

CARMARTHENSHIRE LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

COASTAL & FLOODPLAIN GRAZING MARSH



Coastal & floodplain grazing marsh



Distribution and extent of sites with coastal & floodplain grazing marsh habitat within Carmarthenshire. Data are summarised from the CCW Inventory of Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marshes Dargie & Dargie, 1998), based largely upon the NCC/CCW Lowland Habitat Survey of Wales (1987-1997).

Conservation objectives

- * Maintain the extent and quality of this habitat in Carmarthenshire.
- * Seek to restore and enhance the habitat where possible.

What you can do to help:

- * If you own this habitat – seek advice on management

Further information:

www.ccw.org.uk

www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk

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What is coastal and floodplain grazing marsh?

Grazing marsh is periodically flooded grassland, on low-lying coastal land or along flat meandering river floodplains. Coastal grazing marsh can be man made, created from saltmarsh or other tidal wetland isolated from the sea by artificial defences. Seasonal flooding of the floodplain creates grazing marsh alongside our rivers. Grazing marshes are usually drained by a network of artificial ditches, which help maintain the water level.

Most grazing marsh is either managed as pasture or cut for hay or silage. Much has been improved for agriculture although there may be areas of semi-natural grassland, swamp and seasonally filled hollows and permanent ponds such as old 'ox-bows' containing emergent swamp vegetation.

The ditch systems contain either fresh or brackish (salty) water and supports a range of plants, invertebrates and mammals, notably the water vole. Grazing marshes can also be important for breeding birds such as the snipe, lapwing and curlew, whilst migratory wildfowl often graze the grassland in the winter.

Losses in the whole UK have been significant in the last 60 years (see threats below).

Distribution in Carmarthenshire

Significant areas of coastal grazing marsh occur around the Burry Inlet and in the lower Gwendraeth and Pendine areas, the latter being important for wintering golden plover. Large areas of grazing marsh along the Llanelli coast have been degraded or lost due to development. However, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) at Penclacwydd has restored and created grazing marsh. Floodplain grazing marsh occurs along the lower reaches of the main river valleys, especially the Tywi, Taf and Loughor, Gwendraeth Fawr and Fach.

What are the threats?

- * Excessive drainage, resulting in the loss of wetland habitats.
- * Agricultural intensification leading to loss of habitat and enrichment of watercourses.
- * Industrial and/or urban development.
- * Pollution of watercourses.

What is being done locally

- * An inventory of this habitat in Wales has been completed.
- * A survey of the Llanelli levels has been undertaken.
- * Habitat restoration and creation at the WWT.
- * Carmarthenshire grazing marsh has been evaluated as part of a national review of the habitat in Wales.
- * The habitat is included a number of Tir Gofal agreements.

Where you can see this habitat

The National Wetlands Centre, the Millennium Coastal Park and the Tywi Valley, all have examples of the types of grazing marsh.



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