

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Downs Committee

28 January 2019 at 2.00 pm



Members Present:-

Councillors: Anthony Kenny (Vice-Chair - in the Chair) , Councillor Peter Abraham, Councillor Donald Alexander, Councillor Barry Clark, Councillor Kye Dudd, Councillor Christopher Davies, Councillor Paula O'Rourke, Ross Ancell, Jonathon Baker, Simon Cooper, Francis Greenacre, Mary Prior and Tim Ross

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Cleo Lake (Lord Mayor)

Officers in Attendance:-

Steven Riley, Ann-Marie Leighton, Jemma Prince, Ben Skuse, Becky Belfin, Jeremy Livitt

Apologies for Absence: Ben Wilson White

Other Attendees: Vicki Cracknell and Jonny Wood (Cycling Sunday), Mandy Leivers (Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project, Tom Hedges (Bristol Zoological Gardens), Owen Dow (Secretary of the Bristol Downs Football League)

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

In the absence of the Lord Mayor, the Vice Chair took the chair for the duration of the meeting.

He informed all parties what to do in the event of a fire alarm.

All parties introduced themselves.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from the Lord Mayor and Ben Wilson White.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – Monday 19th November 2018

Resolved – that the minutes of the above meeting be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the minute on Declarations of Interest being altered to confirm that Ross Ancell declared an interest in the Quartet Community Foundation as the chair of Churngold which is involved in this project through the Churngold Environmental Fund.



4. Declarations of Interest

Jonathon Baker declared in interest in the minutes of the previous meeting in his capacity as a trustee of the Quarter Community Foundation.

5. Public Forum

The Committee heard the following Public Forum statements:

(1) Robert Westlake – Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge

In response to a question from Robert Westlake concerning the future of the urinal at the top of Whiteladies Road, Councillor Don Alexander confirmed that it was listed and any alterations would require planning permission. He confirmed that work was currently being carried out on a planning application to put gates across the site which could be closed at nights.

(2) Jon Usher – Sustrans: Agenda Item 7 – Leisure Loop

The Committee noted this statement supporting the Downs Leisure Cycling Loop proposed by Cycling Sunday.

(3) Downs For People: Peter and Jenny Weeks: Zoo Parking on the Downs – Agenda Item 13 (The use of the Land off Ladies Mile 2018 Report to the Downs Committee by Bristol Zoological Gardens)

The Committee heard a statement by Peter Weeks expressing concern at the current car parking arrangements on the Downs and stating that these were against the national and local planning permission guidelines. Peter Weeks welcomed the decision by Bristol Zoo not to seek further planning permission on the site and that alternative options were being considered.

(4) Jeremy Pilling – GCP Chartered Architects Limited - The Repair and refurbishment of Durdham Down Water Tower, Stoke Road, Clifton, Bristol BS9 1FG

The Committee noted that Jeremy Pilling was unable to attend as he was on an urgent site visit.

It was agreed that the Committee should formally request that they be invited to a meeting with GCP and Bristol Water for discussions as part of a pre-application stage. Francis Greenacre and Jonathon Baker were agreed by the Committee to participate in this process.

It was also noted that there were a number of events taking place on the Downs during the period of the proposed works (July to October 2019) which would require the GCP and Bristol water to contact the Events and Maintenance teams to ensure that the works avoided any potential problems.



Action: Jeremy Livitt to write to GCP to advise them of this request and to pursue this directly with the above nominees and with the events and maintenance teams.

6, Cycling Provision Alongside A4018

Steven Riley introduced this report and explained that a consultation process was taking place concerning improved transport provision alongside the A4018 which would include 5 public drop ins, including three in Westbury-on-Trym library and 1 in Henbury.

In response to a member's question, confirmed that it was beyond the scope of his project to seek Section 106 funding for the remainder of the Seven Sisters Loop, which Ben Skuse confirmed was only alongside Saville Road as Stoke Road already has a cycle path beside it.

During discussion of this item, it was noted that the provision of a new footpath was quite a complicated issue and would require a range of difficult decisions.

The Committee agreed that, following the consultation, a report would need to be brought back to a meeting of the Movement and Place Sub Group for further discussion.

Resolved – that this matter be further discussed at a meeting of the Movement and Place Sub-Group once the consultation process has been completed.

