

THE DOWNS COMMITTEE

Clifton and Durdham Downs (Bristol) Act 1861

Agenda

6. Public Forum (Pages 3 - 17)

To consider items of Public Forum sent to the Downs Committee. Interested parties can submit a written statement of approximately one side of A4 to the Downs Committee by sending it to Democratic Services **by no later than 12pm on Friday 18th September 2020.**

Anyone who wishes to present their public forum statement at the zoom meeting must register their interest by giving at least two clear working days' notice prior to the meeting **by 2pm on Thursday 17th September 2020.**

PLEASE NOTE THAT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE NEW STANDING ORDERS AGREED BY BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL, YOU MUST SUBMIT A STATEMENT TO ACCOMPANY YOUR REGISTER TO SPEAK.

Democratic Services Section

3rd Floor Deanery Wing
City Hall PO Box 3399
College Green,
Bristol BS1 9NE

Website

www.bristol.gov.uk

Public Forum Downs Committee 21st September 2020 at 2pm



Councillors: Lord Mayor – Councillor Jos Clark (Chair), Peter Abraham, Donald Alexander, Barry Clark, Christopher Davies, Kye Dudd and Paula O’Rourke

Merchant Venturers: Master – Ross Ancell (Vice Chair), Jonathon Baker, Gillian Camm, Simon Cooper, Mary Prior, Peter Rilett, Tim Ross

Copies Also To: Amanda Sharpe, Melanie Inman, Ben Skuse, Kevin Jay

S next to the name of the person making the statement indicates that they have also registered to speak.



Statements	
Statement	Name – Capital S in bold next to the Speaker’s Name indicates a request to speak
1	S Councillor Steve Smith – Byelaws
2	S Dr Paul Main – Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society – Request for the Erection of an Information Board to explain the Draper Monuments on Christchurch Green, Clifton
3	S Richard Hensey – Downs Cycle Plans
4	Robert Westlake - FODAG
5	Thomas Hathway – Proposed Playground
6	S Merche Clark – Proposed Playground
7	Rupert Stuart-Baker – Proposed Playground



STATEMENT NUMBER 1

I have had complaints from residents in my ward about breaches of the Downs Byelaws, especially on busy weekends, such as vehicles being parked on the grass, tents erected and disposable barbecues used. There seems to be no enforcement activity to support the byelaws, leading to a false impression that such behaviour is acceptable. While nobody wants to see the Downs become a “police state”, it seems that in order for people to respect the byelaws which make them a welcoming place for everybody, some enforcement activity for the worst offenders is necessary.

I would be very grateful if the committee could review and clarify who is responsible for enforcement, and investigate how all stakeholders can work together to ensure that the byelaws are respected and adhered to. I would be pleased to support this work in any way that I can.

Thanks,

Steve Smith,

Councillor for Westbury-on-Trym and Henleaze.

STATEMENT NUMBER 2

The Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society (CHIS) are interested in erecting a lectern type information board to explain the importance and history of the Sir William Draper limestone monuments, the 79th Regiment cenotaph and the Pitt Obelisk, on Christchurch Green, Clifton.

The cenotaph is of great historic significance, as it is reputed to be the first public war memorial in the UK. People are always looking at the monuments trying to work out what they are. As you know the inscriptions on the slate panels are very difficult to read.

We have been given some family money to provide a memorial for Mr Roger Feneley who was a well known and eminent surgeon in Bristol. He lived nearby in Clifton and he and wife loved this part of the Downs. The family have agreed to the above suggestion.

We envisage that the information board would be similar in size, shape and design to those near the Observatory.

Please can the Committee give its agreement to this proposal.

Peter Insole, Bristol City Council Principal Historic Environment Officer, is supportive of this idea.

If there is any money left over we are also interested in helping with some conservation work of the monuments.

I am also waiting to hear back from Christina Raddon, Bristol City Council Senior Building Surveyor, about what conservation work is possible.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Paul G N Main,

On behalf of the CHIS Committee

STATEMENT NUMBER 3

Date: 03 September 2020

“Cycle Sunday” Plans for The Downs

Dear Committee,

In the August 2020 edition of The Bristol Nine” magazine we are encouraged to get involved on this subject.

I have already commented briefly on the subject in my letter to the A4018 Improvements Team on 15 February 2019, para 4.but I welcome the opportunity to comment in greater detail.

