



## STATEMENT NUMBER 4

Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge

September 2020

### Statement to the Downs Committee.

FOD+AG remains committed to preserve, conserve and enhance the overall and several distinct environments within the Downs and Gorge for the benefit of all legitimate users and to support the City Council the Downs Committee and the operational team in the good governance of the Downs and Avon Gorge.

Like many organisations the FODAG committee has been unable to meet as often as we would like. We have however managed outdoor meetings and remained largely operational. Some planned events and activities have been deferred or cancelled. We are following City Council advice for volunteer activity and plan to continue where we can do so safely. This winter we will once again be organising regular deep litter forays across the Downs. We have programmed maintenance of the Haven and adjacent information panel; the Victorian steps and we plan to repaint the White tree.

In response to concerns raised by our members two committee volunteers arranged to interview Tom Paine the organiser of the Breaking Bread event and were reassured that the event was professionally run. Concerns regarding, parking, noise, lack of consultation, intrusion and the impact on neighbouring businesses were largely addressed. Reservations about the escalation of the venture remain. FODAG acknowledges the importance of income generation in the current climate and continue to support appropriate activities.

Many members and the general public have contacted FODAG alarmed at the illegal gathering of motorists last month at Ladies Mile. This unregulated event brought over 300 cars to the Downs and surrounding roads. Members will be well aware of the danger, anti-social behaviour and disruption reported widely in press and television coverage. FODAG intends to support the Respect the Downs group and seek to meet with the Police to see how a repeat of this type of event can be best avoided.

In our last report to committee we highlighted that there is an apparent increased level of mis-use of the Downs not previously evident with regular flagrant breaches of the byelaws.

FODAG and other local groups are keen to see what steps the Downs committee and the relevant authorities intend to take to prevent similar occurrences and what further measures can be implemented to address enforcement of the byelaws and The Road Traffic Act.

Since lockdown our quarterly Newsletter has been restricted to an electronic version. Members may have noticed that the last edition of the Newsletter carried some small ads.

This is offered free to help support local businesses during the pandemic. We intend to revert to hard copy for the Autumn edition.

To further enhance the recently replanted beds at the Thomas Memorial and in consultation with the Downs supervisor FODAG intend to fund and underplant the herbaceous specimens with a variety of spring bulbs. This will provide year-round colour and interest. We will also canvass establishments local to the memorial and see if there is any interest in supporting the project going forward.

FODAG committee members met with the proposers of the Downs Loop for a guided tour of the proposed route. This was an opportunity to raise concerns posed by members about the concept. There are reservations about the need for the scheme, issues about possible conflict of using a shared path and loss of greenspace. FODAG members and our committee are divided but on balance have agreed to support the proposal going forward.

Robert Westlake

Chair

Friends of the Downs & Avon Gorge

