

**BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL**

**DOWNS COMMITTEE**  
**September 10<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**

That the Committee consider a proposal for an event in August 2013 to be known as 'Your Downs Day'

That the twelve month trial period for the designated barbecue area is extended into 2013, this is because of the poor summer it has not been possible to fully evaluate the success or otherwise of the trial.

**Summary**

The significant issues in the report are:

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

- Enjoyment
- Access
- Working Groups
- Landscape
- Wildlife
- Anti-social behaviour
- Management and Resources.

**1. Policy**

Not Applicable

## **2. Consultation**

### **a) Internal**

Richard Bevan, Manager, Parks Estates, Play, Cemeteries & Crematoria.  
John Williams, Estates Manager.  
Tony Whitlock, Principal Accountant.  
Amanda Grubb, Events team.  
Richard Ennion, Horticultural Service Manager.  
Peter Malarby, Senior Solicitor.  
Richard Stransom, Parks Operations Manager.

### **b) External**

Mandy Leivers, Avon Gorge and Downs Biodiversity Education Officer.  
Jack Penrose FOD+AG

## **3. Context**

### **a) Enjoyment:**

In July the Downs team joined colleagues from across the City to formally receive the Green Flag award presented by Councillor Hopkins.

I have received the judges comments about their visit and pleased to report a very positive outcome. (appendix 1)

In July the Downs played it's part in welcoming the South West in Bloom Judges to the City. Mandy Leivers and Martin Collins (FODAG) gave an informative presentation to the judges. Once again impressive floral displays were appreciatively acknowledged by the judges.

At the end of July twelve international judges from across Europe visited the Downs as part of Bristol's bid to succeed in the Entente Florale competition. Bristol's previous success in floral competitions entitled us to represent Great Britain in this prestigious event. To support the bid a presentation by Mandy and Richard Bland (FODAG) described the special nature of the Gorge and the Downs, as well as the work and achievements of the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife project. The outcome for both competitions is yet to be announced but organisers are optimistic for a positive outcome.

At the July meeting Committee agreed to consider the possibility of an annual Downs Day and that should such an event go ahead a date for next years event diary would need to be booked.

Following meetings with colleagues a proposal has been drafted for a mid summer family orientated day with the working title of 'Your Downs Day' (appendix 2 ). Linking the proposal with possibly a sustainable food based activity is also being considered. The proposal aspires to attract a more diverse range of visitors to the Downs and is one of the themes of the Downs Management Plan.

At the April meeting the Committee agreed to host an initiative funded by Sport England to bring table tennis to a wider audience. The scheme has been adjudged a great success and extended for a further month.

**Proposal: That the Committee agree to reserve a date for a family orientated event in mid summer 2013.**

## **b) Access:**

### **Bristol Water update:**

The Downs Committee were advised in July 2011 of the proposal by Bristol Water to install a new water main across parts of the Downs. At the July meeting members taking the tour of the Downs had an opportunity to listen to a presentation from Bristol Water explaining the importance of the scheme. Regular meetings with Bristol Water and project managers continue as we get to the critical stage of excavating parts of the Downs. In late August work began at the Granny Downs. This is the preparatory work to permit archeologists from Bristol Water and the City Council to carry out the necessary archeological investigation of the site. Bristol Water and their contractors have cooperated with all requests to minimise the impact of the work on Downs users. The reinstatement works to the pipeline will be carried out by our in-house landscape team.

## **c) Working Groups**

### **Traffic Management**

In April Committee agreed to the setting up of a small working group to consider traffic issues across the Downs. The first two meetings of the group have now taken place and advice sought from traffic officers on how best to proceed. Further monthly meetings have been arranged. An Action Plan and a timetable has been agreed and the group intends to present a report with recommendations to Committee in April 2013. The group decided that it's guiding principles would be:-

- To protect the Downs in the spirit of the 1861 Act.
- Maximise safe access at all times for all our citizens.
- Improve traffic flow and reduce our environmental footprint.
- Proceed with due regard for the interests of all stakeholders and residents.

Early proposals include.

- That the project will be best served by dividing the Downs into distinct areas and considering problems and possible solutions on a site by site basis.
- That the group will need to work closely with the relevant Neighbourhood Partnerships to avoid duplication of actions already proposed.
- To take advantage of economies of scale when applying for Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO)
- To ensure that any proposal will not deter visitors from coming to the Downs

Regular updates will be brought to the Committee.

### **Inappropriate anti social behaviour**

A second small working group to discuss inappropriate anti- social behaviour has also been formed. The group which comprises The Master, Councillor Davies, myself and

Martin Collins (FoD+AG) will meet later this month to seek solutions and report back to the Committee.

