



Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge.

September 2017

Introduction: The purpose of this brief report is to update Committee on our recent activities, achievements and our plans for the future.

FOD+AG remains committed to our Terms of Reference to fairly represent legitimate users of the Downs and whilst retaining its independence will actively support the Committee on a range of initiatives.

However it remains FOD+AG's intention to keep a watchful eye on what still seems like an uncertain future.

Activities and Achievements: FOD+AG continue with all our usual volunteer activities across the Downs and Gorge, including, goat monitoring, butterfly surveys, litter collections, clearing pernicious weeds, maintaining dead hedges and scrub removal. We regularly update our website and the Downs app. We can also be followed on our Face book page.

In addition to our regular activities FOD+AG volunteers attend many Downs and Avon Gorge events. In July FOD+AG volunteers were alongside the Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project and Sustrans in support of Cycling Sunday. This was a wonderful celebration of all things bike and a treat to see so many youngsters {one still in nappies} enjoying a traffic free day on the Downs.

In August FOD+AG members provided a significant presence at the Bee Festival and at the Botanic Gardens. Our stand generated a great deal of interest with many questions about the future of the Downs.

Earlier this month FOD+AG volunteers had a stand at the Universities Fresher's Fair and were in attendance at the Peaceful Portway event.

Throughout the summer months FOD+AG in conjunction with The Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project have supported many walks and talks on a wide range of Downs's related subjects.

It was with great sadness that the FOD+AG volunteers who monitor the goats at weekends learned that one of the six had died. Investigations by the Downs Supervisor confirmed a fall

from one of the cliff edges after being pursued by a dog. The dog also died in the same incident.

It is important that this setback does not impact on the overall initiative to restore the Gully to its botanical importance. Committee may be interested to note that at the start of the project our own botanical expert Richard Bland observed 75 different plant species; in 2016 this was up to 129 and now stands at an impressive 135. A genuine success story.

FOD+AG volunteers are planning to organise a cleaning rota for the recently renovated Haven. The shelter has become somewhat a victim of its own success, ironically with smokers from nearby medical institutions.

Our members will carry out regular cleaning and monitor the condition of the structure.

Every year FOD+AG contribute in excess of 500 volunteer hours to the betterment of the Downs, this is exclusive of any support and organisational time required to maintain all its activities and inputs.

The FOD+AG committee strives to fairly represent the views of our members and all legitimate users of the Downs and will this year and next be looking to improve the diversity of our own organisation. We intend through our quarterly newsletter and at our AGM to encourage a wider range of representation than is currently the case.

Looking forward to next year FOD+AG will be celebrating its first ten years of existence. A range of activities will be presented to mark the event.

FOD+AG members sit on 'Your Downs' group committee and two FOD+AG members attend all Bristol Parks Forum meetings.

