

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

DOWNS COMMITTEE

September 7th 2010

Report of: *Director of Neighbourhoods*

Title: *Downs Rangers Report*

Ward: N/A

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

Contact Telephone Number: (0117) 9736210

RECOMMENDATION

That the Report be noted

Summary

The significant issues in the report are:

- General maintenance on the Downs
- Security Patrols.
- Wheel Clamping.
- Capital projects from the Downs reserve.
- Litter Management
- Barbecue Monitoring
- The Observatory Tower
- Goat Management.
- Tree Management
- Visitor Telescopes

Policy

1. *Not Applicable*

2 Consultation

Internal:

Matt Bennett Arboricultural Officer.

Peter Parkinson, Security Services

Chris Dooley, Bridges and Structures.

Barry Wiles, Licensing Team.

Neil Terry, Traffic Manager.

Sheelagh Dawson, Contract Solicitor.

Helen Hall, Conservation Officer.

External:

Ian Douglas, BSG

Chris Westcott Natural England

Tim Wilson (Estates) Bristol Zoo

Warwick Hulme City Sightseeing Bristol

3 Context.

The Downs team continue with the summer programme of works carrying out day to day response maintenance and projects in line with the Downs Management Plan and the Avon Gorge Management Plan.

In May the Downs received a visit from the Green Flag Judges. I am pleased to report that the Downs has successfully retained this prestigious award. Staff attended a 'Celebration of Success' event at St Paul's Park in July and proudly received the Flag.

In July and again in August Britain in Bloom judges visited Bristol and were escorted around the Downs by the Head gardener. We await the judges decision.

Works to the dressing rooms undertaken by probationers as part of the Community Payback scheme continues. The work is undertaken in partnership with the Probation Service. Probationers work one day a week at the Downs.

Following the July Committee meeting members who took the tour of the Downs met with the supervisor and spoke to the probationers about the scheme. It was originally envisaged that the scheme would end at the start of the playing season but I would like to continue with the initiative and extend the work into the winter months. I estimate that £1000 has been spent on paint and materials to date and a similar amount will be required to continue

the work.

At the suggestion of the Master I have also obtained a quotation to repaint the outside of the building, this is considered to be beyond the scope of the Community Payback Scheme. The cost of this work will be around £4000 and will include minor making good of woodwork, repaint all walls, doors, windows, guttering and drainpipes. This is a total figure of £6000 that has not been budgeted for and could be funded from the Reserve.

Essential Health and Safety work at the Dressing rooms to improve emergency lighting and to conform to current legislation is complete. A fire risk assessment has been completed and fire extinguishers installed.

In July, in the company of the Strategic Director for Neighbourhoods, Graham Sims, I escorted newly elected Councillors on a brief tour of the Downs. They expressed great interest in the work of the Committee and left suitably impressed.

Since our last meeting, at the invitation of Natural England, I had an opportunity to meet on site with the Minister for the Natural Environment and Fisheries, Richard Benyon. The Minister was in Bristol to look at the work of Natural England and was very keen to discuss partnering arrangements between the various agencies concerned with the management of the Downs.

Following our last meeting I have agreed to meet with the proprietor of City Sightseeing Bristol Mr. Warwick Hulme. This is to look at low branches around the tour route. Mr Hulme has offered the use of an open top bus to assist with the work which is planned for the Autumn. I have also passed Mr Hulme's letter about parking on the Downs on busy days to traffic managers for comment on Mr. Hulme's suggestions on how traffic flow might be improved. A response from Neil Terry, Traffic Management has been received and passed to Mr Hulme. (Appendix 1)

The refurbishment of the Sea walls railings are well underway, the work started promptly on the 5th July and the initial rebuilding of the stonework is now complete. It is anticipated that the work to the railings and the painting will be finished later this month

The annual maintenance work to control vegetation growing from the rock face at Bridge Valley road has been deferred. This is due to the current road closure.

A meeting with representatives from Bristol Zoo has taken place to consider improvements to the informal footpath that takes visitors from the car park to the Zoo. The scope of the work has been agreed and will be carried out during the winter months.

One memorial bench has been installed and I have received requests for two more.

Since the last meeting there has been a request for a licence to operate a refreshment facility on the Portway, near to the redundant toilet block. This was an item that came after the agenda conference and further details if appropriate may be brought to the November meeting.

Since my last report the following works have been carried out.

- Maintenance of children's play equipment.
- Clearing litter from the Downs and emptying bins.
- Regular grass cutting and strimming.
- Hay cutting of Conservation area's (Contributions to City Farms etc.)
- Hedge cutting.
- Summer bedding maintenance
- Graffiti removal.
- Repair and repainting of football posts.
- Essential repairs to the dressing rooms
- Cleaning hard surfaces, shelters and information panels.
- Tree lifting and tidying.
- Works to clear undergrowth from the cliff edge at Sea Walls.

