



STATEMENT NUMBER 2

Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge

January 27th 2020

FOD+AG welcomes the opportunity to update the Downs committee on our recent activities and our plans 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 November the Friends of the Downs met for its AGM. Current committee members stood down and were then re-elected unopposed. The event was well attended and questions were fielded about zoo parking, number of Downs events and managing travellers and van dwellers.

FODAG presented to members an Action Plan detailing what were considered the key issues most likely to impact on the Downs now and in the near future.

The plan is designed to be flexible and respond to changes and challenges as and when they occur. The intention, is that the document will assist our organisation to stay focused and move forward in the coming years.

Early in December FODAG along with the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project co-hosted the annual Star Party near Sea Walls. Invited guests were able to take full advantage of the Downs Dark Skies status and were treated to fascinating tales, seasonal singing and a fantastic display of the planets and the moon. Experts with sophisticated equipment were on hand to describe the wonders of the Universe. This ever-popular event generated a great deal of interest and positive feedback from attendees.

In the winter months FODAG volunteers will be out and about across the Downs carrying out a range of maintenance tasks. This will include annual works to the Victorian steps, refurbishing the dead hedges, cleaning of the Downs shelters, deep litter forays, and goat monitoring. This is in addition to running our regular scrub clearance programmes.

Working with Mandy Leivers FODAG continues to support the 'Your Downs' initiative. This is a small group dedicated to bringing a diverse range of citizens

from across the city. The group works particularly with disadvantaged and under represented communities. A series of walks and events have been planned for the coming year.

The proposal agreed by Downs committee at their September meeting to permit a joint funded scheme by FODAG and the Cotham & Redland Amenity Society to reinstate the planting at the Thomas Memorial is a step closer to coming to fruition. The City Councils Nursery manager has measured the site, calculated plant numbers and selected specimens appropriate for the location.

Volunteers will assist the Downs maintenance team with site preparation and planting in early spring.

FODAG goat monitors turned out on Christmas and Boxing Day to attend to the animals welfare.

Next month FODAG will take a stand at the Students Union Volunteer Fair. The intention is to raise the profile of our organisation, engage with the student population and to recruit volunteers for Downs projects. This is in addition to our attendance at last year's Downs Freshers Fair.

FODAG acknowledges the rights of disparate groups and of those who choose an alternative lifestyle but supports proposals from the 'Respect the Downs' group in their quest to bring about an improvement in the way the City Council manages persistent traveller encampments and van dwellers on the Downs.

Robert Westlake

Chair

Friends of the Downs & Avon Gorge

