

The use of land off Ladies Mile

2017 Annual Report to the Downs Committee

Bristol Zoological Gardens

3 January 2018

1. Use of the land

Since Bristol Zoological Gardens successfully retained the use of Ladies Mile, for a further three years, back in spring 2017, it has been well utilised on school holidays, public holidays and key weekends. Its use, for now, is complete until spring 2018.

From the table below, it is clear that it was utilised within the allotted number of days. The site has remained in good condition and well managed by the Zoo.

High level usage statistics

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Days used	41/45	27/40	-/35	-/30
Total cars parked	10,067	6,532	-	-

- Used 14 days fewer than 2016 (2016 allocation is 41 and 2017 is 40)
- 3,535 fewer cars parked than 2016
- During a school holiday at the end of May/beginning of June we were unable to use Ladies Mile as there were travellers on the area of the Downs next to the car park. Historically travellers on the downs have been problematic for parking in this area, with thefts of ropes, children running around cars and travellers trying to park on Ladies Mile and causing issues. The Zoo does its best to avoid interference and mitigate any issues.

The reduction in usage is within line with our ongoing aim to reduce visitor travel by car, which is excellent news, however it is clear that the car will remain a popular method of transport for families with picnics and young children.

- Traffic congestion and emissions caused by driving around the surrounding area (looking for somewhere to park) is mitigated by the ability to park efficiently on Ladies Mile.
- 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, other members of the public etc.

2. Sustainable travel, Travel Plan and Incentives in place

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. Real time information screens in the gift shop to inform guests of live bus time information.



Real time traffic information installed in the gift shop in 2017

2.2 Marketing measures and incentives for guests:

Bristol Zoo Gardens offer what we believe is the best discount available in Bristol and the Southwest to guests attending visitor attractions by sustainable modes of transport:

- a. **33% off** entry with proof of cycling to BZG (a cycle helmet, say)
- b. **33% off** entry with bus ticket. Available on First Bus and Wessex Bristol
- c. **33% off** entry with train travel when visitors travel by train and 2 for 1 entry with GWR
- d. **33% off** entry with Park & Ride (P&R)
- e. **33% off** entry with National Express ticket
- f. **33% off** entry with tourist bus 'hop-on hop-off' ticket
- g. Discounts are promoted through the website and member e-newsletters. On the home page there is a large 'Travel the right way' link to encourage guests to come by alternative modes of transport. The 'How to find us' button on the home page states that discounts are available for travellers by bicycle, 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 regularly promote these alternative transport offers.

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. Dedicated BZG 'Green Team' made up of a selection of staff to promote sustainable initiatives which includes travel.

3. Travel surveys

Travel Surveys have been conducted in most of the last 10 years and allows us to look at patterns of travel since 2010. Surveys are carried out in the peak season, July-August, often in the School Holidays.

Trends from 2010 show that around 75% of our guests travel over 10 miles to visit in peak season. This restricts opportunities for using public transport, with consistently around 80% of visitors (excluding school parties) coming by car. However, car occupancy is consistently high (3.2-3.6 people per vehicle). Our average guest car occupancy would be envied by most Bristol businesses and the wider city and means that the 'car', in this instance, is actually considered a 'sustainable mode of transport'.

In 2017 we have seen a significant increase in uptake of the sustainable travel incentives and believe this is helped by our generous **33% off** entry when travelling by other means. This is shown below as % of paid entry:

	June	July	August
2016	1.5%	1.5%	1.9%
2017	3.7%	3.0%	6.1%

Percentage of visitors who travelled by alternative transport other than the car

Staff car use had also reduced over the period from 51%, driving alone, in 2012 to 42% in 2017.



Guests enjoying a picnic with their families at the Zoo

4. Stewardship of the land

a. An independent ecological survey is undertaken annually and the results of the 2017 survey indicates consistently that there is no year-on-year deterioration of the sward ecology. The findings of the 2017 survey are similar to those of previous surveys, with pertinent points as follows:

- The composition of the vegetation has been broadly stable since 2006, when surveys began.

- The car parking area, when compared to the control area, has a similar diversity of plants of unimproved grassland
- There is no evidence of any ongoing decline in the diversity of plants of unimproved grassland in the car parking area.
- There is no evidence of any ongoing increase in the diversity of plants indicative of disturbed conditions in the car parking area.

The overall diversity of plants indicative of unimproved grassland has increased since 2006, providing some evidence of an increase in the nature conservation value of the area, which may be due to improvements in the management of car parking (parking cars in various different directions).

- b. BZG maintain close contact with the City Council, in particular the Downs Rangers, on the 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 both BZG and the City Council.



The land off Ladies Mile used for car parking on the key busy days at Bristol Zoo Gardens

Conclusion

Although fewer total users, and used on fewer days in 2017, Ladies Mile has been invaluable to the Zoo throughout 2017 for those spikes in visitor numbers on specific key dates. The site has been well managed by the Zoo's in-house Grounds Team and the condition of the site is in good health.

The Zoo appreciates the agreement which has been in place for many years now. An agreement which provides a much needed source of income for Bristol's parks and at the same time helps the Zoo ensure its guests can still visit and enjoy the Zoo at the busiest times of the season.

2018 will see further reduction in use, down to a maximum of 35 days.

Tom Hedges MRICS
Director of Estates
Bristol Zoological Society

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Tom Hedges – Director of Estates