

# FOD + AG

Friends of the Downs + Avon Gorge

Issue 47

Autumn 2022



Photo: Graeme Churchar

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT****OCTOBER 2022**

Summer has drawn to a close and to quote John Keats we can now enjoy the 'season of mists and mellow fruitfulness.' Not quite so enjoyable for us all is the fuel crisis, the soaring cost of living, industrial action and foreign wars. Added to this many of our public institutions appear broken as beleaguered local authorities struggle to provide more and more services with ever dwindling budgets. Bristol of course is not immune and face even greater financial pressures as central government seeks to impose further austerity cuts. It is a sad fact that Parks are not a statutory service and will always be at the back of the queue when the oft mentioned Government pie is divided up. This means that it is even more important that Friends Groups like ours let Councillors know how important our Parks and Green Spaces are and argue the case strongly against further budget cuts to the Parks Service. Everybody agrees how important good public open spaces are but nobody wants to pay.

**Currently resources are stretched to breaking and it is incumbent on us all to ensure that the Downs remains well cared for; for us and for future generations and that dear members is what your continued support for FODAG helps to achieve.**

You may have seen from the monthly email newsletter that the Downs Committee are looking to amend the way that the Downs are managed. This follows a series of public and stakeholders' engagement exercises to consider governance of the Downs in the future. The Downs Committee are seeking to work closely with a partner organisation within the context of the Downs Act and that organisation is FOD+AG. Discussions are still at an early stage but for FOD+AG this could be an important milestone in our evolution. Below are two statements taken directly from a paper entitled *Downs Vision* that the Downs Committee have been asked to approve. *'Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge (FOD+AG) has a long history of working constructively with the Downs Committee and BCC, they have connections with similar groups and have provided services to the Downs in respect of conservation and education.'* ... and ...

*'Should the Committee decide to agree to Recommendation 1 it is recommended that the Governance Task and Finish Group {GTFG} begin discussions with FOD+AG as a partner organisation to the Downs Committee.'* (A full copy of the paper presented to Downs Committee can be found at [downsfinal gtfg](#))

Should some type of partnership be agreed it will among other things allow alternative funding streams to be explored, be it a charitable trust, sponsorship or a more imaginative approach to income generation. It will require all parties to demonstrate determination, creativity and ingenuity if we are to avoid falling into a slow spiral of decline. Your FOD+AG committee have debated the merits of the 'Downs Vision' and are minded to provisionally engage with the Downs Committee and offer our support for the proposals.

In September we said farewell to our near neighbour Bristol Zoo and Gardens. FOD+AG has enjoyed a long association with the Zoo and its staff. We have worked closely with Mandy Leivers, shown right. Mandy's role as the Avon Gorge & Downs Biodiversity Education Manager and champion of the Downs meant we got to share many interesting projects. Sadly, by now many of you will be aware that Mandy has left her current role and has taken a position with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.

We wish her well.

There was a reminder in the monthly email of our forthcoming AGM. Covid restrictions meant we were unable to hold our last two AGM's but everything is in place for this year's event to go ahead. We shall be back at our regular home at the Redland Bowling Club on the 7<sup>th</sup> December, starting at 7.00pm. You may also have noticed from the monthly Newsletters that the chair of the Downs Committee and Lord Mayor Cllr. Paula O'Rourke will be our guest speaker. Do come and enjoy a couple of



hours with your FODAG committee, join in the debate, and meet with fellow members, The bar will be open and refreshments served. I will close for this quarter with an appeal to all FOD+AG members. Please think about giving a little something back and consider becoming a FODAG committee member. There will be important decisions to be made about the future governance of the Downs in the coming months and you could be part of that process. Contact me directly for further information by email on [robertjwestlake@gmail.com](mailto:robertjwestlake@gmail.com) Robert Westlake Chair

Earlier in the year we were saddened to hear of the death of life-long member Jane Bland. Jane survived her husband and founder FOD+AG member Richard by four years. Jane lived her final years at the Vincent Retirement Complex and remained a passionate Downs & Avon Gorge supporter. FOD+AG offers sincere condolences to Jane's family.

