

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

**DOWNS COMMITTEE
January 28th 2013**

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 agrees to the actions detailed in the report to improve the management of an area of the Downs known as Fairyland.

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
- Management and Resources.

1. Policy

Public Sector Equality Policy.

2. Consultation

a) Internal

Richard Bevan, Manager, Parks Estates, Play, Cemeteries & Crematoria.

John Williams, Estates Manager.
Andrew Gordon Estates Management team leader
Tony Whitlock, Principal Accountant.
Richard Ennion, Horticultural Service Manager.
Peter Malarby, Senior Solicitor.

b) External

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

3. Context

a) Enjoyment:

The process to replace largely redundant wooden football posts is ongoing. Around a third of the current stock is in need of upgrading to aluminium. A full replacement set is around £800. I am in discussion with the Downs League secretary to seek grant funding from the GFA and the FA.

I have also asked the League to consider a slightly earlier kick off time, this is to address a Health & Safety issue whereby Downs staff have to dismantle and transport equipment in the dark.

The Community pay back team continue with internal improvements to the dressing rooms. This project is approximately 75% complete.

I have discussed with Probation Service managers the possibility of extending the range of activities that could be carried out by offenders on Community Payback schemes. This could include seat painting, repainting the football posts and scrub clearance.

b) Access:

Bristol Water update:

Pipeline works to several area's of the Downs continue The site agent has provided regular progress reports and the project remains on programme. (Appendix 1)

The final reinstatement works to the pipeline will be carried out by our in-house landscape team and is scheduled to begin in April 2013.

Following the heavy rains at the end of last year significant washout has occurred to the footpaths in the goat enclosure. Warning signs have been posted. I am in discussions with and met on site with colleagues from the Rights of Way team to ascertain levels of responsibility, and how best to carry out remedial works to restore the path.

Following a road traffic accident at Sea Walls a quotation for repairs to the wall and railings has been received. Work is scheduled to begin in early spring and the cost will be shared by ourselves and Highways and Structures.

c) Working Groups

Traffic Management.

The group has now met six times, advice has been sought from Senior Traffic Officers and Neighbourhood Partnership traffic coordinators. Officers have been invited to attend meetings to provide professional advice to the working group.

It is intended to invite a traffic officer to the remaining meetings to ensure the final report stands up to scrutiny.

An interim report for members has been prepared. (appendix 2)

The group will present a full report with recommendations to Committee in April 2013.

Inappropriate anti social behaviour.

A second working group to consider inappropriate anti- social behaviour has also been formed. The group comprises, The Master, Councillor Davies, myself and Martin Collins (FoD+AG)

Following a meeting in October the group is recommending to Committee four actions to improve the way that this area is managed.

- Increase the frequency of litter patrols.
- Accelerate the scrub clearance programme to open up this area and to encourage more general access. The ongoing clearance of scrub is in line with the Downs Management Plan.
- That a letter from this Committee will be sent to the Chief Inspector of Police responsible for the Downs seeking his views and advice on how best to improve the ongoing management of this area. (This action has been done)
- That ongoing monitoring of the location takes place and updates of any public complaints received by the Police are provided to this Committee.
- That the working group meets with the Police Officer responsible for the Downs to ensure best practice with the ongoing management of the area.

To support the recommendation I have had meetings with the Police and I have discussed the recommendations with the Terrence Higgins Trust. No concerns have been raised.

d) Landscapes:

As part of the programme of winter works scrub clearance is again underway at the Iron Age Fort, this is part of the phased programme of works to be completed over the next few years.

Additional scrub clearance is also planned at:

- Zoo Bank,
- The 3 large copses opposite the Peregrine Viewpoint at Circular Road.
- The Copse outside Saville Manor Nursing Home.
- Cliff edge work is also planned for the winter.
- Fairyland.

Work to clear scrub from the rock faces at Suspension Bridge road and near the children's playground is complete, Parsons Brinckerhoff will inspect and report their findings.

At the end of 2012 a small fall of rock smashed a bench near to the Suspension bridge toilet block. As a precaution I have installed temporary protective fencing and asked Parsons Brinckerhoff to carry out a full safety inspection of the rock face.

e) Wildlife:

Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project:

A programme of agreed vegetation clearance from the Avon Gorge is underway. This is to be carried out by a specialist rock access team assisted by the Downs team.