Security Patrols.

Security Officers continue with regular patrols around the Downs, this now includes two officers carrying out foot patrols and a full time presence on Sundays and is intended to raise the profile of managing bye law infringement.

Security staff along with the Ranger team have carried out Sunday patrols across the Downs to inform visitors of bye-laws and hand out information leaflets. This was carried out on two Sundays in July and feedback suggests that the initiative has been worthwhile. A further Sunday exercise is planned for later this month. Radio Bristol has expressed an interest in accompanying Rangers and Security personnel.

The enhanced security cover has led to a projected overspend on the security budget, however anecdotal evidence and positive feedback indicates that the additional cover and the continual refinement of the service is beginning to have an effect particularly in the management of barbecue use. Complaints have been greatly reduced.

Security Officers continue to liaise with Bristol Security Group and call for back up to deal with parking issues. Since our last meeting Security Officers and Downs staff have ticketed or spoken to over :

- 35 Illegally parked cars/drivers
- in excess of 31 visitors using barbecues and asked that they be

extinguished.

- 2 groups instructed to extinguish fires in woodland.
- 1 person was requested to stop kite boarding.
- 4 visitors asked to take down tents and gazebos.

Following adverse media coverage in July regarding a visitor requested to remove a wind break from the Downs security staff have been asked to adopt a more flexible approach in applying the bye law.

A further review to refine the service will be undertaken by myself the Head gardener at the end of the summer.

Wheel Clamping.

The scheme continues to work well and is having a positive effect on illegally parked vehicles. Since our last meeting BSG have clamped 18 cars parked illegally and received 4 appeals against the penalty, none of which were upheld.

Following the agreement at our last meeting to extend the clamping scheme until February 2011 I have consulted with colleagues to inform of this Committees decision. I have asked for guidance on the protocol for the extension. I am informed by the Contracts Solicitor Sheelagh Dawson that there is provision within the original contract to extend for a further twelve months. I recommend that the Committee adopts this option and following the completion of the extended trial period a report will be brought to a later meeting asking this Committee to consider the alternatives for continuing, extending to include additional area's of the Downs, or discontinuing the scheme.

Following a meeting with the proprietor of Bristol Security Group Ian Douglas I have asked for a brief report for the Committees consideration describing his views of the scheme and his recommendations for the future.

Due to changes in wheel clamping legislation I have requested clarification from Licensing that the Downs scheme will be unaffected.

Projects funded from reserves.

At the last Downs Committee meeting a list of projects that might be funded from reserves was endorsed.

To date the following works are completed or underway:

- 1 Works to railings at Sea Walls to complete the project (underway)
- 2 Replace refurbish Downs depot toilet block. (procurement)
- 3 Install power supply to two ice cream locations. (confirming quotes)
- 4 Install five replacement information panels. (with project team)
- 5 Repair/replace security shutters at depot. (complete)
- 6 Replace one third of football posts. (waiting on supplier)
- 7 Contingency fund to support goat project. (complete)

- 8 Install security lighting at Downs Depot. (underway)
- 9 Update emergency lighting and fire procedures at dressing rooms (complete)

Litter Management.

In line with the Downs Management Plan to review the policy on litter management a trial period for 8 dual use bins was agreed at a previous meeting. Downs staff continue to monitor the effect on deposited litter. A further update will be brought to Committee at the end of the trial period.

Barbecue Monitoring.

As previously agreed at Committee redoubled efforts to try and manage the problems of barbecue use on the Downs continues. Initiatives include instructing Security Services to specifically target barbecue users, additional signs and raising the profile of illegal barbecue use by distributing leaflets to visitors detailing the principle bye laws. This is a joint initiative with security personnel and the Ranger team and will conclude at the end of this month. Monitoring will continue and a report will be brought to Committee for a decision on the various options. As requested other cities have been contacted to research their policies regarding barbecue use. (Appendix 2) It should be noted that colleagues in Neighbourhoods (Parks) are working on a City-wide approach to barbecue use in Bristol's Parks and Open spaces which may have a bearing on future decisions.

Observatory Tower.

Following our last meeting I informed the Licensing Team that the conditions of the previous agreement need to be included in any new agreement. In particular, that the owners vehicle can only be allowed two short visits a day, that the wording of the original agreement be amended to specify what the duration of a 'short' visit means, and that any other vehicle movements to site is at the discretion of the Downs Ranger or his nominated representative. (contractors vehicles, skip wagons etc.) I have sought the advice of the Lord Mayor and the agreement has now been sent to Mr. Michallat's solicitor. (Appendix 3)

Goat Project.

The contractor has been appointed and the work to install the fencing started on the 16th August. The project is likely to take 8/10 weeks to complete and progress is being monitored on a weekly basis. Information signs describing the activity have been erected at the work site.

It is anticipated that the goats will be installed into the Gully in November. Members of the Steering Group have been informed.

Tree Management.

