Delivering grassland management through local grazing schemes - the Hampshire Grazing Project

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Stock from farms graze conservation sites for periods of the year and then return to the farm for finishing, breeding or sale.
Home holding benefits from access to additional grazing land but needs good area of backup land to support the number of stock needed
The conservation sites are not a major part of the farmer’s enterprise. They provide grazing for the stock but may not be capable of providing quality forage for growing on animals to desired weights.

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Managed by HCC Countryside Service
Component of Thames Basin heaths that extend across north-east of county.
Mixture of wet, dry and humid heath.
Complex site management requirements.
Local grazier can provide Irish Moiled and Belted Galloway cattle during summer.
Grazier runs business delivering animals for educational visits to schools.

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Stock move between the farm, conservation sites and associated backup grazing as part of an integrated annual grazing rotation.
Backup land is linked to the grazing of the conservation sites and the conservation sites themselves are an integral part of the system.
Under this system the farmer can run a productive enterprise and produce quality stock for sale as stores, breedstock or slaughter.

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Private owner but managed by Countryside Service.
Potential for expansion through reversion of adjacent arable land.
Good quality hay meadow/pasture is included within main site boundary and used to provide quality forage for stock that have grazed associated downland.

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Stock are purchased (by organisation) and managed as ‘biological lawnmowers’ to deliver grazing on sites that are unattractive to commercial livestock owners.
Herd management may be undertaken by dedicated stockperson or shared among site staff.
Stock may be provided by specialist contract grazier whose main business enterprise is being paid to deliver conservation grazing.
Can be costly due to lack of any financial return from stock but is likely to be much cheaper than using mechanical alternatives.

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Annual cost of £10k per year, of which £8.5k is staff time. Most of rest is travelling costs.
Staff time and travelling costs are covered by partner organisations.
HCC Countryside Service has had a small herd of Highland cattle grazing sites since 1996, which were unattractive to commercial graziers. Existing herd has become ‘restricted’ to Hayling Island due to increased Council land holding.
Grazing Project identified three organisations with sites requiring grazing that could be delivered through roving herd partnership.
Grazing Project contributes £1k to start-up costs and partners contribute £250 per year to cover running costs.
Herd has insurance to cover public liability (as part of a more general policy) through NFU Mutual
Stockman at Manor Farm Country Park provides support for management of health and welfare

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Many large-scale Local Grazing Schemes follow this model, employing a variety of approaches to deliver conservation grazing on a range of sites.
Under such models, the LGS facilitates the establishment of customised solutions to the problems encountered, often linking otherwise separate sites, site managers and graziers together.
Often solutions have to be adjusted over time necessitating repeat intervention by the project.
This is the model that describes the approach of the Hampshire Grazing Project.
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**STAGE II AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

Stage II of the Hampshire Grazing Project will build upon progress made during Stage I. Experience gained during Stage I has guided the development of Stage II:

**To secure the sustainable grazing of land of conservation value in Hampshire through the development of appropriate livestock systems and the provision of advice and support to land managers and graziers.**

1. Secure appropriate grazing on an additional 250ha of chalk downland, 150ha of lowland neutral grassland (incl. wet pasture), 650ha of lowland heathland (with Hampshire Heathland Project) and 50ha of wood pasture by March 2006.

2. Develop initiatives to improve the understanding of the role of grazing in delivering appropriate management for land of conservation interest by April 2004.

3. Establish partnerships with related initiatives to improve the viability and sustainability of farmers and graziers involved in conservation grazing by September 2004.

Database of information for 110 sites (2.5k ha), 157 graziers and 214 herds/flocks

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Advice provided on 67 sites (1200ha)

**Project Activity by Key BAP Habitat**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Habitat Action Plan</th>
<th>Sites [ha]</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lowland Calcareous Grassland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lowland Wet Pasture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neutral Grassland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heathland (incl. acid grassland)</td>
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**Advice, Support and Grants Provided by Site Designation**

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<th>Area of Work</th>
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<th>NNRs</th>
<th>SSSIs</th>
<th>SINC</th>
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<td>Grazing solutions</td>
<td>33 [614]</td>
<td>1 [34]</td>
<td>13 [300]</td>
<td>11 [72]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Grazing solutions for 34 sites (614ha)

**Project Activity by Key BAP Habitat**

Grazing Solutions
**Habitat Action Plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Type</th>
<th>Sites [ha]</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Lowland Wet Pasture</td>
<td>8 [100]</td>
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<tr>
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<td>10 [118]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heathland (incl. acid grassland)</td>
<td>11 [307]</td>
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</table>

**Grazing Solutions by Site Designation**

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Specialist plans and guidance for watering points, livestock corrals, access facilities, fencing. Agri-environment schemes are the main source of funding for developing grazing on sites. LGS can develop schemes for owners or assist other land management advisers with grazing aspects of these schemes.

Often site infrastructure improvements need input to ensure that installations meet the practical requirements of graziers (e.g. fencing specs must be adequate, corrals of right type and in the right place).

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**Grants Provided by Site Designation**

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**CATEGORY**

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<tr>
<td>OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE</td>
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<tr>
<td>STOCK PURCHASE</td>
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**TOTAL £21,742**

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Training for lookers and site staff with stock responsibilities

Training on conservation grazing and impacts upon invertebrates

Grazing Forum field meetings – visits to sites to see practical solutions to grazing problems
Information and guidance in publications – newsletters

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Need to achieve sustainable solutions to the delivery of conservation grazing
Opportunities exist for development of branding and marketing of produce from conservation grazing
Development of agri-environment schemes may provide improved opportunities for developing longer term solutions
LGS can help reduce costs for graziers by identifying opportunities that fit with their grazing systems – e.g. reduced winter feed costs.
Key role for LGS is in the promotion of the role of grazing to the wider public to improve acceptance and understanding.

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LGS can cover whole counties, key areas (river valleys, landscape features) or a smaller network of key sites.
LGS can adapt to and exploit local conditions to achieve best solutions.
Grazing is an integral part of managing lowland grassland to deliver conservation benefits.
The benefits of appropriate grazing (micro-habitats, interaction with environment etc.) cannot easily be replicated. Equivalent mechanical options are more expensive.
LGS are central to the delivery of BAP targets for lowland grassland and other habitats.
LGS need support and longer term funding in order to assist with this delivery.