

The use of land off Ladies Mile

2018 Annual Report to the Downs Committee

Bristol Zoological Gardens

11 January 2019

1. Use of the land

Since Bristol Zoological Gardens successfully retained planning permission for 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. The use of Ladies Mile, as an overflow car park for the Zoo, ceases over the winter until spring 2019.

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

1.1 High level usage statistics

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Days used	41/45	27/40	26/35	-/30
Total cars parked	10,067	6,532	4,008	-

- Used 1 day fewer than 2017 (2017 allocation is 40 and 2018 is 35)
- 2,524 fewer cars parked than 2017

1.2 Usage commentary for 2018

- 18 May 2018 there was a 'Mud Run' event set up within the Ladies Mile car park area which meant that had we wished to open the car park on that day, we would not have been able to.
- For ten days, between 20 June and 30 June 2018, the travelling community were set up adjacent to the car park, and the Zoo decided not to open the car park for this period. 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 continues to do its best to avoid interference and mitigate any issues.

The reduction in usage is in line with our ongoing aim to reduce visitor travel by car which again, year on year, is excellent news. However, it is clear that the car will remain a popular method of transport for families with picnics and young children, particularly in light of the advancements in hybrid and electric vehicle technology.

- 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. There were 31 days recorded through the summer of 2018 where we specifically did not use the car park.
- Note – others may drive across the land in wet weather, which is out of our control; e.g. Bristol City Council contractor's vehicles working in the area, other members of the public etc.

A rapid contour survey was carried out, in line with the planning conditions, to help monitor the condition of the site. Detailed survey information is available upon request. A further survey will be carried out after the end of the use in 2019.



Drone photograph of the Ladies Mile car park area - 2018

2. Sustainable travel, Travel Plan and Incentives in place

The Zoo continues to run a whole host of measures to support sustainable travel for staff and guests.

2.1 Physical measures

- Covered guest cycle parking racks provided in the North Car Park
- Secure cycle parking for staff in the West Car Park, Education Centre and Gardeners' Yard
- Changing facilities, shower facilities and lockers for staff
- 6no. Electric car charging points in the North and West Car Parks
- Real time information screens in the gift shop to inform guests of live bus time information.

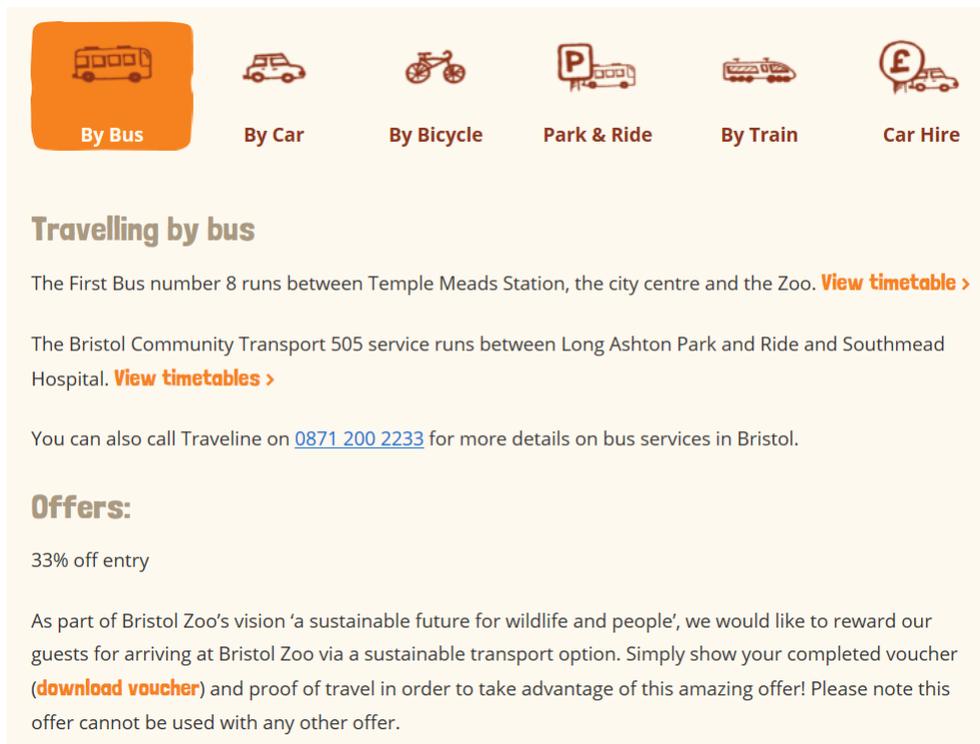


Real time traffic information installed in the gift shop

2.2 Marketing measures and incentives for guests

Bristol Zoo Gardens offer what is believed to be the most generous sustainable travel 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 when visitors travel by train
- 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. 'Members cycling stamp card' providing £5 off annual membership renewal in return for traveling by bike 5 times to the Zoo
- h. Discounts are promoted through the website and members e-newsletters. On the home page there is a large 'Travel by bus, bike or train for an exclusive discount' 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. The link to download the form to fill out to claim your discount is prevalent throughout.
- i. Social media is continually used to promote these alternative transport offers.



The screenshot shows a navigation bar with six icons: a bus (By Bus), a car (By Car), a bicycle (By Bicycle), a car with a 'P' sign (Park & Ride), a train (By Train), and a car with a pound sign (Car Hire). Below this is a section titled 'Travelling by bus' with text about bus services and a link to view timetables. It also includes a '33% off entry' offer section with details on how to claim the discount.

