

# THE DOWNS COMMITTEE

Clifton and Durdham Downs (Bristol) Act 1861

Reply to

Amy Rodwell

To : Members of the  
Downs Committee

Telephone

E-mail

Date

Amy.rodwell@bristol.gov.uk

Tuesday, 11 October 2022

## **The Lord Mayor and 6 City Councillors**

The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor Councillor Paula O'Rourke

Councillor Steve Smith

Councillor Jos Clark

Councillor Katy Grant

Councillor Philippa Hulme

Councillor Christine

Councillor Kye Dudd

Townsend

## **The Master and 6 Merchant Venturers**

David Freed Master of the Society of Merchant Ventures

Jonathon Baker

Gillian Camm

Peter Rilett

Patrick Despard

Mark Burchfield

Mike Bothamley

Dear Member,

You are invited to attend a meeting of the **Downs Committee** to be held at **2.00 pm on Wednesday, 19th October, 2022 at A Committee Room - City Hall, College Green, Bristol, BS1 5TR.**

The agenda for the meeting is set out overleaf and the supporting documents are attached.

Yours sincerely,

*AR*

Amy Rodwell

### **Democratic Services Section**

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### **Website**

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## **Agenda**

- 1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information**
- 2. Apologies for absence**
- 3. Declarations of interest**

To note and Declarations of Interest raised by Councillors.

- 4. Chair's Business**
- 5. Minutes of last meeting (Pages 4 - 9)**
- 6. Action Tracker (Pages 10 - 11) 2.15 pm**
- 7. Matters Arising From the Events and Finance Group (Pages 12 - 14) 2.25 pm**
- 8. Public Forum 2.30 pm**

Up to 30 Minutes is permitted for this item.

To consider items of Public Forum sent to the Downs Committee. Interested parties can submit:

- A written statement of approximately one side A4 no later than 12pm on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2022.
- A maximum of 2 written questions (which will be answered verbally at the meeting) must be received 3 clear working days prior to the meeting. For this meeting, it means that your question(s) must be received no later than 5pm on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> October.
- You will have the opportunity to ask one supplementary question arising directly out of each of the original questions or replies.

Please send submissions to Democratic Services at [democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk).

Please note that your statements and questions will be sent to Committee Members and published on Council's website prior to meeting.

- 9. Governance Report (Pages 15 - 33) 3.00 pm**
- 10. Downs Management Report (Page 34) 3.45 pm**
- 11. Events Report (Page 35) 3.55 pm**
- 12. Finance Report (Pages 36 - 37) 4.00 pm**
- 13. Zoo Gardens Planning Application (Downs Response) - Verbal Update 4.10 pm**
- 14. Parking: Enforcement of Bylaws and Future of Parking on and Around the Downs; Future of North Car Park - Verbal Update 4.30 pm**
- 15. Clifton Down Wildflower Meadow Proposal 4.50 pm**

Report to follow.

- 16. Downs Education Report - To note (Pages 38 - 39) 4.55 pm**
- 17. Any Other Business 5.00 pm**
- 18. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled to be held on 14 November at 2pm in City Hall.

Amy Rodwell, Democratic Services Officer  
Email: Amy.rodwell@bristol.gov.uk or [democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk)

## Bristol City Council Minutes of the Downs Committee

28 June 2022 at 11.00 am



### Members Present:-

**Councillors:** Paula O'Rourke (Chair), Steve Smith, Katy Grant, Philippa Hulme, David Freed (Vice-Chair), Jonathon Baker, Mike Bothamley, Mark Burchfield, Gillian Camm, Patrick Despard and Peter Rilett

### 1 Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and did a round of introductions.

### 2 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Townsend, Councillor Clark, and Councillor Dudd.

### 3 Declarations of interest

There was none.

### 4 Chair's Business

The Chair noted that:

- There had been a last minute amendment to the papers the day before the meeting to include additional items, Chair's Business and Downs Committee Work Plan. The Chair apologised for the error as these items should have been included in the initial reports pack.
- The layout of previous meetings was not ideal as members of the public were positioned behind the committee which made it difficult for people to see/hear. Going forwards, the committee would look to improve the layout with the public facing the Committee, where possible.
- The Committee had only accepted statements to date, but they would like trial accepting questions at the next Committee meeting in September. It was noted that the Committee wanted to open up a dialogue however, due to limited resources, this would only be temporary arrangement.



## 5 Minutes of last meeting

Resolved; That the minutes of the previous meetings on 21<sup>st</sup> March and 20<sup>th</sup> May 2022 be approved as a correct record.

## 6 Action Tracker

The Chair noted that there was only one action on the tracker from the previous meeting which had been completed. Going forwards, she would like to the Committee to be more outcome led with the intention of adding more actions to the tracker at upcoming meetings. She added that Cllr Smith had done great work on the Downs Committee Work Plan which had generated lots of actions to be embedded throughout the year.

## 7 Matters Arising From the Events and Finance Group

The Master of the Society of Merchant Venturers introduced the item and noted there had been a detailed discussion on the finance report which now gave a more detailed breakdown on income and expenditure.

There was a discussion around parking on the downs and the future use of the Zoo car park and Members noted that this was to be discussed at a future meeting.

## 8 Downs Committee Work Plan

The Chair gave attendees a few minutes to read through the Work Plan as the report was published late. Councillor Smith then introduced the report and noted that the Work Plan was split into 3 strands which were as follows:

- Income and finance
- Assets and infrastructure
- Governance and accountability

It was noted that some of the items in the Work Plan were 'business as usual' so a task and finish group wouldn't be required.

Discussion points:

- The Chair noted that the Committee would like to look at the Downs Byelaws which was to be discussed in more detail at an upcoming meeting.
- There was a discussion around enhancing the use of the Downs for all of the city, specifically supporting smaller events.
- It was noted that the planning application for the Sea Walls Café was to be heard at Development Control Committee B on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2022. This was a repeat of a previous application and if granted, there would still be a requirement for the scheme to be approved by the Secretary of State and following this, funding



would need to be established. It was noted that this would be a long process and a Member of the Downs Committee should monitor as it progresses.

- There was a conversation around infrastructure on the Downs, specifically the changing rooms and it was suggested that a Task & Finish group be set up to progress on section 4 of the Work Plan.

**ACTION:** Report around the Committee's governance to be brought to the next Committee meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> September.

**ACTION:** Events team to look at ways to enhance the use of the Downs specifically for smaller events and report back to the Committee at its meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> November.

**ACTION:** Update on the planning application for the Sea Walls Café to be provided at the next Committee meeting.

**ACTION:** Establish a Task & Finish Group to progress issues in section 4 of the Work Plan – Buildings / Assets / Infrastructure.

## 9 Public Forum

The following Public Forum statements were received and noted by the committee:

1. Bristol Tree Forum, Mark Ashdown (in person)
2. Downs for People, Susan Carter (in person)
3. Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge, Robert Westlake (in person)

There were concerns raised around drifting on the Downs and officers advised that 101 had been contacted and police had been present in the past. It was suggested the Committee raise the issue with the Police & Crime Commissioner.

**ACTION:** Councillor Smith to raise issues around drifting on the Downs with the Police & Crime Commissioner. Information available on the matter to be sent to Councillor Smith.

## 10 Downs Management Report

The Area Parks Supervisor for the Downs introduced the Downs Management report and highlighted the key points as follows:

- The grass mowing regime was going as planned, and the animals remained well.
- The team were nervous about potential problems with litter on the Downs over the bank holiday weekend, but the bad weather meant that this wasn't an issue.
- There would be full renovation of the football pitches in May 2023.
- The water tower site was damaged, and the team were looking to improve the condition of the site ahead of the next event, Funderworld, which was due to take place in early 2023.
- A wooden bin store had been installed outside the Spire hospital for Bristol Waste Company to use instead of placing them around the Thomas Memorial plant beds.



- Due to the Ecological Emergency, Parks had been asked to implement measures to mitigate the impact of climate change. Therefore, following a trial last year, colleagues have kept areas of unmown grass on the verges of Westbury Road to help enhance wildlife.

