

Observatory Hill Tree and Scrub Clearance

The Council are preparing to cut down all the trees on the ramparts of the Iron Age fort around Observatory Hill next winter (2009).

Here is a direct quotation from the Council's Downs Management Plan:

"The original idea was to remove all the scrub but to leave the trees to come to the end of their useful life. However after a close inspection of the site it is now recommended that the majority of trees are removed at the same time as the scrub because of the poor condition of the trees. It may be possible to retain a very small number of trees after the clearance. A meeting was held on site in December with English Heritage and Natural England to discuss the way forward and it was agreed that no works begin this winter.

This is because:

- 1. It will very soon be bird nesting time and though it is still possible to do the work if no birds nests are present, it is bound to raise concerns.*
- 2. Such large scale work will attract a lot of attention including from the media and it is proposed that a well planned information dissemination exercise be carried out before work starts to explain the reasons for the work and to explain the benefits of carrying it out.*

This item of work has been re-programmed to be carried out during the winter of 2009/10"

This Plan should be opposed for the following reasons:

1. It will fundamentally change the landscape character of Clifton Green. What has been for generations a sheltered space enclosed by greenery will become a windswept area, open to the prevailing winds.
2. Cutting down the trees will create an eyesore. The tree stumps cannot be removed without damaging the monument. They will be visible for a generation or more.
3. Because the ramparts are too uneven to be mown, unsightly fresh scrub and weeds will require hacking down year on year.
4. The ramparts will become an unofficial adventure playground for youngsters on mountain bikes.
5. It is quite possible and enjoyable to discover the Iron Age Fort through the trees.
6. The trees are protecting the monument from human erosion, and are not considered by archaeologists to be a danger to it.
7. The Downs and Avon Gorge have developed into a very attractive, and somewhat wild place. None of it needs heavy-handed development.

It is not too late to put a stop to this. Write to: The Downs Committee,
Council House,
College Green,
Bristol.

For more information. See <http://www.bristoldownswatch.org.uk>