

**DOWNS COMMITTEE
28th January 2012**

Report of: Service Director, Environment and Leisure

Title: Annual review of the Downs and Avon Gorge Management Plans

Ward Stoke Bishop

Officer presenting report: Robert Westlake, Downs Ranger

Contact telephone number: (0117) 9736210

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the report be noted

Summary

The Downs management plan and integral 5-year work plan were adopted in January 2007 and reviewed and updated for the next five years in 2012.

The Gorge Management Plan was adopted in November 2009.

The work plan is a 'rolling' programme of work and is reviewed annually.

Attached at Appendix A is a copy of the Downs annual work plan for 2012/13. Also appended (Appendix B) is a copy of the annual work plan from the Management Plan for the Bristol side of the Avon Gorge.

The significant issues in the report are:

- The reviewed plans identify achievements to date, actions for the forthcoming year and objectives which need to be re-aligned

1 Policy

There are no formal policy implications beyond , beyond those identified in the management plan including financial, legal and health and safety policies.

2 Consultation

a) Internal

Andrew Gordon Parks Estates Team Leader

b) External

None sought.

3 Context

a) Downs Work Plan

Each of the original objectives has a lead officer designated within the management plan to drive forward each objective.

As can be seen from the table in Appendix A, a considerable number of the objectives have been met in 2011/12, and a number of projects undertaken which were not originally identified. Some objectives for 2011/12 are still to be achieved and will need to roll forward into 2013/14. Some objectives should be subject to review of the Management Plan Review group.

Downs Committee will be aware that Bristol Parks is undergoing a further period of change as the council moves to deliver services in difficult economic times. This will not alter the structure of officers who report to Downs Committee other than Andrew Gordon who will line manage the Downs Ranger team. Richard Bevan - Manager, Parks Estates, Play, Cemeteries and Crematoria continues as lead officer for the Neighbourhoods Department in reporting to the Downs Committee.

Gorge Action Plan

All of the actions within the 2011/12 annual plan have either been achieved or are in progress; with some actions rolling forward to be completed in 2013. Details are set out in appendix B. The development and implementation of the gorge annual action plans are guided by the management plan steering group which includes representatives of the Downs Committee and Clifton Down Charitable Trust.

Proposal

To note the progress identified in Appendix A and Appendix B.

4) Other Options Considered

No other options have been considered at this time.

5) Risk Assessment

A risk assessment has been completed for this project and a summary of the major risks is detailed below.

The main risks of not agreeing to this course of action are as follows:-

The original implementation dates for the 5-year work plan will become disjointed and difficult to understand as time scales change.

The main risks of agreeing to this course of action are as follows:-

None.

It was always understood that the implementation of the work was subject to change through outside influences. (See start of section 7.0 Downs management plan 2007 - 2012)

This is stated within the management plan : - "The work programme will be subject to change from outside influences including pressure from site users, from the results of surveys or monitoring and the availability of finance."

The action taken to mitigate these risks is:-

Officers are working on implementing as many of the objectives to timescale as possible.

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 characteristic”: 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 to disabled people, this include, 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.*

Legal and Resource Implications:

Legal

The Clifton and Durdham Downs (Bristol) Act 1861 provides that the Downs should remain as a place for the public resort and recreation of the citizens and inhabitants of Bristol and that a committee should be appointed to manage them. The recommendation contained in this report is within the powers conferred by this statute.

Legal advice given by: Peter Malarby
Senior Solicitor

Financial The budget for each objective is set out in the management plan and where there is no existing budget e.g. within the wages budget, then each item will be taken back to committee to present further information and identify funding.

Revenue see management plan section 7.0 or 5.0 respectively

Capital See management plan section 7.0 or 5.0 respectively

Financial advice given by: Tony Whitlock
Principal Accountant

Land None

Personnel None

Appendices:

Appendix A - The Downs 5 - Year work plan 2009 / 2013

Appendix B - Avon Gorge Management Plan

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Background Papers

The Downs Management plan 20012- 20017

The Management Plan for the Bristol Side of the Avon Gorge 2010-2015

The Downs Annual Work Plan 2012 - 2013

Key themes.

