

Date: 12th August 2015
Our ref: AG00601672
Your ref:



Pulloxhill Parish Council
C/O Mrs S Young
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Dear Sue,

Higher Level Environmental Stewardship

It was good to meet up with you, Paddy, Laurie and Leonie to have another look around 'Rushymeade' on 10th august. It's a lovely site which I hope the village will continue to value and look after accordingly.

Within the site there are a number of interesting features that require sensitive management namely; the unimproved grassland, the scrub mosaic, the wet flushes and ponds and the historic ridge and furrow. The key is to find the right balance between sensitively grazing the area to ensure that the flowers are able to set seed, whilst not allowing the scrub to extend its range. I will detail some guidelines later in this letter which should help you find this happy medium.

I accept that this has been a difficult year. Nobody wants anyone to come to harm on the site. To this end the signage you have put up at the entrances should help. I can also confirm that although cattle are the most suitable graziers for this site that NE would allow grazing by sheep too.

I will detail our specific on site discussions below

- The stocking density needs to be carefully regulated throughout the year. I am happy for the site to be grazed in the spring (mid-March onwards) as I feel this will help knock back the thatch that is starting to develop in the sward bottom. From mid-May the grazing pressure needs to be decreased to allow the wild flowers to flower and set seed. This reduced grazing should continue until mid-August. As a guide the sward should be in excess of 20cm. From mid-August additional stock should be introduced to graze the sward down with a view to stock being removed around the end of October. When livestock are removed the sward should be around 5cm in height. As ever if it is a particularly dry or wet year these dates could vary by a week or so. You will need to judge this yourself but please ensure that the sward does not become poached up. All stock should be removed over the winter months.

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- An important component of the site is the scattered scrub which provides excellent habitat for the Turtle dove, a key farmland bird which is known to breed during the summer months in the area. The older scrub is generally thorn with the younger scrub being bramble. I would not want the scrubs range to expand (due to the importance of the unimproved grassland) and infact would like to see its area reduced by around 20% by the end of the agreement. By only removing part of the scrub we will be retaining the habitat for the Turtle dove. In general I would target the bramble as you will find this easier to remove, but you will also need to cut back some of the thorn as well. I would look to cut scallops out where possible. The aim is a diverse scrub age range which will provide nesting habitat and food for farmland birds through berries during the winter months. It would be advisable to treat the stumps to prevent regrowth.
- I feel that the removal of the two or three Silver birch and associated fence just to the south of the pond would be beneficial. They are drying the area out and there is greater value in the aquatic plants and rushes that this wet area attracts.
- I would be grateful if you could look to remove the arising's where they lay thicker on the ground as they will lead to nutrient enrichment if they are left in situ, which over time will lead to a decrease in the botanical diversity of the sward.
- I appreciate that there are certain areas that require regular topping to keep on top of thistles etc. However please try to ensure that whilst topping all efforts are made not to damage the anthills that are found across the site. Spot spraying of thistles is allowed.
- I mentioned it may be an idea to set up a beef box enterprise perhaps with cattle such as the Dexter, a smaller 'toy' breed. Given the trampling issue earlier in the year might be a way of ensuring the site is sympathetically grazed, but also calming people's nerves about being on a site with public access that is grazed by cattle. This is just a thought but it could be a way of getting the local community to engage with the site whilst also possibly generating some capital for continued maintenance works such as fence repairs.

All that remains is for me to wish you well in your new life in Sussex. As you are aware Tim Hopwell (tel: 03000601196) will be Rushymeade's Natural England contact in the future and I am sure he will be around every now and then to help with the sites continued management.

I think that I have covered everything, however if there is anything I have missed please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely

David Prichard

Land Management and Conservation Advisor