

THE DOWNS COMMITTEE

Clifton and Durdham Downs (Bristol) Act 1861

Reply to Oliver Harrison

To : Members of the
Downs Committee

Telephone

E-mail

oliver.harrison@bristol.gov.uk

Date

Friday, 10 September 2021

The Lord Mayor and 6 City Councillors

The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor Councillor Steve Smith
Councillor Jos Clark Councillor Carla Denyer
Councillor Geoff Gollop Councillor Paul Goggin
Councillor Philippa Hulme Councillor Paula O'Rourke

The Master and 6 Merchant Venturers

Gillian Camm (Vice-Chair) Jonathon Baker
Simon Cooper Peter Rilett
David Freed David Powell
Mike Bothamley

Dear Members,

You are invited to attend a meeting of the **Downs Committee** to be held at **2.00 pm on Monday, 20th September, 2021 at City Hall, College Green, Bristol, BS1 5TR.**

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

Yours sincerely,

OH

Oliver Harrison

Democratic Services Section

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Website

www.bristol.gov.uk

Agenda

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information (Pages 4 - 6)

2. Apologies for absence

3. Declarations of interest

To note and Declarations of Interest raised by Councillors.

4. Minutes of last meeting (Pages 7 - 13)

5. Action Tracker (Page 14)

6. Matters Arising From the Events and Finance Group (Pages 15 - 17)

7. Public Forum

To consider items of Public Forum sent to the Downs Committee. Interested parties can submit a written statement of approximately one side A4 to the Downs Committee by sending it to Democratic Services by no later than 12pm Friday 17 September.

8. Ice Cream Concessions

9. Legal Review

On the 8th September 2021, the Downs Committee received a confidential legal briefing in relation to recent litigation in respect of parking on the Downs. By a majority vote, it was RESOLVED that the committee was satisfied the process had been handled properly and that no further review was necessary.

10. Downs Management Report (Page 18)

11. Wildlife Project Education Programme (Pages 19 - 20)

12. Events Report

Report to follow.

13. Finance Update (Page 21)

14. Any Other Business

15. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled to be held on 15 November 2021 at City Hall.

Oliver Harrison, Democratic Services Officer

Email: oliver.harrison@bristol.gov.uk or democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk

Public Information Sheet

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- Maintain an enhanced cleaning regime and continue with good ventilation

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- An NHS COVID-19 Pass which confirms double COVID-19 vaccination received at least 2 weeks prior to attending the event via the NHS App. A vaccination card is not sufficient.
- Proof of COVID-19 status through demonstrating natural immunity (a positive NHS PCR test in the last 180 days) via their NHS COVID-19 pass on the NHS App.
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- have tested positive for COVID-19 and are requested to self-isolate



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Public Forum

Members of the public may make a written statement ask a question or present a petition to most meetings. Your statement or question will be sent to the Committee Members and will be published on the Council's website before the meeting. Please send it to democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk.

The following requirements apply:

- The statement is received no later than **12.00 noon on the working day before the meeting** and is about a matter which is the responsibility of the committee concerned.
- The question is received no later than **5pm three clear working days before the meeting**.

Any statement submitted should be no longer than one side of A4 paper. If the statement is longer than this, then for reasons of cost, it may be that only the first sheet will be copied and made available at the meeting. For copyright reasons, we are unable to reproduce or publish newspaper or magazine articles that may be attached to statements.

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We will try to remove personal and identifiable information. However, because of time constraints we cannot guarantee this, and you may therefore wish to consider if your statement contains information that you would prefer not to be in the public domain. Other committee papers may be placed on the council's website and information within them may be searchable on the internet.



