

The use of land off Ladies Mile

2016 Annual Report to the Downs Committee

Bristol Zoo Gardens

1. Use of the land

In 2016 Bristol Zoo Gardens (BZG) used the designated area of land off Ladies Mile for car parking on 41 days during the Easter Holidays, May half-term period, summer school holidays and October half term. This is within the agreed 45 days allowed in 2016. These were all days at which BZG visitation was around, or exceeded, 3,000 guests per day. On the days that it was used, an average of 302 cars were parked, thus reducing congestion and emissions caused by driving around the surrounding area for longer. The car park is staffed from opening to mid-late afternoon when the car park is no longer needed and guests have stopped arriving. BZG is sensitive to causing damage to the land and avoids use of the land when the ground is wet, even if the weather is fine on the day.

Note – others may drive across the land in wet weather; e.g. Bristol City Council contractor's vehicles working in the area.

2. Sustainable travel, Travel Plan and Incentives

2.1 Physical measures:

- a. Covered guest cycle parking racks provided in the North Car Park.
- b. Secure cycle parking for staff in the West Car Park, Education Centre and Gardeners' Yard.
- c. Changing facilities, shower facilities and lockers for staff.
- d. 6no. Electric car charging points in both the North and West Car Parks.
- e. In 2016 BZG paid for the Sunday/Bank holiday Portway Park and Ride service over the May half term. The public Park and Ride service has now been withdrawn by Bristol City Council.

2.2 Marketing measures and incentives for guests

- a. 20% off with proof of cycling to BZG (a cycle helmet say).
- b. 20% off with Bus ticket. Bus travel (Safari Ticket) available on First buses combining the cost of bus travel and entry with a discount providing an approximate 20% saving on the cost of entry.
- c. 33% off with Train Travel. 33% discount off entry when visitors travel by train and 2 for 1 entry with GWR.
- d. £3 off with Park & Ride (P&R) - £3 off entry per person on production of valid P&R ticket (average 22% discount).
- e. 20% off with National Express ticket.
- f. 20% off with tourist bus 'hop-on hop-off' ticket.
- g. Discounts are promoted through the website and member e-newsletters. The 'How to find us' button on the home page states that discounts are available for travellers by bike, bus and train. A single click takes you to the 'Getting to Bristol Zoo' page where the travel options and discounts are specifically promoted with, where appropriate, links to third party websites for ticket sales.
- h. Social media is used to promote alternative transport and P&R.

2.3 Staff measures

- a. Support for cycle purchase.
- b. Provision of lockers, showers and changing facilities.
- c. 10% reduction in bus season tickets available.
- d. Interest free loan scheme for annual season ticket purchase.
- e. Emergency cycle repair kit and high visibility vests available.
- f. Bristol City Council Travel Roadshow.
- g. Walk and Cycle breakfasts.
- h. Staff parking in car parks is limited through a seasonal and annual pass system.
- i. Telephone and video conferencing facilities available to avoid unnecessary travel.
- j. Staff email system to promote initiatives to all staff.
- k. Staff intranet with travel information available.
- l. 'BZG Green Team' made up of a selection of staff to promote sustainable initiatives including travel.

3. Travel survey

An annual travel survey is carried out which shows:

- a. Average guest car occupancy of 3.3 people. This level of occupancy would be envied by Bristol businesses and the wider city and means that the car, in this instance, is a sustainable mode of transport. Zero guests surveyed arrived as single car occupants.
- b. Throughout the year an average of 60% of guests visit from BS post codes, 40% from outside the city. During the travel survey, in the peak summer season, this was reversed with 75% travelling more than 20 miles to visit the Zoo.
- c. The large catchment of BZG's guests, together with a large number travelling with children, means that only a relatively small proportion expressed an interest in travelling by public transport, cycle or walking. Non-car travel is not a viable option for most BZG guests.
- d. The level of single car occupancy by staff travelling to work is 39%. This is significantly below the Bristol average of 50%.



4. Stewardship of the land

- a. An independent ecological survey is carried out annually and the results of the 2016 survey indicates consistently that there is no year on year deterioration of the sward ecology. 'The composition of the vegetation has been broadly stable since the surveys began' (in 2006). The car parking area, when compared to the control area, has a 'similar diversity of plants of unimproved grassland' and 'there is no evidence of any decline in the nature conservation value'.
- b. BZG maintain close contact with the City Council, in particular the Downs Rangers, on management of the land, carrying out maintenance work using agreed seed mixes and to an agreed method. BZG have also repaired damage to the area caused by overnight joy-riders, who are not associated with BZG; this is of benefit to BZG and the City Council.
- c. External groups, such as Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge (FODAG), have commented positively on our management of the land.