### TAKE LITTER HOME

FOD+AG Anti-Litter Activities – an update

Avid readers of our magazine (heretofore Newsletter) will know of the recognition of the success of our litter-picking volunteers, in the form of £1,000 awarded in this year's Growing a Better Future sponsored by the National Conservation Foundation. Our autumn and winter Deep Litter Clearances (DLCs), affectionately known as 'Wombling' have begun again and this update is to raise awareness of three recent or forthcoming components of our programme. To fulfill a requirement of receiving the 'Pick-Me-Up' community clean up award our October 29th DLC welcomes the participation of members of the Foresters Company in a morning's Wombling along the north bank of the river Avon, which suffers littering by users of the A4 (Portway) at the southern edge of FOD+AG's patch. As this section of the Avon Gorge is one of the most important gateways to our city we consider that it should be attractive and welcoming. Following discussions based on suggestions from Timothy Dowling,

we are making some adjustments to our DLC programme after Christmas 2022. Dates for the remainder of the 2022/2023 season are outlined below:

- Saturday November 26th 2022
- As usual there will be no DLC in December 2022.
- Saturday January 7th 2023
- Saturday February 4th 2023
- Saturday February 25th 2023
- Saturday March 25th 2023 a general clean-up in a more open location

The final dates recognise National Conservation Guidelines and reflect the implications of climate change for bird nesting times.

A small group (which I hesitate to call a committee!) has begun to work towards an anti-litter policy to submit to the new-look Downs Committee for adoption and support. As this policy will have its foundation in educating users of the Downs and Avon Gorge and in requiring them to TAKE LITTER HOME for disposal/recycling, we will begin by attempting to involve schools, Colleges and youth organisations in the Downs catchment area in what we propose. We would greatly appreciate the involvement of all members of FOD+AG in this endeavor, in whatever way you might assist. In the current 'climates', both meteorological and societal, there are far more important ways of spending money and valuable work time than on clearing up after the thoughtless vandalism, (for that is what littering amounts to) of an antisocial minority.

Please get in touch with offers of help, especially if you work in one of the target organisations. The more of us who help, the lesser the burden on anyone. Martin Collins (p&p Take Litter Home Team)

Found on the Downs





### DISPOSABLE BBQ UPDATE AUGUST 2022

Reported in the Guardian on 12th August 'Sainsbury's and Tesco halt disposable barbecues sales amid wildfire risk'

*Why it's only one cheer for Tesco?*

'Tesco changed its policy from a local ban near areas of outstanding beauty such as the New Forest to a UK-wide temporary pause on sales late on Thursday in the light of the heatwave and dry conditions.

**It is understood to be planning to restock disposable barbecues once weather conditions make it safe to do so.'**

Whilst we welcome the decision by both Marks & Spencer and Sainsbury's to stop the sale of disposable barbecues, we must continue to campaign against their sale, as the general environmental reasons for getting rid of these items altogether remains compelling. The fire risk is clearly very concerning but the other reasons for getting rid of them altogether are also very powerful.

Perhaps the main clue is in first word of the title: 'Disposable Barbecue'. With our growing awareness of the fragility of our planet, it is difficult to understand how disposable barbecues are still available for use. The whole concept runs contrary our need to:

1. Conserve our natural resources.
2. Avoid using toxic chemicals (inevitably present with fire accelerants included within the wrapped disposable barbecue), which are harmful to wildlife, flora and fauna (& humans!).
3. Avoid burning fossil fuels, which are usually obtained from unsustainable sources.
4. Avoid the emission of carbon monoxide, which can be fatally toxic if used in a confined area.
5. Avoid the unnecessary use of landfill – although DBs are technically recyclable, any DBs that are left around end up in landfill. In practice it is unlikely that DBs are recycled at home because of the work that needs to be done to separate the burnt remains of the DB. There were just 9 million disposable barbecues sold in the UK in 1997. This increased to 130 million in 2015 and there is no sign that this number has stopped increasing in the last seven years.

6. Avoid burning our grasses – most people might attempt to ensure that the disposable barbecue is properly raised above ground level, but unfortunately, as can be seen right across our city parks, many people do not take this simple and basic precaution. Whilst the visible scars of the burnt grass might disappear over a period of six to nine months, it can take the soil up to two years to recover fully from a destructive fire.

Avoid the risk of fire – whilst this might not appear to be as severe a risk as on open moorland in areas such as the Moors of Devon and Yorkshire, Wareham Forest in Dorset and the New Forest, there have been damaging fires in our city parks in 2021. Hot DBs are often left abandoned and are a hazard to children, dogs and wildlife.



### Recycling?

Remember that there are **five different** types of item within the disposable barbecue pack which may require **up to five different means of safe recycling**:

Plastic wrapping

Cardboard box

Charcoal

Metal cooking grill, with remains of fat and cooked items

Aluminium mini-stand

*How many people follow the instructions for recycling?* Tim Dowling

## LETTER TO THE COMMITTEE

Sir

May I comment on a point in the Chairman's Report in the last newsletter issue Summer 2022 please.

On page 2 the Chair refers to: quote '... the **damaging** court case brought by Downs for People'. But who or what exactly was damaged by the court case? As far as the Downs themselves are concerned the court case has had a very beneficial effect. The court ruling of May 2021 prevents the Downs Committee from allowing the Downs to be used as a car park for non-Downs activities. The ruling considerably strengthens the legal protection of the Downs under the 1861 Act. FOD+AG members can see the court case as a very positive outcome for the future of the Downs.

