

Draft press release re: White Park @ Savernake
V1.0



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FOR IMMEDIATE USE

White Park Cattle Graze Savernake Forest

A herd of ancient White Park cattle, one of Britain's oldest rare breeds of cattle, will return to Savernake Forest on Monday 30 April to graze the woodland and conserve wildlife habitats.

You are invited to send a reporter and photographer to watch these beautiful cattle be led into Savernake at 11am on 30 April in the Grand Avenue, about 1km south of the entrance gates off the A4. Available for interview will be the grazier Pat Holloway from Home Farm, West Lavington and Richard Clarke, chairman of the Rare Breeds Survival Trust (RBST).

Pat Holloway explains why the White Park cattle are so suitable for conservation grazing in woods: "They love brambles and woodland shrubs which can be difficult for foresters to manage, and they also tread down the bracken. Historically, these animals have always lived in wooded areas."

She added: "This small group of 12 heifers are from the Dynevor and Lavington Herds. They normally graze on the open chalk grassland on Salisbury Plain, so I expect they will be very keen to get in among the trees."

The herd will graze a 100-acre area, which has been fenced off by the Forestry Commission, eating low-hanging leaves and shrubs to recreate the natural open glades. This enables woodland and grassland flowers to bloom, clears protective areas around ancient oaks and beeches with their specialist lichen communities, and encourages more woodland edge birds.

Richard Clarke, chief executive of RBST, the organisation dedicated to conservation of rare and native breeds of livestock, lives in Manton, near Marlborough. "I'm delighted to see the White Park cattle back in Savernake. This grazing project is vital for the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as well as the future of rare breeds such as the White Park."

This is the fifth year of a collaborative scheme run by Natural England, the Forestry Commission and Savernake Estate to allow White Park cattle to forage until October in the largest remaining open area of relict wood pasture in Savernake Forest. A team of local volunteers or 'lookers' will keep a watchful eye on the cattle, which are all white with the exception of black ears, eyelids, muzzle, hooves and teats.

Savernake Forest is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its ancient wood pasture wildlife. This includes open-crowned specimens of ancient oak and beech pollards and the specialist lichen communities growing on them, rare woodland and grassland plants, and habitats for woodland edge birds and fungi. Traditionally, livestock grazed Savernake Forest until about 100 years ago. Savernake Forest is leased to the Forestry Commission from the Savernake Estate.

Ends

Further information and directions:
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