#### Discussion points:

- There was a discussion around the mowing regime, and it was suggested that the team look at ways to keep people updated on the reasons for the unmown grass and also, the possibility of involving schools for science projects.
- The Chair noted that grant funding was available for the improvement of the Downs Play Area.
- There was a conversation around the possibility of having sheep on the Downs but unfortunately, this was not possible as it would need fencing off to keep the sheep safe.
- The Area Parks Supervisor was seeking approval from the Committee to set up two compound sites on the Downs for gas pipeline works to be completed by Wells and West Utilities. He advised that each site will be at different times of the year with the first one starting imminently at the top of Stoke Road. The contractors would pay for the use of the space and the ground would be covered with matting to facilitate the work but there would be no digging involved. They had agreed to reinstate the land afterwards.
- Following questions from the Committee, the Area Parks Supervisor confirmed that the first round of gas pipeline works was to be completed by December 2020, the space used would be 30m x 30m and that charges would apply. Also, that letters had been sent to local residents informing them of the works. As the fees had not been set, the Committee suggested that Wells and West Utilities are charged a proper commercial rate in line with fees for events and, that the contract should be for 6 months initially with a possible extension subject to a review.

**ACTION:** Update to be provided on the finances relating to the two gas pipeline and structure work compounds on the Downs.

## 11 Downs Education Report

The Chair noted apologies from the Avon Gorge and Downs Biodiversity Education Manager and introduced the Downs Education report.

The Committee thanked the Avon Gorge and Downs Biodiversity Education Manager and colleagues for their great work on the Downs wildlife project education and community engagement programme.

There was a discussion around the planning application for Bristol Zoo and it was noted that the Committee should continue to communicate with them on future plans for the site.

**ACTION:** Chair to collate Committee's views on Bristol Zoo's planning application to be submitted as an official response from the Downs Committee.

Peter Rilett left the meeting at 12:14pm.

## 12 Events Report



The Events Officer introduced the item and highlighted key points as follows:

- Foodies Festival, Funderword and Comedy Garden had already taken place this year with the next events being the Born Free Exhibition and Bristol Pride in July.
- The already damaged water tower site was in bad condition following Foodies Festival and event organisers had address concerns and suggested improvements for the future.
- There had been 3 official complaints received through the council's system since the last report about events on the Downs which were all related to noise levels.
- Officers encouraged Committee Members to direct people to the councils' complaints webpage so issues can be addressed, and complaints are recorded.

### **13 Finance Update**

The Finance officer introduced the item and ran through the report which covered the outturn for 2021/2022, the budgeted income and expenditure and a high level summary.

Discussion points:

- There was a discussion around the deficit in the budget and it was noted that this was mostly due to legal costs relating to the parking legal case and ongoing Covid-19 related expenditure.
- Members asked why the budget for salaries was lower than the forecast outturn and were advised that this was because the council does not allow for a deficit budget.
- There was a discussion around opportunities for receiving sponsorship/grant funding for Downs projects.
- There was a discussion around governance and a Service Level Agreement as Members noted they were keen for the Committee to function efficiently and effectively.

The Chair thanked the Finance officer for producing a more detailed version on the finance report for the Committee.

**ACTION:** Report on the breakdown of Downs Committee finances for previous years to be produced ahead of the next Committee meeting.

### **14 Any Other Business**

An issue was raised around a local resident who had installed a private gravel driveway on what was thought to be Downs Committee owned land without permission. It was noted that the Council's legal team was looking into this, and Members suggested that an update be provided at the next committee meeting.

**ACTION:** Investigate the issue around a resident installing a private driveway that is thought to be on Downs Committee owned land and provide an update at the next Committee meeting.

### **15 Date of Next Meeting**





The next meeting will take place on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> September at City Hall.

Meeting ended at 12.35 pm

**CHAIR** \_\_\_\_\_



# Agenda Item 6

## ACTION TRACKER – FOR DOWNS COMMITTEE 19 September 2022

Date of Meeting	Action Description	Holding Action	Deadline for Completion	Action Taken
28 Jun	Report around the Committee's governance to be brought to the next Committee meeting on 19 <sup>th</sup> September.	POR	19 Sept	Complete – to be covered in agenda item 9.
28 Jun	Events team to look at ways to enhance the use of the Downs specifically for smaller events and report back to the Committee at its meeting on 14 <sup>th</sup> November.	SE	14 Nov	Work has begun on the report, and it is on track to be presented at the November meeting as planned.
28 Jun	Update on the planning application for the Sea Walls Café to be provided at the next Committee meeting.	POR	19 Sept	<p>The Downs Committee supports the development of the café pursuant to the renewed planning permission and the related consent under the Commons Act. The new building is essential to the continued operation of the Downs education programme as well as visitation by disabled and older people and anyone else who lives more than walking distance from the Downs.</p> <p>The next step is to obtain a derogation from the strict terms of the Downs Act to permit building outside the footprint of the present building, for which we have applied to the Secretary of State under section 5 (1) of the Localism Act. .</p> <p>If this route does not succeed, it would be necessary to pursue a private bill, which would be prohibitively expensive.</p>
28 Jun	Establish a Task & Finish Group to progress issues in section 4 of the Work Plan – Buildings / Assets / Infrastructure.	POR / PR	14 Nov	To be established in due course.
28 Jun	Raise issues around drifting on the Downs with the Police and Crime Commissioner. Information available on the matter to be sent to SS.	SS / BS	19 Sept	I have had a response from the PCC about this. It is a private email from him to me so not for publication, but I can offer a verbal summary at the meeting. SS.

28 Jun	Update to be provided on the finances relating to the two gas pipeline and structure works compounds on the Downs.	BS	19 Sept	<p>Standard fees paid by Wales and West Utilities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Licence administration and site inspection fee £250</li> <li>2) Occupation duration at open storage rate of £0.21 per m2 per week</li> <li>3) Open spaces disposal advert £1000</li> </ol> <p>If the stay over runs the stated date of exit a further invoice will be sent for £0.21 per m2 for any additional time</p>
28 Jun	Chair to collate Committee's views on Bristol Zoo's planning application to be submitted as an official response from the Downs Committee.	POR / ALL	19 Sept	To be discussed under agenda item 13.
28 Jun	Report on the breakdown of Downs Committee finances for previous years to be produced ahead of the next Committee meeting.	KJ	19 Sept	Complete - The Downs Committee Finance Report for Sept'22 includes a breakdown of prior years' expenditure for comparison
28 Jun	Investigate the issue around a resident installing a private driveway that is thought to be on Downs Committee owned land and provide an update at the next Committee meeting.	SS	19 Sept	This issue is currently with the BCC Property Services and Legal Services teams. I am expecting an update from Legal Services wc 5 <sup>th</sup> September. SS.

**Downs Committee  
Events & Finance Sub-Group Meeting Minutes  
31<sup>st</sup> Aug 2022**

**Members:**

David Freed (Chair)  
Cllr Steve Smith  
Cllr Jos Clark  
Peter Rillett  
Johnathan Baker  
Patrick Despard

**Officers:**

Kevin Jay – Finance Officer  
Ben Skuse – Grounds Supervisor  
Stefan Edwards – Events Officer  
Amy Rodwell – Democratic Services

**Apologies:**

Cllr Kye Dudd  
Cllr Katy Grant

**1. Minutes of previous meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

The Chair introduced the item and asked Members if they had any comments on the minutes of the previous meeting.

There was a discussion around outstanding actions from the previous meeting and the following points were noted:

- North Car Park lease – Action to be carried forwards. **ACTION: Democratic Services Officer to provide an update on the Lease on the North Car Park to members of the Sub-Group.**
- Charging for commercial operations on the Downs – The Downs supervisor provided a brief update on the work to date and the administration's position on this topic citywide. He advised that the Parks Planning and Development Advisor had more information on commercial operations and would seek an update ahead of the next meeting. **ACTION: Grounds Supervisor to request an update on charges for commercial operations on the Downs and report back to the Sub-Committee at the next meeting.**

**Resolved; That the minutes of the previous meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2022 be approved as a correct record.**

**2. Finance update**

The Finance Officer introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- The report shows the Downs forecast up to period 4 for the year 22/23.

- Additional columns had been added at the request of the Downs Committee to show the outturn for previous years, 20/21 and 21/22.
- Cleaning costs remain high.