I agree with the Chairman however when he says 'damaging' if he means a serious impact on the finances of the Downs Committee. It is clear that the Downs Committee spent a very large amount of money fighting this case. They persisted with strong legal action right up to a few days before the matter was due to be heard. Rather than face the hearing, they effectively conceded on the steps of the court after a great deal of public money had been spent on solicitors, barristers and QCs. It is this self-inflicted financial damage that the Downs Committee now has to repair.

Downs for People is pushing the Downs Committee to publish the facts on exactly how much public money, i.e. council taxpayers' money, was spent on legal fees and why they continued when it was clear they were in a weak position.

Regards

Peter Weeks

(address supplied)

Robert: Do you want to add a comment here?

## FILM EVENT CANCELLED

In August organisers of a planned outdoor film extravaganza on the Downs were forced to cancel all remaining Bristol events. The company behind the event are Adventure Cinema and a spokesman said that the move is '*due to an ongoing external safety concern around the perimeter of the event arena at Clifton Down.*' Spectators expecting to watch film classics such as *Rocketman*, *West Side Story* and *Pulp Fiction* were left sadly disappointed. The company stated, that it was with 'great sadness' that it made the decision and apologised to the thousands of ticket holders affected, going on to state that '*The safety of our customers and staff is of the highest priority to us and the situation leaves us with no option but to cancel all shows to assure everyone involved is kept safe. All ticket holder would automatically be reimbursed.*'

Interestingly in none of the statements proffered by Adventure Cinema to local news organisations do they ever mention what the '*ongoing external safety concern*' actually was, but on the Facebook and Instagram pages of Adventure Cinema you can see customers' reports that the safety concern was in fact as a result of a close by traveller's camp. It seems a little odd that the travellers on the Downs should not be cited as Adventure Cinema's reason for cancelling all Downs events and it should not mean that it is not reported. It is true that there is a lot of anti-traveller prejudice at the moment but that should not stop the reporting of what actually happened. One irate contributor who took to social media stated:

*'This is political correctness gone mad! Council and police are scared of moving on the 'travellers' and the local press are afraid to mention the reason for the cancellation'*  
**SHOCKING!**

RJW



Photo: Adventure Cinema



## END OF AN ERA

After 186 years of trading Bristol Zoo Gardens has finally closed its doors. It was an emotional moment for staff as a gold plaque was unveiled citing 'Thanks for the Memories'

Last visitors applauded zoo staff as they made their final farewells. The Avon Gorge & Downs Education Officer Mandy Leivers (far left) will be leaving her role for pastures new. We wish her well.



Photo: Bristol Post

## FORMER ZOO CAR PARK (LADIES MILE)

**The Downs Committee has accepted a proposal to reinstate the former Car Park.**

The former zoo car-parking area is a flat area adjacent to and south-east of the Ladies Mile Road on the Downs. The area under discussion is an uneven sward with frequent upright brome and less frequent perennial rye-grass and red fescue interspersed with smaller patches of lower grassland. There is compaction and some bare patches caused by years of parking cars, and possibly also by several incidents of illegal car rallies on summer evenings during 2021, involving many vehicles racing and turning at speed on the area. A vegetation monitoring survey (attached)? indicates that the grassland in the area

continues to be of a nature conservation value due to the presence of several plant species characteristic of limestone grassland. The grassland in the area has stabilised, retaining ecological interest but showing some evidence of damage. Bristol City Council and WBCA ecologists have visited the site. It has been agreed that restoration would be valuable in this area, for several outcomes:

- 1) To strengthen the biodiversity and ecological value of the site after several years of being used as a temporary car park.
- 2) To provide WBCA volunteers the opportunity to mobilise and learn about this special environment .
- 3) To provide a number of school children with the opportunity to learn about grass meadows and their creation/maintenance.
- 4) To decrease the likelihood of repeated car rally activities as the area will be less inviting if covered in relatively long hay meadow grass. To achieve these outcomes, it has been suggested that the area should be managed as a meadow, so left uncut until July 2023 and then hay cut. Thereafter the area should be harrowed by an agricultural contractor) to help de-compact the ground, and prepared for receiving green hay. (This will need funding – based on work done this year, a day rate for hiring the tractor and harrow would be about £700 – to be discussed whether this comes from Downs Committee coffers or from support via WBCA). During the summer of 2023, seed could be collected by hand for growing plug plants which could be planted out the following year by volunteers/school children. There will be a cost for someone to oversee this and look after the developing plants. We propose to do this in collaboration with the University of Bristol Botanical Garden, who are a partner in the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project, or with Grow Wilder, or through the BCC plant nursery. During 2023, the Downs team will use their equipment to harvest green hay from more species-rich sections of meadow on the Downs, and deposit it on former car park area immediately prior to volunteers/school children helping distribute the green hay across the area being restored. During the autumn of 2023, volunteers and school children can plant seed collected/plug plants grown during the year out into the meadow.