#### **d) Landscape:**

Following the 2011 Parsons Brinckerhoff report a programme of works is planned for later this month at the Zig-Zag path. This includes the removal and pruning of overhanging trees, branches and vegetation identified as a problem in the report. The condition of the stone walling will also be assessed.

This summer storms and high winds have caused significant damage to trees around the Downs. As part of the six monthly tree check with the City Councils Tree Officer a programme of work has been recommended. Some of the work will be carried out by specialist contractors and some by the Downs team.

The football pitches have been prepared for the forthcoming season and the dressing rooms deep cleaned.

#### **e) Wildlife:**

Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project:

The next meeting of the Avon Gorge and Wildlife Project steering group has been arranged for later this month. The goats continue to thrive and are monitored on a daily basis.

Despite some of the highest levels of rainfall ever recorded this summer Mandy Leivers and her team of volunteers managed to run numerous events, walks and talks. This included a Silky wave moth evening walk, a story telling picnic about the wildlife of the Downs, a 'Singing in the Meadows' event attended by eleven hardy souls in the pouring rain.

The Zoo is organising an Animal Amble event later this month which is a fund raiser and families will be invited to dress in animal costumes and complete a 3k walk around the Downs.

The inclement weather in July reduced bookings for school education classes and play scheme sessions, however Mandy and her team entertained 345 children from schools and groups from across the city, including a group of nine from Claremont Special school.

FOD+AG monitors butterfly activity on the Downs weekly over a six month period each year. Records are sent to the Bristol and North Somerset branch of Butterfly Conservation for inclusion in the National UK Butterfly Monitoring Survey.

#### **f) Anti Social Behaviour:**

In late July damage to the stonework and railings at Seawalls was discovered. The extent of the damage which has dislodged a significant

section of the wall will require a repair. The scale of the damage suggests a road traffic accident, however the Police have confirmed that nothing has been reported. Colleagues in Highways and structures have indicated that they will fund 50% of the work, the remainder will require funding from the Downs budgets or reserve. The site has been fenced off awaiting quotes for the work.

The in-house security team continue with patrols across the Downs. Summer hours are still in force. Since the last meeting Officers and Downs staff have ticketed or removed from the Downs 14 illegally parked cars and requested 20 barbecues be extinguished or moved to the barbecue area.

The wheel clamping scheme continues to be enforced. Since our last meeting BAS Parking Services have clamped 5 illegally parked cars. No vehicles have been towed away.

Several motorists have contacted me directly and complained that warning signs are too small and too infrequent. All have been answered and where appropriate advised to contact BAS Parking. At the July meeting the extent of the wheel clamping zone was raised. It was confirmed that currently the scheme covers Ladies Mile and Circular Road only. Further discussions about the future of the clamping scheme, including the possibility of extending the area's covered will be discussed by the traffic working group.

The first summer of the trial period to provide a designated barbecue area is about to conclude. All indicators suggest that the trial has been successful without any particular problems in managing the site. However due to the poor summer I do not believe that there has been sufficient opportunity to fully evaluate the trial and therefore recommend that the trial is extended.

**Recommendation: That the Committee approve the extension of the trial period. This is to permit more time to fully evaluate the initiative.**

#### **g) Management and Resources:**

The Downs team continue with the Summer 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:

General Maintenance:

Minor tree works around the Downs, maintaining summer bedding, managing the goats, grass cutting, hay making, sports pitch preparation, dressing room cleaning, seat repair, and installation, 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, and retaining scrub areas previously cleared.

As a consequence of the in-house hay cutting, the Downs have donated hay bales to all of the City Farms.

At the last meeting Committee agreed the replacement of two items of frontline equipment. The items are the tractor drawn mower (Spearhead) which is now in its sixth year of operation. The second item is the bespoke trailer used for the transportation of football equipment. I have contacted various suppliers and in consultation with Fleet Management demonstrations have been arranged and professional advice sought.

