

# Minutes of the Downs Committee

18 November 2019 at 2.00 pm



## Members Present:-

**Councillors:** Councillor Jos Clark (Chair), Councillor Kye Dudd, Councillor Peter Abraham, Councillor Barry Clark, Councillor Christopher Davies, Councillor Paula O'Rourke, Ross Ancell (Vice-Chair), Jonathon Baker, Gillian Camm, Mary Prior and Tim Ross

## Officers in Attendance:-

Ben Skuse, Kevin Jay, Amanda Sharpe, John Atkinson, Ed Plowden and Jeremy Livitt

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed all parties to this meeting, including those Merchant Venturers who had recently been elected to replace those who had recently retired.

The Committee also noted with sadness that Councillor Mike Langley had passed away since the last meeting and had been replaced by Councillor Barry Clark on this Committee.

### 2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Simon Cooper, Peter Rilett and Councillor Donald Alexander.

### 3. Membership for 2019/20

RESOLVED – that the following membership of the Downs Committee for 2019/20 be noted.

#### Councillors

Lord Mayor – Councillor Jos Clark  
Councillor Peter Abraham  
Councillor Donald Alexander  
Councillor Barry Clark  
Councillor Chris Davies  
Councillor Kye Dudd  
Councillor Paula O'Rourke



## Merchant Venturers

Ross Ancell – Master  
Jonathon Baker  
Gillian Camm  
Simon Cooper  
Mary Prior  
Peter Rilett  
Tim Ross

### **4. Chairing Arrangements**

The Committee noted the following arrangements for chairing meetings for 2019/20:

Councillor Jos Clark will Chair the Downs Committee in her capacity as Lord Mayor until the Annual General Meeting of Full Council in May 2020.

It was noted that, at their Charter Day Elections on 9th November 2019, the Merchant Venturers appointed Ross Ancell as the Master of the Downs Committee for 2019/20.

RESOLVED: that the above appointments be noted.

### **5. Retiring Members**

The Committee noted the retiring Merchant Venturer members of the Committee: Tony Kenny and Francis Greenacre.

**RESOLVED: that the retirement of Merchant Venturer members of the Committee be noted and a letter thanking them for past services to the Downs Committee be sent.**

**Action: Jeremy Livitt**

### **6. Dates and Times of Upcoming Meetings**

The Committee noted the following proposed times for 2020 meetings of the Downs Committee:

**Monday 27 January 2020 at 2.00pm**

**Monday 30 March 2020 at 2.00pm**

**Monday 29 June 2020 at 11.00am (Merchants Hall)**

**Monday 21 September 2020 at 2.00 pm**

**Monday 16 November 2020 at 2.00 pm (AGM)**



It was noted that some Merchant Venturer representatives had indicated they might find the 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020 meeting difficult to attend and that this date might subsequently be altered.

**Resolved: that the Downs Committee meets on the above dates and times subject to any potential change of date for the meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020.**

## 7. Delegations

Following some discussion, it was agreed that future meetings of the Movement and Place Sub-Group should have a permanent chair to be elected as the first 2020 meeting of the Movement and Place Sub-Group.

**Resolved – that the membership of the Events and Finance Sub-Group and Movement and Place Sub-Group is noted and also the above arrangements for chairing for future M and P Sub Group meetings.**

## 8. Minutes of last Meeting - 23rd September 2019

### Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project

Following questioning, it was confirmed that the commitment to enable an application for a £250,000 grant for a three-year expansion of the project through the National Lottery Heritage Fund would be made via the release of £30,000.

It was agreed that an Action Sheet would be produced for all future meetings. **Action: Jeremy Livitt**

**Resolved – that the minutes of the above meeting be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair. Action: Jeremy Livitt**

## 9. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

## 10 Public Forum

The Committee received the following Public Forum statements:

Statement Number 1: FODAG – General Issues (Attached and also Included In Main Agenda Set)

Statement Number 2: FODAG – Woodland Planting – Relating to Agenda Item 12 – Matters Arising From the Movement and Place Sub-Group on Wednesday 6th November 2019



Statement Number 3 - Peter and Jenny Weeks – Overflow Zoo Car Parking on the Downs

### **11 Matters Arising from the Events and Finance Sub-Group - Wednesday 30th October 2019**

The Committee noted the key issues arising from the Events and Finance Sub-Group.

It was noted that the reference to “change in management” should be removed.

### **12 Matters Arising from the Movement and Place Sub-Group - Wednesday 6th November 2019 - Summary Notes, Recommendations and Reports From The Meeting**

The Committee noted the key issues raised at the Movement and Place Sub-Group.

Members discussed recommendations from each as follows:

#### Richard Bland Memorial

The Committee noted that the recommendation from the M and P Sub-Group was for the creation of a copse and spinney.

**Resolved – that the Downs Committee approves the creation of a copse or spinney as outlined in the report.**

**Action: John Atkinson**

#### Cycling Provision Alongside the A4018

The Committee noted the recommendation to refer this matter to the main Downs Committee for decision.

