

**BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL**

**DOWNS COMMITTEE**

**October 2013**

**Report of:** Service Director of Communication and Marketing

**Title:** Delegated and Upcoming Events Proposed on The Downs

**Ward:** Stoke Bishop / Clifton / Westbury on Trym

**Officer Presenting Report:** Peter Watts, Festivals and Events Officer  
(Site Licensing)

**Contact Telephone Number:** 0117 922 3466

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the events and filming activity that has taken place on The Downs under delegated powers be noted.

That the proposed future events to take place on The Downs between Committee meetings be noted.

**Summary**

This is a report of the Events and Filming activity that has taken place under the Delegated Powers of the Downs Committee, as authorised by the Film Office and Site Permissions team. It also presents an outline of the minor events proposed to take place between Committee meetings. The report is intended to update the Committee and provide an opportunity to raise any issues concerning events on The Downs.

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

- a) Filming activity that has already taken place under Delegated Powers since the last Downs Committee Meeting (Paragraph 7).
- b) Events activity that has already taken place under Delegated Powers since the last Downs Committee Meeting (Paragraph 8).
- c) Proposed future events that will take place under Delegated Powers between Committee Meetings (Paragraph 9).
- d) A proposed review of existing policy for outdoor event activity

## Policy

1. All events that take place on The Downs have to adhere to the 'Policy for events on The Downs'.

## Consultation

### 2. Internal

Robert Westlake – Downs Ranger  
Peter Malarby – Legal Services  
Tony Whitlock - Resources

### 3. External

Not applicable

## Context

4. The following filming activity has already taken place under Delegated Powers between Downs Committee meetings and is presented for the information of the Downs Committee.
5. The following events have already taken place under Delegated Powers between Downs Committee meetings and are presented for the information of the Downs Committee.
6. The following events are proposed to take place under Delegated Powers.

## Proposal

7. Filming that has taken place since previous report (9<sup>th</sup> September 2013)

*No Filming to report*

8. Events that have taken place since previous report (9<sup>th</sup> September 2013)

| Organisation                | Event title and description | Any road closures or restrictions? | Dates and times of event   | Gross Site Fee |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| NHS                         | Headway Abseil              |                                    | 22 <sup>nd</sup> Sept 2013 | £100           |
| Childrens Hospice Southwest | Abseil                      |                                    | 29 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2013 | £100           |

| <b>Organisation</b>        | <b>Event title and description</b> | <b>Any road closures or restrictions?</b> | <b>Dates and times of event</b>                                   | <b>Gross Site Fee</b> |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|---|---|-----------------------|
| Tony Hopkins Entertainment | Circus on the Downs                |   | 24 <sup>th</sup><br>September<br>14 <sup>th</sup> October<br>2013 | £32,000               |

## 9. Proposed future events under delegated powers -2014

| <b>Event title and description</b> | <b>Dates and times of event</b>        |
|------------------------------------|--|
| University RAG event               | 15 <sup>th</sup> February              |
| Funderworld                        | TBC                                    |
| World Challenge Abseil             | 27 <sup>th</sup> April                 |
| Race for Life                      | 6 <sup>th</sup> – 7 <sup>th</sup> July |
| GroovyBug                          | 15 <sup>th</sup> August                |
| Agricultural Fair                  | 6 <sup>th</sup> September              |
| Run for the Future                 | 14 <sup>th</sup> September             |
| Circus on the Downs                | Sept / Oct TBC                         |

### Outdoor Events Policy

The Outdoor Events Policy is included with this report (Appendix 1) following minor changes to the policy including a section covering the need for notification to immediate residents and greater clarification regarding the trigger points for full committee approval.

### Race for Life

Following this years event discussions are taking place with Cancer research UK (CRUK) about how to avoid unnecessary waste post event (in particular water bottles) and greater controls over parking. CRUK are exploring changes to the race to include some obstacles in the hope that it will encourage new participants and retain those loyal fundraisers that have become tired of the usual format.

