

## **DISCLAIMER**

**The attached minutes are DRAFT minutes. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information, statements and decisions recorded in them, their status will remain that of a draft until such time as they are confirmed as a correct record at the subsequent meeting.**

**MINUTES OF DOWNS COMMITTEE  
HELD ON 27<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2014 AT 4.00 P.M.**

- P The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor  
Councillor Faruk Choudhury (Chair)
- P Councillor Abraham )  
A Councillor Janke )  
P Councillor Khan ) City Councillors  
P Councillor Payne )  
P Councillor Colin Smith )  
P Councillor Townsend )
- P Anthony Brown (Master)
- P Chris Booy )  
P Chris Curling )  
A Andrew Densham ) Merchant Venturers  
P Francis Greenacre )  
A Sir James Tidmarsh )  
P Chris Pople )

**DWN**

**16.01/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Apologies were received from Andrew Densham and Sir James Tidmarsh.

**DWN**

**17.01/14 MINUTES – DOWNS COMMITTEE – 18<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2013**

**RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Downs Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.**

**DWN**

**18.01/14 POINT OF PROCEDURE**

Cllr Smith pointed out that as a Member of Development Control (North) Committee he wished to declare an interest in items 3, 3a and 4 relating to zoo parking on the Downs, however unlike other

Committee agendas he noted that 'Declarations of interest' was not a standard item on the Downs Committee agenda.

The Democratic Services Officer advised that this issue had been raised in a Public Forum Statement submitted at the last meeting and would be dealt with under agenda item 3a.

Cllr Payne also declared an interest in items 3, 3a and 4 relating to zoo parking on the Downs because he was also a Member of Development Control (North) Committee.

**DWN**  
**19.01/14 PUBLIC FORUM**

The following items of public forum were received and are available for inspection in the minute book.

<b>AGENDA ITEM</b>	<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>STATEMENT NO</b>
3a & 4	Zoo parking on Downs	S Carter	1
N/A	Bus changes and Tourism	G Bailey, Radstock Public Transport Group, South West Transport Network	2

**Statement 1 - Zoo Parking on the Downs**

Susan Carter spoke to her statement which commented on items 3a and 4 on the agenda. Downs for People recognised that these reports represented progress in the management of zoo parking but felt much more needed to be done. Four additional recommendations had been proposed for consideration by the Committee.

The Committee noted the contents of the Statement and agreed to take it into consideration when making decisions in relation to item 3a and 4.

**Statement 2 - Bus Changes and Tourism**

On behalf of Radstock Public Transport Group, David Redgewell spoke to this statement which raised concerns about reductions in bus provision and that these changes had also not been reflected in Tourist Guides which visitors rely on.

The Committee noted the concerns and agreed that the statement would be forwarded to the relevant department so that the documents could be promptly amended. **Action Ruth Quantock**

**RESPONSE TO ISSUES RAISED IN PUBLIC FORUM  
STATEMENTS SUBMITTED TO DOWNS COMMITTEE ON 18<sup>TH</sup>  
NOVEMBER 2013**

The Committee considered a report of the Democratic Services Officer which set out the findings of the investigation into the issues raised by the public forum statements submitted to the last meeting.

The following key issues were noted during the discussion that took place:-

- The inclusion of Declarations of Interest on the agenda as a standard item would act as a prompt to make Members think about any interest they might have in the topic under discussion or could be perceived by the public to have. In the spirit of openness and transparency it would be up to Members to decide whether to declare any interest but it would not be appropriate to police this in anyway.
- With reference to Downs for People recommendation 3, the Downs Ranger indicated that he had agreed a protocol with the Zoo about the use of the site which would be closely monitored.
- With reference to Downs for People recommendation 4, and in response to a Member's question, officers present were unable to provide an answer as to the number of years the current licence fee of £8000 per annum had been in place. It was agreed that this information would be sought outside of the meeting and circulated to Members. **Action Ruth Quantock.** A member commented that in the past the fee had been fixed democratically at Member level with advice from officers.
- Members requested that next time the license is up for renewal the fee should be re-negotiated to reflect its true commercial value. **Action Robert Westlake**

**RESOLVED**

- 1) **That the Traffic Management Subgroup receives an update on Ladies Mile from Bristol Zoo Gardens in June each year (if necessary this can then feed into the July meeting of Downs Committee)**
- 2) **That the Committee receives an annual update on Ladies Mile from Bristol Zoo Gardens in January each year.**

**3) That 'Declaration of Interest' be included as a standard item on future agendas for Downs Committee.**

**DWN**

**21.01/14 LADIES MILE UPDATE**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Estates, Bristol Zoo Gardens (agenda item no. 4) which provided an update on the various issues associated with the seasonal licence and planning permission granted to the Zoo to continue to use the Ladies Mile site for overflow parking for the next 3 years.

