

Developing a shared use path in conjunction with the Sea Walls café development

Proposal

1. Create a new shared use path along Downleaze and Rockleaze to encourage visitors to walk or cycle to the new café at Sea Walls
2. Develop a bicycle hire business near the Water Tower/Café Retreat, with a view to offering a franchise to increase income and improve access to more people from across the city
3. Reconsider the proposal for the Seven Sisters loop in the light of the café application.

Evidence

- “There is an appetite to develop utility and recreational cycling and pedestrian access to the Downs, including options to reconfigure the highways and changes to the open Downs by enhancing existing facilities and creating new ones. The result should be greater connection with the city, enhanced user experience, as well as contributing to reduced car dependence.” Place and Movement Draft Vision, March 2016.
- The development of a café at Sea Walls will mean that this part of the Downs will be an even more popular destination and a new shared use path would encourage visitors to arrive on foot or by bicycle thereby reducing congestion.
- Taking a decision to develop a shared use path along Downleaze and Rockleaze would strengthen the planning application for the café, as it would be referenced in the transport plan.
- The grass next to Downleaze and Rockleaze is in a poor state due to erosion from walkers and runners. There are very clear “desire lines” along its length. Formalising it into a path would protect the area from further erosion.
- With sensitive design with regards to materials, the natural beauty of the Downs would be maintained.
- Access for walkers, runners and cyclists would be greatly improved. In particular, the path would enable people in wheelchairs, on mobility scooters and with prams to get to the new café without navigating the driveways and side roads along the length of the existing Downleaze/Rockleaze pavements.
- The consistent success of the Cycle Sunday events over the past four years has demonstrated that there is great demand for car-free access to the Downs for people on bikes.
- If bicycle hire was available, the Downs could be accessed by residents from all parts of the City, as they could take a bus to Blackboy Hill or Westbury Road, and use a hired bicycle to explore the Downs.
- A business case for bicycle hire needs to be properly explored. One possibility in the short-term is for an existing bicycle hire company to provide and maintain bikes with hire payments managed by staff at the café.
- Current cycle infrastructure could be incorporated by joining the existing shared used path along the A4108 and the cycle path along Stoke Road. This would mean either widening the existing footpath along Roman Road and or building a short new section along the desire line next to the path.
- In the light of these suggestions and given the focus now on the new café at the Sea Walls, it is important to re-visit the Downs Place and Movement Framework and the suggested Seven Sisters Loop. This should be discussed by the whole Downs Committee.

Recommendation

1. The Downs Committee agrees to explore the cost of the shared use path and the business opportunity for bicycle hire.
2. A more detailed report is presented to the full Downs Committee in November.
3. At the November meeting, there is a discussion about the relative merits of the proposed new shared path and the Seven Sisters Loop.