### Funderworld

James Mellors Amusements Ltd have requested to meet with Bristol city council to discuss options for 2014.

They have the following concerns

- 1, Site Fee to be renegotiated
- 2, They would like to explore changing the format of the event to include less rides and other attractions such as a Petting Zoo
- 3, They are concerned that the current decision making process for event activity can lead to extended waiting times for Committee feedback due to the frequency of the meetings and are keen on exploring other viable sites where decision making can be streamlined..

## **Bristol Outdoor Fitness Accreditation Scheme**

The new scheme supporting and encouraging personal trainers to use Bristols parks and open spaces is in its final stages of internal consultation.

Key aspects of the scheme are:

- A three tier banding scheme
- A new charging structure
- A dedicated webpage

The scheme will soft launch (subject to signoff) in January with a full launch and charges rolled out in April.

See Appendix 2 for more info on the scheme.

## **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.

### **Financial**

#### **(a) Revenue**

Site Fees are based on the schedule of charges 2012 / 2013.

Income since last report under Delegated Powers :

Gross Year End Figures to date (subject to final fee discussions)

|             |         |
|-------------|---------|
| Film Office | £372.50 |
|-------------|---------|

Events already held      £62,000

Year end (March 2014) Forecast      £64,000

**(b) Capital**

None

**(Financial advice provided by *Tony Whitlock, Principal Accountant*)**

**Land**

The land is under the control of the Downs Committee.

**Personnel**

Not applicable

**(Personnel advice provided by n/a)**

**Appendices:**

Appendix 1 Outdoor Events Policy

Appendix 2 Bristol Outdoor Fitness Accreditation Scheme (to follow separately)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

**Background Papers:**



**BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL**  
**POLICY FOR EVENTS ON THE DOWNS**  
Produced October 2013

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### **About this Policy**

The Downs occupy a unique status in the context of Bristol's parks and open spaces, with a dedicated team - The Downs Committee - in place to oversee their ongoing management, maintenance and development.

The Downs Committee must formally approve any event or activity that takes place on the site, and depending on the nature of the application, may also specify particular conditions that must be adhered to. As with other council owned spaces in the city, all applications to use The Downs as an events space are subject to a thorough assessment by a number of parties, including the Safety Advisory Group, the Emergency Services, Park Managers and other stakeholders.

Unfortunately, there is a lot of government legislation that applies to events and as a result getting permission to hold one can be daunting at the first attempt. This ***Policy for Events on The Downs*** provides general guidance on the spaces and locations available for events and sets out the principles and procedures for making an application, in order to ensure compliance with current legislation and best practice in the events industry. It also provides a clear and transparent framework for how each application will be assessed.

The Policy should be referenced alongside the ***Event Application Policy***.

### **Why has this been introduced?**

The Downs are an ideal venue for many events and they have been held here for over 200 years. In 2012 - 13 there were over 10 events held throughout the year. Over the last 5 year previous events have ranged in size and complexity, from large events such as The Bristol Flower show with 18,000 visitors over three days, the Firework Fiesta with 30,000 visitors and Race For Life with 7-8,000 spectators, down to small scale community events, charity abseiling and company picnics. The income generated from events contributes to the ongoing maintenance of The Downs – which is a benefit to all who regularly use and enjoy them. Events are also an important element in the social and recreational use of the site.

However, there is a delicate balance to be struck between holding a diverse programme of events on The Downs, allowing a variety of groups from both community and commercial sectors to hold events, and the preservation of the site for regular users.

This Policy aims to ensure that all event organisers using The Downs consider the local residents and communities, and provide a safe and enjoyable event.

