Dry lowland meadows include most forms of unimproved neutral grassland, not just grasslands cut for hay. The mainstream NVC community of this habitat, MG5 grassland (crested dog’s-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* - common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*), is now highly localised and fragmented. Agricultural intensification has led to the extensive development of nutrient-demanding, productive perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne* grasslands. These are managed for grazing and silage production which involves sites being cut earlier in the year, more frequently and has widely replaced traditional hay-making.

Unimproved neutral grassland habitat has undergone a remarkable decline in the 20th century, almost entirely due to changing agricultural practice. It is estimated that in 1984 lowland England and Wales, semi-natural grassland had declined by 97% over the previous 50 years.

This plan concentrates on meadows and pastures associated with low-input nutrient regimes. Flowering plants include, dyer’s greenweed *Genista tinctoria*, green-winged orchid *Orchis morio*, greater butterfly orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*, pepper saxifrage *Silaum silaus* and wood bitter vetch *Vicia orobus*. Lowland meadows and pastures are important habitats for skylark *Alauda arvensis* and a number of other farmland birds.

### Threats
- Agricultural intensification such as:
  - shift from hay making to silage production
  - application of fertiliser, herbicides and pesticides; and
  - 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
- Under-grazing or neglect leading to bracken/scrub encroachment
- Decline in the perceived value of species-rich pasture

### Current Action
- Some sites designated as SSSIs (NE)
- Agri-Environment Schemes, Herefordshire Meadows Network and Farm Herefordshire advice to land managers (NE, CFE, HWT, WUF)
- Managed hay meadows (HWT, NE, Plantlife)
- Aspiration to undertake a review of Local Wildlife Sites (HC, HWT, WL)
- Environment Impact Assessment Regulations (DEFRA)
- Resurveying of Phase 1 habitats, including grasslands in the Woolhope Dome (HWT, WVAONB)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Locate and map existing habitat extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Maintain the total extent and distribution of grassland</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Assess condition of sites through biodiversity surveys</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Ensure access to appropriate management advice</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Increase markets for agricultural produce of species rich hay, green hay, wildflower seeds and pasture fed meat</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Increase access to grazing and machinery</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Target</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Increase the awareness of the significance and rapid decline of this habitat</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Maintain existing sites through encouraging uptake of Agri-Environment schemes</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Map extent of this habitat in order to secure Local Wildlife Sites and assist in targeting Agri-environment schemes</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Produce advice, set up demonstration events and workshops with relevant land managers</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Undertake biodiversity surveys</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Develop green hay as a seed crop and promote hay making events</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Gain funding for meadow restoration and creation</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Promote rare and traditional breeds and pasture fed meat</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Lead Partner** NE  
**Key Partners** HWT, BSBI, HMN