



Conservation Grazing – I’m not a farmer, will it still affect me?

Driving past sheep in a field you may ignore them, however these sheep are not merely grazing in a field but are in fact saving your local council money.

In the current economic climate some local councils are understanding that conservation does not need to equate to extra funding, and in fact conservation can actually save money for councils. For the past number of years Brighton and Hove City Council have been using sheep to help improve open spaces for both wildlife and people. The innovative approach to conservation by use of grazing is a more favourable method than mowing as the grass is removed over several weeks allowing insects to move away. Sheep also vary in the type of plants that they eat, so grazing removes different plants at different rates, unlike mowing where all the vegetation is removed at once. Furthermore having sheep grazing provides extra fertiliser for the land and will help the grass grow and be fertile. Mowing the grass however is considerably more expensive and problematic, especially as some sites aren't as easy to access.

Sheep were initially introduced in Brighton and Hove to graze as part of an attempt to expand and conserve chalk grassland in and around the city. Since then the chalk grassland has greatly improved and the sheep have proven to be a success. Whilst there is great support for this initiative there is inevitably some resistance to the scheme through lack of understanding of the objectives. Dogs must be kept on leads in the areas that sheep are grazing which can upset dog walkers and there has been vandalism of fences intended to secure the sheep. Through community engagement and education however on the benefits of grazing it is hoped that the sheep will continue to keep the vegetation under control whilst also saving tax payers money.