Tim Wilson referred to the agreed recommendations of the previous report and indicated that he would be happy to report to the Traffic Management Subgroup and work with the Downs Ranger to resolve any on-going issues relating to the overflow parking.

**RESOLVED - that the report be noted.**

**DWN**

**22.01/14 REPORT OF THE DOWNS RANGER**

The Committee considered a report of the Downs Ranger (agenda item no. 5) updating on works and developments carried out since the last meeting.

The following main issues were noted during the discussion:-

Proposal for the installation of second item of outdoor fitness equipment on the Downs

- the application was timely as a further item of equipment has recently been removed from the Trim Trail due to its unsafe condition
- Some members indicated that they felt inadvertently misled with regard to the advertising on the first item of equipment installed which was obtrusive
- The Downs Ranger and local Ward Member indicated that they had received numerous positive comments about the system and it had proved a popular addition to the activities on the Downs, with very few negative comments.
- The Committee did not have the budget to fund the replacement of the Trim Trail so sponsorship was the only way forward.
- It was suggested that the design of the advertising be approved by Members (outside of the meeting) prior to installation.

### Rock Fall at Sea Walls

- Parsons Brinckerhoff had received three bids for the work and were recommending for acceptance a tender bid from CAN Geotechnical Ltd (CAN were the company that carried out the recent works at Bridge Valley road.) The tendered bid for the works is £87,000 of which \*20% is recoverable from the joint land owners at Sea Walls. It was advisable to factor in an additional 10k for possible extras and the possibility of unforeseen problems. The Downs Ranger has been advised by Mike Allen, Finance Officer that there was sufficient funds within the Downs Reserve to meet the cost of the works.
- The proposed programme of works was due to start in early April to prepare risk assessments and safe systems of work etc, with work on site commencing towards the end of February. The work is programmed for completion in six weeks.
- Members were also made aware that this tender does not:
  - 1) address the issue of the removal of the fallen rock. This can be properly evaluated on completion of the stabilisation works.
  - 2) address the smaller rock fall at Suspension Bridge Road. This will be the subject of a separate recommendation.
- Members commented that this was much less than originally anticipated and could therefore be met by the Reserves.
- The Committee wished to express via the Downs Ranger, its impatience with Parsons Brinckerhoff over the time taken to get to this stage of the process. As annual clients, the Committee expected a better service than was currently being delivered.

\* Following the meeting, the Downs Ranger subsequently amended his statement made at the meeting, clarifying that the joint land owners had committed up to £2000 for the schemes design and preparation of tender documents and that any further funding for the stabilisation works would be subject to negotiation between Downs Committee and Seawalls Management.

### Inappropriate Behaviour

- A fourth working group meets on an ad-hoc basis to consider how best to manage inappropriate behaviour of a sexual nature on the Downs. There was clear evidence that this activity was still an issue and the group needed to reform. Due to annual changes to the composition of the Downs Committee there was currently no Councillor representation. Cllr Smith volunteered to join this working group.

### Veteran Ash

– Following on from the update at the last meeting, the fact that the tree had eventually succumbed to the forces of nature validates the original submission that the tree was in a dangerous condition and should have been felled immediately as agreed by the Committee, without re-applying for a license, effectively to meet European legislation for the destruction of a Bat roost. It was agreed that a protocol should be put in place for future management of dangerous trees. Andrew Gordon agreed to contact Natural England to seek advice. **Action Andrew Gordon.**

### Childrens Playground

– It was noted that the playground was due to be completed in April which was many months ahead of the anticipated date in Nov. Whilst this was good news, a bench which had been sponsored locally would not be ready until Nov. It was suggested that any official launch be delayed, if at all possible until Nov. Richard Bevan agreed to pass this on to the project manager. **Action Richard Bevan** (It was subsequently clarified outside the meeting that there were no plans to have an opening event so any formal launch would be completely in the hands of the Downs Committee).

### Management and Resources

– The Downs Annual Plan (Appendix A to the report) provided a snapshot of current progress against the five year management plan and will dictate priorities for the year ahead.

### **RESOLVED -**

- (1) That the installation of a second item of outdoor training equipment on the Downs be agreed in principle subject to agreement of the advertising by Members of Down Committee in advance of the installation.**
- (2) That Parsons Brinckerhoff be authorised to proceed with awarding the contract for the repair of Sea walls**
- (3) That a protocol be drawn up for the management of trees considered a danger to the general public**
- (4) That the Downs Annual Plan be noted.**

**DWN**

### **23.01/14 BARBECUE USE ON THE DOWNS**

The Committee considered a report of the Service Director, Environment and Leisure (agenda item no. 6) which outlined the conclusions of an extended trial period for the use of a small designated barbecue area on the Downs.