#### Discussion points:

- There was a discussion around the high cleaning costs which were mostly as a result of having to pay staff overtime to work on weekends. The Finance Officer noted that there wasn't enough money in the budget to cover salaries for cleaning costs which had resulted in pressure on the budget.
- Members discussed the North Car Park and asked for more information on the charges for the Remainder of the lease. It was noted that there was already an action for the Democratic Services Officer to locate the car park lease so therefore, the Sub-Committee would subsequently have that information once shared.
- The Finance Officer noted that the totals relating to legal costs could be found in the report however, he was not able to report on legal officer time. This level of detail was hard to obtain as each officer was allocated multiple cases.
- There was a discussion around income relating to car parking charges and it was noted that Downs Committee colleagues would look at use of the North Car park including legal implications at the end of the Zoo's lease as part of a possible Task & Finish Group on section 4 of the Work Plan. It was noted that car parking charges apply at Ashton Court and Members asked for more information around the finances for this site. **ACTION: Grounds Supervisor to share the financial information relating parking charges at Ashton Court with the Sub-Committee.**
- It was noted that the possible income that could be generated from the car parking charges would depend on the access to parking on the nearby roads.
- Members discussed accessibility of the route from the car park to the Downs.
- There was a discussion around vehicle encampments and related policies as this was a regular occurrence on the Downs. It was noted that this was a criminal offence and people would usually move on when trespassing notices were issued.

### 3. Events update

The Events Officer introduced the report and gave a brief overview. Discussion points as follows:

- Members were provided with an update on the incident at the Adventure Cinema involving antisocial behaviour which resulted in the event organisers cancelling the remaining screenings.
- Event organisers advised at the event debrief that they hadn't contacted the Police as they thought their presence would make things worse visibly. Also, they thought they could handle the situation as antisocial behaviour had occurred at a previous location and was under control.
- It was noted that Forwards Festival had been invoiced and were due to pay ahead of the event.
- The Sub-Committee noted that the timely collection of funds for events was important and urged that event organisers are chased if they have not paid before the commencement of their events.
- It was noted that one of the Born Free Exhibition items had been stolen which organisers were concerned about.

- It was noted that Pride went well although one of the TV screens needed to be moved which was noted for next year.
- There was a discussion around the Suicide Prevention Charity and Members raised the need to check if volunteers are qualified to give advice.
- It was noted that Foodies Festival went well although there was some confusion around the site location when sorting the initial plans.

#### **4. Maintenance update**

The Grounds Supervisor gave a brief overview and advised that this report is usually presented at the Downs Committee public meetings where more detail would be provided.

#### **5. AOB**

An updated was provided on the issue around the local resident who had installed a private gravel driveway on what was thought to be Downs Committee owned land without permission. It was noted that this was currently being reviewed by the Property Team within Legal Services and once the ownership had been established, there would be a recommendation from the Sub-Committee to the Downs Committee to agree the instruction of Legal Services to resolve.

The Chair noted that a citizen had asked the Downs Committee if the funds raised from the sale of their book that had recently launched to go towards the improvement of the Stoke Road Toilets, which was to be discussed at the next Downs Committee meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

**Close 3:35pm**

## Downs Governance – Proposals

### *Downs Vision*

***An open downland that is protected forever for the wellbeing and enjoyment of the people of Bristol.***

#### **1) Summary**

This document outlines potential changes to the governance of the Downs Committee. The changes have been proposed following the public and stakeholder group engagement exercises that took place earlier this year. Suggestions and comments arising from these exercises together with proposals made by the Committee itself form the basis of these proposals which have also been the subject of early discussions with Bristol City Council (BCC).

The Downs Committee are asked to agree the seven proposals contained in this paper which if agreed will then become the basis for more detailed work by each of the stakeholders, progress will then be reported back to the Downs Committee at its subsequent meetings.

#### **2) Background**

##### **2.i) Current arrangements**

- The Committee is made up of the Lord Mayor (Chair) and six councillors together with the Master of the Society of Merchant Venturers (SMV) (Vice Chair) and six of its members.
- The Councillors are allocated by their parties, so there tends to be a spread of political views.
- There is no specified member tenure but at least two members from the Councillors and two members of the Society of Merchant Venturers (SMV) must stand down each year.
- The Lord Mayor serves a term of one year running from May and is the Chair of the Committee.
- The Master of SMV serves a term of one year running from November and is the Deputy Chair.

##### **2.ii) Summary of the Work to Date.**

In 2021 the Downs Committee agreed to set up a Governance Task and Finish Group (GTFG) to review the principles, structures, and processes under which the Committee works. The Group is not a decision-making body, and its recommendations go to the Downs Committee for discussion and agreement.

Membership of the GTFG is listed in Appendix 1.

The Group held an open meeting with a range of stakeholders in October 2021 and from this developed a set of draft Principles and a draft Work Plan. These were published for public engagement in April 2022 and over 1800 responses were received. The responses were analysed, summarised, and presented in a Report to the Downs Committee at an Extraordinary Meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2022. At this meeting a further set of Principles and a Work Plan were presented, having been amended in the light of the engagement exercise. These were discussed by the Committee and a final set of both documents adopted by the Downs Committee at that meeting. (The agreed Principles and Workplan are contained in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 respectively of this document.)

In addition to the main questionnaire, there was a supplementary survey regarding governance of the Downs which sought views on some wider questions regarding the structure, membership, and operation of the Downs Committee. The survey presented information about the current structure and the requirements of

the Downs Act 1861. The Committee's stated intention going into this engagement exercise was to aim to improve transparency and effectiveness without changing the 1861 Act. The survey results demonstrated clear support for the Committee's stance in this respect. (838 respondents out of 964). The recommendations in this paper are therefore made in this context. There are, however, several governance issues that require further consideration and these are outlined in Section 5 of the Work Plan (Appendix 2). In summary and in reverse order, these are: an examination of alternative governance structures (5.3), engagement with the public (5.2) and strengthening the executive support to the Committee (5.1) This paper goes on to put forward suggestions as to how these issues could be addressed within the context of the Downs Act.

### **3) Governance Proposals**

This section of the paper considers alternative governance structures but also comments on how existing processes can be adapted, to reinforce the spirit and intention behind the Downs Principles.

#### **3i) Alternative Governance Structures**

- a) One option considered by the GTFG was for the two landowners, namely BCC and the Society of Merchant Venturers (SMV), to create a charitable vehicle that sat below the Downs Committee which had accountability for the management of the Downs. On closer examination, it was found that the Downs Act would almost certainly not permit such delegation. In addition, there would need to be a guarantee from BCC that the costs of running the Downs would continue to be underwritten, as, if this was not in place the Trustees might find themselves liable for trading whilst insolvent. Trustees would need to know that the funding streams were there to deliver the management of the Downs; that any funds raised would be spent in consultation with the Downs Committee; and that funds passed to BCC to offset the costs of running the Downs would be guaranteed only to be used for this purpose. As a rule, funds cannot be passed to a non-charity unless there is a commitment that the funds will only be used for the objectives of the charity.
- b) Another option that had been put forward was for one or both of the parties to gift their part of the Downs either to each other or to a charity. This, however, would once again result in a potential termination of the Downs Act and run the risk of crucial beneficial aspects of the Act being up for renegotiation. The Act gives vital protection to the Downs by ensuring it remains, in perpetuity, as open downland for the enjoyment and recreation of the people of Bristol. Having just run a comprehensive engagement exercise where most respondents did not wish to abandon the Downs Act it would seem perverse to ignore a response of this magnitude.
- c) There is, however, a potential option that could ameliorate some of the criticisms of the Downs Act and in turn the Committee. That the proposed way forward could result in easier access to sources of funding from third parties is an additional advantage. The Downs Committee is not a legal personality and does not possess a bank account – this means that receiving funds from external sources is problematic, Option C provides a potential solution.

It is helpful to look at Figure 1 when considering these proposals. Figure 1 is a schematic diagram illustrating the potential future governance of the Downs Committee.