## DRONE HELPS SAVE DOG FROM GORGE

Towards the end of September Avon Fire & Rescue were involved in the rescue of a missing dog. The dog an Akita cross named Phoebe had been missing for nearly a week before photographers spotted her on the riverbank under the Suspension Bridge and called the Fire Brigade. The operation to retrieve Phoebe involved aerial drones and a specialist animal rescue unit, as well as ground search teams and a widespread online and offline awareness campaign.

But the work paid off when the distressed dog was reunited with her owners.

Phoebe disappeared from Clifton Downs when out walking and was next spotted a couple of days later on the Portway beneath the bridge but it was a further three days before she was seen again. A drone operator alerted by Facebook group Drone SAR for Lost Dogs UK, reported a possible injured animal which was in fact a dead fox but later spotted Phoebe near the water's edge.

They contacted the RSPCA to report the stranded dog, before crossing the river to attempt to help the animal. Then they spotted Avon Fire and Rescue's animal and water rescue unit nearby. They were followed to the location together with Phoebe's owners.

The rescue unit climbed down the wall on to the river bank and managed to safely get Phoebe back on the side-walk. RJW

**Members of  
Avon Fire and  
Rescue's animal  
rescue service  
on the  
riverbank.**



Photo: Boys in Bristol Photography

## THE GRANNY DOWNS DIARY

### High Summer 2022

July 8<sup>th</sup>. The first day of a heatwave. I was thinking about the phrase *high summer* and looked up high! And sure enough, two swifts circling, darting like bats, now swerving like boomerangs in the deepest blue sky.

Little blackberries, mostly still green but here is one with dark purple on it!

Not much birdsong. Very soon folk will tell me that the small birds have all been eaten by magpies and crows and yet again I will explain the phenomenon of moulting in bushes.

July 12<sup>th</sup>. Oh my goodness, all these dragonflies zooming around the Granny Downs. They have a very purposeful air about them. I hope the butterflies head for cover! Dragonflies can fly backwards but I have yet to see this and I live in hope.

July 14<sup>th</sup>. Tree branches have all but reached the ground and ash keys are pale green against the dark green of the foliage. Not long ago, on the Downs, I saw a bullfinch feeding its young on these ash keys, a rare and pretty sight.

July 20<sup>th</sup>. No birds singing. They will be in bushes moulting. Later, they start getting chirpy and we can hear them gossiping in the bushes as we collect blackberries. Talking of blackberries, a FEAST of them this afternoon on the Granny Downs. This will be a good year and it has started already. Not that early, blackberries are usually a July/August blessing although many folk regard them as a feature of September.

And here's a blackbird feasting on blackberries! I refuse to move, so he scolds and tuts but goes on eating, giving me the darkest of avian stares ...

Two bright yellow blossoms of silverweed, easily mistaken for buttercups, but they don't shine.

July 29<sup>th</sup>. The beech trees are green fountains and here's a solitary jay.

July 31<sup>st</sup>. I didn't expect magic today. It's dull and overcast, without shadows. But I'm standing in the middle of a cascade of hundreds of



falling lime seeds, the most exquisite of seeds in the way the golden wings spiral down, like angels. Nowhere in the world so beautiful as here, now: the details of the seasons are my companions in life. They always were, I learned them when I was very young, and I'm still learning ...

August 6<sup>th</sup>. All so quiet on the bird front apart from the nuthatch! More and more feathers on the turf as birds moult in bushes: some feathers are threadbare where nesting has run the birds ragged!

August 8<sup>th</sup>. Olly, Olly, Onker, my first red conker, even though it is on the small side. Spider web under this beech catching the sun like a dream catcher. Scientists believe that some spiders dream.

The leaves of this silver birch are turning to gold already, but other birches on the Granny Downs remain green.

August 15<sup>th</sup>. Here's a crow bathing in dead leaves. And a moulting magpie with a bald head. And around us, the whispering gold of autumn.

August 20<sup>th</sup>. There's a soft rustling in the leaves and here's a juvenile robin coming to see the outside world. Welcome.

August 21<sup>st</sup>. Another dull, dark morning when I am not expecting magic. It's not a morning for miracles, only it is ... This is impossible, impossible – a hundred, two hundred maybe more goldfinches on the top branches of this copper beech. The twittering, the bouncing about! A squirrel barks and they disperse in all directions like an avian sparkler.

