



## Report of the Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge.

**Introduction:** The Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge welcomes this opportunity to update the Downs Committee on our recent activities, achievements and our proposals for the future.

FOD+AG remains committed to our core principal to represent all legitimate users of the Downs and whilst retaining its independence will actively support the Committee on a range of projects.

**Activities and Achievements:** FOD+AG continue with regular volunteer activities across the Downs including, goat monitoring, butterfly surveys, litter collections, star parties, clearing pernicious weeds, maintaining dead hedges and scrub removal. In addition volunteers have undertaken further works to the refurbished Victorian steps and in a joint initiative with Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society undertook a complete renovation of the Downs Haven.

This year we have updated our website, introduced a Downs phone app and now have a Facebook page. Volunteers attend many Downs and Avon Gorge events, including, a stand at the Kite Festival, Portway Sunday Park and the Bee Festival at the Botanical Gardens.

FOD+AG members organise numerous walks and talks on a range of Downs related topics and members attend Bristol Parks Forum meetings and sit on the Your Downs Group.

FOD+AG also produces a quarterly magazine with a circulation of almost 200

FOD+AG has played a key role in recent important Downs projects including the Victorian steps renovation and previously took a lead role on the Downs Committee sub-group in preparing the documentation for the traffic and parking restrictions currently in place around the Downs.

On an annual basis FOD+AG contribute in excess of 500 volunteer hours to the betterment of the Downs, exclusive of any support and organisational time required to maintain all its activities and inputs.

It is FOD+AG's intention to continue examining current key issues that significantly affect the Downs and to bring to the attention of the Committee concerns that have been raised with us. This may include concerns about topics such as:

{a} The use of the Downs as a car park by the Zoo.

{b} Intensity of use or overuse of the Downs as an event venue.

{c} The Movement and Place study and its over emphasis on accommodating cyclists.

{d} Income generation, what criteria are to be used when assessing the benefits of increased income against any negative impact and how, and on what, would any additional income be used.

{e } The Downs budgets, are difficult for the layman to understand and need to be more transparent and detailed. FOD+AG would like an improved grasp of the Downs finances.

{f} The choice of possibly inappropriate catering outlets that may be detrimental to the environment.

These are the topics that are regularly raised by FOD+AG members and by the general public.

**Moving forward:** In addition to our regular activities FOD+AG volunteers intend during the coming year to:

[a] Work with Council Officers to carry out an asset Survey of the Downs structures. There are over twenty and many are listed. This includes drinking fountains, memorials and shelters. A report will brought back to the Committee.

{b}FOD+AG will lead on an initiative to install information panels at the Haven, the Victorian steps and at the site of the Old Tramway.

{c} We intend to increase our membership through an intensive recruitment drive.

{d} We will hold our annual general meeting in November for all FOD+AG members. Guest speakers have been invited to discuss a range of Downs related subjects and of course Members of the Downs Committee are most welcome to attend.

{d} A social evening in early September, held on the Downs, is becoming a FOD+AG tradition and it is hoped it will continue this year, with all members of the Downs Committee cordially invited to attend.

Thank you Lord Mayor.

July 4<sup>th</sup> 2016