A quotation to remove trees and shrubbery near the point at the Observatory Tower has been received. Because of the sensitivity and the status of the site various agencies are being consulted before the work can proceed. The work

is to remove/ reduce trees and vegetation that currently obscures the iconic view back down the Gorge. The scope of the works is in line with the Downs Management Plan.

Other tree works identified during the six monthly health check have been undertaken or are programmed for completion.

Visitor Telescopes.

The three redundant telescopes at various locations around the Downs have been removed, none were functioning, were graffiti contaminated and had loose or missing covers. The original supplier no longer exists so I have been unable to contact them. The redundant units are currently stored at the Downs Depot.

I seek the approval of the Committee to investigate the feasibility of reinstating with modern units. There are available telescopes that will deliver to the viewer a recorded audio commentary on what is being observed. I believe this will enhance the visitor experience as well as providing an additional cash stream.

1.Proposal

- (a) To agree an additional £4,000 from Reserve for external repainting of the Dressing Rooms.
- (b) To agree an additional £2000 from Reserve for the continuation of the Community Payback Scheme.
- (c) That the Committee endorses the twelve month wheel clamping extension.
- (d) Permission to further investigate the feasibility of reinstating visitor telescopes at Seawalls and the Observatory Tower.

Other Options Considered

2.No other options considered

Risk Assessment

2. "A risk assessment has not been carried out.

Equalities Impact Assessment

3. "Not applicable"

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal:

The Clifton and Durdham Downs Act (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 of conferred by this statute.

Legal advice given by: Frances Horner, Senior Solicitor

Financial:

Additional £4000 from reserve for dressing rooms repaint.

Additional £2000 from reserve to continue the Community Pay Back scheme.

Budget adjustments for projects funded from Reserve.

(a) Revenue

Not Applicable

(b) Capital

Not Applicable

Land

The land is under the control of the Downs Committee.

Personnel

"not applicable"

Appendices: Appendix A - email ref parking

Appendix B - BBQ research

Appendix C - observatory agreement

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers: None

Appendix (4) A

From: Neil Terry
To: Westlake, Robert
CC: Berridge, Alan; Bullock, Terry; Lloyd, Sally; Vaughan-Williams, Garet...
Date: 28/07/2010 09:34
Subject: Parking on the Downs and obstruction to buses.
Attachments: 09TM029-TR02 RD Julian Road.pdf; 09TM029-TR01 RE Durdham Down.pdf;
09TM029-TR02 RD Julian Road.pdf; 09TM029-TR01 RE Durdham Down.pdf

Robert,

A parking restriction scheme covering relatively small parts of the Downs has recently been developed, and is currently being publicly advertised on site. I understand that the Notices were erected on site on the 22nd July. Please find attached two pdf drawings showing the proposed parking restrictions in the area.

The main aim of the parking restrictions in and around Julian Road is to ease the passage of public transport on the scheduled route, although the removal of parking at the junctions has other benefits. Unfortunately, the parking problems being experienced in Rockleaze, Downleaze and Circular Road only came to light after these proposals had been developed. I regret that it is not possible to modify the proposals at this stage.

As you will be aware, the City Council has devolved a number of its budgets to the 14 Community and Neighbourhood Partnerships now in place in Bristol, including the funding for minor traffic schemes. The Traffic Management Team will continue to design and deliver the measures, but the Neighbourhood Partnerships are now responsible for prioritising the schemes that will be progressed within their respective areas.

As a result, before it would be possible to progress another parking restriction scheme on the Downs (or the introduction of one-way working on Circular Road), a scheme would need to be prioritised by Henleaze, Stoke Bishop and Westbury-on-Trym Neighbourhood Partnership. I will, therefore, raise this matter with the Neighbourhood Partnership for consideration as they develop their priorities for future work programmes.