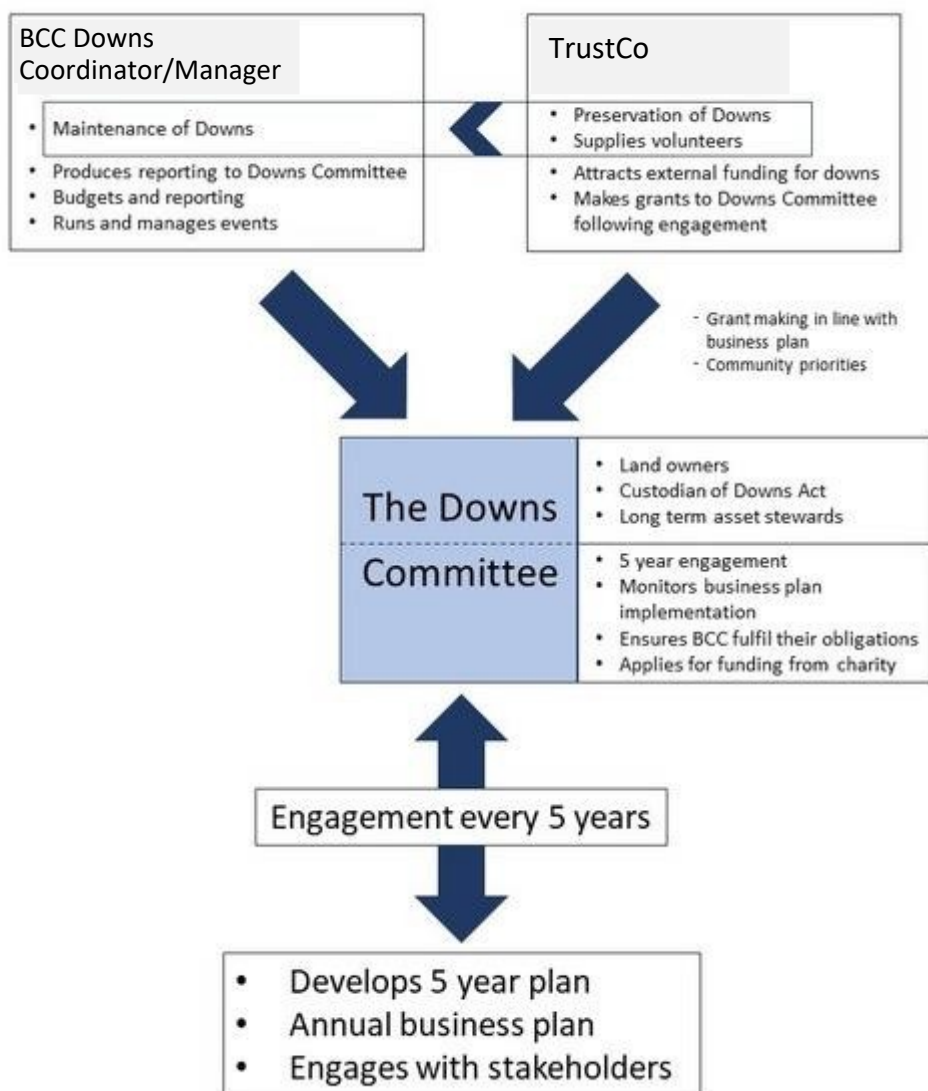


## The Downs Governance Option C) Figure 1

### Proposal

Key points to note:

- The Downs Committee remains intact as the custodian of the Downs and there is no delegation of statutory powers.
- The Downs Committee develops a five-year strategy including engagement with stakeholders and the public
- Bristol City Council (BCC) is accountable for the executive management of the Downs and SMV and Councillors have a more non-executive position providing oversight through members of the Downs Committee.



- A separate body (TrustCo) is created or derived either from an existing organisation or from a newly created one. TrustCo can then apply for and attract funding to support the preservation of the Downs and deliver the activities and amenities identified in the five-year plan. TrustCo could be a charity or be a body with the potential to develop into a charity.
- TrustCo could also become an additional conduit for engagement with the wider community and stakeholder groups.

- In addition to its own priorities, TrustCo could coordinate funding specific projects identified in the workplan external funding could be required. The role of TrustCo would then become a grant maker to the Downs Committee.
- The organisation could provide a source of volunteers to work with the BCC Downs Coordinator/Manager and run educational programmes – these are important, as the engagement exercise identified conservation and education as important aspects of the Downs.
- To facilitate this a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would need to be created between BCC and SMV (as the two landowners), together with one between the Downs Committee and TrustCo.
- It will be important if this proposal is adopted for finance and operational protocols to be in place between the Downs Committee and BCC and for appropriate standing orders to be put in place.

#### ***Recommendation 1***

***The Committee are invited to consider adoption of option C as a development of the governance arrangements of the Downs Committee.***

Option C – potential additional development.

Currently there is no easily identifiable charity that could partner with the Downs Committee although there are charities that are important stakeholders. Setting up such an organisation from scratch would take significant resources and time and this, in turn would mean progress on adoption of the Downs Principles and implementation of the Work Plan would be hampered. The Committee should consider whether an organisation is already in existence that fits with many of the accountabilities of TrustCo and that could have the potential for a more formal partnership with the Downs Committee.

Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge (FODAG) has a long history of working constructively with the Downs Committee and BCC, they have connections with similar groups and have provided services to the Downs in respect of conservation and education. Appendix 5 contains further information on FODAG taken from the organisation's website.

#### ***Recommendation 2***

***Should the Committee decide to agree with Recommendation 1 it is recommended that the GTFG begin discussions with FODAG as a partner organisation to the Downs Committee – detailed proposals will be brought back to the Downs Committee.***

### 3 ii) Other Governance Issues

#### a) *Events and Finance Committee and Task and Finish groups*

The Work Plan covers the key tasks of the Events and Finance Subgroup - the notes from this subgroup being reported as part of the business of the Downs Committee. Other income generating projects have been delegated to a series of Task and Finish groups which report back to the Downs Committee for approval. It will be important that a '**project reporting approach**' (in the form of written reports) is adopted for these Task and Finish groups so that their membership and project milestones are transparent and can be easily monitored by the Downs Committee and the public.

(Relevant areas of the work plan can be found in Section 2 – Events, Section 3 - Income Diversification and Section 4 - Building Assets and Infrastructure.

#### **Recommendation 3**

***The Events and Finance Subgroup and the Task and Finish Groups should operate as described above.***

### 3iii) Continuity and Succession Planning

There are concerns that the governance of the Downs Committee has been hampered by a lack of continuity both in leadership and membership. Conversely, there have been concerns regarding individuals remaining on the Committee for too long a period.

There are only six months in each year where the Chair (Lord Mayor) and the Deputy Chair (Master SMV) are the same individuals. The Lord Mayor changes in May and the Master of SMV changes in November. The timing of both these events is driven by circumstances outside of the Downs Committee and it is unlikely these arrangements will be changed. It is the Downs Act that drives the selection of the individuals to occupy these roles.

The creation of the Downs Principles and the Work Plan will provide an agreed set of guidelines for the operation of the Downs Committee, which to a large extent will enhance continuity.

Continuity can also be provided if all parties select Downs Committee members with this in mind. This may be harder to achieve in respect of the Councillors, as their selection is driven by political balance, however, the decision to have the current Lord Mayor together with her predecessor on the Downs Committee was a helpful one, particularly given the focus on implementing actions following the recent engagement exercise.

On its part SMV has ensured that currently four of the key leadership roles in SMV have been Downs Committee members. SMV will look to maintain this continuity with at least three of the four key SMV leadership roles on the Committee. Specifically:

- Master of the day plus at least two of the following role holders:
- Senior Warden (potential next Master)
- Junior Warden (potential next Senior Warden)
- First Assistant (prior year's Master)

This will provide unprecedented levels of continuity. Currently all four of these post holders are on the Downs Committee ensuring there is commitment, understanding and follow through on the work currently being led by the current Lord Mayor and her predecessor.

The selection of Committee members from SMV will also attempt to balance out nominations from those who live or work in Bristol, and careful consideration will be given to relevant skills sets and these will be made clear to the Committee at the time of nomination.

***Recommendation 4***

- ***That both the Councillors and SMV look to ensure there is continuity in membership wherever possible.***
- ***That the proposed approach to membership by SMV is noted***
- ***That Councillors take a cross party approach to ensure leadership of the committee is as seamless as possible***

3iv) Committee Tenure

There has been a reasonable amount of churn on the Downs Committee which means that any sort of organisation memory can be compromised. It also places a responsibility on newer members to 'get up to speed' as soon as possible.

Currently there are no limits on an individual term of office and occasionally individuals have served for a significant length of time. Good governance means that there should be a limit on tenure for serving on the committee. It is proposed that individuals would typically not serve more than six years but on an exceptional basis (and subject to agreement from the whole committee) an individual could serve up to nine years. In such circumstances, the committee would need to articulate why this individual should be an exception. In practice individuals are re-elected every year (which goes beyond the requirements of most codes of governance), and two members have to stand down each year so in reality extended tenure would not normally be a problem.

