

## LOWLAND GRASSLAND AND HEATHLAND HABITATS GROUPED ACTION PLAN

### Introduction and Vision Statement

This grouped habitat action plan includes lowland dry acid grassland, lowland meadows, purple moorgrass and rush pastures and lowland heathland.

These habitats all contribute to the rich landscape and habitat diversity within the county and are the habitats of some of our most important and declining species. All were much more widespread in the past and have suffered significant declines.



**Lowland heathland** is not extensive in Carmarthenshire. Most of this is wet heath, which often occurs in association with marshy grassland. Notable examples occur at Cernydd Carmel, Mynydd Llangyndeyrn and Mynydd Ystyfflau-carn. The majority of lowland dry heath occurs around the upland fringes, just below the limit of enclosure; small scattered stands also occur along the millstone grit ridge in the south of the county. Here it supports birds such as linnet and stonechat; the only other blocks of similar lowland heathland are small areas on the coast at Marros Mountain and Ragwen Point, near Pendine.

Thanks to its industrial past, the coalfield area of Carmarthenshire has been less intensively farmed and still supports concentrations of unimproved neutral grassland – **lowland meadows**. Scattered examples also occur elsewhere in lowland Carmarthenshire, although generally within a more intensive agricultural setting.

Carmarthenshire has inevitably suffered considerable losses of **purple moor-grass and rush pasture** through agricultural intensification and development, especially around the Cross Hands area. Opencast coal mining has also destroyed a number of sites on the coalfield. More recently a number of sites have become degraded through neglect and lack of management.

The Amman and Gwendraeth Valleys, both lying on coal-bearing rocks still retain a good density of purple moor-grass and rush pasture. Much survives due to patterns of land holdings or physical difficulties of intensive management, which meant the land could not be drained or improved. Further examples are scattered throughout the rest of the county.

In the Cross Hands area the Mynydd Mawr Project aims to work with local landowners to improve this habitat for the marsh fritillary butterfly. A project is underway to survey a large area of land to assess the quality of the habitat in the Cross Hands area which will inform future development and allow targeting of sites for potential management.

**Dry acid grassland** is scarce in lowland Carmarthenshire, although there are extensive tracts on the upland plateaux and fringes of Mynydd Du and Mynydd

Mallaen. Stands of Sheep's fescue/Tormentil/Common bent habitat that represent dry acid grassland occur occasionally at lower altitudes, typically confined to free-draining nutrient poor substrates. Generally soils in the Carmarthenshire lowlands are too fertile to support this habitat.

Churchyards and the like are becoming increasingly valuable for their grassland resource and are potential havens for biodiversity. Unlike surrounding farmland these sites in general have had limited applications of chemicals, fertilisers and herbicides and are very rarely drained. Many such grasslands are 'semi-natural', i.e. species rich with a high diversity of plant species. The inclusion of plants such as knapweed, birds foot trefoil, ox-eye daisy and a range of grasses give the effect of a hay meadow and in some cases rare plants such as orchids are found. These diverse flower-rich grasslands provide in turn a good food source for a variety of invertebrates such as bees, butterflies, hoverflies and moths.

The grassland habitats found in burial grounds and churchyards are some of the most important habitats for the specialised waxcap fungal communities. To date over 200 of these sites have been surveyed in Carmarthenshire and over 80% support at least one species of waxcap. All these sites are very small units of unimproved grassland inter-dispersed between the religious memorials and are of major significance with regard to the number of waxcap fungi these areas can support. These sites include St Anne's Church, Cwmffrwd (14 waxcap species), Pisgah Chapel, Bancffosfelen (12 species), Eglwys yr Efenglwydd, Penygroes (9 species) and the Chapel at Rhos (12 species).

Intensification of agriculture, lack of management, loss to development and loss of heathland to afforestation have all caused a decline in these habitats, which are part of Carmarthenshire's diverse landscape. All of these habitats host rare and uncommon species that make up a rich species diversity. The remaining habitat contributes to vital wildlife corridors within a wider improved agricultural landscape.

The overall vision for this plan is to maintain, restore and extend these habitats in the county and the BAP species associated with them. This is especially important within the context of habitat connectivity within the Carmarthenshire landscape.

<b>Associated species:</b>	Common grasshopper	Common lizard	
	Skylark	warbler	Grass snake
	Tree pipit	Kestrel	Adder
	Common linnet	Barn owl	
	Yellowhammer		<i>Euphrasia rostkoviana</i>
	Common grasshopper	Brown hare	<i>montana</i>
	warbler	Bat spp. (inc. common	Tubular Water dropwort
	Wood lark	pipistrelle)	Lesser Butterfly Orchid
	Tree Sparrow		Three-lobed water
	Eurasian curlew	Marsh Fritillary	crowfoot
	Grey partridge	Small Pearl-bordered	Globeflower
	Common starling	Fritillary	Wood bitter vetch
	Northern lapwing	Grizzled Skipper	<i>Toninia sedifolia</i> (a
	European nightjar	Grayling	lichen)
	Common cuckoo		<i>Microglossum olivaceum</i>
		Slow worm	(fungus)

