazing programme starts
Woodland					
6.10	Manage woodland through continued policy of limited intervention, remove or make safe dangerous trees where they overhang paths	DR	<5K Annually	E	

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No.	Action	Lead	Cost band £	Source E/P/D/G/B	Progress
	or roads				
Landscape					
6.15	Retain important views and restore important lost views , across gorge, in accordance with Downs Management Plan	DR		E	
6.22	Ensure regular litter removal within gorge	DR		E	
6.23	Ensure all new management works are assessed to ensure, as far and possible, that the character of the gorge is maintained, or enhanced where the opportunity arises	SG / AGDWP	<5K	P/D/B	
Wildlife research and monitoring					
6.24	Develop and implement survey and monitoring programmes for rare plants, insects and other animals	AGDWP	5 -10k annually	P	

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Management Plan for the Bristol side of the Avon Gorge Annual Plan 2010

No.	Action	Lead	Cost band £	Source E/P/D/G/B	Progress
6.25	Encourage research projects by University of Bristol focused on rare or scarce species and their conservation	AGDWP	–	E	
6.26	Ensure information collected from surveys, monitoring and research informs the conservation management work on the gorge	ADGWP		E	
6.27	Promote the use of the unique wildlife of the Avon Gorge in teaching and research within the University of Bristol and other academic institutions	UB + others	–	E	
6.28	Natural England to undertake 'condition assessment of SSSI and SAC'	NE	5 -10K	P	
Education and promotion					
6.32	Extend and further develop the existing Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Education Programme	AGDWP	10k	G/D/P	Seasonal assistant employed

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Management Plan for the Bristol side of the Avon Gorge Annual Plan 2010

No.	Action	Lead	Cost band £	Source E/P/D/G/B	Progress
6.33	Investigate options for developing an education programme to include the history of the gorge	BCC	–	E	
6.34	Engage with new groups and audiences to ensure the involvement of people from different backgrounds	AGDWP	–	E	
Management and resources					
6.37	Train Downs Ranger's team in animal welfare to enable management of goats within the Gully	DR	<5K	P	Training achieved through Grazing Animals Project
6.38	Monitor income and expenditure against annual budgets and seek additional funding as required	SG	–	E	
6.39	Review work plan and produce annual implementation plan	SG	–	E	

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No.	Action	Lead	Cost band £	Source E/P/D/G/B	Progress
6.40	Monitor the implementation of the five year plan and report to Downs Committee	SG		E	
Working with others					
6.42	Liaise with outside organisations and groups to deliver relevant actions	AGDWP + SG	–	E	
6.43	Encourage volunteer activity to deliver actions where appropriate	AGDWP, SG and DR	–	E	Friends of Downs and Avon Gorge involved in wildlife monitoring and practical action

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