***Recommendation 5***

***Recommended terms of office should be adopted, and any deviation should be on a 'comply or explain' basis.***

**4) Engagement of Stakeholders and the Public**

The engagement with stakeholders and members of the public will be much improved by the Downs Committee Principles and the Work Plan. These will guide the work of the Committee and will facilitate a more transparent agenda and decision-making process. Should the governance proposals outlined earlier in this document be adopted, then they too will improve levels of engagement particularly through the partnership with TrustCo.

One area that is working less well is the Public Forum. The Public Forum part of the Downs Committee Agenda allows members of the public and special interest groups to put forward representations to the Downs Committee. These representations are listened to but not commented on by the Committee - a factor that is regarded as uncomfortable and unsatisfactory by both those making representations and those receiving them. 5.2 of the Work Plan states that the Downs Committee will delegate finding a solution to this issue to a small task and finish group with procedure rules agreed by the end of 2022.

In the interim it is proposed that a more informal approach to the Public Forum is adopted, with the Chair having the discretion to engage with those coming forward to make representations and ask questions. This will take place as a pilot and be used to inform the work of the small task and finish group.

***Recommendation 6***

***To adopt a more informal approach to the Public Forum on a trial basis.***

## **5) Downs Coordination Role Proposal**

The Work Plan highlights the need to consider strengthening the executive support to the Downs Committee and in particular the Lord Mayor as Chair. Following the engagement exercise and discussions within the GTFG this paper is proposing a new position for coordination of the various Downs activities on behalf of the Downs Committee.

The Downs Committee is supported by a variety of departments within Bristol City Council however there is no overall executive coordination role to coordinate their work. This can result in members of the Downs Committee becoming too involved in the day-to-day running of the Downs.

There is also no natural lead to drive forward projects and fund-raising activities (that go beyond the normal running of events) and once again this can mean that significant burden falls on individual members of the Committee. A lead coordination role for the Downs could become an important link between the Lord Mayor, the Committee, BCC and TrustCo. The role needs to be self-financing as there is no additional budget to fund it. A review of progress would take place within 6 months of the post being filled, when the benefits and costs of the post can be assessed. It is proposed that the post is filled via a secondment from BCC to facilitate both an early commencement and termination of the role if that proves necessary.

It is often difficult for BCC departments and other agencies to interact with the Downs Committee and to establish clear implementation plans for Council led activities - this role could facilitate this involvement with the Downs Committee.

Finally, the occupation of the role of Lord Mayor is busy and short lived, and the proposed executive Coordinator role could provide support to the Lord Mayor as Chair of the Downs Committee and ensure some much-needed continuity for the Committee itself.

It is anticipated that the role will be employed by BCC. There will however be several issues that will require resolution to create and fill the role, for example its accountabilities, reporting relationships and funding. At this stage the Committee is being asked to approve the creation of such a role in principle. A draft role profile is contained within Appendix 6 of this paper, but this should be regarded as illustrative and further work to

define the role will be required, along with work to finalise finance and operational protocols and related Standing Orders. The Committee is also being asked to approve that the GTFG be charged with finding answers to key outstanding issues outlined above.

***Recommendation 7***

***The Committee is asked to approve the concept of the Downs Coordinator role and to ask the GTFG to work with BCC to bring the role to fruition.***

**6) Conclusions**

The GTFG ran an engagement exercise earlier this year the results of which were used to create the Downs Principles and a one-year Work Plan. This paper contains a series of seven recommendations to the Downs Committee to progress this work to the next stage, it also outlines the next steps required to bring these next stages to fruition.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Downs Governance Task and Finish Group Membership (GTFG)**

Steve Smith (former Chair)

Paula O'Rourke (Chair as Lord Mayor)

Paul Goggins (now stood down)

Jonathon Baker

Gillian Camm (now stood down, replaced by Michael Bothamley)

Peter Rilett

## Appendix 2

### Downs Committee Principles

Adopted by the Downs Committee 20th May 2022

#### Purpose

This document is intended to set out the high-level principles by which the Downs Committee manages the Downs for the people of Bristol. This is not a detailed work plan and is not intended to replace the role of the Committee in making individual decisions. The purpose of this document is:

- To provide a framework of agreed principles within which officers can work and the Downs Committee can make decisions; and
- To provide some clarity and certainty to stakeholders and the public about how the Downs is managed.

#### Vision

An open downland that is protected forever for the wellbeing and enjoyment of the people of Bristol.

#### Background

The Downs consists of 412 acres of common land in north Bristol. It is governed under an act of Parliament dating from 1861 when the two landowners (the City Council and the Society of Merchant Venturers) combined their land to create an open space for the people of Bristol. The Act establishes the Downs Committee to manage and maintain the Downs. This is made up of equal numbers of representatives from both landowners. The Act places some constraints on how the committee works, which could only be changed by a new act of parliament, such as the fact that it must be chaired by the Lord Mayor of Bristol. The committee is an independent body, not part of the Council or of the Merchant Venturers.

#### Principles

**Principle 1 – Space for recreation** – Under the Downs Act 1861 the Downs is a “place of public resort and recreation” for all of the people of Bristol. This includes exercise, social activities and use for health and wellbeing. The Downs Committee will always give great weight to this fundamental role in its decision making.

**Principle 2 – Space for nature conservation** – The Downs also has a critical role as an open green space for nature conservation, clean air and education in the context of declared climate and ecological emergencies. The Downs Committee will always give great weight to this role in decision making.

**Principle 3 – Funding** – The Downs Act places a responsibility on Bristol City Council to provide funding for the maintenance of the Downs and the Council accepts this role within reasonable limits. However, the ambition of the Downs Committee is to support Bristol City Council in saving public money by raising revenue to fund the maintenance of the Downs. Bristol City Council may act as custodian of Downs funds, but these will always be ring-fenced under the management of the Downs Committee (the Committee should make detailed arrangements with the Council regarding the management of Downs funds). The Committee will seek to raise funds from as many diverse sources as possible which are compatible with these principles and will engage with stakeholders in developing new income sources.

**Principle 4 – Events** – Events held on the Downs are an important part of its fundamental recreational purpose as well as a way of generating funds. The Downs Committee will organise an annual programme of events which fulfils these aims and which provides for as wide an audience as possible, including small and culturally diverse events. This must always be balanced with the other fundamental purpose of conservation.



It must also recognise that temporarily restricting access to parts of the Downs for events has an impact upon other recreational uses. Events can also cause disruption to neighbours and other users of the space. The committee will always be mindful of these impacts when arranging the events programme, and in particular must ensure that the significant majority of the Downs remains fully accessible to the public for a significant majority of the time.

The Downs Committee works with Bristol City Council's licencing and site permissions teams to manage the process of authorising events on the Downs.

**Principle 5 – Buildings and infrastructure** – The Downs Committee will not sanction any development which fundamentally alters the character of the Downs as an open green space, or which harms the fundamental objectives described here. The Downs is protected from development under the Downs Act and general planning law and nothing in this document changes or outweighs those statutory protections.

Public highways on the Downs are the responsibility of the Highways Authority (Bristol City Council). The Downs Committee has no jurisdiction over them.

There are existing buildings and other infrastructure (paths, sports and play equipment etc) on the Downs, and developments will focus primarily on repairing, updating or where necessary replacing these existing items in a way which is compatible with these principles. Any proposal will be resisted unless there is a strong case that it supports the principles.

**Principle 6 – Openness and involvement** – the management of the Downs should be as open and transparent as possible. Under the Downs Act the responsibility and authority for decision-making rests ultimately with the Downs Committee. The committee will keep its practices and structures under review to ensure that stakeholders (i.e. those who live, work, or operate on and around the Downs) and the wider public have the best opportunities to understand, contribute to and challenge the decision-making process. Decisions will be taken in public unless there are legal or commercial reasons for information to be withheld.

Meeting procedures will provide clarity over the management of any real or perceived conflicts of interest.

