



## **HORSES' FIELD**

## **CATTLE FENCING ENGAGEMENT**

Produced by:



On behalf of:



# Proposal

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## Introduction

As a result of the cattle grazing public engagement receiving predominantly positive feedback in February 2020, Three Rivers District Council (TRDC) have committed to introducing seasonal cattle grazing to Horses' Field to improve management of the wildflower meadow. This aims to create an enhanced habitat for wildlife and a feature of interest for visitors, using a sustainable form of management. The aim of this public engagement is to determine which stock fencing option is preferred by users.

## Fencing

The fencing will consist of stock netting, two strands of barbed wire and one plain strand, just like the fencing used elsewhere in the District. The newly installed fences may stand out to start with but will quickly weather in. It is likely that some trees and scrub will need to be cut back to enable the fencing work to take place along the boundary, depending on the chosen fencing option.

## Public access

There will be no restrictions to public access to Horses' Field, and gates will be installed at appropriate locations around the site. Dog walkers will be free to walk with their dog in Horses' Field when livestock are present, as long as dogs are kept under close control. Children should be supervised at all times.

## Options

There are two potential options for fencing Horses' Field, reflecting feedback received during the first stage of public engagement, which we would like your views on.

**Option 1** would mean a fence line inset by approximately 10 metres from the Furtherfield entrance along the southern field boundary to the Langley Lane play area. Around the remainder of the field the fence would follow the field boundary. As cattle would be excluded from the southern edges of the site, users could walk this field perimeter without encountering cattle. Kissing gates on well-used routes would still allow pedestrian access across the field. The benefits of grazing, such as an increase in pollinator friendly flora, would be slightly reduced.

**Option 2** would involve a fence line inset by approximately 10 metres around the whole of the boundary of Horses' Field. This would allow users to walk a circuit of the field without encountering cattle. Kissing gates would be retained as in option 2, and the benefits of grazing would be further reduced.

Please see the below maps for a visual representation of the fencing options.

## Current management

Horses' Field wildflower meadow is currently managed with an annual rotational cut and lift, cutting a third of the meadow every year. Cuttings are removed after about a week to allow them to dry out and for seeds to drop before collection. Native hedgerows have been planted

along the boundaries as part of the site's Greenspace Action Plan and scrub is controlled to prevent encroachment onto the grassland.

### **Benefits of cattle grazing**

Conservation grazing enhances overall biodiversity, supports wildflowers and creates a mosaic of habitats ideal for our native wildlife, with different structures of grasses and flowering plants that cannot develop with an annual cut and lift. The cow pats left behind from cattle are also important to meadow ecology, as a number of invertebrates and fungi (many of which are now very rare) need dung as part of their specialist lifestyles. Cattle grazing on Horses' Field will manage the meadow in a gradual, low intensity way, causing much less damage to wildlife and making it a more favourable option than cutting. In addition to the wildlife benefits, the introduction of grazing animals has been a popular addition to other local green spaces, with the cattle becoming an attraction in their own right. In the long term, grazing should also reduce the cost of managing the grassland.

### **The cattle**

There will be approximately 20 cattle grazing at Horses' Field between June and September each year. However, the exact timing and duration will depend on weather conditions and how much grass there is for the cattle to eat during each season. Breeds with a temperament suitable for grazing on public sites will be selected. Elsewhere in the District at Croxley Common Moor and Chorleywood House Estate, Charolais crossed with Hereford are employed for conservation grazing very successfully.

# Stakeholder Feedback

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Thank you for taking the time to read this document. Please let us know which fencing option you would prefer to see at Horses' Field.

Please return your comments using the contact details below by **xxx** at the latest.

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