During the meeting:

- Public Forum is normally one of the first items on the agenda, although statements and petitions that relate to specific items on the agenda may be taken just before the item concerned.
- There will be no debate on statements or petitions.
- The Chair will call each submission in turn. When you are invited to speak, please make sure that your presentation focuses on the key issues that you would like Members to consider. This will have the greatest impact.
- Your time allocation may have to be strictly limited if there are a lot of submissions. **This may be as short as one minute.**
- If there are a large number of submissions on one matter a representative may be requested to speak on the groups behalf.
- If you do not attend or speak at the meeting at which your public forum submission is being taken your statement will be noted by Members.
- Under our security arrangements, please note that members of the public (and bags) may be searched. This may apply in the interests of helping to ensure a safe meeting environment for all attending.
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Bristol City Council Minutes of the Downs Committee

5 July 2021 at 12.00 pm



Members Present:-

Councillors: Steve Smith (Chair), Jos Clark, Carla Denyer, Geoff Gollop, Paul Goggin, Paula O'Rourke, Gillian Camm (Vice-Chair), Jonathon Baker, Mike Bothamley, Simon Cooper, David Freed, David Powell and Peter Rilett

Officers in Attendance:-

Ben Skuse and Kevin Jay, Oliver Harrison, Mandy Leivers, Jonathan James

1 Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair led introductions and issued the safety information.

2 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Phillipa Hulme.

3 Declarations of interest

Cllr Geoff Gollop declared an interest as a financial consultant for Jonathon Baker and is also member of FODAG and Respect the Downs.

Cllr Carla Denyer declared an interest as a member of the Playground on the Downs campaign group.

4 Minutes of last meeting

There is bug in the software that is listing everything as item 1.

RESOLVED the minutes of the meeting of 22 March are agreed as a correct record.

Within the Events and Finance Minutes, it says that the Comedy Garden opened 2 July, this should read 2 June.



5 Action Tracker

The A4018 action is now a watching brief and so can be removed from the tracker.

6 Matters Arising From the Events and Finance Group

The Master Merchant introduced the summary and highlighted the following points:

- The sub-committee has identified the need for a better decision-making framework.
- The loss of zoo parking income is a major concern.
- Item 3 and 4 in minutes refer to a 'track' on the water tower site. For clarity, this is plastic webbing installed underneath the grass to support it. It is not a roadway.

7 Public Forum

The following Public Forum statements were NOTED.

1. Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge – July 2021 Update
2. Suzanne Audrey – Judicial Review
3. Downs for People – Downs Committee Review

8 Downs Management Report

Ben Skuse introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- The traditional July bus tour of the Downs had to be rescheduled to ongoing Covid restrictions. There are no more limits on the use of outdoor public spaces, so the Downs is experiencing very heavy use.
- There is a major issue with litter removal on the Downs. This is taking an unreasonable amount of time and cost for the maintenance team to deal with. Members of the public are complaining about the extent of littering.
- The current model needs to change as the current situation is unsustainable. BCC Parks and the Bristol Waste Company need to look at how they manage the increased waste levels in parks. BS would like to be part of those conversations.
- The Comedy Garden event has gone well, as has the Circus with very little impact on the grass. Breaking Bread on the water tower site will require considerable repair work ahead of further events in September.
- The Downs will be featured on the BBC Green Planet programme, due for broadcast in January 2022.
- We need to check the agreement for new signage for the Draper Monument [OH ACTION]
- There have been some issues with vehicles parking partially on the Downs in the surrounding roads. We have received an approach from a group that has offered to pay for ground protection.



It is not clear how we should proceed on this and there is concern about setting a precedent for private donations for specific projects.

Discussion Notes:

