



London Borough of Enfield

Title:	Portfolio Report to Introduce Conservation Grazing to Selected Parks in Enfield
Report to:	Councillor Chinelo Anyanwu, Cabinet Member for Public Spaces, Culture and Local Economy
Date of Report briefing:	Monday 16 th May 2023
Directors:	Cheryl Headon, Acting Director of Leisure, Parks and Communities
Report Author:	Jamie Kukadia, Jamie.Kukadia@Enfield.gov.uk
Ward(s) affected:	Whitewebbs and Cockfosters
Classification:	Part I

Purpose of Report

1. It is proposed to introduce conservation grazing at selected country parks within Enfield. Conservation grazing involves releasing cattle to manage grassland habitats and increase biodiversity. This form of land management will initially be introduced as a 12-month trial at Forty Hall and Trent Park.
2. The project has been awarded £30,282.80 by the Mayor of London's Rewild London funding. The project will be carried out in partnership with Forty Hall Farm and Capel Manor College.

Recommendations

- I. The Cabinet Member for Public Spaces approves the proposal to introduce the practice of conservation grazing to selected parks including Forty Hall and Trent Park.
- II. For the Council to enter into a partnership agreement and licence agreement with Capel Manor College to implement the Conservation Grazing trial.
- III. To delegate authority to the Head of Parks and Open Spaces to authorise the placing of orders through any of the Council's existing relevant term contracts or to invite and evaluate tenders/quotations and, where suitable tenders/quotations are received, to award contracts for the works as part of the delivery of the Conservation Grazing project in compliance with the Council's procurement rules.
- IV. To review the success of the Conservation Grazing trial and thereafter consider adopting this as a long-term sustainable management technique within parks in Enfield.

Background and Options

3. The grassland management practice of conservation grazing is promoted by a wide range of national conservation organisations including Natural England, Wildlife Trusts, RSPB and the National Trust who view grazing as a fundamental approach to managing important habitats such as acid grasslands, wildflower meadows and heathlands. This particular type of grazing uses low stocking densities, as opposed to more intensive practices that use high stocking densities which can lead to overgrazing. Conservation grazing reduces competition from faster growing vegetation and creates conditions for plants to set seed including less dominant grass species. This creates varied sward heights which cannot be achieved with mowing and helps to restore wildflower meadows that support a much wider variety of insects, birds and small mammals. Grasslands and ruminant animals have an interrelationship which has been adapted and built over millions of years, and conservation grazing helps restore these natural processes.
4. It is proposed to trial conservation grazing within selected parks in Enfield. Natural England and Historic England were particularly supportive of Conservation Grazing being trialled at Forty Hall, Trent Park and Whitewebbs Park which are identified as supporting SINC's (Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation), namely acid grassland, semi-improved neutral grassland or lowland meadow habitats. In recent years the budgetary pressures faced by the Council have meant that these habitats have not been maintained to realise full potential benefits. Restoring natural processes by reintroducing large grazing animals aims to enhance these habitats as well as strengthening the spaces between them, ensuring they are bigger, better managed and better connected.

Forty Hall and Trent Park are highlighted as parks with 'Heritage at risk' due to the incremental woodland encroachment threatening the character of the Grade II listed historic landscape, particularly compromising the condition of the nationally significant Elsyng Palace scheduled ancient monument. Historic England feel that conservation grazing will help to address management issues within the registered parks and gardens that have contributed to their 'Heritage at risk' status.

5. The trial project will be delivered in partnership with Capel Manor College who manage Forty Hall Farm. The farm livestock includes a herd of Red Poll cattle which are a notable native breed and considered to be highly suitable for grazing in publicly accessible areas due to their docile nature. The Forty Hall Farm manager will be the Grazing Manager for the project. The cattle will be checked for suitable temperament before they start grazing the sites.
6. The cattle will be fitted with GPS collars which is a containment technology used to create virtual boundaries to keep animals in designated areas. It is a behavioural system that provides an audio melody that increases in pitch and volume as they approach the virtual boundary. If the animal attempts to cross the boundary after hearing the full audio melody, they will receive a small electric shock that is less than a standard electric fence used for containing livestock. GPS collar technology is now widely used across the UK and Europe and allows accurate monitoring of the animals. An added benefit of GPS technology is that it reduces the amount of physical fencing required which can be an access barrier to people, wildlife and allows the parks to remain open and fenceless for the public to continue their enjoyment.
7. The project also provides new volunteering opportunities for the community as 'Lookers' who can help monitor the herds and can report to the Grazing Manager on the behaviour of the cattle.
8. A public consultation was conducted for the Conservation Grazing trial during the summer of 2022 – this covered three potential sites: Trent Park, Forty Hall and Whitwebbs. Consultees included the Friends Groups for the respective parks and other stakeholder groups such as Go Ape, Trent Park Hockey Club, Trent Park Housing Association and Historic England. The consultation was available online from Monday 20th June to Sunday 10th July and was supported by face to face events. A 'Meet the Cattle' event was held at Forty Hall Farm on the afternoon of 29th June 2022, where park goers could see the Red Poll cattle at close hand and discuss the project with the project team including the Grazing Manager. Comments regarding the project continued to be accepted as part of the consultation up to 27th July 2022, these have been included in the consultation response summary outlined below.
9. A total of 132 consultation responses were received. This includes responses from the online questionnaire, email responses and paper responses obtained from the face-to-face consultation event, as well as any comments from members of the public which were forwarded by Councillors.