I have walked the proposed routes on the Downs a few weeks ago, and I am totally opposed to the proposed changes for the following reasons:-

A. I do not accept that there is “unmet demand” for more cycling routes or improved cycling routes on the Downs, a claim frequently made by Cycle Sunday. Cycle Sunday has achieved huge changes already in and around Bristol and I just wish they would leave our precious Downs alone and untouched.

B. The proposals, if implemented, will attract “the wrong type of cyclists”. The natural paths already on the Downs are quite adequate for the leisurely cyclist riding at a modest pace and taking in the views. These plans would very much encourage the “speedsters”, lycra clad racers riding multi-gear thin sports type bikes, no doubt with intimidating dark goggles etc. The claim by CS that the plans would encourage less motor traffic to the Downs is nonsense – quite the opposite as these types of cyclists put their bikes on their cars and drive to selected routes. Very soon word would spread that if one wants a really fast unobstructed 3 mile route head for the Downs.

C. The Downs is not A PARK, and it is very important that it must never be seen as such. The quickest and most effective way to destroy the uniqueness of the Downs is to convert them to a Park.

D. Cycle Sunday seem to hold extraordinary influence and prominence with Bristol City Council and this really needs to be addressed. Walkers and motorists and the general public seem to be treated as “also rans”. This is all just wrong and very undemocratic.

E. If the Downs Committee is determined to implement these proposals, and, as said, I am totally opposed, I trust they may take the following points into consideration please:-

Should the tarmac drives planned be placed where the current natural paths are they would seriously impact the whole appearance of the Downs as the current paths are several metres inset from the trees lining the Downs by the main roads. So walkers

would have to walk through the trees, and some meters again over grass, and again over the new cycle paths, to gain access to the Downs proper. This of course brings the danger of being hit by riders going too fast. This is particularly the case in respect of the route along Saville Road, Rockleaze, down to the Circular Road at Seawalls.

I see no reason at all for any additional paths at Ladies Mile, or along Westbury Road.

I assume all trees currently in place will remain untouched.

The proposed plans, if implemented, will require significant track signage and probably road signage, and in total would be the first move towards turning the Downs into yet another Bristol Park, a playground for cycling speedsters, a very real danger to walkers with families and pets. The advantage that walkers enjoy over cyclists at present is that the natural paths do not encourage fast/reckless cycling.

I ask you all to please reflect on the heritage of the Downs; it needs to remain where, at a push, one could imagine sheep grazing. It has, over the past twenty years, become a very busy and active place, far removed from the original intension of providing a quiet rural space close to the city of Bristol for relaxation. That was the original intention and vision, and we all should be a little modest and a little humble, and value what we have been given by our thoughtful and caring forbears, and do what we can (which frankly amounts to interfering with it as little as possible) to maintain that vision.

The wonderful Downs, so close to the busy city, should surely be a place primarily of quiet solitude, a place to relax and enjoy the magnificent views – it should not be seen as primarily a place to exercise. It simply cannot be both.

Thank you,

Yours Sincerely,

Richard Hensey

c.c. for info: Councillor Steve Smith, by e mail.



STATEMENT NUMBER 4

Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge

September 2020

Statement to the Downs Committee.

FOD+AG remains committed to preserve, conserve and enhance the overall and several distinct environments within the Downs and Gorge for the benefit of all legitimate users and to support the City Council the Downs Committee and the operational team in the good governance of the Downs and Avon Gorge.

Like many organisations the FODAG committee has been unable to meet as often as we would like. We have however managed outdoor meetings and remained largely operational. Some planned events and activities have been deferred or cancelled. We are following City Council advice for volunteer activity and plan to continue where we can do so safely. This winter we will once again be organising regular deep litter forays across the Downs. We have programmed maintenance of the Haven and adjacent information panel; the Victorian steps and we plan to repaint the White tree.

In response to concerns raised by our members two committee volunteers arranged to interview Tom Paine the organiser of the Breaking Bread event and were reassured that the event was professionally run. Concerns regarding, parking, noise, lack of consultation, intrusion and the impact on neighbouring businesses were largely addressed. Reservations about the escalation of the venture remain. FODAG acknowledges the importance of income generation in the current climate and continue to support appropriate activities.

Many members and the general public have contacted FODAG alarmed at the illegal gathering of motorists last month at Ladies Mile. This unregulated event brought over 300 cars to the Downs and surrounding roads. Members will be well aware of the danger, anti-social behaviour and disruption reported widely in press and television coverage. FODAG intends to support the Respect the Downs group and seek to meet with the Police to see how a repeat of this type of event can be best avoided.

