

Proposal for a Car-Free Leisure Loop on Clifton Downs

Cycle Sunday, January 2019

“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.”

Downs Committee Draft Vision, March 2016.

Clifton Downs: A new approach to sharing space

This proposal outlines a car-free leisure loop around the Downs for walkers, runners, people riding bikes, and those using wheel chairs, mobility vehicles or prams. The loop would involve adding a section of new shared-use path, reconstructing the path next to Ladies Mile and reconfiguring Circular Road. It would improve access to, and enjoyment of, the Downs by all those who would like to explore it without needing a car, thereby encouraging active leisure and reducing congestion.

The proposed loop would be 2.3 miles in length and would run along Rockleaze and Downleaze, Circular Road, Ladies Mile and a short section of Stoke Road.

Why it is needed?

The popularity of the Downs as a place to visit, walk, run and cycle is well established. This popularity does lead to a number of management issues including erosion, as people follow “desire lines”.

The success of Cycle Sunday over the past four years and increase in popularity of cycling in Bristol both point to an unmet demand for greater safe access to the Downs by bike. A new leisure loop would also complement the proposal to build a café at the Sea Walls, encouraging people to arrive at the café on foot or by bike thereby helping to reduce motor traffic.

The scheme fits well with the aims of Bristol City Council in terms of improving public health and sustainable transport.

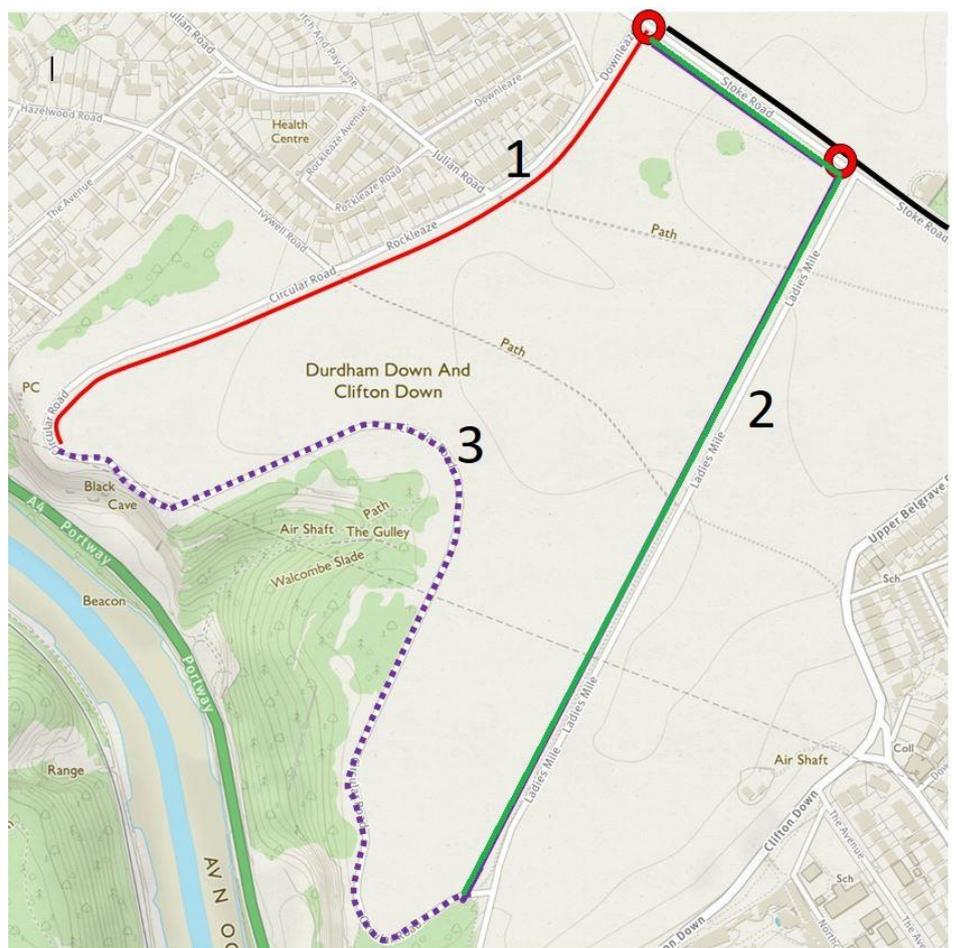


Figure 1 Map of proposed loop

Over the past few years, the Downs Committee has discussed options for improved pedestrian and cycling access to the area for the people of Bristol, but until now with no tangible outcomes.

