

Hollingbury: more than just golf

A brief outline of the issues:

- **No public consultation** has been done other than with some golfers and as a consequence there appears to be little or no understanding as to how this public land is used, its special qualities and what is under threat.
- **A habitat close to extinction** – the ancient chalk grassland needs grazing to enable its effective management, but the ancient chalk grassland that is left on and around the hill fort is so isolated and small, it is at severe risk of extinction on this site.
- **Archaeology under threat** – to avoid harming the archaeology of the hill fort, the gorse needs to be controlled and the chalk grassland encouraged. The hill fort is one of the city's most important archaeological sites.
- **A popular area** – in addition to golf, this area is used extensively for walking, jogging, playing and exercising dogs.
- **No clear access to the hill fort** – currently despite many informal routes across the golf course, there are no clear routes from the west or the south that keep you away from flying golf balls. Even the footpath from the west leaves users feeling exposed.

What needs to happen and why

There isn't a problem with golf continuing on the site, provided the course is managed more sensitively and is reconfigured to allow the following benefits to be realised:

- **A bigger grazing area around Hollingbury hill fort** would create a viable unit (the current area is too small cut off by the course from surrounding habitats). It would enable restoration of the ancient chalk grassland, an internationally rare habitat which now only covers about 4% of the South Downs, often in small fragments. A square metre of chalk grassland can contain up to 40 species (more diversity than in a square metre of rainforest).
- **It would allow better and safer public access**, particularly from the south and west where there are strong desire lines to access the hill fort, and improve recreational opportunities.
- **Would enhance its Local Nature Reserve (LNR) designation** as part of the Wild Park LNR.

How do we achieve this?

Any lease that is let by the council needs to be flexible enough to enable these important issues to be addressed. This is not just about golf, but the future of a much loved and well used public space which is part of the South Downs National Park, rare and threatened habitat and important archaeology. This seems to have been completely ignored in the debate so far and risks creating long term harm. **We strongly urge the council not to go ahead with signing any agreements prior to these issues being addressed.**