

Downs Maintenance Report – Ben Skuse, Area Supervisor

Firstly, it is nice to be able to start a report that does not mention either a lockdown or associated restrictions for the first time since Jan 2020.

High Summer on the Downs, the daily focus is very much on litter removal and removing from site, the many tonnes of rubbish left behind by the many people enjoying our wonderful green space. The costs associated with this process, the drain on the team's ability to be getting on with anything else at times, plus the sense of disillusionment that none of this waste is going to be recycled is beginning to be a big concern. Something needs to change in this regard. It feels like we cannot carry on in this way. Bristol Parks Dept and Bristol Waste Company need to come together here to find a solution.

Our grass cutting regime continues in earnest as does football pitch renovation and seeding. Daily Goat checks also continue. Our 4 new Bagot Goats have fully integrated into life in the Gulley now since arrival in March. Happily they do seem to have lost some of the tameness that they came in with. Their propensity to approach people boldly looking for some food was not ideal when they first came in. But they seem to have attained a bit more wildness now which is good to see.

Events wise, Comedy Garden have come and gone and the event organiser was happy with how it went. The circus site was in good shape when they arrived to begin build and the weather remained fine for the duration so there was hardly any ground impact to be concerned about which is always pleasing.

Breaking Bread are still with us on the much discussed water tower site. My team duck in and out periodically to carry out grass mowing. Due to the duration of their stay and the time of year that they will be breaking down in, a significant amount of ground reinstatement is inevitable but we will come onto that in the Autumn.

I have had meetings with organisers of both the Race for Life and the BU SU welcome fair to prepare for their events later this year.

One negative point to report. It is likely that we will be losing 2 veteran Ash trees from the main meadow area of the Downs. Having reported to the tree officer that a large piece had broken from the canopy and was left hanging dangerously in one of the trees, the tree was inspected and found to be succumbing to Ash die back. The dangerous branch was removed but the long term outcome for the tree's may be complete removal. This would be a shame as Ash trees at this veteran status are amazing for bio-diversity and present welcome shade for school groups on Mandy Leivers environmental education sessions. However the North Area Arboriculture Officer will make this call on the grounds of safety, so we will see.

3 more positive notes to end with:

Members may be interested to hear that the Downs will be featuring in an upcoming BBC natural history unit production, Green Planet. I did some filming with them in early June. Scheduled to go out in Jan 2022.

I have engaged with UK government Kickstart scheme and have a new member of staff for 6 months. The scheme is aimed at giving young people recently out of school but not getting into long term employment an opportunity in work. Matthew started with us on June 2nd and will work with us for 25hrs per week until Dec 2nd. These 25hrs are funded by the Department of Work and

Pensions. Hopefully this will work out well for both parties, we definitely could do with an extra pair of hands and Matthew can get a good amount of work experience on his CV for the future.

Finally my ongoing thanks as ever to FODAG.

- Dead hedge renovation and rebuild.
- Extra daily Goat checks around the time our new arrivals came in.
- Re painting the White Tree.
- Weeding and maintenance at the Thomas Memorial plant beds.

To name but a few things they have contributed to Downs upkeep since the last report.