There are shared-use leisure paths in comparable large parks elsewhere in the country. For example, Richmond Park, which now has a seven-mile shared path which runs near its perimeter. It was designed for recreation and with consideration for the landscape of the historic park.



Figure 2 Richmond Park

The Proposal

With sensitive attention to design, particularly signage and surfacing, the leisure loop could be developed in keeping with the landscape and ecology of the Downs, significantly enhancing the experience of those visiting it. The loop can be described in three sections:

Section 1: Downleaze and Rockleaze to the Seawalls.

Formalising the existing “desire line” made by walkers and runners, this would be a new 1km shared-use path, parallel to Rockleaze and Downleaze and leading to the Seawalls. For people with prams and those in wheelchairs, this would provide a safer and more attractive alternative to the footpath along Downleaze and Rockleaze which has many driveways and two roads to cross.

At the Seawalls, dropped kerbs would enable cyclists to join Circular Road and help people with prams and in wheelchairs to cross to the existing footpath on the other side of the road.

The path would be 3m wide to accommodate both pedestrians and people on bikes. Signs would make it clear that this was a shared space.



Figure 3 Downleaze and Rockleaze

If the path were built from tarmac with a buff coloured high friction surface, the cost to build this section would be approximately £150,000. This surface would be hard wearing and sympathetic to the locality.

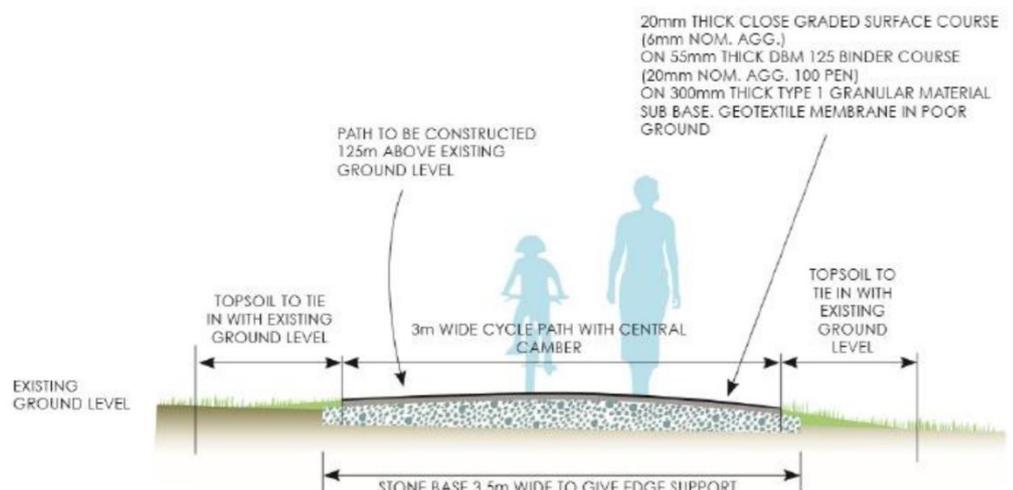


Figure 4 Proposed path construction

Section 2: Ladies Mile and Stoke Road

The existing, uneven path on the west side of Ladies Mile could be reconstructed to form a shared-use path for pedestrians and cyclists. Its design could reference the promenade feel of the avenue and the path could be routed to minimize the need to cut down scrub or trees. Its design and construction would mirror that of the path alongside Downleaze and Rockleaze.

Finally, the broad footpath along the south side of Stoke Road would be widened and made into a shared-use path. This would join up with the Rockleaze section of the loop. Construction costs for this section of the loop would be approximately £190,000.

Section 3: Circular Road.

Our ambition is for Circular Road to complete the leisure loop. There are a range of options:

- Car-free Sundays (temporary closures of Circular Road)
- Physical traffic calming measures
- Circular Road being made one way
- Closing Circular Road (keeping vehicle access to the Seawalls from Rockleaze)

One-way option: Changing the road priority to make it one way for motor traffic would free-up existing road space to allow a two-way segregated cycle route with no new hard surfaces. The current parking would be retained. A good quality pavement for pedestrians already exists along Circular Road. Decisions about the direction of traffic flow would be based on traffic assessments of current usage of the road and suitability of the junctions at either end.