### **What are the Objectives of the Policy?**

- To ensure all activity on The Downs complies with the ***The Clifton and Durdham Downs (Bristol) Act of 1861*** to govern the management of the Downs.
- To ensure all activity on The Downs complies with the ***Aims for the Downs*** as stated on the ***Management Plan for Clifton and Durdham Downs***.
- To ensure events on The Downs are safe, inclusive and enjoyable for those working and attending.
- To ensure the protection of the physical environment and wildlife.
- To ensure that any damage to the site is minimised and appropriate restoration carried out.
- To ensure the event does not unreasonably disrupt the lives of local residents and other Downs users.
- To maintain and promote the reputation and positive image of The Downs.
- To maximise the opportunity for increased spending that boosts the local economy.
- To encourage diverse local communities to deliver and participate in events on The Downs.
- To ensure the event organiser operates best practice in all planning and preparation, with particular attention paid to accessibility, promoting community cohesion and equalities impact assessments.

### **Who was consulted on the Policy?**

The draft Policy was distributed to a wide variety of stakeholders, including various departments within Bristol City Council, Ward Councillors, the Bristol Safety Advisory Group, and the Friends of the Downs.



## Background Information on The Downs

The Clifton and Durdham Downs are known to the people of Bristol and the surrounding area as “The Downs” and have a special place in the hearts and minds of anyone who has visited them. They could be considered to share similar characteristics to that of a listed building, with a historic, social and cultural legacy of national significance that requires ongoing preservation.

Some believe that The Downs are an example of natural beauty that has changed little over the centuries. In fact, the landscape features of The Downs are largely the result of the activities of mankind, ie the past and present use and management of the site. The Downs have changed even within living memory, and they are still changing today in reaction to present management and to the changing demands of the public.

The Downs are a significant heritage site for the citizens of Bristol and it is important to ensure that this inheritance is “handed on” in a healthy and sustainable condition for future generations.

## Who manages The Downs?

The Society of Merchant Venturers has owned Clifton Down since 1676. When the Corporation of Bristol acquired Durdham Down it was agreed that the two organisations would dedicate the Downs for the use and enjoyment of the citizens of Bristol.

Consequently, **The Downs Committee** was formed following **The Clifton and Durdham Downs (Bristol) Act of 1861** to govern the management of the Downs. The Committee is comprised of seven Bristol City Council Councillors and seven Merchant Venturers, and is chaired by the Lord Mayor, with the Master as deputy-chair.

The Downs Ranger post was created in 1861 and is to this day responsible for the day-to-day management of the Downs

## What guidelines govern the management of The Downs?

The policy that underpins everything concerning the management of The Downs is encapsulated in the subtitle of **The Clifton and Durdham Downs (Bristol) Act of 1861**, which sets out the whole purpose of the existence of The Downs under the Act. That is:

***‘To enable the Corporation of the City of Bristol...to secure Durdham Down and Clifton Down as places for Public Recreation.’***

The Downs have been preserved for the people of Bristol as a place for public use and enjoyment and exist for the benefit of everyone. An extract that explains the purpose of The Downs very clearly is:

***‘..the Downs have from time immemorial been open and largely resorted to as places of recreation for the inhabitants of Bristol and its neighbourhood, and it is expedience that they should be so maintained.’***

Although drafted nearly 150 years ago, the Act remains central to the decisions made on the usage of The Downs. The future landscape will be the direct result of the management and use of the area today. However, society and its demands change with time, and the management of The Downs must react to those changing demands.

The **Management Plan for Clifton and Durdham Downs (2007 – 2012)** was adopted in January 2007 as a strategy to maximise the access and recreational value of the area in a sustainable way, whilst acknowledging the possible conflicts created by the many different users of the site.

The plan outlines the following basic aims for The Downs:

### **1 Enjoyment**

To secure Durdham Down and Clifton Down as places for Public Recreation and to ensure that The Downs continue to be a great asset to present and future generations of Bristolians as a place for enjoyment.

### **2 Access**

To ensure that The Downs is accessible to all within the natural constraints of the site.

**3 Landscape**

To ensure that The Downs landscape retains its strong character and remains in good condition.

**4 Wildlife**

To ensure semi-natural wildlife habitats present are both maintained and enhanced and provide maximum opportunities for education and enjoyment of The Downs.

**5 Antisocial behaviour**

To ensure that antisocial behaviour is controlled and its impact reduced.

