

# Conservation Grazing in Enfield

## A consultation document on conservation management proposals



### What is conservation grazing?

Enfield Council have an exciting opportunity to trial conservation grazing in selected parks within the borough. This involves bringing cattle into the park and allowing them to graze the vegetation.

### Benefits of conservation grazing?

- It's in harmony with nature – it's 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
- It restores a traditional approach to cutting grass
- It reduces consumption of fossil fuels because there's no need to mow with large tractors



## A brief history & context of conservation grazing

If we stepped back in time several thousand years we would see our landscape being grazed by several different species of wild herbivores including aurochs (wild Ox or Bison). These large species ate dominant grassland plants and saplings and helped prevent woodlands encroaching over ancient grasslands, making room for wildflowers to grow, creating micro-habitats for many other animals to nest, feed and find refuge.

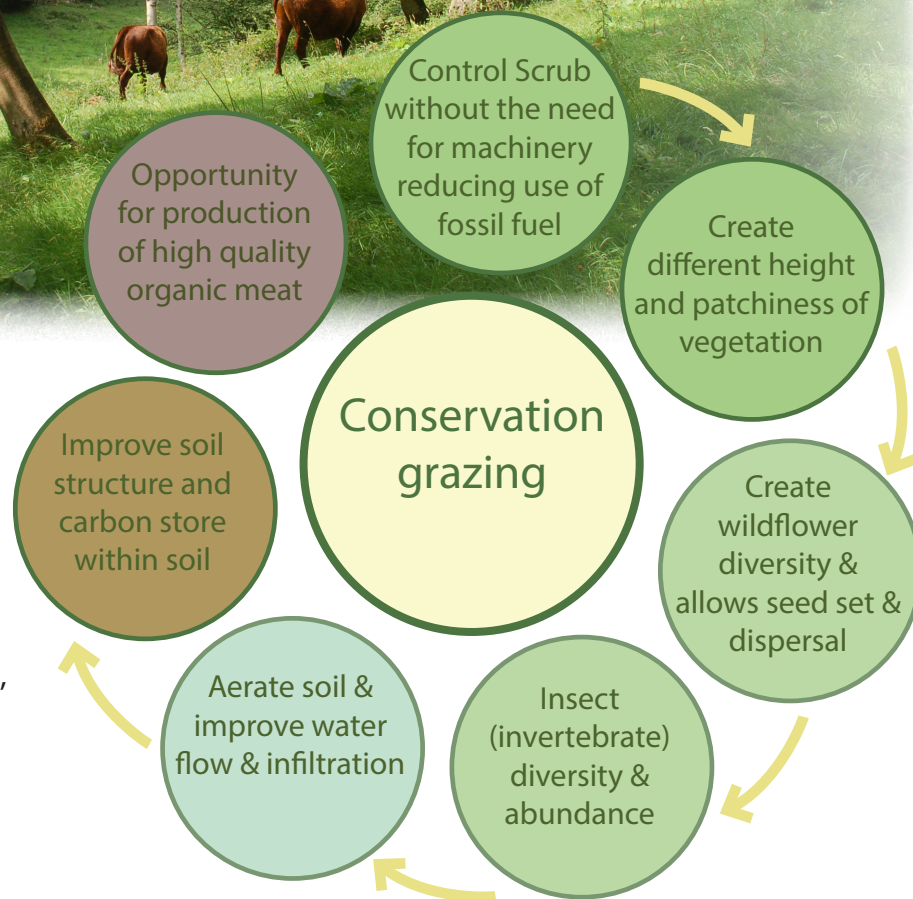
Humans domesticated some of these wild grazers and eventually they were replaced by the common farm animals we recognise today. Meanwhile much of our wild grassland is now farmed and in recent decades as agriculture intensified we have lost over 97% of wildflower meadows. Conservation grazing can help protect the remaining meadows and help boost biodiversity within our public spaces. The wild aurochs have disappeared but animals such as cows are able to recreate the same natural processes first established by ancient wild herbivores. Restoring natural processes such as this will help reduce reliance on machinery to manage the land with the intention that the land becomes self-sustaining.

