

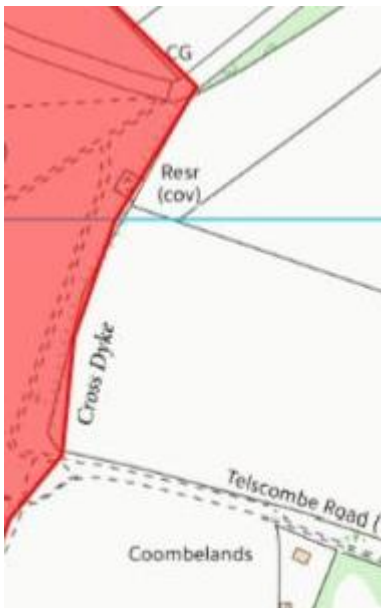


Telscombe Tye



The main part of Telscombe Tye (an ancient Sussex name for a common), is downland situated on the coast between East Saltdean and Telscombe Cliffs. It provides a highly valued downland backdrop while also preserving their distinct identities. The views from the Tye sweep over the Weald of Sussex to the north and over the channel to the south, with the towns nestling into folds of the Downs, their history, shape and outlines defined by the curves of the land. This is one of the very few places where the Downs reaches the sea and the only one on this stretch of the coast.

It lies within the administrative boundary of Telscombe Town Council, Lewes District Council and East Sussex Council and is within the designated South Downs National Park. The importance of the Tye as a buffer zone, open space, protected chalk downland and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is recognized within the Lewes District Plan and the emerging South Downs National Park Authority Local Plan. The site also plays host to three scheduled ancient monuments and on the cliff top is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The area is also within a biosphere project area which is hoped was formally adopted by the EU as a protected site in 2014.



There is evidence of occupation of Telscombe and the Tye since prehistoric times. During excavation of the tumulus on the ancient Cross Dyke for the construction of the underground reservoir, in circa 1909, three internments were discovered, including a crouched skeleton. In 1922 urns, flints and pieces of burnt bone and shells were discovered and pottery and cremated bones were unearthed in a wartime trench.

There is the suggestion that there was Roman Fort on the Tye and reports of a sunken road used by the Romans to their camp. This is likely to refer to the Village road and Cross Dyke, it was typical that these ancient processional burial routes were used as highways.

The tumulus in the Cross Dyke was destroyed by the excavation works. During the 1970's a further part of the Cross Dyke south of the track from Telscombe Village to Telscombe Road was filled in. The archaeological interest possibly remains however, as the land has not been ploughed and the earth works are preserved beneath the topsoil.

There are three Scheduled Ancient Monuments on the Main Tye.

- 1) A tumulus marked on the first edition OS map as Pedlersbery SM 25476. This is a Bowl barrow 16 yards in diameter and 1.5m high.
- 2) A tumulus SM 25477. Well preserved bowl barrow surviving to 1.5m in height. Some damage to centre possibly through 19th Century excavation.
- 3) The Cross Dyke, SM 25478/01 & 02. Believed to be Bronze Age, possibly three to four thousand years old. The Cross Dyke was more extensive than it appears now. A small section was de-scheduled when the reservoir was installed in 1909.

In the 19th Century Telscombe was an important centre for farming and in 1821 the village had a thriving population of 113 people. At the end of the 19th Century Ambrose Gorham became the squire and benefactor of Telscombe Village. He owned between 300-400 acres of land including rights over the Tye. He died in 1933 and bequeathed all his land to the Ambrose Gorham Trust. In 1978 the Tye was registered as a Common Land under the Commons Registration Act 1965. As part of this process the Commons Commissioners confirmed that a right of common was exercisable by the Trustees of Gorham's Gift in respect of Stud Farm for the open and common pasturing of 252 sheep. A right of common was also exercisable by the owners of Kirby Farm for grazing of up to 100 sheep.

There are also rights held by Seeboard in 1969 for an electricity substation, high voltage overhead line and underground cable.

In 1989 the Tye was purchased by Telscombe Town Council to safeguard the land from development and to ensure its continued use by the general public. The land now forms part of the South Downs National Park and as such is being managed and conserved in line with this designation.

The site currently has no byelaws but these may be looked at as part of a new management plan to provide further protection with regards to litter, dog waste and vehicular access.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LIVESTOCK GRAZING

Lowland chalk grassland is one of Western Europe's most diverse plant communities, supporting a whole range of wildlife from butterflies and wildflowers, to fascinating insects, mammals and birds – many of these species are specialists and are unable to live anywhere else. Chalk grasslands in the UK develop on nutrient-poor, lime-rich soils, almost invariably in response to many years of grazing.