In our last report to committee we highlighted that there is an apparent increased level of mis-use of the Downs not previously evident with regular flagrant breaches of the byelaws.

FODAG and other local groups are keen to see what steps the Downs committee and the relevant authorities intend to take to prevent similar occurrences and what further measures can be implemented to address enforcement of the byelaws and The Road Traffic Act.

Since lockdown our quarterly Newsletter has been restricted to an electronic version. Members may have noticed that the last edition of the Newsletter carried some small ads.

This is offered free to help support local businesses during the pandemic. We intend to revert to hard copy for the Autumn edition.

To further enhance the recently replanted beds at the Thomas Memorial and in consultation with the Downs supervisor FODAG intend to fund and underplant the herbaceous specimens with a variety of spring bulbs. This will provide year-round colour and interest. We will also canvass establishments local to the memorial and see if there is any interest in supporting the project going forward.

FODAG committee members met with the proposers of the Downs Loop for a guided tour of the proposed route. This was an opportunity to raise concerns posed by members about the concept. There are reservations about the need for the scheme, issues about possible conflict of using a shared path and loss of greenspace. FODAG members and our committee are divided but on balance have agreed to support the proposal going forward.

Robert Westlake

Chair

Friends of the Downs & Avon Gorge

STATEMENT NUMBER 5

Downs Committee – Support the Playground Petition

I'd like to lend support to the calls for a small area of land to be set aside for the building of children's play equipment on the Downs towards the top end of Blackboy Hill.

Families in the area around Whiteladies Road currently have a substantial distance to their nearest playground and the popularity of the current petition from Cllr. Denyer demonstrates local demand from an area that is densely urbanised.

The benefits of outdoor play for the development, health, and wellbeing of young children are numerous and well documented but nationally time spent playing outdoors has been declining steadily^[2]. Providing high quality equipment that is in easy walking distance could contribute to efforts to reverse the trend locally. There is playground near to the suspension bridge that provides a good example of equipment that is in keeping with the natural surroundings – something which is important and should be considered at the design stage.

Committing a small patch of land to this aim lends itself well to the goals of the Downs Place and Movement Framework. It is also complementary to the local Downs Loop project, but most importantly, would enrich the area for future generations to come.

Tom Hathway

[1] <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/12/6/6475> Tremblay MS, Gray C, Babcock S, Barnes J, Bradstreet CC, Carr D, Chabot G, Choquette L, Chorney D, Collyer C, Herrington S, Janson K, Janssen I, Larouche R, Pickett W, Power M, Sandseter EBH, Simon B, Brussoni M. Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 2015; 12(6):6475-6505.

[2] <https://nt.global.ssl.fastly.net/documents/read-our-natural-childhood-report.pdf> 'Our Natural Childhood' Report from National Trust 2012