An organisation called Climb Bristol applied for consent to Natural England to carry out some minor scrub clearance work on rock faces. This will be of benefit to the climbers and to the Gorge. All work was agreed with Council Officers and N/E.

The small goat herd in the Gully continues to thrive, coping very well with the elements, however I did receive a report from Emergency Control that one of the goats had a broken leg. This proved to be unfounded, the animal was carrying a foreleg, probably as the result of a minor injury but quickly recovered to full mobility.

FODAG continue to support the Ranger team with the monitoring of the goat herd and ongoing litter patrols.

f) Anti Social Behaviour:

The in-house security team continue with patrols across the Downs. Reduced winter hours are now in force. Since the last meeting Officers and Downs staff have ticketed or removed from the Downs 14 illegally parked cars.

BAS Parking Services continue to manage the clamping scheme. Temporary signs to deter cyclists from the Downs footpaths proved short lived. I have received a quotation for the repainting of the current warning signs on the tarmac and this will be completed in the next few weeks. The Traffic working group are also considering cycling issues in their

deliberations.

Following complaints about unruly dogs on the Downs I have spoken with the Dog Warden Service, who have confirmed that there is little that can be done by way of enforcement on a public open space. I have asked about the possibility of 'education days' to reinforce the message of responsible dog ownership and I will report back to Committee any progress.

g) Management and Resources:

The Downs team continue with the Winter 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 winter bedding, managing the goats, leaf collection, sports pitch marking, harrowing and spiking, dressing room cleaning, seat repair, washing and treating. 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.

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 Bristol Water update

Appendix 2 Traffic Subgroup Summary Status Report

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers: None

Appendix 1

Bristol Water - update on progress:

- We have now completed the first section of pipelaying from the top of Granny Downs to our connection on Durdham Downs, this is the northern 700mm diameter section of main. We plan to test this section next week.
- We will start laying the section of 450mm diameter pipe from the connection on Durdham Downs to the Water Tower later this week. We will first string out the pipe and then start pipe laying.
- We have had to remove the 3rd pedestrian crossing right beside our compound, in the short term, whilst we lay through this section and then string out the pipes ahead of us.
- We note that the other two crossings are turning muddy due to the bad weather and heavy foot traffic so we have some wood bark ordered and will lay this within the next week over a geotextile to improve these crossing points.
- We will endeavour to maintain access through these other crossing points with just some minor inconvenience whilst we lay through each one individually.
- We will be starting our excavation for the connection by the Water Tower at the end of this week/ next week. This will be an isolated fenced site.
- Our pipelaying is now complete on Upper Belgrave with pipelaying moved onto Clifton Downs yesterday with good progress already being made. Pipelaying will progress from Upper Belgrave toward Stoke Road until we cross the pedestrian footpath. We have an archaeologist present for this lower section which is the only section we haven't already pre-excavated.
- For works through Upper Belgrave and the Downs we are also working with Bristol University's Paleontology Department. We have a full time Paleontologist present to observe and record the geological/ paleontological deposits found as we have evidence that the type of rock we are experiencing is similar to that in which the Bristol Dinosaur was found in ~150 years ago not far from Upper Belgrave. Generally they are recording any findings with regard to fossils, glacial deposits etc in the bedrock. Our trench provides them with a cross section through the Downs that they would not otherwise have had the chance to observe. I believe that the intention is to provide the Parks Committee with all

the information found at the end of the scheme.

In general we are on programme with the sections on the Downs and our head start on Clifton Downs puts us in a good position for the new-year.

We will close our site for Christmas on Friday 21st December and return on Wednesday 2nd January. During this period we will have a full time security presence in our compound on Durdham Downs and will have operatives visiting any sites that remain open and fenced over the Christmas period. Therefore should you need anything you can contact us via the security in the compound otherwise I can provide you with our on-call contacts for the Christmas period.

As always do not hesitate to contact me if you have any requirements.