Moreover, the beech is dead. Many years ago, a forester told me that his colleagues could tell which trees were dying by which trees birds avoid as perches. I've never been in a position to verify that, but always believed that foresters have some kind of deep wisdom on account of the trees they are around. However there is also a consensus as to how useful dead trees are to birdlife... Anyway, I go over to the tree and examine the ground underneath and sure enough, a little feather, a distinctive black and white tail feather! One more for my precious goldfinch collection.

And thinking about birds and dying trees, does this imply that birds can feel and interpret the energy of trees? What would that mean?

Does my head in just pondering on it.

August 22<sup>nd</sup>. In the midst of these fallen horse chestnut leaves, a nest, so tiny. It's a miracle of weaving, hair, wool, twigs, feathers. One puff of wind would blow it away. And yet there would have been hundreds of these nests all around us here, it's the nest of the goldfinch and I will study it and write about it separately.

August 29<sup>th</sup>. A lot of the blackberries have gone mouldy.

September 3<sup>rd</sup>. Remaining conkers on the horse chestnuts are like bunches of grapes. And the fallen ones, such a mixture of reds from near black to light orange. What a year for conkers this is...

September 4<sup>th</sup>. ...and what a year for conker seekers. Children, grandparents and here's an elderly lady who tells me she is collecting for her housebound neighbour who believes they fend off spiders. The few scientific investigations into this show that no, they don't, but I keep quiet, of course.

Time now to leave high summer, and look towards autumn.

[Geraldine@geraldinetaylor.co.uk](mailto:Geraldine@geraldinetaylor.co.uk)



**Summer at the Downs  
Café Retreat**

Photo: Derek Catterall



## THE NEST

I can see the world in a grain of sand, or in this case, a neatly woven cup of twigs and wool. Once, I held the velvet body of a dead pygmy shrew and felt that all my love and awe was concentrated in that little body. And now it's in this goldfinch nest which I found while mooching amongst horse chestnut leaves on the Granny Downs on 22 August this year. You can have no idea how tiny this is until you see the nest. It's 7cm across, 2.3cm deep and the hole has a diameter of 4.5cm. I have taken a magnifying glass to find the following: Wool, moss, human hair, spider gossamer, little twigs, feathers, thistledown, wool, bits of dried leaf and stalk.

The female goldfinch weaves this cup and there will be four to six bluish white eggs in it. Goodness knows how the hatchlings manage, or how very tiny they are. A little golden feathered dinosaur built this nest. I'm holding it and it feels like feathered air. Eternity in my hand: Grace.

Photo: Nature and Garden



Photo: Geraldine Taylor

## LION PRIDE ON THE DOWNS

If you have taken a stroll up near the Sea Walls anytime this summer you would have been hard pressed not to notice a magnificent pride of 24 life-sized bronze lion sculptures. These life-sized lions were exhibited by international wildlife charity Born Free. The centrepiece Elsa the iconic Lioness on top of a 4x4 truck, featured in the 1966 film Born Free and was created by award-winning Australian artist couple Gillie and Marc Schattner, known for other conservation-focused sculptures. These sculptures are a powerful reminder of the fragility of these beautiful creatures.

This interesting addition to the Downs stayed with us right up until September and were viewed by literally thousands of visitors. Sadly, towards the end of July we heard that one of the bronze statues had been stolen. A 190kg (almost 30 stone) bronze lion statue named Black disappeared overnight and the Born Free charity is appealing for help in tracking Black down.

It is thought multiple people were likely involved in removing the statue, which was probably taken away in a 'large vehicle'. A police spokesperson said: 'The sculpture was taken from the exhibition between an unknown time on Wednesday 27 July and 8.30pm on Thursday 28 July.

Officers believe the suspect would have had a large vehicle and multiple helpers to lift the statue.'

It's a sad indictment of our city that this should have happened and does nothing for our reputation.

RJW



## AVON GORGE & DOWNS WILDLIFE PROJECT. STEERING GROUP.

FOD+AG were pleased to join members of the Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project. Signatories to the Group include Bristol City Council, Bristol Zoo Gardens, Natural England, The Botanic Gardens, The Society of the of Merchant Venturers, Downs Committee, University of Bristol, Bristol Zoological Society, National Trust and Forestry England. Notably the Downs Committee as one of the principal signatories to the project did not send a representative. Traditionally Downs Committee members from both the Council and the MV would attend. We are pleased to see that this oversight has now been rectified.

The Avon Gorge, Downs and Leigh Woods are a very special area for wildlife and geology and recognised internationally as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and nationally designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Downs, which are a Site of Nature Conservation Interest, supports large areas of limestone grassland meadows, brimming with grasses and wildflowers.