5. BZG request

- a. The current agreement with the Downs Committee to use this area of land extends to the end of 2018. The planning consent to use the land expired at the end of 2016. Accordingly, Bristol Zoological Society has applied to extend the planning consent by a further three years to the end of 2019.
- b. BZG is seeking this temporary consent to continue to responsibly use this area of the Downs for a limited number of days (40 days in 2017, 35 days in 2018 and 30 days in 2019) which, as part of our wider ongoing transport strategy, will allow us to continue to further develop our transport solution incorporating public transport and on street parking.
- c. The continued ramp down in use of days and the request of a 3 year temporary permission is considered by BZG as a well thought out and reasonable approach to the situation.

6. Why three years?

- a. Previous consents have been for three year periods. There is a proposed step-down in the limit of the number of days the land can be used, by 5-days a year (40 to 35 to 30). This reduction is also in line with the previous consents that have been granted.
- b. We believe that this is a reasonable approach. We have been working hard on promoting non-car use among both zoo guests and staff and will continue to do so, however it must be acknowledged that public transport or cycling is not a viable option for most families with young children. Consequently, on busy days, traffic and congestion need to be managed through a multitude of measures, with overflow parking on those busiest days being an important component of those measures.

APPENDIX

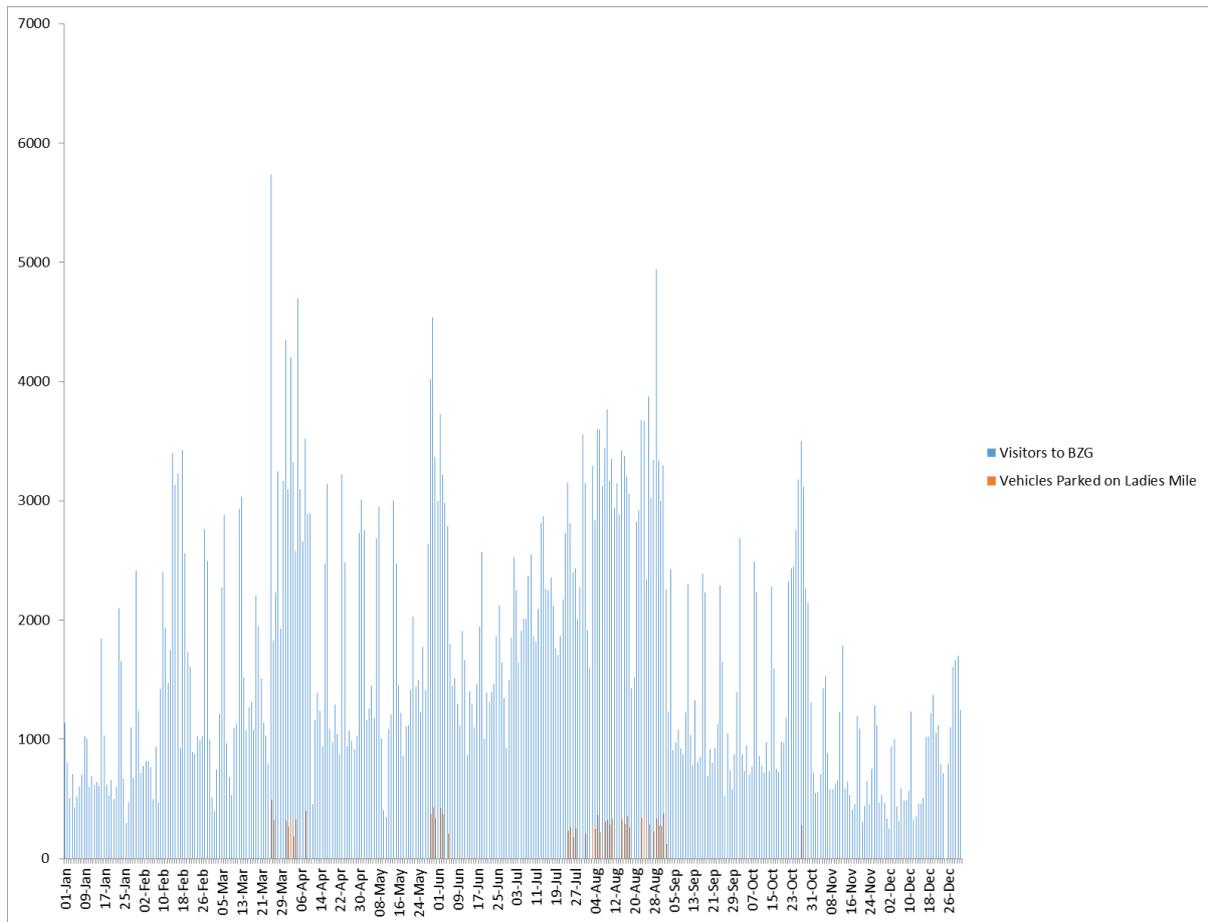


Fig 1. The 2016 use of Ladies Mile in comparison to BZG visitor numbers

Ladies Mile Supporting information

1. Introduction

Bristol Zoo is the most popular paid for attraction in the greater Bristol area. It is also of great conservational, educational and economic value to the city and greater Bristol region.

