

## **Draft Press/Publicity Release.**

### **Hughenden Valley; Exciting plans to restore local wildflower grassland**

Do you regularly use Burnham Field to visit or walk? Hughenden Parish Council would like to hear your views on plans to restore the biodiversity of this small wildflower pasture and woodland.

Accessed by kissing gates, walkers will know that this field lies beyond King Georges Playing fields (next to the allotments and above the football club's pitch).

#### **Biodiversity Value**

This pasture is a relic of a once much larger chalk grassland; - a 50 acre pasture (known as Big Burnham Field) covering the hillside. It is also a vital habitat, as the UK has lost 97% of its wildflower grasslands since the 1940s.

The pasture used to be grazed in the traditional way every summer with sheep. With no added fertilizers or pesticides, this age-old system maintained grassland rich in wildflowers and butterflies. This allowed plants to flower and set seed, and prevented vegetation getting too long.

#### **Lack of Grazing**

Unfortunately grazing lapsed in recent years and only sporadic cutting for hay has kept the field open, though scrub from the surround hedgerows is encroaching. This lack of grazing is having a detrimental impact on the flora and fauna of the site.

#### **Plans to restore Grazing**

As part of a new management plan to restore the biodiversity value of this designated wildlife site, it is proposed to re-introduce light grazing during the summer and possibly into autumn months. The planted spinney will also be thinned or coppiced to allow more light and wildflowers to flourish.

#### **Your Views and Support**

Hughenden Parish Council appreciates that local residents use this attractive site to walk and exercise their dogs. We would like to know your views on proposed measures to help biodiversity and re-introduce sheep (or cattle) each summer. This will mean dog-walkers will need to keep their pets on leads for a period each year as they pass through the pasture. Without this cooperation, it won't be possible to reintroduce traditional management for nature conservation.

Please let us know your views? The Parish Council will be providing a draft copy of the plans on its website and will greatly appreciate your input and comments.