INSPECTOR REJECTS DOWNS CAFÉ PLAN

The plans for new café on the Downs have been turned down by a Government planning inspector.

The plan included replacing the old dilapidated public toilets at Sea Walls, with the cafe profits used to keep the toilets open, maintained and free of charge for the public.

Permission for the steel and glass café at Sea Walls was granted by Bristol City Council last year; but the venture requires government approval before it is built because of its location on common land. The Commons Act 2016 requires permission from the environment secretary before any structure is built on common land and the planning inspectorate makes such decisions on behalf of Defra.

An official request to build on the Downs was sent to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) back in April last year. In November the planning inspectorate officially refused consent for the work citing potential harm to the local neighbourhood and the landscape, and because the alleged benefits of the cafe had not been “adequately demonstrated”.

But the Downs Committee, which is behind the plans, has said it is not the end of the line for this project. Cllr Don Alexander, who sits on the committee, said it would be up to the Downs Committee to decide how to move forward. “*We have the right to resubmit the application or give up and do* *something else,”* he added. “We need to make the toilets at the Sea Walls economically sustainable.

*"The current state of the toilet block is not acceptable as it is and is also costing a lot of money. Something has to be done.”*

A decision on whether to move forward with the current scheme or to withdraw it and start again will be made at a Downs Committee meeting later this month.

Source Bristol Post

*COMMENT: FODAG acknowledges the Planning Inspectors comments and recognises the sensitivity and iconic status of the proposed location. However, the Inspectors rejection raises the possibility that the public toilets as they are will no longer be sustainable. The block as it stands is no longer fit for purpose, susceptible to vandalism and prohibitively expensive to maintain.*

*Without the income that the café would have generated the future of this well used facility is now in doubt. In addition, the café would have also provided a much-needed education facility.*