10. The main concerns raised through the consultation related to the possibility of cattle causing injuries to members of the public, potential conflict between dogs and cattle, and potential restrictions for dogs and dog walkers within the grazing areas.
11. A significant proportion of the consultation respondents raised concerns regarding the proposal to introduce grazing to Whitewebbs Park, including the Friends Group. In consideration of the relatively small area of potential conservation grazing at this location (9 hectares), it was agreed that conservation grazing will be trialled only at Forty Hall and Trent Park initially, with consideration for this type of land management at Whitewebbs Park following the trial, depending on the success of the project at the two main sites.
12. Positive responses received outlined that the scheme would be good for nature and good opportunities for education. Examples include, "I think it is a good idea to use natural means of control has worked well in other areas of the UK," and "I think it would be a lovely educational experience to schools and nursery aged children."
13. A detailed Project Plan with associated risk assessments and key activities and milestones has been produced, which details the measures that will be implemented to ensure the project is conducted safely. This provides information regarding risk control measures and contingency plans. This Project Plan has been developed in consultation with the Epping Forest Grazing Manager, who has extensive experience in grazing animals in publicly accessible open spaces including Wanstead Park, which is a notably urban area with high visitor numbers. The Grazing Manager of Camcattle, who manages conservation grazing in public space close to the centre of Cambridge city, has also been involved in developing the Project Plan and addressing concerns highlighted through the consultation.
14. The key measures that will be in place to reduce the potential for negative interactions between livestock, people and dogs include:
 - Livestock selection – the cattle being utilised for the project are Red Polls which are known for their docile nature
 - Use of leads – it is not an essential requirement for dog owners to keep their dogs on leads within grazing areas, there are many examples of successful grazing projects that do not require this including the aforementioned projects at Epping Forest, Wanstead Park and in Cambridge city centre, nevertheless, dog owners will be encouraged to be responsible and keep their dogs on leads if they have any concerns regarding their dogs' behaviour when in close proximity to cattle
 - Retaining areas free from cattle – at each site the grazing area will be confined to ensure that there is ample space for dogs to run freely off the lead and stay well away from grazing animals if needed (grazing areas will cover up to 40% of the available space at Forty Hall and just 15% at Trent Park)

- Low stocking densities – the number of cattle that would be introduced would be a maximum of 20 at Trent Park and 10 at Forty Hall
15. Ongoing assessment and monitoring of welfare and behaviour of the cattle will be undertaken using GPS technology, regular site visits by the grazing staff and feedback from volunteer Lookers. In addition to these measures, the project will not be grazing cows with newly born calves who can have strong maternal instincts.
 16. Signage will be used on all major entrance ways to inform people of the presence of livestock, which will include a QR code linking to a live map showing where the cattle are grazing (through the GPS Collar Technology). Park visitors and dog walkers can choose to avoid the areas where the cattle are grazing should they wish to.
 17. As a further risk mitigation measure identified in the Project Plan, the 12-month trial grazing project will be introduced using a phased approach as described below:
 - Phase 1 – initial trial, starting in Spring 2023, in a small area at Forty Hall (4 ha) adjacent to the farm, this has been selected because of its existing infrastructure and proximity to the farm, staff and equipment; this will also enable targeted public engagement – more ‘Meet the Cattle’ days, dog training and attracting ‘Looker’ volunteers
 - Phase 2 – upon successful completion of Phase 1 the grazing area will be extended in Summer 2023 across Forty Hall and to Trent Park; the GPS fence boundaries will be adjusted dynamically within these designated areas to meet project requirements; this could be in response to overgrazing, lack of food for the cows, or public events within the parks
 18. The Project Plan and associated risk assessments will be regularly reviewed and updated by the project team where necessary if further risk mitigation measures are identified throughout the trial.