- The discussion should be about the principle of accepting private funding or crowd funding in general rather than piecemeal for particular schemes. We have accepted funding for things like commemorative benches in the past. We would need to check legally whether we can accept and to write a coherent policy about private donations.
- We could raise private funding for a project that the committee has agreed rather than ones being pushed by private funders, or it could be placed in a general bond. This should be considered as part of the at strategy review. [ACTION]
- There have been reports of vehicles driving across the grass almost hitting members of the public. This is related to a traveller encampment, which the council is currently taking enforcement action against.
- Parking on the Downs is a continuing issue that needs additional enforcement. How can we request more enforcement? It is not uncommon to see parking on the grass and barbeques damaging the ground.
- Visitors do not know what the byelaws are, we may need an awareness campaign to engage positively alongside better enforcement. The Lord Mayor has asked legal colleagues to talk to us about enforcement options. [ACTION]
- All members were highly concerned about waste levels on the Downs. The Lord Mayor is in contact with the Bristol Waste CEO about this.
- Waste on the Downs is not being recycled, so it is going to landfill. There are no recycling bins on downs. Bristol Waste is unable to hand pick recycling from landfill waste, it is too labour intensive and does not create good quality recycle. We need recycling bins on the Downs to facilitate that.
- The Downs is an iconic space that needs protecting, it is very disappointing that people are not taking waste home with them. All visitors have a responsibility to do this.
- At every bench you will find bottles, containers, etc. people feel like they can leave rubbish behind. There are already 20 signs about taking litter home that were installed last week at entry points to the downs. Putting signs at bins is too late and encourages dumping.
- We have installed additional bins, but it is still not enough. There are 8 oil drum bins at several points, but they are still overwhelmed. We should consider removing all bins to see what psychological effect this has. The alternative is building bays for recycling, but that will be large, ugly and requires a roadway.
- It is unlikely we can “out bin” this behaviour given the parks team’s efforts so far. The Downs has been bin-free in the past and there was not this level of waste. There are several parks in the city with no bins. Any full bin is an invitation to litter. This should be part of the strategic review and waste funding could be picked out of the finances. [ACTION]
- For context there has been an average 40% increase in park usage across the city during lockdown. There are similar issues in Castle Park. We may need to have a pause after lockdown is lifted, then do a review about taking waste home.



9 Wildlife Project Education Programme

The committee welcomed Mandy Leivers (Avon Gorge & Downs Biodiversity Education Manager) back from furlough. She gave an update on the Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project as there new members now on the committee.

- The Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project started in 1999 and is a partnership of Downs Committee, Bristol City Council, Merchant Venturers, Bristol Zoo, Natural England, University of Bristol, The Forestry Commission and The National Trust. The project has three roles: wildlife surveying and monitoring; habitat management; education and community engagement. The Avon Gorge & Downs Biodiversity Education Manager and the seasonal Avon Gorge and Downs Learning and Engagement Officer roles are funded by Downs Committee and Bristol Zoo. Mandy is grateful to Downs Committee for their continued support.
- Since the education programme began in 2001, over 127,000 people have participated. The project has a public programme of events (walks, talks, courses, family and children's events); school groups are taught between Easter and October; playschemes visit for education sessions in the summer holidays; and we have run many longer-term community projects that engage with under-represented groups. Many of the latter are part of the 'Your Downs' initiative (run in conjunction with the Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge and the Downs Supervisor) which is about enabling a wider audience to visit, learn about and enjoy the special wildlife of the Downs and Avon Gorge.
- We recruited a new engagement officer who started end of May, training has been intensive. We're also working hard to rebuild our volunteer team.
- 500 children are coming back to the Downs for school education sessions this summer, we have had to start slowly due to covid restrictions. This includes social distancing, enhanced cleaning, etc. The autumn term booking is going well, and schools are very keen to get involved.
- Events for 2020 were cancelled but we are now planning ones for this autumn.
- We are also starting a 'Your Downs' project, Nature in the Streets, for young people with mental ill-health. We are working with mental health charity Off the Record and FOD+AG to run the project which focuses on nature connection and wellbeing.
- The Downs is part of the 'Wastes and Strays' project to promote urban green spaces. This includes a researcher collecting oral history about the Downs, also a 'poet in residence' who is leading poetry events to celebrate the Downs.
- The integration of 4 new Bagot Goats was successful and was picked up by ITV news, with lots of sharing across social media.
- Some of the information panels on the Downs are in poor condition and some are vandalised, that will need looking at with the appropriate funding.

Discussion notes:

- The committee would welcome an update on the Wastes and Strays project. It is a comparative study on 4 urban green spaces so is likely to provide good learning opportunities. POR was involved in Phase 1 a couple of years back and could draft a report. [ACTION].



- The committee welcomed the return of the education project. The partnership with FOD+AG shows how important voluntary groups are for the welfare of the Downs.
- Visiting the Downs is very beneficial for all. A key part of the education strategy is to include groups that do not usually visit the Downs. Inclusion of under-represented groups could be part of the governance review.
- Members thanked Ben Skuse and his team for their help restoring areas for educational use.

1 Events Report

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Stefan Edwards introduced the report and summarised it for everyone. Ben Skuse requested contact details for Adventure Cinema to discuss logistics [ACTION].

