

**BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL**

**DOWNS COMMITTEE**  
**January 30<sup>th</sup> 2012**

**Report of:** Service Director, Environment and Leisure

**Title:** Downs Rangers Report

**Ward:** N/A

**Officer Presenting Report:** Robert Westlake, Downs Ranger

**Contact Telephone Number:** 0117 9736210

**RECOMMENDATION**

To note the report

**Summary**

The significant issues in the report are:

The report reflects the objectives of the Downs Management Plan, which is a five year work plan and has six key themes.

- Enjoyment
- Access
- Landscape
- Wildlife
- Anti Social Behaviour
- Management and Resources.

**Policy**

1. Not Applicable

**2. Consultation**

**Internal**

Richard Bevan, Manager, Parks Estates, Play, Cemeteries & Crematoria.

John Williams, Estates Manager.

Tony Whitlock, Principal Accountant.

Amanda Grubb, Events team.  
Vicki Abel, Project Development Officer.  
Richard Ennion, Horticultural Service Manager.  
Steve Morris, Markets Manager.

## **External**

Chris J Westcott, Natural England  
Mandy Leivers, Avon Gorge and Downs Biodiversity Education Officer.

## **Context**

### **3. Enjoyment:**

A second meeting with the Lord Lieutenant has taken place to agree the details for the combined Downs and Jubilee Day celebrations. Due to the proposed late evening lighting of the Beacon the Downs day programme of events will start later than originally planned at 3.00pm and run on into the evening. The intention is to sustain the event throughout the afternoon and early evening and will culminate with the lighting of the Beacon as the finale.

The Committee Downs Day sub group also met earlier this month to formulate the next stage in planning for the event. My colleague in Events Amanda Grubb has secured a range of musical entertainers, including, a steel band, Morris dancers, choirs and assorted musicians. Other entertainment is planned for the day which will be very much family orientated and will include children's games, guided walks, treasure trails, fancy dress and craft activities. The Downs day will also be linked with an event organised by the Botanical Gardens.

Following a 'mystery shop' by Green Flag judges late last year a response has been forwarded and a reapplication for continued Green Flag status for the Downs for 2012 has been submitted. A replacement banner has been installed near to the Downs Cafe.

One new memorial bench has been installed.

## **Access:**

### **4. Bristol Water update:**

Bristol Water Plc proposal to install a new water main across the Downs. Downs Committee were advised in July 2011 of the proposal by Bristol Water install a new water main across parts of the Downs.

Bristol Water have now submitted a Section 38 to seek consent from the Secretary of State to carry out the proposed works. Downs staff have erected copies of the Notice along the proposed route of the pipeline.

Officers continue to negotiate with Bristol Water. Meetings between Bristol Water, myself and colleagues from the City Council Landscapes section have taken place to agree a specification about the reinstatement works and provide a quotation that will be acceptable to Bristol Water.

Bristol Water have also been made aware of possible clashes with events booked and pending, and reminded that the timing of the work will be critical. The start of the works is scheduled for early spring.

Ongoing issues include the arrangements to minimise disruption during construction, arrangements for the site compound and its rent and consideration ie compensation with respect to disturbance and diminution in land value associated with the easement caused. Officers will continue to negotiate with Bristol Water keeping Downs Committee aware of these discussions.

## **5. Wildlife:**

**Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project:**

The goats have completed the first six months of the project and continue to thrive . The keepers assisted by volunteers from FoD+AG check daily on their welfare paying particular attention to their needs during any prolonged cold spells. Hay from the Downs has been stored should it be required as supplementary feed.

Progress in reclaiming some of the scrubby slopes is now evident.

A mains water supply for the goats has now been installed to a drinking trough at the bottom of the Gully.

## **6. Landscape:**

Some further minor tree works and copse clearance has been undertaken by the Downs team this winter. A programme of stump removal is ongoing.

The required assents from Natural England have been granted and the planned work to restore the viewpoint at Observatory Hill is due to start next month .

Early in the New Year the Downs team started the initial clearance works to remove scrub from the Iron Age Fort. This is an ongoing programme of previously agreed works

Due to prolonged wet weather before Christmas, planned scrub clearance works at Zoo Banks were deferred. It is hoped to continue this work ahead of any bird nesting activities.

## **7. Anti Social Behaviour:**

The in-house security team continue with patrols across the Downs. Winter hours are now in force. Officers have been asked to target the unofficial use of football pitches on Saturday mornings, ahead of the Downs League fixtures.

The newly appointed wheel clamping and tow away contractor is now up and running. Since the end of November thirteen vehicles have been clamped. None have been towed away. Three drivers have appealed, two were denied and one accepted a 50% discount on the grounds of extenuating circumstances.

I have responded to a Stage 1 complaint under the City Councils 'Fair Comment' system about the robustness of the scheme and one complaint that came direct to the Lord Mayors Office. I have had meetings with the

clamping company's representatives to agree a protocol as to when a penalty should be applied.

I have also requested a statement from the company as to what procedures they have in place should an unwary motorist be left on the Downs, possibly after dark and without the wherewithal to pay immediately or to summon assistance. I am satisfied that the response from the clamping company will ensure that no vulnerable driver is ever left in that position.