**6 Management and Resources**

To ensure that The Downs are well managed, and well resourced, balancing all the various public uses with the heritage value of the site.

The full Management Plan outlines the holistic strategy for the area, including the context of the policy, the research from the consultation with user groups, and a five-year work plan for the maintenance and development of The Downs.

Further background on **The Clifton and Durdham Downs (Bristol) Act of 1861** and the full aims, objectives and strategies of **Management Plan for Clifton and Durdham Downs (2007 – 2012)** can be found in the **Background Reading** section.

## Site Guide for The Downs

### Landscape

The Downs are comprised of **Durdham Down** and **Clifton Down**. Whilst much of the 442 acres is open grassland, the unique Downs landscape is also characterised by limestone grassland, scrubland and wild flower meadows. Designated locally as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest, the Downs are home to a diverse range of wildflowers, wildlife, birds and plants, including species that are unique to the area, like the Bristol and Willmott's Whitebeam trees. The Downs are also archaeologically important, with open cast lead mines, stone quarries, and Iron Age field systems still evident beneath areas of uneven ground.

### Areas suitable for Events

There are two main event sites on the Downs – the **Water Tower Site** and the **Showground Site** - as indicated on the **attached maps**.

The **Water Tower Site** is the larger of the two – with the capacity for both an event arena, and, when agreed, associated event on-site parking. Careful consideration needs to be given to ground protection at entrance and exits points as the site has areas of poor drainage and soft ground.

The site has three-phase mains power, facilities for phone lines and three water hydrants, which can be accessed with a standpipe. Based on the dimensions of the site with no infrastructure included – the Water Tower Site can hold up to 30,000 people.

The **Showground Site** is the smaller of the events spaces, with the possibility to connect in a mains distribution board for power, 2 water hydrants which can be accessed with a standpipe, facilities for phone lines and the capacity for up to 10,000 people, based on the dimensions of the site with no additional infrastructure.

Event parking areas are often not suitable on the Showground Site due to access difficulties and ground conditions. Agreement to use The Downs for parking must be granted by The Estates team.

In addition, the **Sea Walls** site on the Clifton Downs regularly hosts abseiling events. There are limits in place of no more than 2 abseils or zip wire events in any one month on the Sea Walls in order to prevent excess wear – as the site is SSSI and SNCI rated. This limit is also to ensure that the facility is not removed from individuals who utilise the walls for climbing.

Much of the rest of the Downs is covered by scrubland, uneven ground or football pitches, making these areas unavailable for events. Other sites will be considered but will require full committee approval.

The Downs iconic stature in Bristol also forms a unique backdrop for filming, which affords productions spectacular views of the Suspension Bridge, Avon Gorge, as well as Unit parking on both Parry's Lane and Ladies Mile. For further information on filming in the city, you can contact the Bristol Film Office: <http://www.filmbristol.co.uk> for advice.

### Site Restrictions

Although there are Byelaws prohibiting barbecues, fires, parking or camping anywhere on the Downs, the restrictions for enclosed events sites are subject to the discretion of the Downs Ranger.

Camping is permitted within a fenced area subject to including adequate level of services and facilities for the whole duration of the event, including fire, stewarding, medical facilities and water. The campsite density should also be subject to the HSE guidelines of up to 430 tents per hectare dependant on the size, nature and audience of the event.

Event parking can be negotiated by arrangement with the Downs Ranger, but there must be an adequate management plan as outlined in the Traffic Management section of this policy.

Outside of the area licensed to an event, the regular Byelaws for The Downs are applicable, including:

- No camping
- No public parking

- No fires or barbeques
- No bicycles on the grass

The full list of Byelaws for the Clifton and Durdham Downs are available to view 33 Colston Avenue, at [www.bristol.gov.uk](http://www.bristol.gov.uk).

Wheel-clamping and a tow away service is currently being trialed.

