

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

**DOWNS COMMITTEE
8th September 2014**

Report of: Service Director, Environment and Leisure

Title: Downs Management Report

Ward: N/A

**Officer Presenting Report: Andrew Gordon,
Heritage Planning and Partnership Officer**

Contact Telephone Number: 07710 396 714

RECOMMENDATION:

Members:

To note the points and recommendations made in the report.

Summary

This report reflects the objectives of the Downs Management Plan and to inform members of progress since the last meeting.

The significant issues in the report are:

- Enjoyment
- Access
- Working Groups
- Landscape
- Wildlife
- Management and Resources

1. Policy

Not Applicable

2. Consultation

a) Internal

Sarah Tyler, Estates Planning Officer
John Williams, Estates Business Manager.

Andrew Gordon, Heritage Planning and Partnership Officer
Mike Allen, Business Manager
Becky Coffin, Conservation Officer
Richard Ennion, Horticultural Service Manager.
Peter Malarby, Senior Solicitor.
Terry Hannan, Head Gardener, Downs and Blaise

b) External

Mandy Leivers, Avon Gorge and Downs Biodiversity Education Officer
Jack Penrose, FOD + AG
Chris Westcott, Natural England

3. Context

a) Enjoyment:

- i) By mid-September a second item of OTIS Outdoor Training Equipment will be installed behind the changing rooms. This follows agreement from members to allow this equipment onsite for one year.
- ii) A temporary artwork produced by Oscar Tuazon has been installed by the Arnolfini. This will be exhibited on the Downs until November 2014 (see Appendix 1 for photographs of the artwork). The organisers report they have received a significant amount of positive feedback from the public. However, the use of the BBQ (within the sculpture) without permission is being monitored and managed by site staff.

The sculpture will continue to play host to a programme of events, including BBQ's, catered by top Bristol restaurants. The next event is on the 21st September when a steak barbeque will be provided by The Cowshed.

The Lord Mayor visited the sculpture on Sunday 3rd August to see the artwork and attend the event 'Rice and Things'.

Details of removing the artwork will be confirmed before November. The impact of heavy works and ground conditions will be taken into account when removing the sculpture.

- iii) A request was made by members to challenge Natural England's decision to only grant planning permission for the Downs BBQ site for one year. The intended approach of BCC officers is to collect soil samples from the site and analyse for phosphate levels. This will establish whether or not it is possible to enhance the species richness of the grassland sward within the site, in order to expand the areas of managed meadow. If the phosphate levels are found to be too high, it could be argued that enhancement of BBQ grassland is not possible. To prevent fire reaching the goat enclosure the Downs Team could seek

to create a fire break.

b) Access:

The in-house security team continue with patrols across the Downs. Very few significant incidents have being recorded.

c) Working Groups

Rock Fall Group:

i) Sea Walls

A meeting was held between Council officers, Service Director Tracey Morgan and the Lord Mayor on 9th July to discuss how to review the risks and issues associated with Sea Walls rock face. This included legal responsibilities of the Council and the Downs Committee, risks posed to the Portway, climbers and the public and how to respond to the neighbouring land owner agent's proposal for Bristol City Council to purchase his clients land (this he claims will avoid the need and associated costs to remove of rock that has previously fallen on the land and for further rock face stabilisation works). The outcome of the meeting has been to produce a report with recommendations, which will be considered by members as a separate item.

ii) Bridge Road:

Purchase orders have been raised for Parsons Brinkerhoff (PB) to obtain new estimates for carrying out rock stabilisation works at Bridge Road. This is to produce a detailed design for installation of rock bolts and drap netting, tendering of the stabilisation works and preparation of a specification for the annual tactile inspection and vegetation clearance, as well providing the Construction Development Management Coordinator role. Katie Hauff, from Parsons Brinkerhoff, is planning to complete 2 days of detailed tactile inspections during late September. This is dependent on whether a road lane closure is required for a cherry picker use. Katie then requires approx. 5 weeks from the date of inspection to prepare a detailed design and additional specifications.

d) Landscape:

i) BCC officers were informed that the access track created to enable the construction of the new playground would be reinstated. This will be completed by the BCC landscapes team and is due to take place in September which will give the grass seed the best chance to germinate before the autumn.

ii) Clifton in Bloom judging took place with the Downs Team on 11th July. The results are due to be announced during the autumn.

e) Wildlife:

The goats continue to thrive in the Gully and ensure species rich grassland and rare plants associated with this area are maintained, and with time can be expanded. FODAG members continue with valuable assistance in the management of the livestock.

f) Management and Resources:

The Downs Team are working to the summer programme in accordance with the management plan including:

- i) The annual hay cut which has now been completed. A member of the Downs team completed this using his own hay baler. This is due to the Downs baler being considered to be beyond economic repair. Part of the hay crop was given to the City Farm (1000 bales) and part taken by the staff member as payment for doing the work. It is considered that in the long term reliance on a Downs team member providing his personal equipment is unlikely to be sustainable. As a consequence officers are looking into the options of buying or leasing a baler (with a possibility of sharing this with other grounds maintenance teams in parks and estates) or alternatively, using a contractor for this work.
- ii) Income from providing memorial benches last year for a charge of £750 per bench was reported as being over £7,000. The profit margin taking account of the materials and labour (around £400) was around 50% profit. Members should note that preparing and installing benches by the Downs team staff can be carried during inclement weather. This service has been deliberately limited since April 2015 due to staff shortages.

Recommendation: Members consider allowing the service to recommence on the basis memorial benches replace existing benches, and buying in sets of 6 at cost around £3,000. This is subject to staff numbers increasing following the BCC restructure.

- iii) General site maintenance continues includes maintaining summer bedding, managing the goats, clearing litter and emptying litter and dog bins, grass cutting, cleaning signs and shelters, graffiti removal, shrub bed maintenance and maintaining herbaceous beds.
- iv) Staff have undertaken CPC driver training to meet Health and Safety legal requirements.
- v) All football pitches have recovered well following reinstatement works and will be ready for use at the beginning of the season.

4. Finance

- a) A mobile catering unit concession at Parry's Lane has been tendered and following tender process checks a recommendation will be given to

the committee.

- b) A review of sports charges for the University and Downs Leagues will be carried out in line with the citywide fees and charges schedules.
- c) Investigations to look at opportunities to have refreshment concessions (non ice-cream) operating from Sea Walls and the new playground are ongoing.

5. Risk Assessment:

No risk assessment has been carried out.

6. Public Sector Equality Duties

6a) 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.

7. Legal and Resource Implications

Legal

The Clifton and Durdham Downs (Bristol) Act 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:

(b) Capital

None

Financial advice provided by Mike Allen. Business Partner.

8. Land

The land is under the control of the Downs Committee.

9. Personnel

Not applicable

Appendices: 1 & 2

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers: None



