

## AGENDA ITEM NO:

### BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

#### DOWNS COMMITTEE 19 November 2018

**Report of:** Service Director, Neighbourhoods and Service Director, Culture

**Title:** Downs Management and Events report

**Ward:** N/A

**Officers Presenting Report:** Melissa Inman, Senior Events Officer  
Ben Skuse, Downs Supervisor

**Contact Telephone Number:** 0117 9037141

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

##### 1. Policy

Not applicable

##### 2. Consultation

###### a) Internal

John Williams, Area Manager North.  
Becky Belfin, Parks Development Officer  
Sarah Blazier, Operations Coordinator North  
Ben Skuse, Downs Supervisor  
Gemma Dando, Service Manager  
Melissa Inman, Senior Events Officer

##### 3. Events Report; provided by Melissa Inman.

###### Proposed Schedule of Events 2019 (ongoing)

An update on 2019 events schedule will be provided pending a resolution at the sub-group meeting on 13th November.

###### Circus Tender

The Events Team are currently finalising the contract and process for the Circus on the Downs Tender beginning 2019.

The tender agreement will be a 3 year contract from October 2019, with option to extend for one year. Proposed fees will build inflation (RPI) into the final contract.

A further update will be provided pending a resolution at the sub-group meeting on 13th November.

##### 4. Parks Update

#### **4a) Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project Education Programme; provided by Mandy Leivers.**

From mid-September to early November we engaged with 1,059 people through the education programme. The planned public events included: one parent and toddler music event, two talks, one course, one children's half-term event, and two talks to community groups. We also ran an education session for a beaver group. Unfortunately, due to unseasonably warm and dry weather during September we had to cancel our fungal foray as there simply weren't any fungi to see on the walk.

We ran 16 education sessions for 383 school children. This included education sessions with children from Oasis Academy Long Cross and Bannerman Road Community Academy. It was the first time that these schools have visited us and are schools that we contacted as part of our Audience Development Plan project to widen the range of groups coming for education sessions.

At the other end of the education spectrum, we took 21 first year students on the UWE Foundation Degree in Integrated Wildlife Conservation on a guided tour of the Avon Gorge and Downs as part of their induction. We also had a stall at the University of Bristol Students' Union 'Welcome Fair' on the Downs. We had neighbouring stalls with the Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge in the 'Keep it local' tent. This event is a great opportunity for us to promote the wildlife of the Avon Gorge and Downs, the work of the project and explain about our volunteering programme. During the day we talked to 216 students.

We also held our two final 'Wild Adventures Family Project' sessions. Through this project we have been working with five refugee families in conjunction with Bridges for Communities, the Bristol City Council Inner City and East Bristol Health Improvement Team and Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge, as part of the Audience Development Plan. In our penultimate session in September the families learnt about the rare plants of the Avon Gorge and role that our goats play in their conservation. They loved visiting our goat herd in the Gully.

Our final session at the end of October began with the families learning to identify and find out about 16 tree species in a tree trail. Following this they came back to the Conservation Education Centre where the adults took part in focus group sessions which will be used to evaluate how the project has gone. It will take a little while to analyse all of the responses as the participants were speaking in Arabic through translators. A full report will be written in due course but it appears that the project has been really successful. Here is some of the feedback that the adults gave:

- They enjoyed the activities. Being out in nature they felt relaxed and happy. They described looking forward to the project every month and are sad that it has now ended.
- "We have really learnt from the project and we have learnt about the names of birds, trees and about history".
- For some the most important thing has been getting to know people from different countries. New friendships have formed through the project.
- All would come back to the Avon Gorge and Downs – though the cost of transport is an issue for them. The women wanted to come back and do the project again or do more. The children didn't take part in the focus groups discussions but instead created a book in which they wrote facts about the Avon Gorge and Downs, recorded things you can do when visiting and shared their favourite memory from the project. These included:
  - "The goats eat the trees so the rare plants have more room to grow".
  - "My favourite bit was using the binoculars to see the peregrine falcon".

We also held our final 'Downs Challenge' sessions with the children from Imayla (an organisation that works with children going through family difficulties). In our penultimate

session in September we challenged the children to 'Brave the dark' to find out about bats and moths. Despite being a bit chilly the children had a great time seeing serotine and common pipistrelle bats as well as a wide range of weird and wonderful moths in light traps bought along by the Bristol and District Moth Group.

