



**September 2023**

**Public Forum Statement**

FOD+AG welcomes the opportunity to update the Downs committee on our most recent activities and some of the events planned for the coming months.

FOD+AG remains committed to its core values to represent legitimate users of the Downs and to support the City Council and the Downs committee in the good governance of the Downs and Avon Gorge.

Last month FODAG representatives met with the Master, the Downs Supervisor and three members of our Police Neighbourhood Partnership team. The purpose of the meeting was to quiz the officers on how they police the Downs and look to how further improvements might be achieved. Some positive outcomes included an improved visible presence and better lines of communication. We now have direct email and telephone contact details to speed up reporting lines. Officers also accepted invitations to talk to the Downs Advisory Panel and FODAG's AGM. Officers explained the difficulty of priorities and managing finite resources but were keen to point out the importance of incidents being reported. Just over a week ago and to continue improving our working relationship with the Police FODAG joined local officers at a bike marking event and beat surgery at Seawalls.

FODAG has been busy recruiting new members by organising open events on the Downs, talking to people, finding out what concerns them passing on information on how the Downs work and how they can help us to help the Downs. To date we have successfully recruited a dozen new members.

FOD+AG are delighted that in a new poll conducted by Smart Energy UK Clifton Downs came out top as the local beauty spot most residents admired. Second was Ashton Court followed by Clevedon Pier. Victoria Bacon, Director at Smart Energy GB said: "It is clear that people in Bristol value the environmental benefits of their local hotspots as much as their beauty." "That's why it's so important that we find new and innovative ways to protect our environment".

When it comes to looking after the countryside, (86% per cent) are proud of the preservation work that goes into conserving our green spaces.

Repairs to the vandalised tongue and groove boarding at the Haven shelter have been completed and work to remove the graffiti will be undertaken in the next few weeks.

Last month FOD+AG volunteers were in attendance at the Bee and Pollination Festival held at the Botanic Gardens. FOD+AG are influential in monitoring the activities of our pollinators and carry out regular transects that feed into a national data base. In addition, a talk was delivered to the Friends of Old Snyed Park Nature Reserve.

FOD+AG has received a request from the Students Union to provide a day's volunteer labour for thirty students at the Downs. We will be identifying suitable tasks and the day is planned for sometime next month.

FOD+AG will shortly be resuming regular deep litter clearance duties. This sees volunteers delving into less accessible areas of the Downs to remove accumulated rubbish.

Downs neighbours frequently comment about damage to the edges of the Downs caused by indiscriminate parking. A particular problem seems to be with contractors' vehicles wishing to park near the property that they are working on. FODAG has recently intervened in an incidence at Westbury Park where trucks and even a skip were parked on the Downs. A reminder from FOD+AG about Downs byelaws resolved the issue. We are planning a similar exercise for infringing vehicles parked on the Downs near Wills Hall.

The Downs Ambassadors continue their sterling work keeping an eye on what's going on at the Downs. These regular observations feedback to a coordinator for logging and when required appropriate action undertaken.

FOD+AG has recruited a committee secretary and will hold its AGM on the 6<sup>th</sup> December.

Robert Westlake

Chair.