Preferred Option and Reasons for Preferred Option

19. The key benefits of conservation grazing can be summarised as follows:
 - It is in harmony with nature – better for bees and bugs as well as small mammals and birds
 - Grazing with the right type and number of cattle encourages a wide range of wildflowers to thrive – improves biodiversity and soils
 - It restores a traditional approach to cutting grass
 - It reduces consumption of fossil fuels because there will be no need to mow with large tractors
20. Currently the approach to managing grassland landscapes is to use mechanical mowing, which can be costly and is fossil fuel intensive. Managing important parkland habitats in a more sustainable way through conservation grazing will protect and enhance important grassland habitats, by preventing scrub encroachment, benefitting a wide range of

wildlife including insects, birds and small mammals. This will be monitored through short term and long-term ecological surveys conducted by Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust.

21. Conservation grazing will also help to protect the condition of historic landmarks and landscapes such as the scheduled ancient monument at Forty Hall which can be damaged by the weight of mechanical mowers. Historic England feel that conservation grazing will help to address management issues within the registered parks and gardens that have contributed to their 'Heritage at risk' status.
22. The project will provide opportunities to support existing volunteers, attract new volunteer 'Lookers' and increase public awareness regarding sustainable land management, ecological issues (loss of wildlife caused by modern farming methods) and ecosystem services (improved soil, carbon sequestration, etc) through links with Capel Manor College.
23. Through the trial project, the financial viability and overall practicality of conservation grazing will be tested and evaluated. The adoption of conservation grazing leading to the restoration and expansion of important grassland habitats can attract revenue funding from Natural England under Countryside Stewardship or other Basic Payment Schemes. Therefore, if successful this method of landscape management could be expanded to other parks in the borough.

Relevance to Council Plans and Strategies

24. The project is closely aligned to Priority 2 of the Council Plan, which aims to promote safe, healthy and confident communities. In particular this technique in land management improves the quality green spaces and contributes towards restoring the historic environment. The project also helps with the Council's climate resilience by working with nature, exploring carbon friendly land management options which is a key theme in the emerging Council Plan and the Blue and Green Strategy.
25. The project provides opportunities to work in partnership and strengthen links with different organisations such as Capel Manor College, London's only Environmental College as well as Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust. Working closely with Capel Manor College provides opportunities to upskill Enfield Parks Staff in this sustainable land management technique, but also provides opportunities for attracting and upskilling new volunteers within these parks securing the longer-term sustainability of the scheme.

Financial Implications

26. The trial project has secured £30,282.80 from the GLA's Rewild London Fund, with 50% already paid upfront, and 50% to be paid after the completion of the trial.
27. The costs associated with the project include:

Item	Cost
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Infrastructure – e.g. signage, GPS collars, pasture pumps	15,000
Transport of livestock	1,000
Training (including livestock training for Enfield staff)	4,000
Grazing Manager (including insurance)	13,550
Ecological Monitoring	6,000
Project advice (Epping Forest Grazing Manager)	1,000
Total	40,550

28. The additional £10k required will be monitored throughout the year and will be managed through reductions in expenditure within the Parks budgets.

29. Beyond the Conservation Grazing trial, future costs of managing the cattle would include:

- Annual subscription to the GPS cattle collar technology – estimated annual charge for 30 No collars is £1,350
- Cost of haulage to and from site – estimated £1,000 per year
- Costs of the replacement of infrastructure – expected to be less than £1,000 per year
- Grazing manager and insurance – annual costs expected to be similar to 12-month trial i.e. £13,550

30. If conservation grazing is adopted as a long-term management technique, it is anticipated that additional funding sources may be available, such as Countryside Stewardship but this is not guaranteed at this stage. The impact on ongoing parks maintenance costs e.g. grass cutting also need to be established before it is possible to ensure that the continuation of the project is financially viable. Therefore, at this stage the project is be subject to further financial evaluation, a decision to continue would be agreed by a Director through a Record of Decision (ROD).

Legal Implications

31. The Council has a general power of competence under section 1(1) of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything that individuals may generally do provided it is not prohibited by legislation and can enter into the recommendations within the report in reliance upon such power.

32. The documentation with Capel Manor College (CMC) must require compliance with all applicable health and safety legislation and guidance, and with legislation around animal welfare including the Animal Welfare Act 2006, the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018, the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007 and the Welfare of Farmed Animals (Wales) Regulations 2007. Such documentation must also address any risks flagged in the risk register, clearly set out the roles and responsibilities of each party and ensure that CMC is liable to the Council for any consequences arising from any failure by CMC to comply with those responsibilities. Both the Council and CMC must have adequate insurance in place, and advice should be taken from the Council's insurance officers as needed.