## Appendix 3

### Downs Committee Work Plan 2022-23

Adopted by the Downs Committee 20<sup>th</sup> May 2022

No.	Activity	Responsible person / body	Timing	Budget Implication
<b>1</b>	<b>Ongoing activities / business as usual</b>			
1.1	Downs maintenance activities	BCC Parks (Downs Supervisor) reporting to DC	Ongoing annual programme of work	Ongoing revenue funding through Downs budget – delegation / budget authority to be reviewed
1.2	Education programme	Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project (Avon Gorge & Downs Biodiversity Education Manager and Avon Gorge & Downs Learning and Engagement Officer) reporting to DC	Ongoing annual programme of work	Ongoing revenue funding through Downs budget
1.3	Publish and keep up to date a conservation plan including goals and specific activities related to conservation of the Downs natural environment, and safeguards for managing the impact of events and other Downs uses on the environment.	BCC Officers with appropriate expert input (including from the Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project) reporting to DC	Initial publication end March 2023, reviewed annually	Ongoing revenue funding through Downs budget
1.4	Review the powers available to the committee to enforce existing byelaws and the resources required to do so effectively for consideration in future budget cycles.	T&F group with BCC legal advice reporting to full DC.	End March 2023	Possible implications for future revenue budgets if adopted

No.	Activity	Responsible person / body	Timing	Budget Implication
<b>2</b>	<b>Events</b>			
2.1	Approve an annual programme of events taking into account agreed principles and feedback from previous events. Information about planned events should be published as openly and quickly as possible.	E&F sub-committee working with BCC events / licencing team	Regular review of annual programme	Revenue generation for Downs budget
2.2	Consider opportunities for longer term arrangement with event organisers, where compatible with agreed principles	E&F sub-committee working with BCC events / licencing team	Recommendation by end 2022 – ongoing review of opportunities	Revenue generation for Downs budget
2.3	Review processes to make it easier for people to host smaller community events on the Downs.	BCC Officers – events teams	Report to DC by end 2022	n/a
<b>3</b>	<b>Income diversification &amp; finance</b>			
3.1	Consider opportunities for corporate / individual sponsorship programmes	T&F group to include relevant BCC officers, report back to DC	Recommendation by end 2022 – ongoing review of opportunities	Revenue generation for Downs budget
3.2	Review BCC programme for charging commercial operator in parks and consider how it should apply to the Downs	T&F group to include relevant BCC officers, report back to DC. Sue Long is BCC officer responsible.	To align with BCC parks programme	Revenue generation for Downs budget
3.3	Review suggestions for alternative commercial operations on the Downs to generate new income – all to be compatible to agreed principles	T&F group to include relevant BCC officers, report back to DC	Recommendation by end 2022 – ongoing review of opportunities	Revenue generation for Downs budget

No.	Activity	Responsible person / body	Timing	Budget Implication
3.4	Re-base Downs budget to ensure that it accurately reflects the costs of maintaining the Downs and realistically forecasts income	BCC Finance reporting to E&F sub-committee	To present realistic budget for FY 2023/24	
3.5	Clarify protocols for management of Downs funds by BCC, including scheme of delegation / authority and process for sign-off of business plans for capital works	E&F sub-committee working with BCC finance / senior execs – final sign-off by DC	Agreed protocol ready to apply for FY 2023/24	
<b>4</b>	<b>Buildings / Assets / Infrastructure</b>			
4.1	Clarify consents required to carry out development works on existing sites	T&F group to include relevant BCC officers, report back to DC	ASAP	Impacts upon various capital projects – potential major cost if new legislation required
4.2	Toilet / café site at Sea Walls – progress funding and develop a funded plan for the development (subject to resolution of 4.1 above)	T&F group to include relevant BCC officers, report back to DC	ASAP subject to resolution of 4.1 above	Requires capital funding – should deliver revenue savings / income - tbc
4.3	Develop options appraisal and business case for future of the North Car Park following zoo closure in 2023	T&F group to include relevant BCC officers, report back to DC	ASAP	May require capital funding – aim is to replace some or all of the revenue lost from zoo parking
4.4	Re-development of changing rooms – develop a funded plan for the development (subject to resolution of 4.1 above)	T&F group to include relevant BCC officers, report back to DC	To follow 4.3 above	Requires capital funding – should deliver revenue savings / income - tbc
4.5	Develop options appraisal and business case(s) for infrastructure items to support events or to minimise the impact of events on the Downs (may link to 2.2 above)	T&F group to include relevant BCC officers, report back to DC	ASAP	May require capital funding – should be linked to sustained / improved events revenue
4.6	Continue to support the Council's executive leadership in a review of parking regulations around the Downs.	Downs Committee	Dependent upon BCC actions	n/a

No.	Activity	Responsible person / body	Timing	Budget Implication
5	<b>Governance and Accountability</b>			
5.1	Consider options to strengthen executive leadership of the Downs	Chair / Vice-Chair working with BCC to make recommendations to full committee	ASAP	Potential revenue implications to be taken into account depending upon recommended options
5.2	Review committee procedure rules and practices to ensure meaningful opportunities for stakeholders and members of the public to interact, understand and challenge decision making (compatible with the Downs Act and agreed principles). This should include regular engagement opportunities for stakeholders. This should include a particular focus on communication with a broad range of Bristol citizens, both in terms of geography and demographics.	Downs committee (may delegate to a working group) working with BCC Dem Services support – final rules to be signed off by DC	Agree updated procedure rules by end 2022	n/a
5.3	Develop options appraisal and recommendations for alternative governance structure(s) which are compatible with the Downs Act and agreed principles. Consult with stakeholders before making any proposed change.	Downs committee (may delegate to a working group) – final rules to be signed off by DC	Recommendations to DC by end 2022	Potential revenue implications to be taken into account depending upon recommended options

## Appendix 4

### Downs Committee potential MOUs

#### The Downs Memorandum of Understanding

##### 1. BCC and SMV - proposed items for MOU re the management of the Downs BCC and SMV

Both bodies will continue to provide members of the Downs Committee together to form the strategy for the Downs:

- Produce 5 year business plan
- Produce annual business plan
- Engage with stakeholders in the Downs
- Monitor and hold BCC to account for the implementation of the strategy

#### BCC

Implement the strategy of the Downs Committee and be responsible for:

- Maintenance of the Downs
- Organising/licensing events on the Downs
- Setting tariffs for use of the Downs by third parties
- Produce a budget for operating the Downs for approval by the Downs Committee
- Implement the budget and keep the Downs Committee updated on variations
- Report to the Downs Committee on a regular basis on how the implementation of strategy is progressing
- Provide the staff function for the running of the Downs (e.g., legal and secretariat)
- Settle any annual shortfall in the costs of running the Downs

#### SMV

- Co-operate with BCC in relation to any events or activities on Clifton Down to ensure that all income generated goes to BCC
- Take such steps as necessary in relation to Clifton Down to enable BCC to implement the business plans set by the Downs Committee

##### 2. Downs Committee and TrustCo - proposed items for MOUs

#### Downs Committee

- Will continue to exercise its statutory duties under the Clifton & Durdham Downs (Bristol) Act 1861 for the management of the Downs and to exercise the powers granted to them under the Act
- Will develop a 5-year Strategy for Clifton Downs following consultation with TrustCo and, through TrustCo, all other major stakeholders
- Will agree a three-year programme of works with TrustCo, informed by TrustCo's consultation responses and what is in the best interests of the Downs, and will set out the levels of funding that may be required to deliver each programme
- Will recognise TrustCo as the key/principal community liaison group, and that TrustCo should meet with the Downs Committee bi-annually to raise issues and concerns on behalf of members of TrustCo and the wider stakeholder community
- Will seek the support of TrustCo in any consultation exercise that is required with local groups and stakeholders

#### TrustCo

- Will agree to become the principal liaison group for all those local parties with an interest in the

Downs, for the benefit of the Downs (this will be in addition to the formal consultation run by the Downs Committee)

- Will establish a mechanism for consulting with all local residents groups, and other interested stakeholders, to ensure that it can represent the views of all local residents and stakeholders
- Will raise concerns of local groups and individuals at the bi-annual meetings
- Will provide comments on the 5-year strategic plan having consulted with all stakeholders
- Will comment on the business plan for the following year and raise issues or areas of concern in good time
- Will consider becoming an independent registered charity to enable it to fundraise in a tax efficient manner
- Will ensure that the governance structure of any new charitable entity is designed to ensure that TrustCo is a representative and accountable organisation
- Will establish a fundraising strategy to raise funds from supporters of the Downs to fund new projects on the Downs (outside of business-as-usual activity)
- Will execute the fundraising strategy, with funds being raised and paid on a restricted basis to BCC for specific purposes
- Will continue to provide volunteers to support the maintenance and improvements on the Downs

## Appendix 5

Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge (FODAG)

Website extract:

*Our aims are: To monitor, work with and influence the Downs Committee, Bristol City Council and all those involved in the management, maintenance and improvement of the Gorge and Downs. To protect and enhance the Downs and the Gorge for the benefit both of all its users and its wildlife. To consult with, and represent, the views and aspirations of all users. Activities: Restoration projects, conservation and education. We run a full programme of talks, walks and events as well as volunteer programmes such as wildlife monitoring and deep litter clean-ups. Our quarterly newsletter features reports on our activities, articles to inform, provoke and entertain as well as views from members*

## Appendix 6



## **Role Profile: Downs Executive Coordinator**

### **Job Purpose:**

Support the Lord Mayor and the Downs Committee to fulfil the one year Work Plan in line with the Downs Principles by coordinating the various BCC executive teams and establishing constructive relationships with external stakeholders especially TrustCo.

