

Implementation plan to reintroduce conservation grazing to Juniper Hill



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Introduction

One of the three main objectives of the current five-year Epsom and Walton Downs Habitat Management Plan (2023-2028) is to draw up a project plan to reintroduce grazing to Juniper Hill. This implementation plan will outline the steps needed to fulfil this objective.

Background

The grassland of Juniper Hill bears special attention as it has been considered to be the best of its type in Surrey. It is regarded by the Epsom and Ewell Local Biodiversity Action Plan working group as a top priority to conserve and enhance.

Grazing has always been and is likely to remain, the preferred management option on Juniper Hill as it has been responsible for creating and maintaining the biological interest, allowing the wildflowers to flourish and a vital aid in controlling the scrub.

Following the EWD Conservators meeting, on 23 June 2025, where the feasibility report was considered, it was agreed to progress the project.

Recommendations

1. Robust fencing is to be used, Clipex fencing has been recommended.
2. To ensure safety of the animals and minimise risk of escapees which could endanger horses and their riders, no public access will be allowed while the animals are on site.
3. The vehicle gates in to the paddocks will be locked shut when animals are on site. Staff and specialist volunteers only to have key/combination.
4. When animals are off site, the vehicle gates will be left propped open so people can have free access.
5. The fencing will be set back from the central path to give visitors less of a sense of being shut out.
6. Information leaflets will be delivered to nearby residents and local horse yards.
7. A 'meet the sheep' event will be organised before the fencing is installed and animals arrive to encourage support for the reintroduction of grazing.
8. Volunteer checkers will be sought to support staff in managing the grazing.
9. The Downlands Grazing Partnership will be used to supply the animals, who will also carry out checks once a week and provide training to staff and volunteers.
10. Number of animals and timings to be assessed as we go to ensure correct grazing pressure.

Costs

Capital costs -

Fencing

Juniper south 410m

Juniper north 310m £11,000.00 plus £4000 to install

Task to clear vegetation along the route of the fence line - £500

Rainwater harvester trough x2 - £2000 (materials and installation)

Installation of a mains water supply can be investigated in the future.

Possible other upfront costs - If vandalism becomes a problem, we can look into purchasing NoFence collars as an extra line of defence but considering the type of fencing we are going to use, I don't think this will be definitely necessary. Collars are approx. £200 each. So, £2000 in total for 8 sheep. NB Hire of collars is possible.

Ongoing/revenue costs -

On the basis of **8 sheep grazing** for 13 weeks between 15/09/2026 to 15/12/2026 and then again for 10 weeks between 12/01/2027 and 23/03/2027, plus all movement costs and water filling (may not be needed if we get enough rain), the cost is **£1386.45 ex VAT**.

Vegetation management of fence line. Once or twice a year. This should be able to be carried out by the EEBC Countryside Team and their volunteers.

Hire of NoFence collars is possible from the Downlands Partnership, if there is enough supply, which would cost £1.20 per animal, per week. Total cost for 23 weeks is **£220.80**, which would be the annual cost if it is felt necessary.

Officer time will also need to be considered

Project management will involve:

- Sourcing funding, grant applications.
- Overseeing preparation of the site and installation of the infrastructure.
- Recruitment and support of volunteers. These first three points will be covered by the overtime budget currently being used to progress the project.
- Overseeing safety of animals and other users of the site while animals are on site, including checks twice a week. Extra officer time costed at £2,500 for the duration of the animals being on site.

Downkeepers' involvement:

- Training to check animals and be fully aware of infrastructure needs.
- Daily checks taking approx. 1 hr. Potentially for 4 days a week until a volunteer team is set up. It is suggested that this can be incorporated into their regular duties at no extra cost.

Capital Funding for infrastructure

Your Fund Surrey via Cllr McCormick

Small Projects Community Funding

Applications for the Your Fund Surrey Small Community Projects Fund (YFSSCP) can be made via a local County Councillor. The deadline for submitting applications is 5pm on Friday 20 March 2026, although some Surrey County Councillors may spend their allowance sooner.

The Downlands Trust

An application for a proportion of the money needed will be made to the Downlands Trust. We will also ask them if they would be happy to be the named applicant for the YFSSCP as applications are not accepted from councils.

Revenue funding for animal hire and on-going project management

It is proposed that the new income from the food and drink vans within the car parks will cover the ongoing costs related to the grazing project.

Timetable

January 2026 – EWD conservators committee

Early March 2026 – clear route for fence line by Lower Mole Partnership Volunteers

March 20th 2026 – Deadline for applications to be submitted to Your Fund Surrey Small Community Fund

February – June 2026 – Consultation with the public, recruitment of volunteers

June 2026 – Meet the sheep event, which can include training of staff and volunteers

July/Aug 2026 – Installation of fencing

September - Dec 2026 – Animals graze for 13 weeks

Jan – March 2027 – Animals graze for 10 weeks