

## **Downs Committee**

**10 March 2025**

As is ever the case, this time of year is defined by 2 things for us.

Difficult ground conditions

Nesting bird season deadline

Members may be aware that from March 1<sup>st</sup> we must allow for the fact that birds will begin their nesting activities and as such all activities that may affect or impact this must be halted until the other end of the Summer. Despite our always best efforts to be organised with our work programme this always tends to end in a bit of a mad dash to get the final bits tied up before we come to the hard stop. We can still carry out works if there was a clear health and safety or public safety element but hopefully nothing happens, and we'll pick up this work again in the Autumn.

In this period also the team have been assisting with works carried out by Green Man environmental contractors doing conservation cutting along the gorge cliff tops, FODAG with their dead hedge rebuilding at main meadow and the BMC annual scrub bash at Great Rock Quarry and St Vincents rocks. Our role in these tasks has been to facilitate others to do the work, ie site visits, lending tools and equipment, bringing materials for dead hedging and clearing, removal or chipping up of arisings at the end. Thanks to FODAG and the BMC for carrying out these important tasks, despite some at times inclement weather! Also, thanks to a different brigade of the FODAG army. The deep litter clearance groups led by Martin Collins have been a great success as ever and super helpful in keeping the site tidy in the face of many people trying to live at our beautiful Downs. Again, due to the onset of nesting bird season these activities halt now until the Autumn.

The annual Bridge Valley Rd project was once more a success this year. Inspections and remedial works took place. Diseased Ash was removed and the woodland edge next to the pedestrian footpath has been cut back to maintain good access.

We'll now have a period of time where we'll be dictated by what the weather is going to do. If, hopefully the ground begins to dry up and we get warmer temperatures and the grass begins to grow, we'll start to gear up for Spring/Summer season activities, grass, litter, event site preparation etc..

If on the other hand wet and colder conditions prevail then our focus will remain upon football pitch provision twice weekly. This is always challenging at this time of year and February just gone was tough in this regard. However whatever comes we are based at site and can react and adjust accordingly. There are plenty of general maintenance tasks to be getting on with also. Repairs to parks furniture, namely fence lines, bins and benches are always ongoing but we like to put particular focus on these as we look forward to another crazy busy no doubt, Downs Spring/Summer.

Ben Skuse

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