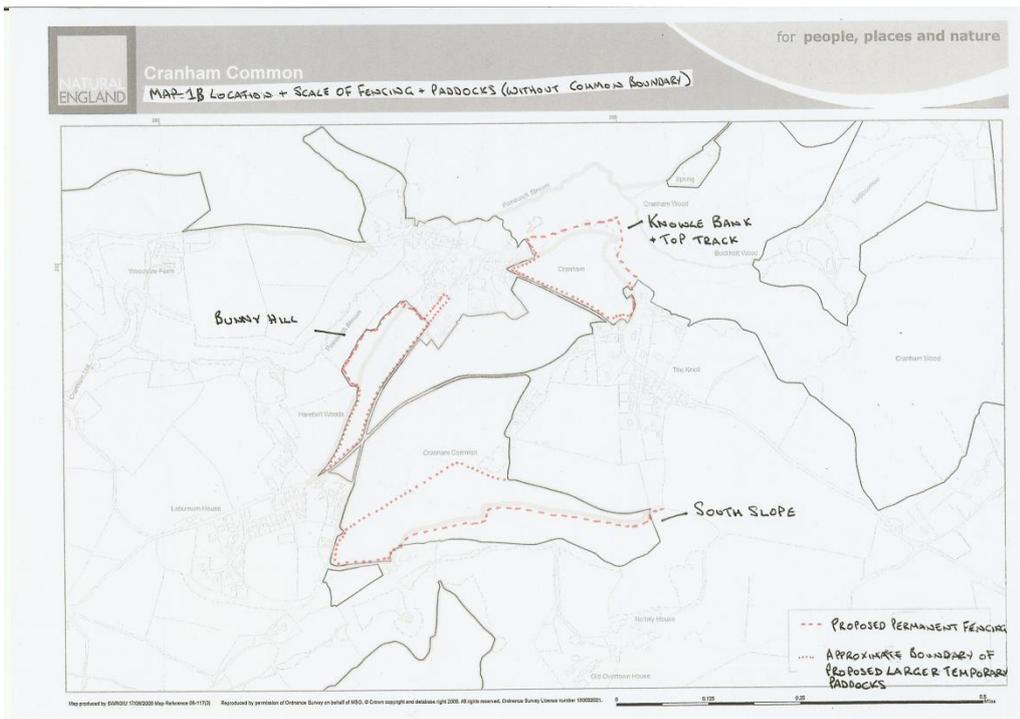


**Report on the fencing and provision of water supplies to Cranham
Common carried out 2011 and 2012,
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The Cranham Common Trust completed the last section of the fencing and improved water supplies for Cranham Common in early 2012. A small herd of seven Welsh Black cattle are used to keep the Common grasslands in optimum condition for the plants and insects that live on this part of the Cotswolds Common and Beechwoods Nature Reserve, and the erection of 2.5km of boundary fencing was vital to help manage the grazing. The Cranham Common Management Committee (CCMC) in conjunction with Natural England and the National Trust are now able to graze the Common using much larger paddocks. This will mean greater diversity of habitat for the wide range of species that make their home on the grassland, and should make the Common a more interesting place for both local people and visitors. The £25,000 project has taken 18 months of planning and took on board the views of walkers, horse-riders, wildlife campaigners, and local residents in order to make the fencing as unobtrusive as possible on the landscape. The work was made possible by generous contributions from Gloucestershire Environmental Trust, Natural England, National Trust and the Summerfield Charitable Trust.

A map of the new fence line is shown below:-



Photographs of the fence





Fence with stile.



Very often conservation groups want to show off the environmental improvements they have made, but in this case both the Cranham Common Trust and Natural England wanted to hide the new fence and hence reduce the impact of arguably enclosing an open space. Having gained the appropriate approvals, and with the aid of a grant from The Summerfield Charitable Trust we thus were able to install the new line just behind the woodland edge and thereby render it invisible. Acknowledgement of the generous donations from the various parties is displayed on a fence post just above the Black Horse Car Park

The new Cranham Fencing is now really showing its worth. The CCMC grazed the whole of South Slope, Far South Slope and along the Promenade as a single field. This has produced excellent variations in sward height. They have carried out a similar exercise on Knowle Bank. These larger paddocks are producing the expected patches of long and short grass rather than the uniform length of grass that arises from the paddocks typically only half of the size of those now possible. They are also grazing the woodland edge without the previous Health and Safety issues for volunteers.

Given the improving grassland the Trust has already been invited to be a partner in the project 'Conserving Rare Butterflies in the Painswick Valley'. This plans to re-introduce both the Large Blues (known up until the late 1920s) and the Duke of Burgundy which also occurred here up until the 1980's. This is very exciting as the latter were last seen on South Bank (ref above). Again the variation sward gives a greater chance of them finding the right sort of shaded cowslip. Visitor numbers continue to be high.

Natural England and the CCMC now also see advantage in even larger paddocks, and again the new fencing will aid this development. The idea seems to have general approval as these effectively reduce the length of fence per hectare of enclosure. The grant also assisted with a new water supply to an additional four locations on the Common making it possible to reduce poaching around the portable water trough and to an extent influencing grazing patterns.

M E Crowther
December 2012.