### **Accountabilities**

- Work with the Downs Committee to ensure that the appropriate engagement takes place with diverse and relevant stakeholder groups to contribute to the formulation of the 5 year plan for the Downs.
- Work with the executive and Downs Committee Members to develop a one-year plan which subsequently forms the agenda of the Downs Committee Members for the year ahead.
- Liaise with the City Council executive officers to bring forward plans to the Downs Committee for recreation, education and conservation activities accompanied by associated planning, financial, consultation and legal ramifications.
- Work with TrustCo and Council Officers to create a fund-raising plan to generate monies to develop facilities in line with the 5-year plan. Apply to TrustCo for grants and funding for one off projects.
- Work with the various executive leads to ensure that a joined-up approach is adopted and that the plans are prepared for discussion at the Downs Committee meetings.
- Where required hold meetings with key stakeholders and community groups to gain feedback regarding the implementation of the Downs Committee plans.
- Work with other Council departments to ensure that their priorities and plans are supported by the Downs Committee and implemented effectively.
- Present with members of the executive teams at each Downs Committee Meeting and ensure timely implementation of the plans

## **Downs Management Report – Downs Committee 19<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

**Ben Skuse, Area Parks Supervisor**

2 heatwave periods accompanied by little to no rainfall saw the Downs change from green to brown very quickly after June's meeting.

Throughout these periods duties continued largely as normal, albeit at times the team adjusted their working hours starting earlier and finishing earlier to escape the hottest part of the day. Grass growth during this time virtually stopped.

Since the last meeting we have had 25 brass Lion sculptures put on the Downs at Sea Walls. 24 now, as unfortunately one was stolen. Also, disappointingly one of our events, Adventure Cinema had to be cancelled due to safety concerns relating to nearby travellers. We have had 2 occasions where travellers have accessed the Downs since the June meeting. On both occasions the team worked hard to clear up the site as soon as the travellers departed.

Members who visit the Downs regularly may notice that several visible gaps in both tree lines and canopy cover have appeared recently. This is the result of the beginning of widescale removal of the diseased Ash trees from the Downs. This work was carried out by the citywide tree contractors. Where gaps are on tree lines and avenues replacement spots have been put online for members of the public to sponsor trees.

We have had a successful hay cut which we had to bring forward due to the perceived risk of fires. During the hot period we had 2 situations whereby grass fires were set and the fire brigade had to attend. One of which was on the Sea Walls and within the site plan for Forwards. Thankfully the ground was not badly damaged, and we were able to sort it out satisfactorily before Forwards arrival.

As ever in August the main job is to re mark onto the ground our 25 football pitches for the upcoming BUSU and BDL seasons, commencing on Sept 10<sup>th</sup>.

As we move back to Autumn, we'll be continuing to carry out works as defined in the Downs scrub management plan for our 8<sup>th</sup> year.

Events still to come:

Bristol University student welcome fair

Circus Montini

## Downs Committee - 19th September 2022

### Events Update

#### 1. Events that have taken place since last Downs Committee

Pride, Adventure Cinema and Forwards have all taken place on the Downs since my last update. The Born Free Exhibition is still running until early October.

##### Pride

This year's Pride event was a huge success, making a welcome return. The event was well managed, especially given the high temperatures over the weekend. The event felt very inclusive, and the atmosphere felt safe for families alongside those partying.

##### Adventure Cinema

There was an incident at Adventure Cinema, which led to the event being cancelled. The organisers felt they were unable to continue with the event, as they couldn't guarantee the safety of their staff or the public, so cancelled the remaining shows for the weekend.

##### Forwards

Forwards was well received, and we are happy it was well run, pending a full debrief with SAGE. We have received a small number of complaints relating to noise and parking issues.

#### 2. Upcoming Events – 2022

The following events have expressed their intension to return to the Downs in 2022 (subject to site permissions). Note: these are the dates the events are 'live' there will be build and break period either side of each event. A provisional calendar of proposed events for 2023 will be presented at the next meeting.

July	August	September	October
		Student Union event 23 <sup>rd</sup> - 24 <sup>th</sup> September	
		Circus 27 <sup>th</sup> September – 16 <sup>th</sup> October	

#### 3. Complaints relating to events on the downs

There have been nine new complaints through the official council complaints system relating to events on the downs since my last report. One complaint was about Pride and was related to traffic issues. Eight complaints were about Forwards, of which seven were related to noise and one as related to parking issues. We continue to be mindful of resident feedback when planning events on the downs.



## Downs Committee Financial Report

### 1. Forecast Report for 2022-23

- 1.1 The report provides a **forecast** of the financial performance of the Downs for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.
- 1.2 The budgeted and actual income and expenditure up to period 4, April to July 2022, has been analysed and projections have been made resulting in some potential variances.
- 1.3 A summary of the forecasted income and expenditure for 2022-23 and the prior year comparators, can be seen in Table 1.

TABLE 1 - Overall Income and Expenditure Summary

	Full Year Budget £	2022/23 Forecast Outturn (P4 - Jul22) £	Variance £	Notes	2021/22 Outturn £	2020/21 Outturn £
<b>Income</b>						
Total Income	360,400	351,050	(9,350)	Deficit	307,020	218,038
<b>Expenditure</b>						
Total Expenditure	(360,400)	(437,125)	(76,725)	Overspend	(611,996)	(456,028)
<b>Transfer from Reserves</b>	0	0	0	All reserves are exhausted	97,680	237,990
<b>FINAL NET OUTTURN</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(86,075)</b>	<b>(86,075)</b>	Representing Downs generated net surplus/(deficit)	<b>(207,295)</b>	<b>0</b>

- 1.4 Income is currently forecast to make small deficit of (£9k), expenditure is forecast to overspend by (£77k), resulting in a net deficit of (£86k). Reserve funding has been exhausted.
- 1.5 The forecast deficit has occurred from the late cancellation of an event, the increased demand placed on the Downs from users, requiring out of hours working and increased cleaning.
- 1.6 Consideration is required regarding controlling measures to be implemented, to mitigate the pressures and reduce the deficit.
- 1.7 Further information and explanations can be seen in Table 2.

