

**NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL
DECISION**

2015/16 scheme



DECISION OF SECTION 151 OFFICER OF THE COUNCIL,
CORPORATE SERVICES DIRECTORATE

DECISION NO: CSD147

SUBJECT: Renewal of grant of Grazing Licence - Land known as the Lower Meadow, which forms part of Cadbury Hill Local Nature Reserve (LNR)

BACKGROUND:

1. The land shown in red on the attached plan comprises a 1.23ha meadow; which forms part of Cadbury Hill LNR. (The hill fort area of the LNR is jointly owned by Yatton and Congresbury Parish Council; and the northern areas are in the ownership of North Somerset Council (to include the lower meadow).
2. The lower meadow was formerly hay cut but has been grazed under a grazing licence spring and autumn 2013, with the grazier paying an annual fee of £25. This licence has now expired. The key objective of spring and autumn grazing is to enhance the botanical diversity of the meadow and to provide an undisturbed wild flower meadow habitat over the summer period for invertebrates and other wildlife, to include foraging rare species of bats. Cattle grazing is favourable for a number of reasons including: minimal cost for grass management; results in the production of dung beetles over August to support juvenile horseshoe bats. Waterlogged conditions during some years (notably 2012), resulted in lack of grass management, as hay cuts were not possible.
3. An updated and amended grazing licence has been produced to cover grazing to meet nature conservation objectives for periods in spring, late summer and autumn and is attached.
4. The annual fee charged at Uphill SSSI for grazing of £300 for a site of 15.78ha, was used as a basis for calculating and setting the original grazing fee for the lower meadow in 2013. The percentage of the fee by area was calculated and rounded up to an annual fee of £25. (For the original application, a one off professional fee of £25 was also imposed (based on the £100 imposed at Uphill, that was reduced to be proportionate to £25).
5. A justification for setting a minimal grazing fee is that a local grazier is paid £200 to graze the area of the site that is under the ownership of Yatton and Congresbury Parish Council (which comprises the area of the hillfort); and a low fee means that the grazier is willing to accommodate the timing and stocking restrictions to optimise management of the site.

DECISION

Further to the original decision for grant of a grazing licence (under Decision Notice 165, April 2013, attached), a decision to grant a renewal to this licence is sought to cover a period of

three years. However, it is intended for this licence to be renewed with the grazier annually, to enable review of grazing levels and patterns, if and where necessary, and to update in relation to DEFRA livestock regulations.

To authorise officers to issue a grazing licence for land known as the 'lower meadow' off Henley Lane, Yatton for an annual fee of £25.

Reasons:

- 1. To realise enhanced nature conservative objectives;
- 2. To reduce expenditure on hay cutting for the local nature reserve as a whole and to generate some small income.

Other alternatives considered:

None.


Financial Implications

- 1. Grazing will save the council the cost of paying a contractor to hay cut the field. This cost would have been approximately £50 in 2012, when this field was last hay cut, as part of the quoted cost for hay cutting of all the meadow areas on site. The cost of hay cutting the remainder of the meadow compartments on the NSC-owned area in 2015 was £400.
- 2. Grazing will generate a small positive income for the council of £25 in 2016; and some similar income in subsequent years.

Other Alternatives Considered: None

Implications for Future Years:

Ongoing savings in relation to hay cutting and small income generated.

Signed: 
 Section 151 Officer, North Somerset Council

Dated: 19.4.16