## Multiple benefits of conservation grazing

Our Cattle will often graze more dominant plant species, which allows less competitive plants to thrive like wildflowers that encourage insects, which are in turn eaten by birds and mammals. The cattle create a mosaic of different sward heights and micro-habitats. Also when they are lying and rolling on the ground they increase structural diversity and trampling creates areas of bare ground, producing nurseries for seedlings and providing basking and hunting opportunities for warmth-loving invertebrates and reptiles. Cattle aerate the soil with their hooves and trample plants and other organic matter including their manure into the soil, this enriches it and increasing water flow or infiltration into the soil.



Other benefits include cattle dung which generates an ecosystem in its own right. By minimising the use of chemicals to control internal parasites a whole host of wildlife will colonise a cow pat - more than 250 species of insect can be found in or on cattle dung in the UK and these in turn provide food for birds, badgers, foxes and bats.



## Management plans and project partners

Our project aims to achieve these multiple benefits by introducing Red poll cattle in low density numbers to some of our parks in Enfield. We will also be using 'invisible fences' which are not harmful to the animals. They wear a special GPS collar which trains them to quickly learn the grazing boundaries without the need for barbed wire or electric fences, this will not therefore impede other wildlife species or indeed human use of amenity spaces.

Enfield Council will partner with Capel Manor College, who have the expertise and experience to manage and monitor the grazing animals. The project provides a great opportunity for these traditional land management techniques to be integrated into Capel Manor's educational courses.

This project assists Enfield Council in the delivery of our Blue & Green Infrastructure Plan which aims to improve the environment to benefit wildlife and give greater opportunity for people to enjoy nature. It also advances our Climate Action objectives.

## Where are we proposing to introduce conservation grazing?



Proposed conservation grazing areas



Trent Park grazing area detail  
Area: 28 Hectares  
Maximum number of cattle: 20



Whitewebbs Park grazing area detail  
Area: 9 Hectares  
Maximum number of cattle: 6



Forty Hall grazing area detail  
Area: 15 Hectares  
Maximum number of cattle: 10



# FAQ

## **Are the cattle dangerous?**

We have selected a breed of hornless cattle called Red Polls. They are considered a docile friendly breed and excellent mothers. They are not concerned by people around them. Although all park users will need to behave sensibly around them and not intentionally bother them.

## **Do I need to keep my dog on a lead?**

We advise that dog owners consider the likely behaviour of their dog and act responsibly. If you are concerned that your dog will interfere with the cattle then please do use a lead when in the vicinity of the cattle

## **Are the cattle bred for meat?**

Conservation grazing is primarily concerned with improving the biodiversity of the environment. In addition Red Poll cattle can produce high quality beef. The owners of the cattle will periodically manage the herd and produce meat which is then available in the Forty Hall Farm shop.

## **Who is responsible for the Cattle?**

The cattle are owned and managed by Capel Manor. Enfield Council work closely with the College to maintain the highest welfare of the cattle at all times.

## **Do the cattle produce methane and isn't that a damaging greenhouse gas?**

Whilst it is true that cattle produce methane during the process of digestion it is actually part of a natural carbon cycle – they eat grass which absorbs carbon from the atmosphere as it grows, the cows return it back to the atmosphere, and so on (this does not contribute additional carbon to the atmosphere so is very different to burning fossil fuels such as diesel to run tractors). Our project will contribute to a reduction of fossil fuels in the management of our parks as the project will improve the grassland that can act as a carbon sink. Research is also showing that cows with a more natural diet produce less methane than those on cattle feed. There are also other environmental benefits of grazing as outlined in the document.

## **How will the cattle be contained?**

We will be using a virtual or invisible fence. The cattle will have special GPS collars that will warn them and our cattle managers if they are going beyond the designated areas of grazing. The cattle are trained to respond to the GPS collar warnings. This virtual fencing system therefore eliminates the need for physical fencing that can be disruptive to people and wildlife.

## **How long will the cattle be in the park for?**

The grazing season typically runs from April to November, but the cattle will be able to graze as long as possible throughout the different seasons. Cattle do not mind the rain or cold, but in extreme weather and when there isn't enough food to graze, the cattle will be taken in-doors at Forty Hall Farm until the next grazing season.

We hope that this pilot project is a success and that the cattle can come back year after year to manage the land sustainably

## **Feedback**

Let us know your thoughts on the project at:

[letstalk.enfield.gov.uk/enfield-conservation-grazing](https://letstalk.enfield.gov.uk/enfield-conservation-grazing)

or email [bluegreen@enfield.gov.uk](mailto:bluegreen@enfield.gov.uk)