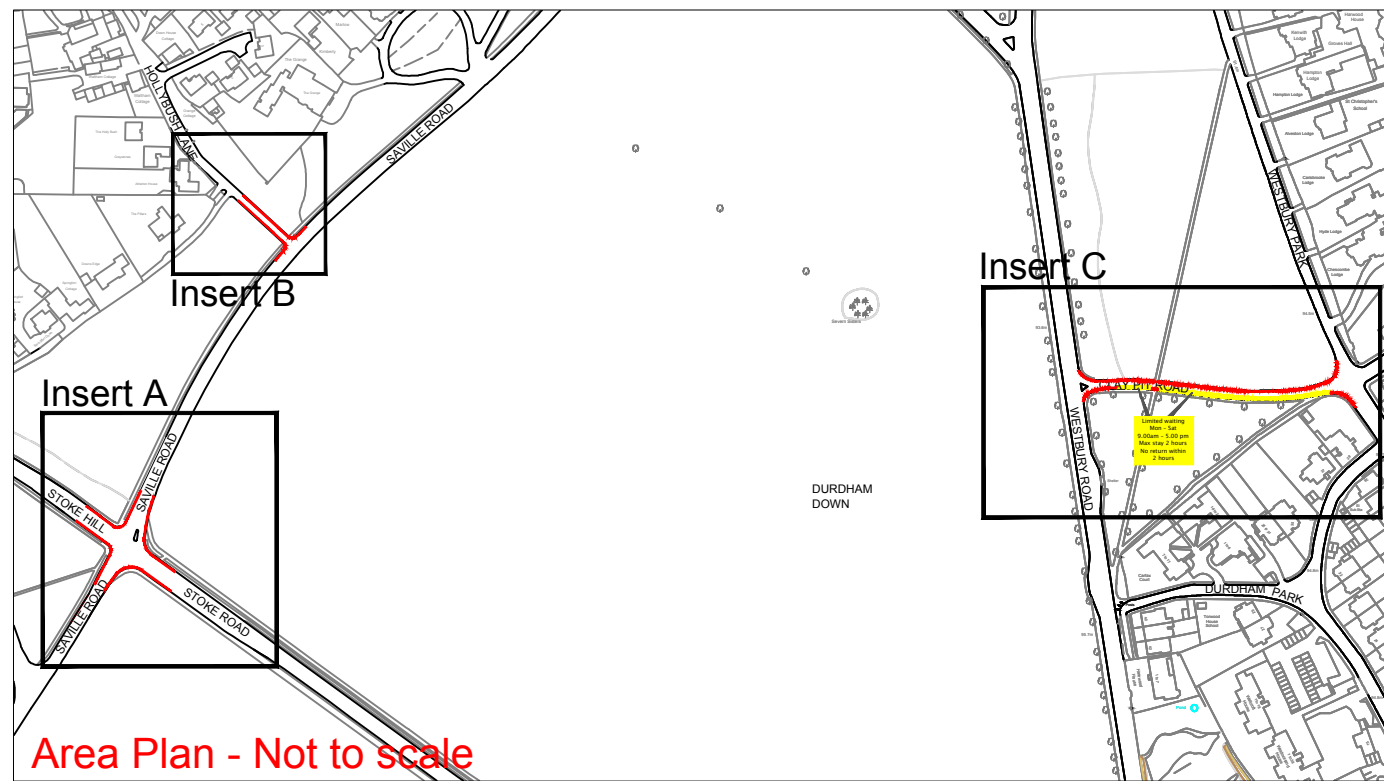
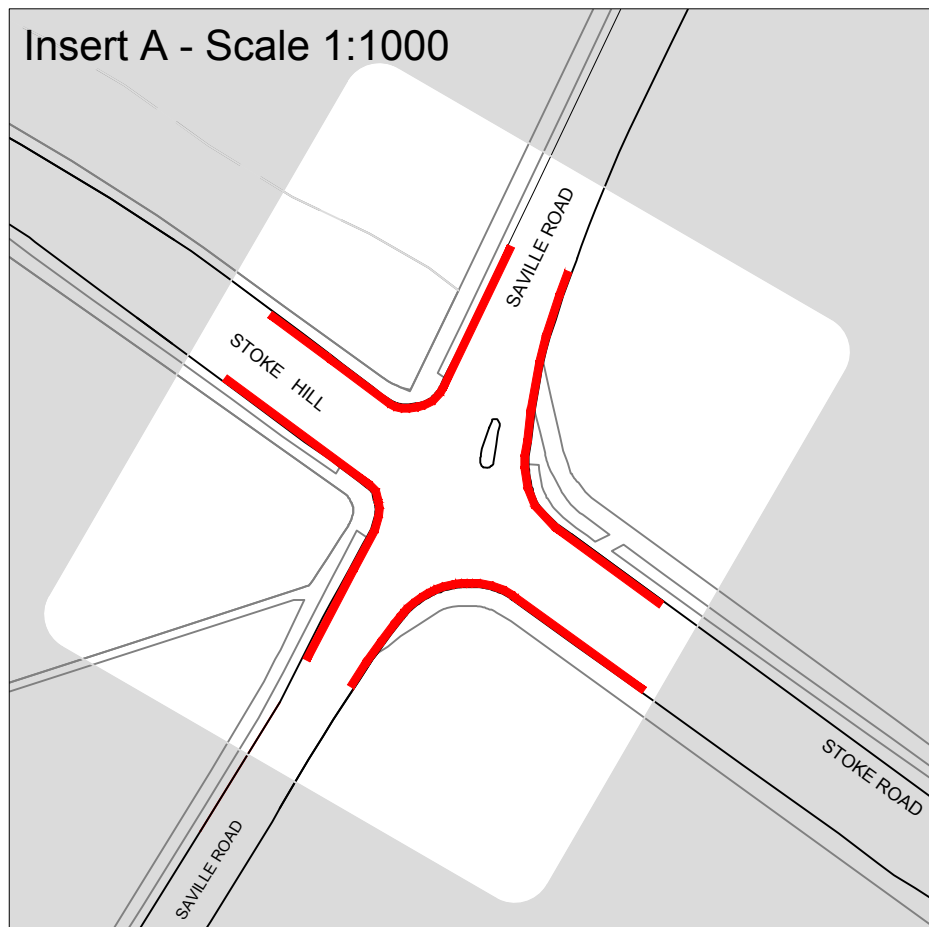
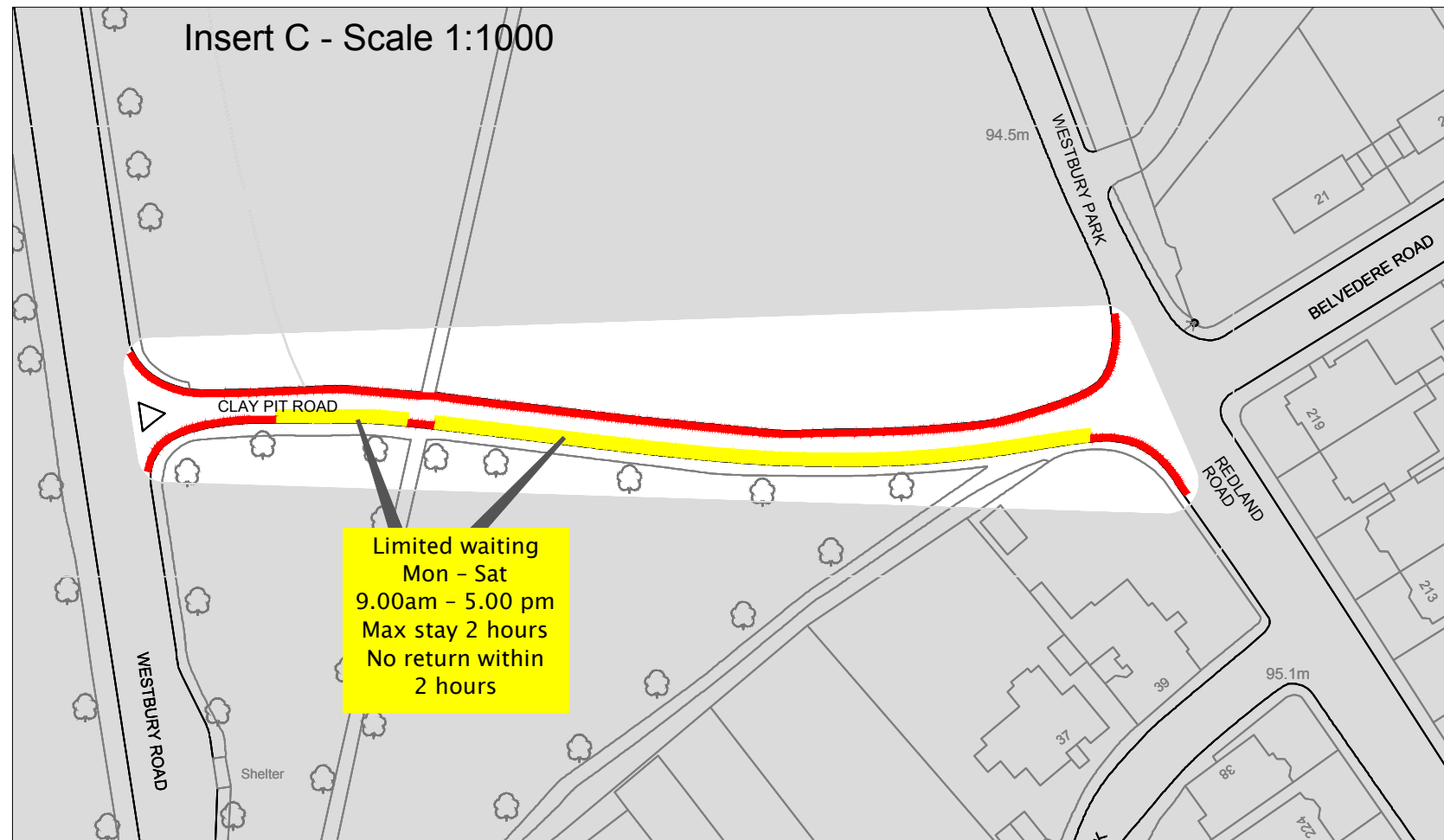
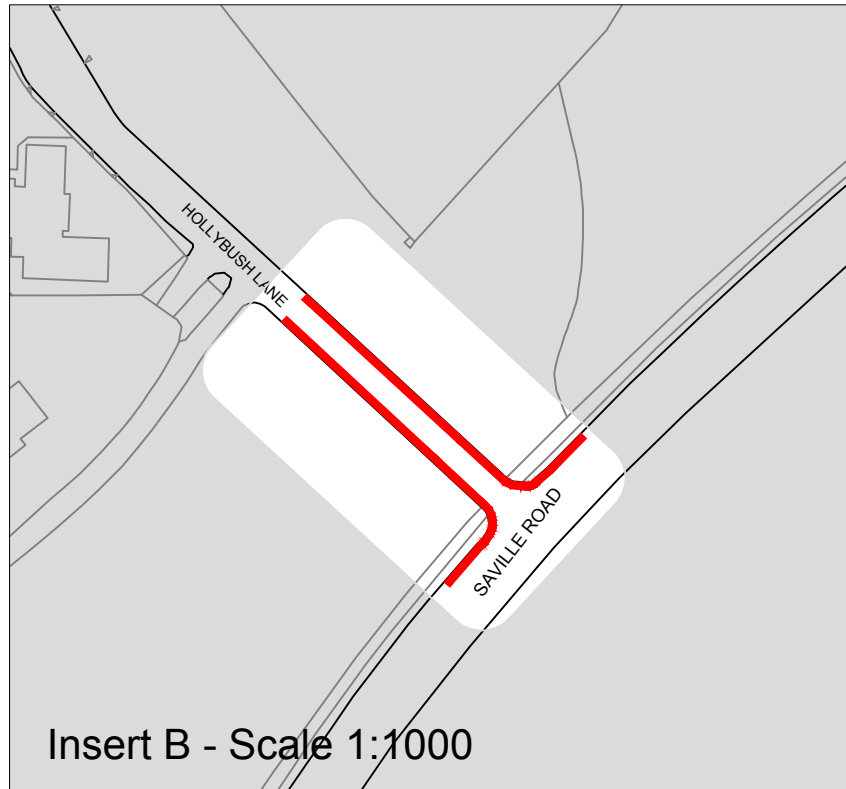
I am sorry that I cannot provide you with a more positive response, but I trust the above provides you with the information you require for the next Downs Committee meeting.