The Project was launched in 1999 to secure the outstanding wildlife interest of the Avon Gorge and the Downs, and to raise awareness and understanding of this unique location. Primarily the group has three roles, Wildlife surveying and monitoring. Habitat Management, and Education.

Recently due to Covid restrictions and key personnel changes within the various organisations the important work of the group has struggled to meet all its commitments. The purpose of the meeting was to re-establish the roles of the key players and seek to rejuvenate the Project. Actions from the meeting included:

- a) To advertise without delay the post of Education Officer and
- b) Invite the respective heads of the key organisations to a recommitment meeting.

FOD+AG would strongly urge the Downs committee to continue supporting the work of this most important group.

## DOWNS COMMITTEE FINANCIAL REPORT

### 1. Forecast Report for 2022-23

1.1 The report provides a forecast of the financial performance of the Downs for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023.

1.2 The budgeted and actual income and expenditure up to period 4, April to July 2022, has been analysed and projections have been made resulting in some potential variances.

1.3 A summary of the forecasted income and expenditure for 2022-23 and the prior year comparators, can be seen in Table 1 below.

1.4 Income is currently forecast to make small deficit of (£9k), expenditure is forecast to overspend by (£77k), resulting in a net deficit of (£86k). Reserve funding has been exhausted.

1.5 The forecast deficit has occurred from the late cancellation of an event, the increased demand placed on the Downs from users, requiring out of hours working and increased cleaning.

1.6 Consideration is required regarding controlling measures to be implemented, to mitigate the pressures and reduce the deficit.

1.7 Further information and explanations can be seen in Table 2 on the Bristol City Council website. Go to: [Robert where did you get this from?](#)

TABLE 1 - Overall Income and Expenditure Summary

	Full Year Budget £	2022/23 Forecast Outturn (P4-Jul22) £	Variance	Notes	2021/22 Outturn £	2020/21 Outturn £
Income						
Total Income	360,400	351,050	(9,350)	Deficit	307,020	218,038
Expenditure						
Total Expenditure	(360,400)	(437,125)	(76,725)	Overspend	(611,996)	(456,028)
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	0	All reserves are exhausted	97,680	237,990
Final Net Outturn	0	(86,075)	(86,075)	Representing Downs generated net surplus/ (deficit)	(207,295)	0

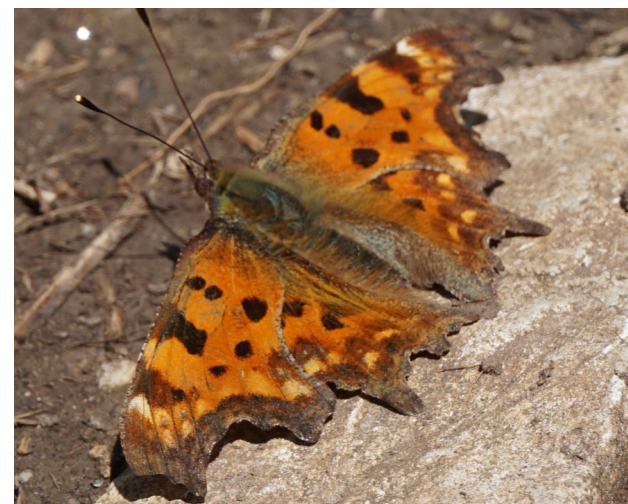


## NEW RED LIST OF ENDANGERED BRITISH BUTTERFLIES

This list follows on from the article in the last magazine on the state of British butterflies as assessed in 2022.

		Overall assessment	Criteria for qualifying
Black-veined White	<i>Aporia crataegi</i>	RE	Last record 1920s
Large Copper	<i>Lycaena dispar</i>	RE	Last record 1864. Reintroduction attempts failed
Mazarine Blue	<i>Polyommatus semi-argus</i>	RE	Last record 1904
Large Tortoiseshell	<i>Nymphalis polychloros</i>	RE	Last record in 1980s. Only vagrants since
Large Blue	<i>Glaucopsyche arion</i>	CR	Extinct in Britain 1979, re-introduced 1980s. Globally Endangered sp. B2 ac(iv)
High Brown Fritillary	<i>Argynnis adippe</i>	CR	A2 b
Chequered Skipper	<i>Carterocephalus palaemon</i>	EN	B2 ab(ii)
Wood White	<i>Leptidea sinapis</i>	EN	A2 c
White-letter Hairstreak	<i>Satyrus w-album</i>	EN	A2 b
Black Hairstreak	<i>Satyrus pruni</i>	EN	B2 ab(ii)
Duke of Burgundy	<i>Hamearis lucina</i>	EN	A2 b
Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria euphrosyne</i>	EN	A2 b
Glanville Fritillary	<i>Melitaea cinxia</i>	EN	B2 b(v)c(iv)
Heath Fritillary	<i>Melitaea athalia</i>	EN	B2 ab(ii,v)c (iv)
Dingy Skipper	<i>Erynnis tages</i>	VU	A2 c
Grizzled Skipper	<i>Pyrgus malvae</i>	VU	A2 b,c
Brown Hairstreak	<i>Thecla betulae</i>	VU	A2 c
Silver-studded Blue	<i>Plebeius argus</i>	VU	A2 c + B2ab(ii,v)
Northern Brown Argus	<i>Plebeius artaxerxes</i>	VU	A2 b + B2 ab(v)
White Admiral	<i>Limenitis camilla</i>	VU	A2 b