By Bus **By Car** **By Bicycle** **Park & Ride** **By Train** **Car Hire**

Travelling by bus

The First Bus number 8 runs between Temple Meads Station, the city centre and the Zoo. [View timetable >](#)

The Bristol Community Transport 505 service runs between Long Ashton Park and Ride and Southmead Hospital. [View timetables >](#)

You can also call Traveline on [0871 200 2233](tel:08712002233) for more details on bus services in Bristol.

Offers:

33% off entry

As part of Bristol Zoo's vision 'a sustainable future for wildlife and people', we would like to reward our guests for arriving at Bristol Zoo via a sustainable transport option. Simply show your completed voucher ([download voucher](#)) and proof of travel in order to take advantage of this amazing offer! Please note this offer cannot be used with any other offer.

Screenshot of the BZG website: Sustainable discount for traveling by bus, bike, park and ride and train



As part of Bristol Zoo's vision 'a sustainable future for wildlife and people', we would like to reward our guests for choosing to arrive at Bristol Zoo via a sustainable transport option*. Simply show your completed voucher and proof of travel as detailed below in order to get this amazing offer!

Postcode:

Sustainable discount voucher available to download ahead of the guest's visit

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 used to promote initiatives to all staff
- k. Staff intranet with travel information available
- l. Weekly staff Wild Times newsletter regularly features sustainable travel incentives for staff
- m. 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 the Zoo to look at patterns of travel since 2010. Surveys are carried out in the peak season, July-August, often in the School Holidays.

3.1 Guests

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 (3.61 people per vehicle in 2018, the highest for a decade). 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 2018 we have seen continued interest in uptake of the sustainable travel incentives since they were implemented in 2017, and believe this is certainly 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%
2018	2.4%	2.2%	3.2%

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

However, the 2018 figures show that visitors travelling by alternative transport has dropped off. Perhaps guests tried the alternative transport once and felt the discount did not compensate the increase in inconvenience or the increased struggle of the journey.

It is difficult to know what else the Zoo can do to encourage families with young children, buggies and picnics, where safety and convenience is such a high priority for them on a day out.

Travel by train was down in 2018, however there was significant regional disruption on the rail network throughout the year and this could have reduced confidence in any out of town visitors.

Key reasons given by guests for non-car travel being impractical were:

- Visiting with children, especially young children, and the equipment needed
- Guests with mobility or other access issues
- More than one bus/train required to complete the journey
- Expense of public transport.

Many guests were unaware of the Park & Ride service however would be willing to use such a service in principle, with the exception of those with young children. However, the P&R which serves the Zoo is not well situated for visitors from outside the city, nor locals.

3.2 Staff

Staff car use had also reduced over the period from 51%, driving alone, in 2012 and 42% in 2017, down further to just 30% in 2018.

Comments in this year's survey about improvements to work travel covered issues mainly outside our control such as:

- Improvements to cycle routes
- Reliability of public transport on existing routes
- Availability of suitable public transport
- Traffic and roadworks

3.3 The future

The Zoo's ability to influence visitor and staff travel is limited by the quality and variety of public transport available, and the level of trust which is put in it. As local public transport infrastructure improves, the Zoo must continue encouraging guest to travel by more sustainable forms, however if uptake does increase the current 33% discount must be reviewed as it will become less affordable for the Zoo. The Zoo's sustainable financial position is critical to the survival of the Zoo in Clifton, which provides over 200 jobs and is an excellent visitor attraction for locals and tourists.

The Metrobus does not go near the Zoo therefore unfortunately does not help, and the new train station at Portway may help train travel if there is better signage in place at Clifton Down railway station, however is still a while away from completion. The Zoo is currently exploring, with other local Clifton organisations, the options of car sharing and a community bus service which could develop in 2019.



Guests enjoying a picnic with their families at the Zoo

4. Stewardship of the land

An independent ecological survey is undertaken annually to provide information around the condition and any variances in the species of flora present.

4.1 The 2018 Ecological Survey

The findings of the survey are similar to those of previous surveys, and as follows:

- The composition of the vegetation in both areas has been broadly stable since 2006, although changes associated with the drought of 2018 are apparent in both the car park and control areas.
- The car parking area, when compared to the control area, has a similar diversity of plants of unimproved grassland but a slightly elevated diversity of plants indicative of disturbance.
- 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.

4.2 General condition

There is no evidence of any decline in the nature conservation value of the car parking area since 2006. Changes in the diversity and frequency of desirable species (limestone indicators) and of undesirable species (those associated with disturbed conditions) have been noted from one year to the next without any clear trend, or any ongoing divergence from the sward in the control area, being apparent.

The overall diversity of plants indicative of unimproved grassland increased between 2010 and 2015, 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). The number of these species recorded has since been stable.

The Zoo 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 and carrying out any repairs to the land where necessary.



Indicative car park layout; the car park has 4 rotating entrances, off of Ladies Mile, to mitigate wear

Conclusion

Although fewer total users, and used on fewer days in 2018, Ladies Mile has been invaluable to the Zoo throughout 2018 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.

2019 will see further reduction in use, down to a maximum of 30 days.

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Bristol Zoological Society

11 January 2019