

## FARMLAND HABITATS GROUPED ACTION PLAN

### Introduction and Vision Statement

This grouped habitat includes hedgerows, arable field margins and traditional orchards.

Carmarthenshire's agricultural landscape is one of the defining features of the county. Species-rich **hedgerows** with mature hedgerow trees are a significant landscape and historic feature. They can be important habitats for butterflies, moths, birds and small mammals. West Wales (Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire) appears to be the most richly endowed region of Wales in terms of ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows.



Some hedgerows were created when land was enclosed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century; others are much older, perhaps formed from woodlands as these were cleared for agriculture. There are peculiarities, such as the laburnum hedges of mid/north-east Carmarthenshire or the seemingly resurgent English elm hedgerows of the coastal flats.

The current condition of hedgerows in the county is very variable. Many have been restored in recent years through the various agri-environment schemes, others continue to decline through lack of management – this has caused increased gappiness, decreased height, a loss of the ground flora associated with the hedge and an increase in the presence of exotic species.

Modern arable agriculture is largely a monoculture with very little to offer wildlife. In the past, before the intensive use of chemicals and increased mechanisation, wild flowers grew amongst the crops and offered more potential for other species as food and cover. **Field margins** were especially important as these less productive areas were an important refuge for small mammals, particularly when the field crop was harvested. These more natural edges can have benefits to the farm as well, encouraging insects like ladybirds, which prey on some crop pests.

At present, there is very little arable habitat of note remaining in the county – in contrast to the past when every local farming community had its share of grain or root crops. This decline of arable along with the disappearance of many associated weed species and a decline of insect food have contributed to the massive decline of the tree sparrow (and other seed-eating birds such as yellowhammer and linnet). Where they remain arable areas (often just a few fields on a farm), can give rise to a distinctive group of arable-associated annual plants such as cornflower and annual knawel as well as specialised mosses.

**Traditional orchards** are managed in a low-intensity manner, using little pesticides and inorganic fertilisers. The trees are relatively long lived and the grassland under the trees is usually grazed by cattle, sheep or cut for hay. Orchards are generally considered to have five or more trees and to have the crown edge of the trees spaced within 20 m of each other.

Orchard trees can be very good as a habitat for rare lichens and invertebrates and are an important part of our heritage and landscape. They have often occupied the same piece of land for centuries.

Traditional orchards are rare in Carmarthenshire. Those that remain are often in poor condition with a requirement to plant replacement stock to ensure the continued viability of the habitat. More information is needed on the extent, type and condition of traditional orchards in the county.

The Tywi Valley seems to have been historically important for orchards. Research shows that this area was once known for its spring blossom with over 100 orchards shown on the 1905 OS map between Llandovery and Llandeilo. There are three historical varieties of apple tree local to Dinefwr alone: Margaret Nicholas, Afal Pig yr Wydd and Tin Wydd. Saint Teilo, after whom the town is named, is called the patron saint of apples.

Carmarthenshire has yielded a number of previously 'unknown' indigenous apple varieties.

These farmland habitats support a range of species, some now rare and uncommon, and contribute to the landscape character of the county. The overall vision for this plan is to maintain, restore and extend these habitats in the county and the BAP species associated with them. The cultural importance of hedgerows and orchards also provides an opportunity to work with communities to look at the historical significance of these habitats within a community setting.

<b>Associated species:</b>	Bat spp. (incl.	Deptford Pink
Common linnet	Common pip)	Annual knawel
Yellowhammer	Harvest mouse	Cornflower
Spotted flycatcher	Polecat	Bastard Balm
Common bullfinch	Brown hare	Fragrant orchid
Common cuckoo	Dormouse	Large-flowered Hemp
Hedge accentor	Hedgehog	Nettle ?EXTINCT
Song thrush		
Herring gull	Brown Hairstreak	Scarce turf-moss
House sparrow	White letter Hairstreak	
Grey partridge		The Cinnabar moth
Common starling	Common toad	
Northern lapwing	Grass snake	
Kestrel		