33. Officer must ensure that the arrangements with CMC to not contravene the subsidy control regime now in force under the Subsidy Control Act 2022. They must also ensure compliance with any conditions attached to the underlying Mayor of London's Rewild London funding.
34. The Council's Partnership Procedure Rules (PPR), part of the Council's Constitution, apply to the proposed arrangements with CMC. The PPR set out the minimum details to be included in the partnership agreement and - among other things - include the following requirements:
- A permanent register of all partnership arrangements must be maintained in which the details of each arrangement are recorded. It is recommended that these arrangements are recorded on the Council's Contract Register.
 - Where the Director responsible believes that the provider (i.e. partner) is the only organisation capable of delivering the service then the selection will not be based upon a tender process. However, in these circumstances he/she must keep a record of the decision and forward it to the Director of Finance, Resources and Customer Services who will report at six monthly intervals to the Audit and Risk Management Committee.
 - Partnership agreements must aim for value for money (VFM). All decision reports which record the decision to enter into a partnership must contain within them a description of how this arrangement will ensure that the Council receives value for money.
35. The documentation to be entered into by the Council and CMC (the partnership agreement and the grazing licence) must be in a form approved by Legal Services on behalf of the Director of Law and Governance.

Equalities Implications

36. The Equalities Impact Assessment demonstrates that the scheme will generally have a positive impact on Enfield residents, and has notably identified measures to attract volunteers from a wide variety of backgrounds to further reduce inequalities.

HR and Workforce Implications

37. The project involves changes to management practices within the selected parks by replacing mechanical mowing with conservation grazing. Appropriate training will be provided to Enfield Council staff involved in the project to ensure they are adequately prepared for this change.

Environmental and Climate Change Implications

38. While cattle do produce methane as part of the digestion process, known to be a highly potent greenhouse gas, based on recent studies, the impact of methane (that partially accounts for the carbon captured by the grass consumed by the cattle) can be neutralised using a carefully managed method of conservation grazing. In this process, grasslands act as a carbon sink, absorbing the carbon and nutrients, and enriching the soil rather than being released into the atmosphere. The practice significantly

reduces the impact of methane associated with traditional livestock farming, also because cows on a more natural diet produce less methane than those fed on intensive systems, the research shows. Incorporating into the calculation the reduction in fossil fuels from industrial mowers currently utilised in the management of Enfield parks, the accumulative carbon impact is suggested to be neutral if not net-positive.

39. Meat will be produced as a by-product of the project and sold at Forty Hall Farm. With only a small number of animals grazing, meat production itself would not be commercially viable at the scale of this project and would be managed by the livestock owner (not the Council). It is hoped that the meat will be purchased by local people to help connect with the parks and provide food choices for those who wish to support conservation management of their local green spaces.

Public Health Implications

40. Climate change and the loss of biodiversity are serious and continuing threats to public health. Projects that address both of these issues will contribute to maintaining health of residents across the borough.

Property Implications

41. The proposals for grazing at Trent Park need to take into account that the western part of the proposed area is leased in from LB Islington on long leases. This means that some matters need to be determined, and if necessary, regularised prior to the introduction of grazing cattle.
42. Firstly, to determine whether the proposed use is within the current permitted use under the leases, and if it isn't, to gain landlord's consent for grazing (which is believed to be contentious). Secondly, to understand the landlord's plans to reoccupy some of its land and to adapt the area for grazing accordingly.
43. There are no property implications for the Forty Hall proposed area.
44. As regards longer term ambitions for grazing in a small part of Whitewebbs Park, the possibility of this use and the access to it will need to be taken into account in the draft documentation that is being prepared in the event that the proposed Agreement for Lease with Tottenham Hotspur FC be approved.

Safeguarding Implications

45. N/A

Crime and Disorder Implications

46. N/A

Other Implications

Procurement Implications:

47. Any procurement of services or partnership agreements are covered by the Contract Procedure Rules.
48. Where there are no other suppliers available then a waiver or exception is needed.
49. Currently this is low spend, but should the pilot be successful then the costs need to be considered should the longer-term project breach Public Contract Regulations, where open tendering is potentially required.
50. Any contract for services should be entered into the Councils Contract Register (LTP) to ensure that transparency regulations are met. That the contract should be contract managed to ensure delivery of outcomes.

Report Author: Jamie Kukadia
Senior Engineer, Watercourses
Jamie.Kukadia@Enfield.gov.uk
020 8132 0965

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Trial Conservation Grazing Maps
Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment

Background Papers

Enfield Conservation Grazing Trial – Project Plan

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