

## **REPORT OF THE DOWNS MAINTENANCE MANAGER**

Into the depths of Winter, typically for this time of year large parts of the Downs are flooded !

Waterlogging of the ground makes the job pretty difficult for the next few weeks. But as ever in this industry you have to work with the weather.

Daily duties continue. Daily litter and bin emptying never stops being required it seems at whatever time of year !. Daily Goat monitoring has become supplemented with the added duty of trying to tempt them with some feed that hopefully might assist us in an attempted round up in the Spring.

Speaking of the Spring, it is at this time of year that we carry out bench cleaning and repairs. We are also refurbishing 4 of our 8 picnic benches that have become damaged/vandalised since their placement 4 years ago.

Before things became too wet we managed to fertilise our football pitches and event areas. Now that since then we have had so much rainfall, that fertiliser will have nicely washed down into the ground where we want it and should hopefully ensure good grass coverage on both our football surfaces and event areas for the coming year. Care was taken in this application to leave wide margins next to our wildflower meadow areas. Sand has also been applied to help with drainage on the football pitches.

I need to inform members of the situation on Bridge Valley Rd in the next few weeks. Following some toing and froing with my colleagues within highways around scheduling road closures a plan has been set that will see a number of weekend road closures of Bridge Valley Rd between now and early March. Initially my team, plus me, will be carrying out the annual vegetation cut back on the rock faces above the highway of BVR. This allows for rock face inspections to be carried out. After that the next phase of the works from before Christmas will begin. This will involve the removal of the accumulated rock from within the catch bund area. This accumulation of rock is from the rock mass that was brought down from its unstable position above the traffic lights at the bottom of BVR in late October last year. This part of the works will largely be carried out by contractors. My teams focus will be on the extraction and removal from site of a Whitebeam ( apparently only one in the world ! ). We hope to remove the root ball from the ground intact and take it to the Bristol University botanic gardens where it will be planted and hopefully survives going forward.

I attend a working group with the Bridgemaster and emergency services, plus colleagues within BCC public health around lessening the incidences of people attempting to take their own life in and around the bridge and gorge. At the last meeting it was put to me that some of our fence lines could have Samaritans signs put onto them. Similar to those that are on the bridge. I have asked for further details, quantity/designs etc and I would bring these to this committee for approval before agreeing their installation.

Finally members will remember the approval of the Richard Bland Copse a few weeks back. Following this approval a date of Monday March 23rd has been set for the planting. My team will be assisting as necessary with any preparatory works required. Also a small event is being planned for May whereby Sheep will be brought to the Downs for a day. This is to ensure grazing takes place and commoners rights are maintained. More details of that to follow later in the year.