Regards,

Neil

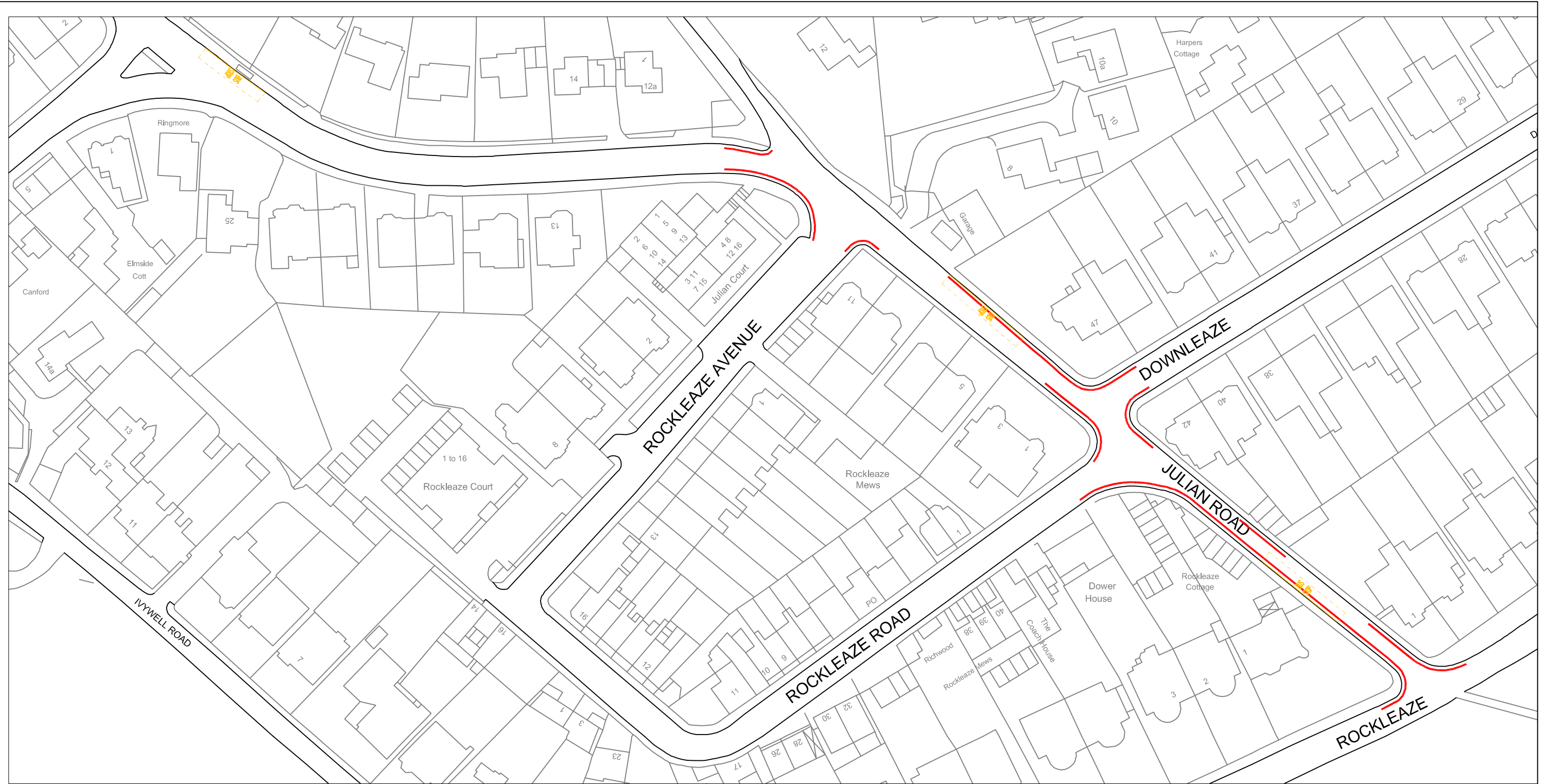
Traffic Management Team
Transport Services