		Overall assessment	Criteria for qualifying
Marsh Fritillary	<i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>	VU	A2 c
Grayling	<i>Hipparchia semele</i>	VU	A2 b,c
Large Heath	<i>Coenonympha tullia</i>	VU	A2 c
Lulworth Skipper	<i>Thymelicus acteon</i>	NT	B2 b(iii)
Silver-spotted Skipper	<i>Hesperia comma</i>	NT	B2 a
Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>	NT	B2 b(iii)
Small Blue	<i>Cupido minimus</i>	NT	A2 c
Chalkhill Blue	<i>Polyommatus coridon</i>	NT	A2 b,c
Adonis Blue	<i>Polyommatus bellargus</i>	NT	B2 c(iv)
Purple Emperor	<i>Apatura iris</i>	NT	A2 c + B2 b(ii)
Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria selene</i>	NT	A2 c
Wall	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>	NT	A2 c
Mountain Ringlet	<i>Erebia epiphron</i>	NT	B2 b(ii)
Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	NT	A2 b



Martin: Can I have an explanation/ key to what RE, CR, EN etc stand for please?

## GIVE THE NHS POWER AND MONEY TO RUN PARKS

**The NHS should be given the power and funding to maintain and even create new parks, a think-tank says.**

Parks and green spaces should be seen as a tool of healthcare in the same way as medicines and therapies, the Social Market Foundation says. Giving the NHS a role in supporting parks and green spaces would allow doctors to make more use of 'social prescribing' techniques where patients are told to take exercise and spend time outdoors to boost physical and mental health.

International evidence and NHS pilots have shown that using parks as a healthcare resource can improve outcomes for patients and significantly reduce demands on GP surgeries, an SMF paper reports. In a briefing paper, the cross-party think tank said that post-coronavirus health policies should give NHS England a role in park provision, possibly by giving NHS chiefs access to central government funding for parks. NHS bodies would be less likely to divert funding away from parks than local councils have been. The paper also suggests introducing new taxes on homeowners close to public parks to raise money for their upkeep. Similar schemes are used in US cities such as Chicago and Seattle. In the latter's King County area, the owner of a \$500,000 property pays \$7 a month to help fund parks, trails and recreational activities. The SMF paper comes as more people are able to use public parks as Coronavirus lockdown measures ease. However, it finds that the 27,000 urban green spaces in the UK are often poorly maintained, with many councils cutting maintenance spending and relying on community groups and National Lottery funding for upkeep. Lockdown has sparked new debates about access to green space. ONS data published this week shows that one in eight UK households has no garden.

Even though parks have been neglected under austerity, health professionals have started to see greater value in using green spaces to relieve pressure on the NHS. Some Clinical Commissioning Groups have started using parks to support patients with anxiety and depression whose frequent GP appointments place significant burdens on surgeries. One scheme in Liverpool involved setting up a park walking

club for patients who made frequent use of GP services for non-clinical needs. The result was a significant reduction in the group's use of GP services, freeing up resources for others.

Because of the medical benefits and potential saving to the NHS, the SMF paper argues that health bodies should be directly involved in parks. This would continue moves by NHS England to take a role in urban planning and housing policy. Some NHS bodies have even "prescribed" and funded new boilers for patients, because warmer homes improve health. The SMF report suggests that NHS bodies should be able to take part in bidding for any additional parks funding offered by central government, perhaps in partnership with local authorities.

And when the current phase of the COVID-19 crisis is over, Government should investigate the overall national potential for better patient outcomes and better use of NHS resources arising from greater use of socially-prescribed public parks and green spaces. If there is convincing evidence that more use of parks would yield significant benefits, NHS England should be resourced to support the improvement and expansion of park provision directly. Ideally this would involve increased overall spending on parks, but if it is necessary to shift funding from local authorities then putting public funds for parks under the partial control of health agencies rather than local authorities might reduce the scope for those resources to be allocated elsewhere.

RJW

Extract from an article published by Social Market Foundation published May 2020.