Action: Steven Riley

7. Leisure Loop

Vicki Cracknell and Jonny Wood gave a presentation on this issue and made the following points:

- A leisure loop was proposed as a means of addressing the concerns of some cyclists who were not currently confident around parts of the Downs
- Many people used cyclists as a mobility aid. Discussions had taken place with Gordon Richards (Chair of the Bristol Disability Forum) concerning difficulties along the current route for disabled people as there were many driveways with dips for them to reverse across the Downs to reach the Sea Walls
- The path along Ladies Mile had been identified as very difficult for cyclists and therefore a new path was proposed
- At a recent event, 3000 people had attended. Cycling Sunday had been overwhelmed by the level of support they had received
- The proposals for cycling would also help in encouraging children to get exercise on the Downs
- The proposed traffic free loop around the edges of the Downs would be set back from the Downs and would consist of a hard surface path. It would need to be 3 metres in width
- It was proposed that the existing path along Ladies Mile would be replaced by a new one with tree guards put in place to minimise the disturbance to the roots.



- The path would be widened to use as a shared path for cyclists and pedestrians. Whilst it was acknowledged that there were concerns about shared paths, particularly in the city centre, they had proved successful in Stoke Park, Blaise Castle, as well as elsewhere in the country such as Richmond Park and the Stray in Harrogate. Experience showed that these worked well in leisure areas as opposed to commuter areas
- It was proposed to make circular road a one way road with physical traffic calming measures such as speed bumps being proposed to address any problems with speeding
- Some preliminary enquiries had been made with charitable trusts to obtain funding. A proposal to apply for £5,000 to £10,000 funding from the Quartet Foundation was being prepared

Councillor Don Alexander stated that improvements to disability access needed to be carefully considered since parts of the Downs were dangerous for a scooter.

In response to Downs Committee members' questions, Vicki Cracknell made the following points:

- Following discussions with Sustrans, it had been considered that 3 metres was required to enable shared use of paths. In addition, paths would need to be a machine sealed surface and not loose for safe disabled use
- Costs were estimated at £150,000 for Downleaze/Lockleaze and at £190,000 for Ladies Mile with an estimated 15 year life span. Details of maintenance costs would be provided to the Movement and Place Sub-Group if it was agreed to consider these proposals in more detail
- The proposals would require the corner football pitch near the Sea Walls to be moved forward about 3 metres
- A lot of initial work in obtaining funding had already been carried out
- One key aspect of the proposals was to demonstrate that not all cyclists were the same and that leisure cyclists had different needs and behaved very differently when cycling in leisure areas. They would be unlikely to cycle through the area at speed

Resolved – that this issue is referred to the Movement and Place Sub-Group for further consideration.

Action: Jeremy Livitt

8. Matters Arising From the Events and Finance Sub-Group

The Committee noted the notes outlining the key issues arising from the latest meeting of the Events and Finance Sub-Group held on 9th January 2019.

Note: The Events and Finance Sub Group are still in discussion with Bristol Pride regarding their event proposal.



9 Event Schedule

Ann-Marie Leighton introduced this report and made the following points:

- Members' attention was drawn to the list of events and to the dates fixed for Funderworld and the new Glow Run Event
- There was a new Rotary Event for 2019 as set out in the schedule
- Arrangements for the Downs concert were indicated, together with details of the proposed fees
- Circus Tender – Tony Hopkins would be providing the circus for 2019. It was noted that he replaced the existing provider Moscow State Circus but that this company had been the circus provider in the past

10 Finance Update

Jemma Prince introduced this report. She pointed out that it was the intention to ensure that next year's budget would break even with an incremental saving of a £100,000 contribution to the Downs Committee.

Committee members noted that, whilst they adopted the budget, they did not recognise that Bristol City Council's role in the Act of Parliament had been dismissed.

11 Downs Maintenance Update

Ben Skuse introduced this report and made the following points:

- (1) There were four weeks remaining for the Scrub Management Plan prior to the nesting bird season
- (2) Meetings had been held with the organisers of a number of events concerning maintenance including the Glow Run and the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project (for the implementation of the tree trail on the Granny Run)
- (3) A catch fence had been built at the recommendation of engineers following a recent rock fall in the Bridge Road Valley area
- (4) Details of further Bridge Valley Road closures would be provided to the clerk for circulation
Action: Ben Skuse to provide to Jeremy Livitt for circulation

Francis Greenacre expressed concern that the original plan for lighting on the path leading up onto the Clifton Observatory Hill was different from the proposed plan set out in the report. He stated that he would speak directly with Ian Johnston concerning this issue. **Action: Francis Greenacre**

12 Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project Annual Report 2018