1 Finance Update

1

Kevin Jay introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- There are significant financial deficits in the report, the biggest impacts being the effect of covid on event management and the Judicial Review costs. The additional toilet maintenance is also a cost pressure.
- This is the first time that BCC will have to underwrite losses for the Downs. The financial relationship between BCC and the Downs Committee will be a significant part of the governance review.

Discussion notes:

- If BCC has received funding from central government for covid expenditure, Downs Committee should get their proportion. It was confirmed that there was funding for parks related to toilets and litter. Finance officers should be sure that the credit has gone into DC. [ACTION]
- Downs Committee pays for half of Mandy Leivers' employment cost so will also need to make sure it has received the appropriate furlough funding. [ACTION]

1 Any Other Business

2

Closure of Parry's Lane

- The Lord Mayor confirmed that he has been approached by Mayor's Office concerning the ongoing issue of Vehicle Dwellers on the Downs, which has also garnered much public interest.
- The Mayor's Office has suggested some options that have been discussed before at this committee. The two main suggestions are around changing parking regulations and the closure and rewilding of Parry's Lane. Local interest groups have shown support for both options.



- The Mayor's Office has now asked whether Downs Committee would accept responsibility for closing and rewilding Parry's Lane. The Lord Mayor has responded that closing a road is a matter for BCC highways and that Downs Committee will need to see a detailed plan and costings. The LM is asking for an in-principle agreement from DC.

Discussion Notes:

- This may cause a "squeezing balloon" effect, where closing Parry's Lane results in the vehicle dwellers moving to other roads bordering the downs. Taking on another piece of land is ok in principle but DC needs to look at the implications of closure.
- The arguments for closing the road are sound, but consider counter arguments. Vehicle dwelling is a city-wide issue. Vehicle dwellers have come to this committee before with sympathetic views. We have said in the DC position statement that we need a strategy for where these people go. OK with the principle of closure but do not want to push the problem across the city.
- The LM understands that this is a smaller element of a much bigger issue, but that the road closure itself is the ask today.
- It was confirmed that the DC position statement recommended that the administration investigate alternative locations for vehicle dwellers.
- While highways own the road itself, they do not own the land underneath it, which should revert to BCC and the Downs Committee once the road is removed. The LM and MO will continue communicate with highways on this.

RESOLVED Subject to finance and a detailed plan, the committee approve the in-principle closure and rewilding of Parry's Lane.

Cllr Paula O'Rourke confirmed that she does not support the closure of Parry's Lane unless there is alternative site provision.

1 Date of Next Meeting

3

The next meeting is scheduled for 20 September 2020 at City Hall.

1 Terms of Reference

4

The Lord Mayor introduced this report, which is a Terms of Reference to review the governance and operations of the Downs Committee.

- Officers have been very supportive of this initiative, providing legal input from BCC and agreeing resources to carry this review out.
- It asks for a review of our overall strategy, what we want to achieve on the Downs, also nuts and bolts of how the committee works, including finance and delegation.



- The committee is asked to approve the scope of this review and members are asked to volunteer for a working group.

Discussion notes:

- In the public engagement part of the review, how much of this is a consultation or participation exercise? There are a few options which will need to be discussed with the consultation team at BCC. We could publish documents for comments and/or have meetings with Downs interest groups for a guided discussion. We also want to involve people outside of the committee in the management of the Downs where possible.
- It is right that we talk to interest groups that currently exist, but how do we connect with users that are not in these organisations? This could be a big opportunity for locals to think about how the Downs is used in future.
- Members that want to be on the working group should email the clerk.
- We also need a review of the recent judicial review; it justifies a full management report. The Lord Mayor has spoken to BCC legal and requested this, we are waiting on a possible meeting date. It is likely to be a closed session as it will contain privileged advice.
- There is a considerable amount of public interest in this report so it would be helpful if we are able to hold a closed session with a public report after. This would need to be discussed carefully with legal colleagues.

RESOLVED Terms of Reference for the governance review are APPROVED.

1 Downs Football League Fees
5

RESOLVED the Downs and University Football fees will remain at 2020 levels.