It's the fifth oldest Zoo in the world, first opening its doors to the public in 1836. Since then it has welcomed six generations of visitors, established over 30 field conservation and research programmes all over the world, showed 40 million school aged children the value of nature and has given more than 90 million visitors a great day out.

The Zoo employs around 200 staff and has 250 volunteers. Its team engages with local community groups and schools, and supports conservation projects within the field.

Bristol Zoo Gardens is operated by Bristol Zoological Society - a conservation and education charity. The Zoo is completely self-financing and whatever profit is realised at the end of the year is always invested back into saving wildlife and enhancing the experience for the visitor.

The Society's mission is to *'save wildlife through conservation action and engaging people with the natural world'*, with its vision being *'a sustainable future for wildlife and people'*.

2. Parking on Ladies Mile

Bristol Zoo Gardens has applied for temporary planning permission to continue parking cars on an area of The Downs, off Ladies Mile, on busy days. The application, which seeks to use 0.4% of the Downs, has not been submitted without a considerable amount of hard work and consideration.

At 180 years old, Bristol Zoo far pre-dates the car and, as such, parking has not been an issue for the majority of the Zoo's existence. However, as the suburb of Clifton grew around the Zoo and with the increase in popularity of cars in more recent years, parking has become increasingly vital - not only to the Zoo's success and viability but for the convenience of Zoo visitors, local residents and for easing congestion and traffic pollution in the area.

Bristol Zoo Gardens has, with the permission of the Council and with a licence granted by the Downs Committee, used a 1 hectare (2.5 acre) area of land off Ladies Mile, Clifton Down, since the 1970s for temporary, overflow parking on peak days when its permanent parking areas are full. The parking area represents less than half a per cent of the total area of the Downs and the Zoo has maintained the site throughout this time.

Bristol City Council has granted temporary planning permission to use the land in that way since the 1990s subject to various conditions and controls plus annual monitoring. These permissions have generally been for two or three years.

For the last decade Bristol Zoo has commissioned a series of technical studies exploring all the alternative options to parking at Ladies Mile. These have been discussed over an extended period with Council officers and transport consultants.

The conclusion of these studies has repeatedly shown that there is no practical alternative to using the land off Ladies Mile for overflow parking at the present time but that Park & Ride from the Portway may reduce the need to use the land. The Zoo has since financed and implemented numerous Park & Ride arrangements over the past five years with limited success.



In 2015 Bristol Zoo used the designated area of land off Ladies Mile for car parking on 38 days during the holidays (Easter, May and the summer school holiday). This is well below the 50 days allowed in 2015. These were all days at which Zoo visitation was around, or exceeded, 3,000 guests per day. On the days that it was used, an average of 343 cars were parked, thus reducing congestion and emissions caused by driving around the surrounding area for longer. This year the Zoo has parked cars on Ladies Mile for 41 days of the 45 permitted.

The overflow car park is staffed from opening until mid-late afternoon when the car park is no longer needed and guests have stopped arriving. The Zoo takes great care to minimise any disturbance to the land where cars are parked and has implemented robust measures to maintain the site. It avoids use of the land when the ground is wet, when high numbers are expected, even if the weather is fine on the day.

3. Why is Ladies Mile important to Bristol Zoo?

For three main reasons:

- *Huge financial loss to the Zoo.* It is estimated that the Zoo could lose £500,000 in income each year if it did not have the use of overflow parking at Ladies Mile on busy days. This is the equivalent of funding the Zoo's entire award-winning education team for more than three years.
- *Even greater financial loss for the city.* The knock-on effect of not being able to park over 300 cars for up to 40 days of the year means the city of Bristol will lose out on nearly £2 million of economic benefit to the city.
- *Families travel in cars.* The Zoo's core audience is families. And the vast majority of families travel in cars due to the amount of items they bring with them. Research has shown they prefer to travel via car and other sustainable travel options are not viable for them. And car transport is green; with nearly four people in every car and lower emissions than ever before. Put simply, if a family cannot drive to the Zoo and park, they will simply choose to go elsewhere.

