



## Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge

November 19<sup>th</sup> 2018

FOD+AG welcomes the opportunity to update the Downs Committee on our most recent activities and some of the events planned for the coming months.

FOD+AG is committed to representing our members and all legitimate users of the Downs and to support the Downs Committee and the City Council in the good governance of the Downs.

In September FODAG manned a stand at this year's Freshers Fair. Our presence generated many positive responses and we hope to gather some new recruits from the student population.

On the second Sunday of every month volunteers will be out and about on the Downs carrying out a range of agreed conservation projects.

Later this week The Friends of the Downs will gather for the eleventh Annual General Meeting. FODAG as a representative body has over 200 members and we work continuously to increase the diversity of our membership.

The volunteer goat monitoring continues successfully and we have recently recruited a University Biology student to our ranks.

Despite numerous warning notices a few errant dog walkers still think it acceptable to take unleashed dogs into the goat compound. FODAG volunteers have reminded irresponsible dog owners of their obligation.

FODAG along with Mandy and Ben have had exploratory meetings with Groundwork South to discuss possible projects for the Lottery funded 'Future Proofing Parks' initiative.

Over the winter months FODAG members will be carrying out maintenance and minor repairs to the Victorian Steps. Remedial work actioned over the last couple of years means that the steps are now able to better withstand sudden flash floods.

On the last weekend of the winter months FODAG members will be out deep litter clearing from the parts of the Downs and Gorge inaccessible to mechanised clearance.

In addition, and in response to more general concerns FODAG have purchased a supply of litter pickers that are kept at the Downs Café.

This allows members of the public to borrow the equipment and make their own contribution to keeping the Downs litter free. If this proves to be popular we will increase the supply of equipment.

FODAG acknowledges support for this initiative from the staff at Café Retreat.

For the ninth year running FODAG volunteers have continued with the Butterfly survey. This important piece of work feeds into a National database.

One of our regular winter tasks is the building and maintenance of 'dead hedges.' Constructed simply from recycled staves and tree trimmings the dead hedges are designed to direct joggers away from the more sensitive areas of the grassland.

Work to remove pernicious Alexander plants from the Portway canopy will continue this winter. This little known but invasive species is in fact edible and sometimes known as Horse Parsley.

Working with the Bristol Astronomical Society and Mandy we will again be assisting with stewarding and refreshments at the Downs Star Party. The event held in mid-December gives visitors the opportunity to learn more about our night skies and to indulge in some festive cheer.

At the last meeting we learnt of the possible closure of the cast iron urinal at Blackboy Hill. It was with some disappointment that the possibility of closure became a reality. The structure has recently undergone a full renovation and has been granted a Grade 2 Listing.

FODAG strongly urge the Committee to make all possible efforts to get this vital community facility up and running again.

