



## Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge

18 November 2019.

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

FOD+AG remains committed to its core values to represent legitimate users of the Downs and to support the City Council the Downs Committee and the operational team in the good governance of the Downs and Avon Gorge.

In early October FODAG welcomed fifty plus members and guests to the launch of a display of Downs and Avon Gorge photographs. Images submitted were of an incredibly high standard and following the launch were presented to a wider audience to be viewed at the AXA building.

FODAG working jointly with the Downs & Avon Gorge Biodiversity Education Manager have been involved with numerous events, walks and talks to several disparate groups and have more planned for the coming months including the winter star party.

Our winter maintenance programmes are now underway. Regular activities undertaken will include, goat monitoring and monthly deep litter clearance from the less accessible areas of the Downs. For the nimble footed we plan to remove deep seated litter from areas of the Gorge.

Conservation work which will target the Iron Age Fort as well as regular planned scrub clearance projects plus refurbishment of the dead hedges.

FODAG will also be investigating the possibility of corporate work days to further facilitate these important projects.

We will again look to carry out winter maintenance tasks on the Victorian steps.

At the end of last month FODAG reported to the Downs supervisor that lead had been stripped from the roof of the Haven shelter. FODAG volunteers are working with Ben to effect repairs.

At the September meeting the Downs Committees endorsed a joint FODAG and Redland & Cotham Amenity Society proposal to replant the fallow beds at the Thomas Memorial with an alternative perennial planting scheme. Working with the Downs supervisor and the City Councils Nursery manager plants suitable for the location have been agreed and an order placed. Planting is planned to be carried out in spring 2020.

Volunteers overseen by the Downs Supervisor will carry out the planting and attend to the ongoing maintenance requirements.

FODAG continues to receive regular questions from our members, local residents and the general public about the numbers of unauthorised encampments around the Downs in recent years and the proliferation of van dwellers on the Downs highways.

Main concerns include, disregard for the byelaws, slow response from the responsible agencies, abuse of current parking restrictions, environmental issues, anti-social behaviour, waste of scarce resource and the apparent inequitable application of the law.

FODAG urges the Downs Committee to work with stakeholders to explore all avenues and support initiatives that can bring about an improvement in this currently undesirable situation.

Robert Westlake

Chair

Friends of the Downs & Avon Gorge

