

# Whitehawk Hill

Your opportunity to shape its future



Brighton & Hove City Council would like to know your views about our plans for conserving Whitehawk Hill.



Brighton & Hove  
City Council

Whitehawk Hill runs from Craven Vale to Swanborough Drive (see map). It has an age-old history, with a 5,000-year-old Neolithic camp and ancient chalk grassland. Today the hill is important for dog walking and nature watching – much of it was declared a Local Nature Reserve in 2004. Whitehawk Hill also includes Craven Vale, Race Hill and Whitehawk Hill allotments.



This photograph was taken during the construction of Whitehawk Estate in the 1930s. Note the absence of scrub and woodland on the steep hill, due to many years of sheep grazing. In summer this would have been buzzing with wildflowers, bees and butterflies.

The council has begun looking at ways of conserving the important features of Whitehawk Hill and improving it as an amenity for local people. We would very much like to know your views.

This recent photo shows just how much wildflower rich grassland has been lost from Whitehawk Hill in the last 80 years, as it has been gradually evicted by brambles and scrub. Some bushes and young woodland are good for wildlife, but chalk grassland will soon disappear from the hill unless action is taken.



### **Management – which way forward?**

Ancient chalk grassland is internationally important – it is one of Britain's rarest and richest habitats, with threatened species including Adonis Blue butterfly and orchids. But without conservation management, it will give way to brambles and rough scrub.

The chalk grassland at Whitehawk Hill is suffering from many years of neglect and will soon be lost for ever, unless the right management can be introduced.

Recently the council was offered government funding to conserve the ancient chalk grassland on Whitehawk Hill and to improve the hill as a public space.



Proposed  
community  
orchard and  
wildflower area

Proposed area of scrub/tree clearance and sheep grazing

Whitehawk  
camp

New  
allotments

## Priorities

We think the main priorities for the future of Whitehawk Hill are:

**Wildlife** – Conserve, restore and enhance the rare and important species and habitats.

**Recreation** – Promote quiet, informal access and enjoyment for all.

**Communities** – Encourage community involvement and awareness, using notice boards, leaflets, events, walks, workshops and volunteering.

**Landscape** – Protect the landscape and promote awareness of the importance of the hill within the South Downs

**History** – Safeguard the nationally important Neolithic camp on the hill and raise its profile.

**Food** – Provide more allotment plots and support community-led food projects, including a community orchard.

**Problems** – Minimise anti-social behaviour on the hill, tackling issues such as fly-tipping, fires, illegal motorcycling and dog related problems.



Bramble bashing



Small Blue butterfly and Cinnabar moth



### Whitehawk Camp

The mounds and ditches at the top of the steep slope either side of Manor Hill are the remains of Whitehawk Camp – one of Britain's most significant earthwork structures. This Neolithic causewayed enclosure dates back to around 3,000BC, much older than Stonehenge! It is thought to have been used for rituals, feasts and ceremonies.

Whitehawk Camp is legally protected (a Scheduled Ancient Monument) but parts of it were destroyed when the racecourse, main road and housing estate were built. This hugely important site deserves better protection and a higher profile.



Dark Green Fritillary and Six Spot Burnet Moth

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Why not just leave the hill alone?

The chalk grassland at Whitehawk Hill has been deteriorating over many decades, since grazing ceased in the 1930s. Things have now reached a critical stage. If the hill is not grazed or managed soon, the rough scrub will continue to advance. Within a few years, one of the city's best remaining ancient chalk grassland havens will be lost for ever.

### Why not mow the chalk grassland instead of grazing it?

Most of Whitehawk Hill is far too steep to mow with a machine. Even on areas where a machine could be used, the cuttings would have to be removed to prevent the rare plants from being smothered. Removing cuttings on this scale is not practical and it would be prohibitively expensive.

### Why not use temporary electric fencing?

The council has trialled grazing on a small area of chalk grassland at Whitehawk Hill since 2009. Electric fencing has been used and although the grazing has helped conserve the chalk grassland, there have been problems with dog attacks. Using permanent post and wire fencing is much safer for the sheep. It is also more practical when grazing large areas.

### Will the fencing prevent me from using Whitehawk Hill?

All of Whitehawk Hill will remain fully accessible at all times. Gates will be placed in the fencing along paths to ensure people can continue to walk freely. People will be asked to keep dogs on leads on the parts of the hill where sheep are grazing.

## Ancient chalk grassland

Ancient chalk grassland is recognised in the European Habitats Directive as one of Europe's rarest and most spectacular habitats. More than 40 different plant species can be found in a square meter of turf. It has been created very slowly, by livestock grazing over hundreds or even thousands of years.

The thin soils covering the chalk allow most of the rainwater and nutrients to drain through. Downland wildflowers are especially adapted to thrive in these poor soils.

Across the UK, 80% of chalk grassland has been lost since the 1930s due to the expansion of arable farming, urban development and invasion by scrub.



## Plans for the future

### Chalk grassland

The council is planning to re-introduce traditional sheep grazing on Whitehawk Hill to conserve the ancient chalk grassland. Some grazing has taken place on a small scale and this has already proved successful. We would now like to extend grazing at certain times of the year which would require putting up fencing, while minimising any impact on public access. The map attached shows the areas the council plans to graze.

### Community orchard

Working with the Brighton & Hove Food Partnership and Brighton Permaculture Trust, the council is planning to create a community orchard on the abandoned former allotments at Swanborough Drive (see map). The aim is to create an area of traditional fruit trees, available for local people to harvest and help manage. We are also looking at working with partners to create a bee haven, a new wild flower conservation area, to attract butterflies and pollinating insects.

### Allotments

Allotment growing is becoming more popular and there is a need for more allotment plots at the southern end of Whitehawk Hill. The council is planning to extend the Craven Vale allotment plot (see map) to provide new plots for local people.

### Whitehawk Camp

Action needs to be taken to protect the Neolithic Ancient Monument from damage and to help people know its national significance (it is one of the earliest and largest of its type in Europe). The council plans to protect the camp and put up interpretation boards, explaining its ancient history.

## For more information

Email: [cityparks@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:cityparks@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

### Or write to:

Cityparks,  
Stanmer Nurseries, Stanmer Park,  
Lewes Road,  
Brighton BN1 9SE

### To be involved in the community orchard project:

Email [harvest@bhfood.org.uk](mailto:harvest@bhfood.org.uk)  
or call 01273 431700



Grazing with traditional breeds at the right time of year keeps the scrub and rank grasses at bay, allowing the rich downland flora to flourish in summer. Sheep also ensure that little vegetation is left to rot down, which can smother new growth.

**Translation? Tick this box and take to any council office.**

ترجمة؟ ضع علامة في المربع وخذها إلى مكتب البلدية. Arabic

অনুবাদ? বক্সে টিক চিহ্ন দিয়ে কাউন্সিল অফিসে নিয়ে যান। Bengali

需要翻譯? 請在這方格內加劃, 並送回任何市議會的辦事處。Cantonese

ترجمه؟ لطفاً این مربع را علامتگذاری نموده و آن را به هر یک از دفاتر شهرداری ارائه نمایید. Farsi

Traduction? Veuillez cocher la case et apporter au council. French

需要翻譯? 請在這方格內划勾, 并送回任何市议会的办事处。Mandarin

Tłumaczenie? Zaznacz to okienko i zwróć do któregoś z biur samorządu lokalnego (council office). Polish

Tradução? Coloque um visto na quadrícula e leve a uma qualquer repartição de poder local (council office). Portuguese

Tercümesi için kareyi işaretleyiniz ve bir semt belediye bürosuna veriniz Turkish

other (please state)

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