7.1 Enjoyment

7.2 Access

7.3 Landscape

7.4 Wildlife

7.5 Antisocial behaviour

7.6 Management and Resources

The work programme will be subject to change from outside influences including pressure from site users, from the results of surveys or monitoring. the availability of finance and operational changes within the Parks Section.

The management plan is to be reviewed every 5 years, this was completed in 2011 and implemented in April 2012.

Note that many items are on-going every year and so have not been highlighted as being **objective achieved** even though the work for 2010/11 and 2011/12 was achieved.

		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Comment
7.1	Enjoyment				
7.1.2	Investigate how to improve the changing facility for sport with provision for both genders		#		The external condition has been improved with weather proofing and exterior decoration. Individual dressing rooms are undergoing a repair and repaint. This work has been organised with the assistance of the Probation Service. Initial enquiries with UWE re dual use of facility.
7.1.3	Develop and expand the existing education project to provide an integrated interpretation and education programme that increases people's enjoyment and	#	#	#	Great strides have been achieved in the development of the educational programme,

		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Comment
	understanding of the natural, historical and cultural heritage of the Downs and its relationship with the city. The good working partnership with existing partners such as the Zoo will be retained and new relationships with additional partners such as English Heritage and the Museums department will be developed.				<p>particularly with the assistance of the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project Education Officers.</p> <p>In 2011 a series of historical information panels were installed. Strong links forged with E/H with significant projects achieved, particularly the installation of goat herd. Signs advising visitors about the goats and how to use the Gully safely have been installed. Two interpretation panels about the project will be installed in 2012.</p> <p>Meet the goat keeper days are underway and school visits are planned</p>
7.1.5	Investigate options for developing a history education programme for the Downs.		#		History trails and leaflets are available. In 2011 a series of history panels were installed at Stoke Road. Their longer term future is yet to be confirmed.
7.2	Access				
7.2.1	Investigate the options of how to provide electric mobility scooters for disabled people.		#		The Downs Ranger has investigated this objective. Suitable vehicles are available but the implementation of such a scheme will need to be linked with

		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Comment
					any future development of a Visitor facility.
7.2.2	Investigate the alternative options and implications of extending the cycling routes on existing roads and paths and the provision of cycle parking facilities at visitor attractions.		#		The first cycle rack has been installed at Stoke road. The intention is to install a second at Sea Walls. . Consultation with City cycling teams to be undertaken. Better integration of cycle ways will form part of the traffic working group discussions.
7.2.3	Carry out an access audit of the site to identify where improvements (if any) can be made.		# Linked with 7.2.1		
7.2.6	Liaise with Highways Dept to provide disabled parking bays at Stoke Road cafe, Seawalls and other areas.		#		A working group formed 2012 will consider all aspects of traffic management and will report to committee. This will include provision for better parking for people with disabilities.
7.3	Landscape				
7.3.2	Implement a programme of scrub management .	#	#	#	This is a rolling programme to recover and retain areas of scrub.
7.3.3	Remove all scrub growing within the boundary of the scheduled ancient Monument known as Clifton Down Camp , an Iron Age hill fort.		#	#	Consents for this work (E/H) applied for and granted to permit the first stage of this programme to commence in 2012. The second stage will be progressed winter 2012/13