#### **4. Other Options Considered**

No other options considered

#### **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.*

6b) *Not Applicable.*

## **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:**

**None**

**(b) Capital**

**None**

*Financial advice provided by Tony Whitlock, Principal Accountant*

## **8. Land**

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

## **9. Personnel**

*Not applicable*

**Appendices: Appendix 1**

**Appendix 2**

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

**Background Papers: None**



**The Downs, Bristol  
Bristol City Council  
Green Flag Award 2012/2013**

**Bandscores**

<b>Desk Assessment</b>	0-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-30			
<b>Field Assessment</b>	20-29	30-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-70
<b>Overall score</b>	30-44	45-54	55-59	60-65	66-69	70-74	75-79	80+

**Status –PASS**

**Overall band score 80 +**

**Desk Assessment Feedback**

**Band score 25-30**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<b>Presentation</b>	Overall, easy to read / Find information needed Good for Green flag judging	
<b>Health, Safety &amp; Security</b>	Any issues are highlighted and dealt with accordingly	
<b>Maintenance of equipment, buildings &amp; landscape</b>	The plan appears to be 'happening' On the ground. The plan is more than adequate	
<b>Litter, cleanliness, vandalism</b>	Similar to above. The plan translates well in practice	
<b>Environmental Sustainability</b>	A very good overview is shown There is a big emphasis on the environmental impact of the downs	



<b>Conservation of heritage &amp; nature</b>	Excellent information shown on the Heritage and biodiversity of the site  Well informed	
<b>Community Involvement</b>	There is seen to be a lot of community involvement , forums / liaising with local agencies and stake holders	
<b>Marketing Strategy</b>	Good information and well distributed	
<b>Overall management</b>	Again, Very good overall management	

**Additional comments**

Staff are aware of the importance of the plan and act upon it accordingly

**Field Assessment Feedback**

**Band score 60-64**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<b>A Welcoming Place</b>	Accessible from many areas Plenty of activities taking place Many areas if interest evident Use of informative information on site	
<b>Healthy, Safe and Secure</b>	Any issues on the grounds are managed as appropriate Staff training / health & safety is clearly important	
<b>Clean and Well Maintained</b>	Dedicated litter clearance and regularly. Use of fewer bins, encouraging public to take litter home. This may well be helped with the education that is carried out.	
<b>Sustainability</b>	Financial sustainability would appear good.  Owing to the amount of use / visitors etc, the downs will no doubt be sustainable.  Part of this sustainability would be due to the team approach from staff.	
<b>Conservation</b>	Management as per SSSI where	

<b>and Heritage</b>	<p>applicable</p> <p>There is clearly a lot of local knowledge and enthusiasm about the local area. This is well documented and used to advantage.</p> <p>Interesting new ideas - i.e the goats</p>	
<b>Community Involvement</b>	<p>Excellent involvement of the local community</p> <p>This is clear from attendances at the judging</p>	
<b>Marketing</b>	<p>Many outlets used on site for marketing</p> <p>Use of Website good</p>	
<b>Management</b>	<p>The overall management of the site is well above average, Staff clearly are aware of their roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>Liked how work / jobs that needed doing were kept 'in house' as far as possible.</p>	

**Additional Comments**

As has already been mentioned, the staff and other agencies involved show a huge amount of enthusiasm for the site. They are well informed and clearly on top of what they are doing.

This shows on the grounds and also shows by the welcome we were given, including all the agencies involved. Some of them volunteers.

The area is obviously a high profile site, well used and well maintained for local people and visitors alike. I shall be re visiting myself.

A well deserved green flag - thank you for our visit.

## 'Your Downs, Your Day' – proposal for 2013 Downs event

The proposal, which initiated from FODAG, is to hold an event that will increase knowledge of and accessibility to the Downs. Many people in the city are not able to visit the Downs as they don't have the means to get there or perhaps don't know that this resource exists.

The suggestion is that we engage with local transport operators to provide free (or substantially reduced) transport to the Downs. Double decker buses would pick up from specific locations and free taxis would be provided for people with disabilities. The taxi service could possibly put on a procession to the Downs reminiscent of the annual Weston-super-Mare taxi trip.

Specific schools, youth groups and community groups would be targeted to participate in the event. We would liaise with the Council's Equalities Team for advice on how best to engage with a diverse audience and the marketing of the event would be tailored to reflect this.

A modest amount of family entertainment would be provided on the Downs - e.g. family games organised by volunteers, armed services activities such as climbing wall, assault course, informal, low key musical performances, sporting activities. Visitors would be encouraged to bring a picnic but catering concessions could also be booked.

If successful, this could be an annual event with different areas of the city being targeted each time. We would aim for attendance in the region of 1 – 2,000 people.

If the transport costs can be covered by sponsorship, the only other costs would be:

- basic event infrastructure (first aid, toilets, stewards) £800
- entertainment (would be kept to a minimum by the use of volunteers (e.g. Rotary Club and organisations who could offer free facilities e.g. armed services, voluntary groups) £1,000
- marketing £500

The event could be held during August when traditionally there are very few outdoor events on in the city – one suggestion is the late August bank holiday weekend. Alternatively, early – mid July would be feasible.