Before the Second World War, fragile and flower-rich calcareous grassland was widespread, but these habitats have seriously declined and by 1984, 80% of sheep-grazed lowland chalk and limestone grassland had disappeared. The most significant reason for this decline is the reduction of grazing and traditional management due to changes in land use, such as cultivation and agricultural intensification or encroachment by scrub.

In order to restore the quality of remaining areas of chalk grassland it is necessary to remove excessive scrub incursion and to manage the sward to maximize the natural diversity of plant species. This is best achieved by grazing the land with appropriate animals in suitable numbers at the right times of year.

Mowing is not a satisfactory alternative to grazing because it does not produce the same effect as grazing. In particular mowing is not selective in what it cuts and it produces a uniform sward height; it does not maintain low nutrient status (unless mowings are removed) and does not create the small pockets of bare soil created by animals' hooves, which are important for establishment of some plants. Mowing is also more expensive, labour intensive and does not maintain the character of traditional sheep grazed downland.

Different types of livestock have different grazing characteristics and favour different plants when they browse. Sheep will be used for the Tye because they graze right down near to ground level, producing tight swards, they are selective in what they eat avoiding some areas producing variation in vegetation height and will create bare patches of ground. They will also browse the young regrowth of scrub thus helping to prevent the re-establishment of shrubs. Due to historic grazing rights being over the land, there is a registered right for 352 sheep are able to graze in accordance with those grazing rights. In addition to those registered, the owners of the land (The Town Council) could be able to graze any further surplus should the land be able to accommodate it.

SITE MANAGEMENT ISSUES

In recent times there have been problems with illicit access on the Tye which has caused damage to the site and associated wildlife. Motorbikes and off road vehicles have caused problems leaving highly visible chalk scars. Strategically gates and fences have been installed which has limited access to the area but permissive rights still exist which allows vehicular access to some residents along Bridleway 8 and therefore not all accesses can be completely closed to motor vehicles, and illicit access occurs.

The training of racehorses and the unauthorized use of the Tye for gallops has been mainly dealt with and there is little occurrence of horse riders causing disturbance or danger to other users of the Tye.

Travellers also have become less of an issue since gates and fencing have been locked. Also communication with the police is undertaken by the Town Council on a regular basis and early notification is undertaken when travellers are reported in the area. This allows the ranger and farmer time to ensure that all gates are locked and accesses are monitored.

There are occasional problems with fly-tipping and abandoned vehicles. This usually occurs in towards Telscombe Village where there is vehicular access along the Bridleway.

There are outstanding fencing issues, as when the new fencing was erected in 2004 it was placed where residents had consented to, and not on the line of the perimeter. In particular this would appear to be the case behind the properties in Highview Road, and at St Michaels Mount, culminating with the Council losing substantial amounts of land. Sheep netting has also been cut in several places along the boundary on western boundary to allow dogs access. An access plan for the Tye is currently being developed to look at existing fencing and access issues for the whole of the Tye and this access plan will form part of the new Management Plan.

Maintaining the large amount of fencing and gateways is also an issue for the Council and as the fencing ages more problems will occur. The Council currently employs a temporary ranger to undertake a fencing check once every two weeks to ensure fences are in places and gates work. The Council are also aided by volunteers from Friends of the Tye who help monitor the Tye and undertake works to help restore the land to its natural grassy chalkland status.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS



Natural England and the Town Council are working together through a Higher Level Stewardship programme to help return the Tye back to its original chalky grass land status to help sustain insects and birds that need a poor alkaline soil to exist.

This will take many years as the land has been damaged over the last century by agricultural ploughing, seeding of alien species, herbicides and lack of management.

The Higher Level Stewardship programme sets out targets and outputs for the different parts of the Tye.

The main part of the Tye will be maintained as semi-improved or rough grassland which is known to provide good conditions for target species, and to protect other features such as the historic monuments.

To enable this, the Tye will need flexible management over the next ten years, and will need to adapt to those times when management does not meet the requirements such as during times of harsh weather periods which affect the growth of the sward.

- A suitable grazing regime will be established by the end of 2015.
- By the end of 2016 the cover of bare ground should be between 1% and 5% distributed throughout the Tye and should only cover small patches.
- By the end of 2019 at least 2 high-value indicator species such as kidney vetch, horseshoe vetch.
- By the end of 2019 the cover of invasive trees and shrubs should be less than 10%.