Robert. We had a version of this last issue



## THE GREAT HOUSES OF THE DOWNS ENGINEERS HOUSE THE PROMENADE



Engineers House was formerly known as Camp House. This impressive pile was built by Charles Dyer for Charles Pinney before he became Mayor in 1831. Dyer, a London architect, built several buildings in Bristol including St Pauls' Church, Bedminster, The Bishops' College and Chapel, Bristol, The Victoria Rooms, and Christ Church, Clifton Down.

Charles was the son of John Pinney, a wealthy Bristol merchant who owned plantations on the Caribbean Island of Nevis. John, who when mayor of Bristol served during the Reform Bill riots of 1831, lived in at 7, Great George Street, which is now the museum called the Georgian House. Engineers House is now used as offices and for conference meetings and is designated a Grade 2\*listed building. RJW

## SWEDISH FIRM DEPLOYS CROWS TO PICK UP LITTER.

Like all our parks the Downs staff spend a disproportionate amount of its income and time clearing litter and discarded rubbish away to landfill, but in Sweden a new company are using trained birds to help with the workload.

Crows are being recruited to pick up discarded cigarette butts from the streets and public squares of a Swedish city as part of a cost-cutting drive. The wild birds carry out the task and they receive a little food for every butt that they deposit in a bespoke dispenser.

"These are wild birds taking part on a voluntary basis," said Christian Günther-Hanssen, the founder of Corvid Cleaning, the company behind the idea.

The Keep Sweden Tidy Foundation says that more than 1bn cigarette butts are left on Sweden's streets each year, representing 62% of all litter. Södertälje spends 20m Swedish kronor (£1.6m) on street cleaning. Günther-Hanssen estimates his method could save at least 75% of costs involved with picking up cigarette butts in the city. Södertälje is carrying out a pilot project before potentially rolling out the operation across the city, with the health of the birds being the key consideration given the type of waste involved.

**There is a certain irony that you can train Corvids to clear litter but we don't seem to be able to train our own human citizens not to drop it in the first place.**

RJW







### PORTWAY BLASTING WORKS 1976

The Portway was closed to traffic in 1976 to permit urgent stabilisation of the rock faces. Loose rock and suspicious crags were blasted away. Other rock faces were netted to provide protection for the busy A4 Portway. The rock faces are inspected every year to ensure they remain relatively stable. The canopy that starts near the bottom of Bridge Valley Road is not as many people think, to prevent suicide victims jumping from the bridge and landing on the road but to protect the highway from further rock falls.

The Portway was opened by the Minister of Transport, Colonel Wilfrid Ashley with the Lord Mayor of Bristol, Alderman Moore, on 2nd July 1926. Following an opening ceremony, the Minister and Lord Mayor drove along the full extent of the road from Bristol to inspect the docks at Avonmouth. It was the most expensive road construction project in Britain, costing £800,000 (now £49,399,000). Of that, £160,000 (now £9,880,000) was spent on the cutting at Horseshoe Bend on the river.



A postcard of the Promenade and Fountain held by Bristol Archives

RJW



Left: the 'slide' at the Observatory today and a committee member sliding down over 60 years ago!



## PICTURES FROM THE PAST



Left: This is one of two shafts ventilating the tunnel of the Clifton Down to Severn Beach railway line, opened in 1877. Note the crenulations, now removed.

Below: Bridge Valley Road. Opened in 1822, it was designed by John Loudon Macadam. With a constant gradient, this road climbs 300 feet up, and 700 metres along the Gorge, from the Portway to the junction with Clifton Down.



## COMMITTEE:

Robert Westlake (Chair), Martin Collins, Derek Catterall, Terry Hannan, Joan Gubbin, Robin Haward, Bob Bell, Tim Clarke, Barry Horton, Luke Hudson, & Dave Jones.

**SECRETARY:** position vacant - volunteer welcomed!

## KEY CONTACT:

Membership: [mail@gubbin.co.uk](mailto:mail@gubbin.co.uk)

**Please Note: Deadline for submissions for the Winter edition is 20th January 2023.** Articles and photographs to:

[fodagcontent@gmail.com](mailto:fodagcontent@gmail.com)

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## SOCIAL MEDIA:

**Website:** <http://www.friendsofthedowns.org> The website has further information on events and a regular blog on the Downs.

**Facebook:** Do please join the group on Facebook, and like/share the page to spread the word. [@fodagbristol](https://www.facebook.com/fodagbristol).

**Instagram:** [Friends\\_of\\_the\\_Downs](https://www.instagram.com/Friends_of_the_Downs).

**Downs App:** This is now working again, with grateful thanks to Emily Smithson.

## FOD+AG AGM

7th December at 7pm at Redland Bowling Club  
Refreshments, bar, guest speakers

## DOWNES EVENTS

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Photo: Derek Catterall