

# Corncrake - Grazing and Mud!

## Grazing

The draft Corncrake Grazing License is appended to this report. It has been drafted so as to try to encourage the growth of wildflowers on the field, including a requirement for grazing by cattle rather than other animals. Some of the terms require the active co-operation of the grazier and need to be tested and reviewed for practicality and effectiveness.

Additionally, the grazing of Corncrake has been delayed this year, awaiting the installation of a water supply. This has now been installed and the trough relocated into the main field. Grazing would normally be expected to commence towards the end of August/ beginning of September, once the wildflowers have seeded and a hay cut taken.

Because of the above the licence period is shorter than we would expect and to some extent the drafting is experimental.

The draft has been discussed with a potential grazier, who finds the terms acceptable but is not prepared to pay a fee for the shortened period and until the terms have been tested in practice. I have been unable to find and discuss the draft with any other suitably sized cattle grazier. Subject to weather conditions, the grazier would be able to commence grazing in November.

Recommendations:

1. that the Licence be granted to the selected grazier for no fee
2. that the Licence terms be reviewed in consultation with the grazier in May/ June, with a view to a Licence for 2021/22 being considered by the Parish Council at its July 2021 meeting.

## Mud

The footpath gate to the area to be grazed (near the Timber Bridge - NE corner of the field) gets muddy and will get muddier once cattle are grazing there. While mud in the countryside is to be expected, we could reduce the problem for walkers by works similar to those undertaken at the Timber Bridge some years ago and which have been reasonably successful. Additionally, we have salvaged some of the rubber matting from the Play Area to assist.

I envisage works comprising excavation of the ground to one foot or so, laying land drainage pipe to drain into the river, covering with gravel/ stone, replacing an inch or so of soil and covering with the rubber matting. Materials should not be expensive: I have sufficient spare drainage pipe (as used at the Timber Bridge); the National Trust has previously given us permission to use some of their aggregate stored at the northern end of Hive Beach car park (this was some time ago and needs to be confirmed, so may need to be bought); we have salvaged the matting. I estimate the time required to be around one day, and suggest that it be undertaken by our Handyperson. A budget of £300 (excluding VAT) should be sufficient and could be taken from our working reserve if not available from Corncrake funds.

If the work is undertaken and is reasonably successful, we should consider similar work, possibly without the land drain, at the other two gates serving the public footpaths into the field.

Recommendation: that drainage work as described above be undertaken by the Handyperson with a budget of £300 (excluding VAT), funds being made available from Corncrake funds or the working reserve.

**Councillor Graham Moody October 2020**