Kind regards,

Adrian

Adrian Parker BEng (Hons) IEng MICE
Site Agent
Capital Projects & MEICA
Utilities & Waterways
May Gurney Limited
Mob: 07740 394717

www.maygurney.co.uk

DOWN'S COMMITTEE TRAFFIC SUBGROUP: Summary Status Report at 2nd December 2012

1 Introduction

At the January 2012 Downs Committee (D/C) Meeting Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge (FOD+AG) presented a draft discussion paper considering traffic problems around the Downs. Subsequently meetings took place with the Downs Ranger to agree how best to take forward a working document that could be discussed with Traffic Managers and stake holders. The Committee was asked to consider formation of a subgroup to further manage and progress management of traffic related problems on the Downs.

At the April meeting the D/C agreed to the setting up of a small working group to consider traffic issues across the Downs. The subgroup is required to present the final study report to the Downs Committee at the 22nd April 2013 meeting.

This note provides a summary covering:

- The Study Process
- Traffic Study – Downs Area Subdivision List
- Extracts from the monthly meeting minutes.

Current subgroup Committee:

Robert Westlake (RW)	Downs Ranger
Barbara Janke	Councillor
Anthony Brown (AB)	Merchant Venturer
Richard Bevan (RB)	Park Estates, Play, Cemeteries & Crematoria Manager
Brian Sprosen (BS)	FOD+AG

2 Study Process

The Down's *Traffic Subgroup* developed and validated a study process that ensured that plans and policies developed through the study activities satisfy objectives according to agreed criteria. The resulting Down's Traffic Evaluation Plan defines the study processes that would aim:

- Within the defined Down's boundaries and related road networks to:
 - [Protect the current and future Down's natural environment in the spirit of the 1861 Downs act.](#)
 - [Maximise access to the Down's at all times for all our citizens.](#)
 - [Improve traffic flow to minimise adverse environmental impact.](#)
 - [Proceed with due regard for the interests of stake holders and residents](#)

Current Situation

- Some 300+ commuter's cars are parked each working day on the Downs.
- Parking disrupts free circulation of emergency and public transport vehicles.
- Downs provides commercial vehicle drivers with free parking / rest area.

- Vehicles often being driven at speeds incompatible with a recreation area.
- Vehicles on Down's: Commercial & private; cars; vans; lorries and buses.

Study Initial Analysis Phase

- Define Downs study boundaries and related road networks.
- Consider impact of existing related policies including: Residential Parking Zones; Zoo temporary parking; clamping, cycling access and related issues.
- Identify and define problems likely to benefit from Traffic Subgroup intervention.

Analysis & Action Process

For each identified problem area:

- Propose and validate candidate remedial action.
- Where possible “dummy test” proposed changes prior to implementation.

3 Traffic Study – Downs Area Subdivision List

The physical characteristics, environmental status, user utilisation and impact vary markedly throughout the Downs area. To allow for this variability, for the purpose of the traffic subgroup study, the Downs area has been subdivided into 5 areas in which the study process can logically be applied. The subdivision areas and dates scheduled for this work are shown below.

- (July) Stoke Road (+ Roman Road) + Rockleaze & Downleaze
- (August) Upper Belgrave Road & Clifton Down (Zoo)
- (September) Ladies Mile & Circular Road
- (November) Westbury & Saville Roads; Parry's Lane; Clay Pit Road
- (December) Clifton

4 Sample Extract from Monthly Meeting Minutes

September Meeting Ladies mile & Circular Road

Down's Area Subdivision 3 - Ladies Mile

- A complaint had been directed to the Parks Department regarding the danger caused by parked cars to pedestrians where the path from Worrall Road crosses Ladies Mile. The problem is illustrated by the picture which shows the footpath being blocked by parked cars. It is proposed that the number of parking bays be reduced to prevent parking on the footpath and to provide pedestrians with a clear view of approaching traffic.
- It was agreed that double yellow lines would not be used to indicate the removal of parking bays.
- White zig-zag road markings or a box labelled KEEP CLEAR are alternative no parking signs.
- It was agreed that Highways Department advice would be sought.



RW to contact the Highways Department

5 Completion Schedule

- January / February, prepare draft report, liaise with NPs and other Stakeholders.