**Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000**

**PROPOSAL FOR A LONG TERM DIRECTION BY THE RELEVANT AUTHORITY**

**SUMMARY FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION**
Prepared by Natural England

## 1. INFORMATION ABOUT THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

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| **Case Number** | **2018118766** |
| **Site Name** | **Barnack Hills and Holes National Nature Reserve** |
| **Grid reference** | **TF 075 046** |
| **Access Authority** | **Peterborough City Council** |
| **Relevant Authority** | **Natural England** |
| **Local Access Forum** | **Peterborough Local Access Forum** |

Section 26(3)(a) of the CROW Act provides powers to Natural England as the relevant authority to give a direction for the purpose of conserving flora, fauna or geological or physiographical features on CROW access land. The relevant authority may only give a nature conservation direction where it is satisfied that restriction of CROW access rights to the extent provided by the direction is necessary for this purpose.

Natural England proposes to give a direction at Barnack Hills and Holes NNR under Section 26(3)(a) of the CROW Act that will last for longer than six months continuously. The Act requires us to consult publicly on all such proposals for 'long-term directions'.

## 2. SUMMARY OF RELEVANT AUTHORITY PROPOSAL

Barnack Hills and Holes National Nature Reserve (NNR) is leased and managed by Natural England. The NNR has been publically accessible for the last 40 years and is mapped as CROW access land, the rights for which came into effect across the whole of England on October 31 October 2005. The site is very well accessed by people living locally and by people living further afield around Stamford and Peterborough, and dog walking is a popular activity on the site.
The site requires regular grazing to provide suitable habitat for the flora features notified under its designations as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and as a Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI). At present, the site is grazed by up to 80 sheep, with the addition of 4 ponies during 2018. The sheep and ponies are located together in one of five fenced compartments on site, and are rotated around each compartment as required.

Previously, signage was placed at the entrances to each compartment when the sheep were present, saying: "sheep now on site – your dog will need a lead".

This was in line with the national restriction on CROW access land to keep dogs on a short lead in the vicinity of livestock. Unfortunately this national restriction has not been adhered to by all visitors, and there have been regular incidents where sheep have been chased by dogs, with multiple sheep fatalities each year as a result of attacks from dogs off lead. In addition to the obvious welfare issue, the effectiveness of the grazing is impacted negatively when the sheep are chased by dogs, as they tend to huddle in a corner, rather than being spread out across the site. The ponies also graze more effectively when not being moved around the site by dogs.

Having considered the circumstances Natural England decided to give a short term dog exclusion on CROW access land within the fenced compartment where the sheep and ponies are present, effective from 31 October 2018 until 31 April 2019, given for the purpose of nature conservation, with the intention of reviewing the effectiveness of the restriction alongside future plans for conservation grazing on site. Since the short term restriction was given, the NNR manager has reported back that the dog exclusion appears to be well respected by most visitors and is having the desired effect. The grazing regime on this site is under constant review, and the NNR have decided to retain the ponies and a smaller number of sheep on site through the summer period, with a larger number of sheep being added to site during the autumn, winter and spring periods. The grazing will be closely monitored and adjusted as necessary to provide suitable habitat for the designated flora features.

As livestock will graze the each fenced compartment on rotation throughout the year, we propose extending the existing dog exclusion within the fenced compartment where livestock are present to year round. The dog exclusion will be clearly signed at the entrances to each compartment when the livestock are present.

The other four compartments where livestock are not present will remain available to people visiting with dogs. If the livestock are removed from the site completely for any short periods in the future the entire site will be available to people visiting with dogs.

## 3. SUBMITTING COMMENTS ABOUT THE PROPOSED DIRECTION:

If you wish to comment on the proposal for this direction then you must do so before 5 April directly to Sarah Haigh at sarah.haigh@naturalengland.org.uk A map accompanies this notice and is attached and/or [delete as appropriate] can be seen on the consultation pages on Citizen Space[1].

### Using and sharing your consultation responses

[1] https://consult.defra.gov.uk/

In line with Natural England's Personal Information Charter, any comments you make, and any information you send in support of them, will help us to determine the application and / or determine if the restriction is still necessary in relation to the review or reassessment of a current direction.

We may wish to pass such comments or information to others in connection with our duties and powers under the open access legislation. This may mean for example passing information, including your name and contact details, to the Secretary of State or their appointees, the Planning Inspectorate or to the relevant access authority(s).

We will summarise all responses and place this summary on the Government's consultation website. This summary will include a list of names of organisations that responded but not the names, addresses or other contact details of individual respondents.

There may also be circumstances in which we will be required to disclose your response to third parties, either as part of the statutory process for consideration of representations and objections about our decision, or in order to comply with our wider obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

If you do not want your response - including your name, contact details and any other personal information – to be publicly available, please explain clearly why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. However, we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not be regarded as binding on Natural England.