

## Downs Committee

### Downs Advisory Panel

Earlier in the year working groups of the Downs committee and the Friends of the Downs {FODAG} met and discussed the possible formation of a Downs Advisory Panel. This was debated and a Memo of Understanding and a subsequent Agreement document that clarified some of the points in the MoU was further agreed and was signed off by both parties.

FODAG would like to thank members of the Downs committee working group for their help and advice in bringing about an initiative that may turn out to be an historic step in the evolution of the Downs.

The Agreement details an arrangement whereby FODAG would seek to form a representative body that could act as a conduit for Downs stakeholders, neighbours and legitimate Downs users. The Panel will seek to discuss issues that affect the Downs and its users and offer opinions, advice and solutions for the better governance of the Downs

A well-attended consultation meeting indicated strong support for the creation of a Downs Advisory Panel and FODAG took on the responsibility for its formation.

It was agreed that a Panel of twelve would be a reasonable working number, with a degree of flexibility to bring in additional members as and when required for more specialist advice and will include a position for a Downs coordinator when appointed.

The Advisory Panel is to be known by the acronym DAP and it was further agreed that FODAG would be the lead partner and would chair the Panel meetings.

To date the core Panel, stands at 9 including 3 from FODAG, 2 from the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Group, 1 Merchant Venturer, 1 City Councillor, 1 Downs Supervisor and 1 representing the Sneyd Park Residents Association. {SPRA}

The Panel are: Robert Westlake, {FODAG} Dave Jones, {FODAG} Bob Bell, {FODAG} Anna Stevens {AG&DWLP} Katy Grant, {AG&DWLP} Ben Skuse, {Downs supervisor}

Paula O'Rourke, {Councillor} Robert Bourne, {MV} Alan Jenkinson, {SPRA}

Critical to the operation of the Panel will be communication. How do stakeholders and Downs users raise concerns that they want brought to the attention of the Committee? To facilitate enquiries FODAG have set up a dedicated email address and a contact telephone number. FODAG will publicise the fact of the existence of DAP through its monthly Newsletter, quarterly Magazine, the Down app, local papers and various social media outlets. In addition, we will inform the groups that were invited to the consultation meeting. It is anticipated that the DAP partners will be able to do a similar exercise through their own outlets.

It is envisaged that the expertise contained within in the Panel will be able to deal independently, speedily and directly with many of the issues raised without ever having to come before the Committee.

It should be noted that any individual or organisation will still retain the right to present Public Forum Statements and the Downs Committee as dictated by the Downs Act will always have the final say.

The inaugural DAP meeting took place on the 9<sup>th</sup> June at the Zoos Education Centre but due to timings for submission of Downs committee documents it is not possible to report on the outcomes. A verbal update to the Committee will be presented by the chair of DAP at the June meeting of the Downs Committee.

Robert Westlake

Chair

DAP