STATEMENT 6

STATEMENT TO THE DOWNS COMMITTEE REGARDING A NEW CHILDRENS PLAYGROUND

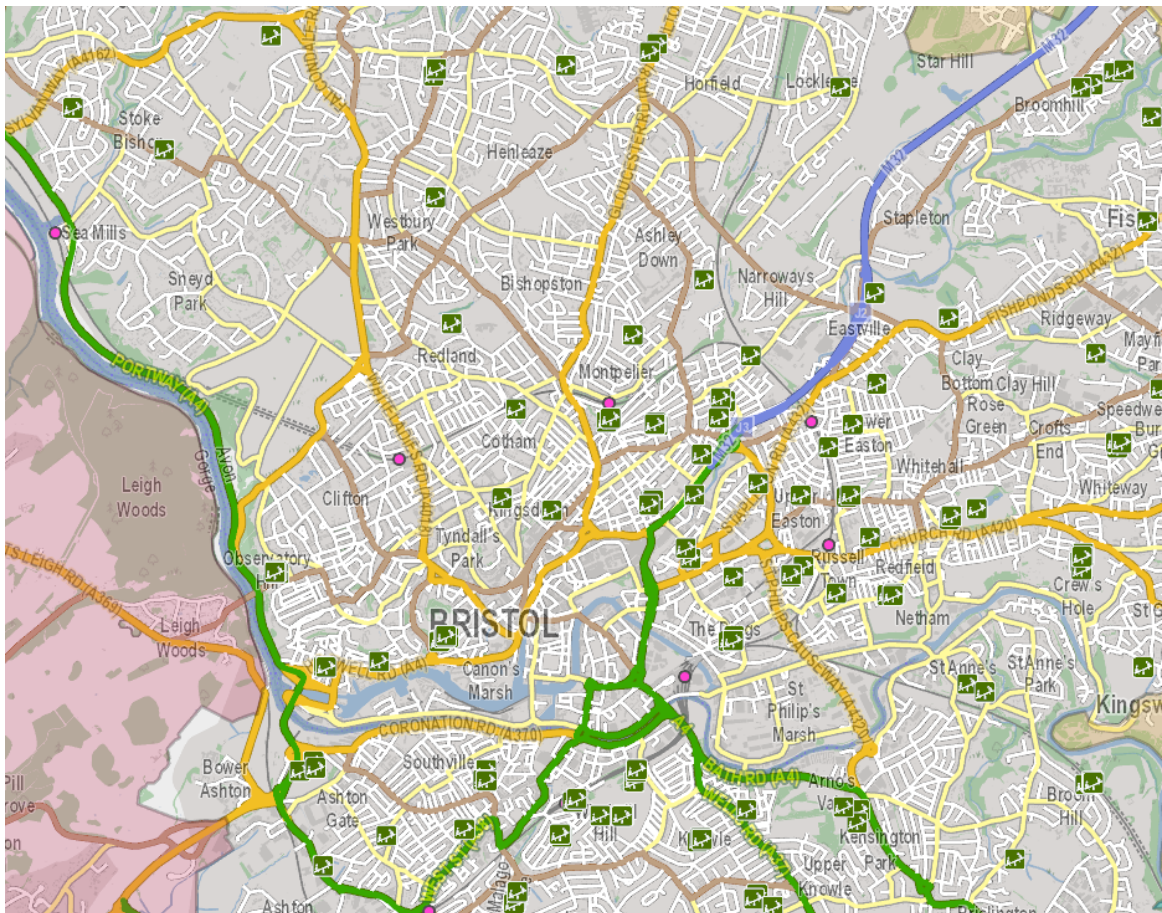
Meeting of 21st September 2020

This statement supports Cllr Carla Denyer's proposal for the construction of a New Playground on the Downs.

Why Here?

The Downs is a treasure. Never more so than in these COVID times where outside activities have been, and will continue to be, so important to the wellbeing of Bristolians. The Downs allows people to walk, relax and play sports. Near the suspension bridge the Knickbocker breaker slide provides thrills for all ages and the well-constructed wooden playground in the dell behind is always well used. A new playground near the café/water tower will only enhance the provision.

The image below shows the Pinpoint Map of childrens play equipment and play areas in the city and highlights how badly the residents around the Downs are served by them. Bristol City Council needs to address this lack.



Why Play and why Playgrounds?

Play for children is a fundamental part of their development. So much so that their right to play is enshrined in Article 31 of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Research focuses on 4 main aspects of development which play provides: Social skills (communication, cooperation, collaboration), Emotional Skills (self-esteem and self-confidence, learning from failure and succeeding), Cognitive skills (problem solving and decision making), Physical Development. Opportunities to climb, use overhead equipment and swings have particular value (see Additional Information below).

A new playground should consider Inclusivity from the outset thereby maximising the opportunity it offers to all children. Emphasis for challenging activities for the 9-14 age range could also be considered as nowadays this age group has little opportunity to continue developing the skills they acquired in playground settings when they were younger.

Conclusion

A playground on the Downs near the water tower / cafe that offers opportunities for children to engage in active outdoor play would greatly enhance the wellbeing of countless Bristol residents, but especially those young people living near the Downs who have no nearby playgrounds. I hope the Committee will support Cllr Carla Denyer's proposal.

Merche Clark

CDCA Committee Member and resident of Clifton Down Ward

16/9/20

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

NHS Guidelines for Physical Activity suggest:

Toddlers (aged 1 to 2) - physically active every day for at least 180 minutes (3 hours). The more the better. This should be spread throughout the day, including playing outdoors... Active play, such as using a climbing frame, riding a bike, playing in water, chasing games and ball games, is the best way for this age group to get moving.

Pre-schoolers (aged 3 to 4)- should spend at least 180 minutes (3 hours) a day doing a variety of physical activities spread throughout the day, including active and outdoor play. ... The 180 minutes should include at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity.

Children and young people aged 5 to 18 should aim for an average of at least 60 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity a day across the week and take part in a variety of types and intensities of physical activity across the week to develop movement skills, muscles and bones. Research suggests that

Well designed playgrounds are fundamental to helping children's development.

