

Grazing on Beacon Hill Nature Reserve

Sheep grazing has long been part of Rottingdean's history, as observed by its most famous resident, Rudyard Kipling, 'The Downs are Sheep, the Weald is corn, You be glad you are Sussex born!' The main entrance road to Beacon Hill Nature Reserve, is even called 'Sheep Walk'.

Sheep grazing became financially unviable for farmers during the second half of the twentieth century and suffered a steep decline as a result. Sheep were reintroduced to Beacon Hill Nature Reserve 14 years ago, not for their agricultural value but because managing the downland with sheep is beneficial for wildlife.

Most Rottingdean and Ovingdean residents have now got used to the annual arrival of the sheep.

Last year CityParks extended the grazing onto some parts of the reserve into late spring/early summer to help deal with the scrub encroachment. This was done with the best of intentions; however, some people were concerned that they thought the sheep could be damaging skylark nests.

Another common complaint is about the electric fencing, dogs receiving shocks and a perception that the electric fence makes the nature reserve a less welcoming place

Thank you to all the people who have expressed their concern about the timing of the grazing and the fencing. We have taken all the above into consideration, and to simplify things;

- The sheep will be grazing on Beacon Hill Nature Reserve from 1st November to 28th February
- Electric fencing will no longer be used.

Grazing during the winter months will hopefully minimise 'disruption' to people's enjoyment of the reserve, concerned local nature lovers can be assured that no birds nests will be at risk of trampling from the sheep, dog walkers need no longer worry about the possibility of electric shocks, and the time that was spent by staff and volunteers erecting and moving the electric fence can be put to better use by doing some extra conservation work and making physical improvements to the reserve

Grazing without electric fencing means we will no longer separate the hill into different compartments.

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For more information please contact Cityparks@brighton-hove.gov.uk

