

# THE DOWNS COMMITTEE

## Clifton and Durdham Downs (Bristol) Act 1861

### Report of the Infrastructure Task and Finish Group

13 November 2023

#### Final recommendations from the Infrastructure Task and Finish Group

##### Improvements to the toilets on Circular Road

In order to progress to build the café and toilet block, which the DC has planning approval for, we would need to seek a derogation of the 1861 Act. We took legal advice which persuaded us that the matter should no longer be pursued. The reasons were:

- Bristol City Council would have to make the application, it is not within the scope of the Downs Committee to do so;
- We were told that a request for a derogation would not be viewed in a positive light by members of the House of Commons, as it would be seen as a vexatious attempt to get around the limitations of the Act. The advice from the lawyers in Portcullis House was that if the Act isn't fit for purpose for the twenty first century, then we needed to have it revoked and redrafted.
- Expense – the costs would be in the hundreds of thousands – money we don't have.

Given Council spending constraints, the Downs Committee concluded some time ago that the only way to have decent toilets in this location (to include disabled facilities) would be to include a small café and require the café operator to maintain the toilets as part of their lease obligations. At present, the toilets need constant maintenance and repair, using resources that could be better spent on other activities on the Downs.

The T&F believe we can create the café/kiosk and toilets within the existing footprint, so there would be no encroachment on the Downs. We would end up with a facility similar to the café and toilets which have recently been completed by the Clifton Suspension Bridge.

Included in this paper is a sketch plan which demonstrates what could be accommodated – it still needs refinement. **Appendix 1**

In principle, planning permission should only be required for change of use of part of the existing building from toilets to café and one would hope that this would be uncontentious. Advice would have to be obtained to check that point and any other permissions which may be needed.

The T&F have not taken this proposal any further for the moment but suggest that an allowance of £150,000.00 would cover the cost. This would be a project for the new Downs Manager to deliver.

## Refurbishment of the Changing Rooms

The Infrastructure T&F recommends that the present building should be refurbished rather than continue with earlier plans to demolish and extend.

To this end, David Freed, as a member of the T&F used his contacts in construction to get some preliminary drawings and costings done.

Included in this paper is a preliminary order of cost prepared by Currie and Brown on the basis of drawings prepared by Ian Jenkins which are also included. **Appendix 2.** Hydrock have given an overview of the structure and Hoare Lea have given initial advice on M&E.

All the professionals have given us their time to date on a pro bono basis.

The brief to the architect was on the basis that we can only carry out a refurbishment of the existing building and there can be no extension which encroaches onto the Downs. To comply with that constraint and current FA regulations, the building can only accommodate 12 changing rooms together with the required disabled facilities and male/female referees changing rooms.

As a result, kick off times would have to be staggered.

You will see from the summary that the cost comes to £1.13m. However, allowance should be made for professional fees (say 10% of construction cost), build cost inflation, all details yet to be addressed and contingencies - so I would advise that, at this stage, we should have in mind a figure of £1.5m.

Raising this funding will be a challenge but the T&F group believe that a combination of grants to Sports England, etc., plus application to CIL and an appeal to local philanthropy, we would raise that money.

But it must be pursued with real energy and purpose now, as the building is in a very poor state and continues to deteriorate.

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