## **Action Plan Objectives**

- FAR1ME** To maintain extent of these farmland habitats in Carmarthenshire
- FAR2AC** To achieve condition of hedgerows and orchard habitats through appropriate management
- FAR3RS** To restore currently degraded hedgerow and orchard habitats
- FAR4EX** To expand these farmland habitats in Carmarthenshire
- FAR6SP** To maintain and expand the range and/or population of species associated with these habitat types
- DCM2FAR** To identify and record priority areas of farmland habitats within Carmarthenshire
- RA4FAR** To raise awareness of the biodiversity, landscape and cultural importance of our farmland habitats and their appropriate management

CODE	TEXT	START / END DATE	Lead Partner	Action goal	Key partner	Funding	Priority L,M,H	Report Jan–Dec 2010		
FAR1ME1	Ensure the retention/translocation of species-rich hedgerows as part of planning applications, road improvement projects and through the work of utility companies	2010–2015	CCC	100% of relevant applications	TRA		H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning ecologist commented on 83 applications in 2010 – requesting either retention and protection or translocation/planting of hedgerows. No mechanism currently to assess whether this has been carried out.</li> <li>• All Welsh Water consultations replied to raising issue of required survey/translocation/replanting during maintenance work. DC/WW report that they generally bore under hedges.</li> <li>• Streetscene west area – no hedges impacted in 2010.</li> </ul> East area - Twynllanan - Translocated - 10m; Blaentwrch - Translocated - 10m.		
FAR1ME2	Maintain through organic rotation arable field margins at NBGW (SN521183)	2010–2015	NBGW	8–9 Ha maintained	Tir Gofal	Through Tir Gofal	H	Spring sown arable crop completed and harvested. Stubble lightly grazed until April when will be ploughed again for follow on crop.		
FAR2AC1	Improve and manage hedgerows on NBGW estate (SN521183)	2010–2015	NBGW	2km improved/managed			H		400 m of hedgerow laid over January 2011. Hedge only planted 11 years ago.	
FAR3RS1	Through TAYO project restore hedgerows by laying/coppicing/gapping up/planting/double fencing	2009–2011	TAYO	At least 3500 m restored	Landowners	✓	H	15243 m restored at 32 sites with thin the TAYO project area within the Tywi Valley project area. Combination of fencing off, filling in gaps with appropriate spp. and laying. Site info available.		
FAR3RS2	Ensure the restoration of species-rich hedgerows as part of planning applications, road improvement projects and through the work of utility companies	2010–2015	CCC	100% of relevant applications	TRA		H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Welsh Water consultations replied to raising issue of required survey/translocation/replanting during maintenance work.</li> <li>• Hedges restores/replanted as a result of gas pipeline through county – details available.</li> </ul>		
FAR3RS3	Through TAYO project undertake restoration of historic orchards by planting	2010–2011	TAYO	18 orchards	Landowners	✓	H	10 orchards restored in the TAYO project area in the Tywi valley - ~102 trees planted. Site info available.		
FAR3RS4	Aberdeunant Farm. RSPB project to restore species-rich hedgerows on farm. (SN671307)	2010–2015	NT	?				No report received		
FAR4EX1	Identify suitable areas for restoration/new planting of orchards in the county, focusing on previous evidence of orchards, connectivity and landscape suitability	2010–2015	CCC	Map produced	DAT CCW	✓	M	Not started – seeking project funding.		