		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Comment
7.3.4	Check the condition of all trees growing on the iron Age Fort annually and maintain them to reduce the risk of them ever being blown over in strong winds.	#	#	#	This is linked to above and in future years will form part of the annual tree inspection. The first inspection completed in Summer 2012
7.3.5	Review the provision and design of all 'park furniture' e.g. seats, litter bins, signage, obstacle fences etc. and produce a design guide.		#		All new seats installed follow a style previously used on the Downs. Some redundant seats removed. 8 corporately styled dual litter bins installed in 2011.
7.3.6	Create and implement a replacement programme of existing park furniture and the provision of additional items – following 7.3.5.			#	
7.3.7	Identify and open up 'lost' view across the Downs and the Avon Gorge. (See map 11)		#	#	A significant piece of work completed in winter 2012 to restore 'viewpoint' at Observatory Hill. Further 'views' to be identified for clearing.
7.3.8	Continued inspection and proactive management of the Downs Tree Stock in line with the risk management strategy. Objective achieved	#		#	The trees on the Downs are inspected on a six Monthly basis, usually in June and again in January. All works required are reported to the Downs Committee.
7.3.9	Prepare a tree planting plan for the Downs to include options for replanting with existing or new species to fill gaps within existing avenue planting and / or phased felling and replanting of horse-chestnut avenues.	#	#	#	The Tree officer is currently working on this plan for presentation in 2012/13
7.3.10	Maintain a sanitation elm tree felling and removal programme where elm disease is identified in an effort to remove the residual disease base with a view to possibly	#	#	#	The Tree officer is currently working on this plan.

		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Comment
	reintroducing elm trees through a planting scheme later.				
7.4	Wildlife				
7.4.4	Develop the idea of introducing grazing to the gully and other selected areas. Objective achieved		#		The plans to introduce grazing in the gully will be reported as part of the Gorge Management Plan. Goats were introduced successfully in June 2011 and continue to thrive.
7.5	Antisocial behaviour				
7.5.1	Produce a plan to better manage Fairyland with the aims of encouraging greater public access and increasing ecological interest through the reduction of scrub.		#	#	This is a rolling programme to reduce scrub cover and retain areas all ready cleared. A small working group formed in 2012 will present recommendations for the improved management of this area.
7.5.2	Consider ways to control traffic speed on The Downs.				This will form part of the traffic groups recommendations.
7.5.5	Further the process of "preventing" vehicles from parking on the grass by the use of physical barriers and reinstate existing damage to turf (whilst being sensitive to ecological considerations, where appropriate).	#	#	#	Successful implementation of the wheel clamping scheme. In 2011 a new supplier took over a city wide contract. Additional posts installed on verges at Clifton Down Road and Upper Belgrave Road. {2011} The traffic working group will consider further physical barriers.
7.5.7	Evaluate the arguments for and against the provision of		#		Following a 12 month trial period

		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Comment
	litterbins and the cost thereof. Objective achieved				the Downs Committee agreed the installation of 8 additional dual use dog waste/litter bins {2011} .
7.5.8	provide more comprehensive cover of dog bins		#	#	Subject to approval of Downs Committee following a 12 month trial. {See above} A rolling replacement programme of poor quality bins is underway. It is intended to seek further assistance from the Dog Warden Service.
7.6	Management and resources				
7.6.1	Investigate and experiment with all options to reduce the effects of joggers eroding grassed areas and any associated 'wildlife'.	#	#	#	Maintenance and extension of areas protected by 'dead hedges' completed and is continually monitored.
7.6.2	Monitor users enjoyment of the Downs through regular surveys	#	#	#	The Downs team require specialist assistance for this piece of work.
7.6.3	Continue to monitor the playing quality of the sports pitches and ensure the quality of the playing surface.	#	#	#	All playing surfaces subject to an annual inspection by the Downs Ranger and remedial action taken as required.
7.6.5	Review the present specification for grounds maintenance.	#	#	#	The height of cut grass has been amended to reflect the requirements of Estates including the Downs. Formal monitoring of the specification revised in 2012. Downs Ranger and head

		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Comment
					Gardener carry out informal monitoring
7.6.7	Investigate ways to increase income through donations and sponsorship of e.g. benches and trees.	#	#	#	Bench sponsorship averages 10 a year generating 6.5k . Sponsored trees will form part of the Tree Bristol scheme. Concession rates have been improved (ice cream contract 2011) Explore further opportunities to increase income for example improved refreshment provision. Surplus hay is sold to local dealers, following donations to City Farms
7.6.9	Retain Green Flag award		#		Accreditation retained for 2012
7.6.11	Audit the EMAS action plan.	#	#		The Downs Ranger carries out an annual audit.
7.6.12	FODAG well established and the expansion of the groups role to evolve through the life of the Plan.	#	#		The group make a significant contribution to the running of the Downs, including, goat management, traffic surveys, mammal and butterfly monitoring assisting at events, litter forays and supporting the Avon Gorge Wildlife project.
7.6.18	Carry out risk assessments and maintain accessible records	#	#	#	The Downs Ranger and Head gardener review R/A's on an

