

THE DOWNS COMMITTEE

Clifton and Durdham Downs (Bristol) Act 1861

Downs Committee Meeting

3rd July 2017 at 11.00 am

Merchants Hall

Present:

BCC -

Lord Mayor Councillor Lesley Alexander (Chair)

Councillor Peter Abraham

Councillor Donald Alexander

Councillor Barry Clark

Councillor Cleo Lake

Merchant Venturers -

Cullum McAlpine – Master

Jonathon Baker

Anthony Brown

Francis Greenacre

Charles Griffiths

James McArthur

Tim Ross

Also in attendance -

Sarah Blazier – Parks

Melissa Inman- Events

Ben Skuse – Downs Maintenance

Jemma Prince – Finance

Norman Cornthwaite – Democratic Services

Mandy Leivers – Avon Gorge and Downs Biodiversity Education Officer

Robert Westlake – Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge (FOD+AG)

Jack Penrose - Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge (FOD+AG)

33. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Nicola Beech.

34. Changes to BCC Membership of the Downs Committee

Resolved – that the changes to the BCC Membership be noted.

35. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Resolved – that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 10th April 2017 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

36. Declarations of Interest

None were received.

37. Public Forum

Nothing was received.

38. Downs Management and Events Report

Events, etc.

Melissa Inman introduced this part of the report and summarised it for everyone. She confirmed that the BBC Children In Need Event would take place on 15th October 2017. The Clifton Suspension Bridge will be closed for 15 minutes on 15th October 2017.

Concerns were expressed about the widespread parking on the Downs associated with Events on the Downs. It was noted that designated area (s) for parking is agreed for each Event. It was agreed that the issue needs to be addressed by the Events Team and the Parks Section. It was also agreed that the Events Sub Group could consider the issue. Once the Events Team have new staff in post a series of Events Sub Group Meetings will be arranged. In the meantime a Meeting of the Group will be arranged in the coming weeks.

Referring to the proposal to site a Traditional British Telephone Box on the Downs, it was noted with concern that the primary purpose of it was to encourage visitors to Clifton Village. It was confirmed however that the Downs Committee should receive and income from it should permission be given to site it on the Downs. It was agreed that the Events Sub Group should give this issue further consideration. It was also suggested that the Events Sub Group could give further consideration to the charges for Events on the Downs, It was noted that the structure of charges in place had been agreed by BCC.

Management Update

Sarah Blazier introduced this part of the report and summarised it for everyone. Referring to the request for Hospital Helicopter Landings on the Downs, she stated that a specific site had not yet been agreed but was likely to be by the Water Tower.

An update on the Travellers issues was noted as was the prompt action by BCC to remove them from the Downs.

Wildlife Project Education Programme

Mandy Leivers introduced this part of the report and summarised it for everyone.

Resolved – (1) that the report be noted; as well as

(2) that approval be given for Event proposed for 2017 subject to the Telephone Box being considered further by the Events Sub Group;

(3) that Events proposed for 2018 be discussed in detail at forthcoming the Event Sub Group meeting with a report back at the next full Committee meeting;

(4) that approval be granted for the installation of sensitively placed Samaritan signs at the Sea Walls location;

(5) that permission for helicopter landings by Search and Rescue helicopters on the Downs be granted; and

(6) that approval of ground investigations and infiltration testing for potential Sustainable Drainage System (SuDs) pond on Durdham Down near Henleaze Road be granted.

39. Finance Report

Jemma Prince introduced the report and summarised it for everyone. She explained that the BCC Budget was being reduced to zero over the coming years and that a number of Meetings of the Committee's Finance Sub Group had taken place to discuss reducing the budget and increasing income. A Budget 2017/18 would now be developed. It was agreed that there is now more clarity about the Committee's financial situation. It was also noted that some more work is still required to ensure that all of the costs are attributed to the correct descriptions. The Downs Cost Centres would continue to be monitored.

Resolved – (1) that the report be noted; and

(2) that a Budget be developed for 2017/18.

40. Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge (FOD+AG)

Robert Westlake introduced the report and summarised it for everyone.

Resolved – that the report be noted.

41. Finance Sub Group's Terms of Reference

It was agreed that the wording of paragraphs 1 and 5 be amended to reflect the fact that the Downs is not a park and that BCC had requested that the Downs become cost neutral from 2020.

Resolved - that the Terms of Reference be agreed subject to the agreed amendments.

42. Any Other Business

Toilets on the Downs.

Francis Greenacre drew attention to proposals by BCC to close a number of public toilets, including those on the Downs. These proposals were the subject of a current consultation and it was suggested that the Downs Committee should express its opposition to the loss of a vital public service for the huge numbers of people making use of the Downs. The Meeting concurred and noted that the financial numbers recently made available confirmed that the Downs Committee's past contribution to the costs of toilet maintenance could be repeated this year. Reservations were however expressed about the liability for any upgrade or other major investment. Mr Ross suggested that the latter was a matter for the future and, in the meantime, believed that a formal Downs Committee decision would be required before any current closure was implemented.

43. Next Meeting

Monday 25th September 2017 at 2.00 pm at City Hall.

Meeting ended at 12.50 pm.

(Chair)