The following comments were made during the debate:

- Some members were opposed to the shared cycle and footpath usage as there would always remain the risk to toddlers and there was no means to control the speed of cyclists
- Some members who supported the proposal stated that the proposal would ensure that the use of an unofficial cycle path would be improved. Signs would be used for cyclists and pedestrians even if it could not be policed
- The 2016 option had been a complete holistic proposal. Two shared use paths did not seem sensible – a better approach would be for cyclists to use a gravel path and for pedestrians to use a new path
- The creation of the path has been proposed to alleviate a traffic problem which was a separate issue. It would be easier for traffic to give way on a tarmac route



- The proposal should not be supported but instead the Committee should request consideration of two separate paths for pedestrians and cyclists with a favoured approach for pedestrians on the path

Officers made the following comments:

- In 2016, there had been a consensus reached that there was a need to improve the cycling and walking offer and that the current situation on the highway was not conducive to feeling safe
- The area which would be affected by the proposal contained in the report would affect three events on the Downs and could cause future problems

The Committee voted on the proposal contained with the report and this vote was LOST (Voting – 3 for, 7 against).

Following some further discussion, it was

**RESOLVED (unanimously): that officers examine a possible segregated option for the A4018 with a separate path for pedestrians and cyclists**

**Action: Ed Plowden/Steven Riley**

#### Leisure Loop Update

The Committee noted the discussion of this item at the M and P Sub Group meeting.

Following a further brief discussion, it was

**RESOLVED: that a Special Committee is set up in January 2020 before the next scheduled meeting of the Downs Committee for Richard Goldthorpe to provide a “rebrief” of the Downs Place and Movement Framework to allow members to fully understand the original commission and the conclusions of the associated workshop in considering the Leisure Loop proposals. It was agreed that if possible this meeting should include details of the traffic survey currently being carried out and that Vicky Cracknell (Cycle Sunday) should also be invited to attend this meeting”**

**Action: Jeremy Livitt (to set up and confirm the meeting), Richard Goldthorpe (to provide the briefing for the Committee)**

#### **13 Downs Maintenance Update (Ben Skuse)**

The Downs Maintenance Manager introduced this report. The Committee noted the followings:

- There is a move away from prolonged grass cutting
- On 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> October, Bridge Valley Road had been closed to in bound traffic to allow the removal of some loose sandstone blocks. The works had overrun but officers were happy that a



further rockfall risk had been removed. A further build-up of rocks would be removed in works on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2020

- A vehicle had lost control on 9<sup>th</sup> October and had crashed into the sea walls. The costs had been subsequently recouped
- Winter working was taking place to get the ground ready to produce a surface for next year's events
- The Council had decided to procure a tractor. It was noted that measures were being put in place to resolve this issue with Bristol City Council
- Police are enforcing a requirement for parking lights on certain roads on the Downs where there were speed restrictions. It was noted that the Government had recently announced legislation to allow Police enforcement. This has assisted parking services in their enforcement activities

**Resolved – that the report be noted.**

#### **14 Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project Update (Mandy Leivers and Simon Garrett)**

Mandy Leivers introduced this report and made the following comments:

- There were an estimated 594 people who had been through the education programme between September to mid-November 2019
- Talks about fungi and the "creepy creatures" half-term event had been particularly good
- There had been a tour of the Gorge and Downs
- The Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project had operated a stall at the Freshers Fair
- Walks were provided to help people suffering from isolation
- A great deal of work was taking place on obtaining lottery heritage funding
- The Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project education officer's contract had recently come to an end and therefore Mandy Leivers would be the only person delivering this service until March 2020

**RESOLVED – that the report be noted.**

#### **15 Events Report (Amanda Sharpe)**

Amanda Sharpe introduced this report and made the following comments:

- In view of the condition of the ground at the end of its event, the Bristol University Student Union Welcome event needed to consider ground protection for any future events
- The Circus Mystery Shopper had provided good feedback. It was noted that the circus had not been that full. Feedback from the Circus was still to come.
- The Ladyboys Event was provisionally fixed for next year
- Pride – This event had gone well. Future dates post 2020 had been considered. They were invited to come back for 3 years with a fee to be set for each of these years



- Downs Festival – a fees proposal was still awaited
- Circus – 2020 would be Year 2 of the Downs Circus Tender
- Foodies Festival – if this returned, it would be May 2020. A proposal concerning fees was awaited.

**RESOLVED – that the report be noted.**

**Action: Amanda Sharpe**

#### **16 Finance Update - Budget and Forecast 2019/20 (Kevin Jay)**

Kevin Jay introduced this report and drew members' attention to the fact that income was £400,000 with a net deficit of £30,000.

It was noted that the Committee does not agree that the Council does not provide funding for the Downs Committee.

**Resolved – that the report be noted.**

#### **17 Finance Update - Budget and Forecast 2019/20 (Kevin Jay)**

##### The Theft of Lead in Downs Historical Structures

It was noted that lead had been stolen from the Haven, Café Retreat and Water Fountain. The Downs Committee was responsible for monitoring repairs by the relevant leaseholder to buildings. The use of Smart Water would be investigated.

##### Football League

Councillor Kye Dudd advised the Committee that the annual meeting of the Football League would be reported to the next Downs Committee meeting.

The Committee then briefly discussed the proposed rates for 2020 Downs Football League

**Resolved – (unanimously) that the rates for 2020 remain the same as for 2019.**

**Action: Kevin Jay/Christine Lucas/Emma Bird**

#### **18 Date of Next Meeting**

The Committee noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 2pm on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2020 in a Committee Room, City Hall, College Green, Bristol.



Meeting ended at 3.30pm

**CHAIR** \_\_\_\_\_