		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Comment
					annual basis. Electronic and hard copies are available at the Downs depot.
7.6.19	Review the five year Management Plan	#	#		The Plan was revised in 2011 and implemented in April 2012. The Plan will run until 2017
7.6.22	Downs Committee monitor the implementation of the five year plan.	#	#	#	The Downs Ranger reports directly to Committee with an update of current activities and progress against the Plan.
7.6.23	Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project.	#	#	#	The steering group present an annual report to Committee.
7.6.24	Parks Grounds Maintenance Manager reviews the Departmental Asset Management Plan for the maintenance of buildings and structures.	#	#	#	Ongoing.
7.6.25	Monitor income and expenditure against annual budget.	#	#	#	The Downs Ranger meets with the Downs Principal accountant.
7.6.29	Play ground checks.	#	#		The playground is monitored weekly by the play inspector and records filed centrally. Ranger team also carry out ad-hoc inspections. The Avon Gorge steering group are considering a design for a revamped facility for installation in 2013/14
7.6.34	Downs Committee reports to the Council and The Society of Merchant Venturers.	#	#	#	This is reported annually.

		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Comment
	Additional Works Undertaken				
1	Established and managed successful partnership with Community Payback				Community payback have a long term project to refurbish the Downs dressing rooms
2	Bridge Valley Road				The Downs team carry out annual scrub clearance to permit rock safety inspections.
3	Downs Events				The Downs Day linked with the Diamond Jubilee in 2012 prompted the possibility of creating an annual event. This is still being progressed
4	Working Groups				The Downs Ranger currently sits on 2 Downs committee sub groups.
5	Bristol Resilience Scheme				Bristol Water installation of major new pipeline, BCC will be responsible for final reinstatement works.
6	Staff Development			#	.The Downs team have all received annual PMDS and training shortfalls and development opportunities identified.

Management Plan for the Bristol side of the Avon Gorge

Annual Action Plan 2012/13

Introduction

The Management Plan for the Bristol side of the Avon Gorge includes within it a five year work plan, which sets out management actions for the period 2010 – 2015.

The management plan also sets out the need for the five year work plan to be reviewed on an annual basis, and an annual action plan to be produced. The purpose of the annual action plan is to set out actions for the year ahead to facilitate the planning of work and resources. The annual action plan for 2012/13 is set out below.

The layout, including numbering of actions, is based on the five year work plan. Where numbering is not consecutive, this is because actions relate to other years.

Progress is indicated as follows:

Green = achieved

Amber = in progress but behind planned deadline

Red = not started or difficulty commencing due to issues beyond our control

Management Plan for the Bristol side of the Avon Gorge Annual Plan 2012/13

No.	Action	Lead	Cost band £	Source E/P/D/G/B	Progress
Rare plants, rock faces and open grassy areas					
6.1	Maintain existing areas of limestone grassland through managed removal of encroaching trees and scrub	AGDWP	10 – 20K	P	Areas identified and ongoing
6.2	Remove selected trees and shrubs in the Gully, clear fence line, and fence the land	AGDWP		P	complete
6.3	Under expert guidance fence rare Whitebeams and areas for seedling re-growth in the Gully	AGDWP		P	complete
6.4	Introduce small group of 5 – 6 goats into the fenced area	AGDWP		P	complete

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Lead:

AGDWP = Avon Gorge and Downs
Wildlife Project
DC = Downs Committee
DR = Downs Ranger
NE = Natural England
SG = Management Plan Steering Group
UB = University of Bristol

Funding Source:

