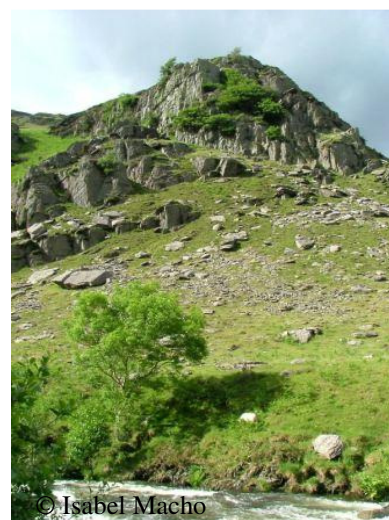


UPLAND HABITATS GROUPED ACTION PLAN

Introduction and Vision Statement

The grouped habitat action plan includes upland heathland, blanket bog, upland flushes, fens and swamps and inland rock outcrop and scree habitats.

Upland heathland occurs on mineral soils and thin peats in upland areas of the county, above the upper limit of agricultural enclosure. It includes both 'wet' and 'dry' heath. Dry heath is characterised by a high cover of species such as heather, bell heather, bilberry, crowberry and western gorse. Wet heath is dominated by mixtures of heather, cross-leaved heath, purple moor-grass and deer grass, alongside carpets of mosses (notably *Sphagnum* species). Good-quality heathland has patches of heather at different stages of growth (i.e. is structurally diverse). In Carmarthenshire, heathland has been lost and declined in quality, mainly as a result of heavy grazing, burning and subsequent conversion to grassland, and afforestation.



Upland heathland often forms a mosaic with other habitats such as blanket bog, mires, grassland, bracken, scree, scrub and woodland. Blanket bog can also be dominated by dwarf shrub vegetation, but this habitat typically occurs over deep peat and is the subject of a separate action plan. Similarly lowland heathland which lies below the upper limit of enclosure, is also covered by a separate plan.

The total extent of upland heathland in Carmarthenshire is relatively small. Much of the upland heathland habitats are concentrated in the north and east. Cwm Doethie–Mynydd Mallaen SSSI supports an extensive area of upland heathland and is designated a SAC for its dry heath vegetation. Mynydd Llanllwni, north of Brechfa, is an important non-designated area, mainly of wet heath/wet heath mosaic, which merits further investigation, although it is somewhat over-grazed.

Blanket bog is a globally rare habitat, approximately 10–15% of which occurs in Britain and Ireland. In the UK it covers large expanses of the uplands in the north and west, where the climate is typically cool and wet. Peat depth generally exceeds 0.5 m, having accumulated through the slow decomposition of plant material under waterlogged conditions. Studies indicate that most blanket peat in the UK began to develop between 5000 and 6000 years ago.

Bog mosses (*Sphagnum* species) are a prominent component of blanket bog vegetation, alongside dwarf shrubs such as heather, bilberry, crowberry and cross-leaved heath. Other common plants include cotton grasses and deer grass. Blanket bogs can support a rich invertebrate fauna and they are often of ornithological importance.

The carbon trapped in the peat makes this, along with other peat habitats, vital in the challenge to address climate change.

Much of the blanket bog in Carmarthenshire is modified and no longer peat forming. Survey data shows areas of intact blanket bog but much more wet and dry modified

bog habitat. Much of this vegetation is concentrated in the upland areas of north Carmarthenshire.

Two SSSIs in Carmarthenshire contain blanket bog vegetation, including the extensive Cwm Doethie–Mynydd Mallaen SSSI. Many areas of blanket bog occur on common land.

Inland rock outcrop and scree habitats

To be added.

Upland flushes fens and swamps

To be added.

Ffridd

Although not a UK priority BAP habitat, ffridd has been identified as an important in the county and so is included within this action plan.

Ffridd consists of a mosaic of semi-natural habitat types. It is typically dominated by bracken, and includes a number of the following: wet and dry heath, acid grassland, woodland, scrub and marshy grassland. It usually occurs on the area of land between enclosed fields and the open hill or upland conifer plantation, but can be found within enclosed fields where these have been abandoned, and the ffridd habitat has been able to develop, often on steeply sloping land that is difficult to farm. As a habitat ffridd can cover fairly large areas and thus makes an important contribution to the Welsh landscape.

Ffridd also supports important breeding bird assemblages including species such as linnet, tree pipit, yellow hammer and stonechat. The large small mammal populations that occur provide food for birds of prey.