<b>FAR4EX2</b>	Seek to expand the county's hedgerow resource – through planning gain, highways action and other projects	2010–2015	CCC	At least 500 m each year	Landowners Developers Highways Streetscene		H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commented on 22 applications in 2010 – requesting new species-rich hedgerows. No mechanism currently to assess whether this has been carried out by applicants.</li> <li>Streetscene west area – no hedges planted in 2010.</li> <li>Streetscene east area - Twynllanan - Planted – 18 m; Blaentwrch - Planted – 20 m.</li> </ul>		
<b>FAR4EX3</b>	Through TAYO project plant hedgerow trees within appropriate hedgerows	2009–2011	TAYO	At least 400 trees	Landowners	✓	H	426 trees planted at 18 sites the TAYO project area in the Tywi valley.		
<b>FAR4EX4</b>	Through TAYO project undertake expansion of historic orchards by new planting schemes	2010–2011	TAYO	At least 5 schemes	Landowners		H	Ten new orchards planted as part of the TAYO scheme – ~155 trees planted. Site info available.		
<b>FAR4EX5</b>	Investigate the creation of conservation headlands on council-owned farms	2010–2015	CCC	Feasibility report produced	CCC Farm tenants	✓?	M	RC met with CCC officer re tenanted farms.		
<b>FAR6SP1</b>	Encourage the recording of polecat sightings by the general public, to be passed to Vincent Wildlife Trust for collation, through press releases to local newspapers and farming press, website and the provision of detailed advice on request.	2010–2012	CCC	One press release	WTSWW CCW WWBIC		M	Not started – 2011 action		
<b>FAR6SP2</b>	Raise awareness and encourage records for white-letter hairstreak butterfly	2010–2015	CCC	One PR One newsletter item	BC CCW		M	Not started – 2011 action		
<b>DCM2FAR1</b>	Identify and map remaining orchards in the county and where possible where they once were	2010–2015	WWBIC	GIS layer	CCC CCW Landowners DAT	✓	H	Not started – seeking project funding.		
<b>DCM2FAR2</b>	Survey identified orchards using PTES survey methodology	2010–2015	??	1 survey report	Afallon Tywi?	✓		Not started – seeking project funding.		
<b>DCM2FAR3</b>	Establish the approximate extent of arable field margin habitat in Carmarthenshire	2010–2015	CCC	One report produced	WAG		H	Liaised with WAG's Agricultural division. GIS layers for arable land received for past 3 years – not indication of extent of marginal habitat though.		
<b>RA4FAR1</b>	Promote bi-lingual guidance for orchard owners	2010–2015	CCC	One guidance document One PR		✓	M	Not started – seeking project funding.		
<b>RA4FAR2</b>	Promote RSPB's bi-lingual guidance for farmers on management of arable field margins	2010–2015	CCC	One PR Newsletter item Item on website	WAG		M	Not started.		
<b>RA4FAR3</b>	Provide written advice on management of hedgerows including list of suppliers of local provenance hedge plants and trees	2010–2012	Coed Cymru	One list available	CCC	✓	M/H	Completed.		

	for the benefit of public and professionals managing hedgerows.									
<b>RA4FAR4</b>	Promote the nature conservation value of hedgerows and hedgerow trees and the need for appropriate management and relevant legislation (felling/protected spp.) in order to maintain and enhance biodiversity to public, landowners and local authority staff	2010–2015	CCC	One PR. Newsletter item. Downloadable website info. One training event.	BC, TAYO, NBGW, WAG	✓	H	Not started – 2011 action RC?		
<b>RA4FAR5</b>	Add a descriptions of farmland habitats to the Carmarthenshire Biodiversity website with maps and photos	2010	CCC	Website entry			L	Completed.		
<b>RA4FAR6</b>	Hold guided walk/event looking at these habitats	2010–2015	CCC	1 guided walk/event every 2 years	TAYO LBAP Partners NBGW		H	????		
<b>RA4FAR7</b>	Hold training event on hedge laying at NGBW	2010–2013	NBGW	At least 2 training events	CCC	✓	M	Not started.		
<b>POL2FAR1</b>	From survey identify a list of candidate orchard SINC in the county – prioritising habitat within settlement limits	2010–2015	CCC	One GIS layer	WWBIC	✓	M	Not started – seeking project funding.		
<b>POL2FAR2</b>	Consider hedgerow removal notice applications using Hedgerow Regulations	2010–2015	CCC	100% of relevant applications			H	Two applications required replanting notices – 416 m hedge replanted.		