

Downs Committee

11 March 2024

Downs Management Report

So now into March we look ahead to an imminent resumption of grass cutting activities. I am pleased to report the delivery after some delay of a new ride on mowing machine which will be a big help this year and the team are very happy with.

The winter work programme of scrub management ceased as usual at the last day of February as after this date nesting bird season begins. We carried out work in a number of locations around the Downs and Avon Gorge, but I would particularly like to draw members attention to an area to the right-hand side of the birdwatchers lookout or Peregrine watch, as some people know it. Whilst the work carried out and identified in the plan is from an ecological benefit reasoning, the views that have been opened up of the gorge are very impressive for users of the nearby pedestrian footpath.

Speaking of footpaths, we have had a large amount of path re-surfacing carried out across the winter including the 2 heavily used footpaths that cross the Downs from Sneyd Park. This work was well needed and is a big improvement to some heavily eroded areas that were trod by millions of feet during the C-19 years!

Early in the New Year the team carried out the annual de vegetation works on the rock faces above the road on Bridge Valley Rd across 3 consecutive Sundays. After previous inspections, this year the wooden crib lock retaining wall half way down was given the remedial works that had been scheduled for a while. We had some more diseased Ash removed from the woodlands above the road and had a general tidy up along the pedestrian footpath and walls above the Portway.

But now into Spring the Goats will be happy to enjoy the fresh new shoots back on the vegetation within the enclosure. So they can eat something other than tree bark ! and the team look forwards to the inevitable large quantities of litter heading our way over the bank holiday period ahead !.

We tried to carry out as much preparatory work as possible on the water tower event site over the winter. This is to get it in good shape for Funderworlds first arrival of the year. They are building at present and as ever I pray for dry conditions for their stay. As regards to Downs Football activities, despite some tricky times in Jan/Feb both BDL and BUSU are progressing as normal. Again, if the weather is favourable the surfaces should really start to improve from here for the final part of the season. Some good news is hopefully on the horizon. As a result of some meetings held a while back between members of the Downs Committee, BCC officers and the FA, some extra funding from the FA is going to allow for inspections and pitch improvement works to be carried out in time for the start of the 24/25 season. This is great news and will really improve the situation with being able to play twice a week and lessening the necessity for cancellations during the wetter months of the season. I will update members with more details as the work gets carried out from early May.

Finally, thanks as ever to FODAG volunteers and the community payback team for the really invaluable contributions that they make to the Downs. These include,

Dead hedge restoration

Deep litter clearances

Goat monitoring on weekends and bank/hols

Flower bed maintenance

Painting over graffiti on buildings

Ben Skuse

Bristol City Council Parks

Area Parks supervisor, Downs, Blaise, and Kingsweston Estates