Meeting ended at 1.30 pm

CHAIR _____



Agenda Item 5

ACTION TRACKER – FOR DOWNS COMMITTEE 20 SEPTEMBER 2021

Date of Meeting	Action Description	Holding Action	Deadline for Completion	Action Taken
5 July 21	Check approval status for information boards at Draper monument	Oliver Harrison	12 July 21	Completed – Lord Mayor confirmed permission 8 July
5 July 21	Add private funding / donation options to the governance review	Cllr Smith		First governance review meeting held 8 Sep
5 July 21	Bylaws are being violated more frequently, discuss enforcement options with BCC officers	Cllr Smith		
5 July 21	Consider waste options as part of governance review. Identify waste funding in finances	Cllr Smith Kevin Jay		First governance review meeting held 8 Sep
5 July 21	Update report on Wastes and Strays	Cllr O'Rourke		Taken forward as part of governance / strategy working group
5 July 21	Stefan to give contact details for Adventure Cinema to Ben	Stefan Edwards	12 July 21	Completed
5 July 21	Check that DC has received relevant Covid subsidies for litter and toilets	Kevin Jay	20 Sep 21	Additional covid cost pressures have been highlighted and included in the Parks covid reporting process. To offset pressures, the management and control of covid funding is being dealt with centrally and not devolved to down to individual cost centres.
5 July 21	Check that DC has received furlough funding for Mandy Leivers	Kevin Jay	20 Sep 21	Mandy Leivers is employed by Bristol Zoo. If necessary, it would require the members of the Downs Committee to initiate a conversion and negotiate a rebate with the Zoo

Downs Committee Notes Of Events & Finance Sub Group Meeting 25th August 2021

Members:

MV Gillian Camm (Master and Chair)
MV David Powell
Councillor Jos Clark
Councillor Geoff Gollop

Bristol City Council Officers:

Jeremy Livitt – Democratic Services
Kevin Jay – Finance
Stefan Edwards – Events Officer
Ben Skuse – Grounds Supervisor

Apologies:

MV Jonathon Baker
MV Peter Rilett
Councillor Paul Goggin
Councillor Paula O'Rourke

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting 2nd June 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

It was noted that work was progressing on the proposed track scheme at the water tower site.

2. Finance Update

Kevin Jay introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- There would be no income from zoo car parking in future. It was hoped that the music festival might fill this cost.
- There had been additional costs related to additional cleaning of the toilets caused by COVID, in addition to costs caused by travellers occupying the Downs, building and repair costs and mower hire
- There remained an issue concerning the rates which was being investigated by Jonathan James
- The costs for all COVID related mitigations were controlled centrally including cleaning costs and this was flagged in the account

Members expressed concern that the additional compensation related to COVID received from the Government by Bristol City Council which related to the Downs (ie cleaning, littering) was not appearing in the Downs Committee accounts.

ACTION: Kevin Jay and Ben Skuse to discuss this issue with their respective Heads of Service and report back

3. Events Report Update

Stefan Edwards introduced this report and made the following points:

Breaking Bread

This event would finish slightly early due to the negative financial impact caused by the weather and difficulty in obtaining staff to cover the event.

It was noted that Breaking Bread had not been able to make a commitment concerning provision of an event for 2022 and for this reason it was recommended that Funderworld were offered the site instead.

ACTION: David Powell, Stefan Edwards and Kevin Jay to meet with Breaking Bread to discuss a number of issues arising from their 2021 event.

Members considered outstanding 2021 events.

Downs Concert

This was scheduled to take place subject to outstanding debts being cleared.

Ladyboys

All outstanding payments had been made.

Adventure Cinema and Race for Life

Both these events would proceed.

Love Saves the Day, IDLES Gig and Foodies

All these events were close to being finalised.

Circus

Circus attended the last SAGE meeting. Officers were confident that it was likely to proceed since the organisation had hired a specialist company to help it meet covid requirements.

Students Union

Confirmation by SAGE that this could proceed would be made at next week's SAGE meeting. Members then considered proposed future 2022 events.

Funderworld

This event was important for the Downs. The organisers were keen to come back on the Water Tower site.