TABLE 2 - Income and Expenditure Analysis

	Full Year Budget £	2022/23 Forecast Outturn (P4 - Jul22) £	Variance £	Notes	2021/22 Outturn £	2020/21 Outturn £
<b>Income</b>						
Fees - Events	250,650	241,300	9,350	Cancelled event	211,634	49,351
Fees - Licensing & Rents	104,750	104,750	0		82,060	145,891
Fees- Other	5,000	5,000	0		13,327	22,796
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>360,400</b>	<b>351,050</b>	<b>9,350</b>	<b>Deficit</b>	<b>307,020</b>	<b>218,038</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>						
<b>Employees</b>	<b>(205,060)</b>	<b>(255,355)</b>	<b>(50,295)</b>	Additional Gardner post, pay award and higher overtime	<b>(258,171)</b>	<b>(197,642)</b>
<b>Premises</b>	<b>(31,240)</b>	<b>(55,170)</b>	<b>(23,930)</b>		<b>(62,798)</b>	<b>(54,460)</b>
<i>* Planned R&amp;M</i>	(2,400)	(2,400)	0	Rock face Inspection	(2,321)	0
<i>* Buildings R&amp;M</i>	(11,300)	(13,700)	(2,400)	Downs compound, toilets and changing rooms	(17,515)	(21,030)
<i>* Grounds Maintenance</i>	0	0	0		0	(1,665)
<i>* Fuel costs</i>	0	(1,000)	(1,000)		(1,873)	(797)
<i>* Cleaning Contract</i>	(17,040)	(37,570)	(20,530)	Strict cleaning regime and locking up of toilets continuing with contractor	(40,737)	(29,555)
<i>* Waste Management</i>	(500)	(500)	0	Septic tank	(352)	(1,412)
<b>Transport</b>	<b>(500)</b>	<b>(500)</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>(466)</b>	<b>(293)</b>
<b>Supplies and Services</b>	<b>(39,750)</b>	<b>(42,250)</b>	<b>(2,500)</b>		<b>(199,423)</b>	<b>(122,562)</b>
<i>* Equipment &amp; Materials</i>	(11,750)	(14,250)	(2,500)	Seed, soil, uniforms, hire of mobile work platform	(34,335)	(17,402)
<i>* Contribution to Educational posts</i>	(28,000)	(28,000)	0		0	(27,000)
<i>* Fees &amp; Charges - Legal</i>	0	0	0		(160,294)	(62,798)
<i>* Traveller eviction costs</i>	0	0	0		(4,794)	(14,545)
<i>* Security Costs</i>	0	0	0		0	(818)
<i>* Photocopier Charges</i>	0	0	0		0	0
<b>Third Party Payments</b>	<b>(5,000)</b>	<b>(5,000)</b>	<b>0</b>	Annual contribution towards managing the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project	<b>(5,000)</b>	<b>(5,440)</b>
<b>Support Services</b>	<b>(78,850)</b>	<b>(78,850)</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>(86,138)</b>	<b>(75,630)</b>
<i>* Human Resources</i>	(250)	(250)	0		(26)	(40)
<i>* ICT</i>	0	0	0		(62)	0
<i>* Finance</i>	(4,300)	(4,300)	0		(4,200)	(4,200)
<i>* Democratic Services</i>	(6,000)	(6,000)	0		(5,900)	(5,900)
<i>* Parks Management</i>	(12,700)	(12,700)	0		(12,700)	(12,700)
<i>* Transport</i>	(26,100)	(26,100)	0	Vehicle R&M, fuel, contract hire	(24,859)	(18,583)
<i>* Utility Costs</i>	(2,500)	(2,500)	0	Electricity, water and sewerage	(5,289)	(2,341)
<i>* Other</i>	(27,000)	(27,000)	0	Parks technical support, asset management and advice	(33,102)	(31,866)
<b>Sub-Total Expenditure</b>	<b>(360,400)</b>	<b>(437,125)</b>	<b>(76,725)</b>	<b>Overspend</b>	<b>(611,996)</b>	<b>(456,028)</b>
<b>Net Position</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(86,075)</b>	<b>(67,375)</b>	<b>Net surplus/(deficit)</b>	<b>(304,975)</b>	<b>(237,990)</b>
<b>Transfer from Reserves</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>Reserves exhausted</b>	<b>97,680</b>	<b>237,990</b>
<b>FINAL NET OUTTURN</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(86,075)</b>	<b>(67,375)</b>	<b>Net surplus/(deficit)</b>	<b>(207,295)</b>	<b>0</b>

## **Summary of activities of the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project education and community engagement programme**

**Reporting Officer: Mandy Leivers, Avon Gorge and Downs Biodiversity Education Manager**

In July and August we directly engaged with 621 people through the education and community engagement programme.

### **Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project events programme**

As part of the events programme we ran: two guided walks ('Butterflies of the Downs' and 'Spiders of the Avon Gorge'); a 'Bat and moth night', and a 'Gorge-ous goats' family walk. The families had lots of fun on the goat walk and one participant posted on our Facebook page, *"Thanks to the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project for organising this fun, informative and local event!"*

Another emailed to say, *"(his daughter) was very happy and really liked all the activities and the story in particular. She recognised a Bagot goat when we came across one in a totally different context last week (I had entirely forgotten the name of the breed) and has been pointing out pineapple weed. Thanks again for a lovely morning"*.

### **School education sessions**

During this period, we taught 236 school children. One of the schools, Kingsweston School **came for the first time** to learn about 'Butterfly lifecycles'. The group consisted of 16 children and teenagers with autism. The teacher who organised the trip said, *"It was so perfect, thank you. It was a tough ask – catering for children with a range of ability levels and fluctuating attention spans! The range of activities was perfect. The communication throughout was very helpful too."* When asked what their highlights were, she said, *"The children really enjoyed the craft activity and Vanessa being dressed up as a butterfly was a real wow moment for our WOW trip!"*

Katie Atkins, who runs Bristol's Nordic4 group, brought a group of six children with autism from Stoke Bishop Primary School. The children Nordic walked their way across the Downs to take part in a 'Peregrine falcons and foodchains' session. Katie reflected on the best bits of the session, *"The highly informed teaching and resources delivered in an energised way, pitched perfectly for Y5 - the children became more engrossed as the session went on."* She added, *"Two parents have written emails of effusive thanks and the children loved their time."*

### **Playschemes and sessions for uniformed groups**

For a second year running, the 57<sup>th</sup> Bristol Brownies visited the Downs to enjoy our 'Wildflower treasure hunt'. They enjoyed it so much that they have already made a booking for next year. The leader fed back on the evaluation form, *"It was clear how much preparation and effort had gone into the session and this meant it was such a memorable evening for the girls."*

We ran thirteen education sessions for summer playscheme groups. This included children from Totterdown Children's Community Workshop and Southmead Development Trust playscheme (this was their **first time visiting** for our sessions). We paid for the transport for these groups, using a grant from the Commoners of Durdham Down and Durdham Downs Charity aimed at enabling groups to visit who wouldn't normally have the funds.

### **Bridge to Nature Project**

After the mural was painted at the Upfest street art festival, the Bristol Zoo Maintenance Team brought it back to the Zoo and installed it in the Zoo grounds. The mural was included in the 'Zoo and You Legacy Art exhibition' as part of the 'Big Summer Send-Off'.

We prepared and put up some interpretation to explain to visitors about the project and the special plants and animals of the Avon Gorge, Downs and Leigh Woods that feature in the artwork.

On 31<sup>st</sup> July, Vanessa met with some of the young people who had taken part in the project for a picnic in the Zoo and to give them the opportunity to view their amazing mural on display.

The 'Bridge to Nature' project was a nature connection, art and wellbeing project for young people aged 18 to 25. We ran the project in partnership with Off The Record (OTR), Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge, the National Trust and Forestry England. It was generously funded by the Co-op Local Community Fund and the Commoners of Durdham Down and Durdham Downs Charity.

### **Interpretation panel revamp**

The majority of the Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project interpretation panels on the Downs are over ten years old and were in a very poor state of repair. So nine of the panels have been updated, printed and installed.

The panel revamp was funded from a number of sources including: the Commoners of Durdham Down and Durdham Downs Charity; a private donor; and by the family of Sarah Booley (a young person who loved the Downs and tragically died whilst waiting for an operation during lockdown).

### **A4 Portway Route**

Robert Westlake and I went to an online meeting, about the proposed 'Traffic Improvements to the A4 Portway Route', run by the Bristol City Council Transport Engagement Team. I talked about the ecological and geological importance of the Avon Gorge and explained about the desire to create safe, circular walking routes from the Downs and into the Gorge.

### **Training for the Clifton Suspension Bridge engagement team**

Vanessa and I gave an illustrated lecture, about the wildlife of the Avon Gorge and Downs and the work of the project, to five members of the Clifton Suspension Bridge engagement team. They will share this knowledge with groups visiting the bridge for school sessions and guided tours.

### **Thank you**

This is my final report. By the time of the next Downs Committee, I will have started a new job as the Severn Treescapes Community Engagement and Communications Coordinator with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.

After 21 years of working on the Avon Gorge and Downs I am very sad to be leaving but I feel it's time for a change and this is a good time to let someone else, with some new and fresh ideas, take the role on.

My fantastic colleague, Vanessa Adnitt (who has been the Avon Gorge & Downs Learning Engagement Officer this year and last), is staying in post and will provide continuity whilst my replacement is recruited.

May I thank you all for all of your support, help and encouragement over the years.