Becky Belfin introduced this report and made the following points:



- The habitat management works in the gully would be taking place next month. This site was difficult to manage and involved employing a company using rope access
- The health and safety of goats in the gully area was being monitored

Mandy Leivers made the following comments:

- The Education Programme was run by her and Gill Parsons. Slightly fewer community projects events had been delivered in 2018 and had received good feedback
- Development of an audience development plan had been completed by the end of 2017, which had focused on gaps in current provision. The first year of its implementation in 2018 had involved 1749 children and had received excellent feedback from teachers
- A grant from the John James project had helped to bring people across the city to learn about the Downs. Work had also been carried out with five refugee families as part of a very successful social integration project throughout the city about British wildlife – the Wild Adventures Family Project. It was hoped to repeat this project in 2020
- The Downs Challenge had been developed to help children facing difficulties to enable them to develop an attachment
- The project had engaged with 8000 people in community events such as the Festival of Nature and had taken part in a meeting of the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquaria
- Funding had now been received for the Botany Without Boundary Project which was aimed at tackling isolation and which looked at how people had collected herbaria
- The Lord Mayor would be launching the Granny Downs Tree Trail at 10.30am on 12th April 2019

Mandy Leivers thanked the Committee for their continued funding support. The Committee congratulated the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project for all the work they were carrying out.

13 The Use Of Land Off Ladies Mile – 2018 Annual Report to the Downs Committee by the British Zoological Gardens

Tom Hedges introduced this report and made the following comments:

- Details of the level of usage of the Downs and cars parked were set out in the report. It was noted that 2,524 cars had been parked in 2018 than in 2017
- Bristol Zoo was encouraging guests to travel to the zoo by alternative transport
- Details of travel surveys were set out in the report, including guest and staff usage. It was noted that there had been a reduction in staff car usage between 2012 and 2018 of 21%
- Encouragement of sustainable forms of travel would continue. However, the current 33% discount would need to be reviewed as it was unsustainable

In response to a member's question, Tom Hedges indicated that he could examine the possible use of taxi fleets as a means of reducing single usage of vehicles in travelling to the zoo.



14 Update – Health and Future of the Downs Football League

Owen Dow (Secretary of the Bristol Downs Football League) was introduced to the Committee by Councillor Kye Dudd and made the following points:

- He gave a brief history of football on the Downs - following the 1861 Downs Act, informal groups played football on the Downs, including the first competitive playing of football in 1890 and the first football league being created in 1896. By 1905, there were 7 clubs playing home matches there
- Following a request to the Lord Mayor, the Downs League had been formally created in September 1905 with three divisions of ten teams. There were initially no changing rooms and results were communicated in local papers and lists of players displayed in Giles Brothers at the top of Whiteladies Road
- In recent years, the number of pitches had decreased to 29 and there had been a reduction in the number of players, in common with other sports due to the impact of work, an increase in spectator sports, other family commitments and cheap travel abroad
- Small sided football had grown but increased costs relating to the costs of training and insurance meant that it was no longer inexpensive and very little sponsorship was available
- Football could continue on the Downs with the right facilities. There were 1500 players in the league with 700 players participating each weekend
- Two Saturdays were currently lost in September in order to accommodate clubs from other leagues.
- There were also youth and women's leagues

He stated that any suggestions for the future of football on the Downs would be welcomed.

It was noted that the Hackney Marshes League had been very supportive in helping the Downs Football League in resolving financial difficulties that they had.

The Downs Committee recognised the importance of football for the Downs, both historically and currently, for all the people of Bristol. The Downs Football League was thanked for their work in maintaining the football pitches on the site.

16 Any Other Business

(1) Sea Walls Café



It was noted that this issue had been added to the agenda at the request of the Lord Mayor.

Jonathon Baker stated that a planning application had now been submitted for the original site and would now be considered by the Development Control Committee in March 2019. The application was part of a concept to provide a replacement building on the existing dilapidated site. It had been advertised in the Evening Post. Revenue obtained would go to the Downs and would ensure that a service was provided to the community.

It was confirmed that the recommendation for this application would not be known until the agenda for the meeting was formally published.

(2) Recovery of Ground at the 3 Sisters Site

Ben Skuse reported that a second attempt was underway to recover the ground at this site to enable grass growth on it.

16 Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Downs Committee was scheduled for 2pm on Monday 8th April 2019 in the Writing Room, City Hall, College Green, Bristol.

The meeting finished at 3.35pm

CHAIR