Our ref: Wilder House/NP03/101636



- Proposed no waiting at any time
- Proposed time limited waiting bay





Key

 Proposed 'no waiting at any time' (double yellow lines)

 Proposed Bus stop clearways

OS NORTH



BBQ Policy Benchmarking Research from other Local Authorities

LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL

Response to email enquiry:

In Liverpool, we have no byelaws, adopted policies or formal codes of conduct relating to use of BBQs in greenspaces.

Our CityWatch teams and Environmental Enforcement colleagues will offer informal advice to any picnickers they encounter to ensure that BBQs are safe, controlled so as not to cause fire damage to grass, furniture etc and so that litter is not left. If damage or litter was left behind then they would take action under byelaws and EPA.

MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Response to email enquiry:

BBQs are not allowed in Manchester Parks. Policing is by our Wardens and Security Services, that being said we did not enforce in one of the larger parks that has a significant student population.

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Response to email enquiry:

We accept the responsible use of BBQs but we have found that portable BBQs are a problem when the public place these on grass areas. We have considered sighting single paving slabs in some grass areas with a painted sign to denote its use as a BBQ location but we have concerns that this limits the use of the grass for other purposes such as ball games.

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL PARKS & COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE

GUIDELINES TO THE USE OF BARBECUES WITHIN PARKS

We do accept the use of personal barbecues in our parks. Unfortunately, we do not have any publicly available barbecue facilities. If you are intending to take a barbecue into a park I would be grateful if you would follow a few simple requirements.

Please make sure that the barbecue is safe and cannot fall over.

Please do not place the barbecue directly onto the grass or on park furniture where it can damage the surface and leave a burn mark.

Please take care with the disposal of the hot ashes, do not dispose of these in a bin or throw them onto adjacent land (take some water to extinguish the burning charcoals)

Please don't put left over food scraps in the litter bins as this encourages foraging by dogs or foxes etc.

Please don't allow the smoke to disturb other park users

Please keep children and pets safe at all times

Please ensure that all food is thoroughly cooked and stored in good hygienic containers.

Please ensure all litter is taken with you.

I apologise if these seem common sense but they are worth reiterating.

Thank you for your cooperation.

LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

We have a bye-law in place that specifically relates to BBQs and their use in our sites is banned unless it is in an area designated for BBQs (we have a few). The bye-law is published on our website in pdf format (use the following path to the relevant page).

http://www.leeds.gov.uk/Leisure_and_culture/Parks_and_open_spaces.aspx

Enforcement of the controls are difficult. The bye-law makes use a criminal offence however the Police see this as a low level issue and are very reluctant to deploy resources to deal with offences. Staff in the Parks and Countryside service monitor the activities of visitors as well as working with the Leeds Community Safety Partnership (including the Police) on a number of targeted site specific operations. Site-based gardeners are also important in helping to deal with instances of anti-social behaviour and can often prevent usage by direct engagement before BBQs are started.

We have recently made arrangements to engage with Students at the Universities in Leeds to inform freshers of the controls when they first arrive in the city.

Extract from Leeds City Council's 'Byelaws for pleasure grounds, public walks and open spaces'

Fires

11. (1) No person shall light a fire or place, throw or drop a lighted match or any other thing likely to cause a fire.

(2) Byelaw 11(1) shall not apply to:

(a) the lighting of a fire at any event for which the Council has given permission that fires may be lit; or

(b) the lighting or use, in such a manner as to safeguard against damage or danger to any person, of a properly constructed barbecue, in a designated area for barbecues.

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

Advisory Notes from council website:

Take care with the fire

Use a sheltered, level site, away from anything that might catch fire.

Keep pets and children at a distance; use longhandled equipment when handling hot coals, and keep a bucket of sand or water handy.

Let the coals burn through and go white before cooking, so that food cooks more slowly and the inside is cooked through before the outside gets burnt.

