

Report on	Removal of horses from Glassmullagh former landfill site
Reporting Officer	Mark McAdoo, Head of Environmental Services

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To inform members on actions taken to deal with the removal, impounding and stabling of horses belonging to members of the travelling community from Council owned lands.
2.0	Background
2.1	A plantation of Short Rotation Coppice (SRC) willows was established on Council lands at the former Glassmullagh landfill site, extending to some 6.4 hectares, by the former Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council.
2.2	Following a complaint from an adjoining neighbour regarding a willow beetle infestation at the site; the willow was harvested by a local contractor in September 2016. In order to prevent a repeat infestation of willow beetle arrangements were being made to have the borders of the plantation sprayed with appropriate insecticide this spring (in April 2017).
2.3	However the Council was prevented from carrying out the spraying due to the illegal placement of horses on the land (as the insecticide would have been harmful to them).
3.0	Main Report
3.1	On Friday 24 th March 2017 Environmental Services were notified, via Environmental Health, that the same adjoining neighbour had observed horses being placed on the lands at Glassmullagh by members of the travelling community (without approval).
3.2	Following investigation by Council Officers it was confirmed that the lock on the gate had been cut and access gained to the site and a number of horses were grazing the lands.
3.3	On 29 th March the PSNI were informed and having ascertained the owners, the police pursued the act of trespass and criminal damage. Simultaneously the Council notified colleagues in Animal Welfare who recommended that a 7 day 'Abandonment Notice' be placed on the gate under the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011 Section 14. The notice was posted on 5 th April with an expiry date of 12 th April (copy attached as Appendix one).
3.4	Over the course of the following week/10 days considerable pressure was applied, via Animal Welfare Officers and the PSNI to have the animals removed. As a result four horses were removed however a horse and foal were left on site. Due to increased concerns from adjoining neighbours regarding the willow beetle encroaching into their properties, and concerns regarding members of the travelling community entering onto private property, the Council had no alternative but to take enforcement action. A further notice was posted to the gate on 26 th March confirming the action being taken by Council to remove and impound the remaining animals.

3.5	On Thursday 27 th March 2017 the Council engaged the services of a contractor (from a framework utilised by Animal Welfare) to remove the remaining animals from off the lands. A horse and foal was taken into private stabling with the Council bearing the costs of transportation and stabling. As no-one came forward to claim the horses, over the following months the private stabling company explored/exhausted all its options to re-home the animals (Council officers also carried out their own extensive investigations).
3.6	Thankfully after considerable research and in conjunction with Crosskennan Animal Sanctuary, the horses were relocated to Cork where they were assessed by a vet, microchipped and appropriate dental and farrier work carried out. Once passed fit for travel the mare and foal were moved on to a re-homing programme in Germany on 6 th October. This was done on a voluntary basis at no additional cost to the Council.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<p><u>Financial & Human Resources Implications</u></p> <p>Financial: The cost of removing and stabling the horses (over five months) was £5495.</p> <p>Human: Officer time in administering the process</p>
4.2	<p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>Enforcement action was necessary to maintain a harmonious and cordial working relationship with adjoining neighbours and landowners at Glassmullagh.</p>
4.3	<p><u>Risk Management Implications</u></p> <p>The Council could have faced legal action had it not taken steps to deal with the beetle infestation at Glassmullagh. The Council could also have suffered reputational damage had it instructed the stabling company to dispose of the horses rather than re-homing them.</p>
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	It is recommended that members note the content of this report.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Appendix One – Abandonment Notice
6.2	Appendix Two – Photograph of horse at Glassmullagh