

8. The Burrows

8. NORTHAM BURROWS

The Burrows is vital to the economy and well being of the District. It is host to one of the oldest and best known links golf courses in England, bringing many tourists here, and supports over a thousand sheep and a hundred horses with its common grazing rights, which have been in place for a thousand years.

It has been designated a SSSI due to some of the wild flora which can be found there, and has a potential wildlife impact on the Braunton Biosphere.

The Burrows was given to Torridge District Council, by Devon on 1 April 2000 and is now managed by TDC.

The grazing (numbers of sheep and horses) has been managed since medieval times by a committee of local burghers. It is now managed for Northam Town Council by the 1716 Committee, a blend of users and Councillors. The current levels of grazing were set by MAFF in 1977, following the local government reorganisation, these levels are 1200 sheep and 100 horses.

In 1988 the Burrows and the Pebbleridge were designated an SSSI and English Nature became involved. Since then a "controlled retreat" covers the Coastal erosion of the Sandhills, but a large area is now under threat from the Sea and this includes the former "Refuse Tip" which has caused great concern.



NTC has now been instructed by DEFRA to reduce the grazing by more than 50%, in order to preserve and encourage the wild flowers. The new Commons Bill is due to be considered by Parliament shortly, and may introduce further controls on the site.

There is also little or no control on many activities on the Common and the recent increase in the use of Kite Boards etc. has led to many people being forced off the beach and onto the Burrows. This is exacerbating the erosion of the Sandhills and causing more pressure on the flora and fauna and hastening the ingress of the Sea onto the Common.



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8.1. Recommendations

In the current fluid state of the pressures on the Burrows, NTC can only make some general recommendations to try to ensure that the management stays with local people who have managed the area for many years, and understand it. We also have some management points which we consider should be included in any future management plan.



8.1.1. All ditches should be kept clear, not for drainage but for salt water irrigation. This will assist in reducing the masses of brambles which are becoming a major problem. It includes the burn which runs up into Goosey pool. Bridges over ditches and the Burn must be well maintained.



8.1.2. All stock on the burrows must be registered and levels monitored on a more regular basis.

8.1.3. An aggressive weed removal programme for brambles, ragwort, spear thistle, nettles and dock etc

8.1.4. Franchise the toll collection and instead of Toll Collectors have staff to enforce and give guidance to users of the Common.

8.1.5. Lock gates at night

8.1.6. Arrange a more formal management group of all users of the Common.

8.1.7. Engage an expert to give an independent appraisal on the levels of grazing and other uses of the Common, and this impact on the flora.

8.1.8. Cut areas which are under grazed at present, such as the Great Plain, which has become overgrown with poor grass following the “Foot and Mouth” crisis.

