

CONSULTATION ON THE INTRODUCTION OF GRAZING TO SHERWOOD OAKS FIELD

THE PROPOSAL - The Friends of Foxley (FoF) propose that a large part of Sherwood Oaks Field (please see map overleaf) be fenced so that cattle and later sheep can be introduced to graze the grassland. If successful this initial area will be extended to enclose the whole of the Field. Croydon Council's Forestry consultant supports this proposal.

WHAT IS INVOLVED? - A stock proof fence would be installed once agreed and funding has been obtained under the English Woodland Grants Scheme. The fence would have a stock gate for moving animals in and out of the enclosure and 5 kissing gates on the existing paths crossing it to allow people and their dogs access to the Field. Dogs would need to be on a lead when animals were in the field. The fence would be inside the existing field perimeter paths. Grazing animals would be on site *for a few weeks only each year* as they would soon eat the available fodder. A source of water will also be introduced for the animals.

SAFETY OF PEOPLE AND ANIMALS - The animals would be those kept for grazing on nature reserves and they would be used to seeing people and dogs. Dogs on leads will protect both the dogs and the grazing animals from unexpected encounters that might frighten or alarm but no real problems are anticipated. People will be able to walk through and in the enclosure although children may need to be supervised.

WHO WOULD SUPPLY/MANAGE THE ANIMALS? - The animals would be supplied by the Downlands Countryside Management Project [DCMP] with whom Croydon and the Friends of Foxley have worked for many years, and their overall welfare and movement into and out of the site will be managed by the DCMP Grazing Officer. For the few weeks that they are on site volunteers will do a daily visual check to ensure the animals were well. It is hoped that the grazing costs will be funded, together with other DCMP managed sites, by an application for a Higher Level Countryside Stewardship Grant (DEFRA)

WHY IS THIS BEING PROPOSED? - When the FoF began in 1992 Sherwood Oaks Field was covered in scrub and trees which when cut down showed a uniform ring-count indicating the field was last grazed in the early 1960s. Previously it had been grazed chalk grassland which can contain an amazing diversity of plants. One of the aims of the FoF in those early days (as now) was to return the Field to chalk grassland. It is now an open field but vigorous grasses and invasive plants such as Golden Rod and Ground Elder growing there are preventing the emergence of a typical chalk flora on nutrient poor soil. Over the years the Field has been cut and the cuttings removed to reduce the fertility but Council resources prevent this happening as often as it should. Grazing is an accepted method of reducing fertility as cattle are good at eating vigorous vegetation. They also disturb the soil which brings seeds to the surface from the old chalk flora. The FoF believe this scheme will help to bring the area back to chalk grassland one of the most rare and biodiverse habitats in Europe.

COMMENTS - We welcome comments both for and against this proposal. Comments can be sent to the Friends of Foxley c/o Anthony Mills, 28 Foxley Hall, Higher Drive, Purley, CR8 2HP. Email:- anthony.j.mills@gmail.com Phone:- 07801 088501

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Approximate line of 540 metres of fencing for cattle and sheep grazing, for a few weeks per year only, fence inside existing perimeter paths, and including five kissing gates on the crossing paths for pedestrian access and one 5-bar gate for stock and vehicle access.

