

**DOWNS COMMITTEE**

**18<sup>th</sup> April 2011**

**Report of: Strategic Director - Neighbourhoods**

**Title: Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project - eleventh annual review**

**Officer presenting report: Helen Hall, Nature Conservation Officer, Bristol Parks, Neighbourhoods**

**Contact telephone number: (0117) 9223 750**

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the report be noted

**Summary**

To report for information on the eleventh annual review of the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project

**The significant issues in the report are:**

- Conservation Management Programme - progress
- Education Programme - progress

## **Policy**

1. N/A

### **2. Consultation**

#### **Internal**

None

#### **External**

None

### **3. Context**

3.1 The Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project was launched on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1999. It is a partnership of Bristol City Council, Bristol Zoo Gardens, the Downs Committee, Natural England, the University of Bristol, the Society for Merchant Venturers and the Bristol Conservation and Science Foundation.

3.2 The aim of the project is 'to secure the future of the outstanding wildlife interest of the Avon Gorge and Clifton and Durdham Downs and to raise awareness and understanding of this unique location and its importance to people and wildlife.'

#### **Annual Review**

3.3 This report provides a review of progress and key achievements of the project between January and December 2010.

#### **A Management Plan for the Bristol side of the Avon Gorge**

3.4 The management plan was published setting out how the management of the Bristol side of the Avon Gorge will be managed in future.

3.5 A new management plan steering group was established which has successfully been overseeing the implementation of the plan.

#### **Conservation grazing in the Gully**

3.6 As part of a programme to restore limestone grassland and rare plant communities in the Gully, the project plans to introduce a small group of goats into the area to help keep scrubby vegetation

in check. In autumn 2010 the area was fenced ready for the goats' arrival in the summer of 2011. The goats will be looked after by the Downs Ranger's team.

### **Managing the Gorge**

- 3.7 The project continued to implement a detailed programme of conservation works in the Gorge. Works focused on scrub removal from key areas of limestone grassland at Sea Walls, Great Quarry, Fairyland, St Vincent's Rocks and the Gully.

### **Events and activities**

- 3.8 The events programme continued to be very popular. During the year the project expanded the programme to include new events including a talk about the Bristol dinosaur, a willow weaving workshop and the fabulous falcons children's event.

### **Summer Education Officer, School groups and Playschemes**

- 3.9 For the third year running the project employed an Avon Gorge and Downs summer education officer to help deliver the school education sessions and summer holiday playschemes.

### **Prickly Tales and Foxy Fables**

- 3.10 To celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity the project worked with year 5 at Christ Church School and a storyteller to create tales about biodiversity on the Gorge and Downs.
- 3.11 The stories were shared with the public and children's families on two specially tailored walks. The children also worked with an artist to produce batik banners to depict the stories which were enjoyed by thousands of visitors at the Bristol Festival of Nature.

### **The Downs Lichen Trail**

- 3.12 In the autumn the project produced the Downs lichen trail which was supported by funds from the British Lichen Society and the Bristol Naturalist's Society.

### **Wild Bus podcast**

- 3.13 The project contributed to Avon Wildlife Trust's innovative Wild Bus podcast. The podcast, for passengers using the number 40 bus, is a commentary about the wildlife along the route (which

includes the Downs). It can be downloaded from the Wildlife Trust's website.

### **Facebook**

- 3.14** A project Facebook page has been created and is proving to be a very useful tool for promoting events and the work of the project.

### **Community Groups**

- 3.15** The education officer gave a talk or guided walk to 735 people from 26 community groups. Groups ranged from the Society of Biology, to Women's Institute local groups, a mental health unit and the tour guides from the City sightseeing tour buses.

### **Volunteer support**

- 3.16** Many of the project's events take place with the support of volunteers. During 2010 the project was joined by 15 volunteers who contributed 940 hours of volunteer time to the project.

### **In Bloom award for Outstanding Conservation Area**

- 3.17** The project was delighted to receive the Britain in Bloom, Royal Horticultural Society Sutton Seed Cup for 'an outstanding area of nature conservation.

### **British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums Awards**

- 3.18** The project was also pleased to receive a commendation for the 'Prickly tales and foxy fables' project under the best education project category.

### **Proposal**

- 4.0 None, report is for information only.

### **Other Options Considered**

- 5.0 N/A

### **Risk Assessment**

- 6.0 N/A

## **Equalities Impact Assessment**

7.0 N/A

### **8.0 Legal and Resource Implications:**

**Legal**      **None for the purpose of this report**

**Financial** **None for the purpose of this report**

**Revenue** **None for the purpose of this report**

**Capital**    **None for the purpose of this report**

**Land**        **None for the purpose of this report**

**Personnel** **N/A**

**Appendices:**    **None**

## **ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

### **Background Papers**

Eleventh Annual review of the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project