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## **8. Management and Resources:**

The annual plan for 2012 is complete { appendix 1} The plan will dictate our priorities for the coming year.

The Downs team continue with the Winter programme of works carrying out day to day response maintenance in line with the Downs Management Plan, the annual plan and the Avon Gorge Management Plan.

Works include:

Minor tree works around the Downs, maintaining spring bedding, leaf clearance, managing the goats, sports pitch marking and pitch and dressing room maintenance, stump removal, seat cleaning, inspection and maintenance of play equipment, clearing litter and emptying litter and dog bins, replacing worn out dog bins and refurbishing others, cleaning signs and shelters, graffiti removal, retaining scrub areas previously cleared.

The Downs team have been working closely with rope access contractors doing clearance works to the cliff edge, the Gorge, the Zig zag path and the rock faces at the children's playground and near the Clifton end of the Suspension bridge.

Additional planting to gap up the herbaceous bed at White Tree roundabout

One of the Downs team retired in December. It is not planned to seek a replacement at this time.

The Probation team continue with the repainting of the Downs dressing rooms one day a week.

The Committee should be aware that some of the front line equipment {tractor, large mower and football trailer} are now on extended leases from Contract Services, Fleet Management, I intend to investigate all options with the fleet manager for replacement items and will report the outcome at a later meeting.

FoD+AG organised the second of their deep litter forays in November. Their efforts on this occasion concentrated on the copses across the Downs. In addition the Friends group have assisted with the management of the goats and will be part of a volunteer party in February clearing scrub. The Friends group are currently considering a volunteer 'gardening party' to assist with the summer bedding schemes.

I have received a request through the Markets Office to permit the Parry's Lane burger site to be used during the evening. The proposal is from an operator independent of the current holder of this concession and would be

offering a similar product.

A sum of £1,000 per month is offered should the Committee be minded to accept the proposal for further consideration.

### **Public Sector Equality Duties**

9a) *Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:*

i) *Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.*

ii) *Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --*

- *remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;*

- *take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);*

- *encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.*

iii) *Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –*

- *tackle prejudice; and*

- *promote understanding.*

9b) *Not Applicable.*

## **10. Legal and Resource Implications**

### **Legal**

*An opinion regarding the parking of vans with advertising boards*

*attached is sought.*

*The Clifton and Durdham Downs Act (Bristol) 1861 provides that the Downs should remain as a place for the resort and recreation of the citizens of Bristol, and that a committee should be appointed to manage them. The recommendations of this report are within the powers conferred by this statute.*

**Financial**

**(a) Revenue**

*None*

**(b) Capital**

*None*

*Financial advice provided by Tony Whitlock, Principal Accountant*

**Land**

*The land is under the control of the Downs Committee.*

**Personnel**

*Not applicable*

**Appendices:**

*{a} The Downs Work Plan 2011-12*

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**Background Papers:**

*None*

## The Downs Work Plan 2011 - 2012

### 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. the availability of finance and operational changes within the Parks Section.

The management plan is to be reviewed every 5 years and is now due to be reviewed for implementation in April 2012

Note that many items are on-going every year and so have not been highlighted as being **objective achieved** even though the work for 2009/10 and 2010/11 was achieved.

		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Comment
<b>7.1</b>	<b>Enjoyment</b>				
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.	#	#	#	Great strides have been achieved in the development of the educational programme, particularly with the assistance of the Education officer from Bristol Zoo. In 2011 a series of historical information panels were installed. Strong links forged with E/H with significant projects achieved, particularly the installation of goat

		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Comment
					herd.
7.1.5	Audit the existing interpretational and directional signage for its siting and efficiency.		#		
<b>7.2</b>	The five major 'you are here' signs to be replaced. Directional to 'The Downs' {brown signs} to be progressed.				
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. The implementation of such a scheme will need to be linked with any future development of a Visitor facility.
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.		#		The intention is to install safe cycle parking at selected locations. Consultation with City cycling teams to be undertaken.
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.		#		The first application for TRO to be applied for. This will provide parking for people with disabilities at Stoke Road Cafe site.
<b>7.3</b>	<b>Landscape</b>				
7.3.2	Implement a programme of scrub management subject to 7.3.1	#	#	#	This is a rolling programme to recover and retain areas of scrub.