The following key issues were noted during the discussion that took place:-

- Barbecue use is a very popular recreational activity for many citizens, particularly for many residents around the Downs who have no gardens or limited access to open spaces (during the summer of 2013 over 100 units of spent barbecues were deposited in the bins provided over the busiest weekends).
- The conclusions of the report were to be welcomed as there had been a partial displacement of the unauthorised use of barbecues on the Downs.
- The proposed designated area falls within the curtilage of a Site of Special Scientific Interest and should Committee accept the recommendation consent will be required from Natural England. The designated area had opened up a previously 'closed', overgrown area and encourages a wider cross section of visitors. If consent was not forthcoming another area had been identified in the area known locally as 'Fairyland'.
- Should the Committee accept the recommendation, current resources would be invested into better signage advising visitors of location and correct barbecue protocol.
- As students were frequent visitors to the Downs, it was suggested that there was a conversation to be had with the University and perhaps some information could be included within their student 'Welcome Packs'.
- It was acknowledged that whilst a small step, the agreement to barbecue use in a small designated area on the Downs was a very significant step forward for Downs Committee.

**RESOLVED -**

**That subject to consent from Natural England, the Committee permits barbecue use in one designated area at Circular Road.**

**DWN**

**24.01/14**

**AVON GORGE AND DOWNS WILDLIFE PROJECT ANNUAL REVIEW 2013 AND THE REPORT OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE AVON GORGE AND DOWNS SEASONAL EDUCATION OFFICER**



The Committee considered a report of the Estates Management Team Leader (agenda item no. 7) relating to the 14<sup>th</sup> annual review of the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project.

Mandy Leivers, Avon Gorge and Downs Biodiversity Education Officer provided a summary of the project's main achievements with regards to conservation management, wildlife surveying and monitoring, and the educational programme. The report of the activities of the Avon Gorge and Downs Seasonal Education Officer was also attached to the report and the key achievements were highlighted.

The Committee was very impressed with the progress and achievements of the AGDWP and Education Programme and congratulated all concerned.

**RESOLVED - that the report be noted.**

**DWN**

**25.01/14**

## **DELEGATED AND UPCOMING EVENTS PROPOSED ON THE DOWNS**

The Committee considered a report of the Service Director Communication and Marketing (agenda item no. 8):

- noting the events and filming that have taken place between committee meetings under delegated powers; and
- noting proposed future events between committee meetings.

The following main issues were noted during the discussion:-

Funderworld – Negotiations were ongoing. There was a possibility that the date may change from the usual Easter holiday to Whitsun (23<sup>rd</sup> May – 1 June). The Downs Ranger commented that the proposed revised timing would make the re-instatement of the football pitches easier for the Downs team.

GroovyBug – This event had been withdrawn by the organisers due to a lack of funding. It was to be replaced by Subway 5K. One member was concerned about the number of road closures, which denied access to the Downs by other users. The Festivals & Event Officer indicated that he was conscious of trying to keep closures to a minimum, however as mentioned by the Finance Officer at the last meeting the Committee also needed to focus on securing more income – fun runs were very popular.

## RESOLVED -

- (1) that the events and filming activity that has taken place under delegated powers be noted; and
- (2) that the proposed future events between committee meetings be noted.
- (3) that the Policy for Events on the Downs be approved

## DWN

### 26.01/14 FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2013/14

The Democratic Services Officer explained that unfortunately, the Finance Officer was unable to attend the Committee to provide a verbal update as stated on the agenda, due to illness.

The Committee requested some written commentary on the key issues relating to the Financial Outturn (Appendix A), in particular the state of the Reserves. **Action Mike Allen**

## DWN

### 27.01/14 A.O.B

Bridge over Bridge Valley Road.

Dr Adrienn Tomor updated the Committee on progress on the consultation and open day planned for Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 10.00 – 12.00 pm, Engineers' House. She also brought a plan along which suggested how the bridge could link into the current cycle network system.

Members had concerns about the proposed links and it was agreed that Dr Tomor would meet with the Traffic Management Subgroup to discuss the issue further. The Subgroup would then make some recommendations to the Committee at the next meeting in April. **Action Robert Westlake/Adrienn Tomor.**

**DWN**

**28.01/14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**RESOLVED -**

**That the next meeting of the Downs Committee be held on 14<sup>th</sup>  
April 2014 at 4.00 p.m. at City Hall.**

(The meeting ended at 6.05 pm)

CHAIR