

## **Downs Management Report – 25 April 2023**

This period, the span between the finish of the winter programme and the beginning of the summer programme is generally a waiting game dictated by the elements.

When will the ground dry up sufficiently to be able to confidently access all parts without causing damage ?

When will the grass get going ?

What is the weather like on/around the bank holidays ?

What is the aftermath from Funderworld ?

So with the team based at the Downs we watch and await the answers to these questions and then react accordingly.

The Downs football seasons come to a conclusion with the BDL cup final on May 6<sup>th</sup>. Evening matches are through some of April. How many fixtures we have played on evenings is dictated by how many fixtures were lost to cancellations during the season.

Following the conclusion to the seasons we swiftly get out onto the surfaces and assess where re-instatement is required. More topsoil and grass seed is added. This concludes by end of May to give time to bed in before the following season commences.

Preparations for grass mowing are carried out, this involves clearing brash off the ground, lifting tree canopies and generally checking and ensuring any hazards that would affect safe mowing procedure are removed.

The team have jet washed off a proportion of our bench stock and we/alongside our community payback team have been repainting and wood staining for the summer season.

I have been in meetings with the event organisers of Funderworld, Pride and Forwards events. I have also attended the FODAG stakeholder meeting and the Avon Gorge and Downs wildlife project meeting at the conservation centre on former zoo site.

The plan is to continue our regime from last year where we identified verges to leave unmown for habitat and food source for invertebrates and promote tree health. There were a couple of areas where this presented a problem to us from a maintenance point of view but the large majority will remain under this regime for another summer season.

Observatory Hill access is still an issue. Whilst the business still requires the access point from the junction at Bridge Rd for its waste transfer vehicles we are still going to have a problem with excessive footpath erosion all the way up to the building. A new bollard has been installed as the last one was broken. This can alleviate some of the problem by taking control of deliveries it is the waste transfer vehicles that are the most problematic. If the owner can get assent from Historic England to carry out building/construction works on a scheduled ancient monument then the plan to create a new access point by widening the middle footpath into an access point will be the best solution. We can then look to do something about the surfacing at the current access point.

Ivywell Rd has been dug up recently as part of the wider Wales and West gas utility works. People have attributed this to the damage that is happening to the Downs alongside the road. I can report that this assertion is incorrect. The road here is too narrow for parking and 2 way traffic. Causing vehicles to drive onto the Downs to pass each other. This problem was happening a long time before

Wales and west utilities arrived to carry out the recent works. Either a kerbway needs to be installed along the Downs edge or traffic can only be one way. I will continue to be in communication with highways colleagues about this to see if they will push it up the their list of highways works projects/priorities.

I want to finish by giving my thanks as always to FODAG volunteers for their welcome assistance with the Downs war on litter. I would also like to thank our community payback team for the valuable time they give us carrying out dressing room cleaning and bench maintenance to name just two of things.