The overall vision for this plan is to maintain, restore and extend these habitats and the BAP species associated with them. This is especially important within the context of landscape character and habitat connectivity within the Carmarthenshire landscape and for blanket bog in its role of contributing towards climate change mitigation. A priority is to gather more information on these habitats outside designated sites and on their condition and current management status.

Associated species:	Brown hare	Wood bitter vetch
European nightjar	Water vole	
Skylark		Dark Brocade
Tree pipit	Small Heath	Grey Mountain Carpet
Common linnet		Galium Carpet
Cuckoo	Adder	Neglected Rustic
Yellowhammer		Heath rustic
Grasshopper warbler	<i>Euphrasia ros koviana</i>	The Anomalous
Curlew	<i>montana</i>	
Ring Ouzel	Juniper	
Lapwing	Bog orchid	
Golden plover	<i>Hieracium</i> spp.	
	Stag's Horn Club moss	
	Globeflower	

Action Plan Objectives

- UP1ME** To maintain extent of these upland habitats in Carmarthenshire
- UP2AC** To achieve condition of these upland habitats through appropriate management
- UP3RS** To restore currently degraded upland habitats in Carmarthenshire
- UP4EX** To expand upland heathland habitat in Carmarthenshire
- UP5SP** To maintain and expand the range and/or population of species associated with these habitat types
- DCM2UP** To identify and record priority areas of upland habitats within Carmarthenshire

CODE	TEXT	START/ END DATE	Lead contact	Action goals	Key partners	Funding	Priority L,M,H	Report Jan–Dec 2010		
UP3RS1	Develop bog restoration project on suitable habitat on identified upland common land in Carmarthenshire	2010–14	CCC, CCW	At least one project developed	FCW EAW WAG (TG)	✓	H	Not started		
UP3RS2	Linked to Upland Ecosystem Group action/guidance develop a priority site-based partner project to restore degraded upland heathland sites	2010–14	CCW CCC	At least one project developed	FCW Landowners WAG (TG) PONT	✓	M	Not started		
UP4EX1	Identify opportunities for expansion of upland heathland	2010–14	CCW	Priority site list produced	Landowners FCW WAG (TG)	✓	M	Not started		
RA4UP1	Add a descriptions of upland habitats to the Carmarthenshire Biodiversity website with maps and photos	2010	CCC	Website description			M	Completed		
RA4UP2	Hold a guided walk/event looking at these habitats	2010–2014	CCC	At last 1 event every 2 years	LBAP Partners		M			
RA4UP3	Provide information to commoners about grazing, upland nesting birds, etc.	2010–2014	CCC	Information note produced	CCW WAG (TG)			Not started		
DCM2UP1	Produce an inventory of all upland heathland sites in Carmarthenshire LBAP area (NGO/LA/MoD management and ownership, including open access & common land)	2010–11	CCW	Inventory produced	CCC, WWBIC	✓		Not started		
DCM2UP2	Produce an inventory of all upland flushes, blanket bog sites in Carmarthenshire LBAP area (NGO/LA/MoD management and ownership) outside designated sites	2010–14	CCW	Inventory produced	CCC, WWBIC	✓?		Not started		
DCM2UP3	Co-ordinate a sample survey to monitor the condition of non-designated upland heathland on NGO or LA managed/owned land	2010–14	CCW	Sample survey undertaken with report	CCC	✓?		Not started		
DCM2UP4	Determine condition and management status of all blanket bog in ownership identified in DCM2UP2	2010–14	CCW	Condition reports produced	CCC	✓?		Not started		
DCM2UP5	Using sample survey identify key issues preventing favourable management of non-designated upland heathland in NGO/LA management/ownership (e.g. S9 commons/windfarm sites)	2010–14	CCW		CCC WTSWW	✓?		Not started		

DCM2UP5	Produce list of priority upland sites (outside SSSIs) to focus action	2010-2013	CCW	Priority site list produced	CCC			Not started		
UP5SP1	Consider upland bird species (curlew, golden plover, ring ouzel) as part of any plan or project that may affect them	2010-ongoing	CCC	100% of all relevant plans/projects	CCW RSPB, FCW CBC, BTO		H	Wind farms applications have bird surveys that are considered by CCC.		
UP5SP2	Encourage regular recording of upland bird species (curlew, golden plover, ring ouzel)	2010-ongoing	WWBIC	PR Newsletter item	CCW, CCC RSPB, BTO CBC, FCW	✓	H	Not started		
UP5SP3	Identify key sites for stag's horn club mosses in the county	2010-14	BSBI	Sites list	CCW FCW			Not started		