Here are why some of the key pieces of equipment are so important:

"Climbing has long been established as a developmentally beneficial activity for children. In order to climb a play structure children must use cognitive skills such as memory, problem solving, and imagery and visualization (Frost, Brown and Sutterby). A child must also combat the feelings of fear and stress, possibly from the height of the equipment, which promotes the proper management of emotions. Children also love climbing because it gives them the power to change their perspective, fostering their natural curiosity (Thornton and Frost)."⁽¹⁾

“Overhead equipment, such as monkey bars, hanging rings, and gliders, are a main component of playgrounds that are essential for children’s learning and development (Thornton and Frost). It presents an entirely different skill set for children, not found in other playground equipment. The motion of holding on and swinging from one arm to another is called brachiation (Frost and Therrell). Brachiation develops upper body strength and endurance, hand-eye coordination, visual perception of distance, and balanced locomotor patterns (Frost and Therrell). Most babies naturally develop sufficient grip and upper body strength to support their own body weight by the time they are two years old (Stoddard), but if this skill is not further practiced and developed, the necessary strength can be lost as their body weight increases. This is why overhead equipment and the act of swinging from one bar to the next are critical to a child’s development).”⁽¹⁾

“Swings are one of the most common and exciting pieces of equipment on a playground. Children can use swings in many different ways and for many different purposes. An over stimulated child might simply relax on a swing by gently rocking back and forth, while an under stimulated child might push to go higher and higher to get a feeling of excitement (Strickland). The act of swinging can be quite challenging to children just starting out. It requires rhythm, leg and arm strength, grasping, and balance (Kerniva). All parts of the body must be working and pumping together in perfect coordination to make the swing go higher. Once children become comfortable they may even start to jump out of the swing, requiring coordination, balance, landing strength, and timing (Kerniva).”⁽¹⁾

(1) Designing and Evaluating Playground Equipment for Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Honors Thesis Leigha R. Brisco
Department: Civil and Environment Engineering Advisor: Dr. Kimberly E. Bigelow, Ph.D. April 2014

10 Principles of Playground Design

https://playgroundideas.org/10-principles-of-playground-design/?gclid=CjwKCAjwzIH7BRAbEiwAoDxxTnG7k9uguniAWaAFmz3H8Cj7WCtr2dpoFB3CJEF0kDnPvzS-PHCe9RoCts4QAvD_BwE

Just for the fun of it: making playgrounds accessible to all children

https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/04419057.2012.759144?casa_token=y6xvY1WuSMEAAAAA%3AnCiQC80JFCd76mlUV2-XwiYMzoYZvKUh1LKifvBu79umwVG6HpFWdK6ns61dgSpxSHy8l0d-Ov4

STATEMENT NUMBER 7

Dear Downs Committee,

My name is Rupert Stuart-Baker and I live just off Whiteladies Road. I'm a father with a 3 year old son, Thomas and my wife Katharine is pregnant with our 2nd child. I have lived in Bristol since I came here for university in 2001.

Along with 750 other local residents who have signed the recent petition I would like to express my gratitude for your time to consider this new playground for the area. The Downs is a fantastic, beautiful and important natural asset to the area and should be preserved yet the area does lack a local playground for children. I have lived in Clifton for almost 10 years and until I had children I didn't notice how important the proximity of amenities and support networks are. I think the recent lockdown and the affect of the Coronavirus pandemic has taught us all that investment in green spaces and local services for all ages is incredibly important for mental well-being and physical health of the community.

At present our nearest playground is at the Suspension Bridge, which is a 25 minute walk for an adult and virtually impossible with a slow walking toddler. The next nearest is Redland School playground which involves crossing a number of busy roads and is also a 25 minute walk. I think a playground by the Water Tower and small café would provide a great opportunity for the local community and visitors to congregate and give small children the opportunity to play. I've also noticed a number of older residents in Clifton who really appreciate the interaction with children in recent months and they may also enjoy the opportunity to take grandchildren to the playground and have a cup of tea.

Given The Downs is a hugely important green space any design should be carefully considered and I would recommend something like the below which is a picture of Tyntesfield's sustainable playground for children, which allows them to practice balancing, jumping and climbing without using plastic, metal or any unnatural materials. This is probably the best looking and most practical playground the in region. The firm I believe is called the Green Play Projects.

<http://www.greenplayproject.co.uk/gardens/tyntesfield-national-trust-wraxall-north-somerset/>

I look forward to hearing your recommendations in due course.

Kind regards

Rupert

