

Downs Management Report – November 2022

Last report of the year.

Another extremely busy year, no real Covid issues to speak of. What we did have to contend with were red weather warnings for storms and extreme heat. The event portfolio returned largely to normal and with the ground being so stressed from the high temperatures I was certainly nervous in some areas that it would not recover at all. This allied to the high risk of fire meant it was a worrying time. However as ever mother nature seems to know what is required and provided conditions that helped recovery. The conditions that were required to balance up and repair the damage have been the conditions that we have had. A longer warmer autumn with sufficient rainfall before frosts have arrived has allowed the grass to keep growing for longer than usual. It has also facilitated extra grounds re-instatement works to be successful because we still had conditions for grass seed germination which in a normal year is not the case.

So, with the work that the team put in allied to favourable weather conditions we arrive at this point with the ground at all four event sites and other areas of high traffic and footfall looking good and in a favourable condition.

However, at this juncture I would like to state to the committee that it is important that you recognise that we work the Downs hard. The frequency and intensity of the activities that go on at this site is really high.

With the football twice weekly, with events and the fact that the Downs is used so heavily with normal parks activities, throw in damaging weather events. We put this ground through a lot at this moment in time and I think it's important to recognise that.

It remains essential to have a team of staff with the right equipment and skills to be based on site. This means they can react quickly to different weather conditions and other factors that require fast attention.

Our usual line up of winter works is now in full swing including:

- Leaf clearance from footpaths and the Promenade
- Downs scrub management plan
- Evergreen Oak removal from zoo banks
- New memorial bench provision
- Existing bench maintenance
- Provision of football for BUSU and BDL football
- Daily litter clearance and bin emptying (this job does not lessen into winter as it once did. We now have a community of people who live at the Downs who use our bins for their personal refuse removal)
- Daily Goat checks

As ever my thanks to both FODAG and the community payback scheme for their ongoing assistance with various important tasks.