

STATEMENT NUMBER 3

Date: 03 September 2020

“Cycle Sunday” Plans for The Downs

Dear Committee,

In the August 2020 edition of The Bristol Nine” magazine we are encouraged to get involved on this subject.

I have already commented briefly on the subject in my letter to the A4018 Improvements Team on 15 February 2019, para 4. but I welcome the opportunity to comment in greater detail.

I have walked the proposed routes on the Downs a few weeks ago, and I am totally opposed to the proposed changes for the following reasons:-

A. I do not accept that there is “unmet demand” for more cycling routes or improved cycling routes on the Downs, a claim frequently made by Cycle Sunday. Cycle Sunday has achieved huge changes already in and around Bristol and I just wish they would leave our precious Downs alone and untouched.

B. The proposals, if implemented, will attract “the wrong type of cyclists”. The natural paths already on the Downs are quite adequate for the leisurely cyclist riding at a modest pace and taking in the views. These plans would very much encourage the “speedsters”, lycra clad racers riding multi-gear thin sports type bikes, no doubt with intimidating dark goggles etc. The claim by CS that the plans would encourage less motor traffic to the Downs is nonsense – quite the opposite as these types of cyclists put their bikes on their cars and drive to selected routes. Very soon word would spread that if one wants a really fast unobstructed 3 mile route head for the Downs.

C. The Downs is not A PARK, and it is very important that it must never be seen as such. The quickest and most effective way to destroy the uniqueness of the Downs is to convert them to a Park.

D. Cycle Sunday seem to hold extraordinary influence and prominence with Bristol City Council and this really needs to be addressed. Walkers and motorists and the general public seem to be treated as “also rans”. This is all just wrong and very undemocratic.

E. If the Downs Committee is determined to implement these proposals, and, as said, I am totally opposed, I trust they may take the following points into consideration please:-

Should the tarmac drives planned be placed where the current natural paths are they would seriously impact the whole appearance of the Downs as the current paths are several metres inset from the trees lining the Downs by the main roads. So walkers

would have to walk through the trees, and some meters again over grass, and again over the new cycle paths, to gain access to the Downs proper. This of course brings the danger of being hit by riders going too fast. This is particularly the case in respect of the route along Saville Road, Rockleaze, down to the Circular Road at Seawalls.

I see no reason at all for any additional paths at Ladies Mile, or along Westbury Road.

I assume all trees currently in place will remain untouched.

The proposed plans, if implemented, will require significant track signage and probably road signage, and in total would be the first move towards turning the Downs into yet another Bristol Park, a playground for cycling speedsters, a very real danger to walkers with families and pets. The advantage that walkers enjoy over cyclists at present is that the natural paths do not encourage fast/reckless cycling.

I ask you all to please reflect on the heritage of the Downs; it needs to remain where, at a push, one could imagine sheep grazing. It has, over the past twenty years, become a very busy and active place, far removed from the original intension of providing a quiet rural space close to the city of Bristol for relaxation. That was the original intention and vision, and we all should be a little modest and a little humble, and value what we have been given by our thoughtful and caring forbears, and do what we can (which frankly amounts to interfering with it as little as possible) to maintain that vision.

The wonderful Downs, so close to the busy city, should surely be a place primarily of quiet solitude, a place to relax and enjoy the magnificent views – it should not be seen as primarily a place to exercise. It simply cannot be both.

Thank you,

Yours Sincerely,

Richard Hensey

c.c. for info: Councillor Steve Smith, by e mail.