### Ground Considerations

The Downs is designated locally as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest and is enjoyed year round by a wide variety of users. In accordance with the ***Aims for the Downs*** as outlined in the **Management Plan for Clifton and Durdham Downs (2007 – 2012)**, Bristol City Council place a high priority on ensuring that The Downs landscape retains its strong character and remains in good condition.

Careful consideration needs to be given to ground protection for all heavily used areas, as well as entrance and exits points, as the site has areas of poor drainage and soft ground. Any vehicle access will require specific ground protection plans. Suitable protection should be agreed in consultation with the Downs Ranger, which may be a combination of metal trackway, plastic roll matting and tiles, carpet and matting.

### Noise

In addition to the general recommendations for noise control and environmental health in the ***Event Application Toolkit***, noisy activities and speakers should be sensitively positioned in order to minimize disturbance to local residents. This is of particular importance to the north of Showground site due to the close proximity of residential properties at Durdham Park and Westbury Road.

Due to the potential impact on local residents, the Downs Committee are not always able to support large-scale music events. All such applications will be treated on an individual basis; however, the Downs are considered less suitable than other Destination Parks for such larger events.

### Consultation / Notification

When planning for an event the impact on immediate residents is an important consideration. Due to the open flat landscape of The Downs events involving amplified music have a greater impact on immediate residents. A short letter describing the event and providing contact information delivered to residents is a basic requirement if an event has any of the following:

- PA systems, generators and / or staging
- High numbers of attendees (over 2000)
- Overnight equipment or a prolonged build break lasting several days
- Extensive use of The Downs – such as fencing, on site parking and / or ticketing the site
- The need for a traffic management plan / coning order
- A licensed bar(s) operating past 22:00

‘Immediate’ residents are those that neighbour The Downs and will be directly affected by the event taking place. Organisers must consider mail dropping additional properties further from the site based on the size of the event and its perceived impact on local residents. If you are in any doubt check with the Site Permission team.

### **How are event applications assessed?**

Once an interest event organiser has submitted a **Site Licence Application Form** to Site Permissions , depending on the size and type of event the application may be presented to the Downs Committee in the form of an overview report for approval.

In consultation with the Downs Ranger, the site permissions team will write and present a report to the Committee seeking permission for the event to take place, and will recommend a site fee and bond to cover any grounds reinstatement costs.

Larger event applications which require an individual report will be considered at the Downs Committee meetings, which take place five times each year. For small or regulated events, The Lord Mayor and the Master of the Merchant Venturers have 'delegated powers' to agree permissions. This means that these applications do not require an individual report to be presented to the full Committee before they are approved, enabling smaller events to take place between meetings. The Committee is then kept informed.

All applications are required to comply with the guidance and timescales contained in the **Outdoor Event Toolkit**. Any application will also require approval from the Safety Advisory Group -made up of representatives from Bristol City Council, The Great Western Ambulance Service, Avon Fire and Rescue Service, Avon & Somerset Police and Bristol Traffic Management Group. The Safety Advisory Group considers all event-licensing requests and offers advice and guidance in the planning and organisation of events.

The relevant level of external consultation may also be required, which could include local residents and stakeholders.

In some instances it may be necessary for a de-brief document to be submitted to Downs Committee so they can assess the suitability of an event returning in subsequent years.

### **What type of events require full committee approval?**

When considering if an event requires full committee approval the following is taken into consideration

- **Quality of your application**
- **The size and nature of the event**
- **The time it falls in relation to other similar events on the site/ in the wider city**
- **Public reaction to similar events**
- **Impact of the event through noise, road closures, and damage to the site**
- **The Site fee and bond. (Larger events / Longer term on site will have higher fees set)**
- **The impact of the event in the preceding year if applicable**
- **An event proposing to use an unusual area of The Downs (aside from the nominated two event spaces)**

## **BACKGROUND READING**

### **List of Documents**

- 1 The Clifton and Durdham Downs (Bristol) Act of 1861
- 2 Byelaws for the Clifton and Durdham Downs
- 3 Management Plan for Clifton and Durdham Downs (2007- 2011)
- 4 Consultation Report