



Calcareous grasslands are developed on shallow lime-rich soils generally overlying limestone rocks. These grasslands are mainly found in the Woolhope Dome area, the Doward, May Hill and a Silurian ridge to the West of the Malvern Hills. The grassland interest here has often survived where sites are too steep to plough. They are typically managed as components of pastoral or mixed farming systems, supporting sheep, cattle or horses; a few examples are cut for hay.

The definition of calcareous grassland covers a range of plant communities in which lime-loving plants are characteristic. Calcareous grasslands support a very rich flora including many nationally rare and scarce species. In Herefordshire this includes upright brome *Bromopsis erecta*, dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria*, pyramidal orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, wild liquorice *Astragalus glycyphyllos*, marjoram *Origanum vulgare*, wild basil *Clinopodium vulgare* and thyme *Thymus polytrichus*. Scrub is frequently associated with calcareous grassland and can contribute to local biodiversity by providing shelter for invertebrates, but needs sensitive management to stop succession to woodland.

Threats

- Invasion by non-native plants
- Under-grazing or neglect leading to bracken/scrub encroachment
- Agricultural intensification such as;
 - shift from hay making to silage production
 - application of fertiliser, herbicides and pesticides
 - supplementary stock feeding leading to eutrophication of soil
- Destruction of grassland through arable conversion and development
- Inappropriate stock management leading to over-grazing and poaching
- Decline in the perceived value of species-rich pasture
- Lack of public awareness
- Atmospheric pollution

Current Action

- Some sites designated as SSSI (NE)
- Resurvey of Phase 1 habitats, including grasslands in the Woolhope Dome and the Doward (HWT, WVAONB)
- Several plant, invertebrate and bird species protected (WCA)
- Agri-Environment Schemes, Herefordshire Meadows Network and Farm Herefordshire advice to land managers (NE, CFE, HWT, WUF)
- Managed hay meadows (HWT, NE)
- Aspiration to undertake a review of Local Wildlife Sites (HC, HWT, WL)
- Environment Impact Assessment Regulations (DEFRA)
- Research on techniques for the re-creation of lowland calcareous grasslands and the restoration of degraded stands (UKBAP, NE)
- 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	2
C	Assess condition of sites through biodiversity surveys	5
D	Promote appropriate management through grazing of sites and hay making	1,4

	Action	Target
1	Increase the awareness of the value of this habitat	Annual
2	Maintain, restore and create sites through Agri-Environment schemes, other funding and the planning process	Annual
3	Map extent of habitat in order to secure as LWS and assist targeting of Agri-Environment schemes	2020
4	Provide advice, set up demonstration events and workshops with relevant land managers	2020
5	Undertake biodiversity surveys	Annual

Lead Partner	Natural England
Key Partners	HWT, BSBI, HMN