

## **Horse Bailiff Scheme - Review of first 6 months of Scheme**

### **Summary**

1. In December 2012 and April 2013 the council's Cabinet considered reports which discussed the increasing problem of illegal fly grazing on council land and agreed a number of recommendations, one of which was to appoint a 'Horse Bailiff' This report reviews the impact of the council's new process for tackling with horses that are fly grazing on council land through the work of the horse bailiff.

### **Background**

2. Illegal fly grazing on council land was becoming an increasing anti social behaviour issue across the city for both the council and North Yorkshire Police. There was concern with regards to both the welfare of horses tethered on the road side as well as an increasing risk of horses getting free on roadside verges and potentially causing a road traffic collision and injuries to either motorists or passengers.
3. The council liaised with various partners including animal charities such as the RSPCA, as well as other stakeholders such as the National Farmers Union. It was decided to tender to find a provider with the appropriate specialist skills and knowledge, and following a procurement process a contractor was appointed. The contract started in February 2014, and from March the company commenced pro-active monthly visits to hot spot sites around York.

### **Analysis**

4. The council initially identified 9 hot spot areas, based on intelligence, complaints from residents. The contractor installed notices at these sites; the number of areas monitored has now increased to 11 areas, based on information received.
5. Each area can be quite large and can consist of more than one notice in each hot spot area, for example there are currently 4 notices posted

along the length of Bad Bargain Lane. In total there are 52 notices that are posted on CYC land across York.

6. Central to the approach the council adopted in determining the policy was that simply displacing the horses off the council land on to private land was not acceptable, however the council do have any legal responsibility to act where horses are on private land. To ensure that an holistic approach was taken discussions were held with the National Farmers Union and local land owners to ensure that where necessary private land owners could access the council contractor should they wish to engage them. As a result of this joint approach notices have been installed on private land in discussion between the landowner and the contractor at no cost to the council.
7. On the 21st March 2014, the contractor seized a total of 5 horses from Bad Bargain Lane. The horses are kept for a period of 14 days to allow their owners to contact the contractor and prove ownership. If ownership can be proved then, if the owner pays the costs that have been incurred, the contractor will return the horse to its owner. If they are not able to do this, then the company will look to re-home or sell at an auction.
8. Unfortunately the opportunities for re-homing are limited and the market for horses is difficult at the present time. If the contractor is unable to re-home or sell the horses then the animal will be put to sleep. None of the 5 horses seized were claimed and unfortunately they could not be re-homed or sold and they were subsequently humanely destroyed.
9. Following on from the regular monthly inspection in July, 4 horses were identified on Council land, and it was agreed to investigate another possible seizure. However when the contractor revisited the locations of these horses there were no horses fly grazing at that time.
10. It is impossible to establish exact numbers of horses that were illegally fly grazed on council land prior to the contract being awarded. However during the first monthly inspection in early March 2014, 23 horses were discovered. Since the seizures, the numbers of horses found have varied between 2 and 6. The following table shows the detail for May to July on the hotspots and the numbers of horses found at each location. Data for August and September is currently being collated and will be provided at this meeting.

Table 1 – Hot spots and horses found.

<b>Hot Spot</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>June</b>	<b>July</b>
Bad Bargain Lane to Outgang Lane	3	2	0
Haxby Moor Road	0	0	0
James St	0	0	1
Monks Cross	0	0	0
Outgang Lane – Murton Way	0	0	0
Stockton on Forest	0	0	0
Holtby Lane	0	0	0
Towthorpe	0	0	0
Water Lane	0	0	0
Green Lane Clifton			2
Water Lane			1
	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>

11. In addition to these identified hot spots, the contractor, as part of their monthly inspection also monitors other CYC land as part of the visit.
12. Anecdotally, service areas such as Public Rights of Way, and Traveller Support Workers have advised that there are less horses, and they are receiving fewer calls about horses fly grazing.
13. In addition to this anecdotal information from council officers, one of the local farmers who, as well as being the National Farmers Union representative on the subject, has suffered badly with horses on his land, has commented that locally things have considerably improved, although he advised that there may be some displacement to areas outside of York.

### **Funding**

14. An annual budget of £40k was established to fund the scheme. It is anticipated that this budget will be fully committed this financial year.

### **Corporate Objectives**

15. Tackling anti social behaviour is one of the key tasks of the council's corporate objective of building strong communities.

### **Recommendations**

16. The Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the work to date through the appointment of a Horse Bailiff.

Reason: To ensure the committee is kept updated on the arrangements in place.

## Contact Details

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**Report Approved**



**Date**

28 October 2014

**Specialist Implications Officer(s)** None

**Wards Affected:**

**All**

