HORNDEAN PARISH COUNCIL

GROUNDS AND PROPERTY MEETING **Date: 02/03/2015**

AGENDA ITEM: 5

SUBJECT OF REPORT: HPC management of Catherington Down

PURPOSE OF REPORT: To discuss and resolve the Management of the Down

Environmental reasons

Given the site's special nature it is essential that it is managed locally. The team are currently able to go to the site and deal with any matters that arise from fence cutting to dangerous trees instantly. In previous discussions with Hampshire County Council (the owners of the site) it has been suggested that the site might be permanently grazed by horses. This would be devastating to the flora and fauna causing land degradation. Added to this with the constant fertilization, it could lead to the loss of the special C3 grasses, and other rare flora and fauna. This could then lead to the loss of its SSSI status.

Public reasons

The site is loved and used by many people locally, this can clearly be seen by the dozens of walkers every day all year round.

In previous meetings such as the public consultation on the future management of Catherington Down there was a 22/4 vote in favour of Horndean Parish Council (HPC) continuing to manage the site. Many positive comments arose from this meeting about the way HPC currently manages the site.

Future plans for the site

The management plan that was written by the countryside team in 2011 outlines plans until 2016. This plan has been followed but there are outstanding elements that are planned to be met by the end of the management plan. Works are already in place to ensure the site can be managed according to the plan and the HLS agreement. such as the installation of the corral to facilitate easier grazing and meet new grazing regulations.

In the past the Hampshire Wildlife Trust has agreed to help out three days each year on the site. The Countryside Team Manager has opened discussions to re-establish this work, a response is awaited.

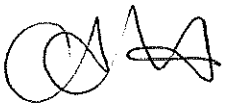
Hampshire County Council (HCC) has agreed to increase their provision to £750 and to provide ad hoc assistance when needed. It was discussed previously that HCC would replace all the fencing, so far to date half has been done. The Countryside Team Manager is currently discussing the possibility of HCC completing the other half.

NB: The fencing to be agreed is along the roadside. The inner fence is stock-proof and not in need of works.

The Countryside Team will be proposing a whole host of works for the site including full vegetation and wildlife surveys and planting Horse Shoe Vetch in order to try and attract the very rare butterfly species the Chalk Hill Blue.

Recommendation:

That the Executive Officer in conjunction with the Chairman of the Grounds Committee have delegated power to negotiate and renew with HCC the lease on Catherington Down.



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Grounds Manager