E = Existing
P = AGDWP
D = Downs Budget
G = Grant aid eg Heritage Lottery Fund
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Management Plan for the Bristol side of the Avon Gorge Annual Plan 2012/13

No.	Action	Lead	Cost band £	Source E/P/D/G/B	Progress
6.5	Ensure good management and welfare of the goats – including daily checks on animals and fences	DR	13k Annually	D	Ongoing, Downs team trained in Animal husbandry. Daily checks implemented and supported by FODAG
6.6	Ensure signage is provided and maintained to explain goat grazing with contact details	AGDWP	<5K	P	Preparation work progressed. To be implemented when grazing programme starts
6.7	Put in place a monitoring programme to measure and record the effects of goat grazing and rare plant recovery	AGDWP	10 - 20K	P	Preparation work progressed. To be implemented when grazing programme starts
Woodland					
6.10	Manage woodland through continued policy of limited intervention, remove or make safe dangerous trees where they overhang paths	DR	<5K Annually	E	The Downs trees are inspected by the D/R &

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No.	Action	Lead	Cost band £	Source E/P/D/G/B	Progress
	or roads				Arb officer every 6 months
Landscape					
6.15	Retain important views and restore important lost views , across gorge, in accordance with Downs Management Plan	DR		E	The 'viewpoint' at Observatory Hill was completed in 2012. Additional areas have been identified for action when resources permit
6.22	Ensure regular litter removal within gorge	DR		E	The Downs team supported by FODAG carry out regular litter forays. In addition the Terrence Higgins Trust clear litter from Fairyland.
6.23	Ensure all new management works are assessed to ensure, as far and possible, that the character of the gorge is maintained, or enhanced where the opportunity arises	SG / AGDWP	<5K	P/D/B	The Steering Group consider all actions that may impact on the

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No.	Action	Lead	Cost band £	Source E/P/D/G/B	Progress
					character of the Gorge
Wildlife research and monitoring					
6.24	Develop and implement survey and monitoring programmes for rare plants, insects and other animals	AGDWP	5 -10k annually	P	The Steering Group oversee and coordinate all surveys.
6.25	Encourage research projects by University of Bristol focused on rare or scarce species and their conservation	AGDWP	–	E	Ongoing and overseen by the Steering Group.
6.26	Ensure information collected from surveys, monitoring and research informs the conservation management work on the gorge	ADGWP		E	This forms part of the ongoing activities of the Steering Group
6.27	Promote the use of the unique wildlife of the Avon Gorge in teaching and research within the University of Bristol and other academic institutions	UB + others	–	E	This has been used regularly as a valuable teaching aid and

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No.	Action	Lead	Cost band £	Source E/P/D/G/B	Progress
					continues to be developed.
6.28	Natural England to undertake 'condition assessment of SSSI and SAC'	NE	5 -10K	P	
Education and promotion					
6.32	Extend and further develop the existing Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Education Programme	AGDWP		G/D/P	Seasonal assistants employed and used very successfully as this initiative develops further.
6.33	Investigate options for developing an education programme to include the history of the gorge	BCC	–	E	Ongoing
6.34	Engage with new groups and audiences to ensure the involvement of people from different backgrounds	AGDWP	–	E	Efforts to increase the diversity of visitors continue.
Management and resources					
6.37	Train Downs Ranger's team in animal	DR	<5K	P	Training achieved through

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No.	Action	Lead	Cost band £	Source E/P/D/G/B	Progress
	welfare to enable management of goats within the Gully				Grazing Animals Project
6.38	Monitor income and expenditure against annual budgets and seek additional funding as required	SG	–	E	Overseen by the Steering Group
6.39	Review work plan and produce annual implementation plan	SG	–	E	
6.40	Monitor the implementation of the five year plan and report to Downs Committee	SG		E	
Working with others					
6.42	Liaise with outside organisations and groups to deliver relevant actions	AGDWP + SG	–	E	
6.43	Encourage volunteer activity to deliver actions where appropriate	AGDWP, SG and DR	–	E	Friends of Downs and Avon Gorge involved in wildlife monitoring and practical action

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