

Case Study

Sussex Grazed – grazing the landscape for nature and people

Brighton and Hove Food Partnership

The Vision

Sussex Grazed reconnects people with their local landscapes through food and the processes behind local food production.

The project aims to shift perceptions of grazing livestock, demonstrate the importance of well-managed grazing for rare, fragile habitats, and support conservation graziers to showcase their work and sell locally through a meatbox scheme. It also highlights the opportunities created through partnership working and the vital role organisations such as the National Trust play in protecting these landscapes.

Key Facts

Ed Brown grazes livestock across 1,200 acres including his home farm, Clapham Farm, and surrounding National Trust land, Frog Firle and Gayles Farm. The chalk grasslands across these sites depend on carefully timed grazing to maintain habitat quality. Ed uses rotational and targeted grazing for chalk grassland recovery.

Ed is one of seven Sussex Grazed farmers we have worked with over the course of the project.



Ed Brown with goats at Clapham Farm. Credit: Brighton and Hove Food Partnership

What we achieved

We’ve been working with Ed since 2023. He’s been farming these landscapes for 20 years as part of his family farming business which was established in 1921. Through the project, we delivered eight Sussex Grazed meat shares using animals raised by Ed, his father Richard, and their team, purchasing 31 animals in total and equating to 186 orders from the public. Over £7,500 has been paid directly to Ed and Richard, showing how the project supports local businesses.

Ed carefully manages livestock grazing to protect and restore chalk grasslands and, through Sussex Grazed, has built a relationship with Chef Diego at Palmito, a Brighton restaurant featured in the Michelin Guide. This has helped bring locally-grazed produce to a wider audience.

Sussex Grazed customers often say the project has changed their eating habits, encouraging a preference for local, ethical and sustainable meat. One said, “I am very pleased to be able to buy local, ethical and sustainable meat so close to home”, showing the appetite for connecting with local farmers.

How we did it

We developed an onboarding process to help farmers and graziers access local markets, using our [Farming for Conservation: Farmer Resource Pack](#) resource pack. Sussex Grazed worked with farmers like Ed, some already selling locally and others not, supporting them to grow their customer base through marketing guidance and wider reach into Brighton.

Ed highlighted difficulties in promoting produce: “It’s really tricky to try and get the word out there when you’ve got 101 different things going on.” Sussex Grazed provided the marketing capacity he lacked. Although

direct sales require significant effort, Ed and his father Richard remain committed to supplying their community and keeping the animals they raise within the local food system.

We also use Downland Traditional Meats, the last small-scale abattoir in Sussex, allowing animals to be processed locally with shorter journeys and improved welfare. You can read more in [The Local Meat Report](#).

Volunteers play a vital role; their food preparation and hygiene training, enthusiasm and ability to get stuck in contributes to the project’s success.

“Where each enterprise feeds into the other, and supports the other, is a good sustainable way for us to move forward both from the environmental side but also economics.”

Ed Brown, Sussex Grazed farmer



Further information

[Sussex Grazed - Brighton and Hove Food Partnership](#)

[What is Conservation Grazing? Livestock on the land - Brighton and Hove Food Partnership](#)

Lessons learnt

We learnt many valuable lessons throughout the project, the most significant being the impact of telling the farmer’s story. Clearly showing the daily work, knowledge and commitment behind conservation grazing helped people appreciate the value of local food production. Blog posts, producer biographies and, for Ed, an interview on the Brighton & Hove Food Partnership’s [Savouring Change](#) podcast all strengthened this connection and understanding.

We also recognised the depth of expertise farmers hold in landscape management and targeted grazing, and how much careful decision-making this requires. Sharing these insights helped people understand what happens behind the scenes.

Although conservation grazing provides clear ecological benefits, farmers can only continue this work with appropriate support. Direct local sales are time intensive. However, the project has helped alleviate some of this responsibility through expertise and publicly accessible resources. It has also helped communicate how livestock farming can benefit certain landscapes and why local, grass-fed, high-welfare meat comes at a higher, but necessary, cost.

The Changing Chalk Partnership

Led by the National Trust, Changing Chalk was a four-year partnership project from 2022 to 2026 working to reverse the ecological decline of chalk grassland in the eastern South Downs, bring histories to life, and connect local communities to the internationally significant landscape on their doorstep.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/changing-chalk-partnership



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