

REPORT OF THE DOWNS MAINTENANCE MANAGER

Autumn has arrived with some high rainfall periods recently and we are back to managing ground conditions and worrying about where we can and can't go without causing too much damage or getting stuck!

Daily duties continue pertaining to the goats and litter. As we start to have two matches of football per week now the weekly pitch mark becomes a must do and football pitch maintenance activities become ever more important to maintain a decent playing surface. Tractor mounted chaining and spiking activities will be carried out as required across the winter and we plan to add some sand to help with drainage.

As mentioned Bristol University are back playing on a Wednesday afternoon now. They have adjusted their KO times to ensure that they are all free of the pitch by the time my team arrive to dismantle the kit and they, like Bristol Downs league, are using anti-bacterial spray liberally on balls and posts etc., pre, during and post-match.

For now both football seasons are going well. As with everything else right now we'll watch this space for changes and keep being flexible in our thinking.

So having firmly parked the grass maintenance for another season now, we pick up the Downs scrub management plan for a sixth winter. For this year I have identified the heavily scrubbed area between our depot and Worrall Rd. We have not done anything in this area so far and there are plenty of examples where we are losing grassland areas to scrub. The aim will be to open up areas to a regular mowing regime again next summer and holding back and halting the non-stop encroachment onto the limestone grassland habitat that the plan tries to maintain.

In this period we intend to install 4 new bins and 3 memorial benches have been bought. The bins will replace some of our oldest stock that are in need of replacement. The new bins will be installed on the same spot. They will be situated largely in the area between Sea Walls and Birdwatchers and one on Observatory Hill.

Leaf collecting on the Promenade area will commence once all the leaves have blown down. And similarly as the leaves fall and accumulate we will keep footpaths clear in this Autumn period.

The popularity of having a memorial bench at the Downs never seems to abate, and as mentioned 3 will be installed this winter, bringing in a revenue of £2,400.

We will, once again this winter try to keep the Giraffes at Wildplace in Evergreen Oak. This species (tree !) has taken over large parts of the zoo banks and other parts of the Downs over the years. It is not a native species to the UK and due to nature of the way it grows and spreads can negatively impact the limestone grassland habitat that we try to protect at the Downs. As such we identify trees to remove and Wildplace staff come and take it away to feed Giraffes over the winter months. The evergreen nature of this Oak meaning it has foliage throughout the winter.

The Circus Montini has left site after a short extension. Due to the work that goes on throughout the year to manage this area to be fit for events the site held up really well. I had good communication throughout with the organiser about the ground conditions and they managed to get off in dry conditions and the site will require minimal work to recover.

Breaking bread should be free of site around November 13th. Again I have been in regular dialogue with Team Love during the period that they have been at the Downs. The extended duration and the nature of the water tower site into the Autumn will inevitably means a process of ground work that

will start as soon as they leave and end with the first event on that site next year. We will work with the conditions and our expertise to provide a site fit for next years programme of events at the Downs, whatever that might be.