Figure 5 Ladies Mile

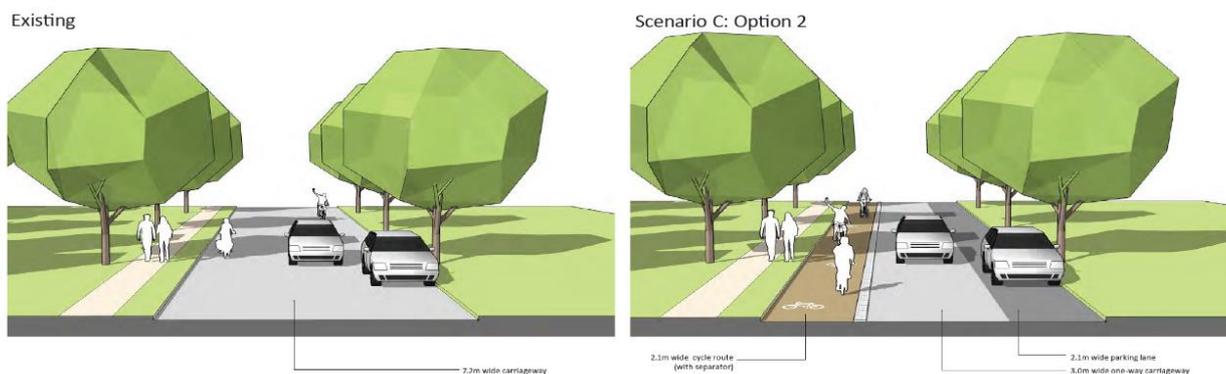


Figure 6 Circular Road – Existing

Circular Road – One-way to motorized traffic

Traffic calming: There have been on-going concerns about some drivers speeding on Circular Road. In order to enforce the 20-mph limit, physical traffic calming measures could be installed. One example would be flat top speed tables that are effective at slowing cars as it is not possible to “straddle” them.

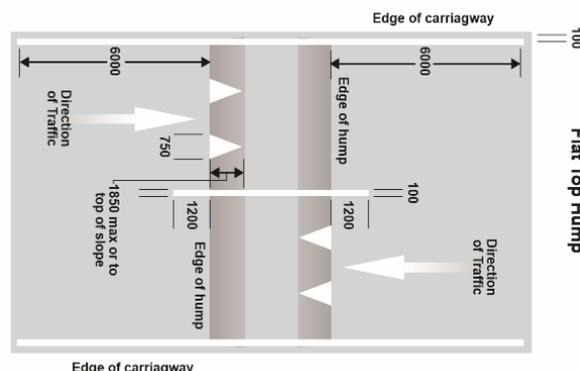


Figure 7 Flat Top Speed Table

Zebra Crossing on Stoke Road

The two sides of the Downs are currently separated by Stoke Road. Its traffic volumes, high kerbs and parked cars make crossing difficult. Many people do cross Stoke Road near the Water Tower/Café Retreat despite the lack of a crossing. A zebra crossing could be installed near the top of Ladies Mile and would make a great difference to accessibility. A zebra crossing with beacons would cost approximately £20,000.

Bike Hire

The Downs is a city-wide resource. We are proposing a bike hire business at the Water Tower/Café Retreat. This would enable people to arrive by bus on Stoke Road and then explore the Leisure Loop on a hired bike. We have been speaking to Jake Voelcker from Bristol Bicycles (some of you may have ridden one of their bikes at our Cycle Sunday events). They are very interested in working with the management of Café Retreat on a joint venture.

Next steps

We are really pleased to have the opportunity to present this proposal to the Downs Committee and would welcome the opportunity to have a more in-depth discussion with members of the Place and Movement sub-group at their next meeting.

We are working with Greenways and Cyclerooutes Ltd on this proposal. It is a charitable community benefit society. It supports groups like Cycle Sunday to develop new walking and cycling paths and was founded by John Grimshaw and Caroline Levett (Former Chief Executive and longstanding board member of Sustrans respectively). John has engineered many traffic free paths, starting with the Bristol and Bath railway path back in 1979. Brean Down Way and Waddesdon Greenway (near Aylesbury) are two recent completed projects.

Greenways can help us get this proposal developed and ready for planning. They have a proven track record for fundraising for projects such as this one and we will work with them to secure a small grant for the development phase and larger capital grants for the build.

References

City Design Group: *Downs Place and Movement Framework*. November 2015. Figures 2,3,6

Department for Transport: *Local Transport Note 07/1 - Traffic Calming*. March 2007. Figure 7

Greenways and Cyclerooutes Ltd <https://greenwaysandcyclerooutes.org/become-a-supporter/>

<http://www.johngrimshawassociates.co.uk/> Figures 1 & 4

Sustrans: *Cycling on Clifton and Durdham Downs*. June 2014

This proposal was written by Vicki Cracknell and Johnny Wood (Cycle Sunday) with advice from Greenways and Cyclerooutes and from Sustrans.