Hornet Robber Fly	Galium Carpet (moth)	Neglected Rustic
Brown-banded carder bee	Narrow-bordered Bee	Broom Moth
The Forester (moth)	Hawk-moth	
Dark Brocade (moth)	Ghost Moth	
The Crescent (moth)	Oblique Carpet (moth)	
Grey Mountain Carpet	Grass Rivulet moth	
(moth)	Heath Rustic (moth)	
	The Streak	

### **Action Plan Objectives**

- LGH1ME** To maintain the extent of these grassland and heathland habitats in Carmarthenshire
- LGH 2AC** To achieve condition of these grassland and heathland habitats through appropriate management
- LGH3RS** To restore currently degraded grassland and heathland habitats
- LGH 4EX** To expand these grassland and heathland habitats in Carmarthenshire
- LGH5SP** To maintain and expand the range and/or population of species associated with these habitat types
- DCM2LGH** To identify and record priority areas of grassland and heathland habitats within Carmarthenshire outside SSSIs

CODE	TEXT	START/END DATE	Lead contact	Action goals	Key Partners	Funding	Priority L,M,H	Jan-Dec 2010 report	Jan-Dec 2011 report	
LGH1ME1	Maintain fungi-rich grasslands outside front of Newton House and record fungi on an annual basis (SN614224)	2010–2014	NT	One survey/year			M	2010 was a poor year for fungi here despite continued management.		
LGH1ME2	Manage meadow habitat at Gelli Aur CP by mowing - hay cut and bracken management (SN595198)	2010–2014	CCC	1.6 Ha meadow habitat maintained	Gelli Aur CP		M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bracken topped</li> <li>• Hay not cut this year issues with farmer who normally takes hay</li> </ul>		
LGH1ME3	Manage meadow habitat at Pembrey CP by mowing - hay cut (SN404007)	2010–2014	CCC	3Ha	Pembrey CP		M	Not mowed in 2010 due to finance. Additional area added by bank removal and sea buckthorn clearance.		
LGH1ME4	Maintain extent of pockets of dry acid grassland at NBGW (SN521183)	2010–2014	NBGW	1Ha			M	In hand by taking hay cuts and cattle grazing and sheep grazing		
LGH1ME5	Maintain extent and restore of purple moor grass and rush pasture habitat at NBGW (SN521183)	2010–2014	NBGW	2.3 Ha			M	By cattle and horse grazing and topping of soft rush in late summer.		
LGH1ME6	Maintain extent of lowland heath at Carmel (SN592162)	2010–2014	GT	2 Ha	CCW		M	6 ha maintained		
DCM2LGH1	Identify from digitised phase 1 habitat maps/aerial photos all lowland grassland/heathland habitats in Carmarthenshire outside SSSIs – also from CCW phase II data	2010–2014	CCC	One GIS layer produced	WWBIC CCW	✓		Not started		
DCM2LGH2	Compile local inventories of all sites with lowland grassland in ownership/management of Local Authorities and NGOs within Carmarthenshire	2010–2014	CCC	Annotate GIS layer	WWBIC	✓		Not started		
DCM2LGH3	Determine condition and management status of all lowland heathland in ownership identified in DCM2LGH1 (including checking any relevant Phase II survey reports)	2010–2014	??	One report		✓		Not started		
DCM2LGH4	Compile local inventories of all sites with lowland heathland in ownership/management of Local Authorities and NGOs within Carmarthenshire	2010–2014	CCC	Annotate GIS layer	WWBIC	✓		Not started		
DCM2LGH5	Determine condition and management status of all dry	2010–2014	??	One report		✓		Not started		

	acid grassland in ownership identified in DCM2LGH1 (including checking any relevant Phase II survey reports)									
<b>DCM2LGH6</b>	Determine condition and management status of all purple moorgrass and rush pasture in ownership identified in DCM2LGH1 (including checking any relevant Phase II survey reports, CMM landscape survey)	2010–2014	??	One report		✓			Not started	
<b>DCM2LGH7</b>	Determine condition and management status of all lowland meadows in ownership identified in DCM2LGH1 (including checking any relevant Phase II survey reports)	2010–2014	??	One report		✓			Not started	
<b>DCM2LGH8</b>	Produce list of priority heathland sites to focus action	2010–2014	CCW	Priority list produced					Not started	
<b>DCM2LGH9</b>	Produce list of priority lowland grassland sites to focus action	2010–2014	CCC	Priority site list produced	WTSWW	✓			Not started	
<b>LGH2AC1</b>	Gwarnoethley Farm, Dolaucothi. Hay meadow restoration	2010–2014	NT	??		?			No report from National Trust	
<b>LGH2AC2</b>	Aberdauddwr Farm, Taliaris. Hay meadow restoration	2010–2014	NT	??		?			No report from National Trust	
<b>LGH2AC3</b>	Management of heathland – tree felling, grazing, and intensive species control at Llyn Llech Owain CP (SN566150)	2010–2014	CCC	14 Ha managed	Llyn Llech Owain CP				Grazing ongoing in north of site. Manual bracken control carried out with volunteer assistance.	
<b>LGH2AC4</b>	Achieve condition and maintain lowland meadows at NBGW – grazing and plug planting (SN521183)	2010– 2014	NBGW	13 Ha managed					By mostly cattle grazing and hay making	
<b>LGH2AC5</b>	Achieve condition and maintain PMRG at NBGW (SN521183)	2010– 2014	NBGW	10 Ha managed					By cattle grazing	
<b>LGH 2AC6</b>	Carmel - undertake traditional hay meadow management of grassland habitat (SN592162)	2010–2014	GT	22 Ha managed	CCW	✓			22 ha cut for hay and aftermath grazed. 5 ha sown with yellow rattle.	
<b>LGH 2AC7</b>	Carmel – achieve condition of PMGRP to traditionally grazed levels (SN592162)	2010–2014	GT	7 Ha managed	CCW	✓			No progress	
<b>LGH 2AC8</b>	Carmel – achieve condition of	2010–2014	GT	4 Ha managed	CCW				Infrastructure installed to	

