



This habitat occurs on nutrient-poor, free-draining soils with pH 4 to 5.5 overlying acid rocks or deposits such as sands and gravels. It is estimated that less than 30,000ha now remain in UK. However, important concentrations occur in the Malvern Hills, along the Welsh borders and in particular on common land such as Bircher Common. It includes U1, U2, U3 and U4 NVC grassland plant communities, defined as both enclosed and unenclosed grassland. It often occurs as part of lowland heath and parkland landscapes. Characteristic plant species include heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile*, sheep's-fescue *Festuca ovina*, harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, sheep's sorrel *Rumex acetosella*, and tormentil *Potentilla erecta*.

Acid grasslands can have a high cover of bryophytes and parched acid grassland are important for spring ephemeral species such as bird's foot *Ornithopus perpusillus*, upright chickweed *Moenchia erecta*, bog pimpernel *Anagallis tenella* and lesser skullcap *Scutellaria minor*. Bird species which utilise this habitat for breeding or wintering include nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, skylark *Alauda arvensis*, stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*, wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* and meadow pipit *Anthus pratensis*.

Threats

- Agricultural improvement through drainage, cultivation, fertiliser applications and supplementary feeding
- Agricultural abandonment, leading to rankness
- Scrub encroachment through lack of grazing
- Over-grazing
- Fragmentation
- Development

Current Action

- Some sites designated SSSI (NE)
- Advice to land managers through, Commons Network, Agri-Environment Schemes, Herefordshire Meadows Network and Farm Herefordshire (NE, CFE, HWT, WUF)
- Several plant, invertebrate and bird species protected (WCA)
- Survey of lowland acid grassland in the UK (NE)

	Objective	Action
A	Locate and map existing habitat extent	3
B	Maintain the total extent and distribution	1
C	Assess condition of sites through biodiversity surveys	4
D	Undertake appropriate management	1,2,3
E	Increase grazing of sites and access to machinery	2

	Action	Target
1	Maintain existing sites through Agri-Environment Schemes and the planning process	Annual
2	Produce advice, set up demonstration events and workshops with relevant land managers	2020
3	Gain funding for restoration, creation and mapping of current sites	2020
4	Undertake biodiversity surveys	2020

Lead Partner	NE
Key Partners	HWT, HMN