Barbecues on parks and open spaces

The use of disposable barbecues on our parks and open spaces is not permitted.

These barbecues cause damage to grass, and when left unattended pose a health and safety risk to yourself and other park users.

WANDSWORTH COUNCIL

From Friends of Battersea Park - joint policy statement from ***Wandsworth Council and Wandsworth Parks Police Service:***

The overall position to be applied is that NO BARBEQUES are to be allowed in or on the Parks, Commons or Open Spaces with the exception of events organised by the Parks Service or Events Team with professional caterers.

Should an officer come upon a situation where a Barbecue is lit or in the process of being lit and with no food having yet being placed on the barbecue the persons involved are to be advised to desist from their activity a recorded warning issued and the contact logged in the Parks Police daily occurrence log. Should an Officer come upon a Barbeque which is already lit and food is cooking thereon but the Barbeque is not causing damage or a nuisance, the persons involved are to be instructed to end the process as soon as possible and issued with a recorded warning and the contact logged in the Parks Police daily occurrence log.

Should an Officer come upon a Barbeque which is already lit and food is cooking thereon but the Barbeque is in a position likely to or having already damaged the ground or surrounding foliage or is creating a nuisance due to excessive smoke, the persons involved are to be instructed to end the process as soon immediately, full details are to be taken and submitted as an intended process for contravening the relevant by law where one applies. The contact is to be logged in the Parks Police daily occurrence log. In all instances the persons involved MUST be advised to remove/dispose of the burning coals/residue in a responsible manner and not to leave/deposit them in the surrounding bushes or on the grass and only in rubbish bins when they are completely extinguished and cold to the touch.

Appendix (4) C

THIS LICENCE is made the _____ day of _____ 2010
B E T W E E N

- (1) The City Council Of Bristol of The Council House College Green Bristol (“the Council”) and
- (2) John Michallat of Clifton Observatory Cliftoin Down Bristol

W H E R E A S the Management of Clifton Down Bristol in the County of Avon is vested in the Committee by virtue of the provision of the Clifton and Durdham Downs (Bristol) Act 1861 and the Licensee is the owner (subject to the powers of the Committee) of Clifton Observatory Clifton Down aforesaid shown edged red on the attached Plan

AND W H E R E A S the Licensee is proposing to provide refreshment facilities at the Clifton Observatory and for this purpose is desirous of having access from the top of Sion Hill to Clifton Observatory as a means of vehicular access for the purpose only of transporting supplies to the Clifton Observatory aforesaid and the collection of refuse to which the Committee have agreed subject to the terms hereinafter appearing

N O W I T I S H E R E B Y A G R E E D as follows:-

1. THE Licensee its servants and agents shall be entitled to use by way of vehicular access to Clifton Observatory from the top of Sion Hill (so long as the said refreshment facilities shall be provided) for a light vehicle not exceeding one and one half tons gross weight on two occasions daily that is in the morning and in the evening for short visits to the Observatory of not more than one hour’s duration for delivery of supplies and for the collection of refuse the route of such access to be as agreed from time to time with the Downs Ranger. Save during such short visits the Licensee shall not keep any vehicle upon Clifton Down or at Clifton Observatory.
2. SHOULD the Licensee from time to time have need of further vehicular access to Clifton Observatory in addition to the permitted visits referred to in Clause 1 he should on each occasion obtain the prior consent of the Downs Ranger or his deputy to such access and adhere to any conditions imposed by him as to the means duration and route of such access.
3. IF any damage whatsoever is caused to the said access by reason of the user referred to in Clauses 1 or 2 hereof the Licensee shall forthwith repair the same at its own expense and to the satisfaction in all respects of the Committee and if any alterations or strengthening of the access is required to make the said access fit for

vehicular use this shall also be carried out by the Licensee at the like expense and to the like satisfaction

4. THE Licensee hereby indemnifies the Committee from and against all loss damage actions proceedings suits claims demands costs damages and expenses in respect of any injury to or the death of any person or damage to any property by reason of or arising in any way directly or indirectly as a result of the user of the said access as aforesaid
5. IN using the said access the Licensee its servants and agents shall not cause any obstruction thereof nor use the said access for the passage of vehicles other than as permitted by Clause 1 hereof to and from the Clifton Observatory and shall use its best endeavours to ensure that members of the general public visiting the Clifton Observatory do not use the said access for the passage of private cars
6. THIS Licence is personal to the Licensee and the Licensee hereby covenants as follows:-
 - (a) Not to sub-licence or part with the rights hereby granted over the said access or any part thereof
 - (b) Not to assign the benefit of this Licence

A S W I T N E S S the hands of the parties hereto the day and year first before written

WITNESS the hand of the said)
John Michallat)

Dated _____ 2010

The City Council of Bristol

-and-

John Michallat

LICENCE

Relating to access to The Observatory, Clifton Down, Bristol