	lowland heathland							enable grazing of 6 ha		
<b>LGH 2AC9</b>	Carmel – achieve condition of lowland dry acid grassland (SN592162)	2010–2014	GT	11 Ha managed	CCW			11 ha bracken sprayed. 0.5 ha pony grazed		
<b>LGH 2AC10</b>	Seek funding for habitat restoration project on Mynydd Llangyndeyrn common/SSSI (SN483133)	2010–2010	PONT	Project plan prepared and submitted	CCW CCC	✓		Applications submitted to LIFE bid and Aggregates Levy.		
<b>LGH3RS1</b>	Dinefwr Park. Hay meadow restoration, grazing with white park cattle. (SN616224)	2010–2014	NT	243 Ha restored				No report from National Trust		
<b>LGH3RS2</b>	Penrhiw. Restoration of Rhos pasture (SN437747?)	2010–2014	NT	2 Ha restored				No report from National Trust		
<b>LGH3RS3</b>	Ragwen Point. Lowland heath restoration using scrub clearance and grazing with ponies (SN219072)	2010–2014	NT	32 Ha restored				No report from National Trust		
<b>LGH3RS4</b>	Continue ongoing restoration of lowland heathland from conifer plantation at Llyn Llech Owain CP (SN566150)	2010–2014	CCC (LLO)	? Ha				Second phase of tree clearance complete. Clearing of brash and manual weeding of reseeded saplings ongoing, with volunteer assistance.		
<b>LGH3RS5</b>	Work with community to develop project for heathland restoration on commonland at Rhos (SN380351)	2010–2014	CCC	Community project established	CCW WTSWW Llanelli Nats	✓		Andrew Paterson, CCC Common Land Officer has met with group. Discussions ongoing re potential community project.		
<b>LGH4EX1</b>	Expand rhos pasture at NBGW through habitat management and plug planting (SN521183)	2010–2014	NBGW	7 Ha expansion		✓ WREN		Fencing and water troughs to be installed over 2011/12. Removal of coarse vegetation by specialist contractor over 2011 to allow for future cattle grazing		
<b>LGH 4EX2</b>	Create a seed bank from locally sourced lowland grassland sites	2010–2014	NBGW	Seed bank established	CCW Landowners WTSWW	✓		Seed harvester gone back to CCW Pembs so facing difficulty in collecting seed.		
<b>LGH5SP1</b>	Undertake annual count of lesser (and greater) butterfly orchids at Plantlife's Caeau Blaen Dyffryn NR (SN604442)	2010–2014	Plantlife	One annual survey	Volunteers			Awaiting report – good numbers in 2010. In bud so could not differentiate between greater and lesser orchids.		
<b>LGH5SP2</b>	Lesser Butterfly Orchid – raise awareness to try and identify sites outside designated areas and highlight to landowners/managers appropriate management for this	2010–2012	CCC	One press release Newsletter item	LBAP Partners			Not started – 2011 action.		



	lowland grassland/heathland habitat SINC in the county – prioritising habitat within settlement limits			produced						
<b>POL2LGH2</b>	Ensure grassland habitats are protected through the development control process and any grassland loss fully compensated for	2010 – ongoing	CCC	100% of relevant applications	CCW			Planning ecologist commented on 17 applications in 2010 requesting survey/mitigation/compensation for grassland habitats. No mechanism at moment to assess area or whether this was carried out.		
<b>RA4LGH1</b>	Add a descriptions of lowland grassland and heathland habitats to the Carmarthenshire Biodiversity website with maps and photos	2010	CCC	Website entry				Action complete		
<b>RA4LGH2</b>	Hold guided walks/events looking at these habitats	2010–2014	CCC,	At least 5 walks and/or events every 2 years	LBAP Partners					
<b>RA4LGH3</b>	Organise and hold a seminar for those responsible for management of burial sites/grasslands	2010–2012	NBGW (Fungi Group)	One seminar held	Llanelli Nats CCC WTSWW Plantlife Local diocese	✓		Not started yet.		
<b>RA4LGH4</b>	Disseminate best practice for lowland grassland/heathland management through public engagement events	2010–2014	NBGW	One event every 2 years	CCW PONT WTSWW			Not started yet.		