The following additional events have expressed a desire to return in 2022: Foodies Festival, March for Men, Race for Life, Pride, Adventure Cinema, Downs Concerts (Name of Organisers TBC), Students Union Welcome, Circus.

Comedy Garden

The venue for this site was yet to be determined subject to a final request from the organisers – either Queens Square or the Downs.

Members noted that the diary was being opened to enquiries from new event organisers. Sites Permissions would review the impact of COVID to confirm whether or not it was yet appropriate for event fees to return to pre-pandemic levels.

4 Any Other Business

There was no other business discussed.

5 Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 2pm on Wednesday 20th October 2021.

The meeting ended at 2.27pm

Downs Management Report for 20 September Meeting

Late Summer on the Downs usually consists of the last throes of grass cutting, the annual hay cut and getting ready for the upcoming football season. All these things are happening or have happened so far, but alongside that this year we are dealing with the most intensive period of events that the Downs has ever known. Whilst I have total recognition of why this has happened this year, I have to say that I think the committee need to consider dialling down the intensity and frequency a little for next year's programme. Myself and the team have been exceptionally busy during this time and I must credit them for the hard work that they have put in over this period.

Members will know that there has been an ambition for a while to increase the number of our conservation grazing Goats in the Gully. Due to the various travel complications in the last few years this was challenging. We gained 4 animals from a local rare breed conservation charity in the spring and took the number of our herd to 6. Now in addition to this we have finally been able to achieve our long-term aim of taking part in another Great Orme round up and getting more Kashmiri Goats from the Orme. Myself and a colleague went to Llandudno in July, chased goats around the Orme for a couple of days alongside Rangers and staff from Conwy County Council and were then able to bring back 4 more Kashmiri Billies around 1yr old. These (proudly Welsh animals) were released into their new home (in England) after a quick health check from vets from Bristol Zoo, on July 15th. After an initial period of suspicion from both sides, all animals look to have (mostly) joined up to make a herd of 10 animals. At this point in time, they look to be fully integrated and happy with their new surroundings. The rate of browsing (i.e. scrub control) has obviously been greatly increased from just the 2 months at the start of the year, thus the conservation aims of the project are being better met now than previously.

Members will recall from previous reports that we saw much greater visitor numbers, particularly around late winter, early spring this year. One of the effects of this was many more people walking through and across our wildflower meadow areas. Alongside wildlife and conservation officer from BCC, Becky Belfin and Mandy Leivers from AGADWP we have identified some areas that need extra protection from trampling. Members will notice extra signage and some roping off of areas to try to protect delicate plants from another potential winter of trampling.

The Downs football season 21/22 has kicked off on Saturday 11th September. At the time of writing, we still are not authorised to use the dressing rooms, but this is under regular review and is in line with the changing facilities in the rest of the wider parks dept. I hope to get them open as soon as possible.

Just the BU SU welcome fair and the circus to come now and we can park events 21 on the Downs and get into the winter works programme!

Summary of activities of the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project education programme

Officer Presenting Report: Mandy Leivers, Avon Gorge and Downs Biodiversity Education Manager

Schools education sessions

During July, we taught 152 school children in 10 education sessions. This is a lot less than we would normally teach at this time of year but as mentioned in my last report we had spaced the sessions out so that we could follow covid precaution protocols (such as leaving extra time for cleaning and disinfecting equipment between school visits).

The schools that had sessions with us were really appreciative. A teacher from Hotwells, whose class took part in our 'Hairy conservationists' session, commented on their evaluation form:

"Observing the goats was the highlight for children and staff! The session was brilliantly run by the team, parents who came on the trip were very impressed with the content and how engaged the children were. Thank you so much!"

One of the other schools who visited was Andalusia Academy who brought the whole school over two days. Coming from a school located within the heart of Bristol without any grounds and the majority of children living in high-rise flats, this was an exciting experience for all, especially after a year of lock-down. The children were clearly impacted by their experiences, as one of the teachers reported:

"The children loved the sessions and learnt so much without realising they were learning! All day my group have been looking at all the birds and trying to spot a peregrine falcon and pointing at a butterfly and telling me its life cycle! It's been the best trip I've been on. The sessions were pitched at the right level and there was a great mixture of learning and moving to keep the children engaged. Thank you again. I've already had several staff members ask if we can do it again next year."