		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Comment
7.3.3	Remove all scrub growing within the boundary of the scheduled ancient Monument known as Clifton Down Camp , an Iron Age hillfort.		#	#	Consents for this work applied for and granted to permit the first stage of this programme to commence in 2012
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.	#	#	#	This is linked to above and in future years will form part of the annual tree inspection
7.3.5	Review the provision and design of all 'park furniture' e.g. seats, litter bins, signage, obstacle fences etc. and produce a design guide.		#		All new seats installed follow a style previously used on the Downs. Some redundant seats removed. 8 corporately styled dual litter bins installed in 2011.
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' view across the Downs and the Avon Gorge. (See map 11)		#		A significant piece of work to be actioned in 2012 to restore 'viewpoint' at Observatory Hill.
7.3.8	Continued inspection and proactive management of the Downs Tree Stock in line with the risk management strategy. <b>Objective achieved</b>	#	#	#	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.	#	#	#	The Tree officer is currently working on this plan.
7.3.10	Maintain a sanitation elm tree felling and removal	#	#	#	The Tree officer is currently

		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Comment
	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.				working on this plan.
<b>7.4</b>	<b>Wildlife</b>				
7.4.4	Develop the idea of introducing grazing to the gully and other selected areas. <b>Objective achieved</b>		#		The plans to introduce grazing in the gully was reported as part of the Gorge Management Plan. Goats were introduced successfully in June 2011
<b>7.5</b>	<b>Antisocial behaviour</b>				
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.		#	#	This is a rolling programme to reduce scrub cover and retain area all ready cleared
7.5.2	Consider 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. In 2011 a new supplier took over a city wide contract. Additional posts installed on verges at Clifton Down Road and Upper Belgrave Road. {2011}
7.5.7	Evaluate the arguments for and against the provision of litterbins and the cost thereof. <b>Objective achieved</b>		#		Following a 12 month trial period the Downs Committee agreed the installation of 8 additional dual use dog waste/litter bins {2011} .
7.5.8	provide more comprehensive cover of dog bins		#	#	Subject to approval of Downs Committee following a 12 month trial. {See above} A rolling replacement programme of poor

		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Comment
					quality bins is proposed. It is intended to seek further assistance from the Dog Warden Service.
<b>7.6</b>	<b>Management and resources</b>				
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 and is continually monitored.
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.	#	#	#	All playing surfaces subject to an annual inspection.
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 , {10 installed 2010/11} and sponsored trees will form part of the Tree Bristol scheme. The Downs Ranger and Parks Estates Manager are currently working to improve concession rates, } significant increase in ice cream concession 2011} and to explore other opportunities to increase

		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Comment
					revenue.
7.6.12	Investigate all grant funding opportunities for 'capital works'.	#	#		
7.6.13	Apply for Green Flag.	#	#	#	Achieved Green Flag again for 2011
7.6.14	Produce an interpretation and promotion plan.		#		
7.6.15	Develop recycling of all arisings and as much litter as possible.		#		Plan to install first recycling point in 2012. All litter is sorted by waste contractor. Arisings from the Downs are chipped where possible plus the provision of the same service to Bristol Zoo.
7.6.16	Audit the EMAS action plan	#	#	#	Annual Audit carried out by Downs Ranger and Head Gardener
7.6.17	Support the formation of a Friends of the Downs group and develop a good working relationship through consultation.	#	#	#	Strong bonds have and continue to be developed
7.6.19	Investigate and encourage volunteer assistance (including research) for the Downs.	#	#	#	The Group carry out significant works, including, assisting with goat monitoring, traffic surveys, butterfly monitoring,
7.6.20	Investigate the options and benefits of establishing a Volunteer Ranger / Warden service.	#	#	#	It is planned to further enhance the role of the group, early discussions to create a 'gardening team' to assist with bedding schemes, and meet and greet the public and distributing leaflets.

		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Comment
7.6.22	Provide an information point adjacent to Stoke Road, which includes emergency telephone contact numbers and information such as public notices.	#	#		A strategy on style for the Downs to be agreed
7.6.23	Manage the Downs budgets as a business unit.	#	#	#	Downs Ranger and Estates Manager regularly review budgets with Principal Accountant
7.6.29	Downs Committee reports to Council and Society of Merchant Venturers.	#	#	#	This is done annually.
7.6.30	Downs Committee monitor the implementation of the 5-year plan through the regular Downs Ranger's reports at the committee meetings	#	#		The 5 year plan was reviewed in 2011 for implementation in April 2012 and will run for a further five years.
7.6.31	Downs Biodiversity Education Officer writes a monthly report for the Downs Committee plus an annual report.	#	#	#	Ongoing
7.6.32	Avon Gorge and Downs Project produces an annual review of the project	#	#	#	Report by sub-group
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.	#	#	#	Estates manager and Downs Ranger meet to monitor budget.
7.6.35	Monitor and record the number of events	#	#	#	Downs Ranger meets regularly with Events team
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.	#	#	#	

		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Comment
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	#	#	#	Downs Ranger & Head Gardener meet weekly to carry out quality inspections.
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.		#	#	
	<b>Additional Works Undertaken</b>				
1.	Established and managed very successful partnership with Community Payback		#	#	Community payback have a long term project to refurbish the Downs dressing rooms.
2.	150 <sup>th</sup> Celebration Event {2011}		#		An annual Downs Day planned for 2012 to be linked with the Queens Diamond Jubilee celebration and National Families week
3.	Bridge Valley Road issues		#		Bridge Valley road reopened Autumn 2011
4.	Water mains replacement works		#	#	Bristol Water installation of major new pipeline, BCC will be responsible for reinstatement works.
5.	Extensive works and training towards the Gorge goat project		#		Please refer to the Gorge Work Plan