During the final session at the end of October the children created a display to show what they had learnt and what they had enjoyed over the course of the five sessions with us. The young people were able to recall an amazing amount including the following facts that they incorporated into the display;

- "Surprisingly there is a type of tree called the Bristol whitebeam. Interestingly they only grow in the Avon gorge and nowhere else in the entire world".
- "Peacock butterflies rub they're (sic) wings together to make a hissing sound to scare off predators".
- "Peregrine falcons are unlike any other bird in Bristol. They are known to be the fastest bird in the whole world. Shockingly they can go up to 200 miles an hour".
- Several young people were very proud that they had managed to overcome a fear of spiders during the project, and others were proud that they had conquered the slopes of the Gully.

The children shared their experiences of the project with their parents who attended a celebration event at the end of the day. The display will remain in St Paul's Learning Centre café for a few weeks so that visitors can find out about the project and will hopefully raise awareness about Avon Gorge and Downs as well.

#### **4b) Management and Resources Downs Team Report; provided by Ben Skuse.**

To follow At last, we now have seen a couple of frosts which I hope will see the start of Autumn proper.

Grass cutting duties now behind us (hopefully), normal duties continue with the addition now of leaf collecting. Areas such as the Promenade in Clifton generate many tonnes of leaves which are removed by the team.

Back in the Summer I was contacted by staff representatives at Bristol Zoo and Wildplace. They were searching for solutions to keeping their Giraffes at Wildplace fed over the winter months. It turns out that Evergreen or Holm Oak serve as a useful supplementary feed for them and noticing that there are large numbers of this species of tree on many parts of the Downs they were wondering what opportunities there were to harvest some across the winter. Holm Oak is not a native species to the UK and does not help our management of Limestone grassland habitat areas as it shades out anything underneath the canopy and spreads really fast. On some areas of the Downs ( Zoo banks for example ) it is a very prominent species. As such I agreed that as we come across areas where the Downs scrub management plan has identified Holm Oak for removal I would notify Wildplace who could then come and take it away after we cut it down. Thus saving my team time as we do not have to spend time chipping it up. This partnership working seems to be going well so far and we'll see how it progresses across the Winter.

In the next couple of weeks I am going to be working alongside the Bristol City Council north area tree officer and Mandy Leivers to plan and implement a third tree trail on the Downs. This is planned to be on an area known as the "Granny Down" over on the Westbury side of Durdham Down.

Again alongside Mandy Leivers and FODAG members, I attended an initial meeting with Groundwork UK. It was useful to hear about their "kick the dust" project to use volunteers,

specifically young people, to help local authorities and friends groups to look after parks and open spaces. Unless told otherwise I intend to continue to explore this with them going forward.

Members may be aware that there is another parks department restructure planned. At this point I have no information on what this restructure might contain. I will keep members updated as I know more.

## **Health and Safety**

The owners of the Observatory have building works planned to start on Nov 19th. During this time to enable them to transport the spoil away from the works to somewhere where they can get it off site they have asked me whether they can temporarily close the middle footpath (for up to 3 weeks) up to the Observatory to allow for transporting the soil away. There are three footpaths up onto this site and this one is used the least so I think this is the best plan. I will be putting up signs informing of this from tomorrow. Because of the time of year the potential for ground damage is quite high so I will be carrying out a full grounds inspection with the owners pre and post the works to ensure they are held liable if damage does occur. Just as a reminder to members it is still the aspiration of the owner to install two further lampposts on the path going up to the Observatory. They have assent from Natural England and Historic England to do this and have identified a place to obtain lampposts that match what we currently have in this area.

The wall and railings at Sea Walls have had some initial remedial repairs carried out. We are having a structural engineers report produced so that we can ascertain what extent of repair is required and therefore the cost up to now have been minimal. However going forward depending on the findings of the report there may be a more significant spend required from this cost code. I will communicate these costs to the finance officer when I have them.

## **5. Public Sector Equality Duties**

5a) Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following "protected characteristics": age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:

- i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
- ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
  - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
  - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
  - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –

- tackle prejudice; and
- promote understanding.

## **6. Legal and Resource Implications**

The Clifton and Durdham Downs (Bristol) Act 1861 provides that the Downs should remain as a place for the resort and recreation of the citizens of Bristol, and that a committee should be appointed to manage them. The recommendations of this report are within the powers conferred by this statute.

**7. Land:** The land is under the control of the Downs Committee.

**8. Personnel:** Not applicable

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

Background Papers: None