As the school didn't want to use a coach (because of covid) parents dropped off and picked up the children. This was a useful opportunity for the parents to see where their children had been exploring and how accessible the Downs can be for them on future occasions.

So far, we have eight education sessions booked in for the autumn term and are waiting for two schools to confirm if they would like to book sessions.

Playscheme sessions

Over the school holidays 65 children took part in our playscheme sessions. This included a group from the Lawrence Weston who visited us for the first time; they enjoyed seeing our new goats as part of a 'Hairy conservationists' session.

Compared to 2019, we were dramatically down on the number of sessions we ran. The Avon Gorge & Downs Learning and Engagement Officer contacted as many playschemes in the area as possible to encourage bookings. Unfortunately, some of the groups that had booked regularly in the past had folded (after a difficult year, last year) and some were not offering trips this year due to covid. We also had a couple of groups who were initially keen to book sessions but then decided they couldn't come after all, or cancelled due to covid-related staffing issues.

Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project events programme

We have organised seven events for October and November including: four walks, two courses and a children's event for the October half term. The first event, on the 3rd October, will be a 'Postcard and poetry promenade on Clifton Down' that will be co-led

by Francis Greenacre and Dr John Wedgewood Clarke as part of the Wastes and Strays Project.

Your Downs Activities

Nature in the Streets / Rainbow Bridge 2 Nature

We have had to pause the 'Nature in the Streets / Rainbow Bridge 2 Nature' project - a nature connection, art and wellbeing project for young people (aged 18 – 24) that we are running in partnership with Off The Record (OTR) and Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge (FOD+AG).

Despite the OTR staff trying really hard to recruit and support the 16 young people who had signed up to the project, eight of them dropped out, only one young person was able to make the first session and no one could make it to the walks in early August. At the time, covid numbers were increasing dramatically. The OTR staff said that although the young people were really interested some of them had contracted covid, had to isolate, or were having mental health difficulties and pandemic-related anxieties. Apparently, this was not unique to our group but was a pattern being seen throughout youth services as a whole.

This is a great project, with great aims, and we're sure the young people will benefit from it hugely however the timing just doesn't seem to have been right.

One of our aims is to inspire young people about the wildlife of the Avon Gorge and Downs so we want them to have positive hopeful experiences in nature, and spring and summer are the best time for that. We have therefore taken the decision to re-launch the project next spring, when the young people will have had both vaccinations and covid pressures and anxieties will have lessened.

Wastes and Strays / Urban Commons Futures

We took part in the first two assignments of the In-common Sites / Urban Commons Futures creative mapping project. The first involved us taking photos and labelling a map of the Downs, marking features of interest and places of significance.

The second activity focused on how signs are used to guide how we interact with our urban green spaces. We labelled a map, showing the locations of the many different signs on the Downs and created a table containing more details about the content of each sign and its purpose.

The Downs Festival

We attended the Idles Downs Festival on Friday 3rd September. We took along our display and range of leaflets and talked to festival goers about the wildlife of the Avon Gorge and Downs and the work of the project. Later in September we'll also be taking along our stand to the University of Bristol Students Union 'Welcome Fair'.



The Downs

Forecast 2021-22

The latest forecast for 2021-22 is as follows:

TABLE 1 - Overall Income and Expenditure Summary

	Full Year Budget	2021/22 Forecast Outturn <i>(as at 14.8.21)</i>	2021/22 Variance	Notes - 2021-22 Forecast
	£	£	£	
<u>Income</u>				
Total Income	350,260	306,211	(44,049)	Deficit
<u>Expenditure</u>				
Total Expenditure	(350,260)	(593,082)	(242,822)	Overspend - Covid-19 pressures, JR Legal case
<u>Transfer from Reserves</u>	0	97,764	97,764	All reserve funding has now been exhausted
FINAL NET OUTTURN	0	(189,107)	(189,107)	Representing Downs generated net surplus/(deficit)

The forecast for 2021-22 is a deficit mainly driven from final legal costs associated with the defence of a Judicial Review and some ongoing Covid-19 related expenditure, such as additional cleaning and maintenance. Prior year underspends can assist the deficit to some degree; however, they are limited.