- By the end of 2019 a survey of the archaeological/historic features identified in the HER will be undertaken and these will be protected to ensure no further degradation. The depth of soil covering the features will be maintained and detrimental indicators such as burrows and scrub growth will cover less than 5% of the area.
- By the end of 2023 flowering heads of wildflowers, including Red Clover should be frequent between April 1st and August 31st.

The area known as the The E Piece is potentially rich in plant and associated animal life and therefore some pro active management will be required in this area to enable seed regrowth and the establishment of a specific grazing regime. This should include surveys to monitor species diversity.

- By the end of 2017 at least 2 high value indicator species (appendix 3) should be frequent and 2 occasional in the sward.
- By the end of 2019 at least 4 high value indicator species (appendix 3) should be frequent and in the sward.
- By the end of 2019 cover of invasive trees and shrubs should be less than 10%.
- By the end of 2019 cover of bare ground should be between 1% and 5% distributed throughout the field in small patches.
- By the end of 2019 the lynchets will be examined in accordance with the County Archaeologist to ensure that all scrub clearance will have been undertaken in a safe manner.

SHEEP TIMETABLE

The need to have a flexible management plan for the Tye is imperative for the success of outcomes, and is very weather dependent. This means that it is difficult to give exact dates when sheep and lambs will be taken off of the land, or even if they have to. Please remember that not all the sheep on the Tye are owned by the Town Council and therefore we have no control on other farmers timetables, however as a general overview the yearly cycle is set out below.

Oct/November ewes are put to ram.

March – May Lambing.

May/June/July Weaning and separation

Sept/October lambs are sold to market.

The Town Council try to provide notice of when sheep are to be taken to and fro the Tye via the website, facebook and twitter.

THE SHEEP AS AN ASSET

Though the community flock are an important tool in the conservation of the Tye, they provide much more for the local community. They provide value, as without the sheep the

Town Council would be required to mow the grass and remove gorse from the Tye regularly. This would cost several thousands of pounds.

During the lambing period when the ewes are taken to the lambing sheds the Town Council organise three classes from Telscombe Town Council to visit the farm and see the lambs. This is part of years 5 & 6 work on life cycles.

This year for the first year, we are also hoping to arrange a site visit to the lambing shed for the Senior Tea Club.

If anybody would like to visit during lambing then please contact the Town Council for further information.

DOG WALKING

Though at the current time there are no statutory access rights for people on the Tye, the Town Council do encourage the use of the land for quiet enjoyment and relaxation, which includes quiet sporting uses and dog walking. However the Town Council do ask for dog walkers to follow the following advice to help keep your pet safe, and protect the environment.

Paws for thought.....

Please clear up your dog mess

Please clear up all dog mess and dispose of it responsibly in litter bins. Please don't hang it in plastic bags from trees or walls. This is unsightly and also hazardous to wildlife when the bags eventually fall off.

When do I need to keep my dog on a lead?

It is advisable to always have dogs on leads, particularly if near to other animals, but it is understandable that owners like to see their dogs exercise off lead. If no other animals around then this is acceptable but it must always be under close control. If you cannot rely on its obedience, it's probably best to keep it on a lead. All sorts of irresistible scents could make your dog dash off.

Wildlife

Even well-behaved dogs can scare wildlife away from their young. Disturbance during the breeding season for ground-nesting birds (1 March - 31 July) can lead to eggs not hatching. Predators can also take young chicks if their distracted parents leave them unguarded. By keeping your dog on a short fixed lead and keeping to tracks during this time, you can help protect our wildlife.

Farm animals

Livestock will often see your dog as a threat, even if it isn't. Usually sheep and lambs will run away from a dog. If chased, sheep become very distressed and the stress could kill young and unborn animals.

It is an offence to allow a dog to worry livestock. If your dog does worry livestock, then the Town Council will prosecute. To avoid such a distressing situation, look ahead and keep your dog on a lead when you might encounter farm animals.

Also when passing through farmyards, gardens or anywhere other dogs are likely to be roaming free, please keep your dog on a lead. Your forethought shows courtesy to the landowner and helps avoid any confrontational situations.

Other people

Look out for cyclists, runners and horseriders. They can startle your dog - or your dog could startle them - so it's best to put your dog on a lead as they come past.

Even the most friendly pet can make other people feel uncomfortable. Don't let your dog approach other people or their dogs unless you're sure they're happy about this.

If you need to contact someone about the Tye gates/fencing/access

Tel: 01273 589777 Telscombe Council.

If you need to contact someone about the community flock or sheep on the Tye then call 01273 302486 (Stud Farm) or Tel: 01273 589777 Telscombe Town Council.