**A grassland purchase opportunity at the Nurdens, Woolhope, Herefordshire. Grid Ref: SO 622360.**

***Mark July – local resident - 21.3.19***

**Background**

A 4.68 acre land parcel is on the market at this location comprising c half an acre of ancient woodland edge and c4 acres of abandoned old grassland. It is for sale by informal tender with an offer closing date of **April 24 2019**. The sellers live abroad and their agents have priced the land at top end agricultural or equestrian value. (The same sale process last year generated only two informal offers and neither proceeded). Development potential is negligible given the electricity supply lines bisecting the field.

Residents recall this field when it was cattle grazed and flowery. There has been no stock for 20+ years and it lacks stock fences. I have discussed the conservation merits with the agent, and through this note hope to interest a potential buyer with conservation aims.

**Annex 1** is the sale particulars.

**Context**

The site is in the Woolhope Dome – a county priority location for biodiversity conservation where efforts are focused. It abuts the ancient, semi-natural woodland of Harris’s Hill, whose private owner is reinstating coppice management. The land is opposite two privately-owned wildflower grasslands, steep paddocks associated with rural dwellings. Both paddocks require a secure grazing arrangement to reverse their deteriorating rank condition. Together these two sites amount to c 10 acres.

The site is alongside the Nurdens –a small housing estate.

**Community and grant support**

The Parish Council and local residents are keen to foster a sympathetic owner who will restore and enhance the conservation and amenity potential of the land. Purchase by either the Council or a community group is an option, but a remote one in the timeframe available. Exploration of practical and financial possibilities can be facilitated via Mark July.

A grant-giving Trust exists for the Woolhope Dome and may be amenable to support land acquisition and/or management costs.

The SSSI designation on one of the adjacent grasslands may increase the prospects of government grant.

There may be income potential from firewood coppice and wayleave fees.

**Conservation grazing potential**

The restoration of flower-rich grassland on the sale site is feasible but expensive for a small area, however the juxtaposition of the three grassland parcels affords scope for a grazier with small cattle or sheep, who could rotate stock between the parcels, suiting grazing regimes to the semi-natural vegetation and site conditions. Collectively, this may be a viable commercial unit (combined freehold and rental) and integrated low-intensity management would bring significant local conservation gains.

Elsewhere in Woolhope parish and its neighbours, there are other conservation grazing opportunities on commons, nature reserves and private smallholdings, especially for a ‘flying flock’ enterprise. Linking up with these could be feasible given time and commitment.

**Summary**

The circumstances of this land parcel afford a rare opportunity for a buyer who is motivated by the conservation grazing potential of this location. There may well be local collaboration and support to draw upon and engagement with the community to this end would suit the right person. Might there be a young farmer looking to start or expand a grazing business to whom this appeals?

A typical pony paddock buyer will normally overgraze and ruin the ecological value and this is perhaps the most likely outcome for the asking price, unless a local farm business is in the running.

mark.july27@btinternet.com

01531 670374 – day and eves.

**Annex 1** Separate attachment PDF file from Bruton Knowles. I have the tender form and can forward