

If the first part of the Summer was very much defined by Coronavirus government lockdowns and guidance, the second part of the Summer has somewhat returned to normal. The intense crowds of people that we experienced in May and June have abated and things have been relatively calm recently, (modified car meets notwithstanding !!)

Daily duties have largely followed the regular Summertime regime of a clear up of the Downs to then enable grass cutting activities to proceed. Daily Goat checks continue and they seem in fine fettle at this time. Across the Summer many more people have found their way into the enclosure for a look and therefore our daily checks have been more important than ever. We have suffered some damage to a portion of the enclosure fence line, mainly caused by people continually wanting to access the cliff tops to sit and admire the view. We have had to carry out more litter picking inside the enclosure than ever before this Summer. There will be some extra costs associated to this fence line repair works and I will report these to the finance and events sub group.

Despite still not really knowing what Downs football will look like this year, we have had to make our usual preparations in terms of football pitch provision. We have initial marked 25 pitches back onto the Downs to be ready for when the season begins. I would say that the football pitches are going to be in very good shape this season. Halting football in March allowed us to carry out re-seeding much earlier in the year. Allied to the continual heavy rain and sunshine that we are experiencing in late August early September, the grass coverage on the surfaces should be excellent for play.

High winds in the same late August period has seen the team have to carry out a number of emergency chainsaw jobs as trees and pieces of trees have blown down in many places across the Downs. There has been quite a lot of clearing up to do which you would not really expect in the Summer.

Along with a return to football, another sign of a potential return to normality has been the return of events to the Downs. Team Loves Breaking Bread seems to have gone well and we are expecting the Circus in its usual slot in October. I will be interested to see the ground when Team Love leave site after Breaking Bread, Given the length of time that they have been on site some element of grounds repair is inevitable. I will be assessing that with them when we carry out post event inspections in early October.

Finally it has been nice for myself and the team to hear the many positive comments about the upkeep of the Downs during this period. In particular people commenting through the prism of the current Covid situation. People realising that it has been super important to have a well-kept extensive green resource nearby to allow for them and their families to escape the pressures of living with this pandemic for a time. It is not always easy given the amount of people who have come this Summer and there have been problems at times but we are not alone in the big daily clear up. Many members of the public are also contributing to this now. It makes quite a big statement I believe, for people to see members of the public picking up litter, it sets an example that might make people think about how much they bring to the Downs, consuming it all and no doubt having a great time, but unfortunately then believing that it is ok to just get up and leave it all here.

Let's see what next summer brings!

Ben Skuse 28th August 20